

Restoring Marriages in Church: A Case Study of Four Pentecostal Churches in Gaborone, Botswana

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the world divorce continues to ravage homes both inside and outside of the church and the number of divorce cases is increasing at an alarming rate each year. Couples face many challenges to building and sustaining a strong marriage. The overwhelming outcomes of divorce do not only affect the parties in the torn relationship but also the children involved, friends, the general well-being of both families, the church members and the society as a whole. A lot of research has been conducted about divorce but despite the broad literature on divorce, very little is actually known about the causes of divorce in Pentecostal churches in Botswana. That being as it may, this qualitative case study was carried out in four Pentecostal churches in Gaborone to discover the causes and challenges faced by divorcees, the role played by pastors or church leadership and church membership to assist the victims, as well as establishing ways of minimising divorce in church. The study concludes that while there are many causes of divorce within the church, little or no remedial intervention takes place in the affected churches. The paper therefore, tries to map out strategies or suggest best practices of combating this ungodly practice as a way of lessening the high rates of divorce within the Christian church.

Keywords: marriage, divorce, Pentecostal church, Gaborone, Botswana

INTRODUCTION

Divorce is not a new occurrence; it has always existed in the society and continues to escalate. It is a global issue which exists in societies despite the negative impact it has on families. It has affected many families and continues to traumatize many more. Historically marriages in the past used to be ruined mostly by death but now they are being destroyed by divorce (Riessman, 1990). Many scholars as a result have shifted their scholarship to issues related to the existence of divorce (Park and Raymo, 2013; Pothen, 1986; Thompson and Amato, 1999). Recent estimates of divorce in USA show that about half of first marriages end in divorce (Copen, 2012). In the United Kingdom, reports show that the number of divorces in England and Wales in 2012 was 118,140, an increase of 0.5% since 2011 when there were 117,558 divorces (United Kingdom Government Office for National Statistics, 2012). Van Der Walt's (1998) study in South Africa, for instance, suggests that divorce rate is rising at an alarming rate with two out of every three marriages ending in divorce. Studies show that termination of marriage is not easy and its undesirable impact is not just for individuals but for one's parents, children and friends (Botswana Gazette, Wednesday 1-7, December, 2010). That on its own is a reflection that divorce is a cause for concern in societies and deserves attention if at all things are to change for the better.

A good number of researches in Botswana have been conducted (Ahmed & Letamo, 1989; Mokgatlhane and Letebele, 2006 & Moeng, 2009) and have confirmed that the divorce rate is rising. The trends have become a regular matter of public talk (Rootalu, 2010) in the newspapers, radios and televisions. Botswana like other countries in the world is not an

exception. Chief Justice Maruping Dibotelo expressed a concern on the rising cases of divorce. He disclosed that in 2009 alone, 971 divorce cases were registered with the High court, while the number increased to 1172 in 2010. Out of the total, 873 and 1054 divorces were granted in 2009 and 2010 respectively (Daily news, Wednesday February 02, 2011 No.20). As from January and February 2011, 200 cases have so far been registered, stated the High Court Deputy Registrar Jacob Manzunzu who further indicated that in total they are 40 901 cases from 2006 to 2011(The Midweek Sun, Wednesday March 11, 2011). This is a worrying experience to Botswana as a whole especially given that just like in many societies, marriage in Botswana is considered a life-long and consecrated union. In Christian circles it is a blessing which is likened to the relationship between Christ and his church (Ephesians 5:21-33).

The high statistics of divorce results are crawling into the church. This escalating rate of divorce among Christian couples in Pentecostal churches is a societal eyesore. The fact of the matter however is the fact that divorce is a troubling societal issue which seem not to be getting the attention it deserves even within the Pentecostal churches of born again Christians in Botswana. Such a scenario is truly a cause for concern which has triggered a study of this nature. It is worth noting that Robinson's (2009)'s study entitled *US divorce rates for various faith groups, age groups and geographic areas: Divorce and remarriage*, a revelation is made that among the people who divorced, born again Christians were at 27% while other Christians were 24%. Such figures are high especially given the USA's population of about 325,127,634.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study explored the perception of the church with regard to causes of divorce in Pentecostal churches as well as the challenges faced by the divorced people. The study also investigated whether churches have strategies in place geared towards curbing the problem of divorce in church.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

As evidenced by current statistics of divorce cases in churches, this study is quiet pivotal since it provides meaningful information on the causes of divorce. Not much is known about the causes of divorce in Pentecostal churches especially in Botswana. No specific study has ever been undertaken to explore the causes of divorce in Pentecostal churches in Gaborone. The findings of this study create a platform for couples to evaluate their marriages and rethinking ways of assisting those whose marriages may be on the line. The findings of the study will challenge Pentecostal Christian leaders to document and give direction to their counselling techniques in church. Therapists will also have to intensify their ministries and or abilities to deal with problems that couples face before and after marriage. The divorce victims can gain insights on understanding their personal and marital conflicts and difficulties through counselling, and be able to deal with them more adequately and responsively (Fowers et al, 1996).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Qualitative research approach was employed for this study which allowed the researcher to investigate the phenomenon in detail within the participants' own context (Kombo and Tromp 2006). The approach emphasises that people's lived experiences can provide a holistic image of what real life is like (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Therefore, qualitative method of

research allows a rich and deep understanding of an event. In this study, four (n=4) old (first to be established) Pentecostal churches in Gaborone were used. Kombo and Tromp (2006) subscribes to the notion that a case study intends to analyse an issue in detail. In this case, the issue of causes of divorce in Pentecostal churches in Botswana became central to this study.

According to Rubin and Babie (2001) one of the purposes of carrying out an exploratory study is to satisfy the researcher's inquisitiveness about the subject under study and in this particular case are the causes of divorce in Pentecostal churches. On the other hand, Yin (2003) views a case study approach as relevant when dealing with contemporary matters. The topic of divorce in Pentecostal churches in Botswana is a contemporary matter.

Data from this study was generated from interviews with Pastors as well as divorcees while focused group discussions were for the members of the church. Diversifying approaches to data collection was meant to accommodate triangulation. Triangulation enhances the credibility of a study and assists in minimising biases the study (Chilisa and Preece, 2005).

Research Sites

This study was carried out in four (n=4) Pentecostal churches in Gaborone namely; Assemblies of God, Apostolic Faith Mission, Pentecostal Holiness Church and Family of God. The churches were chosen because they are some of the oldest Pentecostal churches in Gaborone and also since the researcher resides in Gaborone gaining entrée unto them was not a challenge.

Instruments

According to Patten (2002) there are numerous instruments for collecting data. In this case, perceptions of divorced, pastors and members of the church were gathered through individual interviews and focused group interviews. The sampled population of the sixty (n=60) respondents were representatives from the different departments in the church namely Pastors (n=4), divorcees (n=6), men (n=16) women (n=16) and youth (n=18). Pastors and divorcees were interviewed individually while focused groups were used on men, women and youth. The researcher interviewed the participants at their respective churches as well as at their homes.

Rubin and Babbie (2001) stated that an interview entails asking questions and recording responses exactly as they are. These interviews were semi-structured which allowed the researcher to probe in order to acquire an extensive and detailed understanding of the issue from the respondent (Kvale, 1996). The researcher prepared an interview guide which included all the questions and topics to be asked (Chilisa and Preece, 2005). The interview guide was used during interviews with pastors, members of the church and divorced people as it helped the researcher to focus on pertinent issues. In this way, interviews permit interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, enabling the researcher to understand the issue under study from the standpoint of the respondent. Focused group interviews are a data collection instrument in which several participants concurrently produce data on a specific topic. This type of interview according to Chilisa and Preece (2005) is good because participants tend to give realistic information on issues as they challenge one another especially with extreme views. Accuracy of the information given during the interview is checked when participants ask questions, harmonize and substantiate what others pronounce.

Sampling

Sampling refers to the process of selecting a number of individuals from the delineated target group in such a way that the individuals in the sample represent as nearly as possible the

characteristics of the whole population (Rubin and Babbie, 2001: Grinnell Jr, 2001). The representative number selected from the population is therefore used in the study to generalize the findings. The participants were selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a method based on the judgement of the researcher regarding the characteristics of a representative sample and it ensures maximum variation (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). Since the researcher was interested in the causes and challenges of the people divorced in Pentecostal churches, purposive sampling became relevant in this study. Names of participants are pseudonyms, they are recognised as DV= Divorcee and PT=Pastor for confidentiality, protection of participants and ethical considerations. In presenting the findings, some verbatim comments are used.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was based on premarital model called PREPARE/ENRICH inventory. Due to a high rate of divorce, more often than not people in marriage seem to be having some challenges of how to keep stable marriage or relationships. For this reason couples need to be prepared and enriched for marriage while other marriages need to be restored. Preventive programs such as marriage enrichment and mentoring programs can help keep marriages healthy as well as prevent marriage failure (Antoine, 2012). "Participation in these programs may also keep couples from making impulsive decisions about getting married and teach them to take the time to seek help before the marriage deteriorates too far or before deciding on divorce" (Transcitti, 2011, p.12). This model is a marriage mentoring program that aims at strengthening marriages and relationships through God centered procedures. Antoine (2012) states "Marriage mentoring programs have been giving troubled marriages hope in recent years" (p.8). The program uses four inventories, which are PREPARE, PREPARE-MC, ENRICH and MATE. The PREPARE inventory is designed for premarital couples, while PREPARE-MC is for premarital couples with children either together or from a previous marriage. ENRICH is for married couples who are seeking marital therapy or marital enrichment, and MATE is designed for couples who are 50 years-old or older, or for couples currently experiencing a major transition (such as retirement) that is affecting their marriage. These inventories are based on the Circumplex Model of couple and Family systems, and upon completion of the inventories each couple receives a 15-page computer generated report of feedback" (Kristin, 2008, p.18). This type of model is appropriate for engaged or married couples and is seen more in a church setup hence the reason why the model is suitable for this study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions were used to drive the study:

1. What are the views and perceptions of the pastors, divorced and the church on the causes of divorce in Pentecostal churches?
2. What are some of the causes of divorce within Pentecostal church couples?
3. What are the challenges faced by divorced people in church?
4. What is the role of Pastors or Christian leaders and congregants in assisting divorcees?
5. What can be done to minimise the high rates of divorce in church and restore marriages?

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from this study indicate that although divorce is there in Pentecostal churches, it is a very saddening and shameful situation more so it is happening within the church-a body that is supposed to be playing an instrumental role is helping to sustain marriages.

Pastors' Views and Perceptions on Causes of Divorce in Church

With regard to the Pastors' responses to a question regarding the causes of divorce in church, one Pastor indicated;

It is not something that we encourage; we do not encourage it but some circumstances force divorce to be there... I believe the causes of divorce differ from one couple to the next, but unfaithfulness, financial challenges and interference of the in-laws are the popular major causes of divorce... (Interview Excerpt, PT1).

According to Tembe (2000) the above observation absolutely makes sense in that in his study he found out that unfaithfulness, mismanagement of money and the quietness of the church on the issue of divorce contributes extensively to the high rates of divorce. Mullins et al (2004) asserts that involvement in religious activities can help to produce stable marriages, although on the basis of the above, the opposite seems to be true-there are more marriages collapsing within the church than never before.

Challenges Faced by Divorced People in Church

The findings of the study echoes that divorce brings pain, guilt, anger and victims of divorce tend to experience feelings of denial and shock resulting in isolation (L'Hommedieu, 1984; Lim, 2006). When responding to the question on challenges faced by divorced people one Pastor stipulated:

Yah, I think they really get heartbroken themselves... (Interview Excerpt,PT4).

In view of the above illustration, divorce has a negative impact on the divorcee. Waite and Gallagher (2005) substantiate the above declaration by indicating that divorce adds a great deal of stress to life.

Support Systems for the Divorced People in Church

Regarding the support they give to the victims, all the pastors highlighted counselling to be the most vital service given to the victims. In support of this statement another Pastor added that:

We call them and talk to them and encourage them, I had somebody who divorced... I realised that she was reserved so I provided some materials on marriage, divorce and remarriage... (Interview Excerpt,PT2).

One Pastor added that in cases where they could not provide services, they referred the victims to other professionals such as Psychiatrists. The literature also advance the same point on this issue by stating that Pastors and ministry leaders have a mammoth potential to help couples in marital crisis gain support from professional counsellors (Clinton, 2015).

Factors that can Minimize Divorce in Church and Restore Marriages

Religion has always been one of the strongest factors in determining human conduct. The norms, values and behaviours that were reinforced by religion and have assumed a religious significance hence repressing divorce (Guttman, 1993). Olson et al (1980) stated that divorce is a complex process that proceeds in stages and work needs to be done to determine the intervention strategies most appropriate for particular families and circumstances.

Majority of respondents highlighted that teachings, premarital counselling and prayer could assist reduce the high numbers of divorce in church. This is what one Pastor had to say:

...like I said teaching is the best solution of a good marriage... we make sure people understand what marriage is all about... when they get into a relationship... (Interview Excerpt, PT3). On a similar note another Pastor said:

We provide pre-marital counselling for six months... we counsel and talk to them about basic principles of marriage... We have marriage seminars annually, we teach everyone ... (Interview Excerpt PT2).

Even though teaching is the best remedy for divorce, all the Pastors have acknowledged that they did not offer teachings on marriage issues and divorce during services, but rather indicated that such topics were addressed during seminars and workshops. One may wonder how many people attend such activities! As a result it would be sensible to conduct such teachings during Sunday services to cater for all the members of the church since findings revealed that other people neither attend seminars, workshops nor weekly services when such teachings are being made, which encourages couples to reflect on their relationship hence lowers the risk for subsequent marital distress (Stanley, 2001). Nevertheless, there was almost universal agreement that teachings on marriage issues should be intensified.

Divorcee's Views and Perceptions on Causes of Divorce in Church

Unfaithfulness

When asked about the main causes of divorce in church, one victim stated that:

... she cheated me with my boss...he was called over a table to stop destroying my marriage, and he admitted and agreed that he will stop ...ultimately my former spouse ended up divorcing me, they later got married (Interview Excerpt DV2).

Similarly, another victim stated this:

I was alone most of the time, he would come home very late and say he was from church... For 12 years I was staying alone. He spent most of the time with this other woman...At times I would hear every detail of their conversation because he would talk to her in our bedroom while I was there, there was no respect at all, none whatsoever. When I confronted him about the issue he denied having any relationship with the woman but in the end he married her (Interview Excerpt DV5).

The above sentiments signify unfaithfulness as one of the major causes of divorce in church as also argued by the research findings by (Lim, 2006; Moeng, 2009) who have revealed that infidelity is one of the common sources of divorce. In Moeng's (2009) study on a similar note revealed that 41% of the respondents who were Christians divorced because of infidelities. Although God places a high value on faithfulness as a basis for a happy and lasting marriage (Owoeye, 2008), findings of the study express unfaithfulness as a major cause of marriage failure. DV1 summarizes this concern when he said "*... most of the times marriages break because of unfaithfulness...*". It is in the church that couples can find hope and confidence primarily through the grace of Jesus Christ, who enables couples to be faithful to each other forever (Stanley, 2001).

Lack of Teaching

Giving another cause of divorce another respondent said: "*I never got any counselling from my church, am sorry but I have to be honest with you no body from my church, no body, just friends from other churches supported me*" (Interview Excerpt, DV1). Most of the marriages lack appropriate teachings to use them during difficulties they experience in their path of

marriage. According to their views teaching would help them build stronger families. It was also found out that some Pastors displayed their concern on people who involve them towards the final stages of their marital processes and procedures. Hence, impedes pre-marital counselling lessons. Nevertheless, the Pastors agreed that they end up solemnising their marriages. Although this practice seems to be a perpetual habit, there are no strict measures to guard against it in church. This in turn breeds a negative image as it hinders pastors to perform their duty.

Challenges Faced by Divorced People in Church

“Compared to other losses that may occur at midlife or older, people age 40 and older generally feel that divorce is more emotionally devastating than losing a job, about equal to experiencing a major illness, and somewhat less devastating than a spouse’s death. When two or more life churning events occur near the same time, one can only imagine the emotional devastation someone may face” (Montenegro, 2004, p.1). Statistics prove that the participants experienced some psycho-social problems. The participants described the feelings as *confusion, fear, shock, rejection, emotional abuse, shame and loneliness*. Scholars have shown that men and women experience the above effects of divorce during the time of divorce (L’Hommedieu, 1984; Pothen, 1986; Guttman, 1993). To support this, one of the participants said:

It has affected me but I do not know how I can put it for you in simple language but it really affects emotionally, spiritually. Sometimes even today it’s still affects me like if I am invited to somebody’s wedding and if I attend, it reminds me that this is what I had, now it’s no longer there... (Interview Excerpt, DV1).

This challenge was vividly described by one respondent who shared: “...It came as a shock; I was asking myself whether I am being divorced ... how people will look at me, what they will say especially people I had always preached to” (Interview Excerpt DV4). It destroys self-image. This view is supported by a verse in **Matthew 5:14-16** which states that Christians are the light of the world and our light should shine before men. What this means is that Christians must portray good works always for all to see.

Fear of Dating

In terms of fear the respondents who had fear associated their fear with dating. This is what one had to say: “Life after divorce was difficult, I was asking myself how my life after divorce would be like, whether I will be able to find another person to continue my life journey with. I had lot of fear.” (Interview Excerpt, DV1). Another one went on to say: “I was asking myself who is going to swear yes to a divorcee” (Interview Excerpt, DV6). With regard to the issue of dating, a relatively large number of the respondents were pessimistic about meeting the right partner in future, as a result, had remained single. Findings also revealed that the victims who were still dating found it very hard and challenging maybe because they have lost trust in the opposite sex.

One of the participants reported that:

I have not yet found someone, I have tried to look around, I haven’t yet managed to ask anyone even if my parents are always pushing me that I should get married because as you grow up you need a partner, right now I am staying alone in the house, at times I come home very tired, am doing part time nevertheless I shouldn’t rush even though I was not used to staying alone. It is hard but most of the time I go to church. (Interview Excerpt, DV6).

The above assertions are in line with Montenegro's (2004) study entitled *The divorce experience: A study of divorce at Midlife and beyond*, which demonstrated that 24% respondents had the fear of whether they will find somebody to marry or live with.

Participation in Church Activities

Tanaka (2010) has found that divorce has an effect in reducing the participation of people in attending religious activities. To some respondents divorce came as a blow or a setback especially for those whose participation is felt in the church. Some go through suspension while others personally decide to step down. One respondent stated that: *"It affected my participation, it was just too much, and I could not manage in the Sunday school..."* (Interview Excerpt, DV3). This following response is from a victim of divorce *"... I had to step down from my ministry of singing for some time for healing to take place; I wanted to be ministered to..."* (Interview Excerpt, DV1). Deal (2007) stated that if rejected or limited in religious participation by doctrine, leadership decision, or group attitude, divorced persons may withdraw from church relationships and may either discover a new, more welcoming religious affiliation or forego a religious affiliation altogether. On a similar note the other one said:

Immediately after this...., church wanted me to be involved but because of my situation I was uncomfortable... I was very clear about participating in any committee in that status, I needed time to heal(Interview Excerpt, DV5).

The above extract is contrary to Lim (2006) who found that people who experience divorce are not allowed to hold key leadership positions as deacons and church elders.

Interaction with Church Members is Affected

Although some Pastors appear to be happy about how they assist the victims of divorce, some individuals felt that other church members have a negative attitude towards them. On a similar issue another respondent said: *"Divorce is still a taboo in church... you will find yourself without friends..., you do not get any encouragement from people, and you are just a loner. When you enter a place it becomes tense and other people feel uncomfortable when you are around..."* (Interview Excerpt, DV6). This excerpt is in line with Waite and Gallagher (2005) who stated that following divorce often friends, even close friends, distance themselves from the divorced individual. Given the above illustrations, it could be concluded that divorcees are not given the support that they deserve and it's contrary to Clinton's (2015) view that the church should be a safe place for people going through pain that they can find hope, healing and restoration.

Loss of Assets

With regard to loss of assets, findings illustrate that some of the respondents lost their property after divorce. Surprisingly, this group of people, although they worked hard to accumulate wealth for the family, they lost everything while their former spouse took everything. The study shows that it was not easy to release the assets. Findings show that, even though it was a painful decision to make, they did that purposely to avoid conflicts. One of them said:

Personally whatever I have is the fruits of my hard work... when I was busy building my dream house he was doing nothing, but when it came to sharing of assets he rushed for the cream, I allowed it because I was fed up, ..., whatever he requested I gave, although it was painful ...; I left everything in the house except the bed and the washing machine. (Interview Excerpt, DV5).

Support Systems for the Divorced People in Church

The way in the church responds to couples going through divorce appears to be having a pivotal influence on their lives and their opinions of the church as a caring body. Assistance given to the victims of divorce according to Taylor and Chatters (1988) is the supportive feature of the church which can either be material, spiritual, emotional or informational. On a positive note, majority of the divorcees agreed that they were happy with the assistance they got from their pastors, friends and members of the church. Responding to the same question, one respondent said:

... Looking at what I have gone through..., my Pastor gave me the go ahead to divorce, he encouraged me and continued to talk to me. He warned me of the stigma from the church members. Even when I told him I wanted to get married again he counselled me. (Interview Excerpt, DV6).

However, some of the victims felt that the community of faith provided rejection rather than support and were really wounded by that. The following response clarifies this statement:

...Church leaders did not help me, they did not counsel me. I even asked myself whether I am loved in this church or I should leave and look for another church ...I was wondering why such a thing happened to me, , I didn't even know why they did that to me.(Interview Excerpt, DV1).

This statement contradicts what the Pastors had revealed when they said they provide counselling to the victims. Certainly it is an indication of the gaps which exist in church. A clear clarity that divorced people felt bewildered by the rejection and non-acceptance from the members of the church towards their marital failure. Consequently, there was almost universal sense of intense unhappiness over the issue.

Despite the respondents' traumatic experience, many of them have managed to realize a relatively satisfactory life for themselves. There are many elements that influence the way in which the divorced people resolved their emotional trauma caused by marriage dissolution namely acceptance of advice, inner strength, testimony of other people, listening to sermons and encouragement from friends, three themes were dominant in the responses given by the respondents such as prayer, knowledge and reading the word of God or merely their optimistic nature.

A respondent said although it was hard to bear, nevertheless he emphasized that he remained a positive person: *"I had the heart to go on, trust God looking at what God has done for me..., I had a lot of opportunities... What really helped me most is that I know the word of God, I listened to the word of God."*(Interview Excerpt, DV1). One may assume that maybe some embraced the words in **Proverbs 3:5-6** as the basis of their strength. *"...Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight..."* (Bible, 1984).

Factors that can Minimize Divorce in Church and Restore Broken Marriages

One of the participants expressed a concern that although pre-marital counselling is done, post marital counselling is always left out. One divorcee thus commented: *"There is no post-marital counselling..."* (Interview Excerpt,DV5). The respondent went on to reveal that most of the problems emanate after marriage hence a need for post marital counselling. The other said

...teachings on marriage issues should be intensified since currently not enough is being done, you only learn about what marriage is all about when you are already in, more

emphasis should be on the main issues that can bring about divorce...(Interview Excerpt, DV4).

Given the above assertion one can argue that the victims of divorce are in a desperate situation of saying to the church that it has not thoroughly prepared them for the “battle.” If only they were taught enough from the onset, followed by post-marriage counselling, they would be in a better position to face the challenges in marriage.

Church member’s Views and Perceptions on Causes of Divorce in Church

During focused group discussions and interviews, the following themes were highlighted as some of the main causes of divorce in church: *Infidelity, lack of communication, lack of teaching, interference of the in laws, lack of the knowledge of the word of God, little time spent on courtship, marrying for wrong reasons, financial problems, rushed marriage, marrying to avoid fornication, high expectations of marriage and lack of the fear of God.* (Focus Group Excerpt...). In sharing their views as members of the church one respondent from the mothers in Apostolic Faith Mission stated that “*divorce is not part of us as Christians, it is not supposed to be there... its becoming common in church*” the other mother stated that “*...the main problem that I see is unfaithfulness...*”(Focus Group Excerpt).

Challenges Faced by the Church

Regarding challenges, the focus groups felt that generally divorce does not only affect the couples and the children, but the whole body of Christ. Many of them said that divorced people normally have feelings of rejection, failure, self-blame, low self-esteem, divisions in church, hopelessness, stigmatisation and are also economically affected. The respondents stated that divorce tarnishes the image, testimony and credibility of the church is affected. Another concern was that the church might lose souls who are not spiritually firm hence church activities are affected. An emphasis was made that it will scare and make youngsters to lose interest in marriage. One of the mother at AFM said “*it discourages other people aspiring to get married*” (Focus Group Excerpt, mother AFM). The other said “*children suffer the most and are neglected during counselling...*”. Another youth at AOG clarified that “*...when divorce occurs one of them is forced to look for a different church*” (Focused Group Excerpt, AOG). The above illustration substantiates Craig’s (2012) view that 42 percent of the people changed their religious affiliation as a result of divorce in a study conducted amongst Protestant and Catholic Churches in the United States.

Support Systems for the Divorced People in Church

With regard to members of the church, it seems like they are afraid to interact with divorcees in church because according to Waite and Gallagher (2005), they do not know what to say or do to make the person feel better. The youth in Pentecostal Holiness Church jointly agreed that assisting divorced people would seem like the church promotes it. Nevertheless, focus group findings reveal that members feel that assisting divorcees is not possible. Some indicated that it is difficult to relate with divorcees especially if they are people one has never interacted with before.

Members reported that the victims are likely to push you away, even if you had intentions to assist them. On a different note, focused group of the youth in Apostolic Faith Mission stated the difficulty of assisting divorcees financially. This is different from what Taylor and Chatter (1988) said that church members usually assist the divorced by giving them basic needs such clothing as well as food. The church should treat the divorcees with the knowledge that they are part of the body of Christ and should provide counselling to ensure that their baggage has been eliminated or dealt with (Lim, 2006). By so doing, healing will

automatically come in if they feel accepted, cared for and allowed to participate like any other ordinary person (Sussman, 1999).

Factors that can Minimize Divorce in Church and Restore Marriages

In responding to this question the members of the church acknowledged the need for post marriage counselling which is lacking in almost all the churches. They emphasised that programs should be put in place to curb this embarrassing issue. During focused group discussions members stressed that such teachings should be made during conferences and Pastors should emphasise the dangers of divorce. There was a feeling that Continuous Workshops and seminars should be conducted for the youth at an early stage and not when they are ready for marriage because Proverbs 22:6 says “*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*”. Open discussions on issues about dating and how to choose a life partner should be cultivated on the youth by the Pastors.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that divorce in Pentecostal churches exists although the statistics given by the Pastors do not portray the reality on the ground. There were no detailed and proper records of divorce cases at the time of data collection. The findings also revealed that it is not always easy to know and have the exact number of such people because following divorce; some victims may choose to backslide or move to other churches. One may wonder since some victims expressed their frustrations that the church does not support them as it might be one of the reasons why some of them decide to backslide or leave the church.

The study has identified that the main cause of concern is the issue of unfaithfulness and lack of teaching. According to the researcher’s view, courtship should begin from friendship, as at this level people are open to each other, and there is transparency. Haller in her book “*Ten things you need to know before you get Married*” as stated in (Donaldson, 2002) recommends that couples should take time to get to know one another for at least two years before considering marriage. The study has revealed that although the couples realise certain things during courtship they still ignore and continue to get married. Marital problems will emanate leading to termination of marriage.

With regard to the challenges, the study has found that divorce is a very traumatic experience. It is painful for the victims, the family, friends, church members and the children involved. Divorce does not only cause tremendous pain but also causes long-term emotional strain, fear, rejection and loneliness. In addition, the data revealed that following divorce, social and interpersonal relationships are highly affected. At times some church members are so judgemental and respond negatively towards the divorced and this causes some of them to quit church and backslide. Generally, the church’s image and testimony are affected. The faith of believers is affected as most people end up having so many unanswered questions as to why it is happening in church.

Knowledge is power, when people have the foundation of what to expect and what to do when problems emanate, they will be able to better handle the challenges. Hence, intensive education should be implemented during Sunday services to target all the members of the church because this research has established that most members do not attend weekly services and marriage workshops. It is believed that through the teachings and practices that are already entrenched in the doctrine of the church will support couples to overcome undue unfaithfulness, and other causes of divorce, hence ensure that members are not exposed to marriage teachings only before they get married.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of this study, the researcher strongly believes that *marriage education* is the best divorce prevention strategy. Therefore churches could play a pivotal role in helping more marriages succeed, this would result in less divorces occurring, and ultimately, more children being raised by both their parents in happy homes.

1. By providing both pre and post marital counselling using premarital inventories this dream could be realised. Pre-marital counselling should be a pre-requisite for all people who wish to get married, therefore pastors should only solemnise marriages of people who have attended these teachings.
2. Pastors and church leaders should keep a record of all marriages and divorces in the church. This would make it easier to conduct follow ups after marriage, divorce or help monitor a situation if there is problem between any couple.
3. It is also recommended that Pentecostal churches should have Marriage policies, standard manuals that have been sanctioned by the leadership.
4. Churches should provide annual marriage strengthening retreats, workshops or seminars i.e. both genders together and in some instances on separate occasions.
5. Pentecostal Christian couples should adopt alternative routes of solving conflicts and problems rather than divorce. Divorce is not a solution. Those in bad marriages should not use divorce as an escape just because they are in an unpleasant situation, but should seek God for the healing of their relationship. God's kind of love can overcome in the situation, and a mighty miracle of healing can come to that marriage and home.
6. Intensive counselling should be carried out to focus on belief systems for inter-church marriages.
7. Annual sermon series on relationships, marriage and family and bible studies on these topics should be offered for the youth.

Annual sermon series on relationships, marriage and family and bible studies on these topics should be offered for the youth.

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