



ASSESSING THE RISING DIVORCE RATES IN ZANZIBAR: CAUSES, EFFECTS, AND SOLUTIONS – A CASE STUDY OF WETE DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT :

The study investigated the rising divorce rates and their effects while proposing solutions to mitigate the issue in Wete District, Zanzibar. Employing an ontological philosophical approach, the study utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods within a cross-sectional research design. Data were collected from 51 respondents, including women and officials from governmental and non-governmental organizations addressing family matters, through purposive and random sampling techniques. Primary data were gathered via questionnaires and interviews and analyzed descriptively and thematically. Findings revealed that while divorce is lawful in Islam, factors contributing to its increase include economic challenges, family conflicts, and political influences. The study highlighted significant impacts such as psychological distress, ethical deterioration, educational challenges for children, and health complications. Recommended solutions include marriage education, parental involvement in partner selection, fostering mutual respect and trust in marriages, and promoting marriage counseling and awareness programs. The study concludes that addressing these factors through targeted interventions can help reduce divorce rates and its associated impacts.

Keywords: Divorce, Effect of Divorce, Wete District, Zanzibar

Introduction :

Divorce rates have been rising globally, bringing profound implications for families, communities, and societies (Amato, 2018). This trend is particularly notable in Zanzibar, where cultural, religious, and socio-economic factors uniquely shape the dynamics of marriage and family life. In Wete District, the growing prevalence of divorce has emerged as a critical issue, raising concerns about its root causes and the broader implications for individuals and the community. Existing research highlights several contributing factors, including economic instability, family conflicts, and shifts in societal norms (Cherlin, 2020; McLanahan & Percheski, 2019).

Economic challenges often strain marital relationships, as financial hardships can fuel dissatisfaction and conflict, increasing the likelihood of divorce (Kalmijn, 2021). Beyond financial struggles, divorce impacts the psychological well-being of individuals, with studies linking it to depression, anxiety, and emotional instability, particularly in children (Hetherington & Elmore, 2019). Ethical concerns are also significant, as rising divorce rates challenge traditional values and alter societal perceptions of marriage, potentially eroding the moral fabric of communities (Furstenberg, 2018). Furthermore, divorce-related stress has been shown to weaken physical health, heightening vulnerability to illnesses (Umberson et al., 2020).

This study seeks to examine the causes and effects of the increasing divorce rates in Wete District and propose actionable solutions. Specifically, the study aims to address the following research questions: What are the primary factors contributing to the rise in divorce? What are the impacts of divorce on individuals and the community? What strategies can be implemented to mitigate the rising divorce rate?

The structure of the paper is as follows: Section 1 presents a review of relevant literature on divorce trends and their implications. Section 2 outlines the methodology employed in this study, including the research design, sampling strategies, and data collection methods. Section 3 discusses the key findings on the causes, effects, and proposed solutions for reducing divorce rates in Wete District. The paper concludes with recommendations for policymakers, community leaders, and other stakeholders.

Literature Review :

Divorce is a global phenomenon that has attracted significant scholarly attention due to its far-reaching implications for families, communities, and societies. Existing literature reveals that the rising divorce rates are driven by a combination of economic, social, and cultural factors. This section explores the body of knowledge on the causes and effects of divorce, as well as proposed solutions, to provide a context for the current study.

- **Causes of Divorce**

Economic instability is frequently cited as a primary driver of divorce. Research shows that financial difficulties place stress on marital relationships, leading to conflicts and dissatisfaction that increase the likelihood of separation (Kalmijn, 2021). Moreover, economic challenges are particularly pronounced in developing regions, where limited access to resources further strains family dynamics (Cherlin, 2020).

Family conflicts, often stemming from poor communication, infidelity, or lack of mutual respect, are another significant cause of divorce. Studies highlight that unresolved disputes can erode trust and emotional bonds, making reconciliation difficult (McLanahan & Percheski, 2019). In Zanzibar,

cultural expectations and family interference also play a role, as traditional norms sometimes conflict with modern lifestyles and individual aspirations. Social and political shifts, including changing perceptions of marriage and gender roles, have also contributed to the rising divorce rates. As societies modernize, expectations within marriages evolve, sometimes creating misalignments between partners that lead to marital dissolution (Furstenberg, 2018).

- **Effects of Divorce**

The effects of divorce are both immediate and long-term, impacting individuals, families, and communities. Psychological distress is a common outcome, with divorcing couples often experiencing depression, anxiety, and feelings of failure. Children of divorced parents are particularly vulnerable, facing emotional instability, educational setbacks, and difficulties in forming healthy relationships (Hetherington & Elmore, 2019).

Divorce also has ethical and societal implications. The increasing prevalence of marital dissolution challenges traditional values and disrupts community cohesion. Studies suggest that this trend may lead to a normalization of divorce, further weakening societal perceptions of marriage as a stable and sacred institution (Amato, 2018).

Health is another critical concern, as divorce-related stress has been linked to weakened immune systems, increased vulnerability to illness, and a decline in overall well-being (Umberson et al., 2020).

- **Proposed Solutions**

Scholars advocate for a multi-faceted approach to mitigating rising divorce rates. Marriage education programs are a cornerstone of such efforts, equipping couples with the skills to navigate challenges and strengthen their relationships. Parental involvement in partner selection and fostering respect and trust between spouses are also recommended as preventive measures (Cherlin, 2020).

Community-based initiatives, including counseling and support programs, are essential for addressing both the causes and effects of divorce. These initiatives provide a platform for open communication and problem-solving, helping couples to resolve conflicts before they escalate (Kalmijn, 2021). Additionally, raising awareness of the impact of divorce on children can encourage couples to seek alternative solutions to marital difficulties.

- **Context for the Study**

While global and regional studies have explored the dynamics of divorce, limited research has been conducted specifically in the context of Wete District, Zanzibar. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the unique socio-cultural and economic factors influencing divorce in the region and proposing tailored solutions to address this growing concern. By building on existing literature and integrating local perspectives, this study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on divorce and its implications.

Methodology :

- **Study Philosophy**

This study was grounded in the **ontology philosophy**, which explores the nature of being, existence, and reality. Ontology seeks to understand fundamental categories of existence and relationships between them, addressing questions such as "what exists?" and "what is the nature of reality?" This philosophy provided a framework to examine the complex socio-cultural and economic factors surrounding divorce in Wete District.

- **Study Approach**

A mixed-methods approach integrating **qualitative and quantitative research methods** was employed. According to Creswell and Plano (2018), combining these approaches allows for a more comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena by addressing both the quantitative "what" and the qualitative "why" aspects of the research topic.

- **Research Design**

The study adopted a **cross-sectional research design**, as outlined by Kothari (2014). This design collects data at a single point in time, making it suitable for assessing the current state of divorce rates and their associated causes, effects, and solutions in Wete District.

- **Study Area**

The research was conducted in **Wete District, Zanzibar**, a region experiencing a rapid increase in divorce rates from 2015 to 2021. This area was chosen due to the pressing need to understand and address this issue in the local socio-cultural context.

- **Population and Sample Size**

The target population consisted of **women, men, and officials** from government and non-governmental organizations working on family issues in Wete District. A sample size of **51 respondents** was selected to represent this population, ensuring diversity in perspectives.

- **Sampling Strategies**

Two sampling techniques were used:

1. **Simple Random Sampling:** This method ensured that every individual in the population had an equal chance of being selected, thereby reducing selection bias (Creswell & Plano, 2018).
2. **Purposive Sampling:** This non-probability technique was used to deliberately select participants who possessed specific characteristics or met certain criteria relevant to the research objectives (Kothari, 2014).

Data Collection :

Primary data were collected through:

1. **Questionnaires:** These provided structured quantitative data on the prevalence, causes, effects, and potential solutions to divorce.
2. **Semi-structured Interviews:** These gathered in-depth qualitative insights, complementing the quantitative data with nuanced, theme-based information from respondents.

Data Analysis :

Data analysis involved:

1. **Quantitative Analysis:** Questionnaire responses were analyzed descriptively, and the results were presented using tables and charts to summarize trends and patterns.
2. **Qualitative Analysis:** Data from interviews were analyzed using **thematic analysis**, identifying recurring themes and narratives that shed light on the underlying causes and effects of divorce.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines by:

- Seeking prior permission from relevant authorities.
- Respecting respondents' cultural practices and behaviors.
- Ensuring privacy and confidentiality, with no names disclosed in the final report.
- Politely requesting voluntary participation from respondents.

By employing these methodologies, the study ensured rigor and reliability in addressing the research objectives, offering a comprehensive understanding of the increasing divorce rates in Wete District and their implications.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION :

In order to assess the divorce increasing rate and its effect and solution on divorce in Zanzibar especially in Wete District, the study determined the following; first the study determined divorce, its legality, types and expressions. Findings revealed that rate of divorce in Zanzibar, especially in Wete District is very high. In the year 2015 a total of 98 people divorced, in 2016 a total of 114 people divorced, in the year 2017, a total of 112 people divorced, in the year 2018 a total of 83 people divorced, in the year 2019, a total of 85 people divorced, in the year 2020 a total of 67 people divorced, and in the year 2021 a total of 93 people divorced (see Table 1).

Table 1: Divorce rate from 2015 to 2021

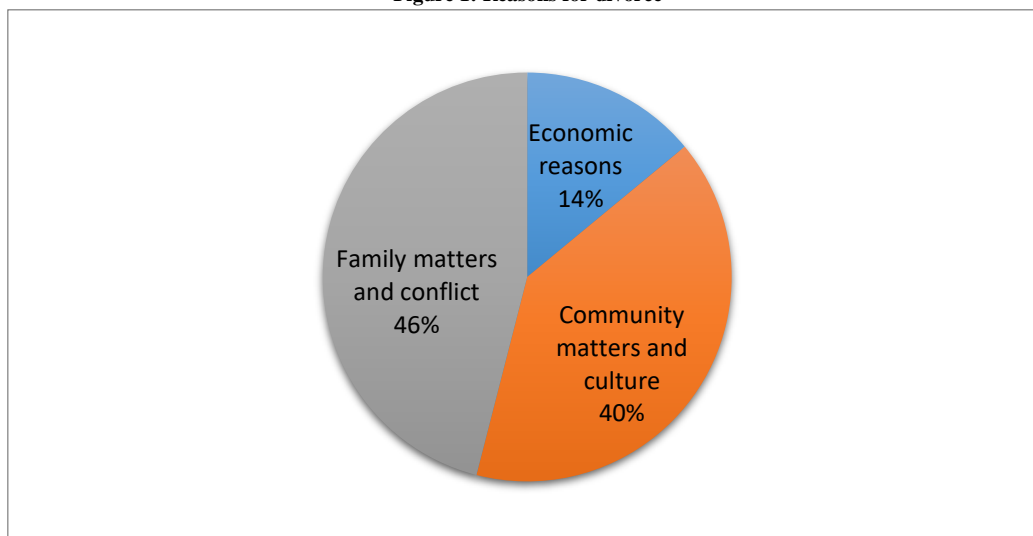
Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Divorce rate	98	114	112	83	85	67	93

However it was shown that divorce is legal according to according to the Quran Sunnah. Perhaps this could be the reason for high divorce rate in Wete District. The interview with one worker in government institutions also informed that divorce is very high in Wete District. This was as quoted below;

"...in fact divorce nowadays is very high especially here in Wete. Many of the cases we get here are from women who are filing for divorce..."

Secondly the study determined reasons for the increase in the divorce rate in the Wete District. Findings were as follows; 14 percent of the respondents informed that divorce is a result of economic reasons, 40 percent of respondents informed that divorce is due to community matters and culture, 46 percent of respondents informed that divorce is due to family matters and conflicts (see Figure 1). According to the majority divorce is due to family matters and conflicts.

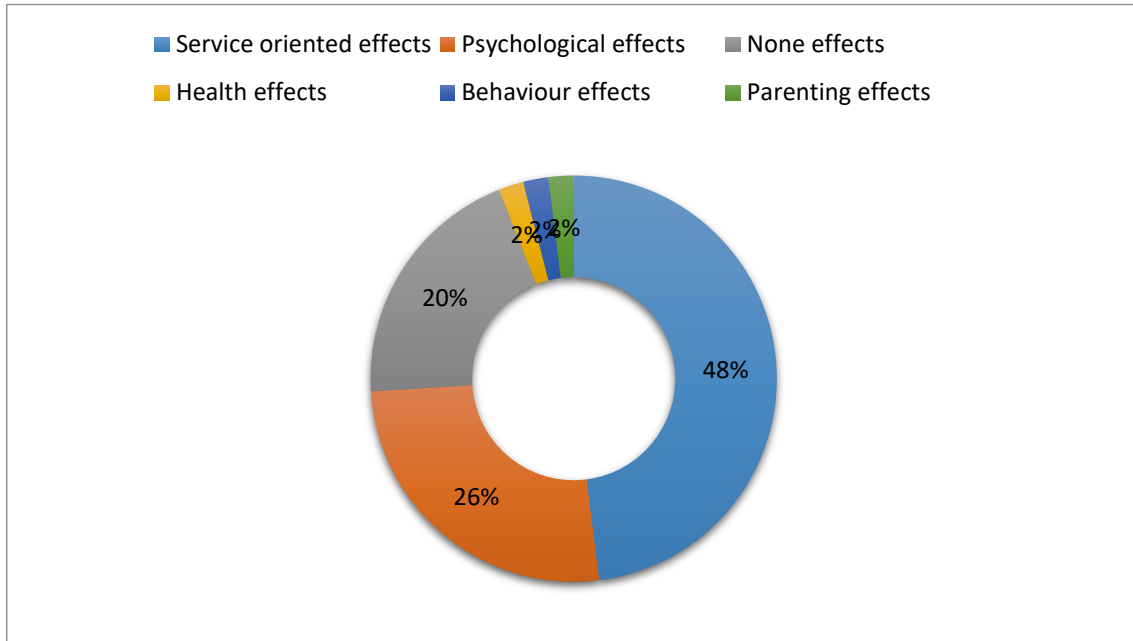
Figure 1: Reasons for divorce



Source: Field data, 2024

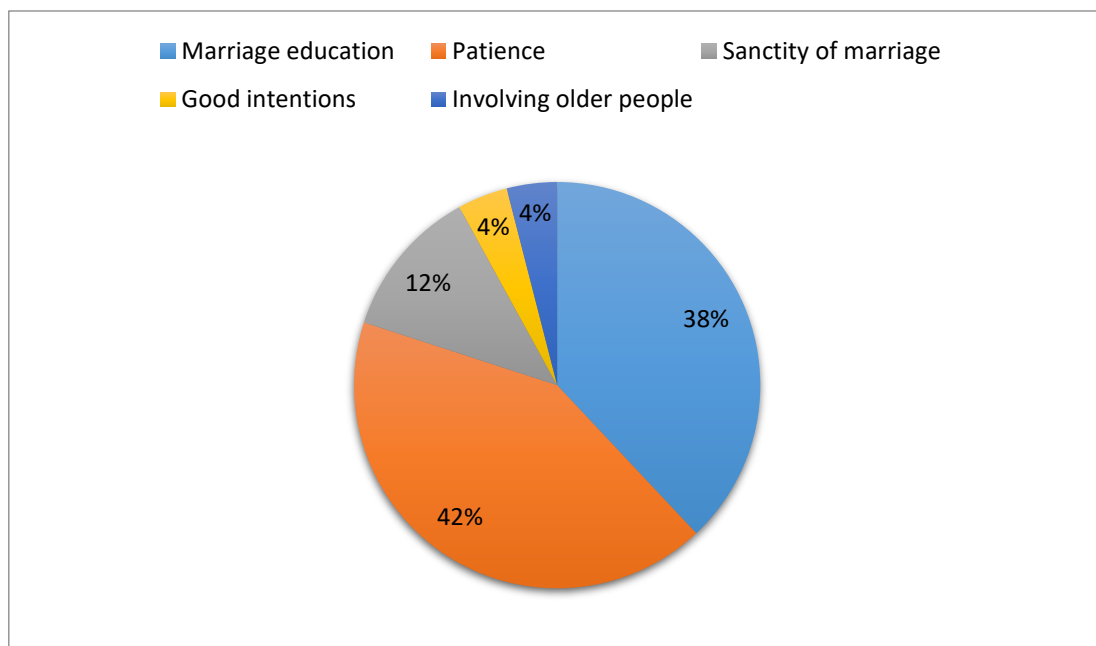
Thirdly study determined the effects of divorce on divorced women in Wete District. Findings were as follows; 48 percent of respondent informed that divorce has service oriented effects, 26 percent of respondents informed that divorce has psychological effects, 20 percent of respondents argued that divorce has no effect, 2 percent of respondents argued that divorce has health effects, another 2 percent of respondents argued that divorce had behaviour effects to children, and lastly 2 percent of respondents informed that divorce has parenting effects to children (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Effects of divorce on divorced women in Wete District



Source: Field data, 2020

Figure 3: Appropriate solutions to divorce



Source: Field data, 2024

Lastly study determined appropriate solutions to increasing the divorce rate. Findings were as follows; 38 percent of respondents argued that marriage education is an appropriate solution to divorce, 42 percent of respondent argued that patience is the appropriate solution to divorce, 12 percent argued that respecting the sanctity of marriage is the appropriate solution for divorce, 4 percent of respondents argued that good intentions in marriage is an appropriate solution to divorce, and 4 percent of respondents argued that involving older people is a solution to divorce (see Figure 3).

Discussion :

- **Interpretation of Results**

The findings of this study confirm that divorce in Wete District is influenced by a combination of economic, familial, and sociopolitical factors. Economic challenges, such as financial instability and unemployment, were identified as primary drivers of marital breakdowns, aligning with Kalmijn's (2021)

assertion that financial stress is a major contributor to marital discord. Similarly, family conflicts, whether stemming from intergenerational disputes or misunderstandings between spouses, echo Cherlin's (2020) findings that strained family dynamics often lead to separation. Political influences, though less commonly discussed in existing literature, emerged as a unique contextual factor in Wete District, reflecting how broader societal tensions can infiltrate private relationships.

- **Relating Findings to Existing Literature**

The psychological effects of divorce found in this study—stress, depression, and anxiety—are consistent with the conclusions of Hetherington and Elmore (2019), who highlighted the emotional toll of divorce on couples and their children. The ethical implications, such as a shift in community values and the weakening of traditional family structures, resonate with Furstenberg's (2018) work, which cautioned against the erosion of societal norms due to increasing divorce rates. The health issues associated with divorce, including stress-induced illnesses, corroborate Umberson et al.'s (2020) research on the physiological impacts of emotional distress.

- **Implications of Findings**

The rising divorce rate in Wete District has far-reaching implications for both individuals and society. Psychologically, children of divorced parents may face educational and emotional challenges, potentially affecting their future stability. For the community, the ethical shift toward normalized divorce could undermine the sanctity of marriage, reducing the perceived value of long-term commitments. Economically, the prevalence of divorce could strain public resources, as single-parent families often require additional financial and social support.

- **Limitations of the Study**

While this study provides valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged:

1. **Sample Size:** The relatively small sample size of 51 respondents limits the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of Wete District.
2. **Scope:** The study focused primarily on Wete District, so its findings may not fully represent the dynamics of divorce in other regions of Zanzibar.
3. **Self-Reported Data:** The reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases, as respondents may have underreported or overemphasized certain aspects due to personal or cultural sensitivities.
4. **Cross-Sectional Design:** As a cross-sectional study, the research captures a snapshot in time and does not account for longitudinal changes in divorce trends or their effects.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies could:

1. Expand the sample size and geographical scope to include other districts in Zanzibar for comparative analysis.
2. Employ a longitudinal research design to track changes in divorce rates and their effects over time.
3. Explore the role of emerging societal factors, such as social media and urbanization, in influencing marital dynamics.

In conclusion, while this study sheds light on the causes and effects of rising divorce rates in Wete District, further research is necessary to develop more targeted interventions and policy solutions.

Introducing family values and relationship skills in school curricula could also help younger generations develop a foundation for healthy relationships.

Economic empowerment initiatives, such as job training and small business support programs, are crucial, as financial strain often contributes to marital issues. Educating the community on the emotional and psychological impact of divorce on children may encourage couples to seek help before considering separation. In collaboration with religious and cultural leaders, reinforcing marriage stability within cultural and religious contexts could provide valuable support to couples, as these figures are often trusted sources of guidance. Lastly, providing accessible legal and mediation services can help couples understand their rights and responsibilities in marriage, while also offering alternative avenues for resolving conflicts amicably.

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