

## Traditional marriage counselling in Zambia: Exploring the views of stakeholders in Kabwe Urban, central province

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### Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the views of stakeholders on the influence of traditional marriage counselling among couples in Kabwe urban in central province in Zambia. The study sought to establish views on level of awareness on existence of traditional marriage counselling services; factors that might have contributed to the rise in incidences of divorce and participants' views on traditional marriage counselling as a strategy for reducing rate of divorce. A descriptive survey design was used. A mixture of quantitative and qualitative techniques were used in the collection of data. The qualitative techniques involved use of interview and Focused Group Discussion guides while, quantitative data was collected through use of questionnaires. The sample comprised 99 participants. The findings revealed that majority of the participants were aware of the existence of traditional counselling services and felt that such services had the potential of providing viable knowledge and information on marriages. It was however evident from the views of participants that there were social factors that had led to high rate of divorces despite availability of traditional marriage counselling ranged from; male dominated social structure; infidelity and unfaithfulness; intrusion of the in-laws; communication breakdown and spouse; lack of respect for each other. The participants further felt that socio-economic factors such as unemployment; drunkenness; husband taking away family earnings to other women; wives earning more than husbands, had led to increased rate of divorce despite the existence of traditional counselling. With regards to participants' views on traditional counselling being a strategy for reducing rate of divorce, some of them felt that; traditional counsellors were not trained to provide formidable counselling services in a multicultural set up such as urban areas. On the whole, the study revealed that traditional counselling although had the potential of sustaining marriages and could help to reduce rate of divorce, it did not have significant influence on marriage couples in urbanized social environment. The study recommended organizations such as Ministry of Gender; Zambia Police Victim Support Unit; legal fraternity; churches and Alangizi Association of Zambia (Traditional Marriage Counselling Association) to work together in order to reduce the rate of divorce among married couples in the study area.

**Keywords:** Views; Counselling; Traditional Counsellors; Stakeholders; Married Couples; Divorce; Ubuntu - *African collectivism*

### 1. Introduction

The underlying issue concerning marriage counseling is that, people generally enter marriage experience with greater but often unrealistic expectations, which invariably lead to corresponding disappointments if such expectations are not met accordingly. Both women and men have primary needs which they look out for in a marriage. From a traditional perspective, women have five major needs in a marriage comprising: affection, conversation, honesty; openness, financial and material support and family commitment; fidelity (Bracher, Santow and Watkins, (2004) <sup>[1]</sup>. On the other hand, Stevenson, & Wolfers, (2007) <sup>[2]</sup> identifies five major things men seem to look for, in a traditionally grounded marriage: sexual fulfillment, recreation and companionship, an attractive spouse, domestic support, admiration; submission and respect for the husband. Hence it is incumbent upon elderly family members from both couples and traditional marriage counselors to help preparing the would-be couples and married couples through reconciliation of these primary needs and expectations. Bracher, Santow, and Watkins, (2004) calls for the synergizing of those expectations through traditional teachings to make marriages realistic and make couples manage the unanticipated

frustrations and disappointments that often goes with marriages and tend to sometimes lead to separations or divorce. The study sought to explore the views of stakeholders on the role of traditional marriage counselling in reducing the rate of incidences of divorce among married couples in Kabwe urban in Zambia.

#### 1.1 Global Perspective

The global trends on divorce rates, reveal that ten of the countries with high rate of divorce in the world show the following rates: Belgium (71%), Portugal (68%), Hungary (67%), The Czech Republic (66%), Spain (61%), Luxembourg (60%), Estonia (58%), Cuba (56%), France (55%), and USA (53%) (United Nations, 2001) <sup>[3]</sup>. Over the past 20 years, Gulf Cooperating Council Countries (GCC) Report of 2010 <sup>[4]</sup> had witnessed raising divorce rates in the world and observed that there were no signs of the pace slowing down. Divorce rates as a percentage of marriages among GCC nationals for example, had followed the overall upward trend, reaching 39 percent in Kuwait (2007), 35.8 percent in Qatar (2007), 25.7 percent in the UAE (2008), 23.8 percent in Bahrain (2006), and 20.2 percent in Saudi Arabia (2008). The number of divorce cases had also increased

steadily—in Kuwait, by 60.8 per cent over the last 13 years (Almunajjed, 2010)<sup>4</sup> From 1994 to 2007 Qatar has had divorce cases raising by 24 percent over four years while in case of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), divorces cases between 2003 to 2007 rose to 42.2 percent over the last four years. In Bahrain, from 2005 to 2008 divorce cases were up by 119 percent over 14 years and Saudi Arabia between 1992 and 2006 it went up to 116.6 percent over a period of 14 years from 1994 to 2008. This concern in divorce rates had led to the Gulf States for example, to putting in place religious and traditional counseling measures aimed at addressing the problem.

Literature on traditional marriages provides several factors contributing to increased divorce and calls for improved marriage relationships among which are the meditative and acceptance roles religious and traditional teachings on marriages. This development has led to challenges on the traditional Islamic values of marriage as embedded in its Sharia Law ((Almunajjed, 2010). As a result of urbanization, wide range of economic, social, and cultural factors that have arisen, traditional marriage counselling have been seen to have significant role to play on the institution of marriage including arresting the rate of divorce among couples (Moroccan Government, 2011) <sup>[5]</sup> Paradoxically, the challenges of traditional marriage values and norms bring to urbanized marriages seem to be in conflicts and in some cases putting either the female or male partner at an advantage or disadvantage within the relationship. These become characterised by lack of commitment to marriage; financial and material problems (Visaria, 1999) <sup>[6]</sup>; infidelity and unfaithfulness, addiction to alcohol and drugs, thereby leading to increasing cases of separation and divorce in communities (Bishop, (1967) <sup>[7]</sup>. The present study, takes cognizance of traditions, cultural beliefs and practices as a basis of a health marriage.

### 1.2 African Perspective

African society is built on collectivist principles which attends to joy and sadness within in family circle. Africa has a tradition of family, neighborhood and community approach to mediation on various issues including issues of marriage related issues (Bishop, 1967). The elders in the family as well as community facilitates guidance and counselling on marriages and related family problems, married couple conflicts. In a traditional manner, the mediation on marriage conflicts takes place in an atmosphere of togetherness and in the spirit of *Ubuntu* (*Ubuntu* - refers *African collectivism*). According to Boniface, (2012) <sup>[8]</sup>, African mediation in married conflict is seen in its social context a process building oneness. It does not only look at the consequences of the marriage couple but also the consequences of other members of the couple's family – a move that attracts traditional counsel on issues of marriage. The objectives of African mediation are directed at soothing the hurt feelings that go with conflicts in the marriage. It helps couples under stress reach an amicable solution to the marriage problem and reach a compromise that seeks to improve their future relations and sustain marriage (Thole, 2013) <sup>[9]</sup>. The African style of mediation is traditional value-based, community oriented and directed towards a restorative outcome of marriage conflicts with less emphasis on court of law as institution for resolving such conflicts. Traditional marriage counselors for example,

as mediators use very strong mitigation strategies; often wear the faulty person- taking place of a counselee and speaking as if it is the traditional counselor that had actually wronged or injured spouse (Raditloaneng, 2010) <sup>[10]</sup>. Sometimes traditional marriage counsellors would plead and present a token that ranges from a *white chicken*, a *goat* or a *herd of cattle* depending on the gravity of the problem within the marriage (Batcher, Santow & Watkins, (2003), Mtswanga, (2010) <sup>[11]</sup>.

Though traditional counselors often do not have formal counseling qualifications, their mediatory authority is conferred on them because of their reputation in marriage and in the community as persons with wisdom and integrity and because they understand the traditions, culture and norms of their people. The traditional counselors are nominated or selected on the basis of their lineage, notable status, and proximity in their relationship with the family (Munyenembe, 2015) <sup>[12]</sup>. Hence, traditional counsellors have certain powers in them that have a potential of helping couples in a marriage crisis resolve their problems without injuring their own relationships. Stevenson, and Wolfers, (2007) in a working Paper on “*Marriage and Divorce: Changes and their Driving Forces*,” provide key facts about marriage and divorce, and compares trends through the past 150 years and outcomes across demographic groups and countries of the efforts of traditional marriage counsellors. It discusses changes in family forms and how house-holds nowadays can exist without the necessity of marriage. The article lays the groundwork for a reconsideration of the theory of the family by describing the tremendous changes in family forms, pointing to some of their driving forces, and suggesting ways of expanding the thinking on the family to better understand its future in its attempts to reduce rate of divorce in African context. This has implications for both the modern and pastoral counseling approaches on issues of marriage and calls for a cultural based approach. The Malawian divorce scenarios and the role traditional marriage counsellors could play in preparing young couples and sustain marriages are compared in the present study and seem to have contrasted well with the Zambian situation on traditions and marriages.

### 1.3 Zambian Perspective

The Zambia Demographic and Health Survey of (2013-14) <sup>[13]</sup> indicate that the divorce rate in Zambia was equally rising as it stood at 23.0 percent in the urban and 9.5 percent in rural Zambia. Based on religious (Christian) and traditional beliefs in Zambia, marriage is expected to be a life-long venture which requires that those who enter it are mature enough and prepared through religious and traditional teachings to meet its challenges hence the local saying refers to marriage as – *shipikisha club* - meaning *marriage is a perseverance club* (Kabosha, 2015:18) <sup>[13, 14]</sup>. From a traditional marriage counselling angle, puberty indicate the maturity and readiness of a boy or girl to marry or get married respectively (Maggai, 2016) <sup>[15]</sup>. As a result, the family through its own or community social structure finds it prudent to prepare the young man or woman for his or her adult responsibilities including managing a family. Marriage preparation (counseling) is conducted with the help of elderly trusted, honest traditional marriage counsellors. They take the responsibility of preparing the young couple to be, through a series of lessons over a period of time. The two spouses are

prepared separately until such a time they are about to be traditionally wedded. Kabosha, (2015) <sup>[13]</sup> notes that by the time the young man and woman become married they are believed to have assumed sufficient knowledge and skills towards their socio-economic roles and responsibilities in the new family. Where these family roles are negated by either spouse their home often experience problems, and parents would arrange for re-counselling by traditional counsellors in order to put the couple back on track and indeed save their marriage from collapse or divorce.

It is interesting to note that the news from the courts in the Zambia Sunday Mail Daily Newspapers throughout the year is dominated by divorce cases. Reasons for divorce include perceived impotence on one's spouse; drunkenness; inadequate care for the family coupled with irresponsibility; infidelity; long and terminal illnesses; pressure from relatives if they do not approve of the marriage; loss of employment and other means that cause inability to support the family (Zambia Daily Mail, 28<sup>th</sup> April, (2016) <sup>[16]</sup>. Cruelty and gender based violence have also been cited as some of the causes of divorce and arising from lack of traditional teachings about marriages (CSO, 2010) <sup>[17]</sup>. Indeed to a casual reader the eye catching headlines make amusing listening and reading, but to a traditional marriage counselor, behind these stories are people with hurting wounds in their hearts; innocent children and dependents who are affected and impacted by the separation or divorce. By examining the consequences of the crisis of broken homes, one appreciates some of the reasons why these trends are devastating to individuals and to society and requires the services of religious, traditional and modern counselling to mitigate the impacts of marital conflicts on couples and people dependent on them in the Zambian society. This research sought to explore the views of stakeholders on the role traditional marriage counselling plays in reduce the rate of divorce amongst married couples in Kabwe Urban in Zambia.

#### 1.4 Problem

The number and rate at which divorce cases are reported to the churches, Zambia Police Victim Support Unit, customary marriage counselors and indeed Zambian courts of law, was alarming even in the midst of traditional, modern and pastoral marriage counseling. From the available literature, it becomes clear that very few studies have been done on traditional counseling and marriages among couples in Afrocentric and multicultural places like urban areas. The dilemma we find ourselves in is that, less is known on the views of stakeholders on the contributions of traditional marriage counselling towards the reduction on the rate of divorce among couples in urbanized areas of Zambia. The study therefore was an exploration of the views of stakeholders on the role traditional marriage counselling was playing in minimizing the incidences of divorce among couples in Kabwe Urban in the Central province of Zambia.

The objectives which guided the study were to

1. Establish the level of awareness on the existence of traditional marriage counselling services among stakeholders in Kabwe urban, Zambia.
2. Assess factors that might have influenced accessibility of traditional marriage counselling services among couples.

3. Examine the views held by couples on the use of traditional marriage counseling as a strategy for reducing incidences of divorce in an urban area.

#### 1.5 Purpose

The purpose of the study was to investigate the views of stakeholders on the role of traditional marriage counselling on reducing the rate of divorce among married couples in urban areas. Literature from many countries was seen to have identified a family as the basic cohesive social unit through which members inherit their social and cultural identities, as well as receives economic security and social support. A variety of emerging family social problems however, often negatively affect the sanctity of the family and the general well-being of its members in most home. Hence, the present study was an attempt to explore the views of stakeholders on the role traditional marriage counselling was playing in reducing rate of divorce in Kabwe urban in central province of Zambia.

#### 1.6 Significance

Marriage counselling in the event of increasing rate of divorce among couples, is a burning issue in the Zambian society. The study gains its importance in attempts to reduce rate of divorce because of its focus on traditional marriage counselling as an alternative to assisting marriages in problems. Literature available shows that until now, the research on views of stakeholders on traditional marriage counselling in the study area has not been studied hence, the increasing importance of conducting such a study. It was hoped that the findings would be of help to concerned people such as: married couples; counsellors; sociologists; administrators and indeed non-governmental organizations involved in the promotion of stable family units in Zambia and beyond.

#### 1.7 Theoretical Framework

The Karl Marx's Conflict Theory of (1959) <sup>[18]</sup>, was used to guide the present study. The theory discusses the modern day conflict theory from the concept of the power of 'the elites.' It acknowledges that the conflicts in marriages and families was as a result of social change; modern life styles which had created the urban nuclear family and was divorced from traditional family system values. The nuclear family has been seen as an elitist family system characterized by much improved life style and de-linked from cultural family norms and practices. The theory alludes to the new position of women in families who had become more emancipated by higher education, better job opportunities and more freedoms; and independence from spousal control under the traditional marriage practices. Because of modernity, the position of a woman for example in marriage had been redefinition in the context of family gender roles. Hence, less subject to traditional marriage practices where a woman was under a man's control. In the present study, this was seen as a conflict scenario in the family systems which had the propensity of discouraging married couples from seeking traditional marriage counsel in times of marital crisis and consequently contributed to the increasing rate of divorce among couples in urbanized areas in Zambia.

### 1.8 Topographical Features of Study Site

Our research area was Kabwe urban in central province of Zambia. It is one of the 10 provinces in the Republic of Zambia. As a country, Zambia is divided into 105 districts and 10 provinces. It is also a land-locked nation. It is surrounded by several countries namely; on the southern front; Zimbabwe and Botswana; on western side; Namibia; Angola and on the northern front; Tanzania; Democratic Republic of Congo and on the eastern front, Malawi and Mozambique. The country has approximately, 752, 614 square kilometres with a national population of 14.97 million (CSO, 2010). The central province in which Kabwe district- study area is located has a population of 1, 307,111 (CSO, 2010). Out of the total population of central province, 202, 914 (121, 748 females), 75,418 resides in Kabwe district with 49, 821 located in Kabwe urban (CSO, 2010). The district itself has had a rich and eventful history over time starting from the colonial (British) rule. In the past, it was a mining and commercial district. It reached its height of its glory in the late 1980s because of mining, railway transportation and commercial activities. The place was famous for its mining and exportation of lead and zinc and commercial activities until the 1990s when its economy was on the decline because of low mineral deposits and falling prices of lead and zinc on the London Metal Exchange market. Eventually the town faced a closure of its mines activities in the early 2000s. The study area is currently one of highly mineral polluted area in the world with the treat of lead poisoning, its population depends on informal sector with most of the people living below poverty line (less than one US \$ per day).

### 2. Materials and Method

A descriptive survey design was used in the study. This type of design refers to the structure of investigation carried out by using a descriptive design. Through this design the researcher, was able to collect data and explain phenomena more deeply and exhaustively to support the findings (Creswell, (2009) <sup>[19]</sup>; Orodho, (2003) <sup>[20]</sup>, see a descriptive research design as a conceptual structure within which research is conducted or planned to be carried out. A descriptive survey design was seen as one of the focused approaches which were able to guide a study of this nature. It has the ability of determining type of participants, how data need to be collected, analysed and interpreted to support the findings. Because of these attributes, this design was used in this study in the collection of views of stakeholders on the role of traditional marriage counselling in reducing the rate of divorce among couple in Kabwe Urban in the central province of Zambia.

In this study, a phenomenological approach was used with an understanding that, humans make sense of the world around them by explaining it according to the way they see, feel and experience things around them (Creswell, 2009); Kasonde-Ng'andu, (2013) <sup>[21]</sup>. This approach was employed in order to make explore the views of stakeholders on the role of traditional counselling in mitigating the rate of divorce among married couple.

The sample comprised of 99 participants. Out of which 32 were married couple; 22 were divorced; 6 were on separation, one had remarried; 3 were cohabiting; 13 were church elders; 4 were local court justices; 6 were Zambia Police Victim Support Unit officers; two were legal counsel and the remaining 10 were traditional marriage counsellors. The participants were drawn from three geographical locations within Kabwe urban namely: low; medium and high density areas.

Questionnaires, interview and Focused Group Discussion guides were used in the collection of data. The data collected through use of questionnaires were analysed quantitatively using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Descriptive statistical package was used to generate mean, frequencies, standard deviation, percentages, cross tabulation and Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) test used in describing distributions of lone and summated variables. Chi-square analysis was used in establishing the associations (relationships) in the variables used to support the study. An inductive method was used in the analysis of qualitative data (Orodho, (2003), Through use of an inductive method, data from interview responses were analysed by coding and grouping of the emerging themes and sub-themes on role of traditional counselling in mitigating rates of divorce among married couples in the study area. Use of this method allowed for analysis dimensions which resulted into the emerging of patterns in the study without the researcher presupposing in advance what the important dimensions would be.

### 3. Results

We now present the findings of the study conducted from 2015 to 2016 on the views of stakeholders on the influence of traditional marriage counseling in relation to reduction on rate of divorce in Kabwe urban, Zambia. After presenting the findings, we shall discuss and conclude the study by sighting how our findings have contributed to the knowledge gap identified earlier on the views of stakeholders on traditional marriage counselling as a strategy for reducing the rate of divorce among married couples in the study area.

**Table 1:** Personal Profile of Participants

S. No.		Personal Profile of Participants					
1	Gender	Male				Female	
		48 (48.5%)				51 (51.5%)	
2	Location	High density		Medium density		Low density	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
		20	22	18	16	10	13
2	Age	15-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55 & above	
		16 (16%)	41 (41%)	18 (18%)	12 (12%)	9 (9%)	
3	Marital Status	Courtship	Married	Divorced	On Separation	Remarried	Cohabiting
		8 (8%)	43 (43.6%)	28 (28.7%)	6 (5.8%)	5 (5%)	9 (8.9%)
4	Socio-economic	Self-employed			Formal	Unemployed	

	Status	Employment		
		58 (59%)	33 (33%)	8 (8%)
5	Place of living	Rural		Urban
		0		99 (100%)
6	Type of Family	Nuclear Family		Extended family
		16 (32.7%)		33 (47.8%)
7	Qualifications	Primary Education Certificate	Secondary Education Certificate	Post- Secondary Education Certificate
		10 (9.9%)	59 (59.5%)	30 (30.3%)

**3.1 Gender**

Gender is one of the major factors considered during the interview because, male and female consisted the couples who formed the centre of the present study. We had eighty two (82) participants out of which 48 (48.5%) were male while the remaining 51 (51.5%) were female participants.

**3.2 Location**

The location of participants was yet another factor that was considered important for this kind of study. Out of the 99 participants 44 (22 female) were from high density areas; 34 (16 female) were from medium density areas while the reminder 23 (13 female) came from low density areas of Kabwe urban in Zambia.

**3.3 Age**

Age of the participants was considered to be significant in the present study. Because age of married couples seen to point to varying views on how couples handled their marital conflicts and perhaps how they viewed advice of traditional marriage counsellors over their marriage problems. Hence, majority of participants 41 (41%) interviewed were aged 25–34, followed by those between age 35-44 years who made up of a population of 18 (18%). The least represented were participants aged 55 years and above, a group which made up a population of 8 (8%).

**3.4 Socio-economic Status**

Socio-economic status of participants was also considered to be important in the time of interviews in that, it had a bearing on the social status and stability of the family. It revealed the socio-economic status of the participants. The majority of the participants (58) 59% were self-employed (informal sector of Zambian economy), 32 (33%) were in regular employment (formal sector of the economy) while the remaining eight (8%) of the participants were unemployed (mostly serving as housewives/husbands in homes). Those who said were self-employed were mainly engaged in working as: herbalists; traditional counsellors; marketeers; street venders -mainly selling Salaula (second-hand clothes); call-boys or bus conductors; owned small groceries or worked in vegetable shops. Those who were in formal employment on the average worked as: teachers, nurses, clerical officers, typists, administrators; court interpreters; local court justice; as house servants (maids); gardeners; shop assistants or as full time house wives/husbands.

**3.5 Marital Status**

Marital status of participants was considered to be significant

in the study as it helped to explain accountability of individual couples to the family, society and it revealed the social background of the participants. In this study, 43 (43.6%) of the participants were married with sufficient experience in married lives, 28 (28.7%) were those once married then divorced, five (5%) were those who remarried while 9 (8.5%) were just cohabiting (not legally married-dowry not paid).

**3.6 Types of Families**

The type of the family was also looked upon at the time of interviews to be an important factor in explaining some of the views. For the purpose of this study, families were divided into two types; nuclear family and extended family. We interviewed, 16 (32.7%) nuclear families while 33 (47.8%) claimed to have had extended families.

**3.7 Qualifications**

Qualifications of participants were seen to be of particular importance in the study. It enabled us to understand the influence of education on desire to access traditional marriage counsel among couples. The situation of our research was that we interviewed 10 (10.5%) who had primary education certificates, 59 (59.5%) with secondary education certificate while the remaining 30 (30.3%) had post-secondary education certificates.

**3.8 Place of Living**

Place of living of participants was considered to be informative in this type of study. The place of living was divided into two areas namely: urban and rural areas. In the present study all the participants. Who were interviewed, 99 (110%) came from an urban settings Kabwe urban, Zambia.

**Objective 1: Establish Participants Level of Awareness of the Existence of Traditional Marriage Counselling Services**

One of the objectives of this study was to establish the views of participants on whether or not married couples were aware of the existence of traditional marriage counseling services in the area.

**3.9 Level of Awareness on Existence of Traditional Counseling Services**

One of the questions asked in order to establish the level of awareness of the presence of traditional counseling services in the study area across various age groups. The responses were as indicated in table 2 below:

**Table 2:** Whether Married Couples were Awareness of Existence of Traditional marriage Counseling Services

Age Range	Responses			Total
	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure	
18- 24 years	5	10	8	23
25- 44 years	27	6	5	38
35 – 44 years	14	4	2	20
45 – 54 years	8	1	1	10
55 years & above	7	1	0	8
Total	61	22	16	99

From the above findings, it was evident that majority of married couples 61 (60.8%), were aware of the existence of traditional marriage counselling services while, a minority of them, 22 were not aware of their existence nor where to access services. Few participants, 16 however, could not commit themselves as whether or not they were aware of the existence of traditional marriage counselling services in the area. Interestingly, the elderly participants especially those

aged 35 and above years were aware and more conversant with teachings involved in traditional marriage counselling. On the other hand, those 34 years and below expressed ignorance on the existence of such service and what was involved in relation to married lives. Further, those who acknowledged the existence of traditional marriage counselling in the area informed the study, that often elderly married family members, family marriage trustees, older neighbours, commercial male and female traditional marriage counsellors (*Alingizi*) were involved in the provision of services especially to young couples and the would-be married couples. It was also revealed from the findings that *bashi bukombe* and *bana bukombe* (*male and female marriage go betweens or the middle men and women were responsible for negotiations on marriage-rites or dowry*). On the question of whether or not couples were able to access the traditional marriage counseling services in the area, participants across age groups gave various responses as indicated in the table 3 below

**Table 3:** Whether or Not Traditional Counseling Services were Easily Accessible to Married Couples (n=83)

Age Range	Responses					Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	
18-24 years	2	2	4	1	8	17
25- 34 years	1	6	2	2	11	22
35-44 years	1	2	2	6	9	20
45-54 years	1	1	0	1	5	08
55 years & above	2	4	1	3	6	16
Total	07	15	09	13	39	83

Arising from the above findings, the majority of participants, 39 were of the view that traditional marriage counselling services though were there, were not easily accessible to the would-be married couples or married couples in the area while a few of the participants, 15 believed that the services were available and indeed accessible to all interested married couples across age groups. The participants who felt services were not available or were difficult to access felt that such services were commercialized- highly priced thus making it difficult for the average married couples to access. Other participants observed that it was increasingly becoming difficult for couples to find traditional marriage counselors from their own tribe especially those with skills in marriage counseling that conformed with their culture, traditions, and customs. The participants also felt that most of the available traditional marriage counsellors in urban setting were those *born and bred* in the urban areas with very little knowledge and value of traditional teachings on marriages as was observed by one of the female participant. *“Many of these traditional counselors are born in town; they have never been to the village where they can learn about traditional values and acquire proper traditional marriage counseling skills to support their marriages. Most of these people can mislead young couples especially those under intermarriages thereby leading them into seeing divorce an answer to their marriage crises”*; -29 year old female married participant.

Those who felt that traditional counselling services were not easily accessible cited several reasons such as high rates of divorce; high cost of accessing such services; failure by counsellors to navigate across different cultural believes about marriage in a multicultural environment like Kabwe urban with clients drawn from different tribal settings. The

participants who expressed the view that traditional marriage counselling services were available and easily accessible to married couples cited the existence of marriage support groups, presence of a network of traditional marriage counsellors and the view that traditional counseling services often offered freely to couples and that only in exceptional circumstances were tokens of appreciation were offered to the traditional marriage counselors. Further, participants who were in support of the view that traditional marriage counselling services were accessible observed that traditional counsellors were often flexible on appointments as can be noted from the following remarks from one of the male participants. *“Traditional counsel can be given even by neighboring elderly couples once a marital problem arises between the spouses and their advice is taken seriously because they are regarded as parents full of wisdom by the warring couple;”*-26 year old male Zambia Police Victim Support Unit participant. On the whole, the findings were that although married couples were aware of the availability of traditional marriage counselling services in the area, such services were not easily accessible to most of couples due to several factors ranging from: commercialisation of services; differences in culture and traditions on marriage; religious inclinations and modernisation of marriage lives. These posed a challenge to couples in accessing traditional marriage counsel in times of need in their marriages.

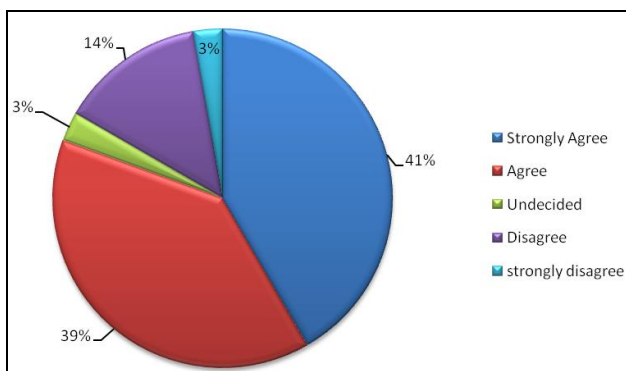
**Objective 2: Assess Factors that Might have Contributed to Couples’ Inability to Access Traditional Marriage Counseling**

We may recall that another objective of the present study was to assess factors that might have led to the inability of couples

to access traditional counselling services on issues surrounding their marriages. The participants were asked several questions on various issues that might have led to their failure to access the traditional counselling services. The participants gave various responses to try and justify the current situation on accessibility to traditional marriage counselling services as illustrated below:

**3.10 Whether traditional orientation among couples influenced their access to marriage counselling**

In order to establish whether or not traditional orientation of married couples had an influence on their ability to seek traditional marriage counselling whilst in marriage, the participants were asked a closed question on the same in which they were required to indicate whether they, “strongly agreed; agreed; Undecided; disagreed or strongly disagreed.” The following were the views of the participants who responded to the question:



**Fig 1:** Traditionally Oriented Couples Tend to have more Access to Traditional Marriage Counselling than those who were Not (n=99)

According to the above figure, out of 99 participants, 41 (41%) of the participants strongly supported the notion that couples who had a traditional orientation on traditional marriages and families were more likely to seek support of the traditional marriage counsellors in times of marital crisis than, those who had no such orientation while, 39 (39%) of participants were in just supported of the view. On the hand, 14 (14%) of the participants believed that regardless of couples’ traditional orientation on marriages, most couples did not value traditional counselling on marriages and were likely to seek pastoral or modern counselling services rather than traditional counselling in their effort to resolve marital disputes were totally disagreed with the notion of traditional marriage counselling helping to sustain marriages among couples. The remaining 4 (4%) were however undecided over the matter. On the whole, it was evident that majority of the participants believed that traditionally oriented couples had high chances of seeking traditional counsel in order to sustain their marriages than those who did not value traditional knowledge and values on marriages. Those who disagreed brought out the issue of negative attitude towards traditional based marriage counselling especially among young couples aged between 18-30. One participant had this to say during Focused Group Discussion, “Our parents chase us from homes when we get pregnant before marriage. They force us to join the men who are responsible for our pregnancies without teaching us anything about marriage hence, our

marriage easily collapse when misunderstandings step in. We are also afraid to approach traditional counsellors for support because of the way we get in our own marriages,” - 22 year old female married participant.

**3.11 Nature of Curriculum on Traditional Marriage Counselling**

In attempt to establish whether or not the curriculum offered to the would be pre-marriage and married couples has influence on access to traditional marriage counselling, participants were asked to indicate the main themes taught during their traditional marriage counselling sessions. The following were the main themes cited:

**Table 5:** Curriculum in Pre- Marriage Traditional Counselling n=99

Themes	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Love and obedience	2	8	10
Communication	7	1	8
Submission	2	14	16
Respect for others	7	3	10
Care for visitors & in-laws	2	3	06
Home management	3	8	11
Handling Husbands & Wives in bedroom	4	8	12
Total	27	45	73

The table above revealed that, curriculum followed in during pre- marriage and married traditional counselling sessions focused more on subject of submission, 16 with emphasis on women submission to their husbands in marriages. This was followed by how couples should handle each other in the bedroom while the least were those who thought communication in marriage was the most emphasized teaching. Further, participants were of the view that pre-marriage teachings emphasized more on preparing a woman for marriage and family than they did on preparing men for married lives hence, the many broken marriages in the area. Those who felt that teachings were weak on marriages believed that the curriculum had negative implications on access to traditional marriage counsel among couples in the study area.

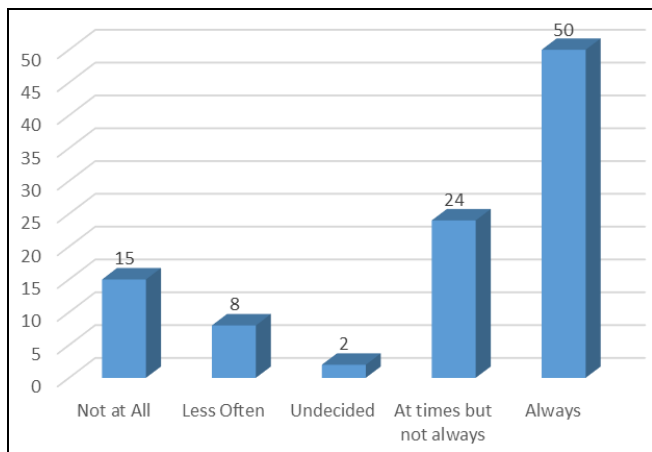
**3.12 Whether qualifications of counselors had influence on couples’ access to traditional marriage counselling**

On whether or not the qualifications of traditional marriage counsellors had an influence on marriage couples’ ability to access traditional marriage counseling services, majority of the participants, 51 supported the notion. Participants were of the view that modern couples believed that traditional marriage counsellors were less knowledge and skills on issues surrounding modern marriages for them to seek their assistance in times of a marriage crises while a few, 26 felt that counsellors had sufficient knowledge and experience to assist couples in a struggling marriage. The participants felt that traditional marriage counsellors had no formal training and that they mainly depended personal marriage experiences which may not be helpful to modern couples in marriage problems, as observed by one of female counsellors: “...all of us in the marriage traditional counselling committee are not trained we use life marriage experience when dealing with marital problems of others. However, we also receive some counseling information through marriage gatherings which

we use during our own counseling (Ifi Bwanse or Insaka-marriage gatherings) and also through discussions with experienced traditional marriage counselors, bana chimbusa," a 45 year female traditional marriage counsellor said. Most of the participants, 51 were of the opinion that because traditional marriage counsellors were not formally trained, counsellors found it difficult to win the trust and confidence of young couples for them to seek their services.

**3.13 Whether attitude and knowledge about marriage had influence on access to future traditional counselling**

As a follow up question, participants were asked whether or not attitude and knowledge about marriage from a traditional perspective, before marriage had influence on couples access to traditional counselling. The participants were asked to rate their views and the following were there responses:



**Fig 2:** attitude and knowledge about marriage had influence on access to future traditional counselling n=99)

Figure above showed that majority of the participants, 74 were of the view that pre-marriage attitude and knowledge about traditional marriage counselling did have influence on couples’ willingness to turn to traditional marriage counselling when they have a crisis in their marriages. However, a minority of participants, 23 had a contrary view in that they felt that there was no relationship between pre-marriage attitude and knowledge about marriage and willingness to seek traditional marriage counsel once in marriage hence, disagreed with the notion. Further investigation revealed that regardless of the age group most of married couples aged between 18 and 34 years had negative attitude and less knowledge about traditional marriage counselling than those 35 years and above and that they entered marriage with any less exposure to traditional marriage counselling for them to traditional counsellors for support in times of marital crisis as observed by a 53 year old male informant from Local Court Justice department, “...traditional counseling demands the seclusion of the candidate (mostly women in some Zambian cultures) over a long time, which is not suitable or convenient for women who are young and in regular employment or those running their own businesses hence are less exposed.” Further, one young male spouse noted that, “most of these elderly women

alanhizi associated with traditional marriage counselling-are too old fashioned to teach about marriage in this era, their teachings do not agree with modern marriage life hence are irrelevant to urban marriages.” – 24 year old female married participant (attitude problem).

Some participants cited their religious convictions which looked at traditional marriage counseling as a practice against their religious beliefs. This made them to stay away from traditional marriage counseling sessions hence missing out on the cultural values which if brought into a marriage can make their marriage hold as alluded to by one the female participant: “These traditional counselors tend to introduce backward and unchristian things when counseling people intending to marry. My conscious is not clear when it comes to such practices thus I do not value their teachings on marriage”. -35 year old female church informant (Attitude & Knowledge problem). Nonetheless, the findings generally showed that majority of the participants viewed pre-marriage attitude and knowledge about traditional marriage counselling as being a foundation for couple’s chances to seek traditional marriage counselling during times of marital differences while a minority of the participant had opposing views about the same.

The findings on whether or not pre-marriage attitude and knowledge about traditional marriage counselling, had an influence on couple’s access to traditional marriage counseling were subjected to a Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) test for purpose of establishing associations. The findings revealed a value at 16 degrees of freedom of 10.693<sup>a</sup> and the *p*-value of 0.828 hence, we accepted the null hypothesis since the *p*-value was greater than 0.5 the degree of accuracy. This implied that most married couples believed that having pre-marriage knowledge and right attitude about traditional marriage counselling increased chances of seeking traditional counselling in times of marital disputes as confirmed by the summary of the results of the descriptive statistics on the same below.

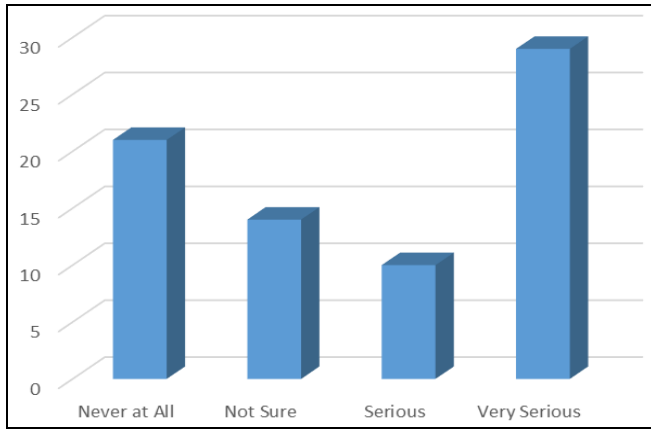
**Table 6:** Results of Chi-Square Tests on Attitude and Knowledge Influencing Access of Traditional Counselling

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.693 <sup>a</sup>	16	.828	.898
Likelihood Ratio	12.487	16	.710	.879
Fisher's Exact Test	, and			.885
Linear-by-Linear Association	.221 <sup>b</sup>	1	.638	.656

**3.14 Whether Socio-Economic Status of Couple’s had Influence on Access to Traditional Marriage Counselling**

In order to further establish factors that may have influenced access to traditional marriage counselling among couples, participants were asked to express their views on whether or not socio-economic status of their spouses had a bearing on their access to traditional marriage counselling services. The following were their views on the relationship between socio-economic status and access to traditional marriage counselling services in the area:





**Fig 3:** Whether Socio- Economic Status had Influence on Access to Traditional Marriage Counselling (n=99)

Figure above revealed that 39 out of 74 participants who took part in the study were of the view that socio-economic status of married couples and families did have, an affect their ability to access services provided by traditional marriage counsellors. On the other hand, only 37 of the participants felt that there was no relationships between the socio-economic status of the couple and access to services provided by the traditional marriage counsellors. In sum, it was evident from the findings that there was a relationship between socio-economic status of the married couples and access to traditional marriage counselling services. In order to verify the outcome of the study on the same issue, the findings were subjected to a chi-square test value with degrees of freedom of 12 which was found as 12.136 and with a p value of 0.435. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected since it was less than 0.5 the degree of accuracy. The table below shows the associations test results

**Table 7:** Results of the Chi-Square Tests on influence of socio-economic status on access to traditional Counselling

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.136 <sup>a</sup>	12	.435	.464
Likelihood Ratio	14.972	12	.243	.414
Fisher's Exact Test	11.345			.436
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.515 <sup>b</sup>	1	.113	.121
N of Valid Cases	35			

The study found out that most couples were not able to access traditional counselling services because of limited financial resources to meet the increasing cost of such services. The situation was further compounded by pre-marital counselling services which did not seem to offer adequate counseling concerning domestic financial mobilization, planning, management involving husbands and wives to enable them have excess resources to help meet costs surrounding traditional counselling services. The study also revealed traditional counseling on marriages did not emphasize on alternative income generation through for example, entrepreneurship as a result leading into single dependence on one source of income as observed by one male informant who said: “*Kabwe urban does not have enough companies to offer employment to its citizens; people who were once employed by Mulungushi Textiles, Kabwe Industrial Fabrics*

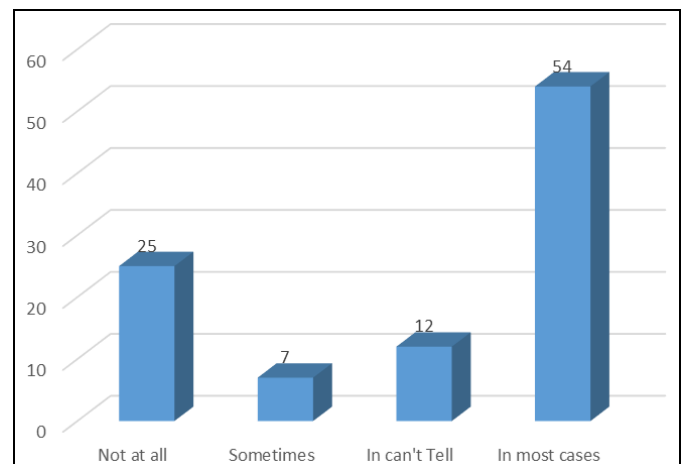
*Corporation and the Mines have been left in the cold economically. This has affected family incomes making it difficult when marital disputes occur to have surplus income to seek services of traditional marriage counsellors in solving family problems.*” – 49 year female old local court justice.

**3.15 Whether Counselling Environment Affects Access to Traditional Marriage Counselling**

One of the issues raised during the Focused Group Discussion was the questions of whether or not environments from which traditional counselling services were provided were conducive to support to continue attracting counselees. Most of the participants, 60 (60.3%) expressed the view that traditional marriage counselling centres which were often homes of counsellors were not conducive counselling environments for couples who had marital problems. The participants went further by observing that, compared to pastoral marriage counseling services in churches whose environments were ideal and vestry for counselees and had the Pastor or Priest or Reverend who also had sworn hold confidentiality of information given to them during counselling, traditional counselling environment had nothing to write home about. Participants felt that churches had better counselling environment than home used by traditional marriage counsellors as observed by one male informant: “*...privacy is limited in traditional marriage counselling places as complainants are interviewed or cases discussed in the presence of other people who will occasionally interject or comment on the issue off hand making the victim/complainant feel rather uncomfortable.*”–37 year old Zambia Police Victim Support Unit informant.

**3.16 Whether Infidelity/Unfaithfulness Inhibited Access Traditional Marriage Counselling**

As a follow up discussion on factors that may have influenced access to traditional marriage counselling services in the area, participants were asked as whether or not infidelity and unfaithfulness contributed to failure to access traditional marriage counselling among married couple. The participants gave varied views on the matter as shown in the figure below



**Fig 4:** Infidelity/Unfaithfulness Inhibits Access Traditional Marriage Counselling

Figure above reveals that 54 out of 98 individual participants believed that the problem of infidelity and unfaithfulness

among married couples had a significant role to play on couple’s unwillingness to seek traditional marriage counselling when in marital problems while 25 of the participants were of the view that there was no relationship between failure to seek traditional counsel and infidelity and unfaithfulness among couples. Those who felt that there was a relationship cited several reasons not limited to: fear of exposure on their private lives; feeling of betrayal by one spouse, strong loss of confidence and trust in marriage relationships, loss of respect and propensity to hurt marriage relationships. In sum, the results revealed that there was a relationship between infidelity/unfaithfulness and unwillingness to seek traditional marriage counselling among married couples. Unfaithful partners felt through interactions with traditional marriage counsellors, there was a possibility of them being exposed over their private lives to the public.

The study went on to establish whether there was a significant relationship between infidelity/unfaithfulness and access to traditional marriage counselling by subjecting the findings to a Chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ) of significance. The chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) value at 12 degrees of freedom was 6.091 with a *p*-value of 0.911. We therefore accepted the null hypothesis as the *p*-value was greater than 0.5 the degree of accuracy. This meant that there was a strong relationship between infidelity/unfaithfulness and failure among couples to access traditional marriage counselling when couples had marital disputes. The couples had fear of being exposed in the process of seeking help through traditional marriage counseling hence, preferred not to seek such services but to take cases to other institutions such as courts of law. Participants who felt that there was a relationship observed that the spouse who felt cheated at some point in the marriage may welcome idea of traditional counselling while one who may have cheated the other partner, tended to opt for not traditional marriage counselling and instead see divorce as a better option as acknowledged by one female traditional counsellor. *“Yes, spouses who involve themselves in extra-marital relationships frustrate their wives or husbands; the cheating spouse will tend to spend time and financial support on the extra-marital relationship, insecurity and loss of trust builds up in the matrimonial home to the extent that the injured spouse makes a decision to end the marriage; - 65 year old female Counsellor informant.*

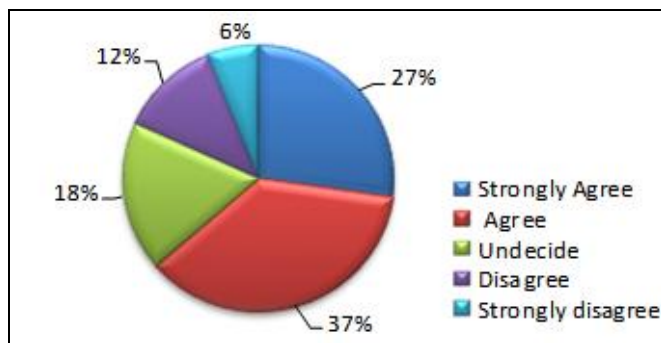
A minority of the participants, 25 however, observed that there was no relationship between infidelity/unfaithfulness and access to traditional marriage counselling. Participants instead cited other factors ranging from; emotional or psychological torture and vulnerability in the relationship created by the uncaring spouse thereby resorting to a separation or divorce as noted by one male married participant: *“There is a careless Bemba proverb (an tribal group in Northern Zambia often used by old women in counseling young brides, which states, ‘Ubu cende bwa mwaume tabonaula ing’anda’ (literally meaning, when a husband commits adultery, the marriage cannot beak down (marriage does not end up in a divorce) while a married woman caught in adultery, the usually ends up in a divorce). The truth of the matter is that homes are shaken and eventually broken especially in young couples over the issues of infidelity/unfaithfulness even if traditional counselling was provided. - 46 year old female traditional counsellor.*

**Objective 3: Views held by Couples on Traditional Marriage Counseling as a Strategy for Reducing Incidences of Separation or divorce**

It will be recalled that one of the objectives of this study was to examine views held by couples on traditional marriage counselling as a strategy for reducing incidences of separation or divorce. One of the questions, participants were asked was whether or not traditional marriage counselling helped to reduce the rate of separation or divorce. The findings revealed that most of the participants 32 (89%), were of the view that traditional marriage counseling had a cultural backbone of the African marriage hence, recognized that urban couples just like those in rural settings had a lot to benefit from traditional counseling in a multicultural environment such as urbanized areas. The participants believed that traditional teachings on marriages had greater potential of strengthening marriages just like modern counselling. The services were seen as a source of knowledge and wisdom for a sustainable marriage life hence, contributed to a reduction of the rate of separation or divorce. Few participants four (11%) however did not support this view and instead saw pastoral and modern counselling approaches as being more sustainable in lowering the rate of separation or divorce.

**3.17 Whether as a Couple would seek the Services of Traditional Counselors in Times of Marital Disputes**

As a follow up question, participants were asked as to whether or not as a couple they would in times of marital disputes seek the services of traditional marriage counsellors as in their efforts to resolve marital differences so as to avoid a possible separation or divorce. The participants gave varying responses to the question as shown in the figure below:



**Fig 5:** Whether as a Couples You Would Seek Services of Traditional Marriage Counsellors in the Invent of a Marital Dispute (n=99)

The above figure revealed that most of the participants 37 (36.6%) were of view that they would seek the help of traditional marriage counsellors when the two partners were agreeable to have the problem resolved through such so to avoid a possible separation or divorce. On the other hand, a few participants, six (6%) strongly objected to the idea of consulting traditional marriage counsellors and saw the action as an act of marriage interference. Instead participants saw elderly family members and pastoral counselling as a better alternative to resolving the domestic problems. Those who agreed to approaching traditional marriage counsellors for help cited several reason: protecting traditional marriage

practices; upholding traditional values; learning from experiences of others. Those who were not in favour of seeking assistance from traditional marriage counsellors cited suppressive nature of traditional marriage teachings – placed a woman at a disadvantage; expressed fear of promoting commercialization of counselling services; cited conflicts between traditional and modern marriage expectations; saw resolving of marital problems as a social responsibility of elderly married couples and largely free apart from tokens of appreciation from counselee. This views were supported by one female married informant who observed that: *“Because young married couples think that (the new school) modern one, was better than the old school (traditional counsel) they were of the opinion of that the old school tended to dilute their expectations of a marriage hence, not keen at seeking services from traditional counsellors.”* –37 years old female married participant.

### 3.18 Whether existence of victim support units and courts interfered with traditional marriage counselling in the study area

On whether or not the presence of Zambia Police Victim Support Unit and Courts Services interfered with role of traditional marriage counselling attempts to minimize rate of separation or divorce among couples in the area, the participants were of different views. Most of the participants, 41 (41.4%) said that one of the factors that led to high rate of separation and divorces in the study area was the services provided by the Zambia Police Victim Support Unit which seemed to favour divorce rather than reconciliation. The counsel appeared to centre on violence aspect in a marital problem with a focus on punishing one partners under the umbrella of human rights (especially the male) rather than the female which often resulted into a separation or divorce. It was after advice given by the police officers as opposed to traditional marriage counsellors that in most cases led to the aggrieved parties to proceed to courts of law for divorce proceedings. Few participants, 18 (17.8%) observed that, women reported most marital cases to the Zambia Police victim support unit as opposed to traditional marriage counsellors or church marriage counsellors because they tend to have the cases in their favour than when handled by traditional or church counsellors. One male Zambia Police Victim participant noted that, *“Many couples hurt themselves so much during court proceedings by what they reveal about each other so much that they feel the marriage should just come to an end to avoid further embarrassment.”* This view was supported by the following comment from a female local Court Justice. *“Cases do not usually come as divorce cases but as victims of gender based violence in the home. Divorce is mentioned in the course of the interview especially by the victims who feel they cannot bear it any longer and neither can it be resolved through elderly or traditional marriage counsel advice.”* – 39 year old male victim support unit participant. In support of this view one church counsellor participant added by observing that: *“...success in resolving marital problems which are already in court is hard but those taken to either traditional or church counselors before rushing to court are always successful.”* – 45 year old female church counsellor.

On the whole, the findings were that, there were significant differences in the way participants viewed support from the

Zambia Police Victim Support Unit and Courts of law in relation to the works of the traditional marriage counsellors in the area. Most of the participants felt that Zambia Police Victim Support Unit and courts of law significantly interfered with knowledge and values that went with traditional counselling thereby contributing high rate of separation or divorce cases in Kabwe urban, Zambia.

### 4. Discussion

We now discuss the findings on the views of participants on the traditional marriage counselling in Kabwe urban in Zambia. The participants were drawn from key institutions on the subject such as: Zambia Police victim support unit; church; courts of law; traditional marriage counsel; marriage couples and legal counsel. The discussion centred on awareness on the existence of traditional marriage counselling services; accessibility to traditional marriage counselling and views on traditional marriage counseling as a strategy for reducing rate of separation or divorce among couples. It was evident from the findings that most of the married couples, 61 (60.8%) across aged groups, were aware of the existence of traditional marriage counselling services in the study area. Traditional marriage counseling itself was seen as an interface between modern marriage counseling and pastoral marriage counseling because it only added the traditional aspects to the marriage counseling context. It was also learn that traditional counseling mainly existed as a non-professional service since counsellors did not posse any formal qualifications, but their services had a marked symbol of cultural identity from the community context. Urban Couples were however, not able to access the service easily when cumbered by the threat of divorce. As a non-professional service, its working hours were unspecified with no permanent place for easy access by the clients. The traditional marriage counselling services however, attracted a social contract between the client and the counselor which also had a token fee in form of appreciation for services provided. It was nonetheless observed that feuding married couples were not willing to pay for such marriage counseling service instead went ahead to seek recourse from the courts of law on their marital disputes (Indabawa and Mpofo, 2006) [22] McFadden, (2011) [23] noted that traditional marriage Counseling was offered as a social responsibility which was largely free apart from tokens of appreciation given upon restoration of peace in the marriage and family.

Literature reviewed revealed that urban couples were of a multicultural background hence, were not willing to access traditional marriage counselling which may have had a leaning towards a particular ethic or tribal group. Because of this access to traditional marriage counselling was quite limited in urban settings. Mutswanga (2010:79) observed that people from different ethnic, tribe, religious, socioeconomic status and language backgrounds often were not keen at receiving counselling services which did not agree with their own beliefs, culture and traditions has was noted by one female married couple age 25 year who said, *“ I am Lozi by tribe ( one of the tribal groups in the western part of Zambia) with ‘our own’ perception of marriage and how to deal with marriage crisis, why go to seek advice from a traditional counselor from another tribe with different beliefs and practices about marriage, I will be miss led.”* Mapalo, (2015) [24] identified differences such as educational, gender, age,

physical and mental abilities between marriage couples and traditional counsellors which made social interactions quite difficult. In short this study felt that the traditional counseling services though available in the area, were not easily accessible to all couples because of multicultural element surrounding such services (McFadden, (2011)). This assumption speaks to the objective to that was directed at establishing level of awareness on the availability of traditional marriage counselling services in Kabwe urban in Zambia.

Interestingly, most of the participants, 46 (45.6%) within the 15–24 age group agreed with the assertion that traditional marriage counselling did not allow for counselling of young girls who were forced into marriages especially in the event of pregnancy before marriage. Participants felt that this somehow, contributed to failure to access traditional marriage counselling as such young couples did not have the courage to face counsellors. Participant went on to say that parents looked at pregnant daughters as deflowered and valueless thus forcing the girls to join the men or boys responsible for the pregnancies without preparing them traditionally for married lives and responsibilities. Studies such as Indabawa and Mpofo, (2006) and Maggai, (2015) <sup>[25]</sup> observed that parents of girls with a pregnancy outside marriage, appeared to be more pre-occupied with receiving the “*damage fees*”-payments made by a man responsible for impregnating a girl outside marriage than preparing the girl for home-making. In the present study, the participants noted that there was little or no counseling traditionally, pastoral nor modern rendered to persons who entered marriage under these conditions thereby making it difficult for them to turn to traditional marriage counselling for support in times of marital differences. Such couples instead entered marriages with no pre-marital counseling thus were too afraid to seek traditional marriage counsel in the event of marriage crisis resulting in them seeing courts of law as a solution yet ending up result with failed marriages.

The older participants however observed during Focused Group Discussion that urban couples tended to avoid traditional counseling when there was conflicts in marriage because both or either of the couples may already developed other extra marital relationships during the time of conflict so much that when divorce was imminent, they were in a hurry to do away with the marriage so that they could settle in a new relationships. Achaje (2016) <sup>[26]</sup> reported that, as a result of the extra marital affairs, couples were not willing to seek traditional marriage counselling for fear of being exposed. Hence, no opportunity was given to traditional marriage counseling to help mend the broken marriage. The consequence was the failure to reconcile and indeed divorce. In the present study, participants observed that in the event of a marriage break down, couples were more interested in sharing property than seeking traditional counselling with a view to reconciliation. It was also revealed that sometimes, married couples avoided traditional counselling because they thought they were able to pull through the problem on their own and that traditional marriage counselling was an interference. McFadden, (2011) reported that most women would rather suffer quietly than come out in the open including seeking traditional counsel on marital conflicts. Because of traditional teachings, beliefs and customs which do not support assertiveness among women in marriages,

marital conflicts end up in a broken marriage (Clark and Crompton, 2006) <sup>[27]</sup>. Stevenson and Wolfer, (2007) observed that young couples especially those who were financially successful, were simply inadvisable because they felt could use finances to mend the marriage or simple felt they knew-it-all and that traditional marriage counselling was an interference into their private lives. They also pointed out that young couples had fears of being misunderstood if they allowed traditional marriage counsellors to get involved in their marital conflicts as observed by one female couple aged 40 years, “*during pre-marital counseling traditional counselors advise the young brides to persevere (local term-shipikisha) in the midst of any problem she is likely to face in the marriage. They are sworn to keep their marriage issues as a secret which the wife should uphold in order to preserve the dignity of their marriage so did not see it as necessary to seek the help of traditional marriage counsellors in finding a solution to marriage conflicts.*”

The CSO, (2010) reported that people as young as between 18 and 21 years were marrying and divorcing faster than the elderly people. According to Ambert (2009) <sup>[28]</sup> it was clear that the adolescent married couples, lacked the maturity and experience to cope with the demands of a marital relationship; their personalities had not yet stabilized hence often took emotional decisions than consult before challenging their circumstances. These very young couples in some cases had little or no income to support their marriages; their educational levels were low hence raising the factor for divorce. Therefore the assumption that traditionally oriented married couples had more chances of a stable marriage than those whose marriages were not traditionally oriented, was accepted in the present study.

It was evident that marriages in Kabwe were being contracted by persons as young as between 16 and 21 years (CSO, 2010). High rates of divorces were also recorded within this age group for various reasons such as; inadequate skills to manage homes; low economic income; and difficulties in getting counsel from family members and the rest of the community. The Panos Institute Southern Africa (2014) <sup>[29]</sup> noted that teenage marriages were by law and constitution illegal. According to Ambert (2009), young people, especially adolescents lacked the maturity and experience to cope with the demands of a marital relationship. Furthermore, their personalities were not yet stabilized to cope with marriage stressors. Very young people also had low incomes; this, along with low educational levels, was another risk factor for divorce (Clark and Crompton, 2006). It therefore was clear that traditional marriage counselors had a role to play in helping reduce rate of divorce more so among young couple if only services could be made increasingly accessible to them.

On the issue of infidelity / unfaithfulness contributing to failure to seek traditional marriage counselling and increasing the rate of divorce, it was evident that this was one of the factors that had led to the current situation of unwillingness in getting counsel in the area. Available literature had indeed supported this view. Literature reviewed had widely identified infidelity and unfaithfulness as among the most prominent causes of failure to seek traditional marriage counsel more so among young couple. The *Zambian Sunday Mail* of 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2015 gave quite a coverage on court divorces, it observed that the rising cases were as a result of adultery; mismanaged of family finances and drunkenness that might

not have been accommodated in the curriculum framework for the would be couples or the ready married couples. Bracher, Santow, and Watkins. (2004) and Cherlin, *etal* (2004)<sup>26</sup> also documented this view extensively. The present study affirmed the assumption based on the Chi-Square Test and the views and opinions of participant couples with literature sources which accepted the assumption that problems of infidelity/unfaithfulness were more prominent in divorce and that they were out of fear by individual couples to be exposed over their private lives. This assumption speaks to the factor that infidelity and unfaithfulness contributed to failure to access traditional marriage counselling and indeed increase in divorce cases in the study area.

Low incomes and poverty were identified as risk factors because financial stressors often impacted negatively on a marital relationship in urban areas; on the other side of the equation, a very rapid upward social mobility where the acquisition of money and status as a prime movers were also a risk factor. This could have been because such a pursuit of materialism took time away from relationships or reflected individualistic values that were incompatible with a good conjugal life, (Cherlin, *etal* 2004); Unsustainable Lifestyle was a catalyst for divorce which needed to be addressed through counselling. Frontline institutions like the Church, the Courts of law, The Police Victim Support Units, Educational Institutions, Civil Society Organizations, had no network platforms for knowledge sharing and joint action in developing local marriage counselling programmes and co-curricular on traditional marriage counselling to assist and sustain marriages.

Urban couples lived in a melting pot of multiculturalism; their environment was amenable to partially due to inter-marriage amongst different tribes, races and ethnic groups which brought with them a large variation in marriage customs. These variations in culture could be a source of conflict and divorce, thus both traditional and modern counselors need to be aware of these variations and what they entailed as regards marriage counseling; they also needed the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively counsel couples of diverse backgrounds. Literature reviewed agreed with the observation that modern life styles among couples had a telling effect on the status of their marriages even if were exposed to traditional marriage teachings before they got married Mapalo, (2015). The findings also pointed out that as a result of women's advancement in education and labor market participation, many women had a mobility they did not have in the past to remain under the influence of traditional teachings about marriage. Through modern life styles they had become more exposed to human rights issues, more assertive and have higher expectations of what they wanted and what they deserved in a long-term relationship like a marriage; which most husbands were not able to meet. Hence, most married women had no taste for traditional marriage counselling which appeared to depress their human rights and dignity in homes and families thus leading to a separation or a divorce (Almunajjed, 2010; Bracher, Santow, and Watkins, 2004).

With regard to whether or not traditional marriage counselling could be used as a strategy for reducing incidences of divorce among couples in Kabwe, Zambia, the study showed that most of the participants 32 (89%), supported the view that such services had the potential of helping to lower the rate of

divorce while, few of the participants, six (6%) did not support the notion. The findings was in line with the works of Chakuchichi and Zvaiwa (2015)<sup>27</sup>. The two scholars addressed this assumption from an Afrocentric perspective. Their findings argued that the term "*marriage counseling*" sounded foreign to traditional counselors, who preferred to call it "*marriage preparation*" because of the many different aspects that were brought to the attention of the candidates for marriage. The study brought out the fact that modern couples belonged to two worlds neither of which brings satisfaction unless the two contributed to their marriage preparation. They brought out another important point, that "*what is so called marriage counseling today comes from other people's culture.*" If then couples were culturally ignorant of the traditional values on marriage as was the case among couples, was a recipe for difficulties in marriage life. The present study therefore found the assumption traditional marriage counseling was a strategy for reducing rate of separation or divorce had a lot to benefit from traditional counseling in a multicultural environment such as urbanized areas.

It was evident that traditional counselors had no formal training in marriage counseling. Counselees therefore perceived them to have inadequate skills to deal with socio-emotional and physiological problems that surrounded marital lives. It was also common knowledge that traditional counsellors mainly used their marital experiences to assist others with difficulties in marriage. Ambert, (2009) in support of this view cites, secularization trends, the liberalization of norms concerning individual choice, and the lessening of family influence as additional forces that have affected access to traditional marriage counselling services among couples in communities. It was equally noted that, the traditional aspects were largely missing in the institution of marriage because de-culturization that has been associated with urbanization (Bowen, 1978)<sup>31</sup>. For many, marriage had become an individual choice rather than a collectivist or family issue. Divorce often arose because of the missing family system ingredients (SAFAIDS (2011)<sup>29</sup>; Bowen, (1978)<sup>[30]</sup>.

It was evident that traditional marriage counselling was based on oral tradition and cultural mythology; the threat here was that because of the convergence of cultures in the urban areas those norms, values and knowledge systems were slowly being lost as the holders and custodians of such knowledge passed on thereby making traditional counselling on marriage less popular among the new generation (Ambert, 2009); Kabosha, (2015) <sup>[13]</sup>; Mulenga; 2016) <sup>[31]</sup>. Modern couples were not taking interest in the values of traditional counselling, hence a glaring knowledge gap on how to synergize the various counselling strategies made available to them.

It was evident from the findings that, a higher number of the participants 33 (32.7%) were of the view that traditional marriage counseling approaches to complement services provided through modern and pastoral marriage counseling. Participants felt that more exposure to traditional counselling would help to reduce the rate of divorce among couples. These findings were supported by the works of Gboku and Lekoko (2007), Panos Institute Southern Africa (2014) <sup>[32]</sup>, who advocated for knowledge systems that that tended to synergize traditional counseling protocols that would assist married couples develop the desire to seek such services. The present study nonetheless showed that the views of the

participants traditional marriage counselling had the potential of helping to lower the rate of separations and divorce were of a mixed nature. While most of the participants supported the view, there were those who opposed the notion. These findings were in line with those of (Bracher, Santow, and Watkins (2004); Achanje, (2016) [33] and Maggai, (2016) supported the need to promote traditional marriage counselling as an act of preserving culture. The study advises couples on the verge of divorce not to run to the Zambia Police Victim Support Unit or divorce lawyers instead of positively considering the option of searching assistance from traditional counsellors in their reconciliatory efforts to save marriages. In view of this view the present study therefore accepts the assumption that traditional marriage counseling approaches can complement efforts of modern and pastoral counselling initiatives in reduce the rate of divorce in urban areas. This assumption speaks to the objective to examine the views of married couples on traditional counseling as a strategy for reducing incidences of separation or divorce.

## 5. Conclusion

The study attempted to examine the views of stakeholders on the influence of traditional marriage counselling on marriages among couples. Although the majority of participants were aware of the existence of traditional marriage counselling services in the study area, there remained some concerns about the quality of traditional counselling services provided which explains the low level of access to such services. The study further revealed that there were several factors that seemed to have had an influence on couples' ability to access traditional marriage counselling services in the area. These ranged from: inadequate exposure of couples to belief on traditional marriages; insensitive curriculum on traditional marriage counselling; negative attitude towards traditional knowledge on marriages; increasing infidelity and unfaithfulness among married couples to low home income and level of education among traditional counsellors and couples made it difficult for them to appreciate the values of traditional teachings on marriage. It was however evident from the study that, traditional marriage counsel as a social institution, was viable in that it had the potential of helping to reduce rate of divorce among married couples. The study recommended a holistic approach to provision of counselling service with modern, pastoral and traditional approaches to counselling, all play more significant role in promoting stable and sustainable marriages among couples in Kabwe urban in Zambia.

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