

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO DIVORCE AMONG YOUNG COUPLES AT
LEBOWAKGOMO, CAPRICORN DISTRICT-LIMPOPO PROVINCE

by

Nkuke Evans Mohlatlole

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SUPERVISOR: PROF SL SITHOLE

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the degree of **Master of Arts in Social Work** has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

Mr. Mohlatlole NE

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to God Almighty my creator, my strong pillar, my source of inspiration, wisdom, knowledge and understanding. I also dedicate this work to my fiancé, Mapula Maponya who has encouraged me all the way and whose encouragement has made sure that I give it all it takes to finish that which I have started. To my children Masape and Phepele who have been affected in every way possible by this quest. Thank you. My love for you all can never be quantified. God bless you.

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ABSTRACT

The overall aim of this study is to explore factors that contribute towards divorce among young couples in the Lebowakgomo area of Limpopo Province. The objectives of this study were to identify factors contributing towards divorce among young couples in Lebowakgomo, and to establish whether the causes of divorce among young couples in Lebowakgomo are the same as those identified in the literature. The research used the qualitative method in the study and the exploratory research design to investigate the factors contributing to divorce among young couples at Lebowakgomo Township. The target group was divorced young adults up to the age of 35 years who had been married for the period of not more than ten years. The researcher used snowball sampling because he knew someone who met the criteria for inclusion in this study.

The sample size was based on the principle of saturation which suggests that data collection stops when there is no new theme emerging. The researcher reached a point of saturation at participant six. The researcher used the semi-structured interview to collect data. This allowed the researcher to elicit information about the respondents' thoughts, feelings and perceptions as open-ended questions were used. The researcher used Interpretative Phenomenological Data Analysis (IPA) which allowed the researcher to explore in detail how the participants made sense of their personal and social world. This study found that sudden character change, lack of and poor communication, financial problems, abuse and infidelity are associated with divorce among young couples. It also emerged in the study that mastering all the stages of family life cycle can reduce the chances of divorce among young couples. This can be achieved by ensuring that young couples receive pre-marital counselling before they enter into marriage. In addition, after entering into marriage young couples should attend marital enrichment programmes.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Divorce cases have increased dramatically among young people in South Africa, and it is amongst the highest in the world (Oosthuizen 2014; Bezuidenhout 2017). Couples who marry at a young age are most likely to divorce. Among 25 to 29 year-olds, the rate is more than twice as high as people in older age groups (Bezuidenhout 2017; Oosthuizen, 2014; Statistics South Africa 2010). It is common that marriage is not only expected to offer security for physical needs, but also to provide emotional and sexual fulfillment. However, increasingly marriages are breaking apart (Scarpitti & Anderson, 2011).

Multiple, interlocking factors have contributed to the rapid rise of divorce in South Africa. Some of the factors include incompatibility, lack of intimacy, lack of communication, infertility, marital infidelity and financial stress or pressure. When one considers some of these reasons, there are potentially deep rooted issues that cause the problems. Often these problems are not addressed, and instead of committing to marriage counseling or couples therapy, relationships start unravelling and as a result, the dissolution of marriage happens.

Research shows that the number of cases settled in South Africa fluctuates from year to year, but that the trend shows an increase (Preller, 2013). Rates amongst the black population are increasing more rapidly than any of the other groups in the country (Oosthuizen, 2014). Statistics also show that in the White and Coloured population, proceedings are usually initiated by the woman, while in the Black population; they are most likely to be initiated by the man (Statistics South Africa, 2010).

In recent times divorce is acceptable in our society. The stigma that was attached to divorce has now lessened. Families are more likely now to accept it when a daughter gets divorced as it has become very apparent that women are more than

capable of having a successful and happy life after marriage. Women have become better at empowering themselves and are less likely to remain in a relationship where they are being abused, for example. Previously, women often remained in unhappy or abusive relationships as they felt that marriage was their only option, or they feared being alone and loss of income. Modern women know their rights and are much more likely to exercise them (Emery, 2013).

Households where both spouses are employed are becoming more common for the modern day family, which often have both spouses working, regardless of whether or not they have children. This allows either party to walk away from the marriage without fear of loss of income. Traditionally, women remained at home while the husband brought in the money, and often the former feared divorce as it meant a severe decrease in income and a lower standard of living, especially where children were involved (Kanji & Schober, 2013).

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Few marriages in South Africa last beyond few years because divorce has become such an accepted alternative to working out marital problems (Kgoleng, 2013). Statistics South Africa (2010) indicates that in March 2010, Lebowakgomo had a total of 8880 married people and at least 850 (10%) of them were between the ages of 25 and 35 years. In addition, in March 2010 Lebowakgomo had 127 people who separated from their partners where 68 of them were people between the ages of 25 and 35. In the same year, Lebowakgomo also had 668 people who were divorced, where 75% of them were people between the ages of 25 and 35 years (Statistics SA, 2010).

The causes of divorce are often complex, as several factors can lead a person or couple to be dissatisfied with the marriage. Commonly cited causes of divorce among young couples in South Africa include a combination of any of the following factors: incompatibility or personality differences, lack of communication, abusive relationship, infidelity, infertility, financial disagreements and sexual dissatisfaction (Thornton & Freedman 2009; Bezuidenhout 2017).

According to Bezuidenhout (2017), it is an advantage if the couple originates from the same or similar cultural background as this helps them in the adjustment processes and in developing a family culture for themselves. Due to various cultures and urbanisation in South Africa, it is possible that intercultural marriages will increase and thus more conflict will arise resulting from cultural differences.

Lack of communication is an underlying cause in many divorces among young couples; failure to communicate makes it difficult to resolve issues whether financial, emotional or otherwise. Furthermore, lack of communication can result in alienation from one's spouse (Benokraitis, 2007). Cheating in marriage has also become one of the most common reasons for divorce among young couples. Whether it is a cheating wife or husband, the repercussions can be devastating for the entire family. Infertility and divorce are somehow related, especially as many people have a strong attachment to children as they want to have a regular interaction with them. Having kids is the most common reason why people get married (Benokraitis, 2007). Money means different things to different people; as such financial matters are often a reason for marital conflict and tend to lead to divorce among young couples (King, 2009).

Like many other body processes, when sexual functioning goes along smoothly, it is usually taken for granted and given little thought (King, 2009). Research confirms that sexual difficulties may well be the most important single factor finally resulting in divorce. King (2009) alludes to the fact that studies have shown that the most frequent reason given by young couples for their divorce is loss of sexual attraction. Considering that a lot has been written about the causes of divorce elsewhere, the researcher found it necessary to conduct a study in Lebowakgomo to determine factors that contribute to divorce in this area.

1.3 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Divorce as a societal phenomenon has gained much attention from researchers in the social sciences, particularly social work, psychology and sociology. Studies conducted on this phenomenon encompass the causes and effects of divorce on both parents and children and recommended therapy by clinicians. For the purposes of this study, the researcher pays attention to factors contributing to divorce among young couples.

1.3.1 Personality incompatibility/differences

According to Vincent (2009), married couples need to adjust to each other, as well as to adjust to each new phase of the life cycle – also to the social environment that they live in. Incompatibility between partners may cause tension and friction, resulting in a disorganised family. Age differences, cultural differences, personality differences, temperament style and sexual adjustment differences between young couples can lead to divorce. It is an advantage if the couple originates from the same or similar cultural background as this helps them in the adjustment processes and in developing a family culture for themselves. Due to various cultures and urbanisation in South Africa, it is possible that intercultural marriages will increase and consequently, more conflict will arise resulting from cultural differences.

According to Bezuidenhout (2017), due to strong attachment to traditional beliefs and practices, young couples with different cultural backgrounds find it difficult to practise cultural tolerance in their marriages and therefore, experience what they perceive as cultural rejection from their spouses. This problem increases tension between spouses and consequently, leads to family disorganisation. African communities who are especially based in the rural areas have strong beliefs in traditional practices, which they observe religiously.

1.3.3 Lack of communication

According to Cox (2010), an underlying cause of many divorces among young couples is lack of communication. Failure to communicate makes it difficult to resolve issues whether financial, emotional or otherwise. Furthermore, lack of communication can result in alienation from one's spouse. Without regular communication, maintaining a strong relationship bond is unlikely. Communication problems between a couple may possibly exist even long before they get married officially. Expectations may not have been made clear or certain issues that could affect the marriage may not have been discussed. Discussing feelings about aspects that are personally important is also crucial, but may not always be practised by couples. According to Bezuidenhout (2017), some young couples may put a little weight on pre-marital issues, only to realise during the marriage that they should have clearly set things in black and white or that they should have been better listeners. Communication issues before marriage can get worse during marriage.

1.3.4 Abusive relationship

According to Lamanna and Riedmann (2009), there are many forms of abuse, all of which are possible causes of divorce among young couples. This does not just include intentional and habitual physical battery. Abuse may also come in the form of sexual and emotional abuse. One partner may actively seek to degrade his/her partner through harsh language. Drug and alcohol abuse, as well as excessive gambling that is becoming detrimental to the marriage may also be used as a form of abuse. There may be no physical or verbal abuse, but the other partner would understandably have a difficult time managing finances and daily life with an addicted spouse.

Sexual, emotional and physical abuse can lead to a divorce among young couples. Feeling unsafe in your relationship can make it difficult or impossible to continue the marriage. No one should feel unsafe at home and many communities, counselling, and legal organisations will encourage the dissolution of abusive marriages for the safety and happiness of the family as a whole (Bezuidenhout, 2017).

1.3.5 Financial disagreements

Hofheimer (2010) points out that financial difficulty can add stress to any relationship, especially marriage. While experts disagree as to the extent to which money causes divorce among young couples, financial issues can cause a breakdown in communication and trust between young couples. Money or aspects related to it are a possible cause of disagreement between young couples. Young couples could fight over issues such as shared financial responsibility, unequal financial status, undisclosed financial state, overspending and lack of financial support. However, evidence suggests that money is not always the sole or primary cause of divorce. Nonetheless, it is still a significant factor. Again, lack of communication over financial issues can be the real problem and not money *per se* (Hofheimer, 2010).

1.3.6 Sexual dissatisfaction

According to Hofheimer (2010), the inability or lack of desire to have a romantic relationship and intimacy with one's spouse can negatively alter the relationship. While friendship makes a good base for marriage, romance can help maintain interest and improve trust and support between young couples. It is important, however, to view sexuality as only one of the many components of a marriage or of a committed relationship.

1.3.7 Infidelity

According to Vincent (2009), betrayal, adultery and cheating in marriage have become some of the most common reasons for divorce among young couples. Infidelity in marriage can ruin the best of relationships. Whether it is a cheating wife or husband, the repercussions can be devastating for the entire family.

1.3.8 Infertility

According to Hofheimer (2010), infertility and divorce among young couples are somehow related, especially as many people have a strong attachment to children as they would like, naturally, to have regular interaction with them. Having children is among the reasons why people get married.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There is a plethora of perspectives, theories, models and approaches in marriage preparation and marriage enrichment. For the purposes of this study, a family life-cycle theory served as the overarching theory for the study. The researcher explained how the theory was used to understand the causes of divorce among young couples in Lebowakgomo.

1.4.1 Family life-cycle theory

According to McGoldrick, Carter and Garcia-Preto (2011), the emotional and intellectual stages that one passes through from childhood to old age as a member of a family are called a family life cycle. In each stage, people face challenges in their family lives that cause them to build or gain new skills. Gaining these skills helps one to work through changes that nearly every family experiences.

Not everyone passes through these stages smoothly. Situations such as severe illness, divorce, financial problems and the death of a loved one can have an effect on how well one passes through these stages. Fortunately, if one misses skills in one stage, they can learn them in later stages (McGoldrick *et al.*, 2011). For the purposes of this study, the researcher decided to focus only on two stages, namely the independence stage and the coupling stage, as identified by McGoldrick *et al.* (2011). The researcher is of the opinion that the two stages are more relevant to this study because they both address the causes of divorce and the challenges found in marriages.

1.4.1.1 The independence stage

Independence is the most critical stage of the family life cycle. As one enters young adulthood, one begins to separate emotionally from one's family. During this stage, one strives to become fully able to support oneself emotionally, physically, socially, and financially. One begins to develop unique qualities and characteristics that define one's individual identity (McGoldrick *et al.*, 2011).

McGoldrick *et al.* (2011) argue that intimacy is a vital skill to develop during one's independent, young adult years. Intimacy is the ability to develop and maintain close relationships that can endure hard times and other challenges. In an intimate relationship, people learn about commitment, commonality or similarity, compatibility,

attachment, and dependence on other people who are not in their family and shared emotion. The researcher concurs with these authors who state that individuals who do not develop these characteristics and skills experience problems maintaining intimate relationships (McGoldrick *et al.*, 2011).

1.4.1.2 The coupling stage

According to McGoldrick *et al.* (2011), after one achieves independence, the next stage in the family life cycle is coupling. People explore their ability to commit to a new family and a new way of life. Although being in a relationship with someone does involve a process of adaptation and relationship building, a marriage or committed union often requires unique skills. When one joins another family through marriage or committed union, they form a new family system. One's family system includes one's personal ideas, expectations and values. These are shaped by the relationships and experiences with one's original family. When an individual marry or forms a union, that person combines his or her family system with the spouses or partners. This requires reshaping their collective goals. In the most functional relationships, partners have the ability to take two different points of view and to create an option that neither person had considered. It differs from a compromise in that it is not giving up something. Rather, it is creating a third, better option. One may find that some of the ideas or expectations that one held in the past are not realistic at this stage. Some common areas of adjustment include finances, lifestyle, recreational activities or hobbies, relationships with in-laws, sexuality or sexual compatibility, friendships, and putting another person's needs before your own (McGoldrick *et al.*, 2011).

The ultimate goal at this stage is to achieve interdependence, which occurs when one is able to fully enter into a relationship with another person. Interdependence also requires that one share goals and that one is able to sometimes place the needs of another above one's own.

However, before one can achieve interdependence, one must have first acquired a high degree of independence. The relationship skills that one learns in coupling serve as a foundation for other relationships such as parent-child, teacher-student, or physician-patient. Within a couple, one learns advanced interpersonal communication, problem-solving skills, common spiritual and emotional development goals, how to form boundaries in relationships, and when to place the needs or importance of the other person above your own (McGoldrick *et al.*, 2011).

1.5 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions will be applied to the terms selected as key to the study.

1.5.1 Divorce

In the context of this study, Divorce is the final termination of a marital union, canceling the legal duties and responsibilities of marriage and dissolving the bonds of matrimony between the two parties.

1.5.2 Young couple

Young couple refers to married people between the ages of 18 and 35 years of age (Kali & Cavanaugh, 2010). In the context of this study, a young couple refers to married people up to the age of 35 years and who have been married for not more than ten years.

1.6 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1.6.1 Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to explore factors that contribute to divorce among young couples in the Lebowakgomo area of Limpopo Province.

1.6.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were as follows:

- to establish whether factors contributing towards divorce among young couples in Lebowakgomo are the same as those identified in the literature.
- to identify factors contributing towards divorce among young couples in Lebowakgomo; and
- make recommendations against divorce among young couples.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology includes type of research, research design, population, sampling method, data collection method and data analysis method, all of which will be discussed below.

1.7.1 Research design

For the purposes of this study, the researcher used qualitative research. This approach is relevant to this study because the researcher was able to gather and to analyse data in a way that enabled the respondents to share their lived experiences. The qualitative approach was chosen because the study intended to explore factors contributing towards divorce among young couples. Further, this method is deemed relevant to this study because it afforded the participants an opportunity to clearly state their opinions regarding problems that they experienced.

The researcher used explorative research design to investigate factors contributing to divorce among young couples at Lebowakgomo Township.

1.7.2 Population

Population refers to the number of groups, individuals and elements from which a sample is drawn (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2007). It can also be defined as the totality of persons, events, organisation units, case records or other sampling units with which the research problem is concerned. In this study, the target group was divorced young adults up to the age of 35 years, who had been married for the period of not more than ten years. The population of the study included adults, both men and women, who experienced divorce, residing in Lebowakgomo.

1.7.3 Sampling method

For the purposes of this research, the researcher used non-probability sampling, particularly snowball sampling. The researcher used snowball sampling because he knew someone who is young adult divorcee, and had been married for the period of not more than ten years. The researcher then asked them to recommend others whom they may know who also met the criteria. The sample size was based on the principle of saturation, which suggests that data collection stops when there is no new theme emerging.

1.7.4 Data collection method

The researcher used a semi-structured interview to collect data. This allowed the researcher to elicit information about the respondents' thoughts, feelings and perceptions as the study used open-ended questions from the semi-structured interview.

1.7.5 Data analysis method

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used interpretative phenomenological data analysis (IPA). The aim of IPA is to explore in detail how the participants make sense of their personal and social world. The main currency for this type of analysis is the meanings of particular experiences and events, for the participants. According to Breakwell, Fife-Schaw, Hammond and Smith (2006), the IPA has the following steps:

Step 1: Familiarisation and immersions: The researcher reads the interview transcript, annotates its identity and identifies any features in the text. This will include making notes, brainstorming and immersing in the material again.

Step 2: Inducing themes: The researcher then re-reads the text and develops a higher order thematic analysis by inferring general rules or classes from specific instances. Having identified the key themes or categories, the researcher then proceeds to look for a connection between them by identifying clusters.

Step 3: Coding: Coding involves breaking up the data in analytically relevant themes or themes.

Step 4: Elaboration, interpretation and checking: In this step the researcher keeps on coding, elaborating and coding until no further significant new insights appear to emerge.

Step 5: Presentation of results: This step includes writing an account of the phenomenon studied. The results are then reported.

1.7.6 Quality Criteria

According to Shenton (2002), trustworthiness has become an important concept in qualitative research because it allows researchers to describe the virtues of qualitative terms outside of the parameters that are typically applied in quantitative research. Hence, the concepts of generalisability, internal validity, reliability and objectivity are reconsidered in qualitative terms. These alternative terms include transferability, credibility, dependability and confirmability. In essence, trustworthiness can be thought of as ways in which qualitative researchers ensure that transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability are evident in their research.

To ensure trustworthiness in this study, the researcher addressed the following:

1.7.6.1 Credibility

According to Merriam (1998:243), the concept of credibility deals with the question such as: “How congruent are the findings with reality”? Silverman (2000:27) argues that ensuring credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. In this study the following provisions will be made to promote confidence that phenomena under scrutiny have been accurately recorded:

- Examination of previous research findings to assess the degree to which the project’s results are congruent with those of past studies. Silverman (2000:27) considers that the ability of the researcher to relate their findings to an existing body of knowledge is a key criterion for evaluating works of qualitative inquiry. In this respect, reports of previous studies staged in the same or similar organisation that address comparable issues may be invaluable sources.
- A thick description of the phenomenon under scrutiny. The researcher will give a detailed description of the phenomenon in order to promote credibility, which helped to convey the actual situations that have been investigated and, to an extent, the contexts that surround them.
- Tactics to help ensure honesty in informants when contributing data. In this study, each person who was approached was given an opportunity to refuse to participate in the project so as to ensure that the data collection sessions involve only those who are genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely. The researcher will also encourage the participants to be frank in each session, with the researcher aiming to establish a rapport in the opening.

1.7.6.2 Dependability

In order to address the dependability issue more directly, the researcher reported in details the processes in this study, thereby enabling future researchers to repeat the work, if not to arrive at the same results. Such in-depth coverage allows readers to assess the extent to which proper research practices have been followed.

1.7.6.3 Confirmability

The concept of confirmability is the qualitative investigator's comparable concern to objectivity. Miles and Huberman (1994), claim that a key criterion for confirmability is the extent to which the researcher admits his or her own predispositions. In this study, beliefs underpinning decisions made and methods adopted were acknowledged within the research report, the reasons for favouring one approach where others could have been used was explained and weaknesses in the techniques actually employed were admitted. In terms of results, preliminary theories that ultimately were not borne out by the data were also discussed.

1.7.7 Area of the study

The area of study which the researcher selected is Lebowakgomo, which is situated about 56 km south-east of Polokwane, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The researcher selected the area because he has identified that divorce among young couples in the area is rather problematic.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following ethical codes were considered in the study:

1.8.1 Permission to conduct the study

The researcher sought permission from Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) before the commencement of the study.

1.8.2 Voluntary participation

The researcher ensured that the respondents' participation is voluntary (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The researcher first agreed with each respondent to voluntarily participate. The respondents were given freedom to withdraw at any stage of the study if they choose to do so.

1.8.3 Informed consent

Each respondent signed a consent form developed by the researcher. This form acknowledged that the participants' rights are protected during the data collection stage.

Elements of the form included that:

- The respondents are to participate voluntarily and may withdraw at any time;
- The respondents understand the nature and procedures of the study; and
- They are free to ask questions about the benefits of the study.

1.8.4 Anonymity and confidentiality

The protection of the respondents' identity was ensured. The researcher did not identify the responses with a given respondent. This means that the respondents were never identified (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The information given was being kept confidential by the researcher. To ensure confidentiality, the researcher ensured that identifiable information about individuals collected during the process of research was not disclosed without permission from the respondents.

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Various social and health care professionals such as social workers, psychologists, therapists and counsellors will gain insight and understanding into factors contributing to divorce among young couples. The study will serve as a baseline for future in-depth studies and for researchers who are interested in conducting research on the same or related topic. The study will also contribute to the knowledge base of social work. The respondents would also get an opportunity to have more knowledge about issues that lead to divorce.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW OF FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO DIVORCE AMONG YOUNG COUPLES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Divorce is a worldwide phenomenon which has received attention from a number of researchers (Amato & James, 2010; Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010). Ozcan and Breen (2012) argue that a substantial body of issues around divorce that have received a lot of attention are causes of divorce in general and its impact on children. Other areas include resilience in single parent families (Greeff & Human, 2004); its influence on teenagers' adaptation following parental divorce (Taruvnga, 2011); young adults from divorced families (Spalding, 1999); personal, familial and environmental perspectives in children's reactions to parental divorce (Akpan & Bojuwoye, 2009); and behavioural and emotional development in children of divorce (Molepo, Sodi, Maunganidze & Mudhovozi, 2012).

Studies on divorce among young couples have identified causes of divorce (Smith 2010; Jonason 2013; Van Pelt & Ryen 2015). Hofheimer, 2010; White, 2010; Tzeng & Mare, 2005), reveals that the inability or lack of desire to have a romantic relationship and intimacy with one's spouse can negatively alter the relationship. On the other hand, Vincent, 2009; Coppola & Di Cesare) revealed that betrayal, adultery and cheating in marriage have become one of the most common reasons for divorce among young couples.

The overall goal of this chapter is first to establish what has been documented on divorce among young couples and what has been possibly omitted. Further than that, the chapter will introduce the family life cycle as a theoretical framework from which to study the whole phenomenon of divorce among young people.

2.2 FAMILY LIFE CYCLE THEORY

2.2.1 General concept

The concept of family life cycle has been used by theorists to describe the orderly sequence of developmental changes that the family system undergoes over time. This process involves the emergence of unique patterns of family structure and functioning that serve as the focal point for family interaction and that contributes to the development and adjustment of family members. In addition to its strong developmental focus, family life cycle theory is inherently conceptualistic and based on the interactionist perspective of family life (Carr, 2006). McGoldrick, Carter and Garcia-Preto (2010) argue that the emotional and intellectual stages that one passes through from childhood to old age as a member of a family are called a family life cycle. According to Koekemoer (2006), the family life cycle is a series of stages through which individuals and domestic groups advance over time. In each stage, people face challenges in their family lives that cause them to build or gain new skills. Gaining these skills helps one to work through changes that nearly every family experiences (McGoldrick *et al.*, 2010)

Carr (2006) argues that the family life cycle focuses on the transitions that families experience as they progress through phases of development such as a family with an infant, toddler, early childhood, latency, adolescent, emerging adult and mid and later periods. Brown (2004) emphasises the fact that during each of these transitions, the family system reorganises and adapts to the new operating rules, roles, responsibilities, communication processes and boundaries to meet the changing developmental needs of individual members, the family as a whole and to adapt to the ever-changing community and larger socio-cultural systems. (Mfuller, 2013; Goode 2011; Newman & Newman 2009), indicate that there may be a number of events that are happening in a family at the same time. For example, one child may be entering elementary school while another is starting adolescence. How a family navigates the family life cycle is influenced by multiple factors, including the parents' stages of individual development, health, class, religion, ethnicity, educational level, sexual orientation, and generational and geographical variables.

Waite & Lillard 2011; Jalovaara 2011; McGoldrick *et al.* 2010), add that the concept of the family life cycle is useful because it informs families about the tasks and issues of different developmental phases, and helps normalise behaviour such as the rebellion of a teenager. (Walsh & McGoldrick 2013; Hoem & Hoem 2012) are of the view that the concept suggests that issues not dealt with successfully at one phase of development are likely to show up at later phases, and if an adult child has not separated and individuated from his/her family of origin, might expect difficulties when this person marries and becomes a parent.

Nielsen & Svarer 2011; Stafford, Prabu & McPherson 2014; Newman & Newman 2009), argues that not everyone passes through these stages smoothly. Situations such as severe illness, divorce, financial problems, and the death of a loved one can have an effect on how well one passes through the stages and fortunately, if one misses skills in one stage, they can learn them in later stages. For the purposes of this study, the researcher decided to focus only on two stages, namely the independence stage and the coupling stage. The researcher is of the opinion that the two stages are more relevant to this study because they both address the causes of divorce and the challenges found in marriages. Moreover, these two stages are relevant to young couples as it is in these stages where they are expected to establish homes and to satisfy homes and marriage relationship. A vast majority of young people fail developmental tasks in these two stages (Newman & Newman, 2009).

2.2.2 The independence stage

The independence stage is the most critical stage of the family life cycle. As one enters young adulthood, one begins to separate emotionally from one's family. During this stage, one strives to become fully able to support oneself emotionally, physically, socially and financially. One begins to develop unique qualities and characteristics that define one's individual identity (Randal & Acock 2013; Hoem & Hoem 2012).

Newman & Newman 2009; Wilcox & Nicholas 2016), claim that intimacy is a vital skill to develop during one's young independent adult years. (Roberts, Voli and Johnson 2015; Martin & Bumpass 2011), hold that intimacy is the ability to develop and maintain close relationships that can endure hard times and other challenges; in an intimate relationship, people learn about commitment, commonality or similarity, compatibility, attachment, and dependence on other people who are not in their family and shared emotion. The researcher concurs that those individuals who do not develop these characteristics and skills, experience problems maintaining intimate relationships.

This stage of life is also explained by Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, which he calls identity versus confusions stage. Robinson, Demetre and Litman (2016 cited Erikson, 1950) claim that during this stage, adolescents explore their independence and develop a sense of self. Robinson, Demetre and Litman (2016) said that according to Erikson, people progress through a series of stages as they grow and change throughout life. As cited by Wenner and Randall (2016), Erikson believes that during each stage, people face a developmental conflict that must be resolved to successfully develop the primary virtue of that stage. Wenner and Randall (2016) also claim that Erickson was interested in how social interaction and relationships affect development and growth; and one of the main elements of Erikson's psychosocial stage theory is the development of ego identity. Malone, Liu, Vaillant, Rentz and Waldinger (2015) posit that according to Erikson, Ego identity is the conscious sense of self that people develop through social interaction, which is constantly changing due to new experiences and information that people acquire in their daily interactions with others.

As cited by Malone, Liu, Vaillant, Rentz and Waldinger (2015), Erikson believes that during the identity versus confusions stage, conflict is centred on developing a personal identity. Wenner and Randall (2016) suggest that successfully completing this stage leads to a strong sense of self that will remain throughout life, and as they transit from childhood to adulthood, young people may begin to feel confused or insecure about themselves and how they fit into society; and as they seek to establish a sense of self, young people may experiment with different roles, activities and behaviours. Robinson, Demetre and Litman (2016) suggest that according to Erikson, this is important in the process of forming a strong identity and developing a

sense of direction in life, and that teen behaviour often seems unpredictable and impulsive. But that all of this is part of the process of finding a sense of personal identity; those who receive proper encouragement and reinforcement through personal exploration will emerge from this stage with a strong sense of self and a feeling of independence and control. (Newman & Newman 2014; Holmberg, Orbuch & Veroff 2013) argue that those who remain unsure of their beliefs and desires will remain insecure and confused about themselves and the future. As cited by Newman and Newman(2014), Erikson held that resolving the crisis at this stage of development involves committing to a particular identity, and that this might involve committing to a career path, deciding what social groups to associate with and even developing a sense of personal style. Kroger (2014) adds that Erikson believed that those who are successful develop fidelity, a psychological virtue characterised by the ability to relate to others and to form genuine relationships. This ability plays an important role in the upcoming stage known as intimacy versus isolation. (Robert, Krueger & Livesley 2016; Colarusso & Nemiroff 2013), indicate that people who are not allowed to explore and test out different identities might be left with what Erikson referred to as role confusion. These individuals are not sure who they are or what they like; they tend to drift from one job or relationship to another, never really sure what they want to do with their lives, and instead of feeling a sense of personal cohesiveness, they are left feeling disappointed and confused about their place in life.

2.2.3 The coupling stage

According to McGoldrick *et al.* (2010:123), after one achieves independence, the next stage in the family life cycle is coupling. People explore their ability to commit to a new family and a new way of life. Although being in a relationship with someone involves a process of adaptation and relationship building, a marriage or committed union often requires unique skills. When one joins families through a marriage or committed union, they form a new family system. One's family system includes one's personal ideas, expectations and values. Brown (2004) held the view that one's personal ideals, values and expectations are shaped by relationships and experiences with one's original family. According to Nichols, Pace-Nichols, Becvar and Napier (2000), when an individual enters a marriage or forms a union, that person combines their family system with the spouse's or partners'. Nichols *et al.*

(2000) add that this requires reshaping their collective goals. In most functional relationships, partners have the ability to take two different points of view, and to create an option that neither person had considered. Some common areas of adjustment include finances, lifestyle, recreational activities or hobbies, relationships with in-laws, sexuality or sexual compatibility, friendship and personal needs (McGoldrick *et al.*, 2010).

Galvin, Braithwaite and Bylund (2015) suggest that the ultimate goal at this stage is to achieve interdependence, which occurs when one is able to fully commit to a relationship, and that interdependence requires that one share goals and that one is able to sometimes place the needs of another above one's own. (Galvin, Braithwaite & Bylund 2015; Marcia, Waterman, Matterson, Archer & Orlofsky 2012), went further to argue that before one can achieve interdependence, one must have first acquired a high degree of independence. (Currie & Rossin-Slater 2015; Marcia & Josselson 2013) add that the relationship skills that one learns in coupling serve as a foundation for other relationships such as parent-child, teacher-student or physician-patient. Within a couple, one learns advanced interpersonal communication, problem-solving skills, common spiritual and emotional development goals, how to form boundaries in relationships and when to place the needs or importance of the other person above your own.

2.3 DIVORCE PHASES

Divorce goes a number of phases and each is characterised by some kind of stress. Hunt (2016) alludes to the fact that the stress of daily living or coping with crisis disrupts the normal family life cycle, and a crisis or ongoing stress can delay the transition to the next phase of life, or one may move on but without the necessary skills to succeed. Kreppner and Lerner (2013) stated that turmoil is especially expected in the divorce phase since emotions are more likely to be raw at this time and there may be greater and faster changes in the structure, roles and rules of the family. Backer and Lynch (2016) argue that when thinking of divorce, most people focus on the legal divorce; but there are a number of aspects in a divorce that the couple will deal with. For the purpose of this study, four components of divorce will be considered: emotional, legal, psychological and economic components

(McGoldrick *et al.*, 2010). Divorce as one of the crises that can disrupt the family life cycle, has two phases which are discussed below:

2.3.1.1 Emotional, legal and economic components of divorce

McGoldrick *et al.* (2010) suggest that the emotional component of divorce refers to emotions involved with deciding to divorce or learning that one's spouse wants to divorce and then going through the divorce process.

2.3.1.2 Kreppner and Lerner (2013) describe the legal component of divorce as steps taken to obtain a legal divorce. This may involve the litigation court processes or alternative resolution processes like collaborative divorce or divorce mediation.

2.3.1.3 Nauck (2016) argues that the economic component of divorce refers to the economic agreements made during the divorce, including the possible change in economic circumstances involved with divorce and the readjustment after the divorce.

2.3.2 Psychic

Rollins and Feldman (2012) indicate that this component involves feelings about oneself and one's identity, change in lifestyle, finding a new love object, helping family and children to accept and to adjust to the divorce. Lansing and Kish (2013) suggest that a formal divorce is a nodal event for the family and a signal that hopes or fantasies about the parents reconciling will not come true, and that temporary living arrangements are likely to become permanent. The actual divorce pushes the family to readjust and to move on (McGoldrick *et al.*, 2010).

Most families weather the storm of separation and divorce and readjust without lasting profound effects on the family members. It is important, however, to realise that divorce represents a major challenge for parents and children of any age, including fully grown, adult children. Parents sometimes fail to realise the full impact of divorce on adolescents and adult offspring. Divorce affects their self-identities, their ideas about self-in-relations, and their feelings of trusting, security and stability (McGoldrick *et al.*, 2010).

Hunt (2016) argues that divorce impacts families differently depending on the life stage of the family, the type of attachment to the parents, amount of conflict and the

sense of autonomy of the children. The impact is expected to be different with young children, teens and young adults; and whether one of the parents wants the divorce or not. Research indicates that high conflict, including the amount and duration of it, has the worst effect on the family (McGoldrick *et al.*, 2010).

2.4 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO DIVORCE AMONG YOUNG COUPLES

2.4.1 Personality incompatibility/differences

According to Vincent (2009), incompatibility between partners may cause tension and friction, resulting in a disorganised family. South Africa boasts one of the highest divorce rates in the world, according to (Popenoe & Whitehead Jensen-Campbell and Graziano, 2010; 2010), who report that 40% of first marriages, 60% of second marriages and 73% of third marriages, result in divorce. Furthering the cause for concern is the research predicting that only 25% of couples will remain happily married after only ten years of marriage (Popenoe & Whitehead, 2010). Numerous studies have reported that similarities between partners in regards to intelligence, education, values, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and physical attractiveness predict greater rates of relationship satisfaction (Tan & Singh, 2005; Buss, 2014; Sprecher & Duck, 2015). Recent developments in the field of personality psychology have indicated that personality traits may be a powerful influence over people's satisfaction within relationships and perhaps even predictive of whom they are attracted to as a couple.

Literature indicates that personality traits have effects both on individual's satisfaction and their partner's. It is therefore necessary to explore the role that similarities and differences in their personalities play on a couple's satisfaction as a whole. It is assumed that personality traits are enduring qualities which shape people's everyday behaviour and interactions. Thus, (Robert, Krueger & Livesley, 2016; Gonzaga, Campos, & Bradbury, 2007) argue that couples with similar personalities tend to share similar emotional experiences, resulting in a positive association between personality similarity and relationship satisfaction. Several studies, including those by Luo and Klohnen (2005) and Luo, Chen, Yue, Zhang, Zhaoyang and Xu (2008) finds significant associations between similarity and

relationship satisfaction. However, Dryenforth, Kashy, Donnellan and Lucas (2010) find that there was little to no evidence supporting this theory. As indicated by Dryenforth *et al.* (2010), a limitation to studies comparing similarity and relationship satisfaction are the methods involved. Since the majority of studies have focused on overall discrepancy scores (a sum of the differences between each partner's personality traits or a sum of the differences in overall relationship satisfaction), there is concern that discrepancy within couples' satisfaction is unaccounted for (Kroger, 2014; Archer and Orlofsky, 2012; Cordova, 2011). In addition, sources of variance that are unrelated to similarity or overall satisfaction may affect correlations between the two. In other words, people cannot control underlying problems or discrepancies outside the realm of what is directly measured.

In their research, Watson *et al.* (2013) compare personality self-ratings and partner-ratings of 74 young couples for parallels/similarities in order to determine if certain personality types consistently "paired-up." The results of the aforementioned study may be related to the relatively small sample size.

The researcher is of the view that the reason young couples are more prone to personality incompatibility is because they have not developed a sense of identity successfully. The researcher's view is supported by Erikson's stage of development called intimacy versus isolation. A study by Robinson, Demetre and Litman (2016 cited Erikson, 1950) claim that Erikson viewed intimacy or closeness and mutual sharing with another as the basic strength of intimacy versus isolation stage and isolation as its core pathology. As cited by Wenner and Randall (2016), Erikson believed that intimacy between two people as a couple was only possible when each had developed a strong sense of identity separately. Malone, Liu, Vaillant, Rentz and Waldinger (2015) argue that it is unfortunate that many couples these days marry at a very young age, so this was by no means always the case. Newman and Newman (2014) write that the dilemma is that it is difficult for two people to grow and mature together unless they have first matured separately. Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer and Orlofsky (2012) observe a trend which is not surprising: divorce is a common outcome for couples who marry while still quite young and immature. Marcia and Josselson (2013) state that young adults often still have not advanced in maturity from adolescence, and although some have achieved a level of maturity by the early twenties, many others do not arrive at this level until well into their thirties

and still others never do attain full maturity. Kroger (2014) indicate that in today's complex world, attainment of maturity and relative independence seems to take considerable time.

2.4.2 Lack of communication

Larry and Deborah (2013), state that communication within the family is extremely important because it enables members to express their needs, wants and concerns to each other. Becker, Landes and Micheal (2010) suggested that open and honest communication creates an atmosphere that allows family members to express their differences as well as love and admiration for one another. Johnson, Caughlin and Huston (2009) say that it is through communication that family members are able to resolve unavoidable problems that arise in all families. Cordova (2011) observes that a problem or conflict in marriage is part of the process that helps couples to be more mature in their marital life. However, it tends to be the source of marital breakdown if not dealt with wisely. Higgins, Duxbury and Lee (2014) think that if one partner is not aware that they have a misinterpretation, they would not even try to amend or improve their communication skills. According to (Norman 2012; Malone, Liu, Vailant, Rentz & Waldinger 2015), the other partner may be neglected, irritated, angry and feeling hopeless. This will lead to shorter discussions and more intervals and they eventually must make a decision to either find someone else they are able to communicate with, seek help to find out what is wrong or live in continued loneliness and sadness.

According to Cox (2010), an underlying cause in many divorces among young couples is lack of communication; failure to communicate makes it difficult to resolve issues whether financial, emotional or otherwise. Furthermore, lack of communication can result in alienation from your spouse. Norman (2012) suggests that without constant communication, maintaining a strong relationship bond is unlikely and that communication problems between couples may possibly exist even long before they get married officially. Larry and Deborah (2011) opine that expectations may not have been made clear or certain issues that could affect the marriage were not discussed. Discussing feelings about aspects that are personally important is also crucial, but may not always be practised by couples. According to Bezuidenhout (2010), some young couples may put little weight on pre-marital

issues only to realise during the marriage that they should have clearly set things in black and white or that they should have been better listeners. Communication issues before marriage can get worse after getting married. Communication and conflict-resolution skills between partners have been found to be key factors in long-lasting relationships (South *et al.*, 2012), and these may be linked to higher levels of education and earnings.

Lack of communication among young couples is the single biggest cause of divorce; without proper communication, no relationship can survive and good communication does not mean always agreeing with each other. Young couples with communication problems that usually lead to divorce are often unable to find a middle ground and are unwilling to compromise. Lack of communication in any area of marriage can cause major damage to the relationship (Preller, 2013; Jensen-Campbell & Graziano).

Bezuidenhout (2017) provide lack of pre-marital counselling as a reason why young couples are more vulnerable to divorce. Bezuidenhout (2017) further highlight the fact that some young couples may put a little weight on pre-marital issues only to realise during the marriage that they should have clearly set things in black and white, or that they should have been better listeners and that communication issues before marriage can get worse after getting married.

2.4.3 Abusive relationships

According to Lamanna and Riedmann (2009), there are many forms of abuse, all of which are possible causes of divorce among young couples. This does not just include intentional and habitual physical battery. South, Trent and Shen (2013) observed that abuse may also come in the form of sexual and emotional abuse. One partner may actively seek to degrade their partner through harsh language. Drug and alcohol abuse, as well as excessive gambling, may also be used as a form of abuse. There may be no physical or verbal abuse, but the other partner would understandably have a difficult time managing finances and daily life with an addicted spouse.

Sexual, emotional and physical abuse can lead to divorce among young couples. Feeling unsafe in your relationship can make it difficult or impossible to continue with

the marriage. No one should feel unsafe at home, and many communities, counselling and legal organisations will encourage the dissolution of abusive marriages for the safety and happiness of the family as a whole (Bezuidenhout, 2017, Brown & Manning 2009). According to Marks (2008), abuse is one of the top reasons for divorce. Abuse occurs in all age, ethnic and class groups and it comes in a variety of forms, from physical (domestic violence) to verbal, emotional, psychological and even financial abuse. It can include things like name-calling, ignoring, restricting a person to a room, monitoring phone calls, forcing a spouse into doing something that they uncomfortable with and withholding finances. Abusers can be male or female, and abuse can occur in heterosexual, same-sex and parent-child relationships. While women and children are the most victims of abuse, men are also abused, especially verbally and emotionally, although sometimes physically too (Preller, 2013).

2.4.4 Financial disagreements

Hofheimer (2010) points out that financial difficulty can add stress to any relationship, especially marriage. Becker, Landes and Michael (2010) indicate that while experts disagree as to the extent to which money causes divorce among young couples, financial issues can cause a breakdown in communication and trust between young couples. According to Udry (2011), money or aspects related to it are a possible cause of disagreement between young couples. Young couples could fight over issues such as shared financial responsibility, unequal financial status, undisclosed financial state, overspending and lack of financial support. However, evidence suggests that money is not always the sole or primary cause of divorce. Nonetheless, it is still a significant factor. Again, lack of communication over financial issues is the real problem and not money *per se* (Hofheimer, 2010). Lawrence, Thomasson, Wozniak and Prawitz (2013), finds that financial management strategies such as goal setting, budgeting, saving and record keeping are inversely related to financial arguments between spouses. Grable, Britt and Cantrell (2012) maintain that financial arguments are some of the most frequently occurring conflicts in marriage. Moreover, financial conflict is qualitatively different from other marital conflict, and on average, it is stronger, longer lasting and predicts divorce better than other types of marital conflict (Stanley, Markman, & Whitton, 2002; Amato & Rogers, 2007; Dew, Britt & Huston, 2009; Papp, Cummings, & Goeke-Morey, 2009; Dew & Dakin, 2011).

The researcher believes that financial disagreements can lead to divorce among young and older couples; it is not only limited to young couples. Older couples can also experience lack of communication over finances. Financial management, budgeting and saving are found to be a problem which sometimes leads to a divorce in marriages involving young and older couples.

2.4.5 Sexual dissatisfaction

According to Hofheimer (2010), the inability or lack of desire to have intimacy with one's spouse can negatively alter the relationship. While friendship makes a good base for marriage, romance can help maintain interest and improve trust and support between young couples. It is important, however, to view sexuality as only one of the many components of marriage or of a committed relationship. The reason for the success or failure of marriage is sexual harmony between husband and his wife. Kanji and Schober (2013) argue that physiologically and psychologically, men and women are different, so the attachments between them can be a large factor in a successful married life. In many cases, it has also been found that 60% of divorce cases among young couples are due to sexual dissatisfaction. Maintaining a healthy marriage requires time, effort and compromise from both spouses. When one or both spouses find the marriage to be unsatisfactory, it is likely because of problems that arise due to issues with communication, expectations or sexual dissatisfaction.

Kanji and Schober (2013) argue that sexual impotence is a condition most poorly understood and mismanaged of all medical disorders, resulting in marriage breakup, as per study of Alpha One Andrology Group, and sexual impotence is a common problem. In their study Kanji and Schober (2013) finds that average married couples have sex 58 times per year, or slightly more than once a week.

2.4.6 Infidelity

According to Vincent (2009), betrayal, adultery and cheating in marriage have become the most common reason for divorce among young couples, this is mainly because of the increasing availability of pornography on the Internet, which has been shown to affect sexual attitudes and perceptions of “normal” behavior, may be playing a role in rising infidelity. Infidelity in marriage can ruin the best of relationships. Whether it is a cheating wife or husband, the repercussions can be devastating for the entire family.

The SiSwati expressions *indvodza Inganwa* (a man is the only one whose proposal is granted by a female) implies that men can have as many concubines as they wish. The same can be said about the Sepedi saying *monna ke thaka o a naba* (a man is like a bean plant, he spreads). If a woman has extra marital affairs, culture does not praise her but condemns her and give her names like adulterer and prostitute. She may also face dismissal and back payment of the dowry. Today women see divorce as a means of regaining their freedom. It has been noticed already that the extramarital affairs also bring financial constraints upon the family. It will lead to a gap of communication in the family. This will lead to divorce. There is also a possibility of sicknesses, HIV and AIDS. In either case, it will eventually tear the family apart (Tembe, 2010).

Morgan and Rindfuss (2013) suggest that infidelity is common across cultures, and that in hunting and gathering societies, there is no evidence that women are any less adulterous than men. Choi and Marks (2008) posts that the fidelity gap may be explained more by cultural pressures than any real difference in sex drives between men and women. Men with multiple partners typically are viewed as virile, while women are considered promiscuous. It is the researchers view that historically, women have been isolated on farms or at home with children, giving them fewer opportunities to be unfaithful.

The researcher is of the view that, young married women are more likely to spend late hours at the office and travel on business. And even for women who stay home, cell-phones, e-mail and instant messaging appear to be allowing them to form more intimate relationships.

2.4.7 Relationship quality

Couples with relationship satisfaction are probably more able to maintain non-traditional arrangements throughout their first child's early years. Alternatively, South *et al.* (2011) suggest that women's greater economic independence through employment increases divorce risks for couples only when the mother already considers the relationship quality to be low. We therefore also test an interaction effect between mothers' low relationship satisfaction and non-traditional arrangements (Kanji & Schober, 2013).

2.4.8 Cultural factors

Butcher, Mineka and Hooley (2013) state that marriages of people from different cultural backgrounds have been a topical issue as people come more and more in contact with persons from different ethnic backgrounds, and the number of interracial couples' relationships grow. Diener, Oishi and Ryan (2013) suggest that this brings the question about how couples negotiate aspects of culture, diversity and difference. The issue of interracial marriage has frequently been viewed in a negative light, and much of the literature has approached the issue from a problem perspective (Cruikshank, 2013; Hantrias & Letablier, 2014). Saroglou and Cohen (2013) believe that disparities between an individual's personal preferences and cultural norms can create marital upheaval over whose culture should take precedence. Aghajanian and Thompson (2013) highlight the fact that usually conflicts come in when one spouse believes that the other culture or belief is inferior, thereby discounting the other person's importance in the relationship.

2.4.9 Gender

With the traditional heterosexual institution of marriage, divorce among young couples is obviously equally likely among men and women. However, striking gender differences emerge when one examines subjective and objective causes of relationship dissolution. Certain variables, such as affirmation by one's spouse, predict marital stability when they are measured in terms of husbands, but not in terms of wives. Husbands who reported that they felt affectionately affirmed by their wives were at lower risk for divorce than those who did not feel affirmed (Orbuch, Veroff, Hassan & Horrocks, 2002). When asked what caused their divorce, young

men and women identify different variables, leading some researchers to suggest that they may be his and her divorces (Gager & Sanchez, 2003). Wives are more likely than husbands to mention emotional or relationship issues, spousal personality variables, spousal drinking and abusive behaviour as causes of divorce. Husbands are more likely to identify external causes and to mention their own negative behaviours as being casually related to the divorce (Harvey & Fine, 2006).

2.4.10 Religion: Lack of or different faiths

De Graaf and Kalmijn (2010), state that religion is an important and influential part of family life. Various dimensions of religious life and practice have been found to either protect against or place couples at higher risk for divorce. According to Edward and Booth (2009), religious hierogamy, in which two spouses hold different faiths, or interfaith marriage, has been one of these risk factors. Connidis (2012) says that classically, religious hierogamy has been defined as the difference in faith; however, a more recent view of religious hierogamy is differences between partners' beliefs in the areas of faith, denomination or levels of practice, and participation or commitment in their faith. This broader definition has evolved as researchers have sought to improve and better understand specific aspects of interfaith marriage and practices that put couples at risk for divorce and the expanded definition also better explains differences in the prevalence of divorce among same-faith couples (Harvey & Fine, 2010).

Booth (2009) says that the risk for divorce among interfaith couples remains significantly higher than for those of same faith marriages; largely, this may be explained by unique challenges experienced by these couples even though recent factors have made it easier for these unions to take place. Nevertheless, some recent research has suggested that it is dissimilarity between spouses that places them at greater risk for divorce, as opposed to some factors directly germane to interfaith marriage (Emery, 2013).

Walsh (2004) argues that problematic behaviours within the context of marriage may account for the relationship between lack of religion and divorce among young couples. Amato and Previti (2003) find that more religious individuals are more likely to cite infidelity as a cause of divorce, and they are less likely to blame incompatibility. Bergan and McConatha (2014) add to Amato and Previti (2003)

findings, suggesting that it does not indicate that religious individuals are more likely to experience infidelity; rather it may demonstrate that highly religious individuals divorce only under extreme conditions, which include infidelity and abuse. Marriage and commitment vows as life partners bring spiritual considerations to the fore. Conflict may arise over whether to have a religious ceremony. Bergan and McConatha (2014) suggest that even partners of the same faith may differ in how they were raised and in their expectations for the observance of doctrine, rules and customs in their shared life. Booth (2009) indicates that families of origin may exert pressures for wedding plans and future family life in line with their own convictions. Harvey and Fine (2010) hold that interfaith marriage, which has become widespread, is traditionally prohibited by many religions. Amato and Previti (2003) suggest that some people may choose a spouse from a different religious background to differentiate from their family of origin. In some cases, this may express a rebellion or alienation from oppressive religious or parental upbringing. Bergan and McConatha (2014) add that family disapproval of interfaith marriage can have long-lasting reverberations in intergenerational relations. When partners follow separate religions, strong faith differences can complicate ordinary couple relationship issues and create discord.

2.4.12 Age at marriage

Age at marriage is a factor in divorce. In regard to the mechanisms that link early marriage to divorce, it has been argued that individuals marrying at a young age may be less compatible with one another, less prepared for marriage, and lack economic resources (Edwards & Booth, 2012). Specific problem behaviours may also account for the link between age at marriage and divorce. Amato (2010) finds that marrying at a later age was associated with a decline in problems that were due to infidelity, jealous and use of alcohol or drugs; behaviours that have been shown to predict divorce. Interestingly, subjective accounts of divorce also tend to differ according to age at divorce. Individuals who marry at older ages are more likely to mention incompatibility and lack of a sense of family as causes of divorce (Amato, 2010). Those who marry young tend to blame marrying young, growing apart, and going out too much with friends. Drinking has been mentioned by those who married young as well as by those who married at an older age (Amato, 2010).

Gurman and Kniskern (2014) claim that the family life cycle suggests that most youthful marriages end in divorce and that the older one is in marriage, the greater likelihood of marital happiness because it would mean that one has passed most family life stages successfully. Fine (2014) alludes to the fact that young couples might have problems when it comes to communication and resolving conflict in a constructive way.

2.5. GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Cronje and Heaton (2004) argue that before the coming into operation of the Divorce Act 70 of 1979, Act 70 of 1979 recognised four grounds for divorce namely, adultery, malicious desertion, incurable mental illness lasting for at least seven years, and imprisonment for at least five years after having been declared a habitual criminal. According to Oudtshoorn, Brown, and Kellner (2011) Act 70 of 1979 regulates divorce and its consequences. It provides for three no-fault grounds of divorce, which are discussed below.

2.5.1 The irretrievable breakdown of the marriage

The crucial issue with regard to the principle of breakdown is to establish when the marriage can be considered as having broken down irretrievably. In other words, according to what criterion must irretrievable of a marriage breakdown be established? Section 4 (1) of the Divorce Act No. 70 of 1979 expressly provides that the court may only grant a decree of divorce on the ground of the irretrievable breakdown of a marriage if it satisfied that the marriage relationship between the parties to the marriage has reached such a state of disintegration that there is no reasonable prospect of restoration of a normal marriage relationship between them (Oudtshoorn, Brown & Kellner 2011).

Oudtshoorn, Brown and Kellner (2011) hold that section 4(1) of the Act lays down two requirements:

- The marriage relationship must no longer be normal; and
- There must be no prospect of the restoration of a normal marriage relationship between the spouses.

2.5.2 Incurable mental illness

Oudtshoorn, Brown and Kellner (2011), mention that Section 5(1) of Divorce Act No. 70 of 1979 provides that mental illness without a reasonable prospect of a cure constitutes a ground for divorce. According to the South African Law Commission (which is now called the South African Law Reform Commission), section 5 of the Divorce Act No. of 1979 was adopted because one is concerned with a special situation for which special rules must be laid down. For this reason, it appears to be desirable to treat mental illness as a separate ground for divorce. The special rules refer to the criteria that apply to establishing this ground for divorce, and the elimination of the spouse's conduct as a factor which can affect the consequences of the divorce (Oudtshoorn, Brown & Kellner 2011).

The researcher holds the view that young couples lack expertise in handling life events and as such they are prone to mental illness such as Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, bipolar disorder and alcohol/substance dependency disorder which can lead to their divorce. Young couples are however more likely to suffer marital dissolution in terms of decline to psychological well-being in comparison to midlife adults.

2.5.2.1 The criteria that apply in establishing incurable mental illness

According to Oudtshoorn, Brown and Kellner (2011), in terms of section 5(1) of the Divorce Act No. 70 of 1979, the plaintiff can obtain a divorce on the ground of the defendant's mental illness if he or she satisfies the court of the following:

- The defendant has been admitted to an institution as a patient in terms of a reception order under the Mental Health Act 18 of 1973 or is being detained as a state patient or mentally ill convicted prisoner at an institution. The Mental Health Act 18 of 1973 has since been replaced by the Mental Health Care Act 17 of 2002. The equivalent of a patient who has been admitted by virtue of a reception order is a mental health care user who is receiving involuntary care, treatment and rehabilitation services.
- The defendant has not been unconditionally discharged from the institution or place of detention for a continuous period of at least two years immediately prior to the institution of the divorce action.

- There is no reasonable prospect that the defendant will be cured of his or her mental illness. This fact must be proved by the evidence of at least two psychiatrists, one of whom must be appointed by the court.

Whereas some factors that bring about divorce may be beyond the young couple's control, intervention by social workers early may lessen the frequency of divorce and they are discussed below.

2.6 SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

Whereas some factors that bring about divorce may be beyond the young couple's control, intervention by social workers early may lessen the frequency of divorce. DuBois and Miley (2013) suggests that the context of social work is changing rapidly. However, one fundamental element remains the same namely, that social work is located within some of the most complex problems and perplexing areas of human experience such as divorce. For this reason, social work is, and has to be, a highly skilled activity. Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney and Strom-Gottfried (2016) hold the view that family social workers help young couples to improve relationships and cope with difficult situations such as divorce, illness or death. Payne (2014) says social workers guide families through the counselling process, by helping them (couples) identify problems, set goals and find solutions to their troubles. Becvar (2014) indicates that in a crisis situation such as neglect, substance abuse or violence, social workers may also recommend legal action such as having children temporarily removed while the parents work through difficulties.

Saleebey (2012) claims that social workers sometimes suggest immediate solutions, even if short-term, to help families work through problems or defuse potentially volatile situations. A social worker will often attempt to stabilise the family unit, including addressing individual members' issues, so that counselling will be more effective.

2.6.1 PREVENTION OF DIVORCE AMONG YOUNG COUPLES

Lichter and Qian (2009) state that social workers prevent divorce among young couple through marital education. (Barton, Futris and Bradley 2014; Wilde & Doherty 2013), suggest that a social worker assumes the role of an educator who educates young couples to identify expectations, practise relationship-enhancing skills such as conflict resolution, and to identify and communicate spiritual values in relationships such as honour, respect, intimacy and forgiveness. Le Bourdais, Neil and Turcotte (2000) indicate that a social worker teaches young couples to address communication and physical intimacy, and reiterates the responsibility of couples to form and practise contingencies for communication within their relationships.

Barton, Futris and Bradley (2014) are of the view that marital education was born out of the research that proves that marital interaction has an effect on marital satisfaction and that communication and quality time spent together could increase the quality of one's relationship. Wilde and Doherty (2013) believe that the rationale for marital education is a desire to combat the high level of distress found in many relationships and the accompanying high divorce rate in our society. Rogge, Cobb, Lawrence, Johnson and Bradbury (2013) argue that divorce among young couples is a societal issue that has not been fully dealt with, and most approaches to marital distress occur in marriages involving young couples.

(DeMaria & Hannah, 2013; Lewis & Oppenheimer, 2012) suggest that marital education attempts to pre-empt those issues that can arise in the marriage, and that if marriage education is focused on prevention, then couples can learn new skills before destructive patterns of behaviour and interaction have become established. Studies have shown that couples that participate in a marital enrichment programme are better off than those who do not participate in one, and that certain prevention programmes provide promise for couples in enhancing competence, relationship satisfaction and reducing distress, divorce and violence (Wilde and Doherty, 2013; DeMaria and Hannah, 2013; Stanley, Whitton & Markman 2002).

Fawcett, Fawcett, Hawkins and Yorgason (2013) add that marital education and therapy have focused on the aspects of marriage that can be changed to ultimately increase relationship satisfaction and to try to avoid divorce.

Various types of marriage education programmes exist that offer couples help with their relationships. Two of these programmes are preparation for marriage, promotion of marital and family life and treatment of marital dysfunction; and they are discussed below.

2.6.1.1 PROMOTION OF THE QUALITY OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE - SECONDARY PREVENTION

Hunter (2016) says that secondary prevention occurs when some kind of dysfunctioning has been identified or is suspected. Secondary prevention emphasises early diagnosis and prompt intervention to halt the pathological process, thereby shortening its duration and severity, and enabling the individual to regain normal functioning at the earliest possible point. Amato, Booth, Johnson and Rogers (2014) suggest that a healthy lifelong marriage involves building multiple marriages with the same spouse. Partners invested in a marriage covenant are committed to a continuing process that has some discreet stages and many transitions that can become either destabilizing events or normative development. Change is a given in this process and ability to adapt is essential.

Berrington and Diamond (2011) provides that an understanding of the lifecycle stages of a marriage is foundational for those wishing to promote and sustain marriage as a community of life and love. If couples know what to expect as normative changes in their relationship, they will be less likely to be blindsided or reactive when these changes occur. Individuals can respond rather than react to life events if they have been helped to understand their feelings and options in the face of change.

The researcher is of the view that social workers who recognise and anticipate the issues which couples face during the lifecycle can provide proactive resources, mentoring and support at times of transition and high risk.

Baker, McNulty, Overall, Lambert and Fincham (2013), as well as Killewald (2016) divide secondary prevention into two components:

2.6.1.1.1 Maintenance of marriage and family life

Baker, McNulty, Overall, Lambert and Fincham (2013) indicate that the maintenance of marriage and family is where the social worker engages with partners in marriage to help them maintain the quality of family life by means of formal and non-formal programmes. These are the programmes that encourage family members to spend quality time together and to give one another support and warmth.

2.6.1.1.2 Marriage enrichment

Killewald (2016) holds that marriage enrichment programmes are used by social workers for couples who have what they perceive to be fairly well-functioning marriages and who wish to make their marriages even more mutually satisfying. Marriage enrichment programmes are presented by churches, welfare organisations, religious organisations, universities, other agencies, individuals and groups. Marín, Christensen and Atkins (2014) add that marriage enrichment programmes in general include personal, marriage and family enrichment courses, parental guidance courses, courses for engaged couples, divorced people and single parents and parenting education.

Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2012) posit that from a family life cycle perspective, young couples are often considered to be prime candidates for marital enrichment. Gurman and Kniskern (2014) suggest that the transition to marriage requires the accomplishment of a number of developmental tasks such as the formation of a new marital system, the regulation of distance with extended families, and the development of effective conflict resolution skills. Schwartz, Cody, Ayers-Lopez, McRoy and Fong (2014) add that while transitions between stages can add stressors that threaten to derail a family life, they may also provide increased opportunity for change as a family seeks to regain its balance, and young couples are often viewed as unrealistic in their expectations about marriage and, hence, resistant to change. Moreover, Fine (2014) says that young couples are seen as being past these high levels of idealism, and as beginning to encounter difficulties common to marriage. At the same time, interaction patterns are still in the process of forming and as such,

couples in the early marital stage may be more malleable than at points later in their marriages. Strong and Cohen (2013) suggest that while some young couples may seek therapy for marital problems, they could benefit from the less threatening intervention offered by enrichment programmes. (Davis & Greenstein, 2014; Carroll, Orthner, Behnke, Smith, Day & Raburn, 2013) opine that working with young couples would be the best way to make the transition from remedial to preventive services for families. In response to this thinking, several enrichment programmes specifically focusing on this stage of the family life cycle have been devised (Strong & Cohen, 2013).

2.6.1.2 TREATMENT OF MARITAL DYSFUNCTIONING

Jacobson (2013) states that this is rehabilitation and it comes into play when a dysfunction is fixed, stabilised or irreversible. (Frühau, Gerger, Schmidt, Munder & Barth, 2013; Berrington & Diamond, 2011) write that the treatment of marital dysfunctions aims at more than halting the dysfunction process itself; it is the restoration of the individual's optimum level of functioning with the constraints of the dysfunction. Guntupalli, Flink, Sheeder, Leifermann, Tergas, Ioffe, Wright and Behbakht (2015) argue that part of this intervention is to work with the children to enable them to cope with the effects of their experience; and that the services here are aimed at the treatment of marital and family dysfunction. This is part of the prevention that is mostly applied in South Africa.

Divorce among young couples has become endemic globally. Research suggests that today almost 50% of young couples will choose divorce as the solution to marital dissatisfaction (Kuhn & McParland 2008; Olson & Lavee; Stienmetz & Sussman; Kotlikoff 2016). Despite its prevalence, few spouses are prepared for the emotional and physical impact of divorce. (Chan and Halpin, 2015; Jacobson, 2013) says that social workers need to take into consideration that divorce affects family members at every generational level throughout nuclear and extended family, thus producing a crisis for the family as a whole as well as for each individual within the family. Guntupalli, Flink, Sheeder, Leifermann, Tergas, Ioffe, Wright and Behbakht ; 2015; Moos, 2013) suggest divorce is a major disruption in the family life-cycling process, adding complexity to whatever developmental tasks the family is experiencing in its present phase and the normal life cycle tasks interrupted and altered by the divorce

process. Social workers working with young couples must adopt the family life cycle approach in their interventions. Newman and Newman (2014) argue that each ensuing life cycle phase becomes affected by the divorce and must henceforth be viewed within the dual context of the stage itself as well as the residual effects of the divorce. (Jacobson, 2013; Bongaarts and Feeney, 2013) says that if a family can negotiate the crisis and the accompanying transitions that must be experienced in order to re-stabilise, it will have established a more fluid system that will allow a continuation of the normal family developmental process. The sociocultural context of the family is another aspect to consider in understanding the impact of divorce, adding a vital and often overlooked dimension to the divorce process (McGoldrick *et al.*, 2010).

2.7 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM LITERATURE

Prior studies reveal that the age of partners at the time of marriage is associated in various ways with their propensity towards separation or divorce, and the younger the partners are at the time of marriage, the greater the possibility that the union will end in divorce. The South African legal system recognizes three grounds for divorce, namely; irretrievable breakdown of the marriage, incurable mental illness and continuous unconsciousness. Additionally, divorce alters the family life cycle. Literature also suggests that social workers prevent divorce among young couple through marital education. (Williams & Nussbaum, 2013) suggest that a social worker assumes the role of an educator who educates young couples to identify expectations, practise relationship-enhancing skills such as conflict resolution, and to identify and communicate spiritual values such as honour, respect, intimacy and forgiveness in relationships. It was also revealed during literature review that South African law recognises three grounds of divorce, namely irretrievable breakdown, incurable mental illnesses and continuous unconsciousness. Finally, literature suggests that every family goes through stages of family life and that the success of every marriage relies mainly on how well partners successfully master those stages of family life cycle.

Having provided a detailed description of the factors responsible for divorce among young couples, the next chapter presents findings, their analysis and interpretation.

CHAPTER THREE

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter reviewed literature relevant to this study. This chapter presents empirical findings from the study on factors contributing to divorce among young couples in Lebowakgomo. In an attempt to seek a solution to the research problem, the researcher constituted a sample of six participants who were selected through snowballing. The selection criteria for this study was divorced young adults up to the age of 35 who had been married for the period of not more than ten years. The researcher could not add other participants because he had reached saturation on the sixth participant. So only the six participants took part in the study. Data collection was done through semi-structured interviews. The entire data collection process lasted six days. Data was audio recorded after obtaining consent from the participants. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed; and interpretative phenomenological analysis followed. In this regard, the following master themes emerged as factors contributing to divorce: (1) character; (2) poor communication; (3) abuse; (4) financial problems; and (5) infidelity.

3.2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

Table 1: Demographic information of the respondents

Participant	Age	Gender	Religious affiliation	Educational status	Duration of marriage	Number of children
1	27	Female	Christianity and Ancestor worship	Undergraduate degree	6 years	1
2	30	Male	Christianity	Matric	6 years	2
3	35	Male	Christianity	Matric	5 years	2
4	33	Male	Christianity	Matric	2 years	2
5	35	Female	Christianity	Undergraduate degree	4 years	4
6	28	Female	Christianity and Ancestor worship	Undergraduate degree	5 years	2

As indicated in Table 1, the sample of this research consisted of six participants who were young people and divorced. This is because a point of saturation was reached on the sixth participant during data collection. Most participants spoke Sepedi, and almost all interviews were conducted in Sepedi so that the interviewees could express themselves well.

Data presented in Table 1 show that the participant's age ranged from 27 to 35 years. Amato, Booth, Johnson and Rogers (2014) claim that for many young couples, their youth itself is the principal stumbling block to successful marriage, and that for many of those who divorced in this age group say they had intensely romanticised ideas about marriage. Bongaarts and Feeney (2013) also observe that family therapists hesitate to use the word immature, but many suggest that people in this age group do not have well-developed identities and often lack skills that could help them resolve problems. Chan and Halpin (2015) argue that in general, young couples are emotionally not at the stage to be able to understand themselves; they are often unable to talk about conflicts constructively without either withdrawing or lashing out. Berrington and Diamond (2011) suggest that explanations focusing on

lack of preparedness are inconsistent with the increased risk persisting as marital duration rises and if one accepts this view, then the most persuasive explanations would seem to be those focusing on a lack of maturity. Davis and Greenstein (2014) indicate that possible consequences of this lack of maturity include greater likelihood of change, whether in terms of self-identity or socio-economic status and prospects, and a greater likelihood of entering into a relatively unsatisfactory relationship, reflecting a greater risk of misjudgments about potential partners or about the marriage market more generally.

The demographic data provided in Table 1 shows that a total of four out of six participants have two children each, while one participant has one child, and another participant has four children. Most studies suggest that the number of children has a linear relation with divorce risk in that the greater the number of children, the lower the risk of divorce (Tzeng and Mare 2005; Coppola and Di Cesare 2010; White 2010; Waite and Lillard 2011; Goode 2011; Jalovaara 2011; Hoem and Hoem 2012). However, some researchers have found that the number of children and divorce risk have a u-shaped nonlinear relationship, and that either too many or too few children are not favourable to the stability of the marriage (Glenn, Uecker, and Love 2010; Wilson and Smallwood 2010). (Schoen, 2014; Strong & Cohen, 2013) holds that intuitively, an increase in the number of children increases a couple's marriage capital, improves and promotes the couple's feelings and interdependence, but these gains may have a diminishing marginal effect as the number of children increases. The burden of raising children becomes increasingly heavy and the negative impact from children also increases.

Table 1 also reveals that three out of six participants had matric as their highest educational qualification, while another three participants had undergraduate degrees as their highest qualification. According to Lewis and Oppenheimer (2012), the impact of education on marital stability is not that straightforward. On the one hand, education determines wage earnings capacity so that homogamy makes specialisation less advantageous and, therefore destabilises the marriage. Lewis and Oppenheimer (2012) further shows that education is part of the general process of socialisation and may represent an individual's preferences for the ways of living. Mfuller (2013) argues that good education improves the opportunities on the labour market, which in turn, makes an individual more independent from the partner.

Hence, high education can destabilise a relationship. In their discussion paper, Nielsen and Svarer (2011) are of the view that the views held by Lewis and Oppenheimer (2012) would imply an inverse relationship between education and risk of divorce.

Although data on Table 1 reveals that there are four participants who mentioned Christianity as their religious orientation, there were two participants who reported Christianity and ancestor worship as their religious persuasion. According to Stafford, Prabu and McPherson (2014), valuing religion and regularly practising it, is associated with greater marital stability, higher levels of marital satisfaction, and an increased likelihood that an individual would be inclined to marry. Randal and Acock (2013) find that couples who acknowledged a divine purpose in their marriage were more likely to collaborate, to have greater marital adjustment, and to perceive more benefits from marriage and were less likely to use aggression or to come to a stalemate in their disagreements. In their research, Wilcox and Nicholas (2016) find that couples whose marriages lasted 30 years or more reported that their faith helped them to deal with difficult times, was a source of moral guidance in making decisions and dealing with conflict, and encouraged them to maintain their commitment to their marriages. Holmberg, Orbuch and Veroff (2013) observe that during the 1980s and 1990s, when religious practice decreased overall, the association between regular religious attendance and marital stability became even more apparent as compared to those who had ceased religious practice, who divorced 2.5 times more frequently than those who continued to attend religious services.

Table 1 also showed that two participants indicated that their marriage lasted for six years, whereas two other participants mentioned that their marriages lasted for five years. The marriages of the two participants lasted for one year and four years, respectively. Martin and Bumpass (2011) note that young couples rush into marriage without knowing the stresses of living together with a partner for hopefully the rest of their lives, then after a period of complete happiness which usually lasts from 1-5 years, fight break out constantly and ultimately get a divorce.

3.3. Table 2: Master Themes and related Superordinate Themes

MASTERS THEMES	SUPERORDINATE THEMES
1. Character	<p><i>"She had a good character, but along the way her character changed and I do not know what changed":</i> The spouses had suppressed their true characters just before marriage, only to show their real character after tying the knot.</p>
2. Poor Communication	<p><i>"Our communication was very poor during our marriage, as he was taking decisions alone without involving me":</i> Bad communication or lack of communication.</p> <p><i>"What caused my divorce is lack of proper communication":</i> Lack of proper communication.</p>
3. Abuse	<p><i>"I experienced physical and emotional abuse, and by the time he started beating me is when I told myself that I am walking out of this marriage":</i> Experience of physical and emotional abuse</p> <p><i>"I experienced emotional abuse, because I was looking down at myself and continuously stressed and doubted my self-worth":</i> Emotionally abused which led to a feeling of doubting one's self-worth.</p>
4. Financial Problems	<p><i>"we had financial problems, and it was as the result of lack of proper communication, as everyone was doing as they please":</i> Had financial problems due to lack of proper communication about finances</p> <p><i>"I think the financial situation led to my divorce because when I was still working things were okay, but after I have lost my job and no longer had a stable income, things started changing, as she began to be involved with other men who can meet her needs financially":</i> Had financial problems due to loss of job which led to lack of income.</p>

5. Infidelity

“He had extramarital affairs and after that, our relationship was never normal again, and at that stage”: **The spouse was cheating.**

“Unfaithfulness of my ex-wife was the main reason why we divorced. She refused the fact that she is cheating me. Until I beat her, she would not admit cheating me, but after I have beaten her is when she will admit and start apologising. I would forgive her because I loved her, but she would repeat that again and again, and it was starting to be a vicious cycle”: **The spouse was cheating and when caught she would promise to stop, but she never stopped.**

“He had extramarital affairs during our marriage, and after I found out about the affairs, I had to accept it, but the problem was that he was giving the lady he was dating too much attention than me; he could go out on Friday and come back on Monday afternoon”: **The spouse was cheating and the wife had to accept that behaviour as it is traditionally acceptable for a man to cheat.**

3.4. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO DIVORCE AMONG YOUNG COUPLES

3.4.1. Character

Most participants mentioned that at the beginning of their marriage, their ex-spouses were good but then there was a sudden change of character later in their marriages.

Respondent 3 narrates his experience with these words:

“... When we started, she had a good character and that demonstrated the reason why I married her. I married her because I liked her character and that made me love her, but along the way her character changed and I do not know what caused that sudden change.”

Respondent 4 also experienced the same fate, as he indicates in his words:

“She had a good character and respected my family, including me. She had a good heart and was very humble. She seemed to be satisfied with everything. She started changing after I had lost my job, and she started cheating on me, and when I tried to talk to her she did not change her new ways at all”.

Respondent 6 explains how patriarchal her ex-husband was:

“When I felt in love with him he was all gentle and seemed to be a modern man who was romantic but after we got married, his character changed. During our marriage, he did not behave according to what I expect of a man to behave, and I think the fact that he is a traditionalist played a big role in his behaviour because he believed that he is the head of the family and everything he says or does goes without being challenged. My opinion as his wife did not count at all; my opinions were just being ignored”.

Respondent 2 presents a character profile of his ex-wife in the following extract

“Eh ... her character was different in different situations. Her character has a good side and the weaknesses ... and let me first tell you her good character first. She was a jolly person, she is caring, especially when it comes to the male species and

knew how to take care of a man. My ex-wife was also very welcoming. The weakness of her character was that she was not trustworthy and faithful. Under certain situations, my ex-wife was not controllable”.

Respondent 3 does not mince her words when she describes her ex-husband’s character:

“Mhm ... he is someone who does not take a solid decision, as he is influenced very easily by his friends and family”.

Respondent 1, on the other hand, describes her ex-husband as someone who is disrespectful:

“When I first met him he was a very respectful man who had high moral ground but while in marriage he was the opposite. He was someone who did not have respect at all, especially for women. He did not even respect or listen to parents, as they tried talking to him several times, but he would not listen”.

Afore-mentioned extracts suggests that the respondent’s ex-spouses had sudden character changes. (Robert, Krueger & Livesley, 2016; Popenoe & Whitehead, 2010) hold the view that character change occurs when a person has a dramatic change in actions, opinions or feelings. The researcher is of the view that the spouses had suppressed their true characters just before marriage, only to show their true colours after tying the knot. This is best explained by Erikson’s stage of development called intimacy versus isolation. Erikson (1950) believed that during this stage, adolescents search for a sense of self and personal identity, through an intense exploration of personal values, beliefs and goals. Erikson (1950) further explains that it is during this stage that the young adults will re-examine their identity and try to find out exactly who he or she is. A study by Robinson, Demetre and Litman (2016 cited Erikson, 1950) claim that Erikson viewed intimacy or closeness and mutual sharing with another as the basic strength of intimacy versus isolation stage and isolation as its core pathology. As cited by Wenner and Randall (2016), Erikson believed that intimacy between two people as a couple was only possible when each had developed a strong sense of identity separately. Malone, Liu, Vaillant, Rentz and Waldinger (2015) argue that it is unfortunate that many couples these days marry at a very young age, so this was by no means always the case. Newman and Newman

(2014) write that the dilemma is that it is difficult for two people to grow and mature together unless they have first matured separately. Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer and Orlofsky (2012) observe a trend which is not surprising: divorce is a common outcome for couples who marry while still quite young and immature. Marcia and Josselson (2013) state that young adults often still have not advanced in maturity from adolescence, and although some have achieved a level of maturity by the early twenties, many others do not arrive at this level until well into their thirties and still others never do attain full maturity. Kroger (2014) indicate that in today's complex world, attainment of maturity and relative independence seems to take considerable time.

(Reiss, Capobianco & Tsai, 2012; Wilde and Doherty, 2013) postulate that personality shapes people's reactions to the behaviour of their partners, and this means that disagreeable individual may escalate negative effect during the conflict. In their study with young adults, Jensen-Campbell and Graziano (2010) suggest that personality traits evoke behaviour from partners that can either contribute to a relationship quality or detrimental to a relationship such as criticism, contempt; defensiveness and stonewalling. Based on the above data, the researcher reads that maybe the respondents' spouses had suppressed their personalities or they did not attain full maturity.

3.4.2. Poor communication

Participants responded differently with respect to poor communication, but most of the participants shared the same experience of bad communication in their marriages.

Respondent 6 narrates her experience of communication during her marriage as follows:

“Our communication was very poor during our marriage, as he was taking decisions alone without involving me; he treated me like a child who does not have a say. Yoh, our communication was very bad, and we were not agreeing with anything”.

Respondent 4 also indicates that communication in her marriage was good:

“Our communication was very good and was characterised by respect but deteriorated after I discovered that my wife was cheating on me.”

Respondent 3 goes into detail on how the state of communication was in his marriage:

“At the beginning, our communication was good, but after she got a job, she started to throw hurtful words on me. Just because I understand human rights, I could not beat her, and I took a decision to divorce her, as I was starting to doubt my manhood as she degraded my dignity. I was unable to continue living with her anymore. The real reason we divorced is communication problems we had experienced once my ex-wife started working. The reason I am saying this is because after she started working, she began troubling me and our communication then started to deteriorate”.

Respondent 5 illustrates why he thinks communication was not good during her marriage:

“It was not a proper communication because he was not engaging me in anything, even if he had to buy a couch, he would not say anything to me. I will just see a delivering vehicle coming to deliver. I think he did this because I was a housewife during our marriage, so our communication was not good at all”.

Respondent 1 highlights that lack of proper communication ended her marriage:

“What caused my divorce is lack of proper communication. One other thing is that my ex-spouse was abusing me verbally and emotionally. What caused my divorce was misunderstanding and differences in terms of opinions”.

The findings presented here indicate that lack of or poor communication was a major problem in their marriages. Cox (2010), notes that the underlying cause in many divorces among young couples is a lack of or poor communication. Tembe (2010) suggests that failure to communicate makes it difficult to resolve issues, whether financial, emotional or otherwise. South, Trent and Shen (2013) observe that lack of communication can result in alienation from one’s spouse and that without regular communication, maintaining a strong relationship bond is unlikely. According to Hohmann-Marriott (2012), communication problems between a couple may possibly exist even long before they get married officially and expectations may not have

been made clear, or certain issues that could affect the marriage may not have been discussed. Heaton (2009) suggests that discussing feelings about aspects that are personally important is also crucial but may not always be practised by couples. Bezuidenhout (2007) also highlights the fact that some young couples may put a little weight on pre-marital issues only to realise during the marriage that they should have clearly set things in black and white, or that they should have been better listeners and that communication issues before marriage can get worse after getting married.

3.4.3. Abuse

All the participants indicated that they experienced abuse in their marriage. But no male participant reported that they experienced physical abuse. However, all of them reported having experienced emotional abuse. Almost all female participants reported that they had suffered physical abuse at the hands of their ex-husbands.

Respondent 1 shares her experience as follows:

“Yes, I experienced physical and emotional abuse, and by the time he started beating me is when I told myself that I am walking out of this marriage”.

Respondent 2 mentions that the actions of his ex-wife made him experience emotional abuse, and this is how he explains it:

“Yes, I was emotionally abused because of her behaviour, as I was always asking myself many questions as to why is she behaving this way, and it was really hurting me inside”.

Respondent 5's account of events is similar to that of **Respondent 2**:

“Yes, I experienced emotional abuse, because I was looking down at myself and continuously stressed and doubted my self-worth”.

Respondent 4 also explains that he suffered emotional abuse, as her ex-wife made him feel bad about himself:

“Yes, I experienced emotional abuse because towards the beginning of our problems, she was trying to make me feel bad and also feel less about myself. She made me feel less of a man as I could not provide for her”.

Respondent 3's account is that she was not physically abused but experienced repeated emotional and verbal abuse from her ex-husband:

“Yes, I can say I was emotionally and verbally abused due to the fact that my ex-husband was not faithful to me, as he was dating ladies staying in the same complex with us, and it was stressing me, as I could see him with those ladies doing all these things ... verbally he was abusing me in a way that he would say that I am not his type and also that I am not working, and as such, I am useless. He was calling me names”.

Respondent 6 explains that she experienced physical, verbal and emotional abuse during her marriage:

“Yes, the man was abusing me physically and emotionally and verbally. He used to throw insults at me”.

Initially trying to rationalise the cause of her divorce, **Respondent 1** refers to the physical abuse she experienced in her marriage as the cause of her divorce:

“My ex-husband was physically abusive ... he was somebody who is very jealousy and lacked trust”.

Respondent 6 confirms that her ex-husband was abusing her:

“He was abusing me physically, and that is what gave me the courage to divorce him, as I feared that if things continue like this, I will end up being killed”.

The data presented above suggest that respondents experienced abuse in their marriages at some point. Lamanna and Riedmann (2009) observe that there are many forms of abuse, all of which are possible causes of divorce among young couples, and this does not just include intentional and habitual physical battery. Brown and Manning (2009) hold that sexual, emotional and physical abuse can lead to divorce among young couples, and that the feeling of being unsafe in one's relationship can make it difficult or impossible to continue with the marriage. No one should feel unsafe at home, and many communities, counselling and legal organisations will encourage the dissolution of abusive marriages for the safety and happiness of the family as a whole (Bezuidenhout, 2017).

Spousal battering, child abuse, marital rape, and incest represent the dark side of family life. Although wives are about as likely to attack their husbands as husbands are to attack their wives, it is generally the husband who lands the last and most damaging blow. Violence against women is related to the sexist structure of society and our socialization.

The researcher is of the view that young men in marriages are more likely to be perpetrators of physical and sexual abuse, while women in most cases commit emotional abuse.

3.4.4. Financial problems

Having financial problems is another factor that makes young couples fight, and their marriages end up in divorce. Most participants reported to have had financial problems in their marriages, and the following extracts paint a clear picture:

Respondent 6: *“Yes, we had financial problems, and it was as the result of lack of proper communication, as everyone was doing as they please. At the end of the month when we got our salaries, we did not sit down and plan how best we can spend our money, and everyone was just spending as they wish”.*

Respondent 2: *“Yes, we had financial problems, as the Sepedi saying says ‘**Shaka la Kgosi gale tlale**’. I was the only one working, and I was working in a supermarket, and they were not paying me enough to can take care of my wife and child, so I ended up helping her find a job, and things got better at home in terms of finances”.*

Respondent 5: *“Yes, we experienced money problems because I did not have a stable job, and I was the only one working at that time, and when my wife started working, I thought it would be a relieve for me because we would help each other, but that was not the case. When I told her that now that you are working you should assist me, she refused. The financial situation we were in was caused by the debts I got into while she was still unemployed, but she was not ready to help me out”.*

Respondent 3: *“Yes, I was working at the garage as a petrol attendant, and I lost my job, and that meant that there would not be an income anymore in the house. Then that changed our lives and started to rely mainly on my parents and her*

parents for survival, something which did not sit well with her and that is why she left”.

Respondent 4 mentions money matters as the reason that collapsed his marriage:

“I think the financial situation led to my divorce because when I was still working things were okay, but after I have lost my job and no longer had a stable income, things started changing, as she began to be involved with other men who can meet her needs financially. To be precise, my divorce was caused by lack of income”.

The data presented here is consistent with Hofheimer’s (2010) contention that financial difficulties can add stress to any relationship, especially marriage. While experts disagree as to the extent to which money causes divorce among young couples, financial issues can cause a breakdown in communication and trust between young couples. Brown and Manning (2010) posit that money or aspects related to it are a possible cause of disagreement between young couples. Choi and Marks (2008) observe that young couples fight over issues such as shared financial responsibility, unequal financial status, undisclosed financial state, overspending and lack of financial support. Evidence by Kuhn and McParland (2008) suggests that though money is not always the sole or primary cause of divorce, nonetheless, it is still a significant factor. Again, lack of communication over financial issues is the real problem and not money per se (Hofheimer, 2010).

3.4.5. Infidelity

One other factor that all the participants experienced is the issue of having to deal with a cheating partner. In the following raw qualitative data, all participants, including men, admitted to having experienced a cheating wife/husband:

Respondent 1: *“Yes, he had extramarital affairs and after that, our relationship was never normal again, and at that stage, I had enough about him, and this just fuelled the situation even worse because of the type of people he was cheating on me with”.*

Respondent 2: *“Yes, she had extramarital affairs, and I believe that if she did not have extramarital relationships, we would still be married. I was asking myself why she is cheating on me while she is busy telling me that sexually I satisfy her. I used to believe that the reason why women cheat their husbands is because their*

husbands were not satisfying them sexually, but now I know that you can be cheated even if you satisfy your woman sexually”.

Respondent 5: *“Yes, she had an affair with some man I think all along, we were not facing the real source of our problems, because after I discovered that my ex-wife is cheating, I had many reasons to divorce her and let the man he was dating have her”.*

Respondent 4: *“Yes, after I lost my job she started seeing other men, and that is one of the reasons that collapsed our marriage. When I first found out that she is cheating on me, I spoke to her, and she apologised and showed some regret, and she suggested that she must go home as she was not comfortable with me about what has happened”.*

Respondent 3: *“Yes, he had extramarital affairs during our marriage, and after I found out about the affairs, I had to accept it, but the problem was that he was giving the lady he was dating too much attention than me; he could go out on Friday and come back on Monday afternoon. He ended up impregnating the girlfriend, and there was no longer sexual intercourse in the house”.*

Respondent 2's accounts of his reasons to divorce were many, but there are two key factors that led to his divorce:

“There are many things which caused my divorce, and unfaithfulness of my ex-wife was the main reason why we divorced. She refused the fact that she is cheating on me. Until I beat her, she would not admit cheating me, but after I have beaten her when she will admit and start apologising. I would forgive her because I loved her, but she would repeat that again and again, and it was starting to be a vicious cycle”.

According to Vincent (2009), betrayal, adultery and cheating in marriage have become one of the most common reasons for divorce among young couples and that infidelity in marriage can ruin the best of relationships, whether it is a cheating wife or husband, the repercussions are devastating for the entire family.

The SiSwati expression *indvodza Inganwa*, meaning the man is the only one whose proposal is granted by female, supports men to have as many concubines as they wish. The Sepedi expression says *monna ke thaka oa naba* means a man is like a

bean plant, he spreads. Choi and Marks (2008) suggest that if a woman has extramarital affairs, culture does not praise her but condemns her and gives her names such as adulterer and prostitute. Morgan and Rindfuss (2013) indicate that today women see divorce as a means of regaining their freedom. It has been noticed that extramarital affairs bring financial constraints upon the family.

Morgan and Rindfuss (2013) suggest that infidelity is common across cultures, and that in hunting and gathering societies, there is no evidence that women are any less adulterous than men. Choi and Marks (2008) posts that the fidelity gap may be explained more by cultural pressures than any real difference in sex drives between men and women. Men with multiple partners typically are viewed as virile, while women are considered promiscuous. It is the researchers view that historically, women have been isolated on farms or at home with children, giving them fewer opportunities to be unfaithful.

The researcher is of the view that, young married women are more likely to spend late hours at the office and travel on business. And even for women who stay home, cell-phones, e-mail and instant messaging appear to be allowing them to form more intimate relationships.

3.5. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

A theory by McGoldrick *et al.* (2010) suggests that failure by couples to navigate transitions in marriages may lead to changes in the structure of the marital relationship. The change may have positive or negative effects, which may eventually lead to divorce. In this study, transitions manifest themselves in different ways such as poor communication, loss of a job, infidelity, sudden character change, financial problems, and abuse.

Couples could transit from good to poor communication as a result of inability to communicate well, and to resolve conflicts in a constructive way. All these factors put a strain on the marriage and eventually lead to divorce. Steinmetz and Sussman (2013) suggest that after getting married, couples are required to have marital adjustment, and one way of achieving this is to develop communication skills. However, the researcher is of the view that most participants failed to adjust well into

their marriages, hence most of them admitted poor communication as the cause of their divorce. The arrival of a child complicates family life and can create upheaval for the couple. For example, studies show an initial decrease in marital satisfaction after the arrival of the first child (Steinmetz and Sussman, 2013; Williams & Nussbaum, 2013; Kotlikoff, 2016). Kotlikoff (2016) write that the first crisis of this stage, then, is preparing for and adapting to the birth of the child and resolving conflicts regarding commitment. McCubbin and Figley (2014) argue that communication is at the heart of a marriage. The other is couples' achievement of relating through the everyday conversations and otherwise trivial interactions that form the fabric of their marriage; it is through communication that couples adapt to the dynamic nature of their relational worlds, given that they do not enter marriage with compatible expectations. Olson and Lavee (2013) suggest that communication allows couples to test and be tested by their partners. It is also through communication that couples respond when the other partner violates or fails to meet those expectations.

The researcher also found a positive association between sudden character change and divorce among young couples. McGoldrick and Carter (2013) postulate that the family life cycle involves tasks and transitions; one of the tasks to be accomplished during the family life cycle is to find a suitable partner to start a family with. Newman and Newman (2014) suggest that common transitions associated with this task are changes in personal relationship, changes in roles and status, and a possible change of job and career. Walsh and McGoldrick (2013) argue that here the person undergoes a series of changes and it might also include their characters.

Noller and Callan (2015) argue that when two people become united in marriage, their initial concern is preparing for a new type of life together and the resources of the two people are combined, their roles altered and new functions assumed. Learning to live together while providing for each other's basic personality needs becomes a crucial developmental task. Datan and Ginsberg (2013) propose that the couple has to mutually accommodate each other in many small ways; for example, they must develop routines for eating, sleeping, getting up in the morning, cleaning the house, sharing the bathroom, recreational pursuits, and going places they both enjoy. The success of the evolving relationship depends on the mutual accommodation just discussed and on a complementarity or the fitting together of

the needs and interests of the mates; just as important, individual differences need to be acknowledged (Le Breton-Miller & Miller 2015). In a healthy marriage, differences are seen to enrich the marital relationship. Achieving a satisfying relationship is dependent on the development of satisfactory ways to handle "differentness" and conflicts (Williams & Nussbaum, 2013).

A healthy way of resolving problems is related to the young couple's ability to empathise, to be mutually supportive, to be able to communicate openly, and honestly, and to approach a conflict with feelings of mutual respect (McCubbin & Figley, 2014). Moreover, how successful the evolving marital relationship will depend on how well each of the partners has differentiated or separated from their respective families of origin (Galvin, Braithwaite & Bylund, 2015). A mature young adult must separate/differentiate from their own parents in order to form their own self-identity and healthy intimate relationships.

Each stage is precipitated by a particular life event or by a family stage marker. These markers demand change and new adaptation (Darling & Cassidy, 2014). The change may be due to alterations in family composition or as a result of a major shift in autonomy. During each stage of the life cycle, young couple's families must achieve certain family tasks. If the carrying out of any task is incomplete, impeded, or disturbed, then family development may be delayed or suspended (Walsh & McGoldrick, 2013). Furthermore, the difficulties experienced by young couples will be carried on into subsequent stages of family development (Olson & Lavee, 2013).

Financial problems due to poor communication about finances, lack of income and loss of job emerged as another cause for divorce in this study. The family life cycle theory states that during the independence stage, individuals strive to become fully able to support themselves emotionally, physically, socially and financially. Noller and Callan (2015) allude to the fact that exploring interests and career goals is part of developing independence by young adults, and to live successfully away from their family, young adults must develop financial and emotional independence. Kotlikoff (2016) says that the next stage in the family life cycle is coupling, and using qualities gained in the independence stage, young adults can explore their ability to commit to a new family and a new way of life. When families are joined through marriage or committed union, young adults form a new family system that includes

one's personal ideas, expectations and values about finances. Le Breton-Miller and Miller (2015) say that young adults may find that some of the ideas or expectations that they held about finances in the past are not realistic at this stage; therefore, as can be seen in this study, failure to adjust to this transitions results in the family life cycle being disrupted or impeded.

This study also noted a relationship between abuse and divorce among young couples. The participants mentioned physical and emotional abuse as the type of abuse they have suffered in the hands of their ex-spouses. All women in this study mentioned that they have been physically abused by their ex-husbands while most male participants indicated that they have been emotionally abused by their ex-wives. One male participant admitted to have abused her ex-wife physically. Widom and Wilson (2015) indicate that although wives are about as likely to attack their husbands as husbands are to attack their wives, it is generally the husband who lands the last and most damaging blow; violence against women is related to the sexist structure of society and our socialisation.

This study also confirmed that there is a strong relationship between infidelity and divorce among young couples. Morgan and Rindfuss (2013) suggest that infidelity is common across cultures, and that in hunting and gathering societies, there is no evidence that young women are any less adulterous than young men. Choi and Marks (2008) posts that the fidelity gap may be explained more by cultural pressures than any real difference in sex drives between young men and young women. Young men with multiple partners typically are viewed as virile, while young women are considered promiscuous. It is the researchers view that historically, women have been isolated on farms or at home with children, giving them fewer opportunities to be unfaithful.

The researcher is of the view that, young married women are more likely to spend late hours at the office and travel on business. And even for women who stay home, cell-phones, e-mail and instant messaging appear to be allowing them to form more intimate relationships.

This study revealed that all the participants had to deal with a cheating partner in their marriages. Kreppner and Lerner (2013) believe that infidelity is one of the most common presenting problems for marriage and family therapists that is devastating

to relationships and can be one of the most difficult problems to treat. Walsh and McGoldrick (2013) note that while the majority of couples disapprove of infidelity, the causes of infidelity are complex and varied. Affairs can occur in happy relationships as well as in troubled ones. Schlacter, Razzouk and Mills (2016) argue that it can be difficult and sometimes impossible for the faithful party to understand their partner's capacity to engage in an affair. While the majority of affairs happen as a result of relational dissatisfaction, they also happen as a result of personal dissatisfaction and low self-esteem. In such cases, the involved partner may be unaware of their contribution to what is lacking in the relationship (Schlacter, Razzouk & Mills, 2016). McGoldrick and Carter (2013) observe that satisfactory relationships hinge on reciprocity, and a prolonged imbalance of give and take can easily lead to unhappiness. In addition to low self-esteem, reasons for infidelity include relationship deficits such as a lack of affection, or a social context in which infidelity is condoned. Datan and Ginsberg (2013) suggest that multiple affairs may be symptomatic of an addiction to sex, love or romance while love and romance addicts are driven by the passion of a new relationship; sexual addicts are compulsively attracted to the high and the anxiety release of sexual orgasm but such release comes with a cost to his or her self-esteem. Moos (2013) states that in the age of social media and technology, a new crisis of infidelity often referred to as the emotional affair has emerged, and people who never intended to be unfaithful are unwittingly crossing the line from platonic friendships into romantic relationships, particularly in the workplace and on the Internet.

In conclusion, sudden character change, poor communication, financial problems, abuse and infidelity are associated with divorce among young couples. Mastering all the stages of family life cycle can reduce the chances of divorce among young couples. This can be achieved by ensuring that before young couples enter into marriage, they receive pre-marital counselling. In addition, after entering marriage young couples should attend marital enrichment programmes.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This study focused on factors contributing to divorce among young couples at Lebowakgomo, Capricorn District, Limpopo Province. Divorce cases have increased dramatically among young people in South Africa and they are amongst the highest in the world (Oosthuizen, 2014). Couples who marry at a young age are most likely to divorce. Among 25 to 29 year-olds, the rate is more than twice as high as people in older age groups (Statistics South Africa, 2010). It is common that marriage is not only expected to offer security for physical needs, but also to provide emotional and sexual fulfillment. However, increasingly marriages are breaking apart (Scarpitti & Anderson, 2011).

4.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The title for this study is factors contributing to divorce among young couple in Lebowakgomo, Capricorn District, Limpopo Province. The study design was a case study. The sample was made up of six (6) participants. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Data was audio-recorded, transcribed and coded into themes through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The study took place through the context of Family Life Cycle Theory. Sudden character change, poor communication, financial problems, abuse and infidelity are associated with divorce among young couples. Mastering all the stages of family life cycle can reduce the chances of divorce among young couples. This can be achieved by ensuring that before young couples enter into marriage, they receive pre-marital counselling. In addition, after entering marriage young couples should attend marital enrichment programmes.

4.3 RE-STATEMENT OF THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

4.3.1 Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to explore factors that contribute towards divorce among young couples in the Lebowakgomo area of Limpopo Province.

4.3.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were as follows:

- To establish whether factors contributing to divorce among young couples in Lebowakgomo are the same as those identified in the literature.

Literature in chapter 2 as well as empirical findings, demonstrate that sudden character change, lack of and poor communication, financial problems, abuse and infidelity are contributory factors towards divorce. Therefore this objective was confirmed positively.

- To identify factors contributing towards divorce among young couples in Lebowakgomo.

This study found out that sudden character change, poor communication, financial problems, abuse and infidelity are associated with divorce among young couples.

4.3 SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS

Factors contributing to divorce among young couples in Lebowakgomo are the same as those found in literature. Factors contributing to divorce among young couples in Lebowakgomo are:

- It was found in this study that sudden character change is associated with divorce among young couples
- Poor communication leads to divorce among young couples.
- Financial problems cause divorce among young couples.
- Abuse is a predictor of divorce among young couples.

- Infidelity is a prime mover for divorce among young couples.

4.4 CONCLUSIONS

From the findings of this study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Sudden character change, lack of and poor communication, financial problems, abuse and infidelity are associated with divorce among young couples.
- Mastering all the stages of family life cycle can reduce the chances of young couples to divorce. This can be achieved by ensuring that young couples receive pre-marital counselling before they enter into marriage. In addition, after entering into marriage, young couples should attend marital enrichment programmes.

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the researcher recommends the following:

- The family life cycle approach should be taken into consideration by therapists in marital counselling. The researcher is of the view that if young people know their life cycle correctly, they will be in a position know which stage of the family life cycle they are in and will be able anticipate problem associated with stage the stage they in.
- Through parliamentary processes, government should pass a legislation that is going to ensure that pre-marital counselling must is mandatory for couples entering marriage for the first time. This will help curb divorce among young couples.
- Marital enrichment programmes should be recommended for all couples, this will help those who are already married to sustain and grow their marriages.
- Further research could focus on the following:
 - (a) the correlation between marital breakdown and poor communication.
 - (b) the correlation between sudden character change and divorce
 - (c) the correlation between infidelity and divorce

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Appendix A (i)

CONSENT FORM

Title of the study: Factors contributing to divorce among young couples at Lebowakgomo, Capricorn District, Limpopo Province

Name of Researcher: Mohlatlole NE

Student number: 200904947

Position: Social Worker

Cell phone: 082 958 7790

Email: evansseleme@gmail.com; evansmohlatlole@webmail.co.za

Please tick the box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.
3. I agree to take part in the above study.
4. I agree to the interview being audio recorded.

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
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Name of Researcher	Date	Signature
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Mametletšo A (ii)

FOMO YA TUMELELANO

Title of the study: Factors contributing to divorce among young couples at Lebowakgomo, Capricorn District, Limpopo Province

Name of Researcher: Mohlatlole NE

Student number: 200904947

Position: Social Worker

Cellphone: 082 958 7790

Email: evansseleme@gmail.com; evansmohlatlole@webmail.co.za

Ka kgopelo swaya

ka lepokisaneng

1. Ke a dumela gore ke badile ebile ke kwešišetše letlakala le la tshedimošo la thuto ya ka godimo ya dinyakišišo gomme ke bile le sebaka sa go botšiša dipotšišo.
2. Ke kwešiša gore ga ke gapeletšege go tšea karolo ka gare ga dinyakišišo tše le gore ke lokologile gore nka kgaotša go tšea karolo go dinyakišišo tše ka nako ye nngwe le ye nngwe, ntle le go fa lebaka
3. Ke a dumela go tšea karolo go thuto ye ya ka godimo ya dinyakišišo.
4. Ke a dumela gore dipotšišootherišano di ka gatišwa ka segatišamantšu.

Leina la Motšekarolo

Letšatši

Mosaeno

Leina la Monyakišiši

Letšatši

Mosaeno

Appendix B (i): Interview guide

Instructions

- Respondents are requested to give answers freely and provide information to the best of their abilities.
- Confidentiality will be preserved at all cost by the researcher.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Gender

Male	
Female	

2. How old are?

3. How many children do you have?

4. What is your highest qualification?

Below matric	
Matric	
Diploma	
Degree	

Other [specify].....

5. What is your religious affiliation?

Christianity	
Muslim	
Hinduism	
Ancestral worship	

Other [specify].....

6. How long did your marriage last?

SECTION B: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO DIVORCE

1. In your view, what led to your divorce?
2. How would you describe your ex-spouse's character?
3. Did you have character clashes? If yes, explain.
4. How would you describe communication between you and your ex-spouse during your marriage?
5. Did you ever experience any kind of abuse in your marriage? If yes, what kind of abuse?
6. As a couple, did you experience any financial problems? If yes, please explain.
7. How would you describe your sexual relation with your ex-spouse during your marriage?
8. Did your ex-spouse have extra-marital affairs during your marriage? (Yes) (No)
8.1 If yes, how would you describe your marriage after the incident?

NB Question 9 will only be answered by the respondents who do not have children.

9. How did the fact that you not having children affected your marriage?
10. Did your culture have an influence on your decision to divorce? If yes, please explain.
11. Did your religious beliefs have an influence on your decision to divorce? If yes, please explain.

Thank you for your participation

Mametletšo B (ii): Tlhahlo ya dipotšišootherišano

Ditaelo

- Le eletšwa go araba dipotšišo le lokologile le go tšweletša tshedimošo go ya ka kwešišo le tsebo ya lena.
- Monyakišiši o tla netefatša gore go tla ba le lekunuto go tshedimošo goba dikarabo tšeo le fanago ka tšona.

KAROLO YA A: TSHEDIMOŠO YA DIPALOPALO

1. Bong

Monna	
Mosadi	

2. O na le mengwaga ye mekae?

3. O na le bana ba bakae?

4. Maemo a gago a thuto ke afe?

Ka fase ga Matriki	
Matriki	
Tiploma	
Tikrii	

Tše dingwe [hlaloša].....

5. Na tumelo ya gago ke efe?

Sekreeste	
Islamo	
Sehindu	
Badimo	

Tše dingwe [hlaloša].....

6. Lenyalo la gago le tšere sebaka se se kaakang?

KAROLO YA B: Mabaka ao a hlalago tlhalo

1. Ka kgopolo ya gago, ke eng seo se hlotšego tlhalo ya gago?
2. Na o ka hlaloša bjang maitshwaro a molekane wa gago wa kgale?
3. Na o ka hlaloša bjang kgokagano magareng ga gago le molekane wa gago wa kgale nakong ya lenyalo la lena?
4. Na o kile wa itemogela mohuta ofe goba ofe wa ditlhorišo ka gare ga lenyalo la gago? Ge karabo ya gago e le EE, ke mohuta ofe wa tlhorišo.
5. Na le kile la itemogela mathata a ditšhelete bjalo ka banyalani? Ge karabo ya gago e le EE, ka kgopelo hlaloša.
6. Na o ka hlaloša bjang tswalano ya gago ya tša thobalano le molekane wa gago wa kgale nakong ya lenyalo la lena?
7. Na o gopola gore molekane wa gago wa kgale o be a go kgotsofatša ka tša thobalano?
8. Na molekane wa gago wa kgale o be a na le dinyatsi lenyalong la lena? (ee) (aowa)
8.1 Ge karabo ya gago e le EE, na o ka hlaloša bjang lenyalo la gago ka morago ga tiragalo ye?
9. Na o tla ikwa bjang ge monna goba mosadi wa gago a go utollela gore ga a na pelego?
10. Na setšo se bile le khuetšo lenyalong la gago? Ge karabo ya gago e le ee, ka kgopelo hlaloša.

Ke leboga ge o kgonne go tšea karolo

Appendix C

Mr. Mohlatlole N.E

PO Box 1763

Chuenespoort

0745

22-05-2015

Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality

Private Bag X07

Chuenespoort

0745

For attention: Ms M Maubane

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT LEBOWAKGOMO

Dear Ms Maubane

My name is Evans Mohlatlole, and I am a Masters student at the University of Limpopo in Turfloop Campus. The research I wish to conduct for my master's dissertation involves **factors contributing to divorce among young couples at Lebowakgomo, Capricorn District-Limpopo Province**. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Mrs Mokone, University of Limpopo and Mrs Shirindi.

I am hereby seeking your consent to approach a number of individuals at Lebowakgomo to as participants for this project. I have provided you with a copy of my dissertation proposal which includes copies of the measure and consent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the University of Limpopo's Research Ethics Committee.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the Municipality with a bound copy of the full research report. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 082 985 7790 or email me at this email address: evansseleme@gmail.com.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Mohlatlole N.E