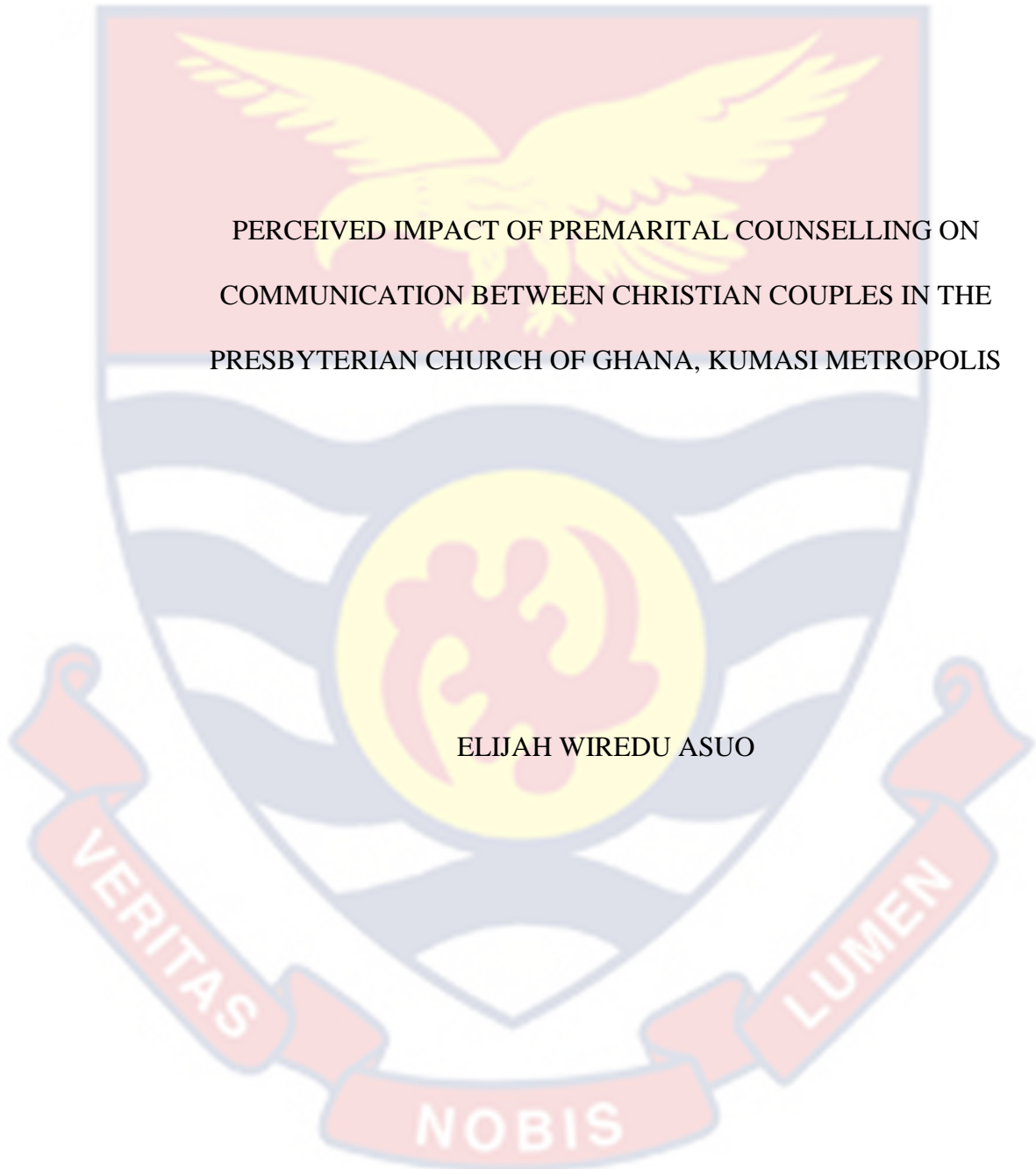


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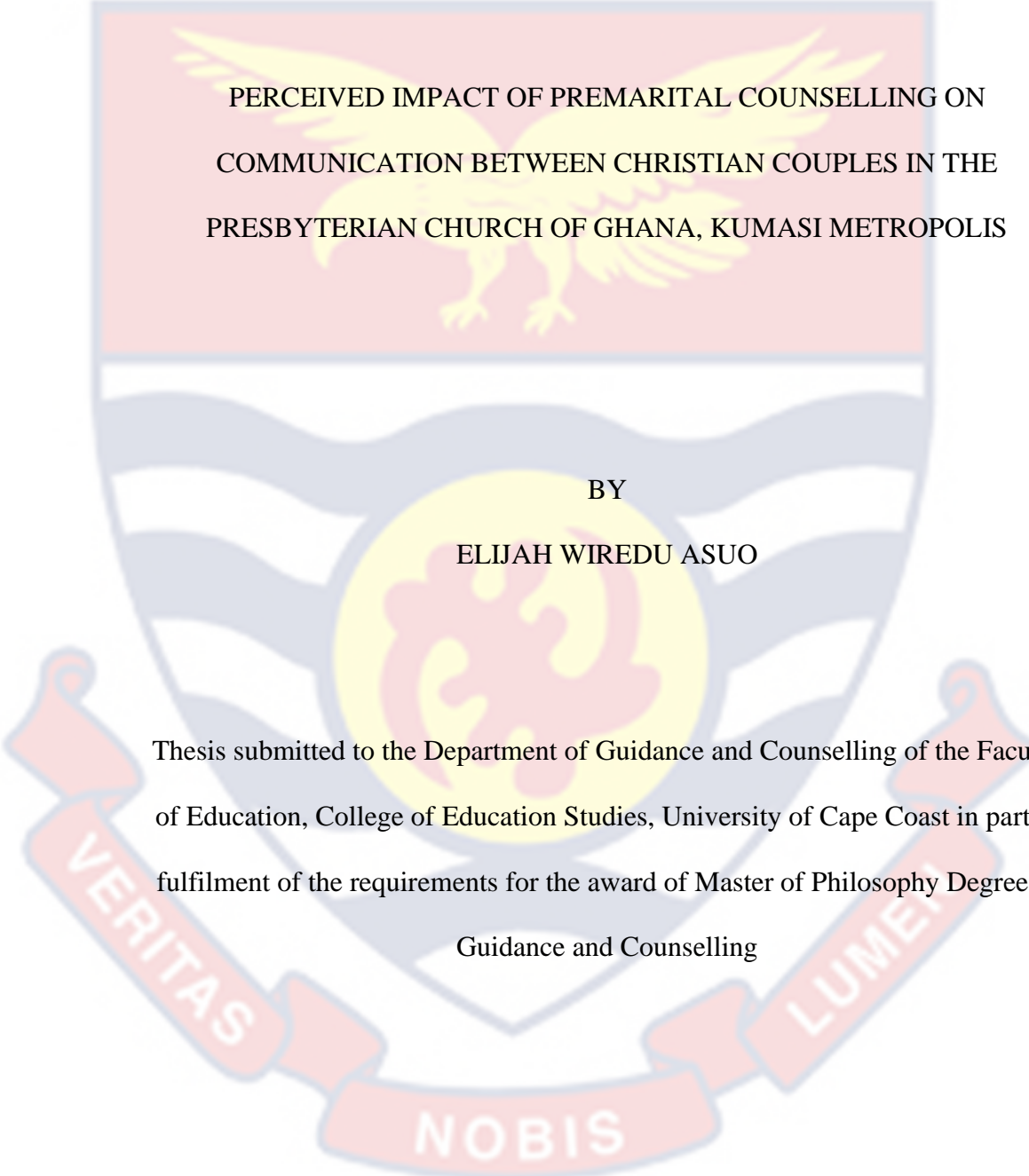


PERCEIVED IMPACT OF PREMARITAL COUNSELLING ON
COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CHRISTIAN COUPLES IN THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GHANA, KUMASI METROPOLIS

ELIJAH WIREDU ASUO

2024

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST



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BY
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Thesis submitted to the Department of Guidance and Counselling of the Faculty
of Education, College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy Degree in
Guidance and Counselling

MAY, 2024

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature..... Date.....

Name:

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature..... Date.....

Name:

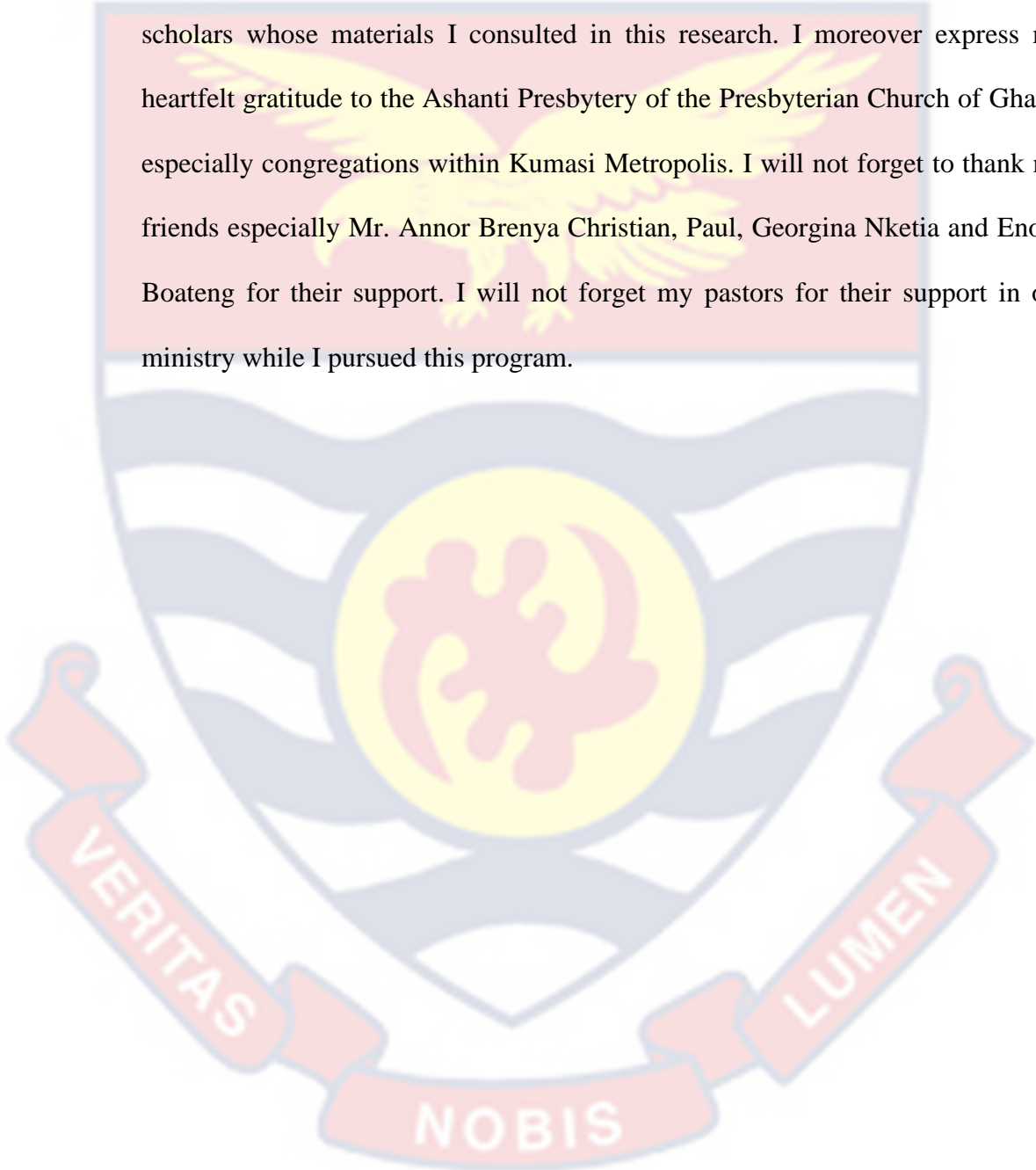


ABSTRACT

This study assessed the perceived impact of premarital counselling on marital communication among Christian couples in the Presbyterian Church in the Kumasi Metropolis. The research design was descriptive research design. Out of an accessible population of 640 married people, purposive sampling was used to select 196 married people as respondents. The study used close-ended questionnaire on four-point Likert -type scale to collect the data. Data analysis was done using Mean, Standard Deviation, Spearman Rank Correlation and Multiple Linear Regression. The results showed that majority of married couples perceived that premarital counselling is an effective exercise in the Presbyterian church of Ghana in the Kumasi Metropolis. A good number of the participants believed that premarital counselling is vital to the success of marriage. It also indicated a significant and positive relationship between premarital counselling and communication in marriages. Also, the study revealed that premarital counselling has a positive influence on marital communication as it provides an avenue for couples to accommodate each other in communication whenever they marry and it is vital to ensure the success of marriage. The study recommended that every effort must be made for premarital sessions to be led by people who are well vested in marital issues and not elders and people who are perceived to be having good marriage lives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DEDICATION

To my wife Gloria Kesewa Wiredu and all my children; Kathryn, Daniel,
Mirabel and Margaret.



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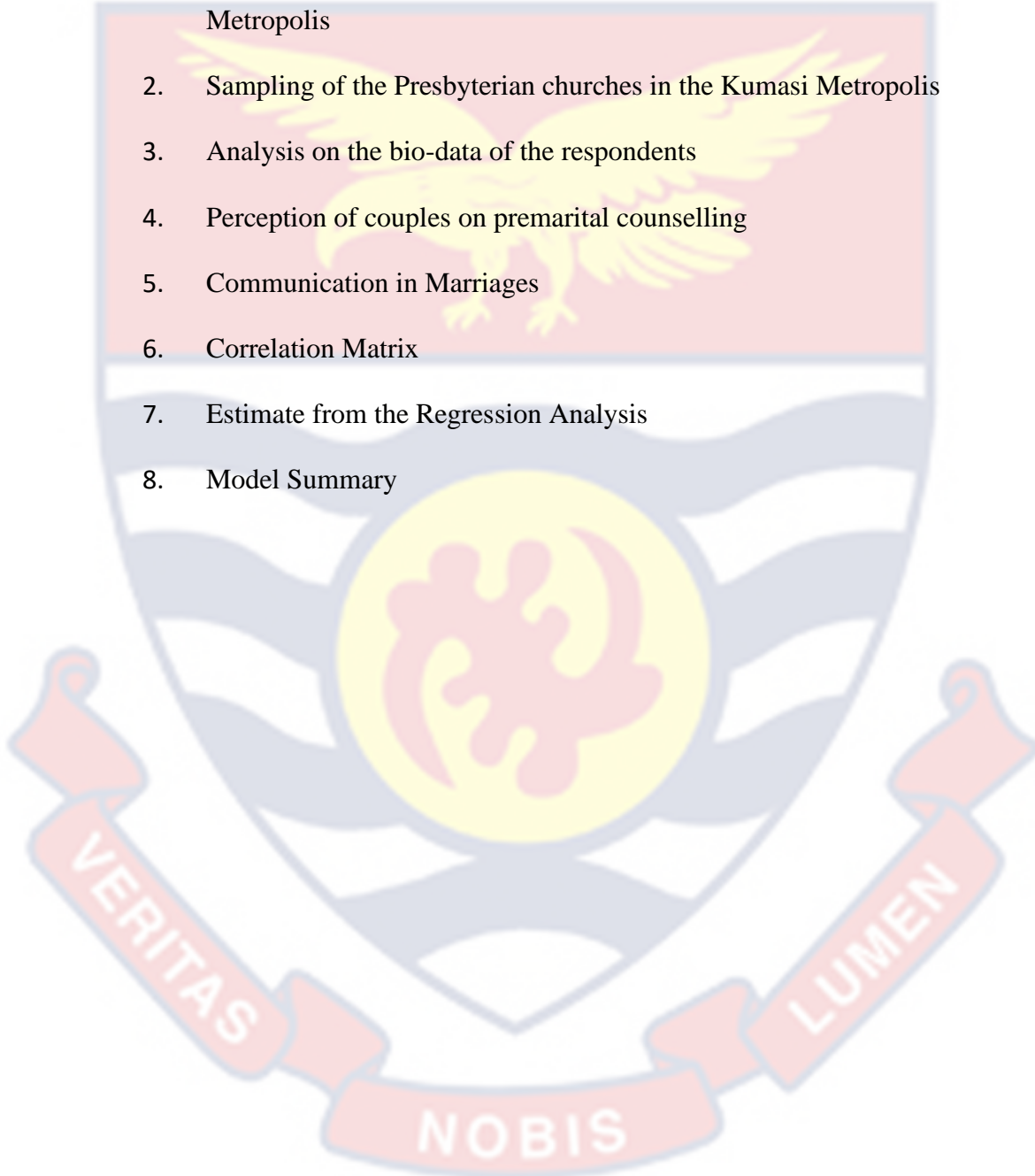
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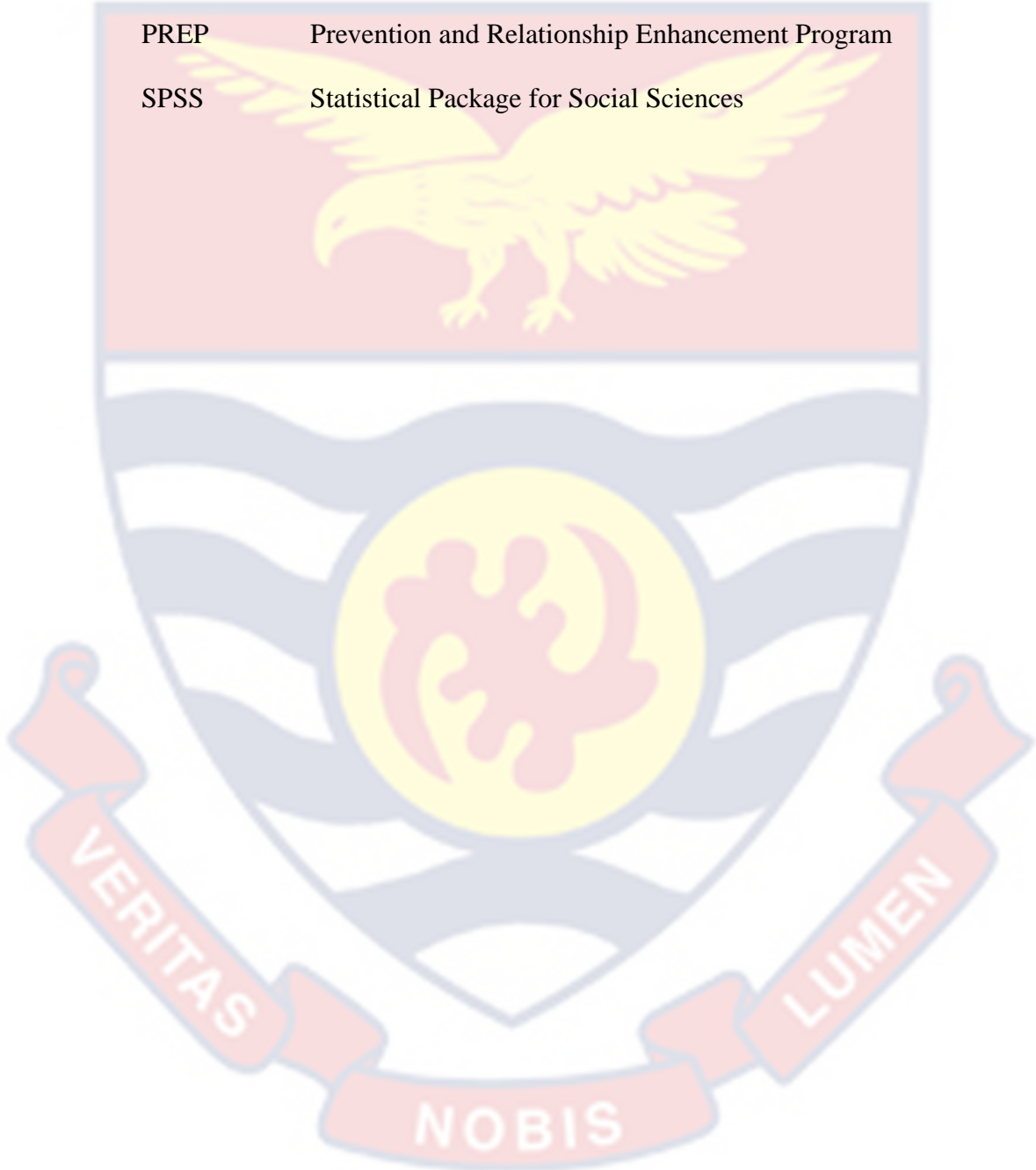
ABBREVIATIONS

CBT Cognitive Behaviour Theory

CMP Community Marriage Policy

PREP Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program

SPSS Statistical Package for Social Sciences



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses conceptual background to the study. This entails a brief recount of the history of premarital counselling and global as well as current local trends. The background also discusses the biblical as well as social concept of marriage and current marital issues facing society. The chapter also provides a statement of the problem, the purpose, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study, definition of terms as used in the study. The chapter closes with a discussion on how the study is organised.

Background to the Study

Studies on relationships concur that communication is a very significant aspect of successful marriages and families (Ndlovu, 2018; Dabone, Essuman & Nyarko-Sampson, 2018). Odukoya (2018) compares a relationship to a vehicle and identifies communication as the fuel that enables the vehicle of a relationship to run. To Odukoya (2018), it is one of the pivotal issues that can foster or mar a relationship.

In view of this, relationship counsellors and most religious bodies have constituted pre-marital counselling for all prospective couples so that they would learn the skills needed for resolving marital conflict (Asante, 2017). According to Asante (2017), pre-marital counselling consists of a number of marriage counselling sessions designed to assist people to learn vital skills needed to overcome marital conflicts. There is evidence to tell that it is beneficial for all people to understand their roles in marriage (Ambakederemo & Ganagana, 2016; Akande, Olowonirejuaro & Akuchie, 2018). Akande et al. (2018) contend that

attitudes are profoundly rooted and an enduring trait of life made up of complex experiences which to a greater extent influence the success of the marriage. Hence, pre-marital counselling affords would-be couples the opportunity to get guidance on how to manage and tolerate each other.

Marriage can be seen as one of the building blocks for building and maintaining a society with legal obligations shared between the partners (Jung, 1993). Considering marriage as an institution, as against a free-standing concept, marriage stands for a socially accepted behaviour which encompasses traditional, legal and predictable assumptions about morality and what is proper (Nock, 2015). Christians, like other various religions regard marriage as a sacred institution where “... a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24) and as stated in Hebrews 13 verse 4a, “Give honour to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage”. These clearly signify that marriage is God-instituted and sacred institution, and as such the Church views premarital counselling as a great tool to strengthen the marriage institution. Hence, an appropriate means of preparing young couples is through premarital counselling which accords them the chance to communicate the challenges of their relationships ahead of the marriage and also prepare them towards what is obvious marriage (Ambakederemo & Ganagana, 2016). It is crucial to intervene earlier in situations that are capable of disturbing the marriage since divorce is more prevalent in the young stages of marriage (Kreider & Field, 2018).

An aspect of pre-marital counselling is to get the couple to communicate or seriously discuss the pending union. To communicate, according to Asante (2017),

is to exchange information through speaking, writing, or using a shared system of signs and behaviour. Krull (2018) asserts that good marriages thrive on good communication and an open exchange of emotions, desires and beliefs.

Marriages are filled with inevitable problems or challenges and when effective dialogue is created between the couple, they are able to build solid biblical foundations whose application becomes relevant prior to and during their marriage journey. Naylor (2017), in her studies, “everything you need to know about premarital counselling” opines that major tiff in the pasts of both couples which have the potency of disrupting the happiness or satisfaction in their marriage are brought to bear and biblical ideas are applied to resolve them.

Causes of marital dissatisfaction can be traced back to many herculean issues of marriage that were not consciously addressed during pre-marital counselling which leads to divorce as a results of poor communication (Christensen & Shenk, 2011; Stanley, Markman & Whitton, 2012). For a marriage to be successful, couples must be able to manage conflicts communicate freely (Mace, 1986).

This study will therefore focus on marital communication between husband and wife. The variables involved are premarital counselling and marital communication. A variable is a condition that can change in or across a person or a situation. When a variable in a controlled experiment is expected to change due to the manipulation of another variable, the former variable is known as dependent variable. The latter variable which is manipulated in the controlled experiment is called independent variable (Lefton, 1997). Therefore, in this work, marital

communication is the dependent variable while premarital counselling is the independent variable. That is to say that premarital counselling is the variable whose impact on marital communication will be investigated.

Communication is a pivotal element of a marriage relationship. In fact, Esere, Yusuf and Omotosho (2011) see communication as the backbone of the marriage between husband and wife. The problem of communication in marriage is made clearer by Idowu and Esere, as cited in Esere, et al. (2011), that over half of unsuccessful relationships are because of severe lack of communication between the partners. So communication within the context of marriage (in which the couple had premarital counselling), which happens to be one of the major factors for successful marriage, is the subject matter of this study.

Premarital counselling and marital communication can be discussed at the world, continental, national and even local levels. In the world over, premarital counselling is gaining popularity as one of the ways to control the problem of marital instability such that some countries' governmental agencies are relying on premarital counselling as the antidote to minimize divorce and make families strong. For example, in the United Kingdom (UK) and other places such as United States, Australia, Canada and Austria, premarital counselling and other proactive methods are used at the point where people transit from single lives into married couples (Stahmann, 2000).

The relationship between premarital counselling and marital communication differs from continent to continent and even country to country. In a research conducted in the United States of American, it was realized that the

communication among newly married couples is not affected by whether the couple participated in premarital counselling or not though premarital counselling is assumed to have failed if it is not focused on skills and behaviours that enhance functional communication in marriages and areas in communications that are likely to cause misunderstanding (Norvell, 2009). This is a bitter pill to take considering the efforts people and the states put into premarital counselling. The necessity for premarital counselling came as a result of the rate of instability of marriages in the country. Attention has therefore been given to preparations and intervention programs ahead of marriages (Norvell, 2009).

In India counselling involving matters related to family and marriage is a modern practice and has not been in the system for long. This is because Indians are not used to discussing such issues with people who are not related to them especially by blood (Kashyap, 2009). The whole concept is stigmatized in a traditional Indian society and the adherents do so when all other avenues have been exhausted. It is therefore, not far from right to say that premarital counselling is a new trend in India and only a few people even patronize it.

In Africa, premarital counselling has existed informally for a very long time. For instance, in Botswana, premarital counselling was held in initiation schools known as “Bogwera and Bojale”. It was during initiation rites that these schools exposed the young ones to matrimonial, motherhood and fatherhood lives (Gaolatlhe, 2018). “Go laya” is another form of premarital counselling held in Setswana which is more about husband-and-wife roles and it is given by the married relatives of the groom and his bride on their wedding day (Gaolatlhe, 2018).

Modern day counselling is also available and the commonest since most of the younger generation prefer this to the traditional counselling methods. In recent times, premarital counselling in Africa and other parts of the world is provided by pastors, professional counsellors and medical practitioners. Most of the premarital counselling are done by pastors who mainly offer it before they accept to officiate the wedding. The premarital counselling services offered by professional counsellors and therapist mostly involve one of the couples having married before. When information about contraception and other medically technical information is involved, medical practioners also come in (Carroll & Doherty, 2003).

The situation of premarital counselling in Ghana is not so different from the rest of Africa. In Ghana, premarital counselling is mostly done by pastors who do it as a requirement to officiate a wedding ceremony. According to Tuffour (2017) the problem is that some of the churches do not have well documented or an official document that contains the lessons would-be couple should be taken through. In fact, some do not have an established standard that regulates the processes of premarital counselling such as the number of sessions the couple should have and how long each session should last. Another concern is that the use of assessment tools or inventories is not common and there are virtually no follow ups or post marriage plans for the couples. A 2011 study conducted in Kumasi showed that non-communication is very common in marriages and people have not given it the required attention. A number of issues, including sex-related issues exist because the rampancy of marital non-communication has been ignored (Amidu, Owiredu, Gyasi-Sarpong, Woode, & Quaye, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

Premarital counselling is a key issue to attend to in ensuring that a-would-be couple enjoys good communication in their marriages. Communication within any given system is essential (Stanley, Markman & Whitton, 2012) hence a vital tool for the success of every marriage. Krull (2018) describes communication as good when information is provided by systems to their components and the various components of the system also provide information in the form of feedback. The family is a system mainly built through marriage and it functions well when there is frequent flow of information among members. Therefore, whenever communication is poor, the success of the marriage is adversely felt by the family and its dependents (Olson & Defrain, 2014). Also, effective communication among couple has been a key issue to the success of marriage and most divorce cases settled in family courts are as a result of a break in communication (Britten & Britten, 2016; Collins, 2017).

In general, the break in harmony, cohesion, misunderstanding and the failure of couples to talk about their problems affect the eventual life of the marriage journey (Ambakederemo & Ganagana, 2016; Akande et al., 2018; Britten & Britten, 2016). Many studies have attributed this situation to the failure of marital counsellors to occasionally visit newlyweds to assist them with any difficulty they may face (Britten & Britten, 2016; Collins, 2017; Ambakederemo & Ganagana, 2016; Akande et al., 2018). Yet, such works mainly considered the causal factors of divorce and identified communication as the main cause (Akande et al., 2018; Collins, 2017).

These and other volumes of literature exist on premarital counselling and its impact on the survival of the marriage over time (Ntim, 2014). However, studies that assess the impact of premarital counselling on communication among couples appear not to be existing and the closest even lack cultural validity in the Ghanaian context since they were mostly done in developed countries. This current research is designed to bridge this gap. For example, Norvell (2009) had a study on premarital counselling and communication skills among fresh couples. Though it is closer to studying the impact of premarital counselling on marital communication, it was done in the United States. Once more, premarital counselling programs are frequently started by governmental and non-governmental organizations; however, there are no published research on the effect of these activities on marital communication. Premarital counselling's wider societal impact in Ghana can be better understood by examining the efficacy of initiatives launched by organizations such as the Department of Social Welfare and neighbourhood-based NGOs (Gyimah, 2016; Takyi, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

This current research was carried out to assess the impact of premarital counselling on the communication between Christian couples in the Kumasi Metropolis.

Specifically, this study was designed to;

1. examine the perception of Christian couples on the effectiveness of premarital counselling;
2. investigate the relationship between premarital counselling and marital

communication.

3. examine the effects of premarital counselling on marital communication.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study

1. What is the perception of Christian couples on the effectiveness of premarital counselling?
2. What is the relationship between premarital counselling and marital communication?
3. How does premarital counselling affect the communication between Christian married couples?

Significance of the Study

This study will help to improve premarital counselling in the Presbyterian church of Ghana; especially within Kumasi Metropolis. The findings of this study will enable marital counsellors and pastors come out with pragmatic strategies or marital counselling questions for incoming couples that will enable them alleviate challenges that would lead to a divorce. This study will again contribute immensely in building up happy marriages and bring to bear vital issues usually overlooked at during premarital counselling. This would invariably help the couples to effectively deal with such issues and hence, enjoy a fruitful and happy marriage. The study will be significant to marriage sustainability which is the heart beat or aim of stakeholders of marriages. Lastly, the study will add to the existing stock of knowledge and will be a reference point for further research.

Delimitations of the Study

This study took place in Ghana and it covered Presbyterian churches within the Kumasi Metropolis. This was because the problem under study was identified in a Presbyterian church in Kumasi Metro. Kumasi Metro was also suitable for the time available. The targeted population consisted of married people in the presbyterian churches within Kumasi metro (Namely; Adum, Bantama, Garrison, South Suntreso, Ash Town and New Amakom) who went through premarital counselling in the church before they got married. This was because in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, premarital counselling is a requirement for a reverend minister to officiate a wedding.

Limitations of the Study

The interpretation of the results of this study was guided by the following limitations. Some Christian couples did not want to take part in the study. They saw that it was time consuming especially when they have to wait after service had officially closed to respond to questionnaires. Their reluctance to respond to the study influenced the answers they provided for the study. The researcher therefore used the leadership of the churches to talk the members into taking part in the study. Secondly, the study may contain some biases which could influence the results of the study. This is because sometimes what people do and what they say are different.

Definition of Terms

The following are the operational definitions of the terms used in the study.

Premarital counselling: A kind of training program organized for a man and a woman who have decided to get married to each other. It is meant to expose them to rudiments of marriage so that marriage would not be a completely new thing to them. In Ghana, the duration of premarital counselling varies from church to church. While some churches take two to three months to complete a premarital counselling program, other may take as long as six months. Among the topics considered in premarital counselling are communication, conflict resolution, relationship with in-laws, sex and preparations for the wedding.

Couple: Two people who have decided to marry each other and avail themselves for premarital counselling ahead of their wedding ceremony. In the study, couple refers to a man and a woman who are married.

Ministers: They are pastors of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana who have been trained and ordained to serve and represent the church.

Newlyweds: A man and a woman who have just been wedded as husband and wife.

Marital communication: The interactions between a husband and his wife in in their marriage.

Couple: A man and a woman who are married to each other

Married people: men and women who are married but not necessarily married to one another

Organization of the Study

This study was organised into five chapters with chapter one as the introduction. It involved the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation of

the study, limitations of the study, and definition of terms that were used in the study.

Chapter Two was about literature review. It involved the theoretical framework and empirical review of the study. Under the theoretical framework, Behavioural theory as a theory of counselling was discussed. The conceptual review also involved Dimensions of premarital counselling under which content of premarital counselling, duration of premarital counselling and the approaches to premarital counselling were discussed. The empirical review covered the following the institution of marriage, communication barriers in marriage and the relevance of premarital counselling on communication.

The third chapter was about research methods and it included: research design; study area, population, sample and sampling procedure, research instrument, validity and reliability of instrument; data collection procedure, data analysis, chapter summary. Chapter Four presented results and discussions of the study and Chapter Five finally summarized the work, drew conclusions and made recommendations. The chapter also made some suggestions for further studies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews already existing works that relate to the impact of premarital counselling on communication between Christian couples in the Kumasi metropolis. The chapter discussed the theoretical framework, empirical review and conceptual review of the study. With the theoretical framework, Behavioural Theory was discussed as a theory of counselling. The conceptual review also dealt with the dimensions of premarital counselling which discussed the content of premarital counselling, duration of premarital counselling and the approaches to premarital counselling.

The empirical review finally considered areas such as the institution of marriage, communication barriers in marriages, the relevance of premarital counselling on communication, the perception of Christian couples on premarital counselling and the effects of premarital counselling on marital communication. Behavioural Theory has given birth to techniques and procedures for dealing with a lot of issues. Such techniques include “operant relaxation, systematic desensitization, vivo exposure and flooding, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, social skills training” and they are also used in group counselling (Corey, 2017).

Theoretical Review

Theories of Counselling

Behavioral Theory

The theory of behaviourism rejects the idea that the unconscious mind is very influential on the behaviour of a person. The focus of behaviourism is on describing and measuring observable behaviour by using instruments of assessment. One basic assumption of behaviourism is that we can replace inappropriate behaviour with one which is appropriate by using some common techniques of learning (Lefton, 1997). Myers (2007) describe behaviourism as the view that psychology should be an objective science that studies behaviour by not relying on mental processes.

Pavlov (1932) propounded his theory of learning by conditioning through his experiments with dogs which led to an incidental discovery. He realized that the dogs salivated at the sight of the meat powder and later on the sound of a bell which was repeatedly paired to the presentation of the meat. By this experiment, Pavlov discovered that before conditioning, there was an unconditioned response was produced by an unconditioned stimulus and a neutral stimulus produced no response but after conditioning, the stimulus that was neutral now produced a conditioned response. He therefore referred to the neutral stimulus as conditioned stimulus (Myers, 2007). Though Ivan Pavlov was a great behaviourist, the most influential person in that field is B. F. Skinner and John B. Watson coined the name Behaviourism.

In relation to our subject of discussion, the behaviour theory of counselling

sees premarital counselling as something from the environment that gives meaning to the communication-related behaviours in marriage. The theory also orients couples to create a marital environment that will positively influence their communication.

Ways of Personality Development

We can understand modern behaviour theory by considering that personality develops in four different ways. These areas are “classical conditioning, operant conditioning, social cognitive theory, and cognitive behaviour therapy” (Corey, 2017).

Classical conditioning (1849-1936)

Also known as respondent conditioning, classical conditioning explains that when a stimulus which is originally neutral is paired severally with another stimulus which elicits a response naturally, the neutral stimulus later comes to elicit the same or a similar response as the natural-response-eliciting one. According to the proponent, B.F. Skinner, it happens that the response which is not conditioned involuntarily occurs in the absence of learning, by responding to the unconditioned stimulus. This can be seen in humans using sucking as an unconditioned response. New-born babies tend to suck anything that enters their mouth because breasts have been used to condition the babies to suck whatever enters their mouth. In this child-sucking experiment in 1993, when light or sound were severally paired with a nipple, the babies sucked at the presentation of the sound or the light (Lefton, 1997). In premarital counselling, classical conditioning is used to modify unfavourable behaviour such as drug abuse. Such processes of behaviour modification include

aversion therapy, and flooding.

Operant conditioning (1904-1990)

In operant conditioning, also known as instrumental learning, Skinner (1953) introduced new concepts known as reinforcement and also punishment. This type of conditioning refers to an experience by which a behaviour is greatly influenced by the actions that follow it. Whatever consequence that comes after a behaviour and influences the chance that a behaviour will be repeated is called reinforcer. Punishment is when an aversive stimulus is presented after a behaviour (usually an undesirable behaviour). Operant conditioning implies that if the consequences that follow a behaviour are favourable, there are great chances that the behaviour will be repeated. The opposite is true. In humans, operant conditioning has been used in weight management programs and in parent education programs (Corey, 2017). During premarital counselling, couples are trained to identify the reasons to their partners' unfavourable behaviours. They must also identify the antecedents of their own behaviours that are not favourable to the marriage (Butner, et al., 2017).

As an intervention strategy, operant conditioning is used to shape partners to engage in more adaptive behaviours by maximising the reinforcement they receive from behaving in new ways. Although different couple therapies implement operant conditioning principles in slightly different ways, they all share the aim of clients working with their therapist to identify new behaviours that may have positive outcomes for their relationship overall. After these behaviours have been identified, clients are encouraged to implement the new behaviours and the

outcomes of these behaviours are then reviewed in session. Because reinforcers that have worked previously may become less reinforcing over time, partners may be instructed on how to provide reinforcement for partners' behaviours they would like to see repeated (Butner, et al., 2017). Implementation of this intervention varies across therapeutic approaches and often falls into one of two categories: rule-governed change and contingency-shaped change (Christensen & Shenk, 2011).

Social Cognitive Theory (Albert Bandura 1925-2021)

Propounded by Albert Bandura, it is also known as Social Learning Theory and it assumes that a person is the agent of change in his affairs and so people can direct their own behaviour change. It posits that there is always an interaction between a behaviour, the environmental frame of the behaviour and personal factors such as preferences, beliefs and expectations (Petit, 2019). According to the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), the personality of an individual does not only depend on the kind of environment you are living in, but it also depends on the individual's differences in grasping the information around them (i.e., the cognition factor). Hence, to determine the personality and moral development of an individual, both the environment and the cognitive abilities of an individual play key roles. Thus, the theory argues that the learning of people depends upon the reciprocal interaction of the three factors: behaviour, cognition, and environment.

The SCT is exemplified in how a person who has difficulty in relating to people can acquire social skills when they associate themselves with those who demonstrate effective interpersonal skills (Corey, 2017). It is useful in premarital counselling, such that couples are trained to take responsibility of their actions.

They also learn to find solutions to problems from their own perspective instead of looking at it from their partner's end.

This study aims to examine SCT by applying its principals to a controlled environment, such as premarital counselling. Couples participating in premarital counselling have the opportunity to learn behaviours from a respected role model. As the counsellor explains and demonstrates certain behaviours to the couples, the participants have the opportunity to observe the behaviours, see the positive or negative outcomes, and determine for themselves if that behaviour is something they wish to incorporate or dismiss from their relationships. Group counselling increases the occasion for social learning. According to Gleason and Prescott (1977), group counselling affords the opportunity for couples to compare and contrast their relationships to one another, providing chances for couples to adopt certain behaviours they see as beneficial to other couples. Groups allow for feedback from other participants and occasions for couples to watch their partner interacting with other individuals. Participants may also watch other couples make behavioural decisions, which may reinforce certain behaviours as beneficial to relationships. All of these occurrences create an environment in group counselling where the chance for the anticipated outcomes of social learning theory to occur increase.

The SCT, nevertheless, has some limitations. It highlights the reciprocal determinism triadic model (the interactions between the behaviour, cognition abilities, and environment impacts the personality of the person). However, this theory does not clearly describe which factors impact the personality of the

individual more than the other two factors. Also, the theory only emphasises observational learning and ignore the genetic or biological influence on the personality of an individual. Other factors like the impact of the emotional or the psychological factors on the individual's personality are not discussed in the SCT.

Cognitive Behaviour Theory (CBT)

Cognitive Behaviour Theory was developed by Aaron Beck in the 1960s. This theory stresses on the beliefs of people with the assumption that how a person feels and acts is influenced by the beliefs of the person (Corey, 2017). The theory seeks to change the way people think (cognitive) and the way they act (behaviour). It draws a person's attention to his wrong and irrational thinking. It also ensures the person to replace the previous negative thinking way with fresh better ones and to put up more positives approaches to dealing with daily issues. Myers (2007) cites Schwartz and others in an experiment on cognitive behaviour therapy in which people who suffered obsessive-compulsive behaviour were made aware of the nature of the conditions they were experiencing. They were taught to change their beliefs and challenge the urge by saying that "I'm having a compulsive urge". They therefore engaged in alternative activities that would take their minds off the urge until it subsides. During premarital counselling, this theory is used when couples show signs of having beliefs that militate against the success of the marriage. In such a situation, the person is assisted to replace such beliefs with more health ones.

Conceptual Review

The Institution of Marriage

We may define marriage as the humanly accepted and established social institution by which families are established through “socially or ritually recognized union or legal contract between spouses that establishes rights and obligations between them, between them and their children, and between them and their in-laws” (Ntim, 2014:25). As old as it is, it permeates every human society in various forms (Wimalasena, 2016). By uniting man and woman, marriage becomes a ubiquitous and naturally-existing social institution that has been present in one way or the other in all known societies and it is a gender-integrating union that is related to helpful sexual- channelling, reproduction, child-upbringing, and dependent-protecting roles. It is a pre-legal, pre-state institution because it existed prior to the existence of states and legal systems (Wardle, 2017).

Marriage as an institution includes the formal and informal presence of third parties. Parents and other family members informally and sometimes formally have say in the choice of partners and some other marital decisions. Sometimes, the influence of such third parties ends up being the bane of the marriages. Asogwa (2015) opines that the ignorance of the third parties is the reason why their influence on marriages destroys the marriages.

The economic aspect of the institution of marriage involves the in-flow of income and how expenditure is incurred. It also includes the roles assigned to each member of the family. Most marriages are patrilocal in the sense that the woman leaves her parents’ house and goes to live in the house provided by her husband. The husband works outside the house and comes home with the returns as his

economic contribution. The wife however stays back at home to care for the children and keep the home (Wimalasena, 2016).

Communication Barriers in Marriages

Communication is a very important element in marriage. Secularly, it can be seen as coming from the words, “com” and “munis”. The former means “together with” while the latter means “binding oneself to another person”. In relation to marriage, communication could be defined as a regular exchange of information (messages) between couples by speech, writing, telephone, body and facial expression and others. It includes communication that exists between couples and their children, their in-laws, or their parents. Communication can once again be defined as ‘meeting of meanings’ – a flow of meanings (values, attitudes and understanding) between a couple in the midst of unfortunate circumstances that could mar the relationship. With the definition and discussions above, it would not be out of order to see communication as process by which a couple to relate by using verbal and non-verbal cues to overcome the obstacles of successful communication. It must be stated that the person at the receiving end of communication is also actively involved and must be recognized as such (Jent, 2012).

The importance of communication in marriage is emphasized as one of the primary goals of premarital counselling (Gurman & Fraenkel, 2002). So Parhizgar, Esmaelzadeh-Saeieh, Akbari Kamrani, Rahimzadeh and Tehranizadeh (2017) proposed communication skills be included in the topics considered for premarital counselling. It is when the receiver has decoded the message of the encoder just as

it is meant to be understood that we can say communication has been successful. Due to the many factors that hinder the success of communication, it is assumed that communication can hardly be hundred percent complete. In fact, sometimes, instead of successful communication, there could be miscommunication. Miscommunication does not necessarily imply disagreement. The causes of miscommunication or lack of communication are what we term as “barriers of communication” (Mittal & Silvera, 2018).

Dimensions of Premarital Counselling

A number of premarital counselling programs can be found throughout the world. These programs have got their unique features that distinguish them from others. However, amidst all the differences, there are three fundamental dimensions that cut across all the programs. These dimensions of premarital counselling are reviewed in turn.

Content of premarital counselling

In premarital counselling, a great number of topics are involved. The topics include communication, religion, friendship and social support, personality characteristics, parenting and children, finances, family background, gender role expectations, values, adjusting to married life, commitment to marriage, emotional intelligence, sex, the importance of spending time with one's partner, conflict resolution skills, attitudes and beliefs toward marriage, gender role expectations, problem-solving, fun and leisure (Murray, 2006). Manley (2006) also asserts that premarital counselling must incorporate topics such as communication, conflict management, expectations in marriage, role differentiation, sex, parents and in-

laws, parenting, leisure, religion, finance and budgeting, decision making, intimacy, quality and stability.

This makes it clear that the many topics that are incorporated into premarital counselling consider almost every facet of human lives. Of course, the topics do not share the same level of importance because some topics are considered to affect the core components of the marriage relationship. Such very important areas are “communication (interactional patterns), conflict management, attitudes and beliefs, and core beliefs pertaining to marriage” (Manley, 2006).

Duration of premarital counselling

A host of authorities have had divergent views as to how long premarital counselling should take. Some authors appear to define the duration of premarital counselling in terms of the number of sessions that the couples are expected to have ahead of their marriage. If Howe’s (2011) definition of premarital counselling is anything to go by, then we expect the program to be a brief. Howe (2011) saw premarital counselling as a brief form of therapy. Generally, there is a consensus that accepts premarital counselling to have a number of six to eight sessions with each session lasting for one hour to one and half hours (Odero, 2018). In a research conducted on “Premarital and couple counselling with Co-SEE: couples’ self-awareness exploration and evaluation”, it was realized that clergy counsellors who applied CO-SEE demonstrated significant increase in actual time spent in premarital counselling in comparison with the Control Group (Sabey, 1981). With this we could say that premarital counselling produces more positive results when it is not rushed for the couple.

Approaches to premarital counselling

The likelihood of having a troubled marriage and may be eventually, a failed marriage has made it necessary to include in one's preparation, a formal marriage-based-program that will prepare and equip one for the task ahead. Premarital counselling can be defined as “an orderly, step by step and organized process which contains an introduction to the purposes of marriage, male and female psychology, awareness about correct criteria for marriage, the required conditions for entering into marriage and sex education” (Parhizgar, et al., 2017). Marriage counsellors have a number of approaches with which they deal with couples-to-be. Of course, these approaches differ a lot in many areas such as objectives and setting. Unique as they may be, they all try to assist their clients to acquire skills and other necessary tools needed for a good marriage. And they involve common issues of marriage such as communication, conflict resolution and sex education. Depending on their counselling orientations and the uniqueness of a premarital situation, counsellors select suitable approaches to take premarital couples through counselling ahead of their marriage. Some situations call for an approach that is skill-based while others require therapeutic approaches, especially when the couples have identified a problem that could affect their impending marriage. Sometimes, the counsellor has to choose between standardized programs and programs that suit specific couples (Sabey, 1981). This work involves a discussion on some of these approaches to premarital counselling.

Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP)

One common approach used in premarital counselling is Prevention and

Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP). The main focus of PREP is on proper ways of communicating in marriage and the use of problem-solving skills, both of which have been found to be correlated to successful marriage. It implores cognitive-behavioural marital therapy techniques to expose couples to important contents such as forgiveness, conflict management in marriage and ways of creating and keeping enjoyment and friendship in marriage (Kepler, 2015).

Community Marriage Policy

Community Marriage Policy (CMP) is another common approach to premarital counselling. CMP makes premarital counselling mandatory to any couple whose marriage would be officiated by a bonded pastor. Community Marriage Policy require the local pastor to sign a binding document by way of covenant that binds him to officiate marriages only when the couple have gone through a substantial amount of premarital counselling. The policy also implores married couples who are trained and used as mentors to impart into the fresh couple strong, satisfying and lasting marriages.

Solution Focused Premarital Counselling

This approach is based on strength and its objective is to develop a common vision for a couple's marriage based on the resources available to them. The aim of this approach in premarital counselling is to assist couples to build marriages that are stable and satisfying (Murray & Murray, 2004). When the couple develops the vision, they create ways that will lead them to effect changes that will make them fulfil the vision. For the counsellor in premarital counselling, he can employ different methods to help the couples while they grow and progress in their marital

shared vision. When discussing topics such as parenting, conflict resolution, communication and finances and even the extended family, the counsellor may resort to the Solution Focused approach (Friedman, 1993; Hoyt & Berg, 1998).

Even though, this approach does not guarantee a hard-and-fast guideline for premarital counselling, it can really add up to programs in premarital counselling. The method requires the couple to consider each other's unique strength and resources. A major role of the counsellor is to keep a future orientation and focus on the goals and objectives of the couple while they prepare towards their marriage and if possible, add skills training into the sessions (Ntim, 2014). This approach to premarital counselling has a number of assumptions. We can identify one true reality, the counsellor and the couples are more concerned with solutions than problems, little changes produce great changes and couples can rely on available resources to equip them with solutions to manage problems (Murray & Murray, 2004).

A very key concept of the Solution Focus approach to premarital counselling is "the Couple's Resource Map" which works on the premise that couples can rely on available resources to equip them with solutions to manage problems (Murray & Murray, 2004). The map's main objective is to enable the couple find fundamental resources on which to rely for support in getting solution in the event of a marital problem. The map considers three areas where the couple believes they can seek support when there is a problem which are individual resources, relationship resources and contextual resources. Each area has some descriptive elements. For example, "personal resources" has elements such as self-

esteem, self-awareness, values, etc. Relationship resources include couple history, shared dreams, shared material resources, etc. contextual resources also include family life professionals, economic and political contexts and cultural community elements (Murray & Murray, 2004).

The Relevance of Premarital Counselling on Communication

The world has an increasing high rate of divorce and one issue that can be identified as a factor in a lot of divorce cases is ineffective communication between husbands and their wives. Therefore, one way to prevent the breakdown of marriages is to make the acquisition of communication skills a key element in premarital training programs (Hays, 2017).

Kariuki (2018) hinted the relevance of premarital counselling on managing suspicious thoughts ahead of marriage. It does so by guiding the man and woman who have thoughts of suspicion on good ways of communicating those thoughts and how to discuss the way forward with their spouse. Sometimes, with little or no evidence, a couple may suspect each other. These suspicions are fuelled by cases they hear about other people's relationships and marriages and sometimes their own past experiences. The suspicions are mostly communicated indirectly even when they have not formerly talked about it.

Before they enter marriage, most couples have issues of incompatibility to deal with. This is to say that couples may have misunderstanding due to differences in values, education, standard of living, religion, goals and conflict managing strategies etc. Ideally, they wouldn't know about such incompatibilities until they have been married for some time. It is during premarital counselling that such issues

can be brought to bear and effectively dealt with (Shumm, 2010).

There are various areas in the life of an individual which may call for adjustment due to marriage and one of them is communication. We all grow up with certain principles that regulate our communication; and in marriage, we have to negotiate and renegotiate with our spouse's system. Prenuptial counselling helps people, which only causes resentment and, eventually, emotional separation or defensiveness. During premarital counselling, couples are taught to appreciate each other's differences instead for them to try and change the other person to suit their needs (Moeti, Koloi-Keaikitse, & Mokgolodi, 2017).

Empirical Review

Introduction

Various studies have been conducted on the issue of premarital counselling and marital communication. In this section, past studies which relate to the study have been chronicled. The empirical review was conducted based on the objectives of the study hence, organised under the following headings: the perception of Christian couples on premarital counselling, relationship between premarital counselling and marital communication, and the effects of premarital counselling on marital communication.

The Perception of Christian Couples on Premarital Counselling

A number of studies have been done about premarital counselling and the results have been conflicting. The results of some studies show that premarital counselling does not affect the success or otherwise of marriage. For example, Adzovie and Dabone (2021) conducted a study on the relationship between

premarital counselling and marital success: Perceptions of married Christians in Ghana. After purposively selecting 300 men and women, the results of the study turned out that Christian married couples held a negative perception of the effectiveness of pre-marital counselling.

However, in another study in Iran, “seven counselling sessions were conducted, which focused on communication skills. The results showed that the marital satisfaction increased significantly after the session” (Parhizgar, et al., 2017). Vail (2012) also adds that Communication is one of the areas of concern that needs to be considered in marriage counselling. Again, a study in the Techiman Municipality in 2015 found out “that premarital counselling has positive impact on marriages and Techiman Municipality married people have positive perception about premarital counselling. The study therefore suggested premarital counselling to be maintained and encouraged in all churches” (Ansah–Hughes, Akyina, & Oduro-Okyireh, 2015).

Lastly, Adzovi, & Dabone (2021) in their research titled “Relationship between premarital counselling and marital success: Perceptions of married Christians in Ghana” had results that showed that “there is a significant mean difference between the male and female married Christians regarding their perception on the essence of premarital counselling. It was also found that Christian married couples held a negative perception of the effectiveness of premarital counselling” (Adzovi, & Dabone, 2021).

Relationship Between Premarital Counselling and Marital Communication

According to Ansah–Hughes, Akyina and Oduro-Okyireh (2015) good

premarital counselling includes skills in effective communication techniques, which promote understanding, foster empathy, and bring about insight and facilitates forgiveness. Thus, content on communication skills should be part of any premarital counselling programme so as to enhance effective marital communication. Over the years, studies have been conducted to ascertain whether premarital counselling has any influence on communication in marriage.

In 2009, Norvell examined the effects of premarital counselling on newlywed communication. The author predicted that individuals who had participated in premarital counselling would have lower levels of demand/withdrawal communication and higher levels of spousal support. However, the findings of the study revealed that participating in premarital counselling has no effect on newlywed communication (Norvell, 2009). Nevertheless, other studies (Kariuki, 2018; Ngunjiri & Muiro, 2021; Parhizgar et al., 2017) unravelled that premarital counselling actually has effects on marital communication.

Krivickas, Sanchez, Kenney and Wright (2010) examined relationships between childhood abuse and two maladaptive marital communication patterns – hostile and withdrawing – and test whether pre-marital counselling mediate the effects of childhood abuse. Drawing on a sample from the Marriage Matters data from 1997-2004, the authors found both gendered differences in communication and in the relationship between childhood abuse and negative communication patterns. Wives are more likely to use a hostile style of communication, whereas husbands are more likely to use a withdrawing style. Krivickas and colleagues further reported that pre-marital counselling is not associated with hostile

communication for either spouse. However, pre-marital counselling increases the use of withdrawing communication in both wives and husbands (Krivickas, et al., 2010).

In Iran, Parhizgar, Esmaelzadeh-Saeieh, Kamrani, Rahimzadeh and Tehranizadeh (2017) conducted a parallel intervention study on 60 couples to explore the effect of premarital counselling on marital satisfaction. Specifically, they examined the effect of communication skills on marital satisfaction of couples attending pre-marriage counselling centres. Therefore, the intervention group for the study, in addition to the routine trainings, received training on communication skills. The results of a paired t test showed a significant relationship between the level of marital satisfaction in the intervention group before and after the intervention ($P < 0.001$). Moreover, marital satisfaction in the intervention group (who had received training on communication skills) was significantly higher than in the control group (who only received routine training). Considering the effect of communication skills on marital satisfaction of the couples, Parhizgar et al. (2017) recommended the inclusion of communication skills in the pre-marriage counselling sessions.

According to Ngunjiri and Muiru (2021), premarital counselling enables partners to communicate honestly with their spouses. In a study on the effects of communication skills acquired during premarital counselling on marital stability among newly married couples in Kamukunji sub county, Ngunjiri and Muiru found that communication skills have a positive and significant effect on marital stability among newly married couples. In a similar Kenyan study, Marang'a (2021)

reported that couples who went through premarital counselling experienced greater commitment to spouse, enhanced affective communication.

In another study, Kariuki (2018) investigated the effectiveness of premarital counselling on marital stability among couples in Nairobi County. The study adopted a quantitative descriptive research design involving 105 married couples. The study revealed a significant difference in marital satisfaction between the couples who received different counts of premarital counselling sessions. It showed that premarital counselling had a significant effect on marital satisfaction which translated into communication within the marriage. Based on this finding, Kariuki recommended that premarital counselling should focus more on communication, finance management and personality development in order to improve overall marital stability.

The Effects of Premarital Counselling on Marital Communication

On the surface, one may easily think that premarital counselling always impacts positively on all marriages but studies in the world over have not always found same. Some studies have resulted in findings that try to establish that premarital counselling does not affect the communication between couples. For instance, Cobbinah and Osei-Tutu (2019) who did a study in the Ghana in 2019 found out that though pre-marital counselling is necessary for would-be couples, it does not support every marriage. They further noted that married couples who had pre-marital counselling and those were not given were all getting separated. Therefore, going through premarital counselling does not affect the communication of newlyweds.

Also, Busby, Ivey, Harris and Ates (as cited in Ntim, 2014) identified a number of positive effects from premarital education. Their study showed that premarital counselling programs had significant effects on relationship success. They also discovered premarital education that is based on assessment supported couples to keep and even enhance their communication and minimize problems as a way of enhancing marital adjustment. To sum up their findings, they wrote that “premarital education not matter what it is, is positive because it encourages couples to simply slow down. It gives them time to talk about major areas of relationships along with the chance to hear their partner’s perspectives on their relationships”.

Conceptual Framework

The Health Belief Model (HBM) (Rosenstock, 1966, 1974) was adopted as the conceptual base for the study. The HBM was originally developed in the 1950s by social psychologists to explain the failure of some individuals to use preventative health behaviours for early detection of diseases, patient response to symptoms, and medical compliance (Janz & Becker, 1984; Rosenstock, 1974). The theory hypothesises that people are likely to engage in a given health-related behaviour to the extent that they (1) perceive that they could contract the illness or be susceptible to the problem (perceived susceptibility); (2) believe that the problem has serious consequences or will interfere with their daily functioning (perceived severity); (3) believe that the intervention or preventative action will be effective in reducing symptoms (perceived benefits); and (4) perceive few barriers to taking action (perceived barriers). All four variables are thought to be influenced

by demographic variables such as age, level of education, and socioeconomic status. A fifth variable, cues to action, provides an important social factor. Cues to action are incidents serving as a reminder of the severity or threat of an illness.

These may include internal or external cues.

The key concepts in the HBM are presented in Figure 1.

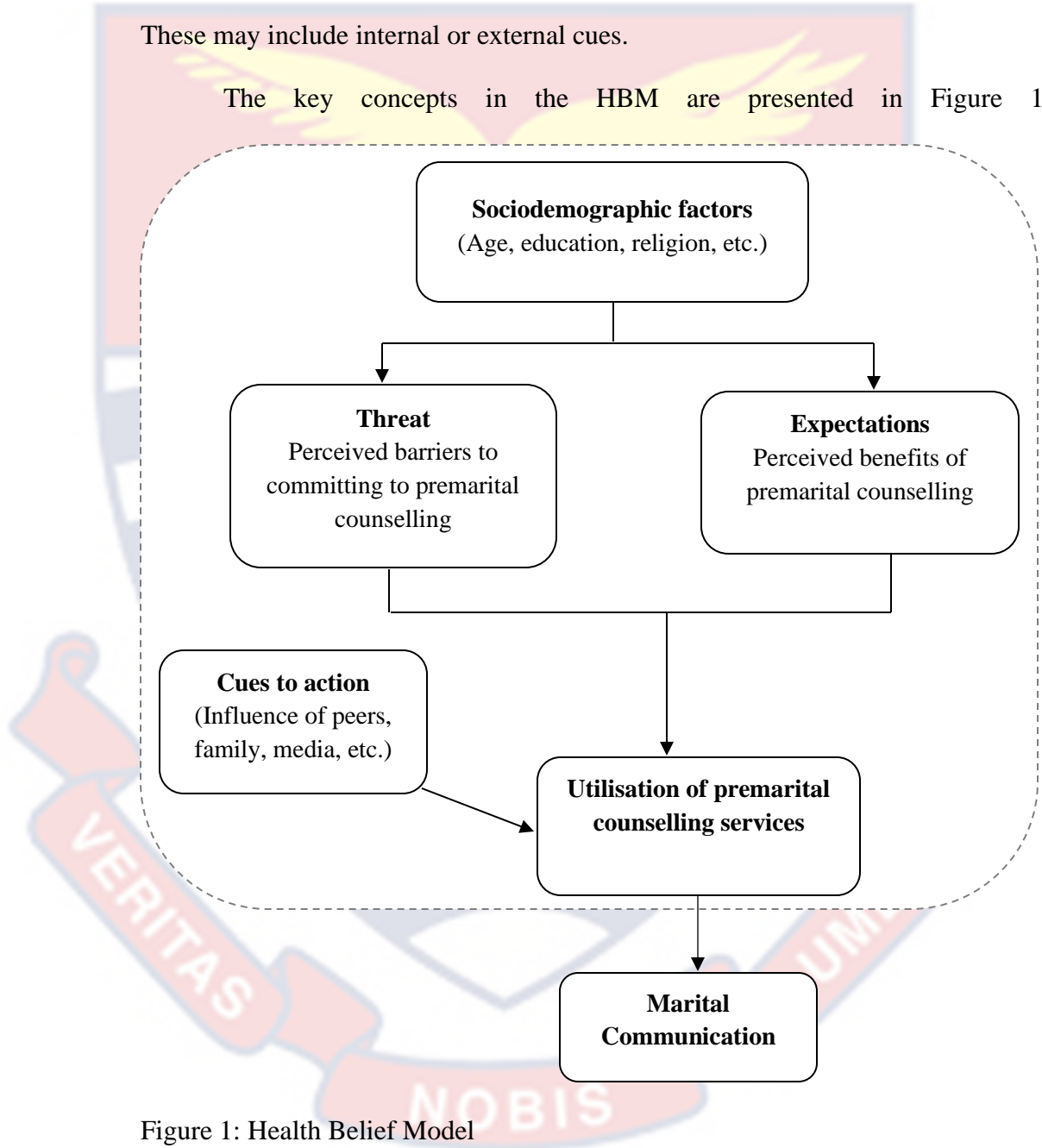


Figure 1: Health Belief Model

As shown in Figure 1, a couple's perception of threat (barriers to premarital counselling such as availability of counselling services and cost involved) and

expectations (benefits of premarital counselling such as positive marital communication) influence them to decide whether or not to go for premarital counselling. When the perceived expectations are more than the threats, the couple will go for counselling and vice-versa. Thus, when they perceive that the benefits they would get from premarital counselling outweigh the cost involved in seeking counselling, they will opt for counselling. Threats and expectations are also influenced by the couple's sociodemographic and economic factors. Moreover, influence of family and friends, the media and significant others can also influence a couple's utilisation of premarital counselling services.

Summary of The Literature Review

The review discussed the Behavioural theory of counselling. The theory seeks to explain behaviour from the perspective of what is observed. Coming from the experiments of B. F. Skinner and Ivan Pavlov, it becomes clear that Behaviour theory accepts that the environment can influence a person's behaviour. In relation to this research, the theory affirms that communication in marriage can be affected positively or negatively by the couple's environment. This is to say that people go into marriages with learned behaviours from their many experiences gathered from their environment. Premarital counselling becomes a very great opportunity deal with such learned behaviours before they militate against the marriage. The chapter also reviewed marriage related concepts such as the dimensions of premarital counselling. The conceptual review discussed the content of premarital counselling, the duration of premarital counselling and the approaches to premarital counselling. In all, one can say that the nature of topics considered in premarital counselling,

duration and number of premarital counselling sessions attended and the counsellor's strategy can determine the success or otherwise of the program in the marriage. The chapter ended with of premarital counselling and marital communication. Among the areas considered are the institution of marriage, communication barriers in marriages, the relevance of premarital counselling on communication, the perception of Christian couples on premarital counselling and the effects of premarital counselling on marital communication.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Chapter three discusses the methodology used in this study. That is the processes for collecting data and analysing data. The chapter considers issues such as research design, study area, population, sampling and sampling procedures, research instruments, data collection procedures, ethical considerations and analysis of the results and a summary of the chapter.

Research Design

This research was guided by the Positivist paradigm. The positivist paradigm posits that one can understand the social world objectively. It requires a researcher to analyse data objectively. In the process, the researcher dissociates himself from his personal values and do independent work. The researcher used a descriptive survey design. According to Siedlecki (2020), descriptive survey is when data is gathered to describe events. The data is then organized and describe. This design regularly uses It often uses graphs and charts to communicate information about the population of interest to the understanding of the reader. Gravetter and Wallnau (2009) mentioned that, quantitative research examines variables that change in magnitude, size, quantity and duration.

Among other demerits, descriptive design is known to likely have biases and also the strength of the outcome of a descriptive design depends on the incidence of consideration as well as the length of survival following the outcome. Despite the weaknesses of the design, the researcher still prefers to use it. This is because it can be conducted in a relatively shorter period of time and it is cost-

effective. Omair (2015) also mentioned that the descriptive survey is ideal when the purpose of data collection is an attempt to determine the current status of a population with respect to one or more variables. Lambert and Lambert (2012) also posited that descriptive survey enables the researcher to look at a number of variables at a time which is rarely possible in laboratories and in field experiments. The study area was the Kumasi Metropolitan area in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. It contains sub-metros such as Bantama, Adum, Nhyiaeso, Manhyia, Suame and Asokwa. Kumasi Metro houses important state institutions such as Registrar of Companies, Regional government administration, Kumasi High Court, Kejetia Market, Regional Police Headquarters Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital and Manhyia Palace and the administrative office of the presbytery in which the study is done.

Population

Population, as defined by Lavrankas (2008), is the whole set of units that a study data will be referenced to. Frankel and Wallen (2006) state that the population is a group which the results of the study will be applied to. That is, the population to which the researcher is interested in gaining information and drawing conclusion. The population for the study was all married couples in Presbyterian churches in the Kumasi Metropolis. In all, there were six Presbyterian churches within Kumasi Metro; namely, Adum, Bantama, Garrison, South Suntreso, Ash Town and New Amakom. However, the target population was all married couples in the Presbyterian Church in the Kumasi Metropolis who went through premarital

counselling before tying the knot.

The accessible population is the portion of the target population that the researcher can access. The sample is normally drawn from the accessible population. This is the reason it represents the sample frame (Asiamah, Mensah & Oteng-Abayie, 2017). The researcher therefore had an accessible population of 640 married people which included church counsellors and reverend ministers. The participants for the study only included married people in the Presbyterian Church who went through premarital counselling, marriage counsellors, and ministers of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana within Kumasi Metropolis. This implies that couples who did premarital counselling outside the church and those who did not do it at all were excluded from the research. The population of the churches are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Accessible Population of the Presbyterian churches in the Kumasi Metropolis

| Presbyterian Church | Population of married people |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Adum | 186 |
| Bantama | 244 |
| South Suntreso | 50 |
| Garrison | 92 |
| Ashtown | 52 |
| New Amakom | 16 |
| Total | 640 |

Sample and Sampling Procedure

Fowler (2015) admits that a very common question posed to survey methodologists is the size of a sample. To him, the appropriate sample size is influenced by the researcher's purpose for conducting the research. Thus, with the researcher's intent of investigating the impact of premarital counselling on communication among Christian couples in the Kumasi Metropolis, 196 married people (98 men and 98 women) were sampled from five (5) churches for the study by simple random sampling technique as seen in Table 2. Simple random sampling, was selected because it gives each member of the population an equal chance of being selected.

The sample size was determined using Borg and Gall's (2003) formula for finding samples. According to them, a minimum of 30 percent of the total population is enough (Borg & Gall, 2003). Thus, 30 percent of the accessible population is representative of the population. The churches were selected purposively for the study due to the characteristics and objectives for the study. This was because the Presbyterian Church had a central administration that saw to it that all their churches were regulated by the same doctrines, beliefs, culture, mode of worship, structure and a system for all their churches. This meant that premarital counselling was the same in terms of duration and approach in all their branches.

Table 2: Sampling of the Presbyterian churches in the Kumasi Metropolis

| Presbyterian Church | Sample Size |
|---------------------|-------------|
| Adum | 56 |

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Bantama | 74 |
| South Suntreso | 16 |
| Garrison | 28 |
| Ashtown | 18 |
| New Amakom | 4 |
| Total | 196 |

Data collection Instrument

Closed-ended questionnaire was used for the study based on the study objectives. The questionnaire comprised demographic data from the respondents on the first section. The demographic data included gender in which respondents were grouped into males and females. The second item in the questionnaire was age and the classifications that were made were ages less than 25 years, ages 26 to 40 years, ages 41 to 50 years and ages beyond 50 years. This was followed by the highest level of education of the respondents and the questionnaire had options such as Junior Secondary School (JSS)/Junior High School(SHS), Senior Secondary School (SSS)/Senior high School (SHS), Higher National Diploma (HND), First Degree, Masters, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Others. The next item among demographics was the number of counselling sessions that the respondents attended before getting married. The options provided were 0, 1- 5 times, 6-10 times, 11-15 times and 16 time and above times. The last was the respondents' number of years of being married. The options provided were 1-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years and 16 and above years.

The second section focused on the perception of Christian married couples

on premarital. It was on a 4-point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (SD) to Strongly Agree (SA). The items in the section included “It is vital to the success of my marriage, It enabled us plan and prepare adequately for the marriage, It is just a waste of time, It cleared some misconceptions I had about marriage, Enables me to know more about my partner, It’s all theory and not realistic at all, Enables me to handle marital disputes more maturely, It exposed us to expectations in marriage, It helped us to reduce cost in our wedding and lastly, It educated us on our rights and responsibilities in marriage.

The third section of the questionnaire was also on a 4-point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (SD) to Strongly Agree (SA). The section was about communication in marriages and it contained items such as “My spouse and I keep secrets from each other, We discuss our marital issues with family, When there is an argument, I sometimes apologize in order to end the matter, My spouse and I try to find evidence of infidelity with each other, Any of us is able to initiate conversations, We both spouses blame, accuse, or criticize each other, My spouse and I feel safe to talk about any issue in marriage, I am satisfied with the quality of conversation between my spouse and I, We are able to use non-verbal cues to communicate, I am not satisfied with the quality of communication in my marriage, Both my partner and I feel understood by each other”. It must be stated that the questionnaire was adapted and modified from Ntim (2014), Odero (2018) and Futris, Campbell, Nielsen and Burwell (2010).

Validity and Reliability

In terms of measures aimed at enhancing the validity and reliability of the

data collection instrument the instruments were tested for validity and reliability. An expert was engaged to check how they were reliable and valid and the instruments were updated to meet the recommendations of the expert as well as the external validity of the study, the researcher ensured the use of adequate sample size. A pilot test of the instrument was held for the questionnaire at the Trinity Congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana- Bekwaimin. Married people in the church were selected for the piloting because the church has the same structure and system as the population for the study. The collected data were coded and entered into SPSS. Cronbach's alpha was used through SPSS to determine the reliability coefficients of the items and an alpha value of .78 was realized.

Frankel and Wallen (2006) have stated that for the purpose of research, an important principle is that reliability should be at .70 and preferably higher. The research instrument was therefore considered reliable and appropriate to collect the relevant data.

Data Collection Procedures

Respondents were briefed about the study and their consent sought. The questionnaire was administered in the churches after permission has been officially sought from the appropriate authorities. Follow up sessions were held for respondents who did not attend church service on the regular day of the administration. A period of four weeks, specifically 7th November, 2021 to 28th November, 2021 was anticipated to be used for the data collection. Respondents were met after Sunday services on 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th November, 2021. Field assistants were around during midweek services to meet respondents who could not

make it to church during Sunday. With participants seated, the informed consent form was read and explained to them. They were allowed to ask questions and clarifications were given. They then signed the informed consent. After the questionnaires were given out, the field assistants went round to assist respondents to complete the survey. It took each participant a maximum of 25 minutes to complete the survey.

Data Processing and Analysis

All data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 for windows. The research questions namely “What is the perception of Christian couples on the effectiveness of premarital counselling?” was analysed using mean and standard deviation. “What is the relationship between premarital counselling and marital communication?” was the second research question and it was analysed by Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient. The third research question namely, “How does premarital counselling affect the communication between Christian couples?” was also analysed by multiple linear regression.

Ethical Considerations

An ethical consideration was to protect the rights of the respondents and the churches by keeping their records and responses confidential. Respondents were

made anonymous. That is, their names were not written on the questionnaires in order to hide their identities. Letters of the alphabets were also used to represent the churches in which the survey were conducted. The respondents were also educated on their rights as participants of the study. Pseudonyms were used when individualized reference to a response became relevant to clearly answer a question. Also, permission and consent were obtained from the sampled churches as well as the respondents. Consent was sought from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Cape Coast for ethical clearance before the conduct of the survey.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the methods followed in this research. The chapter stated that the research design used for this study is descriptive survey design. The chapter also discussed the population of the study and the sampling procedure used in the study. The population was all married couples in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana within Kumasi Metropolis. It also included the reverend ministers and the marriage counsellors in the churches. In all the six churches in the metropolis, a total of 320 married couples and 43 counsellors were used for the study. A sample of 98 couples and 43 counsellors was taken from the population and used for the study. With the help of three field assistants, the survey was conducted within four weeks and the results were analysed using SPSS. Among the limitations, some married people did not want to take part in the study because they saw that it was time consuming especially when they had to wait after service had officially closed.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The chapter four of this research focused on the presentation, analysis and discussion of data collected from the field of study on the impact of premarital counselling on the marital communication of Christians in the Kumasi Metropolis. The purpose of the study was to examine the perception of Christian couples on the effectiveness of premarital counselling; investigate the relationship between premarital counselling and marital communication and examine the effects of premarital counselling on marital communication. The analysis was based on descriptive statistics which was mainly the usage of mean and standard deviation in data analysis. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to analyse research question 1 (What is the perception of Christian couples on the effectiveness of premarital counselling?) and Spearman Rank Correlation was used to analyse research question 2 (What is the relationship between premarital counselling and marital communication?). Also, Multiple Linear Regression was used to analyse research question 3 (How does premarital counselling affect the communication between Christian married couples?)

Demographics

The study assessed the bio-data of the respondents. The data collection instruments were self-administered by the researcher to 196 respondents (98 males and 98 females) at the church premises on Sundays after church services. The respondents, with the counsellors inclusive were made up of married Presbyterians

who underwent premarital counselling prior to their marriages. In all, the researcher administered the questionnaire to 196 respondents for their views on premarital counselling and communications in marriages. After the exercise, all the 196 data collection instruments used for the exercises were collated. The 196 instruments administered were error-free and therefore same were used for the data analysis. With this, there was 100% response rate on the questionnaire administered.

As shown in the Table 3, the gender of the respondents comprises 98 husbands and 98 wives; making a total of 196 respondents. The gender of the respondents thus constituted 50% each of males and females. This means that the researcher successfully sought the views of both couples. Regarding the age of the respondents, whilst 35 (18%) indicated to be below 25 years, 60 (33%) and 10 (5%) however indicated to be within the age groupings of 41-50 years and 51 years and above respectively. Majority of the respondents comprising 86 (44%) indicated to be with the ages of 26-40 years. The analysis of the years of the respondents implied that majority of them, that is 95% of the couples are below 50 years. This also means that they are active couples and are also in their mid-years working lives.

On the status of the educational level of the respondents, whilst 17 (9%) and 59 (30%) indicated to have completed JSS/JHS and SSSCE/WASSCE respectively, 53 (27%) reported to have completed a course in HND. Also, whilst 28 (14%) indicated their educational level as Bachelor degrees, another group, comprising 31 (16%) stated their educational qualification as Masters degrees. In addition to this, 8 (4%) reported to have attained the highest form of educational studies, PhD in their endeavours. None of the respondents however indicated not to have attended

any educational studies. The educational level of the respondents therefore implied that on average, most of the respondents have attained appreciable level of educational qualification and could be said to be at a better position in understanding the essence of the research. They are therefore able to contribute meaningfully to assist in attaining the objectives of the study.

On the number of sessions that the respondents underwent premarital counselling prior to marriage, the analysis indicated that 8 (4%), 30 (15%) and 11 (6%) attended between 11-15 sessions, 6-10 sessions and then 16 sessions and above respectively. The majority of the respondents comprising 147 (75%), however, indicated to have participated in the sessions between 1-5 times. This analysis indicated that on average, most of the respondents adequately underwent premarital counselling prior to taking their initial nuptial vows. Thus, the experiences of the respondents since the period are deemed critical for the researcher to achieve the objectives of the study.

On the length of years in marriages, whilst none indicated to have been married less than a year, 49 (25%) and 53 (27%) however, indicated to have been married between 1-5 years and 6-10 years respectively. Again, whilst 56 (29%) indicated to have been 11-15 years, 38 (19%) indicated to have been married for 16 years and above. This analysis on the length of years that the respondents have been married indicated that on average, they have been married for a considerable length of years and have communicated in lengthy periods and therefore their perception on the research are essential for the study. The analysis on the bio-data of the respondents is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Analysis on the bio-data of the respondents

| Background characteristic | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 98 | 50 |
| Female | 98 | 50 |
| Age | | |
| Below 25 | 35 | 18 |
| 26-40 | 86 | 44 |
| 41-50 | 60 | 33 |
| 51 years and above | 15 | 5 |
| Educational level | | |
| JSS//JHS | 17 | 9 |
| SSSCE/WASSCE | 59 | 30 |
| HND | 53 | 27 |
| Bachelor | 28 | 14 |
| Masters | 31 | 16 |
| PhD | 8 | 4 |
| Number of sessions attended | | |
| 1-5 Sessions | 147 | 75 |
| 6-10 Sessions | 30 | 15 |
| 11-15 Sessions | 8 | 4 |
| 16 Sessions | 11 | 6 |
| Length of years in marriage | | |
| 1-5years | 49 | 25 |
| 6-10years | 53 | 27 |
| 11-15 years | 56 | 29 |
| 16years | 38 | 19 |
| Total | 196 | 100 |

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

What is the Perception of Christian Couples on Premarital Counselling?

The result as shown in the Table 4 was based on the responses of the

respondents on the perception of premarital counselling in marriages. According to the results, “It is vital to the success of my marriage; It enabled us plan and prepare adequately for marriage; and It cleared some misconceptions I had about marriage” generated Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) values of 1.50 (SD 0.73), 1.85 (SD 0.47) and 2.06 (SD 0.87) respectively to confirm the agreements of the respondents on the stated items. The attached standard deviation values indicated that the variations as seen in the responses of the respondents were not far apart or were closer to the Mean values.

Also, on the statements: “Enables me to know more about my partner; Enables me to handle marital disputes more maturely and then It exposed us to expectations in marriage”, the analysis generated Mean and Standard Deviation values of 1.89 (SD 0.80), 1.83 (SD 0.79) and 2.02 (SD 0.93) respectively to indicate the acceptance of the respondents on the stated statements. The standard deviation values attached also indicated that the responses are not so much varied from each other. This means that the respondents agree that premarital counselling enable them to know each other, enable them to handle marital disputes more maturely and also guide them on their expectation in marriages. Again, the analysis on the statements: “It helped us to reduce cost in our wedding and It educated us on our rights and responsibilities in marriage” had Mean and Standard Deviation values of 2.19 (SD 0.96) and 1.61 (SD 0.52) respectively to indicate the agreements of the respondents to the stated items. There were low variations in the responses as provided by the respondents on the stated items. The analysis therefore implied that premarital counselling help couples to reduce cost in their wedding and also serve

as a form of education on their rights and responsibilities in marriage.

The respondents however indicated their rejection on the notion that “premarital counselling is just a waste of time”, “it is all theory and not realistic at all”. This is indicated as the analysis generated Mean and Standard Deviation value 2.94 (SD 0.84) and 2.76 (SD 0.98) respectively to indicate the disagreement of the respondents to the stated items. This means that premarital counselling is not a waste of time and never unrealistic but rather practical experience to be gained by marriage couples. This was necessitated by the fact that the variables involve social relationships and there was probability that some of the respondents might have something to say about premarital counselling and or marital communication.

Table 4: Perception of couples on premarital counselling

| Items | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|------|----------------|
| It is vital to the success of my marriage | 1.50 | 0.73 |
| It enabled us plan and prepare adequately for marriage | 1.85 | 0.47 |

| | | |
|---|------|------|
| It is just a waste of time | 2.94 | 0.84 |
| It cleared some misconceptions I had about marriage | 2.06 | 0.87 |
| Enables me to know more about my partner | 1.89 | 0.80 |
| It's all theory, not realistic at all. | 2.76 | 0.98 |
| Enables me to handle marital disputes more maturely | 1.83 | 0.79 |
| It exposed us to expectations in marriage | 2.02 | 0.93 |
| It helped us to reduce cost in our wedding | 2.19 | 0.96 |
| It educated us on our rights and responsibilities in marriage | 1.61 | 0.52 |

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Communication In Marriage

On a Likert scale ranging from 1-strongly agree, 2- agree to 4- strongly disagree, the researcher analysed the responses of the respondents on communication in marriages. As shown in Table 5 and on the statements: “When there is an argument, I sometimes apologize in order to end the matter; Any of us is able to initiate conversations and expression; and then We sometimes blame, accuse, or criticize each other” derived Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) values of 1.73 (SD 0.77), 1.71 (SD 0.80) and 2.31 (SD .89) respectively to indicate the agreements of the respondents to the statements. The low level of the values of the standard deviation also implied that the variations in the responses are not far from the mean or from each other. This means that the couples sometimes apologize to each other whenever there are disagreements in their conversations to end the argument. Also, a spouse is able to initiate conversations or express something to

the partner whenever the need arises. However, spouses sometimes blame, accuse and criticize the partner when there is an issue at stake.

Also, on the statements: “My spouse and I feel safe to talk about everything and anything; We are able to use non-verbal cues to communicate in our marriage, I am satisfied with the quality of conversation between my spouse; and I, and then Both my partner and I feel understood by each other” had Mean and Standard Deviation values of 1.81 (SD 0.76), 2.34 (SD 0.91), 1.83 (SD 0.53) and 1.80 (SD 0.62) respectively to indicate the agreements of the respondents to the stated items. There was also a low Standard Deviation values to indicate a little variation in the responses as provided by the respondents. The results therefore mean that couples feel safe and secure to talk about any issues in their conversation. It means that the couples are able to use non-verbal form of communication to express themselves to each other and feel understood by each other to indicate a healthy marriage communication. This means that the couples feel satisfied in their conversation based on the existence of quality conversation in their marriages.

Also, on the statements: “My spouse and I keep secretes from each other; We discuss our marital issues with family and friends; My spouse and I try to find evidence of infidelity with each other and then I am not satisfied with the communication between my spouse and I” derived Mean and Standard Deviation values of and 2.51 (SD 1.12), 2.68 (SD 1.04), 2.64 (SD 1.10) and 2.52 (SD 0.89) respectively to indicate the disagreements of the respondents to statements. The results means that spouses hardly do keep secrets from each other and do not discuss their marital issues with family and friends. Again, they do not try to find

fault or evidence of infidelity in their marriages and are satisfied with the communication between them and their marriage partners.

Table 5: Communication in Marriages

| Items | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|---|------|-----------|
| My spouse and I keep secretes from each other | 2.51 | 1.12 |
| We discuss our marital issues with family and friends | 2.68 | 1.04 |
| When there is an argument, I sometimes apologise in order to end the matter | 1.73 | 0.77 |
| My spouse and I try to find evidence of infidelity with each other | 2.64 | 1.10 |
| Any of us is able to initiate conversations or expression | 1.71 | 0.80 |
| We sometimes blame, accuse, or criticize each other. | 2.31 | 0.89 |
| My spouse and I feel safe to talk about everything and anything. | 1.81 | 0.76 |
| I am satisfied with the quality of conversation between my spouse and I. | 1.83 | 0.53 |

Table 5 continued

| | | |
|---|------|------|
| We are able to use non- verbal cues to communicate in our marriage. | 2.34 | 0.91 |
| I am not satisfied with the communication between my spouse and I. | 2.52 | 0.89 |

Both my partner and I feel understood by each other. 1.80 0.62

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

What Is the Relationship Between Premarital Counselling and Marital Communication?

A Spearman correlation coefficient which is otherwise known as Spearman rank correlation or Spearman's rho which is typically denoted either with the Greek letter rho (ρ) or r_s was used to assess the strength of the relationship between the variables of Premarital Counselling and Communication in Marriages of the study. Like all correlation coefficients, Spearman's rho measures the strength of association between two variables. In Spearman Correlation, the analysis of the result will always be between 1 and minus 1. The strength of the correlation could be described by using the absolute value of: 0.00-0.19 "very weak"; 0.20-0.39 "weak"; 0.40-0.59 "moderate"; 0.60-0.79 "strong" and then 0.80-1.0 "very strong".

It must be noted that the greater the values of correlation, the stronger the linkage between the two variables and vice versa. A positive correlation coefficient implies a positive relationship between the two variables (an increase in the value of one variable means an increase in value of the other) while a negative correlation coefficient expresses a negative relationship (an increase in the value of one variable means a decrease in value of the other). A zero correlation coefficient indicates that no relationship exists between the variables. A Spearman correlation analysis can therefore be used in many cases in which the assumptions of the Pearson correlation (continuous-level variables, linearity, heteroscedasticity, and

normality) are not met.

The researcher analysed to examine the relationship between premarital counselling and communication in marriages alongside other demographic variables such as age of the couple, gender, educational background, the length of the marriage as well as number of sessions in premarital counselling attendance. In pursuance of this analysis, these aforementioned elements were added to determine their relationships with communications by couples in marriages with the results of the analysis displayed in Table 6. The researcher however reported on the elements of number of years in marriage, number of sessions in premarital counselling alongside the main variables of premarital counselling and communication in marriages.

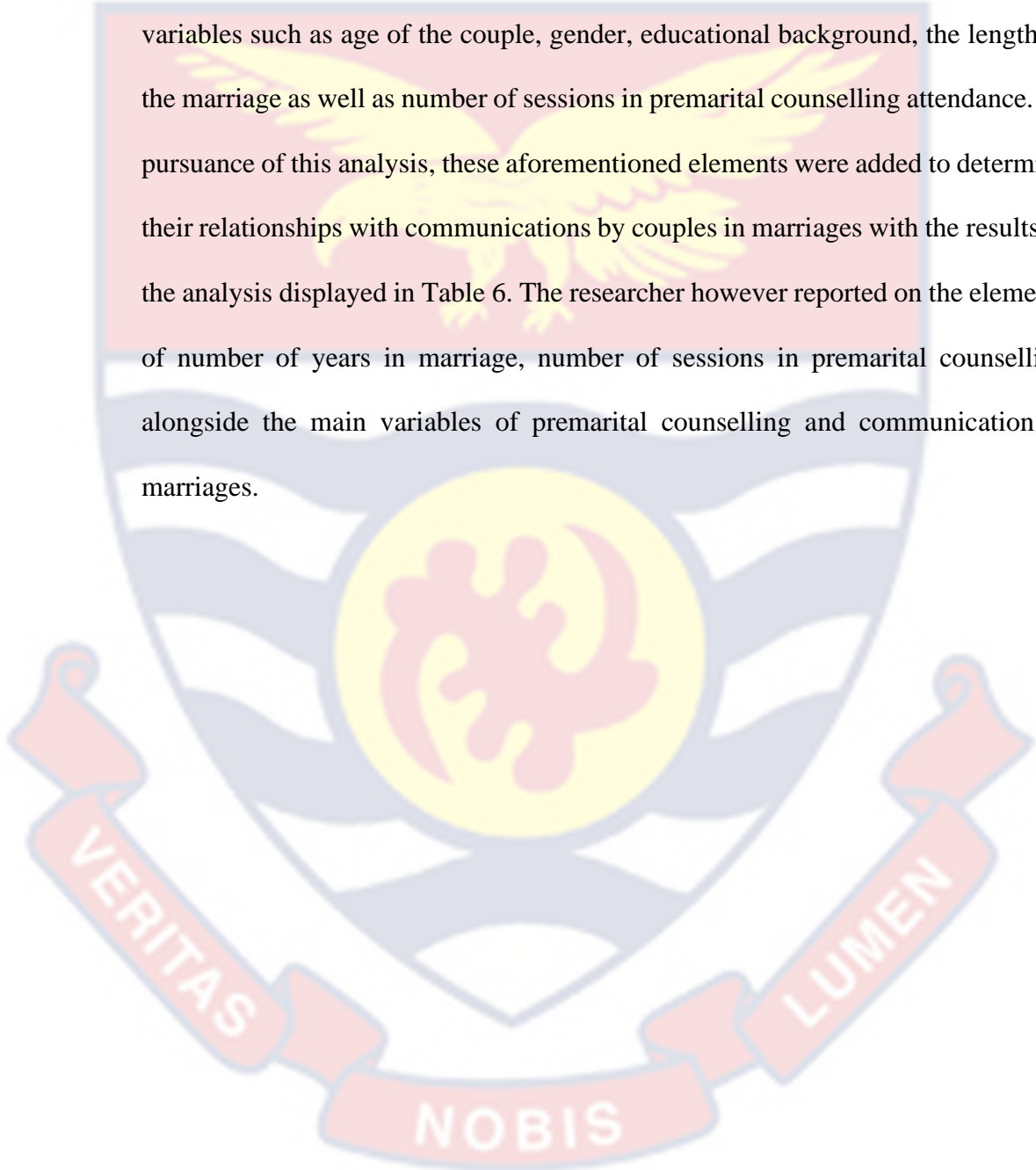


Table 6: Correlation Matrix

| Spearman's rho | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| Counselling Sessions | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | | | |
| | Sign. (2-tailed) | | | | |
| | N | 196 | | | |
| Length of years in Marriage | Correlation Coefficient | .124** | 1.000 | | |
| | Sign. (2-tailed) | .000 | | | |
| | N | 196 | 196 | | |
| Premarital Counselling | Correlation Coefficient | .210** | .366** | 1.000 | |
| | Sign. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | | |
| | N | 196 | 196 | 196 | |
| Communication in Marriages | Correlation Coefficient | .379** | .408** | .714** | 1.000 |
| | Sign. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | |
| | N | 196 | 196 | 196 | 196 |

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 focused on the analysis on the relationships between the variables as indicated. The correlation coefficients between the communication in marriages and the number of sessions of premarital counselling attendance, length of years in marriage and then premarital counselling were $r_s=.379$ (weak), $r_s=.408$ (low), and $r_s=.714$ (Strong), respectively. This implies a strong correlation between premarital counselling and communication in marriages. As indicated in the analysis from the Spearman coefficient of correlation in measuring the strength of the relationship

between premarital counselling and communication, the general assumption was that premarital counselling should rise with communication in marriages.

From the analysis pursued, a positive and strong relationship was observed between the two variables, as evidenced by the r_s value of 0.71. However, the correlation coefficient between communication in marriages and number of sessions of premarital counselling attendance and then length of years in marriage were weak and low to imply negligible relationships based on the fact that the values were weak and insignificant. These weak to low coefficients of correlation values could be an indication that changes in communication in marriages might not be strongly correlated with anything or changes related to number of sessions of premarital counselling attendance or number of years that the couples have been married but to other external factors.

How Does Premarital Counselling affect the Communication Between Married People

The researcher adopted Linear Regression model to forecast the impact of premarital counselling as the independent variable on Marital Communication, the dependent variable of the study with the outcome of the analysis shown in the Table 7.

Table 7: Estimate from the Regression Analysis

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients (Beta) | t | Sig. |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|----------------------------------|-------|-------|
| | B | Std. Error | | | |
| (Constant) | 4.383 | 9.04 | | 7.37 | 0.02 |
| Premarital Counselling | 0.348 | 0.137 | 1.048 | 2.533 | 0.003 |

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Dependent Variable – Marital Communication

As indicated in the Table 7, the analysis indicated a positive and significant effect of premarital counselling on communication in marriages (Beta= 0.348, $t=2.53$; P-value = 0.003). This means that premarital counselling affects significantly couples' communication in marriages.

Table 8: Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .680a | 0.517 | 0.396 | 0.182 |

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Predictor: (Constant), Premarital Counselling

Also, the R-square value of 0.517 which is indicated in the analysis (see Table 8) implied that 52% of the variations in the communication of the Presbyterian couples in the Kumasi Metropolis is due to their participation in premarital counselling in marriages. The analysis also means that the other 48% of the total variances in the marital communication among the Presbyterian Couples within the Kumasi Metropolis is attributed to other elements which were not

captured as part of the model or the study. In all, the study results indicated a significant effect of premarital counselling on communication of couples in marriages among the Presbyterian couples in Kumasi.

Discussion of Results

The research focused on the impact of premarital counselling on the communication between Christian couples in the Kumasi Metropolis. The objectives of the study were to assess the perception of Christian couples on the effectiveness of premarital counselling, and then investigate the effect of premarital counselling on marital communication. The outcome of the main findings from the study are presented as follows:

Perception of Christian couples on the effectiveness of premarital counselling

The study generally indicated a positive perception on the effectiveness of premarital counselling among Christians couples of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana within the Kumasi Metropolis. The findings indicated that premarital counselling is key to ensuring a successful marriage, as it assists the would-be couples to plan and prepare themselves in all things adequately towards marriage. It also enables couples to know each other and to handle marital issues more maturely. The study also showed that premarital counselling help couples to reduce cost in their wedding serve as a practical experience to be gained by marriage couples in the form of training which guides couples in knowing their rights and responsibilities in marriage.

The findings also added that premarital counselling is perceived to have become a requirement by churches for a would-be couple to meet before their

nuptial vow is officiated. Thus, some couples according to the study participate in the exercise with eagerness, gladness and peace. This finding supports the studies of (Ratson, 2015), Ansah–Hughes, et al. (2015), Johansson (2016) and Teal (2018) whose studies also indicated a positive perception of premarital counselling on marriages. These studies indicated that premarital counselling assist couples to derive a strong, healthy relationship with a higher opportunity for establishment of a stable and satisfying communication. The implication of this study is that, attendance in premarital counselling guides couples to identify their weaknesses which could have serve as a way of creating a problem during their marriage (Pepple, 2017). Thus, this study perceived a positive influence of primatial counselling on marital communication as it gives couples an avenue to enhance their interrelationships and work healthily towards a sustainable marriage (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1987).

The study also supported the study of Fickle, (2020), whose study indicated that premarital counselling has become a compulsory requirement in most churches for would-be couples to attend before their marriages are permitted or contracted in the church. The positive perception of premarital counselling in marital communication among the Presbyterian Church couples in the Kumasi Metropolis contradicted the findings of Knowles (2016) and Macdonald (2018) who indicated in their studies that couples had negative perceptions about premarital counselling in George Town, Bahamas and Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada respectively.

Relationship between premarital counselling and marital communication

The findings showed a significant and positive relationship between

premarital counselling and communication in marriages ($r_s=.71$). The indication of positive and strong relationships between premarital counselling and marital communication implied that couples feel safe and secure to talk about any issues in their conversation. It also means that the couples are able to use non-verbal forms of communication to express themselves to each other and are satisfied since they feel understood by each other. Premarital counselling therefore opens the couples up to develop healthy and free communication among themselves. This finding of the study supports the studies of Hawkins, Blanchard, Baldwin and Fawcett (2008), Teal (2018), Muluha, Kipnusu, Tarus and Karimi (2020) and then Adzovie and Dabone (2021) who indicated that couples' involvement in premarital counselling is associated with maximum satisfaction in terms of communication, commitment in marriage and reduced miscommunication among couples. Therefore, as recommended in the study of Muluha, et al. (2020), marriage counsellors should endeavour to create more awareness of premarital counselling services for couples planning to marry to find such counselling assistance and should also be encouraged to continue attending even after solemnizing their marriage to keep up with the uncertainties in marriages lives.

Effect of premarital counselling on the communication between Christian married couples

The study revealed that premarital counselling has positive influence in marital communication ($\text{Beta}= 0.348$, $t=2.53$; $P\text{-value} = 0.01$). The study indicated that participation of would-be couples in counselling sessions provide an avenue for them to accommodate one another in communication whenever they marry. The

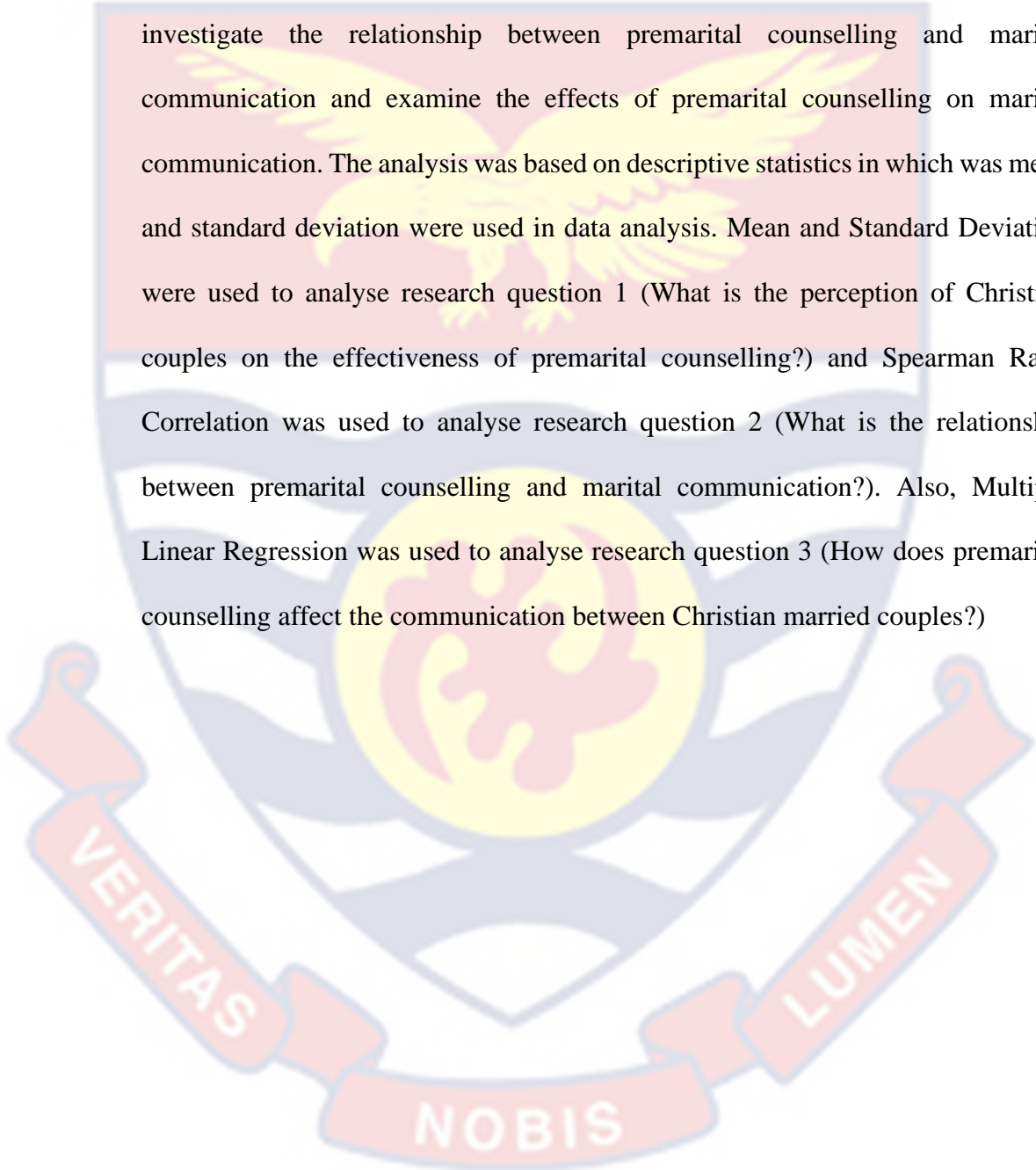
study revealed that 52% of the variations in the communication of the Presbyterian couples in the Kumasi Metropolis is due to their participation in premarital counselling. Thus, there is a significant effect of premarital counselling on communication of couples in marriages among the Presbyterian couples in Kumasi. These findings from the study support the studies of Carroll and Doherty, (2003), Fawcett, Hawkins, Blanchard and Carroll (2010), and then Kariuki, (2018) who indicated that premarital counselling had a substantial effect on the satisfaction of couples in their marriages.

The study indicated that premarital counselling is mostly effective in helping couples to gain social skills and quality in communication for improved marriage lives. This finding from the study is also in collaboration with the study of Ratson (2015), who indicated that premarital counselling is at its best when it is more focused on communication, and the development of couples' personality for them to be able to improve their relationships in the marriage. Thus, this study concludes that premarital counselling is effective in improving marital communication. Based on this, every effort must be made for premarital sessions to be led by people who are well vested in marital issues and not elders and people who are perceived to be having good marriage life and finally, confidentiality must be highly kept in all pre-marital counselling.

Chapter summary

The chapter discussed the presentation, analysis and discussion of data collected on

the perceived impact of premarital counselling on the marital communication of Christians in the Kumasi Metropolis. The purpose of the study was to examine the perception of Christian couples on the effectiveness of premarital counselling; investigate the relationship between premarital counselling and marital communication and examine the effects of premarital counselling on marital communication. The analysis was based on descriptive statistics in which mean and standard deviation were used in data analysis. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to analyse research question 1 (What is the perception of Christian couples on the effectiveness of premarital counselling?) and Spearman Rank Correlation was used to analyse research question 2 (What is the relationship between premarital counselling and marital communication?). Also, Multiple Linear Regression was used to analyse research question 3 (How does premarital counselling affect the communication between Christian married couples?)



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The chapter five of the study focused on the summary of the main findings, conclusion and recommendation on the study which was pursued to assess the impact of premarital counselling on marital communication among the Presbyterian Church Christian's couples in the Kumasi Metropolis in Ghana. The purpose of the study was to examine the perception of Christian couples on the effectiveness of premarital counselling; investigate the relationship between premarital counselling and marital communication and examine the effects of premarital counselling on marital communication.

Summary

The objectives of the study were to assess the perception of Christian couples on the effectiveness of premarital counselling, and then investigate the effect of premarital counselling on marital communication. The research design was descriptive research design. Out of an accessible population of 640 married people, the purposive sampling method was used to select 196 married people as respondents. The study used closed-ended questionnaire on four-point Likert scale to collect the data from the field of study. The analysis was based on descriptive statistics in which mean and standard deviation, Spearman's correlation and multiple linear regression were used in data analysis.

Key Findings

Perception of Christian couples on the effectiveness of premarital counselling

The finding revealed a positive perception on the effectiveness of premarital counselling among Christians couples of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana within the Kumasi Metropolis. Premarital counselling is vital to ensure the success of marriage. It assists would-be couples to plan and prepare themselves in all things adequately towards marriage. It also enables couples to know each other and to handle marital disputes more maturely. The study also revealed that premarital counselling helps couples to reduce cost in their wedding, serve as a practical experience to be gained by marriage couples in the form of training which guides couples in knowing their rights and responsibilities in marriage. The findings also added that premarital counselling is perceived to have become a requirement by churches for a would-be couple to meet before their nuptial vow is officiated.

The relationship between premarital counselling and marital communication

The findings showed a significant and positive relationship between premarital counselling and communication in marriages. The finding revealed that premarital counselling opens the couples up to develop healthy and free communication among themselves. It is associated with marital communication which results in a reduced miscommunication among couples.

Apart from the above, the study also found out that as much as premarital counselling has its associated problems, it is still a good concept that should be encouraged for prospective couples. It was also realized that premarital counselling is not enough to determine the success of marriage. A call was, therefore, made for

post-marital counselling as a support scheme for the efforts of premarital counselling.

Effect of premarital counselling on the communication between Christian married couples

The study revealed that premarital counselling has positive influence in marital communication. It provides an avenue for couples to accommodate one another in communication whenever they marry. The study showed that 52% of the variations in the communication of the Presbyterian couples in the Kumasi Metropolis is due to their participation in premarital counselling. Thus, there is a significant effect of premarital counselling on communication of couples in marriages among the Presbyterian couples in Kumasi.

Conclusions

With respect to the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn. The findings revealed that members of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in the Kumasi Metropolis have a positive perception about the effectiveness of premarital counselling. The most popular method for preparing for marriage among Christian spouses in the metropolis is premarital counselling. The experience and information gained during premarital counselling were deemed to be very applicable to a couple's marriage. Premarital counselling, according to the majority of couples, helped them get ready for marriage. As a result, it substantially aided in easing the transition from single to married life, increased the couple's happiness and stability, and improved their communication skills. Premarital counselling, according to the

respondents, improved problem-solving and decision-making abilities in areas like marital responsibilities and family financial management. It also boosted friendships and commitment to partnerships.

The results of the study revealed a significant and positive relationship between premarital counselling and communication in marriages. Just as the study anticipated, couples who had undergone premarital counselling saw reflections of the premarital lessons in their marriages. A good number of the respondents agreed that premarital counselling is not a waste of time at all because it helped them to understand their spouses better and to manage anger and conflict situations more appropriately

lastly, the study revealed that premarital counselling has positive influence in marital communication as it provides an avenue for couples to accommodate each other in communication whenever they marry and it is vital to ensure the success of marriage.

Implications For Counselling

In the work under consideration, an outcome was that premarital counselling is not a waste of time. A good number of respondents affirmed that premarital counselling is vital to the success of marriage and also strongly disagreed with the statement “It is just a waste of time”. The implication is that premarital counselling, like other forms of counselling, has always got something good to offer. Studies over time have shown that 70-75% of counselees get considerable benefits from the counselling sessions they partake in (Manthei, 2005).

The study found out that premarital counselling is able to ensure the effectiveness of marital communication. Communication is not the only facet of marriage. Other facets of marriage that should be considered are balance of roles, openness, intimacy, agreement, social intimacy in relationships, sexuality, finance and spiritual facets (Budiharto, Meliana & Rumondor, 2017). The implication is that if premarital counselling has been identified as effective with marital communication, it can be used as a good tool to improve upon the other facets of marriage.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made;

1. Premarital counsellors must ensure that Premarital counselling meets the expectations of the would-be couples. That is to say that the perception of couples on premarital counselling is that it assists would-be couples to plan and prepare themselves towards their marriage. It also enables couples to know each other and to handle marital disputes more maturely. Also, the study revealed that premarital counselling helps couples to reduce cost in their wedding. Having this perception about premarital counselling, the study recommended that premarital counselling should be tailored to address such issues.
2. Secondly, the study recommended that the subject of communication should be taken seriously and treated in detail by premarital counsellors premarital

counselling. According to the study, premarital counselling opens the couples up to develop interests and ideas of healthy communication with each other. Therefore, communication in marriage cannot be underestimated. Premarital counsellors should be rather given prominence in premarital counselling.

3. Finally, the study recommends that the government should establish premarital counselling as a requirement for the officiating of marriages and the issuance of marriage certificates. With the kind of impact that premarital counselling has on marriage, it is prudent that we make very good use of premarital counselling to secure the sacred institution of marriage.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the findings, the researcher recommended that future studies should consider embarking upon extended follow-up research on the long-term effectiveness of premarital counselling on marriages as a survey and not limited to only one denomination. Further studies should also consider using observational measures on the couple's behaviour in communication as part of the qualitative study rather than using self-report measures as recorded in this study.

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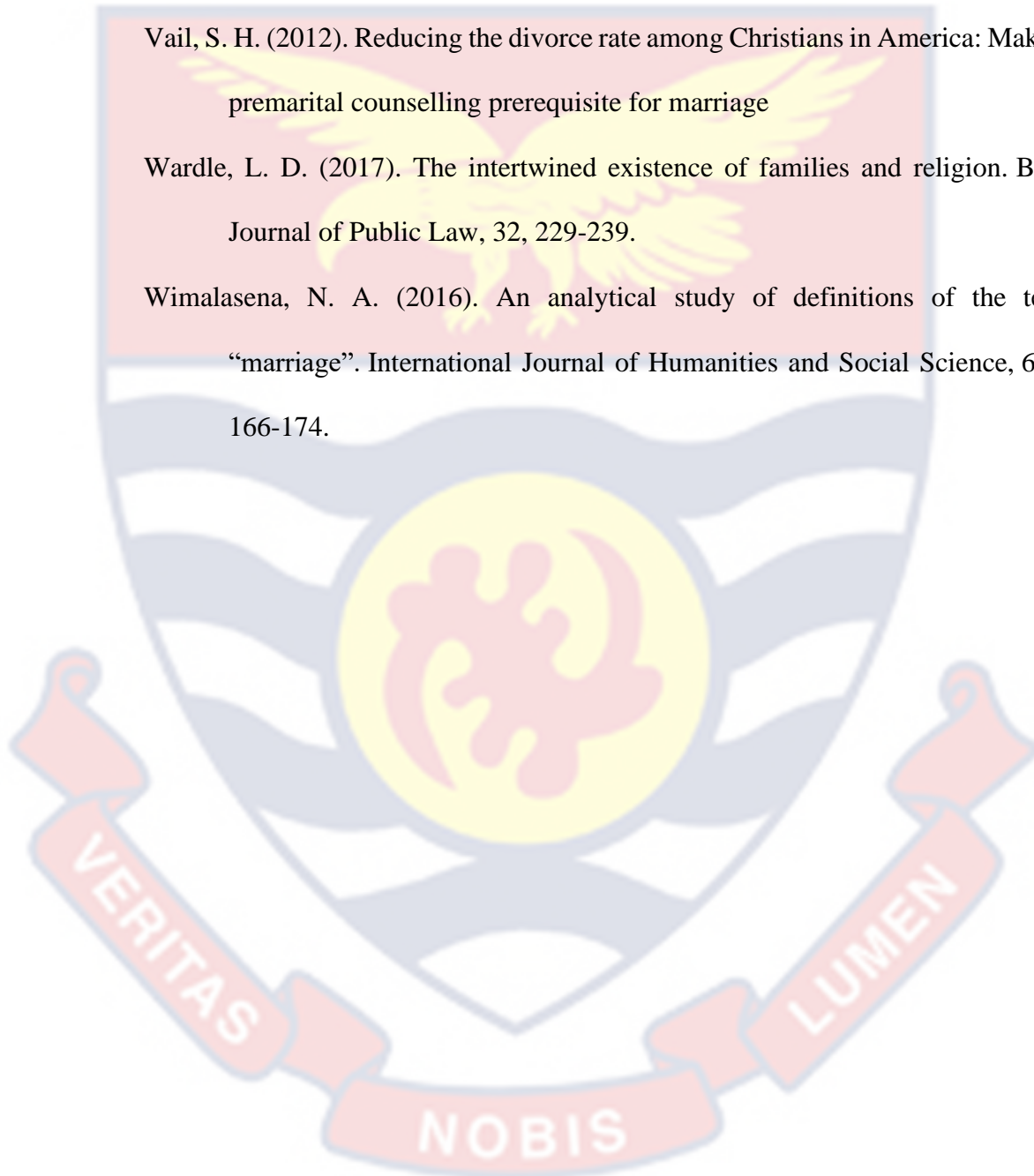
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MARRIED COUPLES IN THE PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF GHANA WITHIN KUMASI METROPOLIS**

I am a postgraduate student of the University of Cape Coast, researching the impact of premarital counselling on the communication between Christian couples in the Kumasi Metropolis, Ashanti Region of the Republic of Ghana, as part of the preparation for a Master of Philosophy Degree Program. Your institution has been chosen for a study for academic purposes, and therefore, I would appreciate your voluntary cooperation to complete the questionnaire. All information given by respondents will be treated confidentially.

Instruction: Please tick your response in the space given. In all such instances where more than one response is necessary under the same Question, please tick as many responses as are applicable.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENTS

1. Gender:

(a) Male []

(b) Female []

2. Age:

(a) Less than 25years []

(b) 26– 40years []

(c) 41 – 50years []

(d) 51 and above []

3. Highest level of education:

(a) JSS/JHS []

(b) SSSCE/WASSCE []

(c) HND []

(d) First Degree []

(e) Masters PhD []

(f) Others:

4. The number of premarital sessions you went through

(a) 0 []

(b) 1-5 []

(c) 6-10 []

(d) 11-15 []

(e) 16 and above []

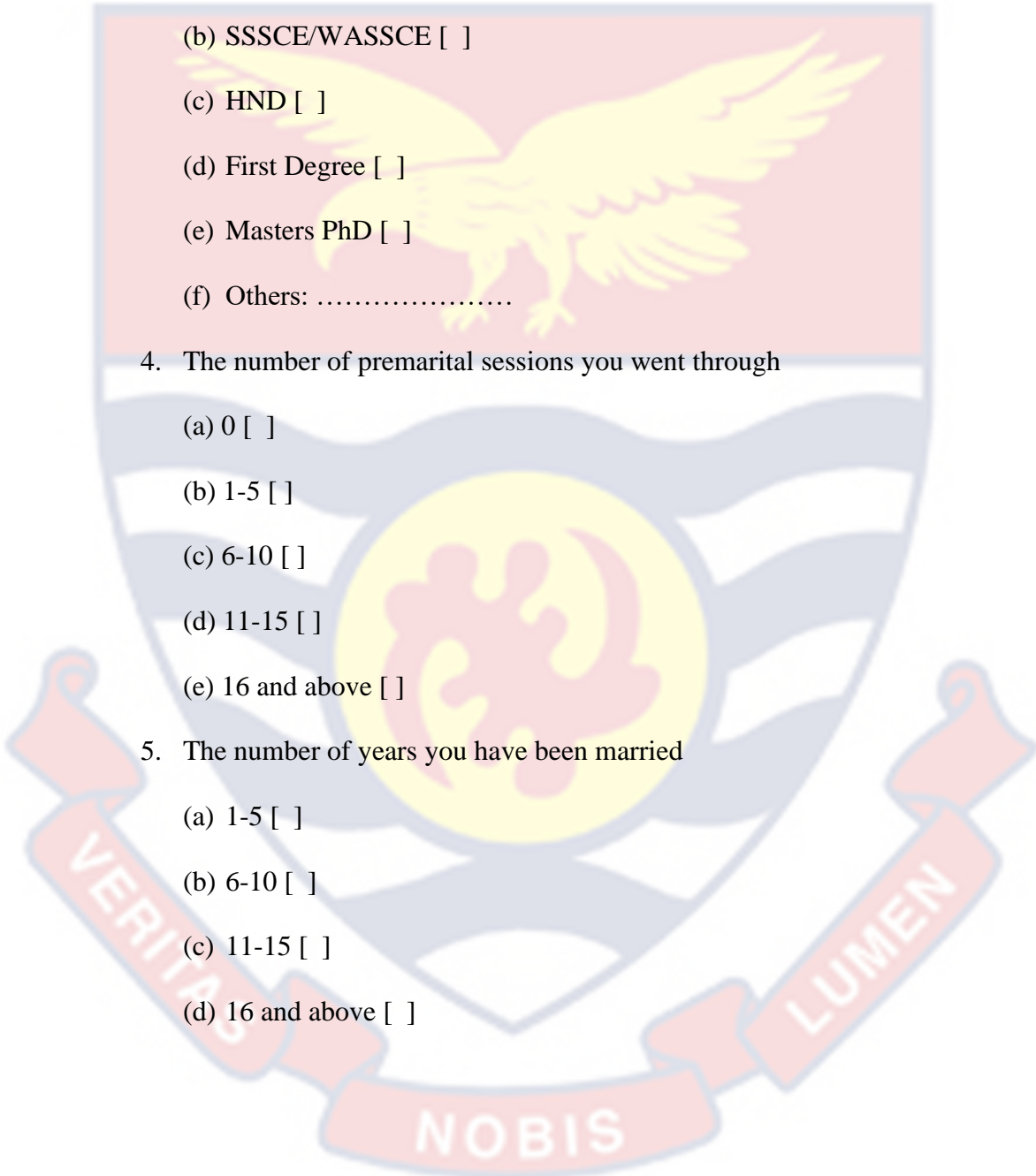
5. The number of years you have been married

(a) 1-5 []

(b) 6-10 []

(c) 11-15 []

(d) 16 and above []



SECTION B: PERCEPTION OF PREMARITAL COUNSELLING IN MARRIAGES

Please, on a scale ranging from SA= “Strongly Agree”; A= “Agree”; D=“Disagree”; SD=“Strongly Disagree”, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree to each of the statements on your views concerning premarital counselling in marriages.

Tick appropriately the responses to the statements given.

| # | Perception of premarital counselling | SA | A | D | SD |
|-----|---|----|---|---|----|
| 6. | It is vital to the success of my marriage | | | | |
| 7. | It enabled us plan and prepare adequately for marriage | | | | |
| 8. | It is just a waste of time | | | | |
| 9. | It cleared some misconceptions I had about marriage | | | | |
| 10. | Enables me to know more about my partner | | | | |
| 11. | It's all theory, not realistic at all. | | | | |
| 12. | Enables me to handle marital disputes more | | | | |
| 13. | It exposed us to expectations in marriage | | | | |
| 14. | It helped us to reduce cost in our wedding | | | | |
| 15. | It educated us on our rights and responsibilities in marriage | | | | |

SECTION C: COMMUNICATION IN MARRIAGES

Please, on a scale ranging from SA= “Strongly Agree”; A= “Agree”; D=“Disagree”; SD=“Strongly Disagree”, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree to each of the statements on your views concerning communication in marriages. Tick appropriately the responses to the statements given.

| # | Communication in marriages | SA | A | D | SA |
|-----|---|----|---|---|----|
| 16. | My spouse and I keep secretes from each other | | | | |
| 17. | We discuss our marital issues with family and | | | | |
| 18. | When there is an argument, I sometimes apologise in order to end the matter | | | | |
| 19. | My spouse and I try to find evidence of infidelity with each other | | | | |
| 20. | Any of us is able to initiate conversations | | | | |
| 21. | We both spouses blame, accuse, or criticize each other. | | | | |
| 22. | My spouse and I feel safe to talk about | | | | |
| 23. | I am satisfied with the quality of conversation between my spouse and I. | | | | |
| 24. | We are able to use non-verbal cues to | | | | |
| 25. | I am not satisfied with the | | | | |
| 26. | Both my partner and I feel understood by | | | | |

APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
GRADUATE STUDIES UNIT

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1st November, 2019

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir,

A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION – ELIJAH ASUA WIREDU (ED/GCP/18/0001)

Mr. Elijah Asua Wiredu is a student of the College of Distance Education, University of Cape Coast with student registration number ED/GCP/18/0001. He is pursuing a Master of Philosophy programme in Guidance and Counselling. He is currently working on his thesis on the topic "Assessing the impact of pre-marital Counselling on Communication between Christian couples in Kumasi Metropolis."

We would be grateful if you could provide the necessary assistance he might need, please.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

COORDINATOR
POST GRADUATE PROGRAMMES
COLLEGE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

Eddiebright J. Buadu (PhD)
(Co-ordinator)

Encl.

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11TH MARCH, 2024

Mr. Elijah Asuo Wiredu
Graduate Studies Unit
University of Cape Coast

Dear Mr. Wiredu,

ETHICAL CLEARANCE – ID (UCCIRB/CODE/2021/06)

We are writing with reference to the protocol titled *“Assessing the Impact of Premarital Counselling on the Communication between Christian Couples in the Kumasi Metropolis- A case study of the Presbyterian church of Ghana”*.

The University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board (UCCIRB) is the only institutional statutory body with the mandate to oversee the research activities of staff and students of the University as far as compliance with research ethical issues are concerned.

This letter is a confirmation that, per the UCCIRB Standard Operating Procedures on research involving human participants, Mr. Elijah Asuo Wiredu has successfully completed all the requirements in obtaining ethical clearance. Mr. Wiredu had been granted the permission by UCCIRB to conduct any research activity such as conducting interviews, focus group discussions or observations that would involve human participants.

Please, do not hesitate to revert to us for further information on this matter, if need be. Always quote the protocol identification number in all future correspondence with us in relation to this protocol.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kofi Fosu Amuquandoh', written over a horizontal line.

Kofi Fosu Amuquandoh

Ag. Administrator

