

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

THE IMPACT OF PREMARTITAL COUNSELLING ON MARITAL  
ADJUSTMENT AMONG CHRISTIAN COUPLES IN THE CAPE COAST  
METROPOLIS

BY

EUNICE NTIM

Thesis submitted to the Department of Educational Foundation, College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for award of Master of Philosophy Degree in Guidance and Counselling

JULY 2014

## 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.*

Candidates Signature:.....

Date:.....

Name: Eunice Ntim

### Supervisors' Declaration

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

Principal Supervisor's Signature: ..... Date:.....

Name: Dr. Mrs. Linda Naa Dzama Forde

Co-Supervisor's Signature:.....Date:.....

Name: Rev. Prof. J. K. Essuman

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of premarital counselling on adjustment among Christian couples in the Cape Coast Metropolis. A case study was used as the design for the study. Convenience sampling procedure was used to select the three churches from the metropolis. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data for the study. Using Tabacknik & Fidell (1996) procedure for sample size determination, a sample size of 300 Christian couples were selected for the study. The study revealed that many Christian husbands and wives had positive attitude towards the views on premarital counselling as only few of them had negative attitude towards views on premarital counselling. It also revealed that many Christian husbands and wives found experience and knowledge gained from premarital counselling to be very relevant to their marriage life. There was no significant difference in Christian husbands and wives who had undergone premarital counselling, and those who had not. Also, there was no significant difference in the marital adjustment level of Christian husbands and wives who had undergone premarital counselling and those who had not.

As a result of the findings, it was recommended that Counsellors should make pre-counselling assessment to ascertain areas where the

prospective couple may have challenges and counsel them on those areas. The study also recommended that the counselling relationship should be terminated based on the goals set, but in most cases it is terminated without reaching any set goals. Therefore counsellors and prospective couples should make sure that goals are set for the counselling process and these must be achieved before they terminate the counselling process.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Director of counselling unit, University of Cape Coast, Dr. Mrs. Linda Naa Dzama Forde and her team for granting me the opportunity to pursue this study. I wish to extend my highest gratitude to my principal supervisor, Dr. Mrs. Linda Naa Dzama Forde, and co-supervisor, Rev. Prof. J. K. Essuman for their indispensable supervision. I am also grateful to Prof. Emmanuel Kofi Gyimah and Prof. Kwawo Edjah, former and current Heads of Department of Educational Foundations respectively for accepting me into the Department and their encouragement.

I also acknowledge the immense contribution of Mr. Doh Fia and Mr. Lebbaeus Asamani for their concern and proof reading various parts of the work for me. I also appreciate all my course mates, roommates, Mrs Abigail Dadzi, Bengamin Amoh, Linda Ofori for their support and encouragements that have spurred me on to this stage.

I also express my heartfelt gratitude to my husband Rev. Anthony O. S. Kwarteng and my children Elgrace Adom Pokuaa Kwarteng and Itswell Nana Gyambrah Kwarteng for their prayers, support and understanding. To the entire Kwarteng and Ntim families and all others who helped in diverse ways towards the successful completion of this work.

All limitations in this document are exclusively mine.

## **DEDICATION**

To my family.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background to the Study**

Generally, there is a remarkable difference in the patterns of marriage. Educated men and women tend to marry at older ages whilst their counterparts with fewer years of schooling usually marry at early ages (U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2013). Research shows that 40%–50% of all first marriages and 60% of second marriages end in divorce (The Lewin Group, 2008; Doherty & Corroll, n.d.). Recent report by U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics (2013) however, indicates that more educated couples have lower chance of divorce while over half of marriages between couples who did not complete high school education end in divorce.

Similarly, most families in Africa are undergoing a process of major transformation and the most significant factor is that most marriages are ending up in divorce. According to Legal Aid Ghana 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2011 at least 40% of marriages registered annually in Ghana break up within a spate of 14 months (Ghanaweb, 2011). This high divorce rates and personal experience with divorce discourages many people from marrying. Research has shown that personal experience with divorce, whether their own or that of significant others, influences attitudes towards marriage (Thornton & Freedman, 1982). Looking at the reasons why we are experiencing such high divorce rates helps us understand attitudes which affect behaviours towards marriage and the need

for premarital counselling. Marital adjustment has long been a popular topic in studies of the family, probably because the concept is believed to be closely related to the stability of a given marriage. Marital adjustment is the state in which there is an overall feeling in husband and wife of happiness and satisfaction with their marriage and to each other (Khurshid, Hashmi & Hassan, 2007). Marital adjustment calls for maturity that accepts and understands growth and development in the spouse. If this growth is not experienced and realised fully, “death” of the marital relationship is inevitable. A poor relationship between couples is not instantaneous rather a slow progress. “It is like the undetected cancer that kills silently and softly” (Khurshid et al., 2007: 3). In an effort to address the current rates of marital distress and divorce numerous scholars and educators have advocated for the development and implementation of premarital education or counselling programmes (Markman, Floyd, Stanley, & Storaasli, 1988; Stahmann & Salts, 1993).

Premarital counselling involves a series of marriage counselling sessions aimed at helping individuals to learn skills useful for resolving marital conflicts. Evidence has shown that it is beneficial for better understanding of marital roles (Ambakederemo & Ganagana, 2006). Akande, Olowonirejuaro and Akuchie (2008) contended that attitudes are deeply rooted and influence success in many areas. It is also an enduring trait in life which is a composite of many experiences, that could be positive or negative depending on the circumstances and experiences of individuals.

Christians variously regard marriage as a sacrament, a contract, a sacred institution or a covenant. From the very beginning of the Christian

church, marriage law and theology have been a major issue. The foundations of the Western tradition of Christian marriages have been the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul. Christians often marry for religious reasons ranging from following the biblical injunction for a “man to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two shall become one,” (Genesis 2:24) to obeying Canon Law stating marriage between baptised persons is a sacrament that need not be broken. The Church like many institutions views premarital counselling as an effective means of strengthening the institution of marriage. The purpose of premarital counselling is to work out any problems in the relationship prior to the marriage as well as to prepare the couple for what is expected in a marital relationship. Additionally, it equips the couple with effective communication skills to enable them to solve problems as and when they arise (Ambakederemo & Ganagana, 2006).

Marriage has significant value for individuals, families, and society. The institution of marriage appears to be under threat. There is a fear towards marriage as a result of the high divorce rate, as well as the unpreparedness of “future adults” to cope with relationships such as marriage ( as a result of significant others being poor role models) makes it fearful for these adults to marry in the future. There is a dire need for preparation concerning married life (Martin *et al.*, 2004). Early intervention with couples is beneficial because the risk of divorce is highest in the early years of marriage (Kreider & Field, 2001). The goal of premarital counselling is to enhance the premarital relationship and future marriage so that it might develop into a satisfactory, stable marital relationship (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997).

## **Statement of the Problem**

Premarital counselling has been viewed by many people, including churches, as an effective means of reducing the high rate of divorce. The purpose of premarital counselling is to work out problems in the relationship prior to the marriage as well as to prepare the couple for what is expected in a marital relationship. Additionally, it equips the couple with effective communication skills to enable them to solve problems as and when they arise. With a preventive orientation, these programmes (premarital counselling) are geared at providing couples with an awareness and understanding of potential problems which may occur during marriage, as well as providing couples with information and resources to effectively prevent or ameliorate such problems (Markman & Hahlweg, 1993).

The philosophy behind counselling before marriage is to give couples an opportunity to discuss values to gain a greater understanding of their partners' beliefs (Waichler, 2011). Couples are told what to expect in marriage and use role-playing to communicate effectively while avoiding destructive tactics like name-calling and withdrawal. A trend seen in most churches is that couples are mandated to attend premarital counselling if they desire to be married by that particular church. Although there is no concrete evidence that shows that premarital counselling lowers the divorce rate, there is evidence showing that it results in happier marriages (Waichler, 2011). This goes to show that premarital counselling is a powerful tool in marriage preparation.

Despite the desires for successful, life-long marriages among couples marrying for the first time worldwide, there are roughly (40%) to (50%) of these marriages ending up in divorce (National Center for Health Statistics



(NCHS), 1996). Some demographic projections also predict that the divorce rate will likely rise for the coming generation, with as many as two-thirds of recent marriages ending in divorce (Lamanna & Riedman, 1997) and that two-thirds of these divorces will occur within the first ten years of marriage (NCHS, 1996). Amankwah (2008) reported that data available at the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) on customary marriage indicates that a total of 618 marriages were dissolved in 2009 out of 1,511 marriages registered. In January 2007, 46 out of 136 registered marriages were dissolved, while in February 2007, 49 out of 122 registered marriages were dissolved. Studies statistics from Ghana Statistics Service (GSS) indicate that in 2010, there were 1.3 divorces per 1,000 marriages, the divorce rate rose to 2.3, 4.6, 4.3 and 6.0 in the years: 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively. The study further indicated that the highest rate, 6.3 divorces per 1,000 marriages was recorded in 2006 (GSS, 2014).

These statistics are very disturbing which call for pragmatic steps to be taken to address the situation. There is the need for empirical work to be done to find out factors that can promote adjustment and increased satisfaction among couples. However, many of the studies done in this area did not look at how premarital counselling helps couples to handle their individual differences they bring into marriage. This study therefore seeks to address this threatening situation in our society. Addressing these questions has become an issue of critical importance, because as the demand for premarital education increases, so does the need for sound research to determine the effectiveness of such preventive interventions.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to determine the impact of premarital counselling on marital adjustment among Christian couples in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Specifically, this study was designed to:

1. Examine the views of Christian husbands in the Cape Coast Metropolis on premarital counselling
2. Determine the views of Christian wives in the Cape Coast Metropolis on premarital counselling.
3. Examine the relevance of the knowledge gained from premarital counselling on marital adjustment of Christian husbands in the Cape Coast Metropolis.
4. Examine the relevance of the knowledge gained from premarital counselling on marital adjustment of Christian wives in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions.

1. What are the views of Christian husbands in the Cape Coast Metropolis on premarital counselling?
2. What are the views of Christian wives in the Cape Coast Metropolis on premarital counselling?
3. What is the relevance of the knowledge gained from premarital counselling on marital adjustment of Christian husbands in the Cape Coast Metropolis?

4. What is the relevance of the knowledge gained from premarital counselling on marital adjustment of Christian wives in the Cape Coast Metropolis?

### **Hypotheses**

In addition to the research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated to guide and give direction to the study.

1.  $H_0$ : There is no significance difference in the marital adjustment of Christian husbands who went through premarital counselling and husbands who did not.

$H_1$ : There is a significant difference in the marital adjustment of Christian husbands who went through premarital counselling and husbands who did not.

2.  $H_0$ : There is no significance difference in the marital adjustment of Christian wives who went through premarital counselling and Christian wives who did not.

$H_1$ : There is significant difference in the marital adjustment of Christian wives who went through premarital counselling and wives who did not.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study is significant to marriage sustainability which is the heart beat or aim of marriage couples. The findings of this study would also enable marital counsellors and pastors come out with pragmatic policies or marital counselling question for incoming couples that enable them alleviate challenges that would lead to a divorce.

This study would again contribute immensely in building up a happy marriage. The findings of this study would help to create the awareness of couples on factors that encourage distress, conflicts or misunderstanding in marriage. This would invariably help the couples to effectively deal with such factors and hence, enjoy a fruitful and happy marriage. The findings would also benefit divorcees who intend to remarry. The findings of this study would help them to identify and correct the mistakes that broke their earlier marriages.

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and Community Development Officers can use the findings of the study as a guide in the settlement of marital cases. Advocacy agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations, (NGOs), Family Tribunals, Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU), Social Welfare can use the findings of the study as a guide in the formulation of policies for children's right and for the protection of women, men and children. The study would also play a significant role of engineering further research into other aspects of the topic under consideration.

Finally, the findings and recommendations from this study would be an added literature and sources of information as well as reference materials for other academic discourse on the issue of premarital counselling and marital adjustment in the country.

### **Delimitation of the Study**

The study was carried out in the Ghanaian context and it covered communities in Cape Coast Metropolis in the Central Region of Ghana. This was due to logistical and time constraints which made it impossible for the

researcher to conduct this study on a national level. The targeted populations consisted of Christian couples. This is because premarital counselling in one way or the other influences or had influenced these people behaviours toward marriage. The study focused on the impact of premarital counselling on marital adjustment among Christian couples in the Cape Coast Metropolis. It was also limited to communities in Cape Coast Metropolis due to time and budget constraint.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The results of the study must be interpreted within the following limitations. There was general reluctance by some churches not to accept the researcher due to changes in their worship periods. Many Christian couples were not willing to respond to the study since they felt it was time consuming for them to stay and respond to these questionnaires, as some of them were not even willing to share their marital issues publicly. Answers to the question might contain some biases which may influence the results of the study, since what people say is not true always the same as what they do or practise.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Counselling:** A process that enables a person to calmly address his/her problems and issues in a supportive environment.

**Premarital Counselling:** Knowledge and skills based training procedure which aims at providing couples with information on ways to improve their relationship once they are married.

**Marital Adjustment:** The process during which partners in a marriage adapt and change to their new roles complementing each other

## **Organisation of the Rest of the Study**

Chapter two contains a review of relevant literature related to the study. Various articles, internet materials, books, periodicals are reviewed in order to situate the study in a proper perspective. The methodology of the study is found in chapter three which describes the various methods and procedures employed to generate data for the study. It includes research design, population and sampling procedures, research instrument, data collection procedures and analysis. Brief description of the study area also forms part of chapter three. Chapter four presents the results and discussion. It includes data analysis procedures and their interpretation. Chapter five provides summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study. The summary included the general overview of the study and the key findings of the study. Conclusions drawn based on the findings and recommendations were made. Finally suggestions for further research were made.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Premarital education has long been a focus of both national and international public policy, as several states (Ooms, 1998; MMS, 2000) and countries (Stahmann, 2000) have proposed or enacted legislation that requires or offers incentives for couples to participate in premarital education. Although debate continues about whether the current divorce rates should be viewed neutrally as a by product of contemporary social and family norms or as a serious problem (Doherty & Carroll, in press), almost every family scholar and professional advocates for better preparation for marriage. The impact of premarital counselling on marital adjustment among couples across the world has engaged the attention of many writers and researchers. In this regard, the review of literature involved the systematic identification, location and analysis of documents containing information related to the research problem.

In this chapter, a theoretical overview of marriage, Christian couples and counselling would be presented. This would set the foundation for a discussion on premarital counselling and questions regarding impact of premarital counselling in the lives of Christian couples. The empirical review consisted of studies that have been conducted by earlier researchers and are relevant to the current topic under investigation. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature review.

## Theoretical Framework

Counselling is a profession that tailors the approach to the needs of the client, presenting issues and the personality of the individual. A counsellor's approach is also uniquely based on belief systems and personal values. Counselling is an activity where personal values are important part of the development of the individual and the community at large. Counselling theories are used by counsellors and psychologists in their treatment plan for their clients. There are many types of counselling theories, including family systems, gestalt, behavioural and psychoanalytical. Theories may be used on their own or with other theories to help clients with their issues. However, the most common counselling theories are the client or person centered theory, rational-emotive theory and the transactional analysis theory. Theories are useful because they are predictive and explanatory as they make sense of what has already happened (Talking Therapy, 2012). They also inform a practitioner choice or approach to counselling.

These approaches are traditionally taught and based on an explicit theory or model. A theory provide the foundations of good counselling. It provides the counsellor with a framework that they can use to explore the counselling process, the clients problems, and indeed, to measure progress against the marriage. Theories are important in counselling in so far as they relate to practice. If a theory helps make sense of what is going on to the client, or because it gives hints and clues about what is going on to the client, then it is helpful. The important question about a counselling theory is therefore not "*Is it true?*", but "*Is it useful?*" (Talking Therapy, 2012). Boy and Pine (1990) state that there are six functions of theory in counselling: It helps counsellors



find unity and relatedness within the diversity of existence, it compels counsellors to examine relationships they would otherwise overlook, it gives counsellors operational guidelines by which to work and helps them evaluate their development as professionals, it helps counsellors focus on relevant information and tells them what to look for, it helps counsellors assist clients in the effective modification of their behaviour, cognitions, emotional functioning, and interpersonal relationships and helps counsellors evaluate both old and new approaches to the process of counselling.

### **Client or Person-Centered Theory**

Client-centered therapy, also known as person-centered therapy, is a non-directive form of talk therapy that was developed by humanist psychologist Carl Rogers during the 1940s and 1950s. It is still one of the most important approaches to counselling. The core of the theory is that, humans have an inherent self-actualising tendency, a movement towards developing capacities in ways which serve to maintain and enhance the individual. By following this innate drive, people can meet their needs, develop a view of themselves, and interact in society in a beneficial way. This may not occur without distress or 'growing pains', but theoretically, if humans can be helped to follow their nature, they will move towards a state of relative happiness, contentment, and general psychological adjustment (Patterson, 1980).

It is also important to note that Rogers was deliberate in his use of the term client rather than patient. He believed that the term patient implied that the individual was sick and seeking a cure from a therapist. By using the term client instead, Rogers emphasised the importance of the individual in seeking

assistance, controlling their destiny and overcoming their difficulties. Self-direction plays a vital part of client-centered therapy. Problems in the personality development process arise when significant people in our lives (for example, parents, teachers, peers), place a condition of worth upon us, rather than accept us unconditionally. They value us only if we meet certain conditions and expectations. Rogers (1957) stated that there are six necessary and sufficient conditions required for therapeutic change:

1. **Therapist-Client Psychological Contact:** a relationship between client and therapist must exist, and it must be a relationship in which each person's perception of the other is important.
2. **Client in-congruence:** that in-congruence exists between the client's experience and awareness.
3. **Therapist Congruence or Genuineness:** the therapist is congruent within the therapeutic relationship. The therapist is deeply involved in him or herself - they are not "acting" - and they can draw on their own experiences (self-disclosure) to facilitate the relationship.
4. **Therapist Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR):** the therapist accepts the client unconditionally, without judgment, disapproval or approval. This facilitates increased self-regard in the client, as they can begin to become aware of experiences in which their view of self-worth was distorted by others.
5. **Therapist Empathic understanding:** the therapist experiences an empathic understanding of the client's internal frame of reference. Accurate empathy on the part of the therapist helps the client believe the therapist's unconditional love for them.

6. **Client Perception:** that the client perceives, to at least a minimal degree, the therapist's UPR and empathic understanding.

Rogers asserted that the most important factor in successful therapy is the relational climate created by the therapist's attitude to their client. Rogers believed that a therapist's attitude would help liberate their client to more confidently express their true feelings without fear of judgement. To achieve this, the client-centered therapist carefully avoids directly challenging their client's way of communicating themselves in the session in order to enable a deeper exploration of the issues most intimate to them and free from external referencing (Reece, 2012). Humans need the regard of others in order to have self-respect, we strive to meet the expectations of others, though this often requires us to suppress, or ignore, our self-actualising tendency and the opportunity to accept and value ourselves unconditionally. A false self-image is created, based on meeting the conditions of worth, and we then distort and deny reality, in the quest to confirm our maladjustment. Therefore the key to healthy personality development and self-generated rehabilitation of psychological problems lies in the necessary and sufficient conditions of personality change.

### **Rational Emotive Theory**

Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) is a type of cognitive behavioural therapy developed by psychologist Albert Ellis. REBT is focused on helping clients change irrational beliefs. Underlying the practice of Rational Emotive Theory and its applications to counselling is a set of theoretical hypotheses about the emotional-behavioural functioning of humans and how it can be changed (Ellis, 1977). One of the fundamental premises of REBT is

that humans, in most cases, do not merely get upset by unfortunate adversities, but also by how they construct their views of reality through their language, evaluative beliefs, meanings and philosophies about the world, themselves and others (Ellis, 2001). Ellis suggested that people mistakenly blame external events for unhappiness. He argued, however, that it is our interpretation of these events that truly lies at the heart of our psychological distress. To explain this process, Ellis developed what he referred to as the ABC Model. The A-B-C model states that normally, is not merely an *A*, *adversity* (or *activating* event) that contributes to disturbed and dysfunctional emotional and behavioural *Cs*, *consequences*, but rather what people *B*, *believe* about the *A*, *adversity*. *A*, *adversity* can be either an external situation or a thought or other kind of internal event, and it can refer to an event in the past, present, or future (Dryden & Neenan, 2003).

At the centre of these hypotheses is the concept that events do not force people to have emotional behavioural reactions. It is rather their interpretation or thoughts about events that precipitate emotion and behaviour. REBT commonly posits that at the core of irrational beliefs there often are explicit or implicit rigid demands and commands, and that extreme derivatives like awfulising, frustration intolerance, people depreciation and over-generalisations are accompanied by these (Dryden & Neenan, 2003). According to REBT the core dysfunctional philosophies in a person's evaluative emotional and behavioural belief system, are also very likely to contribute to unrealistic, arbitrary and crooked inferences and distortions in thinking. REBT therefore first teaches that when people in an insensible and devout way overuse absolutistic, dogmatic and rigid "shoulds", "musts", and

"oughts", they tend to disturb and upset themselves. Therefore, the target for change in psychotherapy is those thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and meanings that create emotional-behavioural disturbance. Ellis theorises that humans have the capacity to interpret reality in a clear, logical and objective fashion, and avoid unnecessary emotional-behavioural upsets, but also says that humans are predisposed to irrational interpretations. They are susceptible to crooked thinking, draw illogical conclusions which are not objective, and are cognitive distortions of reality. An irrational interpretation of reality, such as the foregoing, usually has two or three standard characteristics (Ellis, 1979: 7). (1) It demands something unrealistic of the world, other people, or yourself; (2) it exaggerates the awfulness of something you dislike; (3) it concludes that you cannot tolerate the thing you dislike; and (4) it condemns the world, other people, or yourself.

It is also important to recognise that while rational emotive behaviour therapy utilises cognitive strategies to help clients, it also focuses on emotions and behaviours as well. In addition to identifying and disputing irrational beliefs, therapists and clients also work together to target the emotional responses that accompany problematic thoughts. Clients are also encouraged to change unwanted behaviours using things such as mediation and guided imagery. REBT can be effective in the treatment of a range of psychological disorders including anxiety disorders and phobias as well as specific behaviours such as severe shyness and excessive approval seeking (Ellis, 1979).

## **The Transactional Analysis Theory**

Transactional Analysis is one of the most accessible theories of modern psychology. Transactional Analysis was founded by Eric Berne, and the famous 'parent adult child' theory is still being developed today. Transactional Analysis has wide applications in clinical, therapeutic, organizational and personal development, encompassing communications, management, personality, relationships and behaviour (Berne, 1961). Transactional analysis (TA) is an integrative approach to the theory of psychology and psychotherapy. It is described as integrative because it has elements of psychoanalytic, humanist and cognitive approaches. While there were many theories purporting to explain human behaviour before Eric Berne, the most frequently cited and known is the work of Sigmund Freud. Freud emerged in the early 20th century with his theories about personality. In the 1950's Eric Berne began to develop his theories of Transactional Analysis. He said that verbal communication, particularly face to face, is at the centre of human social relationships and psychoanalysis. His starting-point was that when two people encounter each other, one of them will speak to the other. This he called the Transaction Stimulus. The reaction from the other person he called the Transaction Response. The person sending the Stimulus is called the Agent. The person who responds is called the Respondent (Berne, 1961).

According to Berne (1961), at any given time, a person experiences and manifests their personality through a mixture of behaviours, thoughts and feelings. Typically, according to TA, there are three ego-states that people consistently use:

- 1. Parent ("exteropsyche"):** a state in which people behave, feel, and think in response to an unconscious mimicking of how their parents (or other parental figures) acted, or how they interpreted their parent's actions. For example, a person may shout at someone out of frustration because they learned from an influential figure in childhood the lesson that this seemed to be a way of relating that worked.
- 2. Adult ("neopsyche"):** a state of the ego which is most like computer processing information and making predictions absent of major emotions that could affect its operation. Learning to strengthen the Adult is a goal of TA. While a person is in the Adult ego state, he/she is directed towards an objective appraisal of reality.
- 3. Child ("archaeopsyche"):** a state in which people behave, feel and think similarly to how they did in childhood. For example, a person who receives a poor evaluation at work may respond by looking at the floor, and crying or pouting, as they used to when scolded as a child. Conversely, a person who receives a good evaluation may respond with a broad smile and a joyful gesture of thanks. The Child is the source of emotions, creation, recreation, spontaneity and intimacy.

These ego-states may or may not represent the relationships that they act out. For example, in the workplace, an adult supervisor may take on the Parent role, and scold an adult employee as though they were a Child. Or a child, using their Parent ego-state, could scold their actual parent as though the parent were a Child. Berne states that there are four types of diagnosis of ego

states. They are: "behavioural" diagnosis, "social" diagnosis, "historical" diagnosis, and "phenomenological" diagnosis. A complete diagnosis would include all four types. It was demonstrated later that there is a fifth type of diagnosis, namely "contextual", because the same behaviour will be diagnosed differently according to the context of the behaviour (White, 2011). It is important to note that when analysing transactions, one must look beyond *what* is being said. According to Dr. Berne, one must look at *how* the words are being delivered (accents on particular words, changes in tone, volume, etc.) as the *non-verbal signs* accompanying those words (body language, facial expressions, etc.). Transactional Analysts will pay attention to all of these cues when analysing a transaction and identifying which ego states are involved.

Transactional Analysis can be said to be an effective method in the process of counselling. Recently its scope is increasing. Among psychological approaches, transactional analysis is outstanding in the depth of its theory and the wide variety of its applications. As a theory of personality, TA gives us a picture of how people are structured psychologically (Stewart & Joines, 1987). To do so it uses a three-part model known as the ego-state model. The same model helps us understand how people function - how they express their personality in terms of behaviour. According to (Board, 1997) outside the therapeutic field, TA is used in educational settings. It helps teachers and learners to stay in clear communication and avoid setting up unproductive confrontations. It is particularly suitable for use in counselling. TA is also a powerful tool in management and communications training and in organisational analysis. Among the many other applications of TA are its uses by social workers, police and probation authorities, and ministers of religion.



TA can be used in any field where there is a need for understanding of individuals, relationships and communication (Dryden, 1996). Individuals especially the young adults are the needy clients of this transactional analysis counselling, because present generations carry different complex ego states. It enables the clients to identify the sorts of relationship.

### **Needs Theories**

Needs theories of mate selection are based on the idea that people select partners who compliments the other partner's needs. Rice (1990) asserts that complementary need theory originated by Winch (1958) who holds that people tend to select mates whose need are opposite but complementary to their own. According to Bulcroft (2012) two people who have opposing values or personality traits would be more likely to marry. Needs theory believes that a nurturant person who likes to care for others would seek out a succorant person who likes to be cared for. Nurturant means giving sympathy, help and protection while succorant means seeking the same thing. A dominant person would also like to select a submissive person. The individual selects a person who provides maximum need satisfaction, an example of the person whose needs are complementary to one's own. But Murstein (1980) believes that similarity of need may be more functional in mate selection than complementary.

Olson and DeFrain (2000) believe that marriage provides the opportunity for growth as a human being and for nurturing the growth of one's partner. For this reason, a marriage cannot survive if the partners think only of their own development, careers and needs or needs for recognition and accomplishment. Marriage, therefore, works well if couples share each other's

successes and genuinely support each other. For marriage to stabilise for betterment and achievement of success both people must be willing and able to give of them self.

### **Solution Focused Premarital Counselling**

This is a useful framework to use premarital counselling because it helps engaged couples to together vision for their future marriage. Upon developing this vision, couples develop strategies to make changes that will lead them toward their vision. The premarital counsellor or educator can use various strategies to aid couples in the development of and progression towards the shared vision of the marriage. The practitioner can adapt the solution focused framework to a wide range of topics that are often addressed in premarital counselling such as communication and conflict resolution skills, finances, parenting (Douglas et al., 2001) as well as extended family relationships (Parish, 1992). Thus, the solution oriented frame work does not mandate a fixed prescription for premarital counselling, but rather it can be used to enhance any premarital counselling program. It is solution focused in the sense that it assists individuals to move toward their shared vision of their future (Friedman & Lipchik, 1999). In addition, the practitioner's main function is to help link each partner's individual vision to facilitate the development of a shared vision (Hoyt & Berg, 1998). In using the solution focused approach for premarital counselling, practitioners must respect each couple's unique resources and strength. The premarital counsellor should maintain a future orientation and should focus on the client's goals and objectives in preparing for the marriage (Friedman, 1993). Where appropriate,

the practitioner may incorporate skills training into solution focused premarital counselling sessions (Hoyt & Berg, 1998).

Thus, existing methods of instruction in communication skills and conflict resolution skills, for example are compatible with solution focused premarital counselling. Along with the general orientation towards solutions, practitioners may incorporate specific interventions that are rooted in solution focused theory such as couple's resource map, solution oriented questions and providing feedback. For many reasons, solution focused theory provides a useful framework for premarital counselling. Generally, solution focused premarital counselling is a supportive, respectful approach to use in counselling couples. Proponents of the solution focused approach assert that focusing on solutions rather than problems allows clients to develop their personal strengths (Clark-Stager, 1999). In addition, solution focused premarital counselling presents a flexible, positive context for practitioners to work with couples. Solution focused premarital counselling invites couples to actively construct a shared vision of a mutually satisfying marriage and to develop strategies to achieve the shared vision.

An additional benefit of solution oriented approach is that it is a brief intervention in which couples receive the minimal amount of services needed (O'Connell, 1998). Empirical research tends to support the effectiveness of solution focused counselling as a brief therapy approach (Friedman & Lipchik, 1999). Another important benefit of adopting a solution oriented approach is that theory is adaptable for use with diverse population. The solution oriented approach values the diversity and uniqueness of all human beings and relationships (Friedman & Lipchik, 1999). Solution focused premarital

counselling positions the client as the expert in his or her own life and emphasises the unique cultural resources of all clients (Hoyt & Berg, 1998). This according to Sayers, Kohn and Heavey (1998) is useful for all couples especially those from diverse cultural backgrounds. This is because solution focused counselling respects and honours the unique cultural backgrounds of all couples, thus providing a context for programmes that are appropriate for diverse client populations.

The major criticism of the solution focused theory according to Clark-Stager (1999) is its overly simplistic approach, the potential for minimising the clients' problem and the possibility that some clients may not possess the skills or resources to solve their problems. Despite the benefit of adapting solution focused theory in premarital counselling, it may not be appropriate for all couples. For example, couples in a violent relationship may not be suitable candidates for solution focused premarital counselling. These couples would benefit from participating in specialised programmes that treat domestic violence (Busby & Killian, 1996). Generally, when couples exhibit serious levels of distress, the practitioner should consider carefully the use of solution focused premarital counselling. Increased theoretical refinement and methodologically sound research is needed to explore the use of the solution focused framework and interventions in premarital counselling. Researchers must examine the effectiveness of the approach with premarital couples. In addition, practitioners can develop new programmes as well improve existing ones that are based on the solution focused framework in order to incorporate an orientation toward solutions.

## **Empirical Review**

This part of the chapter deals with related empirical studies. Among the issues discussed include:

1. The institution of marriage
2. Marital stability
3. Christian concept of marriage
4. Counselling
5. The role of premarital counselling in facilitating marital adjustment
6. Intensive Approach to Premarital Counselling

### **The Institution of Marriage**

Marriage is an approved social institution whereby two to more persons establish a family through a socially or ritually recognised 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 (Haviland, Harald, McBride & Walrath, 2011). The definition of marriage varies according to different cultures, but it is principally an institution in which interpersonal relationships, usually intimate and sexual, are acknowledged. In some cultures, marriage is recommended or compulsory before pursuing any sexual activity. The concept of marriage cannot be pinned to a few phrases because various people attach subjective meaning to this concept. It may also be possible that a married couple may share different opinions on the meaning of the concept of their own marriage. There are various contexts such as religious, legal and psychological, from which the concept of marriage can be defined. Nonetheless, the concept of marriage

transcends the mere definition of those who are in it and those who try to define it according to personal experiences (Glendon, 1999).

In religious terms, marriage can be viewed as a sacred institution instituted by God, and should be cherished. Marriage can be seen as the most intimate of all relationships; physically, psychologically, spiritually and emotionally. Marriage links two lives through an immense range of experiences. It involves learning to be separate and together, to allocate power, to pool financial and emotional resources, to shape a sexual life, to share intimate as well as mundane feelings, and most challenging of all, to rear another generation (Napier, 2000). Marriage is a social institution in which two individuals come together. It begins with a legal contract/marriage certificate which legitimises the expected permanence of the relationship (Jung, 1993). Marriage is viewed as one of the building blocks upon which a society is established and maintained wherein the partners share in the legal obligations and responsibilities.

From the psychological perspective, marriage is conscious relationship between two individuals which is fuelled by man's drive to establish connection and intimacy with another person. This drive for connection and intimacy exists among those who want children and those who do not. It exists among those temperamentally suited to be good partners and those who are not (Cutrona, 2004). The psychological perspective also views marriage as a highly complex structure made up of a whole series of subjective and objective factors, mostly of a very heterogeneous nature. Weiss (1974) identified attachment, reassurance for wealth, guidance, reliability, social integration and nurturance as the six major psychological reasons why

individuals engage into relationships. Attachment is the emotional bonding from which one derives security. The sexual bond may be included in this provision. The next is reassurance of worth, assurance that the individual is viewed as competent and as a person of value. The third provision is guidance, the availability of advice and information when it is needed. The fourth is reliable alliance, knowledge that the other can be trusted to provide help and tangible assistance in times of need. The fifth is social integration, a sense of shared values, interests, and companionship. The last is the opportunity to provide nurturance, being needed by another for love and care (Cutrona, 2004).

When looking at marriage as an institution, as opposed to a free standing, marriage represents socially sanctioned behaviour. Marriage embraces traditional virtuous, legal and predictable assumptions concerning what is moral and what is proper (Nock, 2005). Some societies allow a male to marry only a single female whereas in other societies a husband is allowed to have more than one wife. Similarly some societies will not allow a woman to have more than one husband whereas other societies such as Nyinba people of Nepal, Nomadic tribes in Tibet, Irigwe in northern Nigeria, Massai of southern Kenya and northern Tanzania will not mind a woman having more than one husband (Levine, 1998; Levine & Silk, 1997). In some cases the parent arranges the marriage whereas in others the boys and girls arrange their marriage. Through marriage an individual is transformed. Each partner has a specific status and role as husband and wife.

## **Christian Concept of Marriage**

Christians consider marriage termed holy matrimony to be an expression of divine Grace, a sacrament, a contract, a sacred institution or a covenant. The Biblical definition of a Christian Marriage is given in Genesis 2:24. It states, "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." Christian Marriage is exclusive ('a man ...his wife...'), publicly acknowledged ('leaves his parents'), permanent ('cleaves to his wife') and consummated by sexual intercourse ('becomes one flesh') (Pothan, 2009). They consider it the most intimate of human relationships, a gift from God, and a sacred institution (Meredith, 2003). When a man and a woman get married they commit themselves to spending their lives in a new relationship. It is a partnership of love, made richer and deeper through sex. Like many people, Christians regard it as the best context for nurturing children. It is also seen as the best (many Christians would say the only) setting for sex. The New Testament teaches that sex is reserved for marriage (Stagg, 1978). It calls sex outside of marriage the sin of adultery (for the married person) if either sexual participant is married to another person, while it calls voluntary sexual intercourse between two unmarried persons the sin of fornication.

There are various Christian schools of thought on the concept of marriage. Christian Egalitarians believe that Christian marriage is intended to be a marriage without any hierarchy a full and equal partnership between the wife and husband. They emphasise that nowhere in the New Testament is there a requirement for a wife to obey her husband. While "obey" was introduced into marriage vows for much of the church during the Middle



Ages, its only New Testament support is found in 1 Peter 3:6, with that only being by implication from Sarah's obedience to Abraham (Stagg, 1978). Scriptures such as Galatians 3:28 state that in Christ, right relationships are restored and in him, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" (CBE, 1989). Christian Egalitarians interpret scripture to mean that God intended spouses to practice mutual submission, each in equality with the other. The phrase "mutual submission" comes from a verse in Ephesians 5:21 which precede advice for the three domestic relationships of the day, including slavery. It reads, "Submit to one another ('mutual submission') out of reverence for Christ", wives to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to their master. Christian Egalitarians believe that full partnership in marriage is the most biblical view, producing the most intimate, wholesome, and reciprocally-fulfilling marriages (Spencer & Besancon, 2009).

The Complementarians hold to a hierarchical structure between husband and wife. They believe men and women have different gender-specific roles that allow each to complement the other, hence the designation "Complementarians". The Complementarians view of marriage is that while the husband and wife are of equal worth before God, husbands and wives are given different functions and responsibilities by God that are based on gender, and that male leadership is biblically ordained so that the husband is always the senior authority figure. They state they observe with deep concern accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives. The Complementarians believe the Bible presents a clear chain of authority above

all authority and power is God; God is the head of Christ (Spencer & Besancon, 2009). Then in descending order, Christ is the head of man, man is the head of woman, and parents are the head of their children. Complementarians teach that God intended men to lead their wives as “heads” of the family.

The Biblical patriarch is similar to complementarianism but with differences of degree and emphasis. They carry the husband-headship model considerably further and with more militancy. While Complementarians also hold to exclusively male leadership in both the home and the church, Biblical patriarch extends that exclusion to the civic sphere as well, so that women should not be civil leaders and indeed should not have careers outside the home (Blankenhorn, Browning & Leeuwen, 2000). Biblical patriarchates see what they describe as a crisis of this era being what they term to be a systematic attack on the "timeless truths of biblical patriarch." They believe such an attack includes the movement to subvert the biblical model of the family, and redefine the very meaning of fatherhood and motherhood, masculinity, femininity, and the parent and child relationship (VMF, 2001).

The foundations of the Western tradition of Christian marriages have been the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul. In Western rituals, the ministers of the sacrament are the husband and wife themselves with a bishop, priest or deacon merely witnessing the union on behalf of the church and adding a bishop blessing. In Eastern ritual churches, the bishop or priest functions as the actual minister of the sacred mystery (Eastern Orthodox deacons may not perform marriages). Western Christians commonly refer marriage as a vocation while Eastern Christians consider it an ordination and

martyrdom, though the theological emphases indicated by the various names are not excluded by the teachings of either tradition. Marriage is commonly celebrated in the context of a Eucharistic service (Spencer & Besancon, 2009). The Roman Catholic tradition of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries defined marriage as a sacrament ordained by God which signifies the mystical marriage of Christ to the Church (Witte, 1997). It is matrimonial covenant by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of their life. It's by nature ordered towards the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring.

Christians seek to uphold the seriousness of wedding vows. Some Christians believe that marriage vows are unbreakable, so that even in the distressing circumstances in which a couple separates, they are still married from God's point of view. In the Roman Catholic Church, marriage can be ended by an annulment where the Church for special reasons regards it as never taking place. Yet, other Christian denominations have responded with compassion to deep hurts by recognizing that divorce, though less than the ideal, is sometimes necessary to relieve one partner of intolerable hardship, unfaithfulness or desertion (Stagg, 1978) and have accepted divorce and remarriage in these circumstances. While the voice of God had said, "I hate divorce" (Malachi 2:16), some authorities believe the divorce rate in the church is nearly comparable to that of the culture at large (Desai, 2005). Divorce and remarriage while generally not encouraged are regarded differently by each Christian denomination. Most Protestant churches allow people to marry again after a divorce. The Eastern Orthodox churches allow for a limited number of reasons, and in theory, but usually not in practice. It

requires that a marriage after divorce is celebrated with a penitential overtone. There is rarely divorce without pain. Even when divorce comes as a relief, it follows the pain of broken relationships and dreams, and great anxiety about the impact on children. Christians seek to uphold the seriousness of marriage while responding with compassion to deep hurts by recognising that divorce is sometimes necessary.

### **Marital Stability**

Marital instability has increased markedly in both developed and developing countries since the mid-1960s (Garriga & Härkönen, 2005). A reading of the literature reveals that a number of Christian writers had perceived Christian marriage since the World War II to be as much under threat as is the modern secular marriage institution. Mace (1975), a Christian marriage counsellor, cited by Syphus (2007) for instance had already noted some three decades ago that marriages are breaking down on an unprecedented scale. In the same way, at the beginning of the 1980s, the Catholic Bishops of Africa (AFER, 1981) also cited by Syphus (2007) at a Synod of Bishops in Rome expressed a similar concern for marriage and family life in Africa while at the beginning of the 1990s. Wilson (1991) wrote that our society is witnessing a tremendous weakening of the nuclear family structure, of which the marital relationship is both a vital and fundamental structure. Studies by Giblin (1994) indicates that between 60 and 80 percent of first marriages, and 30 and 40 percent of second marriages, occur in the church. Therefore, Christians are reported to be slightly more likely to experience divorce than non-Christians.

In recent decades there has been a quite impressive growth in the number of studies assessing the individual and social impact of parental divorce and separation on children's living conditions, i.e. educational attainment, socio-economic success, psychological well-being, the intergenerational transmission of divorce, social relations, children's family behaviour, intergenerational relations etc. (e.g.: Amato 2000, Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004). Nevertheless, social research is far from having clarified all of the micro and macro level mechanisms and consequences related to marital instability. According to Naidoo (1981) cited by Syphus (2007, the breakdown of marriage and family life is due not only to social and economic conditions but also to the lack of due preparation for marriage. Mace (1975) has argued that the need for marriage preparation grows out of the changing nature of marriage from a hierarchical institution that focused on the production of children and the maintenance of family traditions to the "companionship" marriage, which he maintained is much more difficult to operate and requires the skilful management of personal relationships within the marriage.

A stable marriage depends on the level of satisfaction couples gain from the marriage. The marital relationship is difficult to measure, predict, or define because of its complex nature. Marriage is aimed at happiness in one way or another. Couples that marry have the expectation of a satisfactory marital relationship. Some of these expectations may be realistic and others unrealistic (Zikhali, 2009). According Amato (2000), marital satisfaction is the subjective evaluation of one's experience in their marriage. This is because, marital satisfaction can only be rated by the couples themselves and not anyone else.

Marital satisfaction is not a property of a relationship; it is a subjective experience and opinion (CHARISMA, 2006). Uniquely, marital satisfaction is a relatively stable attitude and attribute which reflects the individual's overall evaluation of the relationship. Marital satisfaction depends upon the individual's needs, expectations, and desires for the relationship. If couples are successful in making the necessary adjustment in their marital union, it leads to stability in the marriage. Marital stability is the relationship in which couples live together in marriage, enjoying the closest possible loving and fulfilling relationship without any intention of breakup (Adesanya, 2002). A peaceful relationship is achieved when married couples understand their individual roles and work together towards it. Adesanya (2002) identified certain factors that ensure marital stability such as economic wellbeing, responsiveness, among others. However, the strongest factor of marital stability is considered to be economic satisfaction (Adesanya, 2002).

According to Owuamanam (1997), inadequate provision of essential needs for wives and children within the family is capable of creating tension, conflict and poor marital adjustment. Similarly, Owuamanan and Osakinle (2005) observed that marital instability in homes could lead to separation and divorce. In their own study, Ambakederemo and Ganagana (2006) found that marital instability is caused by sex-related issues, love and trust, socio-cultural factors, anti-social vices and lastly economic factors. Some methods employed by couples in resolving marital conflicts include the traditional round-table settlement by both family members of married couples and intervention by close friends. In most cases, these methods are faulty, one-sided and could make matters worse. Therefore the need for adequate marriage preparation so

that couples would be well equipped to deal with marital problems themselves other than seeking the help of third parties all time.

### **Counselling**

Counselling is the means by which one person helps another through purposeful conversation. It is also a method of identifying practical solution to an identified problem. Similarly, there are also several possible definitions of counselling. Christian psychologist Gary Collins cited by Tan (2011) defined counselling as a relationship between two or more persons in which one person (the counsellor) seeks to advise, encourage and/or assist another person or persons (the counselee[s]) to deal more effectively with the problems of life. He further states: “Unlike psychotherapy, counselling rarely aims to radically alter or remould personality. Most people think that counselling is reserved for people who are mentally disturbed or emotionally unstable. Although people who are mentally disturbed or emotionally unstable do need help, counselling is helpful to all people in some form or another (Waters, 2003). Counselling helps people through more than just a crisis or severe problems. It is a relationship which is experienced as healing and it is a relationship which is offered and entered into formally, rather than casually or by chance (Feltham, 1995).

Counselling can be viewed as the kind of psychotherapy which helps people adjust to their circumstances by providing reassurance, support, understanding, and guidance (Stafford-Clark, 1952). That is, any intervention that assists an individual to discover and develop his or her psychological or relational well being, through the use of psychological interviews, techniques, and testing instruments. Flanagan and Flanagan (2012) also use counselling

and psychotherapy interchangeably and define it as a process that involves a trained person who practices the artful application of scientifically derived principles of establishing professional helping relationships with persons who seek assistance in resolving large or small psychological or relational problems. This is accomplished through ethically defined means and involves, in the broadest sense, some form of learning or human development. Winmill (1994) argues that clients in fact have their own preconceived idea of what counselling is, which is very often that it is a prescriptive activity addressing particular problems and steering clear of uncomfortable emotions. No amount of postulation about what counselling and psychotherapy are will be conclusive if the frame of reference, wherein the definition lies, is with the prospective client (Winmill, 1994). Counselling is viewed as having the following principles:

1. Counselling respects the self-knowledge and self-determination of the client and does not pre-suppose that counsellors have privileged access to or the right to interpret clients' complex inner lives.
2. Counselling acknowledges that clients' goals are to be respected and that these indicate a demand for apparent "symptom- removal" in a short period of time. This cannot be justly regarded as an illegitimate or ineffective aim.
3. Counselling is a non- medical enterprise which values the power of non-judgemental, attentive listening and an ethic of enabling and empowering people from all walks of life.
4. Counselling is a skill and not an elitist activity.



5. Counselling acknowledges the complexity of individuals, the diversity of theories of human behaviour, and the value of a pragmatic, as well as an idealistic attitude.

With this in mind, premarital counselling is based on similar principles set out at assisting couples to have a satisfactory marital relationship. A look at premarital counselling and some hypotheses on the lack of attendance of premarital counselling.

### **Premarital Counselling**

Premarital counselling is best defined as knowledge and skills based training procedure which aims at providing couples with information on ways to improve their relationship once they are married (Senediak, 1990). Despite this widespread support for marriage preparation programmes, valid questions remain regarding their effectiveness in strengthening marriages and preventing divorce (Stanley, 2000; Sullivan & Bradbury, 1997: 5). Some of these questions regarding premarital education include:

1. Is it generally effective?
2. Is it effective for all couples?
3. Are some forms of premarital education more effective than others?

And

4. Are premarital education programmes reaching couples who are most at risk for marital problems?

Addressing these questions has become an issue of critical importance, because as the demand for premarital education increases, so does the need for sound research to determine the effectiveness of such preventive interventions. Premarital counselling centres on a prevention perspective that has the goal of

starting with happy couples and helping them maintain their relatively high levels of functioning (Markman & Hahlweg, 1993). With preventive orientation, these programmes are geared at potential problems which may occur after marriage, as well as providing couples with information and resources to effectively prevent or ameliorate such problems. Giblin's (1985) meta-analysis of 85 other studies found that the average couple that participated in one of 20 different marriage enrichment programmes was happier in their relationship than the couples who did not participate in the programme. A trend seen in most churches is that couples are mandated to attend premarital counselling if they desire to be married by that particular church. Although there is no concrete evidence that shows that premarital counselling lowers the divorce rate, there is evidence showing that it results in happier marriages. This goes to show that premarital counselling is a powerful tool in marriage preparation.

Marriage preparation programmes, sometimes referred to as "premarital prevention" or "premarital counselling" are not new. Marriage preparation educational programmes (Premarital counselling) have been around for decades dating back as far as the 1930s. The first program was developed at the Merrill-Palmer Institute in 1932. Nine years later, the Philadelphia Marriage Council established a standardised programme for the purpose of helping couples gain a better understanding of what companionship in married life involves and thus helps them avoid some of the causes of marital difficulties (Stanley, 2000). The use of premarital education remained relatively rare until the 1970s, even though clergy would often meet with couples prior to getting married. Since the 1970s, the focus of meeting with

couples has shifted from educating them about marriage to preparing them for marriage. In the past three decades, clergy, as well as counselling professionals, have taken an increased interest in preparing couples through formal educational programmes (Norman, 1977). The timing of this coincides with the advent of no-fault divorce and the corresponding increase in divorce. H. Norman Wright developed a premarital program in 1977, *Before You Say I Do*, which became a catalyst for formal educational programmes focused on educating and training couples with skills benefiting them in their marriage relationship. Premarital education programmes have since evolved to be available in a number of various formats, including retreats, individual couple counselling, group sessions, workshops, classes offered through colleges and universities, self-directed curriculum, books, internet sites, online courses, and inventories.

Premarital counselling has been seen by many institutions, including government, mental health professionals, and priests, as an effective combatant against divorce. The purpose of premarital counselling is to work out any problem in the relationship as well as prepare the couple for marriage (Waters, 2003). Premarital programmes are viewed as effective in decreasing divorce and making marriage more satisfying. People seek counsel in many ways: through prayer, from others, from their religious affiliation and from other sources. Premarital couples seek assurance that they can create a lifelong intimate partnership. Each partner needs accurate concepts, positive attitudes, technical knowledge and skills, and practiced competencies to sustain a loving relationship (Harway, 2005).

A trend seen in churches is that couples must go through some form of premarital counselling if they desire to be married in that particular church or by a particular minister. People both outside and inside the church see premarital counselling as a powerful tool in marriage preparation and, although there is no concrete evidence in premarital counselling lowering divorce rates, there is evidence showing happier marriages (Waters, 2003). While counselling has been with us for only a few decades, religion is as old as humanity itself, and older indeed than even philosophy (Feltham, 1995). As much as the roles of the church and the priest have declined in this century, our society still acknowledges the church's importance in promoting family values and as a protector of spiritual values for the time being. The priests, as representatives of the church, fill the role of teachers in the realm of pre-marriage counselling for the Church and for society. And they are expected, with their training and experience, to provide help for couples before, during, and after their marriages. Unfortunately, the time for the Church's influence may be running out (Waters, 2003).

### **History of Premarital Counselling**

Counselling and Psychotherapy theories were being developed during the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; however it is thought that the roots of this subject originated a long time before this. The most renowned work is that of Sigmund Freud whose research into the human mind began in Vienna in 1881. He received training to become a neurologist and began working with patients who were classed as hysterical. Freud named his method psychoanalysis and continued to practice his theories until the 1930's. Although Freud is thought of as the oldest psychological theorist, it was Franz Anton Mesmer, and 18th

century physician who discovered animal magnetism (also known as mesmerism) and James Braid who developed hypnotherapy using inspiration from Mesmer's ideas (Ellis, 1979).

Hypnosis was a technique Freud adopted in his early work to treat mental disorders but then concentrated on developing his own theories after recognising that hypnotherapy was only a useful technique with certain problems. However Freud's work remains the most well known in recent times. Freud proposed the division of the mind into ego, superego and id. He also believed that infants pass through oral, anal and phallic stages and becoming 'stuck' in one of the phases could lead to disastrous consequences. Carl Jung was a close colleague of Freud, but eventually split from Freud to pursue his own school of analytical psychology. His ideas are also widely recognised in recent times. Alfred Adler, Sandor Ferenczi, Karl Abraham and Otto Rank are other influential theorists who worked closely with Freud. Carl Jung, and other proponents of Freud's approach, focused heavily on psychodynamic theories.

The 1940's and 1950's marked an important expansion in the field of counselling. The US psychologist Carl Rogers established the person centred approach, which is at the heart of most current practice (Pamela, 2010). Premarital counselling as a branch of counselling dates back so many years ago if not centuries. Preparation for marriage before the 1920's was generally a function of the family or at least, a topic mother and daughter would discuss. In fact, in Ghana parents usually marriage engage in some form of counselling for their siblings before they enter into the lifelong commitment of marriage. However, formal marriage counselling originated in Germany in the 1920s as

part of the eugenics movement (Kline, 2005). The first institutes for marriage preparations begun in 1922 when schools in the United States of America started instructing students in the area of marriage with the first marriage course being offered by the University of Boston (Gangsei, 1975). This was partly in response to Germany's medically directed, racial purification marriage counselling centres. It was promoted in the USA by both eugenicists such as Paul Popenoe and Robert Latou Dickinson and by birth control advocates such as Abraham and Hannah Stone (Kline, 2005).

In 1931, the protestant Episcopal churches began to require all clergy to give counselling in preparation for marriage to all couples getting married (Mudd, 1951). This sparked up interest on the importance of premarital and its impact on marital success and the role ministers, physicians and others could play in premarital counselling. Premarital counselling and marriage counselling was on the rise during the forties and fifties. Various marriage clinics were established throughout the United States which dealt with both pre and post marital problems. Counselling has grown and improved over the years to a point where couples can feel comfortable knowing that a well trained, empathetic counselor has the skills to assist with the day to day issues they may be struggling with.

### **Individual Counselling**

Individual counselling is a personal opportunity to receive support and experience growth during challenging times in life. It is a process between a counsellor and an individual which helps the individual to gain an understanding about oneself and one's behaviours and fosters the development of skills to be used in dealing with difficulties associated with personal,

academic and social life. The process works on the basis of trust and confidentiality principle (M.E.T.U, 2012). Counselling can help one deal with many personal topics in life such as anger, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, marriage and relationship challenges, parenting problems, school difficulties, career changes etc. Individual counselling is an opportunity to talk confidentially with a counsellor about personal concerns and to facilitate personal growth. The counsellor and client work together to define and discuss personal issues and to reach mutually agreed upon goals.

Sometimes, life experiences often disrupt our sense of wholeness, leaving us feeling unable to find our way back to ourselves. When this happens, our lives and our relationships can become difficult, or even unbearable. Individual counselling provides the opportunity for individuals who find themselves in such situations to reunite with their innate wisdom, so that they can experience more of the love, connection and happiness. However, the most important benefit of individual therapy is that it can help individuals enjoy and appreciate their most valued relationships.

### **Couples Counselling**

Every couple experiences ups and downs in their levels of closeness and harmony over time. This can range from basic concerns of stagnation to serious expressions of aggressive behaviour. Most relationships will get strained at some time, resulting in their not functioning optimally and producing self-reinforcing, maladaptive patterns. These patterns may be called negative interaction cycles. There are many possible reasons for this, including insecure attachment, ego, arrogance, jealousy, anger, greed, poor communication or problem solving, ill health, third parties and so on.

Marriage counselling or couples counselling can help resolve conflicts and heal wounds. Marriage counselling helps couples of all types recognise and resolve conflicts and improve their relationships. Through marriage counselling, couples can make thoughtful decisions about rebuilding their relationship or going your separate ways. Overall, couples counselling can help couples slow down their spiral and re-establish realistic expectations and goals. Some couples seek marriage counselling to strengthen their bonds and gain a better understanding of each other. Marriage counselling can also help couples who plan to get married. This pre-marriage counselling can help couples achieve a deeper understanding of each other and iron out differences before marriage (Weil, 2012). Before a relationship between individuals can begin to be understood, it is important to recognise and acknowledge that each person, including the counsellor, has a unique personality, perception, set of values and history. A tenet of relationship counselling is that it is intrinsically beneficial for all the participants to interact with each other and with society at large with optimal amounts of conflict. A couple's conflict resolution skill seems to predict divorce rates (Sternberg, 1997).

Though counselling is recommended as soon as discontent arises in a relationship, studies show that on average, couples do not seek therapy until they have been unhappy for six years (Christensen, Atkins, Baucom & Yi, 2010). Changes in situations like financial state, physical health, and the influence of other family members can have a profound influence on the conduct, responses and actions of the individuals in a relationship. Often it is an interaction between two or more factors, and frequently it is not just one of the people who are involved that exhibit such traits. A viable solution to the



problem and setting these relationships back on track may be to reorient the individuals' perception and emotions. These emotional responses to a relationship by couples can be explored collaboratively and discussed openly. The core values couples can comprise on are then understood and respected or changed when no longer appropriate. This implies that each person takes equal responsibility for awareness of the problem as it arises, awareness of their own contribution to the problem and making some fundamental changes in thoughts and feeling (Gottman, 1999).

It's not enough to know how relationships work in general, but to how you and your spouse can relate, given your different personalities and beliefs. Good counselling shows how incompatibilities can be turned into a pleasant thing. It also shows couples the need to adopt conscious, structural changes to the inter-personal relationships and evaluate the effectiveness of those changes over time. Research by Christensen et al. (2010) evaluating changes in marital satisfaction in couples after therapy indicated that approximately 48% of couples demonstrated either improvement or full recovery in relationship satisfaction at five-year follow-up. Relationship deterioration resulted for 38% of couples and 14% remained unchanged. This is a clear indication that good couples therapy helps to get individual perspective across to their spouse when they can't, and helps them to also see their spouse's perspective.

### **Family Counselling**

Family therapy is often sought due to a life change or stress negatively affecting one or all areas of family closeness, family structure (rules and roles) or communication style. Family counselling helps individuals understand and cope better with the stresses and strains of family life (L.S.C., 2013). Families

can be a source of support, encouragement and love but sometimes relationships within families are put under strain and family members feel isolated or overlooked. By virtue of a family being a group of individuals with differing personalities, opinions and attitudes, family conflict can often arise. Families can get stuck in patterns of destructive behaviour or negative interaction and may have difficulty identifying how to make change, or even that the potential for positive change exists. This mode of counselling can take a variety of forms. Sometimes it is best to see an entire family together for several sessions. It provides the platform for families to facilitate greater harmony and more positive family relationships within family groups. The process may involve just two or several members of the family working with the counsellor to better understand each other views and perspectives.

The distinctive feature of family therapy is its perspective and analytical framework rather than the number of people present at a therapy session. Specifically, family therapists are relational therapists: They are generally more interested in what goes on between individuals rather than within one or more individuals (Becvar & Becvar, 2008). Each person brings to the family group their own set of life experiences and perspectives within that family, along with their own personality and interactional style. Depending on the conflicts at stake and the progress of therapy to date, a therapist may focus on analyzing specific previous instances of conflict, as by reviewing a past incident and suggesting alternative ways family members might have responded to one another during it, or instead proceed directly to addressing the sources of conflict at a more abstract level, as by pointing out patterns of interaction that the family might have not noticed.

Family therapists tend to be more interested in the maintenance and or solving of problems rather than in trying to identify a single cause. Some families may perceive cause-effect analyses as attempts to allocate blame to one or more individuals, with the effect that for many families a focus on causation is of little or no clinical utility. It is important to note that a circular way of problem evaluation is used as opposed to a linear route. Using this method, families can be helped by finding patterns of behaviour, what the causes are, and what can be done to better their situation (Gale, 2007).

Common issues addressed in family counselling are concerns around parenting, sibling conflict, and loss of family members, new members entering the family, dealing with a major move or a general change affecting the family system. Family counselling helps family members to genuinely hear each other and better understand each others' perspectives while also learning to take responsibility for their own actions and reactions within the family context (L.S.C., 2013). Identifying ways to facilitate more effective communication within the family and strategies to constructively deal with conflict are paramount to achieving more positive dynamics within the family group. Family counselling can help when siblings aren't getting on, or when parents and children are going through a divorce or separation. Family counselling benefits the whole family by helping everyone to say how they are feeling. Family counselling can help reduce conflict which means fewer rows at home and can help everyone cope better with their situation.

### **Group Counselling**

The classic form of psychotherapy is a one-on-one contact with the client and the therapist. Group counselling, however, is a form of treatment

that involves the simultaneous treatment of two or more clients and may require one or more therapists. Furthermore, group therapy encompasses many of the techniques that are utilised in individual psychotherapy, but on a larger scale (Selbor, 2007). Group counselling is more in consonance with the Control Theory, later named Choice Theory, forwarded by William Glasser. This theory states that a person's behaviour is inspired by what that person wants or needs at that particular time, not on an outside stimulus. That all living creatures control their behaviour to fulfil their need for satisfaction in one or more of these five areas: survival, to belong and be loved by others, to have power and importance, freedom and independence, and to have fun (Cuzion, 2013). The most important need among the five is love and belongingness. Group counselling promotes this kind of feeling. Being connected to others is encouraged in group counselling.

Group counselling allows one to find out that they are not alone in their type of life challenge. There are a variety of group therapies and each reflects a certain dimension of which it is categorised. The primary dimension is the type of people that form a particular group for a therapeutic setting. For instance, in couples therapy and family therapy, the various members have a previous relationship, though in most therapeutic group settings the members are initially strangers. Moreover, different groups share different characteristics in order to reach a common goal for the entire body (Selbor, 2007). To be involved in a group of peers who are in a similar place not only increases one's understanding of their struggles but also the variety in the possible solutions available. Typically, groups have up to eight participants, one or two group leaders, and revolve around a common topic like: anger

management, self-esteem, divorce, domestic violence, recovery from abuse and trauma, and substance abuse and recovery.

When people learn to interact freely with other group members, they tend to recreate the same patterns of interactions that have proved troublesome to them outside of the group. The group therapy environment provides a safe confine to experiment with alternative ways of treating yourself and others that may be more satisfying (Corey, 2010). Groups offer members the ability to become involved with other people in realistic social settings. This experience allows each member to interact with other members and, thus, recognise how his or her behaviour may be affecting or influencing others. One fundamental notion of group therapy is that problems are caused by interpersonal interactions with other people (Selbor, 2007). Therefore, by allowing the group member to recognise their behaviour, problems in the behaviour can be pinpointed and resolved.

One of the most powerful mechanisms that group therapy can offer is the ability for members to gain social skills, communication skills, and insight (Selbor, 2007). This is due to the fact that group therapy provides an environment for emulative learning and practice of these essential interpersonal skills. Groups can provide a member with strong feelings of belongings, trust, and protection. Furthermore, these feelings may not be common to them in their everyday lives and, thus, can be a powerful reinforcing factor to helping a group members tackle their problem and seek ways to rise above it. According to Corey (2010) group counselling provides a safe environment where one can share their innermost thoughts and ideas without the fear of being rejected or ridiculed.

## **Religious and Secular Counselling**

Religion and spirituality are important to many people seeking psychotherapy (Shafranske, 2005). The growing literature according to Wade, Everett, Worthington and Vogel (2007) investigating religion, spirituality, and psychology often cites the large majority of people who report a belief in a personal God or profess to some religious affiliation and report that their religion is very important to them (Gallup Organization, 2001). Many of these individuals use religious methods, such as prayer or religious reframing, to cope with difficulty in their lives (Pargament, 1997). Religious counselling differs from secular counselling in that it uses the Bible as a compass to help people sort through and solve their problems. Christian counselling is often provided by church ministers but may also be provided by anyone who is trained in psychological counselling and who is a committed Christian. In Christian counselling, modern psychological techniques and therapy methods are combined with the Christian ethos to provide a form of counselling that is spiritually oriented and that reflects facets of the Christian religion. Christian counselling has many things in common with other types of counselling.

The aim of Christian counselling, as with secular counselling, is to help people to overcome their difficulties, find meaning in life and improve the person's overall health and well-being. However, what distinguishes Christian counselling from secular therapy is that in a Christian counselling session, the therapist refers to the teachings of the Bible that (by analogy) may help the patient work through his or her problems or that will provide them with strength or guidance, whichever is needed. The basic premise of Christian counselling is that the Bible and its teachings has much to offer a

person in terms of practical wisdom, guidance and advice, particularly when dealing with areas that commonly cause conflict or distress to people (Direnfeld, 2011). This may involve relationships with others, the trials and tribulations of marriage, the family, or may deal with suffering and human nature in general. While methods and techniques from modern psychology may be employed in Christian counselling, some Christian counselors believe, and will promote the concept that the Bible is the ultimate authority and not psychology (Direnfeld, 2011). Religious counsellors consider The Bible as the final authority when it comes to behaviour and thinking. Religious counsellors teach their clients how to follow God's will to the best of their abilities. Religious counsellors use the Bible as a standard against which they measure and evaluate their own objectives and their clients' objectives and lifestyles. As opposed to other forms of counselling, religious counselling does try to convey to the counselled that there is a right way to live their lives and that the right way is found in the Bible (Swenson, 2003). Perhaps the most common perception of religious counselling is that it consists of an authoritative, prescriptive approach to problem solving.

Secular (non-religious) counselling is dyadic in nature, involving a professional relationship between counselee and counsellor; wherein, the counsellor provides guidance in resolving personal conflicts and emotional challenges. Secular counselling is aimed at facilitating psychosocial, behavioural and emotional functioning. Typically, someone has a difficulty getting along with others or in feeling satisfied with oneself or in meeting personal goals and or societal expectations. While such an approach can prove effective in addressing mental and emotional issues, it does not take into

account matters related to one's spirit. It cannot offer is to repair an individual's relationship with God or appease concerns such as when an individual's preferred choice brings him or her into conflict with religious beliefs or expectations (Direnfeld, 2011). Studies by Johnson and Hayes (2003) investigated the prevalence of religious and spiritual concerns among college students throughout the United States. For the total sample, which included those who had sought counselling and those who had not, 26% reported at least a moderate amount of distress from religious or spiritual problems. The prevalence of religious and spiritual concerns was smaller, but still considerable (19%), in the subgroup of students who had sought services at university counselling centers. Given the importance of religion and spirituality in the lives of many clients and the desire to address these issues in therapy, the need for therapists to be open and sensitive to their clients' religious or spiritual lives is crucial (Wade et al., 2007).

According to Wade et al. (2007) a review of the available literature suggests that there is some agreement among therapists that religious and spiritual issues can be integrated into therap. Both therapists chosen for their religious affiliation and therapists chosen without regard for religiosity agree that some religious and spiritual interventions, such as silent prayer for clients and discussions of spiritual experiences, are appropriate to use in therapy. They also appear to agree that some religious interventions should not be used, such as praying with a client or suggesting that the client join or leave a religion.



## **Premarital Counselling and Marital Adjustment**

The concept of marital adjustment is to refer to the state of accommodation, which is achieved in different areas where conflict may be least (Landis, 1994). Lock and William (1959) defined marital adjustment as an adoption between husband and wife to the point where there is companionship, agreement on basic values of affectional intimacy, accommodation and on certain other unidentified factor. In short, the definition of marital adjustment can be framed as the state of relationship in marriage in which the overall feeling between husband and wife is happiness and satisfaction with their marriage and with each other. Moreover, other studies have identified marital adjustment as a significant contributor to peaceful society (Okobiah, 2005; Ebebuwa-Okoh, 2007; Okorodudu & Okorodudu, 2004).

Premarital counselling generally refers to a process designed to enhance and enrich premarital relationships leading more satisfactory and stable marriages with the intended consequences being to prevent divorce (Stahmann, 2000). Premarital counselling centres on a prevention perspective that has the goal of starting with happy couples and helping them maintain their relatively high levels of functioning (Markman & Hahlweg, 1993). The purpose of premarital counselling is to work out any problem in the relationship as well as prepare the couple for marriage (Waters, 2003). Premarital programmes are viewed as effective in decreasing divorce and making marriage more satisfying in order to promote marital adjustment (Waters, 2003). The primary goal of premarital education is to promote healthy happiness. Since marriage affects not only the couple but their families

and the parts of society they interact with. When the individual family unit is healthy it sends a ripple effect through the couples' entire social network (Olson, 2008).

The typical goal of premarital counselling as stated by Stahmann and Salt (1993) include easing the transition from single to married life, increasing couple stability and satisfaction, enhancing the communication skills of the couple, increasing friendship and commitment to the relationship, increasing couple intimacy, enhancing problem solving and decision making skills in such areas as marital roles and finances. For a couple, premarital education is important for several reasons (Olson, 2008). First, it creates shared meaning within a couple. Shared meaning comes from the symbolic interaction theory. As individuals, we respond to things in our environment on the basis of their meanings, or the understanding we have made of them. Individuals respond differently to things. Exploring shared meaning helps the two individuals have similar responses to different stimuli or unveil their similarities. This understanding is the key to marital adjustment as it allows for the individuals to work their actions into agreement with the meanings they ascribed to the given situation (Olson, 2008).

By participating in premarital education, couples are showing that the meaning of marriage is important to them. Their actions are in agreement with their intentions as they set a precedent of working and dedication to improve the relationship. Beyond these facts, it is dually important for the couple because the education focuses on giving them the knowledge of what makes a marriage successful and help them practice the skills to improve in all different areas in order to improve marital adjustment (Busby, 2007).

Therefore as stated by Stahmann and Hiebert (1997) premarital counselling is essential to marital adjustment because it is educational, remedial and preventive.

### **Role of Premarital Counselling in Facilitating Marital Adjustment**

There is a saying that marriage is like a flower garden and when a couple waters it regularly, weeds out the problems and allows sunshine to nurture it, it will bloom year after year. But it will take awareness, education, practice, willingness and effort to keep it the marriage growing and progressing forward. Choosing to marry is a one of the biggest decisions you will make. Marriage is life changing. Partners want to be loved unconditionally for life, emotional connection with another human being, to be understood, forgiven, and encouraged. Couples want a partnership of support as they move through the stages of their lives. Although couples begin the marriage relationship in love, as they go through changes, crises, adjustments, and disappointments, without a strong foundation, their love can evaporate. If this happens, the marriage gate opens, allowing disenchantment and maybe even strangers to rob the couple's happiness leading to marriage maladjustment (Brown, 1999). If the marriage becomes damaged, divorce will impact their future happiness, emotional health, lower financial security, cause damage to their offspring and their physical health. However, the benefits of a good marriage make a person have the best chance of experiencing emotional and mental health, a stable financial future, strong bonds with family and children, a good sex life, better physical health and a sense of belonging (Glendon, 1999).

There are factors that could lead couples to experience marriage maladjustment. Various researchers have identified factor that significantly contributed to marital maladjustment. For example, inappropriate financial management (Okoh, 2007), over involvement in working activities (Guzman 2000), emotional related problem, lack of respect for the views of spouses (Osakwe, 2003) and inadequate preparation before marriage (Wright, 1977). Therefore, in order to maintain marital adjustment, premarital counselling has become a necessity or an important programme for incoming couples in order to eradicate this marital maladjustment cited above. Generally those who remain in marriage always cite commitment, understanding, acceptance of constructive criticism, satisfaction of the emotional status as major factor affecting their decision to remain which in one way or the other contribute to marital maladjustment and marital adjustment depending on how these issues are considered among couples (Ebenuwa-Okoh, 2011). Few studies have been reported on the relationship between communication flow, emotional expression, gender work involvement duration of marriage, financial management, and personality types among married persons in Delta state as factor that significantly contributed to either marital maladjustment or marital adjustments on stepwise basis (Ebenuwa-Okoh 2007). When a couple can learn to have a healthy relationship then that relationship can generate healthy interactions around it and the tendency of marital adjustment is also assured.

Effectively addressing what is missing with intervention, new understandings, and the teaching of new skills, especially for the premarital couple, can prevent years of confusion, misery, and probable later family disintegration. According to Stahmann and Hiebert (1997), a review of the

literature related to premarital counselling found that most of the studies showed that premarital counselling impacted positively on couples' marital adjustment while some showed minimal or no effect. They emphasised that no studies have demonstrated negative effects on couples or individuals who participated in various marriage preparation programmes. Guldner (1987) conducted studies on the effectiveness of premarital counselling with eighteen couples who had three or more counselling sessions. The survey was repeated one to ten months after couples had been married. The studies revealed that eleven out of the eighteen couples could not recall much from the premarital counselling. To further investigate the effectiveness of premarital counselling, Guldner (1987) conducted a post marital survey in which 23 couples who had either being married for one to six years much served as the respondents. They study revealed that couples married for six months were the most realistic about their marriage and marital problems. However, in a study conducted by Carroll and Doherty (2003) titled "Evaluation the Effectiveness of Premarital Prevention Programmes," it was concluded that premarital education programmes are generally effective. Especially in communication processes, conflict management skills and overall relationship quality. All of which are very important for a successful marriage and a well adjusted marriage.

Also studies conducted by Busby, Ivey, Harris and Ates (2010) identified some positive effects from premarital education. They found that many programmes significantly improve relationship functioning. They also found that assessment based education helped couples maintain and even improve their satisfaction, communication and keep a low level of problems in order to improve marital adjustment. Similarly, they found that self-directed

education showed an ability to maintain high levels of satisfaction. Furthermore, they found 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. This shows that any form of premarital education is helpful in increasing marital adjustment. Bruhn and Hill (2004) in an article titled, "Designing a Premarital Counselling Program," states one of the benefits of premarital education is that couples can learn that there are others who can help them or refer them to help if they experience difficulties later in the relationship. This is important because it ensures the couple has the resource they may need to access later on in life. There are many positive findings and benefits from every kind of premarital education. Premarital education forces couples to slow down and have the important conversations in preparing for marriage. These conversations are very useful because a professional is there to facilitate and give unbiased support. It creates and helps to develop a shared meaning for the couple. Most importantly, it sends an institutional and societal message about the important of marriage.

However, it must be emphasised that people seeking premarital counselling are not always unmarried partners, since most counsellors according to Stahmann and Hiebert (1997) report that 30% to 40% of their premarital counselling clients were previously married. Therefore the need for training in new competencies to enable couple advance far (Harway, 2005). It is expected that couples requesting premarital counselling do so willingly or voluntarily rather than being forced into it (Stahmann & Hiebert (1997), this

offers couples an opportunity to learn about their relationship and each other. The optimal time to develop the knowledge, skills, and strategies needed to build a solid family rather than an illusory is during the early romantic “illusion” stage of marriage. Moments of hurt, misunderstanding, noting differences, or use of power often trigger doubts and fears about the marriage (Harway, 2005). To clarify all illusions and unrealistic expectations that normally result in divorce and any other factors that contribute to marital maladjustment, premarital counselling must follow the stage of engagement (Harway, 2005). Premarital counselling assists couples to practice healthy patterns of communication and understand differences. Premarital counselling takes the surprises out the marriage that may contribute to an unhappy family.

### **Intensive Approach to Premarital Counselling**

A time-focused intensive approach to premarital training has been developed by the Smalley Clinical Team. An overview of the programme is provided including goals/objectives and key concepts. Therapeutic concepts such as emotional safety, effective communication, team work, person responsibility and personal care are discussed in the context of couples’ therapy. Integration of the PREPARE Inventory is described. Finally, the strengths and weaknesses of an intensive approach are discussed, along with training opportunities.

### **Goals/Objectives of the Premarital Intensive Programme**

Premarital intensive programme has been focused on helping couples develop knowledge and skills needed for a successful marriage relationship.

Knowledge is thought of in terms of things couples need to know and understand about themselves and their relationship, as well as marriage in

general. Through a series of surveys and assessment, as well as a clinical interview, the therapists attempt to help each individual consider how their family of origin, past relationship history, stage of life, personality style, marriage expectations, and behavioural patterns impact what they bring their relationship. The couple relationship was assessed by using the PREPARE inventory (Olson, 1999) to help couples identify their strengths and weaknesses, couple-type, family of origin patterns, personality issues and special focus items that need to be discussed and understood.

When appropriate divorce risk factors, such as previous divorce or conflicted couple-type (Fowers, Montel & Olson, 1996) were presented to encourage healthy couples to get more help before committing to marriage. The skills which are focused on in the Premarital Intensive programme include: communication, team work (conflict resolution and decision making), personal care, individual emotional health and personal responsibility. Counselors would attend to help couples understand, learn, and apply these skills to themselves and their relationship during the actual intensive process.

Stanley (2001) indicates that premarital education can do several things. First, it can slow couples down to foster deliberation and help them become more aware of their marriage expectations. Second, it sends a message that marriage matters and highlights the importance of focusing on commitment and personal responsibility. Third, it introduces couples to counselling and helps them become acquainted with options if they need later help. Finally, through the teaching of healthy communication, premarital training can lower the risk for subsequent marital distress or divorce. The Premarital Intensive Programme has the objective of clearly communicating



all four of these messages to couples as we focus on a wide range of knowledge and skills.

### **Key Concepts and Principles of the Smalley Clinical Team's Intensive Programme**

The Smalley Clinical Team Intensive Programme on premarital counselling came out with 6 main concepts that can lead to effective marriage. Based on the work the Smalley Clinical Team has done in the intensive programme with couples in crises, key concepts have been identified to effectively help couples break out of dysfunctional patterns and re-establish intimacy and connection. These concepts have then been translated into a premarital training curriculum that proactively helps couples recognise potential pitfalls and equips them with skills to stay on track. While none of these concepts may stand alone as completely new, the combination of concepts organised as model or paradigm for understanding and working therapeutically with couples appears to be unique (Smalley, 2000).

**Concept 1: Safety.** The team has come to understand the importance of safety, not only physical safety but emotional safety. In order to open one self up and share or connect at deep levels, people need to know that it is safe to risk being vulnerable. Individuals want their feelings and opinions to be treated with value. For years Smalley (2000) has taught on the concept of honour, which he refers to as the number one skill. It is understood that honoring one's spouse helps create safety. Indeed, the construct of emotional safety appears to be increasingly recognised as a priority in couple therapy. Therapeutically, professionals understand the importance of creating a safe environment for an individual to honestly look at themselves and make good use of therapy. When a person feels safe, they can relax, drop defensiveness

and let their true feelings, thoughts fears and desires surface. When members of a couple feel safe enough to be open, intimacy and connections are more likely to occur.

**Concept 2: Fear Cycle.** Using a combination of systems theory, cognitive behavioural theory, brief psychodynamic theory, and insights from human physiology, a therapeutic concept called a “fear dance” emerged from the intensive work. Therapists begin by identifying core areas of how pain or fear is triggered. Considering fight or flight reactions on a physiological level can help explain the built in human drive to work towards safety when feeling threatened. While it is sometimes more difficult to identify a premarital couple’s fear dance due to what Olson (1999) refers to as “idealistic distortion”, many couples already have examples of difficult topics and conflicts that need working through. When couples report little to no conflict in their lives and how they reacted can often give a good picture of what a premarital couple’s fear might look like.

**Concept 3: Personal Responsibility.** When couples get stuck, they often point a finger of blame at the other. Married couples caught in crisis often come to therapy hoping the counselling professional can change their spouse. This leaves the individual completely disempowered and stuck with the irrational belief that his or her own behaviour is dependent upon their spouse. In contrast, with this approach couples are challenged to realise that their greatest point of influence is looking at their own half of the fear dance. Each individual is responsible for their own thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Unfortunately, couples typically spend time and energy trying to get their partner to change instead of focusing on the things which are within their own

control. When individuals focus the majority of their energy on changing or blaming their partner for relationship difficulties, the result is often frustration and disempowerment (Smalley, 2000).

**Concept 4: Personal Care.** We live in a society and culture that suggests that fulfillment is unattainable unless one meets their soul mate, and that person begins to meet all of their needs and “completes” them. This approach assumes that wholeness and fulfillment do not come from another person, but from fully receiving God’s love and provisions. It is understood that the healthier a person is, the more they have to give and the more they are able to serve God and others. Being fulfilled, however, doesn’t just happen unless the individual takes responsibility to attend to their own needs and feelings. Therapists teach that understanding the other person’s needs and directing attention towards them is an opportunity to express love and care. The opportunity to give and attend to someone else is not the same as assuming that the healthiest marriages consist of two whole and healthy adults (Olson, 1999).

**Concept 5: Effective Communication.** Communication frequently tops the list of problem areas for couples. Teaching effective communication can reduce misunderstandings, increase empathy, and lead to greater emotional intimacy. Again, all of this leads to increased safety, openness, and connection. The PREPARE inventory gives therapist a head start into understanding the quality of couples communication prior to the intensive. This intensive approach teaches speaker method which involves taking turns and using active listening to summarise what one’s partner is trying to communicate. Speaker communication models are common to many

programmes, (Mark-man, Stanley & Blumberg, 2001; Olson & Olson, 2000) however, the intensive model emphasises that couples communicate at an emotional level and not just reflect content.

**Concept 6: Teamwork.** A final pathway to safety that is emphasised in the Premarital Intensive programme involves the notion of teamwork (Smalley, 2000). Smalley indicates that as humans, we prefer to get our way and therefore will defend, argue, and debate a topic with winning in mind. Unfortunately, this usually means a loss for the other person and a loss for the relationship. The intensive model assumes that there are really only two options when it comes to resolving marital conflict: win or lose. The notion of win or lose is only an illusion because if one partner feels run-over, discounted, or hurt through the course of a decision, the marriage is likely to suffer a set-back. Trust levels drop, resentments and negative beliefs set in, and while it may not look damaging immediately, the relationship can be undermined by each similar interaction.

### **Summary of Literature Review**

The chapter contains a review of related literature on the topic under investigation. The theoretical review was based on Carl Roger's client-centered therapy, also known as person-centered therapy, which is a non-directive form of talk therapy. Roger identified the six necessary and sufficient conditions required for therapeutic change as Therapist-Client Psychological Contact; Client in-congruence; Therapist Congruence or Genuineness; Therapist Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR); Therapist Empathic understanding and Client Perception. Albert Ellis's Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) which is a type of cognitive behavioural therapy;

Transactional Analysis was founded by Eric Berne, and the famous 'parent adult child' theory is still being developed today; the complementary need theory as originated by Winch (1958) as well as the Solution focused premarital counselling also formed part of the theoretical framework of the study.

The review suggests that the term 'marriage' is conceptualised in various ways. It is a social institution in which two individuals come together. It begins with a legal contract/marriage certificate which legitimises the expected permanence of the relationship (Jung, 1993). Haviland, Harald, McBride and Walrath (2011) rather define marriage as an approved social institution whereby two to more persons establish a family through a socially or ritually recognised 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. It is also considered as the most intimate of human relationships, a gift from God, and a sacred institution (Meredith, 2003) which is usually characterised by love and care (Cutrona, 2004).

Syphus (2007) noted three decades ago that marriages are breaking down on unprecedented rates. The review points out that the breakdown of marriage and family life is due to social and economic conditions, inappropriate financial management (Okoh, 2007), over involvement in working activities (Guzman 2000), emotional related problem, lack of respect for the views of spouses (Osakwe, 2003) and inadequate preparation before marriage (Wright, 1977).

The appropriate antidote to ensure marital stability is premarital counselling. Various authors view counselling as a psychotherapeutic

relationship between two or more persons in which one person (the counsellor) seeks to advise, encourage and/or assist another person or persons ( e.g. Waters, 2003; Tan, 2011 Flanagan & Flanagan; 2012). It emerged from the literature that premarital counselling is the best form of counselling that will not only ensure marital stability but also contribute to happy marriages. It is knowledge and skill-based training procedure which aims at providing couples with information on ways to improve their relationship once they are married (Senediak, 1990). Empirical studies showed that premarital counselling is effective in strengthening marriages and preventing divorce (Stanley, 2000; Sullivan & Bradbury, 1997), ensuring happiness which leads to marriage maladjustment (Brown, 1999) and encourages couples to simply slow down in difficult situations (Bruhn & Hill, 2004).

However, little knowledge is available on the impact of premarital counselling on marital adjustment in the Ghanaian context especially among Christian couples. There is therefore need for a study of this nature to be carried out to examine the impact of premarital counseling on marital adjustment among Christian couples in the Cape Coast Metropolis in the Central Region of Ghana.

Finally, the intensive approach to premarital counselling by the Smalley Clinical Team was also revealed as consisting of the following concepts: emotional safety, fear cycle, effective communication, team work, personal responsibility and personal care are discussed in the context of couples' therapy. With emotional safety, it spoke about the need to honour one's spouse in the marriage in or order to protect each other. Fear cycle also considers the fight or flight reactions on a physiological level can help explain

the built in human drive to work towards safety when feeling threatened; personal responsibility also involves counselors explaining to couples roles they need to play in the relationship to promote a healthy marriage. Personal care assumes that wholeness and fulfillment do not come from another person, but from fully receiving God's love and provision. Effective communication stresses on couples having effective interaction in the form of communicative language in order to express their feelings and emotions. Team work, which is the final pathway to safety, is emphasised in the Premarital Intensive Programme. As humans, we prefer to get our way and therefore will defend, argue and debate a topic with winning in mind. The notion of win or lose is only an illusion because if one partner feels run over, the marriage will have likely suffered a set-back and the relationship can be undermined by similar interaction.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter deals with the methodology adopted in carrying out the study. It discusses the procedures used in the collection and analysis of data. It covers the justification of the study area, research design, population and the sampling procedures and methods of data analysis. The analysis of data was basically on the findings and interpretation of the results.

#### **Research Design**

The study used case study. This approach according to Kassin (2007) refers to as the study or analysis of a particular case or situation used as a basis for drawing conclusions in similar situations. Case study aims to understand the case in-depth and in its natural setting, recognizing its complexity and its context. For this study, impact of premarital counselling on marital adjustment among Christian couples. According to Kassin (2007) this approach describes individual's events seeking for probabilities for a trend. Case study involves in-depth collection of the demographic data of the subject in real life situation, the special abilities and disabilities as well as close observation of manifested interests and behaviours, and other illuminating incidents in the subject's life. Case study was chosen because an in-depth study of couples' case were revealed something important about similar people in general.

The strength of the case study make it possible to get detailed information about couples. The approach is able to capture and explore the complexity of phenomenon for a better understanding. It also requires the use



of multiple methods to collect data, enabling it to be validated through triangulation (Denscombe, 2003, Yin, 2003). Case study is action oriented and therefore, the findings are useful for improving practice (Cohen et al., 2000). The approach is useful for theory building and theory testing (Denscombe, 2003).

However, this has some loopholes such as case studies often take a great deal of time to complete, and the results may be limited by the fact that the subject is a typical. Also, the approach requires a prolonged stay in the sociocultural context of the participants for data collection and therefore negotiating access to such a place can be difficult. Despite these shortcomings, case study was still considered the most suitable design for the study considering the nature of the topic under study. In fact, it helped to get detailed report on the prevailing impact of premarital counselling on marital adjustment among Christian couples in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

### **Study Area**

The study area was the Cape Coast Metropolitan area. The Cape Coast Metropolitan is home to the regional capital of Central Region. The Metropolitan forms part of the Twenty (20) Metropolitan, Municipalities and Districts in the Central Region of Ghana. The Metropolis is bounded on the south by the Gulf of Guinea, on the west by Komenda / Edina / Eguafo / Abrem Municipal, on the east by the Abura/Asebu/Kwamankese District and on the north by the Twifu/Hemang/Lower Denkyira District. The Metropolis covers an area of 122 square kilometres and is the smallest metropolis in Cape Coast Metropolitan Area. The Administrative capital is Cape Coast. Cape Coast was the only noticeable urban centre in the Metropolitan area in 1984

with a population of 65,763. The 2000, Population and Housing Census returned a figure of 82,291 for the town.

Cape Coast is the most populous settlement in the metropolis with a hierarchy of functions that make it the nerve centre of economic activity for both the metropolis and the region. About 6% of settlements in the Metropolitan Area including Cape Coast, Ekon and Nkanfoa and Kakomdo account for nearly 85% of the population of the entire district. Out of the 71 settlements in the metropolis, 54 or 76% have a population of less than 1,000 persons and account for only 10% of the district's population. Thirty (43%) of the settlements have a population less than 100 persons. The population of the Cape Coast Metropolitan area (excluding Aggrey Memorial Zion Secondary School) was 54,123 in 1960 and 69,495 in 1970, giving an inter-censal increase of 28.40%. In 1984 and 2000 the population increased again to 84,477 and 118,106 respectively, indicating a substantial increase of 39.8% for the 14-year period. The population grew at a rate of 22% between 1960 and 1970, dropped sharply to 13% between 1970 and 1984 and then rose to 20% between 1984 and 2000. The metropolis has a sizeable population of 2,107,209 as at 2010 census with 998,408 being males and 1,108,800 being females (Ghana Living Standard Survey, 2012). The occupational background of the residents is mainly informal consisting of petty trading, fishing, mechanical work, civil service and others. Most of the women engage in marketing activities.

The majority of men work as civil servants, only a small proportion and insignificant percentage of the population work as office employees, and most of this category has a fairly high standard of living and higher

educational background. The major religions practiced by the residents of Cape Coast Metropolis are Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion. Christianity is the dominant religious practice as it is prevalent in almost all the sub-areas. Islam is the second dominant religion in the metropolis. In most cases the Hausas and Northern tribes constitute the bulk of the Muslim population. The traditional believers are found dotted in almost all the sub-areas. The main traditional believers are the Akans and Ewes (GLSS, 2012).

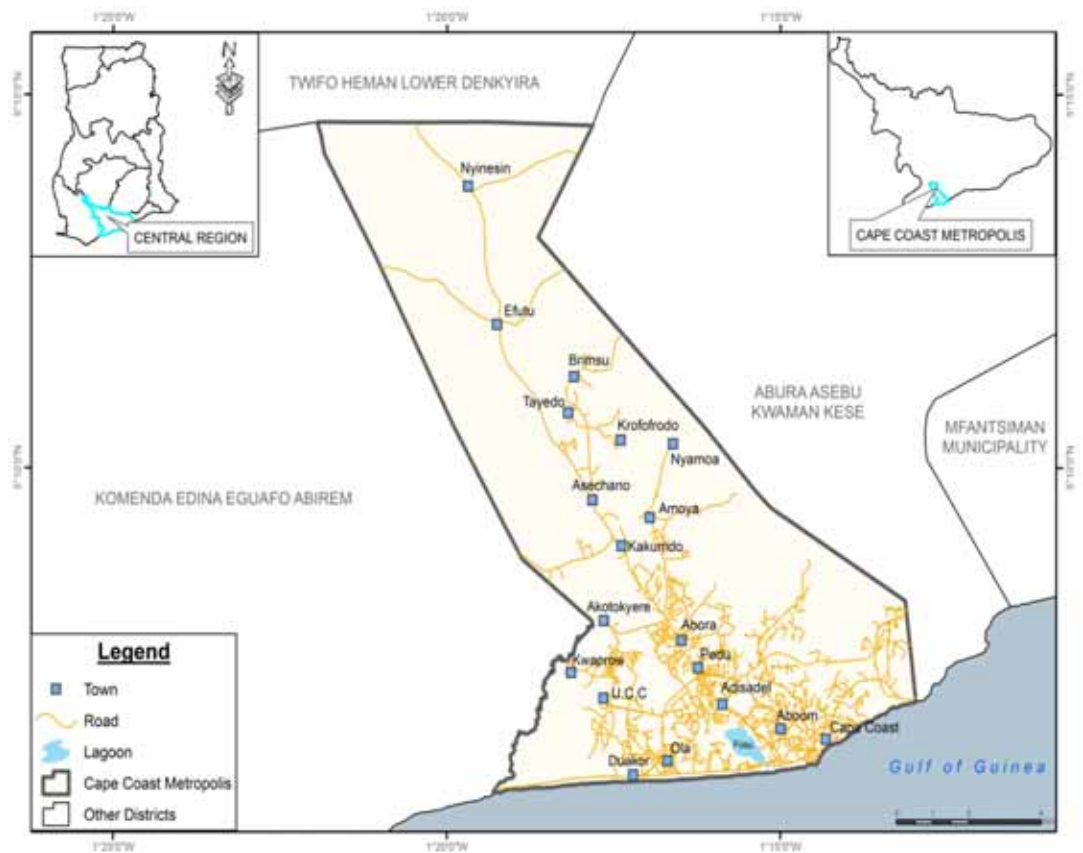


Figure 1. Map of Cape Coast Metropolitan area showing the study area

Source: Department of Geography and Regional Planning,U.C.C, 2014

## **Population**

The population of a survey is defined by Lavrankas (2008) as the entire set of units for which the survey data are to be used to make inferences. Frankel and Wallen (2006) state that the population is a group to which results of the study are intended to apply. That is, the population to which the researcher is interested in gaining information and drawing conclusion. Thus, population defines those units for which the findings of the survey are meant to generalise. Sarantakos (1998) referred to a population as the whole set of objects of research and about which a researcher wants to determine some characteristics. The population for the study was thus all Christian couples in the Cape Coast Metropolis. This population was considered because the study sought to investigate the impact of premarital counselling on marital adjustment in the lives of Christian couples in the cape coast metropolis.

The target population defines those units for which the findings of the survey are meant to generalise and draw conclusions (Cox, 2008). In this study, the target population was all Christian couples in the selected churches in Cape Coast Metropolis.

## **Sample and Sampling Procedure**

The sample size is the number of observations used for calculating estimate of a given population (Smith, 2010). The sample size is an important feature of any empirical study in which the goal is to make inferences about a population from a sample. In practice, the sample size used in a study is determined based on the expense of data collection, and the need to have sufficient statistical power. Fowler (2002) admits that the size of a sample is one of the most common questions posed to survey methodologists. To him,

one familiar misconception people have is that, the adequacy of the sample size depends heavily on the population included in that sample. Fink and Kosecoff (1998) also stated that, the size of a population from which the sample of a particular size is drawn has virtually no impact on how well a sample is likely to describe a population. The appropriate sample size is influenced by your purpose in conducting the research. In selecting the couples for the administration of the questionnaire, the researcher conveniently sampled 300 couples. The 300 couples were sampled due to the readiness to respond to the questionnaire, some couple didn't show any readiness to respond to the questionnaire. Some couples contacted for the study declined participating because they also felt their marital issues were confidential.

The researcher selected Tabacknik and Fidell (1996) sample size determination with the formula:  $N > 50 + 8m$ , where  $N$  is the sample size and  $m$  is the number of independent variables, to select the sample size for the study. The study involves two variables (premarital counselling and marital adjustment). According to Tabacknick and Fidell (1996), if a study involves two variables, that is (premarital counselling and marital adjustment), a sample size of  $66 > 50 + 8(2)$ , where 66 is the sample size and 2 is the number of independent variable should be more than adequate. Therefore, a sample size of 300 for this study was more than adequate based on Tabacknik and Fidell's (1996) recommendation ( $300 > 50 + 8(2)$ ).

The sample of the three churches was drawn using the convenience sampling techniques. Convenience sampling is the sampling procedure that involved selecting research participant just because they are easiest to recruit

for the study and the researcher did not consider selecting participants that are representative of the entire population. Many researchers prefer convenience sampling technique because it is fast, inexpensive, easy and the participants are readily available. Researchers use convenience sampling not just because it is easy to use, but because it also has other research advantages. This sampling technique is also useful in documenting that a particular quality of a substance or phenomenon occurs within a given sample. Such studies are also very useful for detecting relationships among different phenomena Sarantakos, 1998).

Convenience sampling procedure has been criticised on several grounds. The most obvious criticism is sampling bias and that the sample is not representative of the entire population. This may be the biggest disadvantage when using a convenience sample because it leads to more problems and criticisms (Explorable.com, 2009).

However, convenience sampling technique involves selecting research participant just because they are easiest to recruit for the study. Although, there were a lot of churches in Cape Coast, the researcher conveniently sampled only three churches from all the churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Various churches were not ready to accept me and changes in period of worship made it difficult to get those churches. The church of Pentecost; Adisadel Assembly, the Calvary Charismatic Church; Cape Coast Branch and the Wesley Methodist Church were the three churches that were conveniently sampled for the study. In selecting the couples for the administration of the questionnaire, the researcher conveniently sampled 300 couples.

## **Instrument**

Primary data for the study was gathered using detailed structured questionnaire. Amedahe (2002) defines questionnaire as consisting of a list of questions or statement relating to the aims of the study and the research questions to be verified and answered to which the respondents are required to answer by writing, ticking, marking or circling the response as necessary. Questionnaires are an inexpensive way to gather data from a potentially large number of respondents. Often they are the only feasible way to reach a number of respondents large enough to allow the researcher statistically analyse the results of the study. A well designed questionnaire that is used effectively can gather information on both the overall performance of the test system as well as information on specific components of the system such information about the practices, conditions, opinion, and the attitudes of the subjects. Questionnaires become even more cost effective as the number of research questions increases. Questionnaires are easy to analyse. Data entry and tabulation for nearly all surveys can be easily done with many computer software packages.

Included in the advantages of using questionnaire are: it provides good amount of responses (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006) from a wide range of people with diverse backgrounds. It also gives clear meaning to events and seeks to explain people's behaviour on the basis of data collected. The device also allows the respondents to complete it at their own convenient time. Questionnaire also offers a greater assurance of anonymity with regard to whatever information they provide.

On the other hand, the use of questionnaire has some weaknesses. The respondents often do not reveal the truth about certain issues; it is also prone to social desirability, problems of halo effect as well as low return rate (Ofori & Dampson, 2011). It does not also offer opportunity for probing and motivation on respondents' part, the instrument tends not to be affected by the problems of no contacts (Sarantakos, 1998). This can be minimised through designing counter probing questions. Notwithstanding the above shortcomings and challenges of using questionnaire to collect comprehensive and first hand as well as authentic information and data for this present study.

The structure of the questionnaire was made up of close-ended items. The use of the close-ended format offered the respondents fixed alternative responses. The use of the close-ended items was appropriate because it was easier to be administered, coded and analysed. The close-ended items were also easier and faster to be completed since it does not require any extensive writing to complete them.

The questionnaire had three sections (A, B, and C). The item (1 to 5) in section A was on demographic characteristics of the couples which dealt with gender, year of marriage, educational level, occupation either went through premarital or did not etc. Respondents were expected to tick only the appropriate response.

The items (6 to 12) in section B sought to gather information on the views of Christian husbands and wives in Cape Coast metropolis on premarital counselling. The sample items are: is premarital counselling a waste of time or not, either fashion nowadays or not etc.



The items (13 to 24) in section C sought to gather information on the marital adjustment. The Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test was adapted to measure the couple's marital adjustment level. The Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test is a 15 item instrument, which as the test name suggests purport to measure marital adjustment. The instrument first request the examinee's general impression of marriage happiness on a continuum from "Very Unhappy" to "Perfectly Happy". Then additional specific statements and questions are given to which the examinee is asked to respond.

The original scale consists of fifteen items. One is global adjustment question, eight are questions measuring possible disagreement and six are questions of conflict resolution, cohesion and communication. The responses are weighted differently, according to the amount of difference between groups of satisfied and problem couples (Freedman & Sherman, 1987). Items were weighted to have discriminative power to them. Although there were 15 item instrument, the researcher selected 12 items for this study because the remaining 3 items such as friends, philosophy of life and what couples prefer doing during their leisure time, didn't seem relevant to the objectives of the study.

### **Pre-Testing of Instrument**

The pre-testing of the instrument was conducted at the Church of Pentecost Firestone Worship Centre in Madina Area in the Greater Accra Region. This exercise was conducted in order to refine the items on the questionnaire so that respondents do not have a problem in answering the main questions. Thirty (30) couples in the church were used to conduct the pre-testing of the instrument.

Leedy (1985) noted that everything regarding the questionnaire should be pre-tested, and nothing should be excluded. Before the pre-testing of the instrument, it was given to my supervisors to examine and validate the content in order to remove any ambiguous and irrelevant items from the questionnaire. In this study, the pre-testing helped to record the time taken to complete the achievement test and decide whether it was reasonable. With the help of Statistical Package for Service Solution (SPSS) version 16.0 the contents of the pre-tested questionnaires were analysed to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The pre-tested results were used to calculate the Cronbach Alpha Co-efficient value which was found to be .75. Research has shown that Cronbach's Alpha Co-efficient of .75 or more are considered to be reliable (Pallant, 2001).

### **Validity and Reliability**

This session explains briefly the measures that were observed to enhance the validity and reliability of the data collection instrument as well as the external validity of the study. In this study, external validity was concerned with the extent to which the study findings can be generalised beyond the sample used for the study (Burns & Grove, 2005). This was assured by the use of adequate sample size.

In this study, reliability was made possible. The Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability coefficients of the items under each section of the questionnaire. The reason for choosing Cronbach's Alpha is that it measures internal consistency of the items that are non-dichotomous (Kuder & Richardson, 1937; Cortina, 1993).

The marital adjustment scale had very good psychometric properties. Sherman and freedman (1989) reported an internal consistency of .90 using split-half, with the Spearman Brown correction formula, Spanler also reported alpha = .73.

The Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test was adapted for this study and the pre-testing of the instrument yielded a Chronbach's Alpha of .75(N=30) and for the main study, a Chronbach's Alpha of .83 was obtained. Research has shown that Cronbach's Alpha Co-efficient of .75 or more are considered to be reliable (Pallant, 2001).

### **Ethical Consideration**

Ethics focuses on concepts and principles on how human beings do things, think and behave. In research context, ethics is concerned with the moral concepts and principles that underpin socially recognised professional as well as legal obligations (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). An ethical consideration on this study refers to protecting the rights of the respondents and the churches in which the study was conducted as well as maintaining scientific integrity (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

Protecting the rights of the respondents in this study was ensured. Respondents were given options to be part of or withdrawn from the study. Information provided by the couples was kept confidentially. This was observed by respondents not writing their names on the questionnaires. A written permission to conduct the study at the various churches was sent to the Leaders of the churches to obtain permission before conducting the study

there. Concerning scientific integrity of the study, an honest conduct, reporting of the study results was done (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Data was collected personally by the researcher using the instrument designed for the study. Permission was sought from the Leaders of the churches used to conduct the studies by presenting an introductory letter from the Department of Educational Foundations, University of Cape Coast.

A familiarisation visit was then made to the churches to explain the intent and purpose of the study to the church leaders and respondents. Dates were then fixed for the administration of the questionnaires. On the fixed dates, the questionnaires were administered to the sampled respondents with the help from some of the church ushers. The sampled couples were assembled in the churches' conference rooms and the topic was discussed with them before the questionnaires were distributed to them for completion. The completed questionnaires were collected immediately after completion to ensure high return rates. The collection of data spanned within two weeks; from the 4<sup>th</sup> week of April to May, 2014.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected were coded, edited, labelled, and made sure that the questionnaires were set and up to the number. It was later in-putted into computer using the Statistical Package for Service Solution (SPSS) Version 16.0 to analyse the raw data. The research questions and hypotheses were analysed using the following statistical tools:

Research Question 1: What are the views of Christian Husbands in the Cape Coast Metropolis on Premarital Counselling? In order to analyse this research

question a descriptive analysis of frequencies and percentages was used. I deemed this tool appropriate because I wanted to find out the views that Christian husbands have with regards to premarital counselling.

Research Question 2: What are the views of Christian Wives in the Cape Coast Metropolis on Premarital Counselling? In order to analyse this research question a descriptive analysis of frequencies and percentages was used. I deemed this tool appropriate because I wanted to find out the views that Christian wives have with regards to premarital counselling.

Research Question 3: What is the Relevance of Knowledge Gained from Premarital Counselling on Marital Adjustment of Christian Husbands in the Cape Coast Metropolis?

A descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages was used to determine the relevance of the knowledge that Christian husbands had gained from premarital counselling on marital adjustment.

Research Question 4: What is the relevance of the knowledge gained from premarital counselling on marital adjustment of Christian wives in the Cape Coast Metropolis? A descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages was used to determine the relevance of the knowledge that Christian wives had gained from premarital counselling on marital adjustment.

### **Hypotheses**

$H^1_0$ : There is no significant difference in the marital adjustment of Christian husbands who went through premarital counselling and those who did not. I used the independent sample t-test statistical tool to test this hypothesis because I consider the tool as expedient in finding out whether

there existed statistical difference in marital adjustment of Christian husbands who went through premarital counselling and those who did not.

$H^2_0$ : There is no significant difference in the marital adjustment of Christian wives who went through premarital counselling and those who did not. I used the independent sample t-test statistical tool to test this hypothesis because I consider the tool as expedient in finding out whether there existed statistical difference in the marital adjustment of Christian wives who went through premarital counselling and those who did not.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of premarital counselling on marital adjustment among Christian couples in the Cape Coast Metropolis. This chapter presents the results and discussions of the findings. Data in table 1 showed that a total of 261 respondents were surveyed for the study. With regard to sex, one hundred and seventy seven representing 67.8 percent of the respondents were males while 84 of the respondents (32.2%) were females.

**Table 1: Gender of Respondents**

Response	Frequency	Percent
Male	177	67.8
Female	84	32.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field work, 2014 (n=261)

Even though there are more women in churches than men in Ghana, it could be seen that the respondents for this study were predominantly male. This could be attributed to the glaring disparity in gender distribution when it comes to participation in research or political activities.

This was in accordance with studies by Herman (2008) who was of the view that a notable difference exists in the way men and women participate in community development activities. While both men and women are required to attend meetings, men are often more engaged than women in debates over community, regional or national issues in both formal and

informal forums. However, studies by Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle (1997) concluded that there were higher levels of religious involvement, prayer, experience and overall religiosity among women compared to men, and suggested that these gender differences may be a reflection of greater opportunity among women for religious activity, or perhaps of differences in personality and socialization. It must however be emphasised that, this effect may be culture-specific. Many religious traditions differentiate between the religious obligations of men and women, placing greater onus upon men to fulfill “religious” duties such as prayer and text study. Traditional Judaism, Christianity and Islam place less strenuous religious obligations upon women than upon men in some respects, due particularly to the traditional allocation of primary home making and child care responsibilities to women.

Also, men and women have different opportunities, motivation and capabilities to involve themselves in collective action (Pandolfelli, Meinsen-Dick, & Dohrn, 2007). Domestic responsibilities may also reduce chances of women to participate in groups (Meinsen-Dick & Zwartveen, 1998) thereby accounting for the high number of males engaging in this case study

A further question was asked respondents to enquire from them whether they went through counselling before getting married. The response is shown in Table 2.



**Table 2: Counselling before Marriage**

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	203	78.0
No	58	22.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Source: Field work, 2014		(n=261)

From Table 2, it was realised that majority of the respondents (78.0, n = 203) had undergone some form of counselling before getting married while 58 (22.0%) had not. This could be attributed to the fact that premarital counselling had been instituted in all the churches surveyed for the study as prerequisite to the recognition of marriage by the church. In all of the churches, premarital counselling usually falls under the office of the pastor or leader of a local congregation. In all of these congregations, the pastor will not undertake to perform a marriage ceremony unless the engaged couple submits to a series of counselling sessions. This was in accordance with studies by Waters (2003) which revealed that premarital counselling has been seen by many institutions, including government, mental health professionals, and priests, as an effective combatant against divorce. The purpose of premarital counselling is to work out any problem in the relationship as well as prepare the couple for marriage (Waters, 2003). Premarital programmes are therefore viewed as effective method of decreasing divorce and making marriage more satisfying.

## Analysis of Main Data

The analysis of the main data is presented on the basis of the research questions and hypotheses set for the study.

### Research Question One

#### What are the views of Christian Husbands in the Cape Coast Metropolis on Premarital Counselling?

Various studies have emphasised the importance of premarital counselling in helping couples improve their relationships before marriage (Tan, 2011; Markman & Hahlweg, 1993; Feltham, 1995). However, none of these studies sought to find out the views of couples on their counselling experiences. Research question one, therefore sought the views of male respondents on premarital counselling. Table 3 shows respondents' views on premarital counselling.

**Table 3: Husbands' Views on Premarital Counselling**

Views on Premarital Counselling	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total
Waste of time	15 (8.5)	162 (91.5)	177 (100)
Fashion nowadays	24 (13.6)	153 (86.4)	177 (100)
Not realistic	46 (26.0)	131 (74.0)	177 (100)

Source: Field Work, 2014 (n=177)

From Table 3, majority of the responses as high as (91.5%, n = 162) indicated that premarital counselling was not a waste of time. This is followed by the view that premarital counselling was realistic to their marital relationship (153 responses representing 86.4%) with the least being the view that premarital counselling was just a “fashion” for couples seeking to get married nowadays. The result meant that majority of the male respondents

held the view that premarital counselling helps partners improve their ability to communicate, set realistic expectations for marriage and develop conflict-resolution skills. In addition, the male respondents indicated that premarital counselling helps couples establish a positive attitude about seeking help with their marriages down the road.

The results of this study was in accordance with studies by Stahmann (2000) and Waters (2003) that revealed that premarital counselling programmes are designed to enhance and enrich premarital relationships leading to more satisfactory and stable marriages with the intended consequences being to prevent divorce and that the purpose of premarital counselling is to work out any problem in the relationship as well as prepare the couple for marriage (Waters, 2003). Premarital programmes are viewed as effective in decreasing divorce and making marriage more satisfying in order to promote marital adjustment (Waters, 2003). The primary goal of premarital education is to promote healthy marital relationship and happiness. Since marriage affects not only the couple but their families and the parts of society they interact with, when the individual family unit is healthy it sends a ripple effect through the couples' entire social network (Olson, 2008).

### **Research Question Two**

#### **What are the views of Christian Wives in the Cape Coast Metropolis on Premarital Counselling?**

Research question two sought the views of female respondents on premarital counselling. The details are presented in the Table 4 below.

**Table 4: Wives' Views on Premarital Counselling**

Item	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total
Waste of time	10 (11.9)	74 (88.1)	84(100)
Fashion nowadays	20 (23.8)	64 (76. 2)	84 (100)
Not realistic	26 (31.0)	58 (69.0)	84 (100)

Source: Field Work, 2014

The results showed that majority of the respondent (88.1 %) indicated that premarital counselling was not a waste of time. This is followed by the view that premarital counselling was realistic to their marital relationship (64 responses representing 76.2%) with the least being the view that premarital counselling was just a “fashion” for couples seeking to get married nowadays. The result meant that majority of the female respondents held the view that premarital counselling helps partners improve their ability to communicate, set realistic expectations for marriage and develop conflict-resolution skills. That notwithstanding the result reveal that some more wives (31%, n=26) indicated by their responses that premarital counseling was not realistic.

Today's high divorce rate worldwide highlights the difficulty many couples have in achieving happy and lasting marriage. Premarital counselling has been identified as one of the solutions to this problem as it helps to improve couples preparation for marriage. Marriage preparation classes or counselling are an alternative or supplementary approach to educating engaged couples and newlyweds in the skills, habits, attitudes, and enrichment techniques that research shows lead to happy, enduring marriages. Such marriage preparation programmes are education, not therapy. The study revealed that wives held a positive view of premarital counselling as they

believed it offered them the skills needed to face the challenges of marriage life. This was in agreement with studies by Stucky et al. (1986) and Carroll and Doherty (2003) which sought to ascertain from female graduates from a high school course on family life were surveyed about their involvement in and their perceptions of the effectiveness of premarital counselling for preparing them for the realities of married life. The study revealed that females generally held a positive view about premarital counselling and that the perceived effectiveness of premarital counselling is related to duration of counselling in hours and to the degree to which the programme was seen as voluntary.

Since the basic premise of Christian counselling is the Bible, most of the respondents show counselling as means of inviting God into their relationship and as such had a positive attitude toward premarital counselling. This was in conformity with studies by Pargament (1997) which revealed that many individuals use religious methods, such as prayer or religious reframing, to cope with difficulty in their lives. Christian counselling is often provided by church ministers but may also be provided by anyone who is trained in psychological counselling and who is a committed Christian. The aim of Christian counselling, as with secular counselling, is to help people to overcome their difficulties, find meaning in life and improve the person's overall health and well-being. However, what distinguishes Christian counselling from secular therapy is that in a Christian counselling session, the therapist refers to the teachings of the Bible that (by analogy) may help the patient work through his or her problems or that will provide them with strength or guidance, whichever is needed. According to Wade et al. (2007)

therapists chosen for their religious affiliation and therapists chosen without regard for religiosity agree that some religious and spiritual interventions, such as silent prayer for clients and discussions of spiritual experiences, are appropriate to use in therapy and that some religious interventions are needed counselling people who going through turbulent times or preparing them for marriage.

### **Research Question Three**

#### **What is the Relevance of the Knowledge Gained from Premarital Counselling on Marital Adjustment of Christian Husbands in the Cape Coast Metropolis?**

Research question three sought from male respondents who had gone through on premarital counselling the relevance of the information gained from their premarital counselling experience. The details are presented in the Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Relevance of Premarital Counselling among Husbands**

Relevance of premarital counselling	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total
Preparation for marriage	149 (84.2)	28 (15.8)	177 (100)
Vital to success of marriage	142 (80.2)	35 (19.8)	177 (100)
Helps you know your partner	133 (75.1)	44 (24.9)	177 (100)
Marital disputes maturely	143 (80.8)	34 (19.2)	177 (100)
Source: Field Work, 2014			(n=177)

Results in Table 5 showed that majority of the responses as high as (84.2 %, n = 149) indicated that premarital counselling help them prepare for marriage. Also 142 responses representing 80.2% of the respondents believed that premarital counselling was vital to the success of their marriage, and 133

responses representing 75.1% believed that premarital counselling helped them know their partners better.

Similarly, previous studies (Senediak, 1990; Stanley, 2000; Sullivan & Bradbury, 1997) also found that premarital counselling helps couples improve their relationships before marriage. Through premarital counselling, couples are encouraged to discuss a wide range of important and intimate topics related to marriage, such as: finances, communication, beliefs and values, roles in marriage, affection and sex, children and parenting, family relationships, decision making, dealing with anger and time spent together. Premarital counselling offers couples the opportunity to explore the dynamics of their partnership in order to set them self for a satisfying future together. The findings of the study also indicated that 44 respondents (24.9%) did not consider premarital counselling as important in helping partners in knowing each other better. While there were other findings from the study that revealed some negative views about premarital counselling, the analysis of result show that a reaffirmation to ready existing literature on premarital counselling. The findings, therefore, revealed that respondents have a generally positive view of pre marital counselling.

#### **Research Question Four**

##### **What is the Relevance of the Knowledge gained from Premarital Counselling on Marital Adjustment of Christian Wives in the Cape Coast Metropolis?**

Research question three was asked to seek from female respondents the relevance of the information gained from their premarital counselling experience. The details are presented in the Table 6. Data in Table 6 showed that majority of the respondent as high as (98.8%, n = 83) indicated that

premarital counselling helped them prepare for marriage. The findings of the study also showed that 65 responses representing 77.4% of the respondents believed that premarital counselling was vital to the success of their marriage while 56 responses representing 66.7% believed that premarital counselling helped them know their partners better.

**Table 6: Relevance of Premarital Counselling among Wives**

Item	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total
Preparation for marriage	83 (98.8)	1 (1.2)	84 (100)
Vital to success of marriage	65 (77.4)	19 (22.6)	84 (100)
Helps you know your partner	56 (66.7)	28 (33.3)	84 (100)
Marital disputes maturely	64 (76.2)	20 (23.8)	84 (100)
Source: Field Work, 2014			(n=84)

The study revealed that respondents generally viewed premarital counselling as very relevant to their marriage. This was in accordance with studies by Direnfeld (2011) which revealed that teachings of Christian premarital counselling offered couples practical wisdom, guidance and advice, particularly when dealing with areas that commonly cause conflict or distress to them. This may involve relationships with others, the trials and tribulations of marriage, the family, or may deal with suffering and human nature in general. While methods and techniques from modern psychology may be employed in Christian counselling, Christian counselors believe, and promote the concept that the Bible is the ultimate authority and not psychology (Direnfeld, 2011).

The study was also in agreement with findings by Stahmann and Salt (1993) which revealed that premarital counselling enabled couples ease the



transition from single to married life, increasing couple stability and satisfaction, enhancing the communication skills of the couple, increasing friendship and commitment to the relationship, increasing couple intimacy, enhancing problem solving and decision making skills in such areas as marital roles and finances. For a couple, premarital education is important for several reasons (Olson, 2008).

However, it must be emphasised that people seeking premarital counselling are not always unmarried partners, since most counsellor according to Stahmann and Hiebert (1997) report that 30% to 40% of their premarital counselling clients were previously married. Therefore the need for training in new competencies to enable couple advance far (Harway, 2005). It is expected that couples requesting premarital counselling do so willingly or voluntarily rather than being forced into it (Stahmann & Hiebert (1997). This offers couples an opportunity to learn about their relationship and each other. The optimal time to develop the knowledge, skills, and strategies needed to build a solid family rather than an illusory one is during the early romantic “illusion” stage of marriage.

### **Hypothesis**

Hypothesis was set to ascertain if there was a significant difference in marital adjustment among respondents who went through premarital counselling and those who did not. The independent samples t-test was used to find out whether there existed any significant difference in marital adjustment between those who went through premarital counselling and those who did not for husband and wives. The result in Table 7 shows that there was no significant difference for all the categories.

**Table 7: Differences in Marital Adjustment for Respondents who went through Premarital Counselling and those who did not**

Respondents	Mean		Mean diff	Standard Deviation		t value	Df	Sig.
	C	NC		C	NC			
Husbands	76.82	69.4	7.38	22.52	32.46	1.65	175	.101
Wives	74.18	68.35	5.82	20.52	13.84	1.106	82	.272

**Note:** C- Counselling, NC- No counselling

In all cases no significant differences existed between those who went through counselling and those who did not. However, the means for those who went through counselling were higher in all cases, but not significant. In a nutshell, the results indicated that, generally, those who went through premarital counselling had better adjustment scores than those who did not, for husbands and wives. The differences were however, not statistically significant. Marriage is life changing. Partners want to be loved unconditionally for life, emotional connection with another human being, to be understood, forgiven, and encouraged. Receiving premarital counselling is one of the most important things you can do to ensure the success of your marriage. Often marriages fail in the early years simply because of a lack of preparation or unrealistic expectations about the institution of marriage. Premarital counselling generally refers to a process designed to enhance and enrich premarital relationships leading to more satisfactory and stable marriages with the intended consequences being to prevent divorce.

In short, the definition of marital adjustment can be framed as the state of relationship in marriage in which the overall feeling between husband and wife is happiness and satisfaction with their marriage and with each other. The

study revealed that respondents who had gone through premarital counselling adjusted slightly better to the realities of marriage as compared with respondents who did not go through counselling even though the difference in adjustment was not statistically significant. This was in accordance with studies by Markman and Hahlweg (1993) and Waters (2003) which revealed that premarital counselling centres based on a prevention perspective that has the goal of starting with happy couples, helping them maintain their relatively high levels of functioning, decreasing divorce and making marriage more satisfying in order to promote marital adjustment. The primary goal of premarital counselling is to promote happiness. Since marriage affects not only the couple but their families and the parts of society they interact with.

Studies by Olson (2008) asserts that premarital counselling creates shared meaning within a couple which is key to marital adjustment as it allows for the individuals to work their actions into agreement with the meanings they ascribed to the given situation. This study did not find any statistically significant difference in the marital adjustment of husbands and wives who had undergone premarital counselling and those who did not because of factors such as duration of the counselling period, professional competence of counsellors and the wiliness of the couples to participate in counselling sessions since for most of the churches surveyed for the study premarital counselling was mandatory.

The study also revealed that there is no statistically significant difference in the marital adjustment of male and female respondents. This was in disagreement with a study by Fowers (1991) which revealed that men seem to derive more advantages from marriage than women and therefore adjust

better as compared to females. Shek (1995) believed that the gender difference in marital adjustment operated in terms of the differential expectations held by males and females. According to him, females tend to be less satisfied with marital relationship than males because they tend to place higher expectation which cannot be easily satisfied by men who are not socialised to provide relationship with such quality.

This finding is in agreement with that by Rapport (1969) that revealed that the dual career nature of most marriages had forced husbands and wives to negotiate the redefinition of traditional sex roles to cope with the associated stress of career and family obligation, making women more satisfied with their marital relationships. Williams (1988) asserted that females are more likely to use marital status to define their identities than males and that female are socialised to rely more on marriage as a source of gratification. The researcher therefore is of the view that the re-socialization and definition of traditional sex roles in the marital setting is the phenomenon that is bringing about equality in the adjustment level of husbands and wives.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of this study was to find out the impact of premarital counselling on marital adjustment among Christian couples within the Cape Coast Metropolis. This chapter is devoted to the summary, conclusions, and recommendations drawn from the findings of the study. Further research areas have also been suggested.

#### **Summary**

##### **Overview of the Study**

Chapter Five presents the summary and main findings of the study, as well as conclusions drawn. Recommendations arising from the finding and suggested areas for further research were also included in the chapter.

This study looked at the impact of premarital counselling on marital adjustment among Christian couples in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The study specifically examined Christian husbands and wives understanding with regard to their views on premarital counselling, the relevance of the knowledge the Christian husbands and wives had gained from premarital counselling on marital adjustment, the difference in the marital adjustment of Christian husbands and wives who had went through premarital counselling and those who had not. The study was guided by four research questions and two hypotheses. The research questions were

1. What are the views of Christian husbands in the Cape Coast Metropolis on premarital counselling?
2. What are the views of Christian wives in the Cape Coast Metropolis on premarital marital counselling?
3. What is the relevance of the knowledge gained from premarital counselling on marital adjustment of Christian husbands in the Cape Coast Metropolis?
4. What is the relevance of the knowledge gained from premarital counselling on marital adjustment of Christian wives in the Cape Coast Metropolis?

The following hypotheses were formulated to direct the study:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference in the marital adjustment of Christian husbands who went through premarital counselling and husbands who did not.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant difference in the marital of Christian husbands who went through premarital counselling and husbands who did not.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference in the marital adjustment of Christian wives who went through premarital counselling and wives who did not.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant difference in the marital adjustment of Christian wives who went through premarital counselling and wives who did not.

A case study was used to conduct the study because of its relevance. The target population were all Christian couples in the selected churches in the

Cape Coast Metropolis. The total population were all Christian couples in the Cape Coast Metropolis. There was no exact figure for the Christian couples due to transfers of work, travellers who after sometimes might leave the church, as there is freedom of worship for every person, couples come in and others also go to other places of worship. The three churches for the study were conveniently sampled from all the churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis and convenience sample procedure was used to select 300 Christian couples from all the three churches. The churches selected were the Church of Pentecost-Adisadel Assembly, the Calvary Charismatic Church Cape Coast Branch and the Wesley Methodist Church, Abura.

A questionnaire which consisted of 24 items and divided into three sections was used to collect data from the respondents. Section A ranges from 1 to 5, Section B ranges from 6 to 12 and Section C ranges from 13 to 24. I adapted Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (1959) for section C which was used to measure the marital adjustment of the Christian husbands and wives who went through premarital counselling and those who did not. The original test consists of fifteen items but the re The findings, therefore, revealed that respondents have a generally positive view of pre marital counselling searcher selected only twelve items since the remaining three items didn't seem relevant to the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was mainly closed-ended items. There was 100% retrieval of questionnaires sent to the field. Data collected with the research instrument was analysed using the Statistical Package for Service Solution (SPSS) version 16.0 Independent sample t-test tool was used to test the hypotheses for significant differences. An alpha level of 0.05 was used for all tests of significance.

## **Key Findings**

The main findings of the study were organised in line with the research questions and hypothesis formulated to guide and give directions to the study.

### **Christian Husbands View on Premarital Counselling**

Premarital counselling was viewed by most Christian husbands to be essential in their preparation for marriage. Christian husbands generally had a positive view about premarital counselling as majority of them indicated that it was not a waste of time or just a fashion to be followed but a realistic aspect of their marital relationships.

### **Christian Wives View on Premarital Counselling**

The results showed that majority of the respondent indicated that premarital counselling was not a waste of time. This is followed by the view that premarital counselling was realistic to their marital relationship. The least of them viewed t premarital counselling was just a “fashion” for couples seeking to get married nowadays. The result meant that majority of the female respondents held the view that premarital counselling helps partners improve their ability to communicate, set realistic expectations for marriage and develop conflict-resolution skills.

### **Relevance of the Knowledge Gained from Premarital Counselling on Marital Adjustment of Christian Husbands.**

Results of the study showed that majority of the responses indicated that premarital counselling help them prepare for marriage. Respondents believed that premarital counselling was vital to the success of their marriage, and that premarital counselling helped them know their partners better. The results meant that majority of the male respondents indicated that



premarital counselling helps partners improve their ability to communicate, set realistic expectations for marriage and develop conflict-resolution skills.

### **Relevance of the Knowledge Gained from Premarital Counselling on Marital Adjustment of Christian Wives**

Results of the study showed that majority of the respondents indicated that premarital counselling helped them prepare for their marriage. Christian wives asserted that premarital counselling have helped them in the success and overall health of their marital relationship by helping them settle marital disputes more maturely.

The study revealed that there was no significant difference in Christian husbands and wives who had undergone premarital counselling and those who had not. Therefore, gender was not a predictor of marital adjustment. There was no significant difference in the marital adjustment level of Christian husbands and wives who had undergone premarital counselling. This was because, majority of the respondents had undergone some form of premarital counselling and pastors in most churches would not perform marriage ceremonies unless prospective couple had submitted to series of premarital counselling sessions.

### **Conclusions**

On the basis of the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn. The study revealed that respondents generally held a positive view of premarital counselling.

Premarital counselling remains the most commonly used marriage preparation tool as Christian husbands and wives within the Cape Coast Metropolis. Couples found experience and knowledge gained from premarital counselling to be very relevant to their marriage life. Most couples stated that

premarital counselling helped them prepare for marriage. This therefore greatly assisted in easing the transition from single to married life, while it increased couple's satisfaction and stability thereby enhancing the communication skills of the couple. Respondents believed that premarital counselling increased friendship and commitment to relationships, enhancing problem solving and decision making skills in such areas as marital roles and management of family finances. However, not all Christian couples had undergone premarital counselling before marriage.

Results of the study revealed that gender was not a predictor of marital adjustment as there was no statistical difference in the marital adjustment level of husbands and wives. Contrary to expectation, couples who had undergone premarital counselling did not adjust better than their counterparts who did not. This finding may be attributed to informal mechanisms for seeking opinions of family members and elders who play advisory role for couple. However, it must be emphasised that premarital counselling is not the preserve of the unmarried partners but those who were previously married as well.

### **Recommendations**

Even though the awareness of the importance of premarital counselling among Christian husbands and wives was generally high, there is still room for improvement. From the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

1. Guidance and Counselling Units of all religious bodies should create the awareness for married couples and even the unmarried adults on the importance of marital counselling. Emphasis must not be placed only on unmarried partners but those who are married as well.

2. There is the need to intensify education on the importance of premarital counselling among couples seeking to engage in the lifelong commitment of marriage. This is because most people think that premarital counselling programme is reserved for couples who have relationship problems.
3. Churches must also institute post marital counselling sessions for married couples to help improve marital adjustment of their marriages.
4. Counselling is a profession which requires trained and skilled people to counsel the prospective couples in order to make impact in their marriage. Therefore, pastors and leaders in the various churches should acquire counselling training and skills before they counsel prospective couples.
5. Counselling is supposed to be targeted according to individual needs but not in general since the prospective couples are different people. The guidance and counselling co-ordinators must identify the needs and problems of individuals before services are rendered to such individuals.
6. Counsellors should make pre-counselling assessment to ascertain areas where the prospective couple may have challenges and counsel them on those areas.
7. The counselling relationship should be terminated based on the goals set but in most cases it is terminated without reaching any set goals. Therefore counsellors and prospective couples should make sure that goals are set for the counselling process and these must be achieved before they terminate the counselling process.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Taking the scope of the current study into consideration, it should be necessary to replicate it in other churches in other district of the region or

other regions in the country. This should include couples who are not Christians so as to make comparisons to provide basis for general conclusions.

It is further recommended that a large sample, including churches in rural areas, covering wider geographical area be drawn in future investigations, in order to improve the generalisability of the findings.

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## **APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**  
**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**  
**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION**  
**Questionnaire for Participants**

I am a graduate student conducting a research on the topic: The Impact of Premarital Counselling on Marital Adjustment of Christian couples. Please read through the items and respond as frankly and objectively as possible. There are no wrong answers. Your responses would be treated confidentially and will be used solely for academic purpose. Thank you for taking time to help with this research.

**SECTION A: Demographic Characteristics of the Couples**

Instruction: Tick (✓) the appropriate box that applies to you.

1. Gender?      Male       Female
2. How long have you been married? A. Less than 5 years       B. 6 –10   
years
- C. 11years and above
3. Educational level: A. No formal education       B. Basic   
C. SHS/ Technical       D. Tertiary
4. Occupation:
- A. Government employee       B. Private Employee
- C. Unemployed       D. Retired
- E. Farming       F. Others (specify).....
5. Did you go through counselling before getting married? Yes  No

## SECTION B: Views of Premarital Counselling

*Please tick (✓) as appropriate*

S/N	QUESTION	YES	NO
	Pre- marital counseling		
6.	Enables me prepare adequately for marriage		
7.	Is vital to the success of my marriage		
8.	A waste of time		
9.	is something I did because its fashion, nowadays		
10	Enables me to know more about my partner		
11	Is all theory, Not realistic at all.		
12	Enables me to handle marital disputes more maturely		

## SECTION C: Marital Adjustment Scale

*Please tick (✓) as appropriate*

13. Check the dot on the scale line below which best describes the degree of happiness, everything considered, of your present marriage. The middle point, "happy," represents the degree of happiness which most people get from marriage, and the scale gradually ranges on one side to those few who are

very unhappy in marriage, and on the other, to those few who experience extreme joy or felicity in marriage.

<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>35</b>
.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Very Unhappy			Happy			Perfectly Happy

*State the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your Partner on the following items.*

1- Disagree                      2- Always Agree   3- Somehow Agree

S/N	QUESTION	3	2	1
	My partner			
14.	helps me handle Family Finances			
15.	Shows me a lot of Affection			
16.	And I participate in recreational activities together			
17.	And I have sex frequently			
18.	has a good or proper conduct			
19.	interact positively with my in-laws			

20. When disagreements arise, they usually result in:

My husband giving in	My wife giving in	Agreement by mutual give and take

21. Do you and your partner engage in outside interests together?

All of the time	Some of the time	Very few of the time	None of the time

22. Do you ever wish you had not married?

Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never

23. If you had your life to live over, do you think you would:

Marry the same person	Marry a different person	Not marry at all

24. Do you confide in your partner?

Almost never	Rarely	In most things	In everything

**Thanks for being part of this study**