

Factors That Influence The Breakdown Of Interracial Marriage Between Black Male Guides And White Female Tourists- A Case Of Victoria Falls

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Abstract:

The aim of the study was to find out the factors that influence the breakdown of interracial marriages between black male guides and white female tourists. Descriptive survey was used to collect data. This helped to gain understanding of underlying reasons and motivations of the breakdown of such marriages. A sample of 20 black male guides and 10 white female tourists who had been married interracially and divorced was chosen through convenience sampling method. The findings indicated that breakdown of these marriages was due to cultural clashes, lack of family support and reluctance of husbands to perform house chores. Recommendations of the study include mobilisation of the community to fight discrimination and stereotypes.

Key words; *Interracial marriage, Tourist, Tourist guide, divorce, dissolution*

Introduction

The study focused on the interracial marriage between black guides and white tourist females from the western world. The researcher would investigate challenges met by interracial couples to establish what factors influence gross complications inevitably ending up in divorce. For the purpose of this study, the focus was on interracial marriages in the Victoria Falls town. Divorce has caused psychological problems following failure of marriages. It is with this view that the study would help find out what factors are contributing to the dissolution of interracial marriages so that recommendations and therapeutic interventions could be arrived at.

Victoria Falls is one of the seven wonders of the world which attracts many visitors from different continents to witness the magnificence and

splendour of the mighty Victoria Falls. The resort town is located in Matabeleland North Province of Zimbabwe, 440km north of city Bulawayo. The resort town is also a border town of Zimbabwe sharing borders with Zambia, Botswana and Namibia.

In this resort town, there are various activities that can be enjoyed including air activities such as the helicopter scenic flights above the game area, the Victoria Falls, sky- diving and micro- light flights. Land activities include adrenaline producing activities such as Bungee jumping, game drives, safari walks, bicycle tours, lion walks and an elephant rides among other activities while water activities provide interaction in activities like white water rafting and sunset cruises. In all the activities, the tourists are assisted mostly by black guides who are considered highly knowledgeable.

Some female white tourists tend to develop sexual interests towards some of the young black guides.

Childs, (2009) explains that many travellers especially white female tourists search for sex, bodily pleasures, intimacy as acknowledged by motivations in their travels to different exotic countries. Similar studies in tourism industry indicate that women tourists involved in sexual relationships with local men have been studied (Freidus and Romero-Daza 2009, Frohlick 2007). Some white female tourists like dread locked black men whom they believe are powerful and can satisfy their sexual appetite. While interracial relationships and marriages are now common, in most instances they do not seem to last (Kreider, 2000).

Statement of the problem

Female tourists develop sexual interests in black guides whom they date and eventually marry. After marrying the white tourist, the black guide, in most cases is taken abroad to go and settle with the new wife and the family. Unfortunately, most of these marriages do not seem to last, they end up in divorce. The problem of this study therefore is to find out what challenges are faced by these couples that lead to breakdown of marriages. The researcher wonders whether these challenges could be prompted by cultural constraints, education, economic and psychological issues among other factors.

Objectives of research

- to establish cultural factors leading to marriage dissolution.
- to establish the extent to which economic differences play a role in marital dissolution.
- to determine whether there are solutions and to help curb challenges and remedial solutions to minimize these problems.

Research questions

- To what extent do cultural differences influence the breakdown of interracial marriages?
- Do economic differences between partners influence marital dissolution?
- What are factors that can help reduce breakdown of interracial marriages?

Review of literature

Interracial relationships have become more acceptable and more people are likely to become involved and willing to participate in an interracial relationship (Knox, 2000). Researchers reported a change in societal attitudes during recent decades with more individuals engaging in interracial dating and marriage (Fiebert, Karamol, Kasdan, 2000; Gurung & Duong, 1999). Various studies do indicate negative consequences of interracial marriage such as higher rates of marital disruption and divorce, and lower levels of social support (Kreider, 2000)

Beliefs about black men

Foeman & Nance (1999) discuss what they consider to be areas of “mythology” regarding Black-White interracial couples. Two areas that apply to the couple unity in particular are the Black men sexual acting out, and the white women neurotic acting out. The first myth, black sexual acting out, can be seen in the stereotype that black people have an unusual strong sex drive. White female tourists find black men very masculine and sexy and as a result of their physical appearance are assumed to provide security.

Because some black men are not privileged, lack education, the neighbourhood they live in, struggling in life, and are unemployed, they suffer dependency syndrome and need a place to live and so inescapably would date and be married to white women so that they can be looked after or use marriage as a link through which their goals might be achieved. The goals might be to seek

employment opportunities in foreign countries, the procurement of residence permit, work permit and just an exposure abroad.

Cultural differences

Interracial marriage has been a topical issue as people come more and more in contact with persons from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, and the number of interracial couples' relationships grow. 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 (Childs, 2009; Solsberry, 1994). Disparities between the individual's personal preferences and cultural norms can create marital upheaval over whose culture should take precedence. Usually conflicts come in when one spouse believes that the other culture or belief are inferior thereby discounting the other person's importance in the relationship.

Economic reasons for divorce

Economic reasons are contributing factors of marital disruption especially when white spouse has financial advantages over a male spouse. Marital dissolution can be threatened by low income becoming a major contributing factor to the family breakdown (Pear, 1993). For this reason black guides usually feel inferior when with their white women spouses.

Research methodology

Research Design

This research study employed the descriptive survey method. This was probably the best method which was available in collecting data for the purposes of describing a population large enough to be observed directly. This method assumes that whatever is observed at any one time is normal under the same conditions and can be conceivably be used at any one time in the future. The method has a broad coverage as well as low cost. Descriptive survey was used to explore and

understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviour and interactions.

Population and sample

For the purpose of this study, the population was made up of eighty divorced black guides and tourists from Victoria Falls. It was not practical in terms of time and cost to collect data from the large population hence a sample of 20 black male guides who had been married and divorced and 10 white female tourists who had been married and divorced were selected. Convenience sampling was used. The researcher found the sampling method very convenient because of the availability of the black guides and white female tourists who had been married and divorced.

Research instruments

The instruments that were used to gather data in this study were the questionnaire for 20 black male guides and the interview guide for 10 white female tourists who had been married and divorced.

Data presentation, analysis and interpretation

Question 1: Length of service as a guide

Table 1: Distribution by length of service

N=20

LENGTH OF SERVICE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT AGES
0- 5years	0	0
6- 10 yrs	0	0
11-15 years	0	0
16-20years	6	30
20years +	14	70
Totals	20	100

The question was asked to establish the extent to which black male guides interacted with the white female tourists. The length of service might indicate the level of exposure of the guides to white female tourists.

Table 1 above shows that (14) 70% of the guides have been in Guiding field and that they have been in contact with clients for over 20 years. It seems from the sample studied that they were no guides with less than 15 years of experience.

Question 2: Period of marriage

Table 2: Distribution by period of marriage

N=20

PERIOD OF MARRIAGE	FREQUENC Y	PERCENTA GES
0- 2 years	8	40
3- 5 years	12	60
5-7years	0	0
7-10years	0	0
Totals	20	100

Table 2 shows that (8) 40% of the respondents were married and divorced before the end of 2 years, while (12) 60% of the respondents indicated that their marriage did not last 5 years. This shows that marriages are short lived.

Question 3: Cultural issues

Table 3: Is it true that the difference in culture make interracial marriage difficult to manage?

N= 20

RESPONS E	FREQUENC Y	PERCENTAGE S
TRUE	15	75
FALSE	5	25
TOTALS	20	100

TRUE	15	75
FALSE	5	25
TOTALS	20	100

Table 3 indicates that (15) 75% of the respondents indicated that it was true that the difference in culture made interracial marriages difficult to manage and as the result might lead to marital breakdown, while (5) 25% of the respondents said it was not true that difference in culture made interracial marriages difficult to manage.

Question 4: Cultural issues

Table 4: Differences in cultural expectations lead to stress in an interracial marriage.

N =20

RESP ONSE	STR ON GLY AG REE	A G R EE	UNC ERT AIN	STR ON GLY DIS AG REE	DIS AG RE E	TO TA LS
FREQ UENC Y	12	4	3	1	0	20
PERC ENTA GES	60	20	15	5	0	100

The findings in Table 4 show that (16) 80% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively, that differences in cultural expectations led to stress in an interracial marriage, while (3)15% of the respondents were not certain whether or not disparity in cultural expectations led to stress and (1)5% did not agree to the statement.

Table 5; Question 5: Most interracial marriages breakdown because one partner might not be accepted by other family members.

N=20

RESPONSE	ALWAYS	UNCERTAIN	NO	TOTALS
FREQUENCY	14	3	3	20
PERCENTAGES	70	15	15	100

In Table 5, (14)70 % indicated that when one partner is not welcome into the other family, the marriage might not last, while (3)15% of the respondents were not certain about acceptance issues the remaining (3)15% of the respondents might have other reasons other than the statement above.

Question 6: ECONOMIC ISSUES: Black guides are dependent for money on the white tourists.

N=20

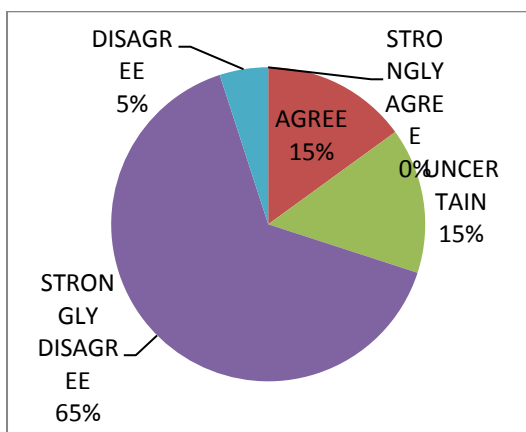


Figure 1. Comparison of dependency on white female tourists

The information above indicated that (14)70% of the respondents were not dependent for money on the white female tourists perhaps they had own source of income that they needed not to rely on the white spouse and probably they strongly disagreed to protect their ego and pride.

Perhaps the guides had own source of income that they needed not to depend on the white female tourists. (3)15% of the respondents agreed that black guides were dependent for money on white female tourists, while (3)15% were not certain.

4.4.3 Table 6; Question 7: Disparities in economic differences increase stress in the interracial marriage leading to divorce.

N=20

RESPONSE	ALWAYS	UNCERTAIN	NEVER	TOTALS
FREQUENCY	15	4	1	20
PERCENTAGE	75	20	5	100

Table 6, illustrates that (15)75% of the respondents agreed with the statement. Stress could be increased by one partner who might be overworked by the other partner of low income status. Marital breakdown might be the cause of feeling of inadequacy by the partner of low economic status leading to divorce. The statistics indicated (4)20% of the respondents who were uncertain about whether or not disparities in economic difference increased stress, while (1)5% disagreed the statement above.

Question 8: In your own opinion, in what ways do economic discrepancies lead to marital distress?

In response to the above question, the following factors were put forward:

The economically disadvantaged person is not invited to make financial decisions as one partner

with low economic status would feel a sense of inadequacy. Moreover, dependency on an individual who is economically advantaged brought stress and had an effect on the black guide's ego leading to the sense of worthlessness and affecting esteem levels of an individual.

Discussion of the findings

Due to the length of service, most black male guides (14)70% had experience in guiding for more than 20 years and that is how they met their wives. This statement seems to agree with the white female tourists' response as most of them indicated that they met their husbands at activities such as Bungee, canoeing activities, skydiving and 20% mentioned that they met their guides on the overland trip from Cape Town to Victoria Falls. Overland trip are scheduled tours that carry out safari tours on buses or open vehicles for specified number of days. It is evident from the findings that cultural related issues are one of the causes of interracial marriage breakdown between black male guides and white female tourists. This is shown by the fact that 75% of the respondents indicated that the differences in culture might lead to marital dissolution, while 80% agreed that cultural expectations led to stress in an interracial marriage ending in divorce.

Most interracial marriages breakdown if one partner is not accepted by the other family, 70% of the respondents agreed to this statement. Based on these results, the researcher concludes that cultural issues might lead to breakdown of interracial marriages. The white female tourists also seemed to suggest that incompatibility in terms of culture led to collapse of marriages. In support of the above, Kalmijn (2005) found that larger cultural differences between husband and wife increased risks of divorce. Cultural issues could include factors such as language, religion, food preferences and communication of partners among other.

Literature on economic issues indicated that unequal economic status of partners might lead to divorce. Pear (1993) says that men usually feel

inferior to receive command from women, especially when they feel economic inferiority and would feel taken advantage of. White people are generally in a more privileged position economically (Featherman & Houser, 1978).

From the findings in this study, 50% of the respondents disagreed that most white female tourists were economically privileged, 65% also strongly disagreed that black male guides were dependent on their white female tourist wives. What this means is that may be these guides were protecting their egos or they had their own sources of incomes so that they did not need to depend on their wives. But interestingly enough, when they were asked of economic disparities between the parties that led to divorce, 75% of the respondents agreed to the statement meaning that they agreed with the literature cited above. The comment from the white female tourists suggested that their spouses could not match up to their expectations and standards.

Their husbands were reluctant to carry out or perform home chores related tasks. Abusive relationships, infidelity, cultural clashes, lack of family support, compatibility problems and fear of polygamy were factored in by the divorced white female tourist as factors that led to their marital dissolution.

Among other factors, the collapsing of marriages might have been caused by expectations that never came to be. Further to marital problems that could have led to the breakdown were, the ulterior motives or hidden motives behind the interracial marriages. The hidden motives could have been the desire to obtain residence permits or citizenship, job opportunities and the pleasure of being in different countries.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the research study, the researcher came up with the following conclusions: Differences in culture between partners lead to marriage breakdown. In this study, it was not apparent that discrepancies in

economic status led to divorce, but the different levels of partners led to incompatibility which in turn influenced to divorce. **Recommendations**

It is paramount of importance for community mobilization and education on the subject of interracial relationships and marriages, so that the community is well informed about the advantages and disadvantages of engagement.

Couples in interracial marriages are recommended to organize their relationships, make decisions, and deal with each other and the larger community. Analysis revealed that couples experienced most issues as cultural issues; race was only present to them during their interactions with others from family members, community, and members of society. Couples in this study are recommended to organize their response to racial and cultural differences in a bid to increase dealing with their framing differences, emotional maintenance, positioning in relationship to family, community, and societal context. Thus, these strategies provide a basis for interventions that may help interracial couples identify what works for them and strengthen their relationships. The following recommended points are central to the maintenance and healthy tips of interracial marriages in curbing the issues related to dealing with differences, openness to interracial marriage, reasons for interracial relationships, appreciation beyond culture, social networks and support. It is vitally important for the couple to find support and position themselves within family, community, and societal context.

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