

## ***Family Dissolution in South Africa: Analysis of General Household Survey (GHS) 2002/2009 Data.***

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### ***1.0 Introduction (Study background):***

Family dissolution (referred here as divorce/separated) is the dissolution of nuptials leading to single parenthood and or social orphanhood as the case may be (Kumchulesi, 2007). In South Africa, family dissolution is a common feature as it has been identified and accepted as a common norm and standard of the society. In addition to this, it has also been “classified as a major loss for all affected children” (Wade and Travis, 2003). Available studies (Hampden-Thompson and Pong, 2005; Lloyd and Blanc, 1996, Kumchulesi, 2007; Sabiti, 2007) have all shown that there is a high rate of divorce in South Africa.

According to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) official release, “the total number of officially recorded divorces in the country in 2003 was 31,566 per annum. This represents an increase of less than 1% (0, 6%) as compared to 31,370 per annum in 2002. The modified crude divorce rate in the same year was 520.4 per 100, 000 married females. In the same year, there were in total 33,424 minor children involved in divorce. This figure was lower than the figure observed in 2002 (34,400)” (Stats SA, 2005).

On the other hand, current statistics shows that between 2007 and 2009 alone, 28,564 recorded divorces took place in South Africa per annum and one in every two marriages end up in divorce. The province with the highest divorce rate is Gauteng. The Whites race has the highest divorce rate in the country followed by the Black race. The result also revealed that a total number of 28,480 divorces involved couples who had children below the age of 18 years (Monareng, 2009).

However, more recent and detailed statistics shows that “the number of granted cases has been fluctuating between 37,098 and 28,924 per annum in the past decade (1999-2009)” (Preller, 2009). A deeper investigation by population group (Race) shows that there are

more divorces among the African population group compared to the other groups. Also, in the past ten years or so, available result shows that despite the general fluctuations, the proportions of divorces from the mixed and the African groups have been increasing whilst that of the White group has been declining. (Preller, 2009). Before 2002, the Africa, Indian/Asian, White and mixed groups made up 18,4%; 5,3%; 39,9% and 1,0% of the total number of divorces respectively. However, current result shows that these are no longer so as presently, Africans, Indians/Asian and mixed groups increased to 35,0%; 6,2% and 3,1% respectively whilst that of the White group declined to 32,8% (Preller, 2009).

On age at the time of divorce, the result showed that the median age at divorce in 2008/2009 was 41 years for men and 38 years for women. African men had the highest median age (43) at divorce. Women from the mixed and India/Asian group had the lowest median age (36 years). And on duration of marriage of those divorcing, available result shows that “the largest number of divorces (7,859 or 27, 2%) lasted five to nine years. Also, the result showed that as the duration of marriages increased the number of divorces decreased and the distribution of divorces continues to be skewed towards earlier years of marriage in the country. (Preller, 2009).

According to White, (1990), “Divorce is more likely to occur among couples with personal, social and economic problems”. In support of this and relating it to South Africa, Mothiba, (2008) wrote that presently, “South Africa is a society where poverty is endemic, education disproportionate, HIV/AIDS rampant, and a majority of the workforce unskilled. These factors have significantly contributed to the general level of anger, despair, and violence in disadvantaged South African communities. These uncontrolled feelings of anger and despair are reflected in a family violence pandemic where violence against and abuse of women and children is rife” (Mothiba, 2008).

To further her argument, Mothiba, (2008) also went on to note that thus, “Divorce rates are also increasing yearly, reflecting the trauma in our society. Also, due to the magnitude of issues that underprivileged South Africans face daily, most people lack the

coping skills to deal with such internal and external stresses” (Mothiba, 2008). All these, according to the writer have contributed to the current increase in divorce prevalence in the country. Also, at the long-run; demographers and other policy developers have come to associate these developments to other socio-cultural and economic ills in the society. A reasoning which is understandable having it in mind that the country have the highest divorce rate if not in Africa but in sub-Saharan Africa. In line with this thinkings and putting the context in summary, FAMSA, (2009) in a recent publication concluded that “in South Africa, 1 out of 2 marriages ends up divorce” (FAMSA, 2009). And that “Divorce affects not only the adults who make this choice but the children as well”(FAMSA, 2009).

Thus, based on these submissions; the need to understand the factors associated with family dissolutions (divorce/separation) in country cannot be overemphasized. In South Africa, there are notable studies that have been done in this area.(Udjo, 2001, Sabiti, 2007 etc). However, all of these studies have ended up using the old OHS Data rather than the more current GHS data in their studies, thus creating a gap. It is this gap that this study is aimed at covering. In other words, this study is an attempt to use the 2002/2009 GHS data to examine the situation at hand in order to paint a better picture of the current situation.

## ***2.0 Study Objective, Concept and Question.***

Against the above background and understanding, the main objectives of this study are to highlight the distribution of family dissolution by demographic composition in South Africa. It will also examine the level of association between some selected demographic and socio-economic characteristics and family dissolution in the country.

The study is based on the theory of general economic-demographic approach to family dynamics. This theory states or is built on a broad concept of the cost and utility of family organization that assumes that each individual tries to maximize utility by entering or leaving unions (England and Farkas, 1986; Becker, 1991). This theory is also called the “rational choice theory” (England and Farkas, 1986; Becker, 1991). Therefore, the

research questions that will guide this study are: What are the levels of distribution of family dissolution in South Africa. And what are the factors associated with family dissolution in the country. I believe that an attempt to answer these questions will help achieve my set objectives.

### ***3.0 Study Justification:***

This study is justified in many ways. Firstly, available record shows that “In South Africa, 1 out of 2 marriages ends up divorce” (FAMSA, 2009). Research has also shown that family dissolution affects not only the adults who make this choice but the children as well. Hence, this study is justified as it is aimed at examining current the demographic and socio-economic characteristics associated with family dissolution in South Africa. Thus, enabling policy developers reach informed decisions.

### ***4.0 Study Methodology:***

#### ***4.1 Data Source, Size and Method of Analysis:***

The data used in this study are the General Household Survey (GHS) 2002/2009 data sourced from the Statistics South Africa (Stats. SA) dataset archives in STATA format. Both data are annual cross-sectional secondary data collected using a multi-stage stratified random sample with probability proportional to size principles. With a first level stratification based on province and second tier stratification based on district council. As an omnibus survey, the GHS helps measure the country’s socio-economic development as it collects information on individual characteristics, fertility, employment, migration, mortality, and household characteristics.

In collecting the GHS data, a total of 34,902 (N = 34,902) (GHS 2009) sampled households were visited across the country and close to 29,311 (n = 29,311) sample were successfully interviewed using face-to-face interview method in each case. To ensure quality and reliability of the data, 784 and 260 well trained supervisors and coordinators participated in the survey across all nine provinces, with an additional 46 quality assures responsible for monitoring and ensuring questionnaire quality. National training took

place over a period of four days and provincial training was done one week later in 40 localities situated across all nine provinces for five days. All meant to ensure data quality, reliability and reduce non-response (undercount) as low as possible.

The study adapts a quantitative method of analysis approach. Analysis of the study is carried out basically at two levels. These are the uni-variate and multi-variate levels of analysis respectively. While the Uni-variate analysis helped to bring out the profile (respondent characteristics) of the sampled population, the multivariate analysis helped with the in-depth understanding or impact association between the selected independent variables and the outcome variable. In other words, the multivariate analysis will “enables us to estimate the additive effects of the micro and macro level variables simultaneously” (Amos, 2007).

The logistic regression model is used at the multivariate level. This is so because the dependent variable is recoded into binary (categorical). Also, experience has shown that the logistic regression model is “flexible, easy to use and gives room for meaningful interpretation between explanatory and outcome variables” (Kirkwood and Sterne, 2005). The general model of the logistic regression model used is as follows:

$$\log \left[ \frac{P_i}{1-P_i} \right] = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \epsilon$$

Where:

$\log \left[ \frac{P_i}{1-P_i} \right]$  = Odd ratio,

$\alpha$ : = The intercept,

X1, X2, X3, X4, X5, X6, and X7 = all independent variables used in the study,

$\epsilon$  = the error term.

#### ***4.2 Data Processing: Weighting and imputation.***

The STATA software is used to run both data for analysis. Before this, both data have been processed by the organisation and transformed into STATA format. In line with practice, the data used here is only Ten Percent (10%) of the entire GHS data collected in the Survey.

### 4.3 Explanatory and Outcome Variable used in the Analyses:

**Table 1: Possible Outcome and Explanatory variables of interest and their definition/response, using the GHS 2007 Data.**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Operational Definition</b>
<b>Outcome Variable:</b>	
<i>Marital Status (recoded as Family dissolution)</i>	<i>Yes, No</i>
<b>Independent Variables:</b>	
<i>Age</i>	<i>15-65 (in groups of five each)</i>
<i>Gender</i>	<i>Male Female</i>
<i>Race</i>	<i>Africa/Black, Coloured, Indian/Asian, White</i>
<i>Literacy</i>	<i>Yes, N</i>
<i>Highest Level of Education</i>	<i>No edu, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary</i>
<i>Illness: Abuse of Alcohol/drugs</i>	<i>Yes, No</i>
<i>Illness: HIV/AIDS</i>	<i>Yes (1), No (2) Don't know/Unspecified (3)</i>
<i>Province</i>	<i>Western Cape(1), Es/Cape(2) Nt/Cape(3), F/State(4) KZ/Natal(5), N/West(6), Guateng(7), Mpumalanga(8) Limpopo(9)</i>
<i>Disability</i>	<i>Yes, No</i>
<i>Etc.</i>	

For the purpose of clarity the independent variables are understood here to be those variables that make the family dissolution comparable across the survey, defining the social and economic structure (SES) of the respondents. Combined, these characteristics are: Age in groups, race, gender, literacy, highest educational level, Illness type (Abuse of drugs/alcohol or HIV/AIDS, Province Disability etc. The variable marital status is used as the outcome (dependent) variable in this study. This is recoded into two responses (binary) and renamed as “family dissolution” to achieve the study set objectives.

### 5.0 Data Limitations:

The GHS dataset is posed with some notable limitations. First, the data have problem of variable (indicators) limitation. It also has the possibility of cases of non-response and reporting bias from both the enumerators and respondents hence can be said to have problem of loss of enumeration quality. It is also envisaged that there will be cases of missing data on variables of interest resulting from collection and capturing in both cases. Finally, it is important to mention that as these data was not originally conceived with this research in mind, it may not ensure accuracy of information on the exposure characteristics.

### 6.0 Data Finding and Analysis

#### 6.1 Data Profile:

**Table 2: Percentage distribution of respondents by selected Characteristics, using the GHS 2002/2009 Data.**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>	
	<i>2002</i>	<i>2009</i>
<b>Family Dissolution:</b>		
No Dissolution	93.87	94.04
Dissolution	6.13	5.96
<b>Age in group:</b>		
15-24	30.57	29.83
25-34	21.90	21.26
35-44	17.83	16.86
45-54	13.01	14.17
55-+	16.69	17.88
<b>Gender:</b>		
Male	47.46	46.75
Female	52.54	53.25

**Race:**

<i>Africa/Black</i>	77.88	82.18
<i>Coloured</i>	11.35	10.29
<i>Indian/Africa</i>	2.41	2.21
<i>White</i>	8.36	5.32

**Province:**

<i>Western Cape</i>	10.32	9.58
<i>Eastern Cape</i>	14.09	11.86
<i>Northern Cape</i>	4.70	6.15
<i>Free State</i>	7.89	8.77
<i>KwaZulu-Natal</i>	17.47	17.39
<i>North West</i>	10.00	8.79
<i>Guateng</i>	13.57	15.01
<i>Mpumalanga</i>	9.25	10.03
<i>Limpopo</i>	12.71	12.42

**Highest Edu Level:**

<b>No Formal Education</b>	20.19	17.98
<i>Primary</i>	36.25	39.65
<i>Secondary</i>	38.05	37.66
<i>Tertiary</i>	5.51	4.71

**Literacy:**

<i>Yes</i>	75.79	66.32
<i>No</i>	24.21	33.68

**Illness: Abuse of alcohol/ drugs**

<i>Yes</i>	0.36	1.06
<i>No</i>	99.64	98.94

**Illness: HIV/AIDS**

<i>Yes</i>	0.33	1.12
<i>No</i>	99.67	98.88

**Disability:**

<i>Yes</i>	3.73	5.03
<i>No</i>	96.27	94.97

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Table 2 above shows the characteristics distribution (profile) of the respondents in frequency and percentage. In both cases, the result shows that less than one in every ten respondents are from homes/families that are dissolved. Majority of the respondents are between the ages 15-24, while minorities are between the age group 45-54 years in both years. The numbers of male respondents are almost equal to the number of female with that of female being slightly high. Also, Blacks are the majority respondents as the result shows that two in every three respondents are Blacks while the Indian/Africans are the minority respondent in both years.

The result also shows that while Kwazulu-Natal followed by Eastern Cape are the Provinces with the highest respondent while Mpumalanga, followed by Northern Cape are the least in 2002. On the other hand, Kwazulu-Natal followed by Gauteng are the Provinces with the highest respondent while the Free state followed by North West are the least in 2009. Also in both cases, the result shows that one in every three of the respondents are literate. While those with primary and secondary education are higher, those with tertiary education are the least. A very insignificant part of the respondent are accused of alcoholic/drugs abuse, is HIV/AIDS positive and or is disabled.

## 6.2 Dynamics of Family Dissolution in South Africa.

**Table 3: An Overview of Family Dissolution Dynamics in South Africa, between 2002 and 2009.**

<i>Compositions</i>	<i>Outcomes /results (2002/2009)</i>
<i>Current Average number of divorce (per annum)</i>	<i>28,924</i>
<i>Median age of divorce/separations: Male</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Female</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Duration of marriage of those divorcing/separating:</i>	<i>9 years</i>
<i>Current number of divorce with children</i>	<i>16,370 per annum</i>
<i>Percentage of current number of divorce with children</i>	<i>56.6%</i>
<i>Current average number of children per divorce</i>	<i>1 or 2 per divorce</i>

*Source: Prillar, 2009, etc*

The table three above shows an overview of family dissolution (divorce/separations) dynamics in South Africa. Results from the table shows that on average, 28,924 couples divorced or separated per annum and the median age of these couples are 41 for male and 38 for female. Most marriages divorced or separated within this period only lasted for 9 years at the most and of these, 16,370 involve couples with children per annum. This according to the result amounts to about 56% or 1 or 2 children per divorce per annum.

**7.0 Multivariate Analysis:**

**Table 4: Result of Binary logistic regression showing odds ratios for characteristics predicting family Dissolution in South Africa, GHS 2002/2009 Data.**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Odd Ratio</b>		<b>Direction of change (Odd Ratio)</b>
	<b>2002</b>	<b>2009</b>	
<b>Age in group:</b>			
15-24	Rc	Rc	
25-34	8.94**	1.16	-
35-44	1.45**	3.95**	+
45-54	1.65**	4.54**	+
55+	6.87**	3.68**	-
<b>Gender:</b>			
Male	Rc	Rc	
Female	1.33	1.64**	+
<b>Race:</b>			
Africa/Black	Rc	Rc	
Coloured	0.66	0.90	+
Indian/Africa	-	0.83	+
White	0.48	0.64**	+
<b>Province:</b>			
Western Cape	Rc	Rc	
Eastern Cape	1.03	0.70	-
Northern Cape	2.09	0.56**	-
Free State	1.75	0.86	-
KwaZulu-Natal	0.94	0.24**	-
North West	0.92	0.55**	-
Guateng	1.99	0.78	-
Mpumalanga	1.06	0.56**	-
Limpopo	0.60	0.70	+
<b>Highest Level of Edu:</b>			
No Formal Education	Rc	Rc	
Primary	1.91	1.90**	-
Secondary	2.69	1.93**	-
Tertiary	6.99**	2.55**	+

***Illness: Abuse of alcohol/ drugs***

<i>Yes</i>	<i>Rc</i>	<i>Rc</i>	
<i>No</i>	0.40	0.83	+

***Illness: HIV/AIDS***

<i>Yes</i>	<i>Rc</i>	<i>Rc</i>	
<i>No</i>	0.71	0.85	+

***Disability:***

<i>Yes</i>	<i>Rc</i>	<i>Rc</i>	
<i>No</i>	1.42	1.03	-

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**\*\* Statistically significant at 5% level (or  $P < 0.05$ ), Rc = Reference category =1**

Table four above shows the result of binary logistic regression showing odds ratios for characteristics predicting family Dissolution in South Africa, GHS 2002/2009 Data. Result of age group shows that the likelihood of all age group predicting family dissolution are high and hence good predictors compared to those in the reference category. With the exception of those in age group 25-34, all age groups are significant and only age group 25-24 and 55+ has a negative direction of Odd ratio change.

With gender, the result shows that being female has strong predictive power compared to males. However, only those in 2009 are significant. And the direction of change is positive. In contrast, the result of race showed that all reference has a weak predictive power compared to their reference category. Also, with the exception of the white race, all other race in the two years are all not significant. However, they all have a positive direction of change.

The result showed that with the exception of Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Free State, Gauteng and Mpumalanga with a strong predictive power, all other province shows a weak predictive power compared to their reference categories in both years. Also in both years, only Northern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, North West and Mpumalanga are significant. With the exception of Limpopo Province, all Province shows a negative direction indicating a fall in value.

Couples level of highest are all good predictors of family dissolution with those in tertiary being the strongest and those in Primary the lowest as expected. With the exception of those with Primary and secondary highest level of education in 2002, all other levels are significant. Also, with the exception of those with tertiary qualification, all other levels have a positive direction of change.

The result also showed that all nature of illness (Abuse of alcohol/ drugs/ HIV/AIDS etc) all shows a weak predictive power compared to their reference categories. They are all not significant but all has a positive direction of Odd value of change. From the result it can also be seen that disability is a good predictor of family dissolution although not significant compared to the reference category. It also shows a negative direction of Odd value change.

### ***8. Brief discussion and Conclusion:***

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors influencing family dissolution in Southern Africa, using the GHS 2002/2009 data. Among other findings, it can be observed that family dissolution is on the increase in the country. This is so as one in every two marriages will end in divorce.

An overview shows that the current average of divorce is on the rise. While the median age of divorce/separation for male is 41, that of female is 38 further reading on these findings showed that South Africa has one of the highest mean divorce rate in the world. The country duration of marriage at 9 years is also very small compared to other developed countries. In general, multivariate analysis also revealed that while age, gender, highest level of education and disability and Province (Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Free State, Gauteng and) are all good predictive variable of family dissolution, all other variables are not.

The result of direction of Odd value change shows that all Province and Highest level of education variable references has a negative direction of change (with the exception of

Limpopo province and Tertiary level references). On the other hand, all other variables show either a positive or equal number of direction of change.

Thus, it is therefore advised that in order to bring down the rising number of family dissolution in the country, the government should be aware of these factors and consider them at all time.

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