

**DIVORCE AMONG WOMEN: A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES**

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**Abstract**

This study attempts to find the most significant factors which caused divorce by using multiple logistic regression analysis among 330 women Aizawl who had been or are still married. It was found that out of 15 variables, only 6 variables viz., women occupation, husband occupation, higher education, number of children, premarital birth and presence of children are significant. Out of these 6 variables, women education, husband occupation, higher education and presence of children have most significant impact in causing divorce among women.

**Key words:** Divorce; Mizoram; multiple logistic regression; socio-economic; marital histories.

**I. Introduction**

Divorce, according to Bohanna (1973), is a complex phenomenon in human relationship and it takes place in six stages, these are emotional divorce stage, economic divorce stage, legal divorce stage, co-parental divorce stage, community and psycho- divorce stages. Thus, Lands (1975) explained that divorce comes as a climax to a long story of unhappiness and it provides a legal way out of a situation which one or both parties have considered intolerable.

The Mizo society in pre-modern times was strictly based on what is known as an extreme patriarchal society. But today, Mizoram is the only state where women voters outnumber men (<http://www.oneindia.com/guwahati/mizoram-the-only-state-where-women-voters-outnumber-men-1347273.html>). In the Mizo society, a woman may lose her reputation if she commits adultery and she is termed as 'Uire' (adulteress). In such instances, if her husband does not forgive her, she has to leave her house empty-handed, with no claims of over her properties including her own children. In some cases, husbands may even take away the wife's personal possessions.

Divorce was comparatively fewer in the traditional society as the partners were afraid that they will have to pay back the bride price by taking initiative in divorce. Since money was scarce, it controlled the divorce rate (Thomas E.J, 1993). This is no longer the case as bride price is a very meager as no changes in the amount has been made even with the passage of time.

According to the Shillong Times published on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015, 2011 census revealed that Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland are three states of the North East which have the dubious distinction of having more divorced or separated women in proportion to men and Mizoram attained the highest number of divorced or separated women with 6.9 percent. Four of the five states with the highest proportion of divorced or separated women in relation to those ever married (ranging from about 7% to 2%) are from North East – Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Sikkim in that order.

Divorced Mizo women are now entitled to inherit property and are protected to a great extent from being divorced at the whims of their husbands under the newly enacted Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014. The Act which disbands the customary law of the strictly patriarchal Mizo society allows divorced women to inherit property and also protects them from being divorced by their husbands at their will. (<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-divorced-mizo-women-now-entitled-to-inherit-property-2039987>).

## II. Literature Review

The family that emerges from a marriage has some basic functions which makes it unique. Bilton, Bonnett, Jones, Sheard, Stanworth and Webster (1981) observed that in all societies the family must perform some basic functions involving conception and birth, regular intercourse, socialization and maintenance functions of providing economic support and physical protection for the children as they mature. In fact, each spouse is a source of emotional support and companionship for the other (Filani, 1985).

Ono (1998) finds that at low levels, women's earnings help stabilize marriage by relieving economic pressure, especially if the husband does not earn much. At higher levels, in contrast, women's earnings destabilize marriage by allowing the wives to leave. Sayer and Bianchi (2000) find otherwise: women's earnings have little effect when husbands' incomes are low but a strong protective effect on marital stability when husbands' incomes are high.

Age at marriage is often found to have a considerable positive effect on marriage stability, both in a Western context (Murphy 1985, Martin and Bumpass 1989) and in African populations (Locoh and Thiriart 1995). Isiugo-Abanihe (1988) did not find a significant effect. I will test for a non-linear effect of age at marriage, because it can be assumed that the positive effect of age at marriage on marriage stability decreases with an increasing age at marriage.

In some cases the relationship between female education and divorce is found to be positive (Isiugo-Abanihe 1998). Under other circumstances its influence appears to be non-linear, with the lowest divorce rates observed among uneducated women and among the highest educational groups (Brandon 1990; Tilson and Larsen 2000, Takyi 2001).

Sexual experience in adolescence has been related to subsequent marital experience. Initiation of sexual experience before marriage is negatively related to marital stability (Kahn & London, 1991). Kahn and

London (1991) argue that this relationship may not be causal but can be explained because those who engage in premarital sex also have characteristics that detract from marital stability. Heaton (1993) questions interpretation of their results regarding selectivity, leaving open the possibility that a causal connection exists. The relationship between the nature of premarital sexual experience and marital stability has received less attention. Adult-child sexual contact is related to earlier initiation of sex and adolescent sexual activity (Browning&Laumann, 1997). By implication, forced sex may detract from subsequent marital stability. Research also indicates that having a birth before marriage detracts from marital stability (Billy, Landale, & McLaughlin, 1986).

According to Castro Martin (1991), women's educational attainment and marital stability are also positively related. But which is contradicted to our finding that women educational attainment is inversely proportional to marital stability.

### III. Methodology

The present study is based on primary data collected during the month of June, 2015. A total 330 ever married (women include those who are "married" and "divorced") women between the ages of 17 to 55 years were interviewed in Aizawl. Detailed information on socio-economic and marital histories were collected with a structured questionnaire by well-trained researchers. 15 variables with one response variable are taken into consideration, response was coded 1 if a woman had ever been divorced and 0 otherwise and processed through software R version 2.10.1 using  $\chi^2$  – test and multiple logistic regression as techniques of analysis.

### IV. Results & Discussions

**Table 1:** Distribution of divorced and union by socio-economic and marital histories

Variables	Category	Divorced	Union	Total	$\chi^2$
Women Occupation(WO)	Pub. sector	25	77	102	0.032 (p=0.858)
	Others	58	170	228	
Duration of stay with Parent(DSWP)	>25	28	122	150	6.143 (p<0.013)
	≤ 25	55	125	180	
Age at marriage(AM)	>25	26	118	144	6.833 (p<0.009)
	≤ 25	57	129	186	
Husband occupation(HO)	Pub. sector	21	123	144	15.157

	Others	62	124	186	(p<0.000)
Cohabitation(Co)	Yes	4	25	29	2.179
	No	79	222	312	(p=0.141)
Parents divorced(PD)	Yes	13	41	54	0.040
	No	70	206	276	(p=0.842)
Premarital sex(PS)	Yes	33	81	114	1.333
	No	50	166	216	(p=0.249)
Same race(SR)	Yes	23	91	114	2.291
	No	60	156	216	(p=0.131)
Same religion(SRe)	Yes	82	236	318	1.871
	No	1	11	12	(p=0.172)
Higher education(HE)	Wife	40	152	192	4.548
	Husband	43	95	138	(p<0.033)
Age	Wife older	20	88	108	3.752
	Husband older	63	159	222	(p=0.053)
No.of children(NoC)	>2	35	145	180	6.851
	≤ 2	48	102	150	(p<0.009)
Premarital birth(PB)	Yes	17	19	36	10.456
	No	66	228	294	(p<0.001)
Conflict (Con)	Yes	51	147	198	0.097
	No	32	100	132	(p=0.756)
Children(Child)	Yes	69	231	300	8.114
	No	14	16	30	(p<0.004)

From Table 1, the rate of divorce is visibly less among women who are working in the public sector, but not significant ( $p=0.858$ ). Longer duration of stay with parents has significant impact on divorce ( $p=0.013$ ), For a consequences, higher age at marriage also significantly influenced divorce among women. Moreover, other factors like husband's occupation, higher education, number of children, premarital birth of a child and having children also have significant impacts on divorce among women. Divorce is therefore significantly influenced by 7 out of 15 socio-economic and marital histories considered viz., duration of stay with parent, age of marriage, husband occupation, more educated wife than husband, number of children, premarital birth and having children.

**Table 2:** Logistic regression analysis of divorced women by enters method:

Variables	$\beta$	SE	P-value	Exp( $\beta$ )	95% CI for Exp( $\beta$ )	
					Lower	Upper
WO	.805	.389	.038	2.236	1.044	4.789
DSWP	-.345	.501	.491	.708	.265	1.892
AM	-.204	.510	.690	.816	.300	2.218
HO	-1.026	.349	.003	.358	.181	.709
Co	-.622	.614	.311	.537	.161	1.787
PD	.073	.458	.873	1.076	.438	2.642
PS	.706	.389	.070	2.026	.945	4.343
SR	-.719	.390	.066	.487	.227	1.047
SRe	1.844	1.229	.133	6.319	.569	70.204
HE	1.033	.349	.003	2.811	1.418	5.570
Age	.495	.363	.173	1.640	.806	3.340
NoC	-.964	.407	.018	.382	.172	.847
PB	1.390	.600	.020	4.014	1.239	12.999
Con	-.094	.350	.789	.910	.458	1.808
Ch	-1.237	.585	.034	.290	.092	.913
Constant	-1.790	1.608	.266	.167		

Table 2 shows that through multiple logistic regression model (enter method) 6 out 15 variables under study are identified that each has significant impact on the marital instability, controlling the impact of others, they are WO (woman's occupation), HO (husband's occupation), HE (higher education), NoC (number of children), PB (premarital birth of child) and Ch (children).

The odd ratio women occupation 2.236 indicates that a women working in the public sector has 2.2 times more chance to impact on marital instability, keeping other variables constant. If the husband is working in the public sector, there is 64.2% lesser chance of divorce than those husbands who are working in other sectors. A more educated wife has 2.8 times more chance to divorce than more educated husband as evidenced by the OR 2.811. Increasing number of children also reduces divorce by 61.8% than those have less number of children. Premarital birth also increase divorce by 4.01 times than those who have not. Children play very important roles in a family; presence of children also reduces divorce by 71% than those families without children.

**Table 3:** Logistic regression analysis of divorced women by stepwise method:

Steps	Variables	$\beta$	SE	P-value	Exp( $\beta$ )	95% CI for Exp( $\beta$ )	
						Lower	Upper
1	HO	-1.075	.283	.000	.341	.196	.594
	Constant	-.693	.156	.000	.500		
2	HO	-1.167	.292	.000	.311	.176	.552
	PB	1.294	.381	.001	3.647	1.727	7.702
	Constant	-.832	.164	.000	.435		
3	HO	-1.270	.298	.000	.281	.157	.503
	HE	.696	.273	.011	2.006	1.174	3.427
	PB	1.249	.393	.001	3.488	1.615	7.537
	Constant	-1.092	.199	.000	.335		
4	HO	-1.280	.301	.000	.278	.154	.502
	HE	.734	.278	.008	2.084	1.208	3.595
	PB	1.205	.410	.003	3.335	1.493	7.452
	Ch	-1.084	.435	.013	.338	.144	.794
	Constant	-.124	.431	.773	.883		

Further, multiple logistic regression analysis of divorced women by stepwise method ( forward wald) is also applied to identify the most significant variables which are indispensable to study divorce among women. In the final step, i.e., step 4, it is established that four variables viz., HO (husband's occupation), HE (higher education), PB (premarital birth) and Ch (having children) have significant impact on divorce among women.

#### **V. Conclusion**

Many factors, it has been found, has its impact on the divorce rate among women. Out of the various factors studied it was found that factors like the wife's occupation as well as the husband's occupation, educational level of both the spouses, birth of a child before marriage and presence of children and the number of children have their impacts on the possibility of divorce among couples. Among these factors, it was further discovered that the educational level of the wife/woman if higher than that of the husband and the birth of a child before marriage are more significant than all the other factors in increasing the divorce rate. Meanwhile, factors like higher occupation of the husband as compared to that of the wife and the presence of children in a marriage have significantly higher chances of lowering the divorce rate.

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