

International Journal Research Publication Analysis

Page: 01-12

SOCIAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE DIVORCE TO COUPLES IN MAGHARIBIA DISTRICT, ZANZIBAR

*¹Juma Moh'd ²Zebedayo Mvena ³Frank Philipo.

¹Department of Community Development, Zanzibar Municipal Council.

²Department of Community Development, University of Iringa.

Article Received: 11 September 2026

*Corresponding Author: JumaMoh'd

Article Revised: 01 October 2026

Department of Community Development, Zanzibar Municipal Council.

Published on: 21 October 2026

DOI: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijrpa.6020>

ABSTRACT

This study examined social factors that influence couples to divorce in Magharibi District, Zanzibar. The study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches involving the use of questionnaire survey, key informant interviews and focus group discussions for data collection. Data were analyzed using SPSS for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. Results indicate that family interference, poor communication, addiction on alcoholism, infidelity and age at marriage, were major social factors influencing divorce among respondents. These social problems weakened trust, intimacy, love and cooperation between spouses, ultimately making it difficult for marriages to succeed. In many cases they created misunderstandings, emotional distance and frequent conflicts within the family. Consequently, the continued occurrence of these problems made it difficult for couples to maintain healthy relationships and sustain their marriages, ultimately contributing to marital breakdown and divorce. The study concludes that issues such as family interference, infidelity, poor communication, domestic violence and alcoholism were major causes of divorce. The study recommends the need for awareness campaigns to change harmful gender norms, stigma and interference from extended family in marriages. Community leaders should promote the values of mutual respect, love, trust and communication between couples.

KEYWORDS: Couples; Divorce; Marriage; Spouse.

1. INTRODUCTION

There is a remarkable increase of divorce rates worldwide in the recent time. Research in recent years reveals that divorce is at its highest level throughout the world, cutting across all people and cultures thus affecting families and societies, depending on couples' underlying factors (Burnham, 2018). This rise of

marriage breakdown rates has been predicted to increase disintegration of the family institution which is the foundation of the society itself. The element of any society in the world is family. It can weaken family relationship, affect children's emotional well-being and education and parental care (Laursen, 2019).

Globally, the divorce rates around the world is 18 per 1000 married persons (Forbes, 2022). For many and various reasons married people file for divorce due to infidelity by one spouse, unmet expectations, marital problems and other related issues as well as loss of emotional attachment (Mulugeta et al, 2020). Across 20 high-income countries, the average divorce rate rose steadily until the 1980s, then decreased, the median rate among these countries fell from 2.6 per 1,000 in 2000 to 2.0 per 1,000 in 2021 (OECD, 2023). According to Ubong (2018). Crude divorce rate in China decreased from 0.3% per 1,000 people in 1978 to 0.2% per 1000 people in 2018. This also took place in South Korea where the divorce rate rose from 0.5% to 2.3% (Chen & Li, 2014).

In recent years, Africa has witnessed a high rate of marital misunderstanding due to westernization, urbanization and industrialization these changes have weakened the traditional role of the extended family in resolving couples' conflicts and contributed to increased disrespect within marriage (Ademiran, 2015). In Ghana, particularly in Accra marital misunderstandings are becoming more common among young couples. This situation is partly associated with women's growing financial independence, which enables them to leave unsatisfactory marriage. Changes in social values, expectations and attitudes towards marriages have made it more difficult for some couples to maintain a stable relationship. Mutual respect, effective communication and understanding between partners are important in reducing marital conflict and promoting lasting marriages. In contrast, Kenya data shows that divorce is more prevalent among older age groups, suggesting that marital strain accumulates over time, with likelihood of divorce increasing later in life (Abdulrahman, 2020).

In Zanzibar, the divorce rate has doubled within six years, emerging as a major social problem across the islands. Up to 2012, the rate of continuous divorce was recorded at four times, with incidents frequently reported by Kadhi courts, the office of chief mufti, civil society organizations, social workers and the house of representatives (Ngwali, 2013). While Mjini Magharibi has a high rate followed by Kusini Unguja region and Kaskazini Unguja region (OCGS, 2023). Between 2018 and 2019 a total of 1600 cases of divorce were reported to Kadhi courts while more than 45 cases were reported to Zanzibar Female Lawyer Association (ZAFELA). This research examined the social factors influencing divorce among couples in Magharibi District, Zanzibar. Understanding these factors would help to develop targeted strategies to mitigate the divorce rate and strengthen family structures in the district.

2. STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study Area

This study was conducted in Magharibi A District, the District has a population of about 344,517 people with more than half (52.5%) being females (180,978) and (47.5%) males (163,539). The district number of people has increased by half of itself from 2012 which has the population about 163,740. Most of the population in this district lives in town and periphery according to the 2022 Tanzania National Census. The study was conducted in Magharibi A District, specifically in the villages of Mwera, Kianga, Michikichini, Bububu and Bumbwisudi. These villages were selected purposively to represent others. Magharibi A is located in Mjini Magharibi region of Unguja Island. In the East this district is bordered with Kusini Unguja region, in the West it is bordered with Mjini district and the Indian Ocean, in the South it is bordered with Magharibi B district and in the North it is bordered with Kaskazini Unguja region. Magharibi A was selected as a case study because of the high rate of divorce and suitable environment in terms of transport and cooperation among people which enabled the research to collect data and accomplish the study on time.

2.2 Study Population

The study population was the divorced couples who cannot remarry filled questionnaire for quantitative data in Magharibi A district. The study involved officers from chief magistrate's office, social welfare officers, and sheikhs from Kadhi court, local community leaders, village religious leaders and chairperson from selected villages to collect in-depth qualitative information related to divorce. The quantitative and qualitative approach was used for deeper exploration of the findings on social factors that influenced divorce for couples. The study adopted a mixed methods research approach that integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain comprehensive information on divorce and socio-factors that influenced divorce for couples. A cross-sectional research design was adopted to collect quantitative and qualitative data at one point in time. The study used 62 sample sizes who are divorced in the study area. In this study, a multi-stage sampling was used to obtain the five villages namely Michikichini, Kianga, Bububu, Mwera and Bumbwisudi. Simple random sampling was used to obtain divorced couples in the study area. The quantitative data was collected from the respondents by using semi-structured questionnaires, while qualitative data was collected from 10 key informants. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze quantitative data from the selected respondents and presented in forms of frequencies and percentages. The qualitative data obtained from interview with key informants and focus group discussion were analyzed using thematic analysis in which handwritten notes were organized and reviewed repeatedly to enhance familiarity with the data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part presents, analyzes and discusses the findings obtained from the data collected during the study. The main purpose of this section is to provide a clear understanding of the research results and show how they address the study objectives and research questions. The findings are represented using tables, frequencies, percentages and descriptive explanations to make the results easier to understand. The chapter begins by presenting the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including age, marital status, education level, occupation and other relevant background information. This is followed by the presentation and analysis of findings based on the specific objectives of the study. This section also provides a discussion of the results by relating the findings to existing literature and theoretical perspectives related to the study topic.

3.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

The respondents' ages ranged from 24 to 45 years. (Table 1) shows that the largest proportion of respondents 29.0% were aged between 30 and 35 years, followed by those aged 24–29 years 27.4%. Respondents aged 36–40 years accounted for 24.2%, while those aged 41–45 years constituted 19.4%. The findings indicate that 37% of respondents had attained secondary education, making it the largest educational group. Respondents with post-secondary education represented 31%, while 19% had completed primary education. Only 13% reported having no formal education. These findings suggest that divorce affects individuals across all educational levels. (Table 1) shows that 61.3% of respondents were female while 38.7% were male. The higher proportion of female respondents suggests that women were more represented in the study, which may reflect their greater willingness to participate or their accessibility during data collection. The majority of respondents 62.9% identified themselves as divorced while 32.3% were recorded as married and 4.8% as widowed. This result should be interpreted with caution because the study targeted divorce couples. (Table 1), indicates that nearly half of the respondents 48.4% had been married for less than one year before experiencing marital breakdown. Respondents who had been married for more than ten years accounted for 27.4%, while 24.2% had been married for approximately five years. (Table 1) shows that fishermen and unemployed each accounted for 19.4% of the respondents, making them the largest occupational groups in the study. Traders represented 17.7%, while farmers accounted for 16.1%. And employed respondents represent 27.4%. The findings indicate that respondents came from diverse occupational backgrounds, suggesting that divorce is not confined to a single profession or income group.

Table1: Demographic Characteristics of respondents.

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percent(%)
Age Group(n=62)		
24–29	17	27.4
30–35	18	29.0
36–40	15	24.2
41–45	12	19.4
Total	62	100.0
Level of education(n=62)		
None	8	12.9
Post-secondary	19	30.6
Primary	12	19.4
Secondary	23	37.1
Total	62	100
Gender(n=62)		
Female	38	61.3
Male	24	38.8
Total	62	100
Marital status(n=62)		
Divorced	39	62.9
Married	20	32.3
Widow	3	4.8
Total	62	100
Year in marriage(n=62)		
5 years	15	24.2
Less than 1 year	30	48.4
More than 10 years	17	27.4
Total	62	100
Occupation(n=62)		
Farmer	10	16.1
Fisherman	12	19.4
Unemployed	12	19.4
Employed	17	27.4
Trader	11	17.7
Total	62	100

Source: Field Data(2026)

3.2 Social Factors that Influence Divorce to Couples in Magharibi A District, Zanzibar

This section examines the social factors influencing divorce among couples in study area. It focuses on how issues such as lack of communication, family interference, domestic violence and infidelity, between spouses and cultural or community pressures influence marital breakdown. To understand how social relationships and interactions contribute to instability and eventual divorce among married couples

3.2.1 Family interference and divorce

The results in Table 2 show that 62.9% of respondents lived with their spouse's relatives, while 37.1% did not. This indicates that co-

residence with extended family members was common among the majority of respondents. Erosion of marital privacy and intimacy, mentioned by 32.2%. Bond, 29.1% reported interference in decision-making and loss of autonomy. Conflict and tension between spouses and in-

laws was reported by 24.2%, misunderstandings, perceived favoritism and disrespect within the extended family and 14.5%, was communication breakdown and escalation of marital problems. These results were supported by the study of Xu et al., (2021). Investigated the effects of extended family involvement on marital satisfaction and stability using a large-

scale household survey and multilevel regression analysis among married couples in China. The results showed that high levels of family interference are associated with increased marital conflict and reduced marital satisfaction, particularly when in-laws frequently intervene in couple decision-making and the study recommended promoting boundary setting and couple autonomy in family relationships to improve marital stability.

The findings were supported with the interview with religious leader in the chief mufti office, Sheikh recounted a case where;

If my husband wanted to buy anything for me, he consulted his mother first. It came to a time that they saw what he bought things for more than expected. So, I think envy is part of it. I feel so sad and regret ever because my aunt advised me to further my education rather than marrying this early (Interview with Chief Mufti Officer at Mazizini, 14th June 2026)

Table.2: Respondents family interference and its effect on marriage (n=62)

Respondents view on whether they experience family interference	Frequency	Percentage%
No	18	29
Yes	44	71
Total	62	100
Contribution of family interference to divorce		
Erosion of marital privacy and intimacy	20	32.2
Interference in decision-making and loss of autonomy	18	29.1
Conflict and tension between spouses and in-laws	15	24.2
Communication breakdown and escalation of marital problems	9	14.5
Total	62	100

Source: Field Data (2026)

3.2.2 Spouse communication and divorce

The quantitative results in Table 3 show that 59.7% of respondents reported that their spouse lost communication with them during marriage, while 40.3% indicated that communication was maintained. This suggests that breakdown in communication was common among the majority of respondents and played an important role in marital instability. The most frequently reported theme was emotional distance and weakening of intimacy, mentioned by 33.9%. A total of 22.6% reported that poor communication resulted in the accumulation of unresolved problems. The theme of reduced trust and emotional support was mentioned by 14.5%. The final theme, reported by 10%, was the eventual breakdown of the marriage leading to separation or divorce. These results were supported by the study of Markman et al. (2021) who investigated communication patterns and relationship stability in married couples using longitudinal observational data and behavioral coding of couple interaction sessions from the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) studies. The results showed that negative communication behaviors such as criticism, avoidance and poor listening skills significantly predict lower marital satisfaction and higher risk of divorce and the study recommended early communication skill training and couple-

based preventive interventions to strengthen marital relationships. The interview with the social welfare officer saying that:

The problem is when it comes to making decisions, they did things without consulting themselves, like . When it's time for making decisions about the child the husband does not consult his wife. When you tell him something, he only says I have heard you. So, you haven't heard from him again (Interview with Social Welfare Officer at, in Sebuleni, 14th June 2026).

Table 3: Respondents' views on lack of communication. (n=62)

Respondents' views on whether they lack of communication	Frequency	Percentage%
Yes	37	59.7
No	25	40.3
Total	62	100
Views on lack of communication		
Emotional distance and weakening of intimacy	21	33.8
Accumulation of unresolved problems	14	22.5
Increase in misunderstandings and conflicts	12	19.3
Reduced trust and emotional support	9	14.5
Breakdown leading to separation or divorce	6	9.6
Total	62	100

Source: Field Data (2026)

3.2.3 Domestic violence and divorce

The results in Table 4 show that 54.8% of respondents reported experiencing domestic violence from their spouse, while 45.2% indicated that they did not. A total of 30.6% identified emotional and psychological abuse as a major factor contributing to marital breakdown, the gradual loss of love, respect and emotional attachment was mentioned by 25.8%. 22.6%, was economic control and resource denial was mentioned by 22.6%. The final reported theme was gradual loss of love, respect and emotional attachment mentioned by 30.6% these results were also supported by the study of Spencer et al., (2022) investigated domestic violence, relationship satisfaction and marital dissolution risk using meta-analytic review of longitudinal and cross-sectional couple studies. The results revealed that domestic violence significantly reduces relationship satisfaction and increases the probability of marital breakdown due to fear, mistrust and emotional withdrawal between partners and the study recommended early intervention programs, counseling services and public awareness campaigns to reduce intimate partner violence. During the interview with the religious leader in the chief mufti office, sheikh explained

Most times the couples cannot live with continuous insults and threat made them feel emotionally exhausted. When it reached a point where they believe that leaving the marriage was the only way to protect themselves even if they have children that need their care (Interview with Chief Mufti Office at Mazizini, 14th June 2026)

Table 4: Respondents view on domestic violence. (n=62)

Respondents view on whether they experienced domestic violence	Frequency	Percentage%
No	28	45.2
Yes	34	54.8
Total	62	100
Kind of domestic violence		
Physical violence and fear-based marital relationship	19	30.6
Emotional and psychological abuse	16	25.8
Economic control and resource denial	14	22.5
Gradual loss of love, respect and emotional attachment	13	20.9
Total	62	100

Source: Field Data (2026)

3.2.4 Cheating and divorce

The quantitative data in Table 5 show that 77.4% of respondents reported that their spouse cheated on them, while 22.6% indicated that they did not experience cheating. The most dominant theme was the breakdown of trust and emotional security 27.4%. Some respondents 21% reported that cheating caused emotional pain and reduced commitment toward continuing the marriage. Repeated conflicts and com

munication breakdown as a consequence of cheating identified by 17.7% of the respondents. Loss of respect and dignity was reported by 16.1% as another consequence of cheating. Psychological stress and emotional trauma mentioned by 11.3%. The least reported theme was failure of reconciliation attempt at 6.5%. These results were supported by the study of Amato & Previti (2021) who investigated perceived causes and consequences of marital infidelity and divorce using large-scale survey data and multivariate analysis of divorced individuals' reports in the United States. The results showed that infidelity is one of the most frequently reported causes of divorce and is strongly associated with reduced happiness, love satisfaction between a husband and wife in their marriage and increased marital dissolution risk. During the interview session with social welfare officer reported saying that:

One of the reasons why most marriage is not in place anymore is the issue of cheating. A man would cheat on his wife by letting her know that he is even cheating. You say that African men are polygamous, but some do cheat by not letting their wives or persons get to know that they are cheating. If he does it without his wife knowing, that's fine. But he does it and brags with it. It was very annoying (Interview Social Welfare Officer at Sebuleni, 14th June 2026).

Table 5: Respondents views on cheating

Respondents view on cheating	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
No	14	22.6
Yes	48	77.4
Total	62	100
cheating as a reason for divorce		
Breakdown of trust and emotional security	17	27.4
Emotional pain and loss of commitment	13	20.9
Repeated conflict and communication breakdown	11	17.7
Loss of respect and dignity within marriage	10	16.1
Psychological stress and emotional trauma	7	11.2
Failure of reconciliation attempts	4	6.4
Total	62	100

Source: Field Data (2026)

3.2.5 Substance abuse and divorce

The quantitative findings in figure 1 show that alcoholism and drug addiction were perceived as an important factor contributing to divorce among couples in the study area. Out of 41.9% strongly agree and 37.1% agree that alcoholism and drug addiction contribute to marital breakdown. A total of 79% agree with the statement. Meanwhile, 11.3% were neutral while 6.5% disagree and 3.2% strongly disagree. These findings suggest that substance abuse is perceived by a majority of respondents as a significant factor contributing to divorce. This is because excessive alcohol and drug use can increase marital conflict, re-

duce commitment to family responsibilities, create financial difficulties, poor communication and contribute to violence between spouses. These findings are further supported by the study of Torvik et al (2017) who argues that alcohol misuse is a key driver of domestic violence, infidelity and financial instability, all of which fuel marital breakdown. This aligns with findings by Mulugeta et al (2020) who emphasized that alcohol-

related harm extends beyond the drinker, affecting spouses and children through neglect, aggression and economic deprivation, often resulting in divorce. Moreover, the spouses in families where there is chronic, excessive use of alcohol are frequently separated. During an interview with a religious leader in the Imufti office, the Sheikh reported that:

Husband used to be responsible, but when he started drinking heavily, everything changed. He became violent and stopped providing for the children and used all the money on alcohol. When he drinks, he beats his wife multiple times and he becomes suspicious, he accuses her of cheating and ignores many important issues. Then he goes out and sleeps with other women. She couldn't tolerate the insults and humiliation anymore, so she filed for divorce. (Interview with Chief Mufti Officer at Mazizini, 14th June 2026)

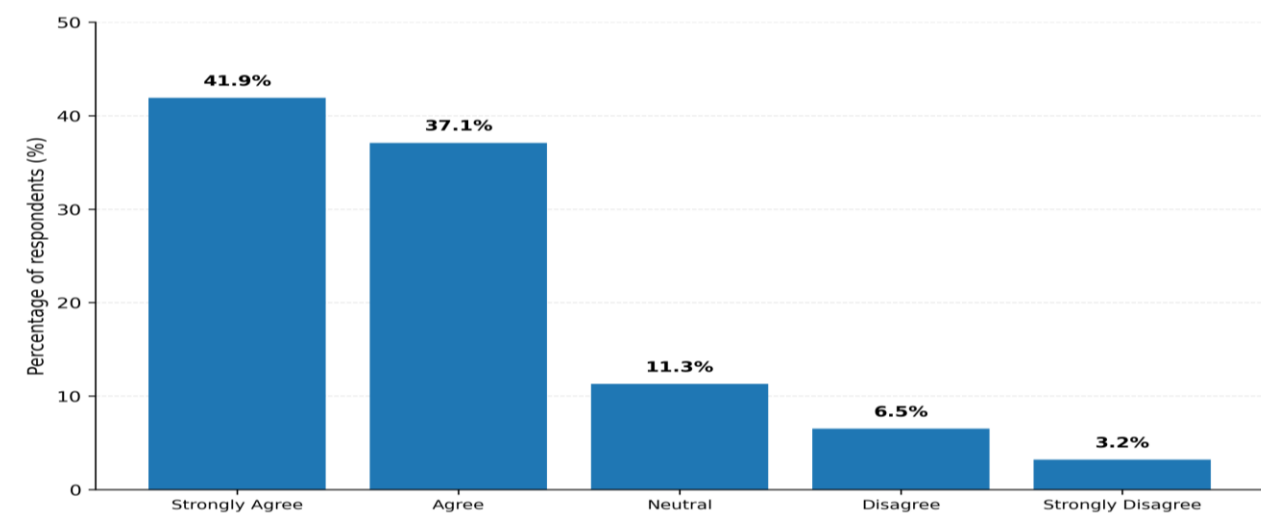


Figure 1: Respondents' views on addiction to alcoholism and drugs.

Source: Field Data, 2026.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Social factors play a significant role in driving couples to divorce. Family interference, domestic violence, poor communication, infidelity and alcohol addiction weakened trust, love, respect, and cooperation between spouses. These problems create conflicts and emotional distress, making it difficult for couples to maintain stable and successful marriages. Therefore, improving communication, promoting

gmualrespect,addressingdomesticviolenceandreducingunnecessaryfamilyinterferenceareimportantstepstowardsstrengtheningmaritalrelationshipsandreducingdivorce.

5.RECOMMENDATIONS

Basedonthe findings,thereisaneedforawarenesscampaignstochallengeharmfulgendernorms,stigmaandinterferencefromextendedfamilyinmarriages.Communityleadersshouldpromotethevalue ofmutualrespect,trustandcommunicationbetween couples.Policies thatprotectindividuals fromculturalpracticesthatthreatenmarriagestability,suchasforcedpolygamyandgenderbias,mustbeenforced.Additionally,encouragingintergenerationaldialogueaboutevolvingmaritalexpectationsth atcouldhelptoreducemisunderstandingsrootedintraditionalnorms.

6.CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

Allethicalissueswereadheredresearchpermissionweresought,awarrantfromtheauthorities,thatistheUniversityofIringa,Zanzibarresearchcommittee.MagharibiADistrictandChiefMuftoffice.Int hatlightthere researcheralsoobservedparticipantsrights,consent,normsandculturalethics.Theinformationprovidedwasprotectedfromanyoneandwasusedforresearchpurposeonly.Toensureconfidentialityoftherespondents'information,alldatacollectedwerestoredcarefullytoprotectitfromunauthorizedpersons.Informationwascarefullyrecordedandthereisnoanyidentityofparticipantsrecord ed.

REFERENCES

1. Abdulrahman,M.M.(2020).AnanalysisofthecausesofdivorceamongMuslimsinMombasaCountyintheShariaLawPerspective.*IJISH(InternationalJournalofIslamicStudiesandHumanities)*,3(2),90-97
2. Ademiran,A,O.(2015).AnalyticalstudyofthecasualfactorsofdivorceinAfricanHome.66*Researchinhumanityandsocialscience*5(14),18-29.
3. Amato,P.R.,&Previti,D.(2021).People'sreasonsfordivorcing: Gender,socialclass,thelifecourseandadjustment.*JournalofFamilyIssues*,42(3),567–590.
4. Burnham,R.(2018).Globalfamilychangesanddivorcetrends.*FamilyStudiesJournal*.
5. Chen,Y.C&Li,J.C.A(2014).FamilychangeinEastAsia.IntheWillyBlackwellcompaniontothesociologyoffamilies(pp.61-82).
6. Laursen,L.L.(2019).Familydissolutionandchildren'ssocialwell-beingatschool:ahistoriccohortstudy.*BMCpediatrics*,19,449

7. Markman, H. J., Rhoades, G. K., Stanley, S. M., Ragan, E. P., & Whitton, S. W. (2021). *Preventing marital distress through communication skill training: Evidence from longitudinal couple studies*. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 35(4), 512
8. Mulugeta, Ashebir G. and Meseret M. Nigatu. 2020. "The rate and causes of divorce in Bale Robe Ngwali, B, (2013). *Marriage instability and family challenges in Zanzibar*. *Zanzibar social Research Journal*
9. OCGS. (2023). *Crime and civil statistics report 2023*. Office of the Chief Government Statistician Zanzibar
10. OECD. (2023). *Marriage and divorce rates* (OECD Family Database). Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>.
11. Spencer, C. M., Stith, S. M., & Kim, C. (2022). *Intimate partner violence and relationship dissolution: A meta-analytic review*. *Journal of Family Violence*, 37(3), 345–360.
12. Torvik, F. A., Rognmo, K., & Tambs, K. (2017). *Alcohol consumption and divorce: a longitudinal analysis of a Norwegian cohort*. *Addiction*, 112(6), 1012–1020
13. Ubong E. 2018. "Divorce: Causes and Effects on Children". *Asian Journal of Humanities*
14. Xu, A., Lai, S., & Liu, J. (2021). *Extended family interference and marital quality: Evidence from Chinese households*. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 83(3), 789–805.