

Full Length Research Paper

The psychology of unmarried men in Nairobi: A case study of three bachelors over forty

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Equal number of males and females in Nairobi today says that they want to settle down and raise a family. More women than men, however, wish they were married and are currently in search for a life mate. However, although there are many marriageable women, some men still remain unmarried even after clocking the marriageable age. If we assume that marriage is a conscious and deliberate choice, then the internal logic, self-understanding, or rationales of such men should provide answers. This study therefore sought to discover and understand the perspective of men aged 40 and above who are still unmarried. The study explored the experiences of three men who are self acclaimed senior bachelors living and working in Nairobi. A convenient sample obtained through snowballing was used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and the data tape recorded. Phenomenological immersion and thematic analysis were employed in the analysis of the transcribed data. A thematic description was provided narrating the essence of the phenomenon as experienced by the participants. The study found out that early childhood experiences relating to parental relationships have a cardinal effect on whether or not a male views the institution of marriage positively or with dread. Financial considerations and economics of scale also play a huge role in the choice to marry or not. Prescriptions that may encourage men to marry by age 40 and change the current social trajectory include public social policies geared towards strengthening marriages, such as issuing decrees to ensure some lucrative jobs in government were restricted to men, youths' empowerment such as developing and implementing measures to promote the economic enfranchisement of young people which helps them to create choices in life.

Key words: Marriageable age, phenomenological immersion, theme analysis, parental relationships, social trajectory.

INTRODUCTION

The changing nature of society

The trend towards delaying marriage among men is emerging as a universal phenomenon. This study aims to find out why this is the case through a qualitative approach to research.

Over the decades, economic factors and social mores have increasingly made it difficult for young men in general to reach early independence (Pacana, 2009). Sociologists and demographers extrapolate that other subtle factors are also at work, including increasing numbers of cohabiting couples, more highly educated women

who have fewer highly educated men of comparable age to partner with, and more choices open to women than in decades past (Hazan and Shaver, 1987). Sociologists observe that for those reasons and others, they do not expect this upward trend in the ages for marriage to reverse (Whitehead and Popenoe, 1999).

In the Kenyan situation in particular, this trend of late marriage and less marriage has come about because of a confluence of interrelated economic, social and cultural changes, including remarkable educational gains by women, massive increases in the proportion of women who work for pay outside the home, major changes in the structure and functioning of the marriage market, extraordinary increases in the prevalence of premarital sex, and far reaching changes in values relating to marriage and family life (Wachege, 2003; Retherford et al., 2001).

Marriages and Bachelorhood in the USA

In the United States of America, in the 1950s, high school and college sweethearts tended to marry each other. A large percentage of those marriages did not last; however, almost two thirds of them ended in divorce in the 1960s and 1970s owing, according to one scholar, to the advent of egalitarian bohemian attitudes (Kathryn, 2005). As social forces changed the economic landscape, women began to demand "more" employment opportunities, financial credit, and sexual freedom, and men were not happy with this development.

Although a generalization about 1950s American culture, it has been argued that, women were expected to be "home-makers" and sexual gratification featured less among their foremost expectations. In contrast, men expected to have a lot of sex both in and out of the home. This produced a huge amount of emotional pain and marital discord (Kathryn, 2005). Divorce and separation began to be viewed as acceptable options for ailing couples (Levin, 2005). Public opinion about black women, however, differed: they should stay married and wait on their husbands. In the 1960s, however, the marriage enterprise changed even more with some women deciding not to get married (Pacana, 2009).

During the feminist movement, although most women got jobs, they were paid less than their male counterparts but some marriages were still held together. In the 1970s, owing to civil rights and women empowerment movements, women were treated as equal to men and women could make choices to get into or remain in unwanted marriages (Kathryn, 2005). Over the next decades, wife abuse became illegal, getting divorce became easier and more and more women were elected to political posts. These social changes ushered in a new ways of relating and marriage and mate selection was no longer business

as usual. According to social researchers at Rutgers University, recent data confirm that as an aftermath of toppling the patriarchal order, men in the United States of America are now waiting longer and longer for the first trip to the altar (Whitehead and Popenoe, 1999). The researchers elucidate that nowadays men do not need to get married to get what they principally want from marriage: sex. The men they interviewed confirmed these findings. Hence, some men feel comfortable putting off that long-term commitment until they have a few bucks in the bank and a mortgage to pay off (Ibid). The male participants of this longitudinal study aimed at understanding why marriage has declined in the United States also indicated that men want a woman who is able to take care of herself, which is somewhat of a reversal from the 'male machismo' attitude of just a generation or two ago. In the current wobbling global economy, men are looking for women who are financially able and who can contribute to the marriage and this phenomenon is becoming increasingly true for Kenya.

Marriages and bachelorhood in Kenya

Among most tribes in Kenya in pre-colonial times, marriage was a communal collectivist agenda. Although a male had a say in who eventually became his bride, the broader considerations were tilted towards conforming to certain preexisting parameters. Post independence Kenya differed very slightly from modernist America in terms of choosing a mate. In Kenya in the 1950s, marriages were still "semi-arranged". Some married the persons they were "expected to" marry.

Among the Gikuyu community, marriage and its obligations occupied a position of great importance (Kenyatta, 1965). One of the outstanding features in the Gikuyu system of marriage was and still is the desire of every member of the tribe to build up his own family group, and this way prolong his father's clan (Kenyatta, 1965). The paternal uncles thus had a strong say in whoever the man chose as a bride. Upon the bidding of the clan, some tribes were completely 'no go zones' and certain clans could not inter-marry. These restrictions tended to produce a certain kind of despondence and most males would just let the clan make that hard decision (Wachege, 2003). All this was over thrown after the modernization and Christianization of the Gikuyu people (Kenyatta, 1965). And with it, ideals like autonomy, self actualization and economic empowerment severed the strong hold the clan had on people (Ibid).

Post independence Kenya created conditions favourable to autonomous decision making. Capitalism, urbanization, and social mobility exposed many Kenyans to other options in deciding whom to marry (Wachege, 2003). In Kenya today, among most tribes, it is the

prerogative of the unmarried man to choose whom, when and whether he will marry. Although social pressure is still exerted in considerable measure, the male has the final say. That is however not the case for females.

In Kenya today, there is an apparent stigma that seems to be associated with single mothers; they are generally viewed as home-breakers and therefore isolated, yet the same judgment is not applied to men who are bachelors. This indicates that patriarchal attitudes are still alive (Wachege, 2003). In actual fact, senior bachelors seem to be gaining admiration even from unlikely quarters. The Lifestyle Magazine published by the Sunday Nation Newspaper on 17th December, 2000 highlighted a story on members of parliament who are Senior Bachelors. The feature acknowledged that *“Though it was generally difficulty for unmarried men to rise to leadership positions in traditional African society, a number of top past and current Kenyan politicians have been able to convince voters to elect them to parliament despite being bachelors”*. The feature highlighted the successes of significant people who all held senior government positions albeit bachelors and only got married much later in their lives. This gave the implication that senior bachelors were finding greater acceptance and more latitude in Kenya because tribal traditions have eroded.

Parental influence in delayed marriage among men

In the United States the worry that parents are currently raising a dependent generation has a long history (Ray, 2010). This is because universally it was expected that the first step in the path to adulthood was leaving home (Kathryn, 2005). Currently, it is easy to understand the reasons why young adults in their early 20s are living at home: they are still in school. But after 25, the empathy starts to wane (Pacana, 2009; Retherford et al., 2001).

The question then is, ‘how come some males in their 40s are still living with their parents? What’s going on?’ A lot of reasons have been cited: nowadays life is too expensive; there are no jobs; too much college debt. While these have a grain of truth in them, one wonders if all these are genuine reasons or illegitimate excuses! The one touted most often is that it is the parents’ fault. Parents today coddle their children too much. They hover and never cut the cord. They build up their self-esteem too much. And on and on it goes. The crux of the matter however is that these days, many older people--males and females-- just choose to remain unmarried. But the unmarried older woman hardly raises eyebrows or questions (Kathryn, 2005; Hazan and Shaver, 1987). People just quietly assume that she has had her share of bad relationships and let the matter pass (Kathryn, 2005). There is a more judgmental widespread assumption, which is that the older, unmarried woman could not ‘get

a man’; that is, that it is not by choice that she ended up (what used to be called) ‘a spinster’; and that all of her troubles—physical, emotional, and financial—are attributable to her being single.

On the other hand, the unmarried older man has a different story to tell. His life is uneasy as a subject of scrutiny and speculation. He is often dissected and analyzed. Not a day passes without some reference to his marital status--or lack of it (Nevid and Rathus, 2005; Wachege, 2003). In his social circles, he is whispered about everywhere. Apart from the barrage of questions about their lifestyles, they face suspicion from every corner. The pressure for them to conform to society’s expectations of marriage is overwhelming and often suffocating (The Globe Newspaper, 28th March, 2011).

According to the Global newspaper of 28th March 2011, a senior Bachelor was quoted complaining: *“People laugh and make jokes about us, but we suffer quietly, being ridiculed all the time, as if being single makes us less of men”* (The Globe Newspaper, 28th March, 2011). The same paper gave the story of Jesse, a 47-year-old bachelor who was passed over for promotion to be the Financial Controller of the blue-chip company he worked for. He was the most qualified and experienced person, but he did not get the promotion because the company felt he did not fit into the corporate culture because he was still single (The Globe Newspaper, 28th March, 2011).

Why do some men remain unmarried for so long?

Many theories have been advanced on why some males delay marriage or fail to marry all together. Raging from early childhood fixations to arrested development, to unresolved narcissistic tendencies to sexual dysfunction. All these theories tend to externalize the reason and place it outside the male person. Such theories seem to ignore the fact that the male has choices to make for his life and need therefore to take due responsibility of what happens to him.

However, few researchers like Weisman (2008) (an Engineer who at 49 was not married), have examined the rational mind of the bachelors with the intent of gaining a realistic understanding of their reasons. Weisman interviewed thirty-three diverse men (33 out of 1533) which seem he risked not getting a nice cross-section of males over the age of 40. He tries to correct for this second problem by carefully selecting a geographically diverse group of younger and older men, with both higher and lower incomes and with greater and lesser amounts of education. Weisman (2008) conducted a large scale survey of 1,533 men who self-identify as heterosexual and published his findings in a very insightful book: *‘So Why Have You Never been Married’* (Weisman, 2008).

From his research, he deduced that there are four groups of bachelors: Those who are sure they never want to marry (8%), those who do want to marry (31%), those who want to marry, but will not settle for anything less than perfection (31%) and lastly those who are not sure if they want to marry (30%). Weisman further observed that in 1980, just 6% of men who had reached their early 40s had never married, compared with 17% by 2008. Yet in his research, nearly three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) of these men insisted that they were not afraid of marriage. They were however, very much afraid of marrying the wrong woman. He put it succinctly: *"It's so important to these men to get it right"* (Weisman, 2008). But his observation and assertion begs the question: is it that these men have to get it right the first time or is it an act of ego-defense mechanism which attempts to help such men cope with anxiety and prevent the ego from being so overwhelmed? Such an idea may not be farfetched when one considers that not all psychologists and scholars view defense mechanisms as infantile or pathological. Waehler (1996), an associate professor of psychology at the University of Akron, in his book *Bachelor: the Psychology of men...* presents his conclusions resulting from several studies he undertook on the psychology of bachelors (Waehler is himself a bachelor). Defining bachelors as heterosexual men over the age of 40 who have never married, the author divides them into three types: flexible, entrenched and conflicted bachelors, and provides case histories for each type based on his interviews and questionnaires. Although the individual stories are interesting, Waehler's conclusion that all bachelors share core personality traits: Independence and self-reliance, emotional detachment, interpersonal passivity and idiosyncratic thinking, is not contrasted here by any documented research with married men. Much of the text deals with advice on how bachelors can lower their guard and get more in touch with their emotions. The book will be of interest primarily to bachelors who are interested in self-help and women who are interested in bachelors.

According to Corey (2009), ego defenses are normal behaviors that can have adaptive value provided they do not become a style of life that enables the individual to avoid facing reality. In this regard, the bachelors could actually just be prudently cautious! Weisman (2008) further observes that for some, money is a major reason why they will not commit to marriage. Those with little money felt that they would have nothing to offer a partner, with some suffering from low self-esteem and withdrawing from the dating pool; while those who are financially sound were terrified of what a bad divorce could do to them. Since divorce is an expensive matter, the bachelors could indeed have a legitimate concern. It is highly likely, through their unconscious psychological profiles, that most of the bachelors could have found great contentment in being a single, creating lives busy

with careers, friends and ambitions, and therefore view marriage as potentially disruptive. Yet such happiness is likely to be only short-term, since as the senior bachelor advances in age, he may experience or anticipate loneliness, diminishing his perceived happiness.

Weisman (2008) summarizes by opining that there is usually something more than meets the eye when a man of marriageable age goes beyond his time. He categorized the type of men who are likely to end up as bachelors as also confirmed by another scholar, Melissa Clark, also a professor of psychology, who attempted to explain why some men never marry. According to Clark (2012) some men make a conscious decision to spend their entire lives single. Clark gives five reasons why some men never marry as follows: fear of divorce, the bachelors' psyche, career, children and finances.

Financially challenged men

Some men are forced to remain bachelors because they are perpetually broke and feel unable to support and maintain a wife and subsequently, a family. These men shy away from approaching women for marriage. Other men find that they simply cannot keep up the financial obligations needed to raise a family, and so they opt to remain bachelors until such a time when they can afford it. But this time never comes and many end up living their lives as confirmed senior bachelors. Even in many African cultures, men have had to earn the respect of their in-laws, and this requires him to pay a sizeable amount as dowry to somewhat prove his ability to provide for their daughter and children. Men who have a good deal of money, or intend to, may choose to never marry because they fear two things. First, that a woman is only marrying them because of the money and second, that a woman is going to marry him and then divorces him, taking a large portion of his money with her when she goes. He may even just assume that she will stay with him but spend everything that he has frivolously and quickly (Clark, 2012).

The ageing playboy

This is the man who has always lived life on the fast lane and prefers to have a series of relationships and girlfriends without ever committing to any one of them. Often wealthy, this man will lure young women with the trappings of success. He views women as 'game' to be hunted and conquered, and is notorious for leaving in his wake, a trail of broken hearts. Even in their 60s, such men are observed to be still hunting in places where their children's age-mates frequent and, because they have money, they will still be seen with girls young enough to

be their daughters and grand-daughters. Weisman asserts that in the end however, when age finally catches up and they can no longer lure the young girls who want more action than they can give, such men find themselves lonely and miserable.

The disappointed man

According to Weisman, this type has gone through bitter experiences with women. He has been cheated on, and conned. He is quite scared of getting into a relationship and has vowed never to fall into the marriage trap. This man is not very happy to be a senior bachelor, but would rather stay put than face the risk of love upheavals once again. This man has a wall around him which is near-impossible to penetrate as he is always on guard. He may date but will be too cautious for any meaningful relationship to develop even though he may want one. According to Clark (2012) some men do not marry for the simple fact that they do not want to get divorced. These men might enjoy relationships with women, but they have seen too many people and/or families get devastated by divorce to want to even consider putting themselves in that position. Often, it was their own family that was hit by the anguish of divorce and they were deeply affected by that. Similarly, unmarried men may witness their married colleagues who want to give up at the first sign of disharmony. This may scare them since marriage is not an easy institution to maintain.

The man of ill-repute

This is a dreaded character because of the way he has treated women. Such men are the kind who rape minors, spread social diseases, are violent towards women, have served time in prisons for whatever reason...in other words, his character tends to lean more on the criminal or social deviant side. His relationships never last because of this unsavory nature. Even where he manages to get a wife or girlfriend, the relationship never lasts and he will in his lifetime go through very many women.

The medically challenged man

Some men were born impotent. They therefore remain bachelors because they fear the possibility of being ridiculed by a wife or the public in case she exposes them. There are those who deserve mention – the psychologically castrated man who looks, talks, and walks like a man, but is not really a man in terms of his behaviour and attitude. He knows only too well that it is futile to marry, and so opts to remain a bachelor. Others

have medical issues that would be a great burden to marriage partners. Sometimes, a man who is impotent may fear the stigma that comes from being branded as such and prefers to remain single for life. Such a man can be very generous and loving but will never consummate a relationship.

Unknown sexual orientation

This group of senior bachelors could be gay or bi-sexual. They opt to remain unmarried to avoid complicated situations, which could inadvertently crop up. The belief among many people is that a modern, healthy, good-looking man who has it all going for him- a man who frequents all the posh clubs in town - but who does not want marriage way past his 45th birthday, is probably gay or lacks libido.

The fussy idealist

This type is still waiting to marry an angel. He flees from women at any sign of imperfection. For him, the perfect woman exists somewhere but not in a place where he can meet and date her.

Children

Men who know that they do not want to have children may not marry because they know that most women, even those who think that they do not at one point, typically do want to have those little babies sometime. Couples that marry with the understanding that there will be no children may run into great difficulty when one or the other of them changes his or her mind. This is often a woman who begins to feel her biological clock ticking away and she can end up angry and resentful towards her husband, even though this was a part of the marriage from the start.

Career

Men who have careers that are very demanding or that they are entirely devoted to often will not marry. It is a simple matter of time and dedication. When their heart and soul lies in a career, there may not be room for a woman to share his life in the way that marriage requires if it is to be successful. They will often spend a great deal of time on their education and then on building up a business. After that, they are keeping their career going and this is where their primary focus is.

Clark asserts that not every man will get married in his lifetime and thinks that not every man should get married

in his lifetime (Clark, 2012). She portends that if a man makes the decision not to marry, it may be for one of the above reasons, or some other reason. Yet there are still many men of marriageable age who, even with all circumstances working in their favour, will still either delay marriage or not marry. This however, does not seem to be either a precise or an insightful conclusion on Clark's part. It is for this reason that the researcher decided to carry out a phenomenological research on the experiences of aged men who delay marriage.

METHODOLOGY

A research philosophy is a belief about the way in which data about a phenomenon should be gathered, analyzed and used (Blaxter et al., 2006). The term epistemology (the study of what is knowable) as opposed to doxology (the study of opinion or of what is believed to be true) encompasses the various philosophies of research approach (Holstein and Gubrium, 1994). The purpose of science, then, is the process of distinguishing opinion (doxa) from knowledge (episteme), as Socrates first said. Two major research philosophies have been identified in the Western tradition of science, namely positivist (sometimes called scientific) and interpretivist (also known as anti-positivist) (Creswell, 2009).

The American anthropologist Clifford Geertz in his published essays in interpretive anthropology under the title "Local Knowledge" adds to the philosophy. The goal of interpretive analysis is to spell out the implicit or unstated presuppositions, implications, or "meanings" (the goals, values, and pictures of the world) that make this or that action, practice, object, or pattern of sounds intelligible to members of some culture or interpretive community in some specified con-text (Geertz, 1983).

Positivism

Positivists believe that reality is stable and can be observed and described from an objective viewpoint (Levin, 1988), that is without interfering with the phenomena being studied. They contend that phenomena should be isolated and that observations should be repeatable. This often involves manipulation of reality with variations in only a single independent variable so as to identify regularities in, and to form relationships between, some of the constituent elements of the social world (McLeod, 2003; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Thus predictions can be made on the basis of the previously observed and explained realities and their inter-relationships. Positivism has had a long and rich historical tradition (Blaxter et al., 2006). It is so embedded in the social sciences that knowledge claims not grounded in positivism are simply dismissed as unscientific and therefore invalid (Holstein and Gubrium, 1994). This view is indirectly supported by Alavi and Carlson (1992) who, in a review of 902 Information Systems research articles, found that all the empirical studies were positivistic in approach (Alavi and Carlson, 1992). Positivism has also had a particularly successful association with the physical and natural sciences.

There has, however, been much debate on the issue of whether or not this positivist paradigm is entirely suitable for the social sciences with many authors calling for a more pluralistic attitude towards social science research methodologies (Hirschheim, 1985; Kuhn, 1970; Bjørn-Andersen, 1985; Remenyi and Williams, 1996). Indeed, some of the difficulties experienced in social science research, such as the apparent inconsistency of results, may be

attributed to the inappropriateness of the positivistic paradigm for the social science domain. Likewise, some variables or constituent parts of reality might have been previously thought unmeasurable under the positivist paradigm--and hence went unresearched (Galliers, 1991).

Interpretive research

Interpretive researchers contend that only through the subjective interpretation of and intervention in reality can that reality be fully understood (Blaxter et al., 2006). The study of phenomena in their natural environment is key to the interpretivist philosophy [Geertz, 1983], together with the acknowledgement that scientists cannot avoid affecting those phenomena they study. The researcher used Descriptive Phenomenological method to find meaning by intuiting what was essential to the phenomenon being studied. This helped the researcher to get a sense of the lived meaning of each description and related it to what is known about the phenomenon of interest in general. The researcher being at age 60 was conscious that the research participants were likely to experience her as a mother figure and therefore an anticipated Transference (participant's unconscious shifting to the researcher of feelings and fantasies that are reactions to significant others in the participant's past) situation would be valuable as its manifestations would allow the participants to re-experience a variety of feelings that would otherwise be inaccessible and hence express feelings and desires that would be buried in their unconscious. Various authors admit that there may be many interpretations of reality, but maintain that these interpretations are in themselves a part of the scientific knowledge they are pursuing.

The study is therefore in support of Sigmund Freud's theory of psychosexual development. Freud believed that personality develops through a series of childhood stages during which the pleasure-seeking energies of the id become focused on certain erogenous areas. According to Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality, the id is the personality component made up of unconscious psychic energy that works to satisfy basic urges, needs, and desires. The id operates based on the pleasure principle, which demands immediate gratification of needs. Working initially in close collaboration with Joseph Breuer, Freud elaborated the theory that the "mind" is a complex energy-system, the structural investigation of which is the proper province of psychology (Freud et al, 2000).

Interpretivism does not have a tradition that is any less glorious than that of positivism, nor is it shorter (Blaxter et al., 2006; Bjørn-Andersen, 1985; McLeod, 2003). In this research, the researcher embraces the interpretive and qualitative approach because she believes it is going to give her an in-depth understanding of her research participants and their multiple ways of experiencing reality. The researcher believes in epistemic relativism; that is there is no singular reality 'out there' and that indeed, there are multiple realities existing simultaneously. This relativistic way of interpreting the world and ascribing arbitrary meanings which emanates from a person's beliefs and perceptions is what phenomenologist concern themselves with. In this case the researcher shall be exploring the realities of her research participants' world as they experience it juxtaposing it with her heuristic ethical beliefs that, by their late twenties, young men leave their parents' homes and started their own families.

Why phenomenology

The aim of phenomenology, as propounded by Husserl (1982), is to

study human phenomenon without considering questions of their causes, their objective reality, or even their appearances. The aim is to study how human phenomena are experienced in consciousness, in cognitive and perceptual acts, as well as how they may be valued or appreciated aesthetically. Phenomenology seeks to understand how persons construct meaning and a key concept is inter-subjectivity. This differs from psychoanalysis in that the development in psychoanalysis has paralleled both developments in the theory of knowledge as well as the change in cultural trends. Creating meaning is central to the psychoanalytic process, but there are divergent views as to how this happens: by articulating meaning, by uncovering meaning, by constructing or deconstructing meaning. The narrative tradition in which the central point is to tell stories about oneself is discussed more thoroughly in the paper (Tidsskr, 1998). Our experience of the world, upon which our thoughts about the world are based, is inter-subjective because we experience the world with and through others. Whatever meaning we create has its roots in human actions, and the totality of social artifacts and cultural objects is grounded in human activity.

It is from this understanding that Creswell (1998) then postulates that *"Researchers search for essentials, invariant structure (or essence) or the central underlying meaning of the experience and emphasize the intentionality of consciousness where experiences contain both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image and meaning (Creswell, 1998)*. This is what this researcher set out to do in order to uncover the lived experiences of being an aged bachelor. According to Rossman (1998), phenomenology as a tradition and a discipline of study is rooted in Germany philosophy which focuses on the essence of lived experiences. Those engaged in phenomenological research focus on in-depth meaning of a particular aspect of experience, assuming that through dialogue and reflection, the quintessential meaning of the experience will be captured. Language is viewed as the primary symbol system through which meaning is both constructed and conveyed (Holstein and Gubrium, 1994).

The purposes of phenomenological inquiry are descriptions, interpretation and critical self-reflection into the "world as World" (Van Manen, 1990.) Central are the notions of intentionality and caring on the part of the researcher. The researcher believes that a phenomenological framework is best suited to answer her most pertinent question and achieve her noble objectives - namely and chiefly, improving the lives of her subjects by identifying the main problem with their lives and by recommending public policies or measures to address that problem.

Participant's sample

The participants comprised three males aged 40 and above who had never married or cohabited with a woman. They identified themselves as heterosexual in orientation and indicated that they had never married or been in any form of committed relationships. Celibate senior bachelors firmly confined to religious duty were not included in the study. The researcher used a convenient sample and the sampling procedure used was rather novel. It involved getting the first participant to introduce the researcher to one other participant and the second one to introduce a third. This sampling technique is also known as 'snowballing' or chain referencng. Its basic premise is that birds of a feather flock together. A qualitative researcher does not place high premium on the number of participants or how representative of the population a sample is.

Unlike the quantitative approaches, qualitative methods do not seek generalizations and therefore even a single participant is viewed as a valid source of data. The validity and reliability of the

source is not in the numbers but on the quality of their lived experiences (McLeod, 2003).

Means of data collection

The researcher undertook to explain to the participants that the research was a study meant to be part of the partial fulfillment of a Diploma in Psychological Counseling course requirement. The researcher explained the purpose of the research, made it clear how she would treat the information given with confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher explained to the research participants that she would tape record the interviews and the tapes would be handled with utmost discretion by the researcher and her course supervisor. The researcher also allowed the participants to freely choose to participate in the research by informing them that they were free to drop out of the study at any time and made it clear to them that they could choose to respond to all the questions or choose to leave out any questions they were not comfortable answering.

The researcher made sure that in the interview process the research participants were free to express themselves by creating a relaxed atmosphere imbued with acceptance and deep empathy. The researcher explained that for purposes of data analysis, she would transcribe the tape recorded information and after she had synthesized the data together with the supervisor the tapes would be destroyed.

The researcher believes that a good interview is more like a discussion than a question and answer session. Through argumentation, the researcher managed to obtain interesting information relating to the research question. The researcher was careful not to go too far. An interview that ends in an argument is unproductive; thus after a lively debate, the researcher tried to calm things down by asking less emotive questions bearing in mind that the amount of emotion that can be safely introduced largely depends on the character of the respondent. The researcher also used her counseling skills whenever she felt that the respondent was holding back information, to get them to open up.

Data analysis

This research is a qualitative one whereby the researcher wanted to capture the participant's feelings and perception of how it is to be a man over forty years and not married. Being a phenomenological study, it behooved the researcher to enter into the field of perception of the participants and understand deeply the meanings attached to their expressions. Creswell (1998) states that phenomenological data analysis cascades through the process of data reduction, the analysis of specific statements and themes and a search for all possible meanings. In this quest, the researcher needed to set aside all pre-judgments, bracketed 'off' her experiences and was open to surprises.

Firstly the researcher transcribed the data from the tape recorded interviews and made a legible transcript. Secondly, the researcher listened to the tape recorded interviews intently and repeatedly at the same time read and re-read the transcripts. This was done severally and

Table 1. Qualitative data categories.

Data categories	Internal disposition
	External influence

Table 2. Data categories and main response themes.

Data categories	Themes
Internal disposition	Theme of feelings/emotions
	Theme of memories
	Theme of sexuality
	Theme of decision making
	Theme of material development
	Theme of blame excuses and defensiveness
External influence	Theme of finances
	Theme of parental relationships

it is referred to as phenomenological emersion (McLeod, 2003). The researcher continued listening to the tape recordings and reading the transcript until she reached a point of saturation whereby no new information was being registered in the researchers' awareness. The researcher was deeply caught up in the data and had an active engagement with the data and this evoked the phrases she then used to describe the meaning units. After immersing herself in the transcripts to saturation the researcher worked closely and intensively with the text, annotating it closely ('coding') for insights into the participants' experience and perception of their world.

As the analysis developed, the researcher catalogued the emerging codes, and subsequently began to look for patterns in the codes. These patterns are called 'themes'. Themes are recurring patterns of meaning (ideas, thoughts, feelings) throughout the text (Moustakas, 1994). Themes are likely to identify both something that *matters* to the participants (that is an object of concern, topic of some import) and also convey something of the *meaning* of that thing, for the participants. Thirdly, the researcher began to write down and memo the ideas emanating from the immersion. Certain statements seemed to have particular essence and the researcher wrote them down in the form of statements that formed some commonality. The researcher then grouped them and sorted them out as common meaning units (Bell, 2010). Fourthly, the meaning units that had formed began to cluster and form categories and themes with similar or identical meanings. Data analysis was done from a 'bottom-up' model. This means that the researcher generated codes *from* the data, rather than using a pre-

existing theory to identify codes and then applying it to the data. Quintessentially, phenomenological studies do not test theories, but they are often relevant to the development of existing theories (Moustakas, 1994; Blaxter et al., 2006; McLeod, 2003).

From the analysis and synthesis of the data, two broad categories were formed, namely; Internal Disposition and External Influence (Table 1).

Certain statements seemed to coalesce together and formed similar themes under the two broad categories as illustrated in Table 2.

These themes were distilled further to form sub-themes. Each theme captured the essence of the meaning the participants conveyed about their experiences. After further scrutiny, the researcher was able to come up with the essence of the experiences as expressed by the participants. Having identified meaning units, themes and subthemes, the researcher proceeded to display the data through a process of thematic narration (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological analysis encourages an open-ended dialogue between the researcher and the participants and may, therefore, lead one to see things in a new light. Consistent with the phenomenological philosophy, the researcher believes she was able to capture what participants felt about why they have delayed in getting married from their own internal frame of reference.

Themes explained

A variety of feelings and emotions were experienced by the research participants in relation to the phenomenon of delayed marriages. The participants expressed anxiety and worry about the future. They felt angry at how things had turned out to be and carried with them feelings of rejection, guilt, loneliness. These were familiar feelings for the participants since they had experienced them from childhood in their family of origin. Participants remember feeling angry at their parents whenever the parents separated or quarreled. All three participants had a special sympathy for their mothers having witnessed them being mistreated by their dads. The participants lived with that sense of helplessness and they had to painfully accept that they could do nothing to help their mothers as illustrated in some of the experienced that they shared¹. Participants expressed their deep negative

¹ "...well it was painful as a child growing up...I do not think any child would want to go through that kind of scenarios... it was rather uncomfortable , rather painful seeing my parents separating that way... ..Sometimes he (father) used to fight with my mother but we used to stop it....." ".....and finally the last break up was what was final. It was complete.it was quite a challenge..." ".....I had already begun to accept to adjust to the circumstances now that I was really facing, I was not going to fight it but I just accepted it...." "....I was not happy, sometimes he (father) used to

feelings about their parents' marriage. The traumatic experiences they had witnessed with their parents seemed to have influenced their attitudes towards marriage².

The participants had feelings of rejection. When the parents separated, as children they felt like they were left on their own. Sometimes the participants had attempted to create relationships with women and when such relationships did not work, they had feelings of rejection as if they were not good enough. They felt that their inadequacy contributed to their being rejected³.

Participants also had memories of bad times as they were growing up. They remembered how their parents started their quarrels and sometimes they would take courage to separate them⁴. The participants felt anxious about their economic well-being not being good enough making decision to get married. They expressed their to sustain a marriage. They were anxious about the passage of time and the fact that they did not intend to remain single forever⁵.

Participants felt that finance was a major issue in concern that these days unlike in the past, girls would not consider to marry a man who was not financially able.

make a lot of noise...." Nobody was taking care of the family; it is every man for himself..." "We are destroying each other..." "To hell with family, and everyman to himself..."

² *"...I used to respect marriage as you can see I have told you about my parents; you can see what happened okay for some it works...for others it does not but to make me come to really respect marriages.... I cannot really say I respect marriages as a whole probably I would disrespect the person who spoils the marriage but what am seeing nowadays even amongst my age group somebody after one year they have not lasted even in marriage after one year..."*

³ *"...I used to have one.....(girlfriend) then I stopped, she was moving around..." "Just decided to stay..." "I went into slight depression.... to the point of you have no money... and you have been rejected, by this girl..."*

⁴ *"the relationship was rather rocky, from time to time they would separate...and I think it went on that way until eventually they decided to make final and they got a divorce" it was actually my mother who moved out of the house... our father was looking after us". "....now I would say there are quite a number of reasons...I would say my drinking in early stages played a major role....". "I would not say there was too much bonding..." "....mmm... it was painful... as a child growing up to see.... That kind of scenario... rather uncomfortable..." "Rather painful seeing my parents separating that way..." "It was quite a challenge... I had to look after my younger brothers and sisters..." "I was not happy...."*

⁵ *"....I would say at times it is quite lonely coz you are in the house alone."It is not easy also"*

They felt that having been brought up by financially able parents, they would not want to bring up their children with financial difficulties. Participants felt they did not have good jobs that attracted adequate financial resources. They felt they needed to make more money in order to start a family⁶.

The participants felt worried that time was passing and they had not stabilized enough to get a life partner. They had not settled down to getting intimate to a woman they could consider marrying⁷. Participants felt that living without a partner was lonely. They felt that every man would like to have company. They experienced loneliness especially when they grew up and lived on their own⁸. The participants expressed their feelings about sexuality and admitted that though not married they were sexually active and enjoyed sex for fun⁹.

Participants expressed feelings of regrets especially when they would go to parties and end up sleeping with women whom they were not in reality interested in. The participants felt empty in that all they were up to was to meet their sexual desires in the short-run¹⁰.

Participants felt that present day marriages were not

⁶ *"....I would say that -let's say it's financial security..." "The kind of girls we have around today if you do not have money... you are as good as nothing..." "....These are not the 1970's or 1960's They were assured of that employment...." "Would like them to have something better..." "Stabilize my life....something that can bring me income...get married after that..." "The reason I have been like this is basically the issue of economics... getting stable employment has been difficult..." "There is also the issue of the other side.... The women of today.... a question of financial stability..." "Unpredictable financial situation that is prevailing in the country or you come from a wealthy family where the family has acquired substantial assets and are able to pass that to the next generation..." "How are you going to look after the family.... I would not like to send my children to the rural areas..."*

⁷ *"...I realized being in that area, being in that environment the possibility of me getting somebody Who I would like to spend the rest of my life with, the chances were zero..." "....they will tell you, you do not even have a wife.... but of course it touches you and you try to fight back by saying....there is always time for that..." "But when you go home you ask yourself I do not have a wife .." "of course you feel like you want the ground to swallow you because you are not going to give somebody a list of all your excuses....."*

⁸ *"and you are watching that TV and you are like 'this house is too big!... you are just there alone...' "I am used to it". "....it is lonely when you are alone... When you are with friends out there you may not realize it, but when you are alone that's when it hits you..."*

⁹ *"....I am a very sexually active person....." "As a man reaching my age it is quite difficult trying to contain it..." "I have slept with women ..."*

¹⁰ *"...but it is not a situation that I am proud of...it is something I can put an end to..." "....Spiritually I realize it is a short term solution..." "I have been 70% successful for the last 2 years I have not done any kind of sexual activity..." "well it is rather difficult because sometimes it will come through phone pornographic materials."*

stable. Many of their colleagues had gotten married and divorced sooner than later. They wondered “why bother” after all¹¹. Participants felt they were somehow responsible for their decision to remain single. They had sort of chosen it as a lifestyle¹². Participants experienced mistrust for women when their first attempted relationships did not work¹³.

Participants felt that they had an opportunity to change their mind along the way if they got the right partner. They felt that one day they would get married however old they might be¹⁴.

The research participants tended to blame external sources for their predicament. They expressed disappointment in the way today’s girls behave and the failure by society to provide support systems. Some participants indicated that though their aunts tended to understand their predicament better, their uncles on the other hand did not seem to understand. They blamed the uncles for lack of understanding¹⁵.

Other participants blamed their parents indicating that they did not prepare well for their children’s future making it difficult for them to settle¹⁶. Participants would observe their parents disagreeing on issues raising arguments

¹¹ “...In fact in my mind I was just saying I would just get a girl, let’s just get a kid from her then it is all over.”

¹² “...I just like staying single.....” “...It is just problems, that is why I decided to stay like that.” “...I decided to stay with nobody, not to disturb anybody...” “..... I decided to stay by myself alone...” “...I am very selective when it comes to friends...”

¹³ “From then on I do not know, I just developed mistrust in ladies”, “I looked and thought if that is the marriage life. Let me live”..., “I decided to wait and see, you cannot marry for the sake of it”, “what I got from that was that it is not a question of men and stability it was more or less a question of financial stability”.

¹⁴ “... I see hope... I hope I will be able to get married but it depends on my generating stable constant income....”

¹⁵ “...I place a lot of blame to our society, I place a lot of blame to earlier generation...they have not enabled the society to remain cohesive...” “...kikuyu community was very well organized...” “...Somewhere along the way it has broken down it is a consequence as to why many men are getting to the age of 40 and are not marrying...” “...mainly the uncles, the men...well should I say it is like they come from a different planet coz their life was very easy in the 1960’s and 1970’s. They do not reflect back and see the challenges men in today’s society go through.... Having said that I place a lot of blame to our society...” “nowadays people are bad...” “...I used to respect marriages...now I cannot really say I respect marriages...but what I am seeing nowadays even amongst my age groups...”

¹⁶ “... those who had the foresight to prepare and plan for their children...” “...are the one today who are able to get married as young as 25 years old...” “...This is the difference we are facing.....it is about people losing touch with their roots.....so we cannot turn around what is happening in today’s society....it is a complete departure from what used to happen before”.

which the participants did not like¹⁷. Participants expressed the feelings of mixed up relationships within the family system. Boundaries had become diffuse¹⁸. Participants expressed feelings of depression after they parted with girlfriends¹⁹.

The participant gave their experience of failure to launch from the family of origin. They indicated that they were still living in their family home at the age of over forty years²⁰.

The participants felt that when they were growing up, they did not interact much with their fathers as they appeared to be too busy and they insinuated that they had more close contact with their mothers. The mothers were more available and taught the children how to read and write as they helped the children with their homework²¹.

DISCUSSION

There are a number of things going on that that have contributed to men getting married late. One is that there are other kinds of living arrangements that are socially acceptable now that may not have been in the past, such as living with someone without being married, living on your own, or even living as a single parent. So people may feel they have options that they did not use to have. Another factor in some cases is that the men may want to get their education done and get launched in a career before they settle down and get married. From the results

¹⁷ “Sometimes they were not understanding each other”. “Sometimes he used to make a lot of noise”...My father started it, he was caught involved in a lover relationship with somebody else”.

¹⁸ “Some rifts started developing between me and my father probably I do not know whether it was because I started becoming rebellious...it was like telling you they do not like you... that is the kind of attitude the.. attitude I took”.

¹⁹ “..... I have lost this person....I went into slight depression.... Very.... not slight ...to the point of ... you have no money and you have been rejected by this girl!.... and actually it was not her fault I have myself to blame so ... would walk in town you are hating yourself...you are talking to yourself ...like nobody like me”

²⁰ “We are okay. We do not live together. I stay with the 4th born in this house where we were left for” “...it was my mother who moved out...” “...but basically it was the rest of us remained in the house...”

²¹ “...my father was caught involved in a love relationship with somebody else... and took a great toll on my mum.. who I believe was there for him, but he was not there for her.....” “may be the time when we got time to talk to our father was in the evening and may be on Saturdays or weekends....” “...I would not say there was too much bondingdad stays with another woman...” “...the person whom I had very close contact with was my mother”.

of this research, respondents were heard to say that it is important, at least for men, to be financially able to provide for a family before they get married. It may [also] be that some couples feel they do not have the financial wherewithal to have a wedding yet. It is generally argued that economically speaking, married couples tend to have more income and more wealth. Some of that might have to do with who chooses to get married, that is, people who are educated have less of a decline in their marriage rates than people who are less educated. We also know that the kind of partnership marriage encourages is one in which you plan for the future, share your assets, build wealth together. There is no that evidence yet for people who merely live together. So it would be of concern if there is a growing gap between people who are married and people who are not, in terms of the wealth and income that they have. Another thing to think about is that many of our organizations and institutions are built on the assumption that people are married, that does not mean that they cannot change or should not change, but it means there would be some adjustment. The third thing to think about is the living conditions and well being of children. There is research indicating that children have a higher likelihood of turning out well if they come from a household where their parents are married. Most children turn out well regardless of whether their parents are married or not, so the author is not at all trying to suggest that children will turn out badly if their parents are not married. But there is a somewhat higher likelihood that they will face issues, and some of those may include economic hardship.

So the issue of men delaying marriage matters. It might matter for their children; it might matter for the institutions that they operate in, such as their employers and the nation's tax base. If, for example, people who are not married are less able to build wealth, then that will affect the overall wealth of the country.

The study found out that delay in marriage was based on a choice by the research participants. This choice was made rather rationally and various factors like economics, mate suitability and social status were put into consideration. Although the participants seemed contented with their singleness, they expressed hope that someday, they may find a suitable partner and get married.

The theme of choice resonates well with the humanistic theory of personality which views each individual as unique, deriving and viewing the world from different perspectives and capable of creating and reinventing his/her life through self actualization. Humanistic theory examines the import an individual places on being true to the choices one makes and how those choices align with aspirations to affect significant transformation in the direction one's life is taking. Humanistic theories focus on how external stimulus affects one's behavior, with little or no concentration on one's personality traits or the

motivations driving one's behavior. Humanistic theory derives a lot of its ideas from existentialism as a philosophy. Existentialism postulates that one's life is determined by one's choices and is not predetermined by fate (Nevid and Rathus, 2005).

The study also established that parental relationship issues had also greatly contributed to the men remaining unmarried. Yet there is a general lack of understanding among parents of the impact social environment has on the fate of their sons. Cruel marriages seemed to have contributed to dissuading the participants from marriage under the fear that they may also end up mistreating or being mistreated by their spouses and eventually separating or divorcing. The study seems to confirm the attachment theory. The influence of the mother-child attachment bond which is critical in shaping an infants' brain, profoundly influencing its self-esteem, its expectations of others, and its ability to attract and maintain successful relationships should not be ignored.

It would seem then that the success or failure of a son's first love—the attachment bond—has a life-long effect on him and his relationships. Individuals who experience confusing, frightening, or broken emotional communications during their childhood often grow into adults who have difficulty understanding their own emotions and the feelings of others. This limits their ability to build or maintain successful relationships.

The observation by participants that divorce rates amongst their peers were on the increase was also a major contributory factor to the fear that they may get married and end up divorced. Thus the role of peer influence should not be gain said. The study also confirmed what the literature review noted that men do not actually fear getting married as much as they fear entering into a marriage that fails.

The research participants also brought out the notion that it was obvious they could easily get women for sexual gratification even when they were not married and this made them feel comfortable and not in a rush. Access to easy sex seems to contribute to a no-hurry policy. The research participants indicated that they were significantly driven by the availability of sex and derived a lot of pleasure in free sex.

Conclusion

Parental relationship does have a significant impact on how sons view themselves and their relationships. Economic factors play a major role in whether or not a man feels ready to start his own family. While the family structure is rapidly weakening as the number of unmarried men over forty increases, public policies could change its current trajectory. On the basis of the findings presented here, the author believes that the single most

important policy change would be guaranteed provision of care and love to children in their early childhood to avoid bringing up individuals who have broken emotional communications that may create difficulties in adult life and less understanding of their own emotions and feelings of others. The author also recommends *that* institutions be on the look-out as they recruit at senior positions to give preference to married couples in order to encourage wealth creation. Furthermore, policies should dissuade couples from living together without committing themselves to marriage.

For instance, some parents are secure enough to live the life that works for them, without assuming that the same life would work best for each of their children. Perhaps, what parents can give to their children, that is more valuable than just about anything else is faith in themselves and the confidence to live an authentic life and not just an expected one.

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