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PRE-MARITAL COUNSELLING AND MARITAL STABILITY AMONG SELECTED CHURCHES IN ADA COMMUNITY

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**PRE-MARITAL COUNSELLING AND MARITAL STABILITY AMONG
SELECTED CHURCHES IN ADA COMMUNITY**

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(202114416)**

**A thesis in the Department of Social Studies Education,
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DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, Tulasi Emmanuel Dasi, hereby declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works, which have all been identified and dully acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted either in part or whole for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Signature: ………………………………………….

Date: ……………………………..……………..

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of dissertation laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name: Professor. (Mrs) Danso-Wiredu Esther Yeboah

Signature: ………………………………………….

Date: ……………………………..……………..

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated my mother, Madam Korkor Tulasi and Sister, Koranteng Angela. Finally, I dedicate this work to my supervisor Professor (Mrs) Esther Yeboah Danso-Wiredu, who spent much time on this work to ensure its accomplishment.

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ABSTRACT

Pre-marital preparation has been designed for couples prior to marriage and aimed at preventing future distress in marriage by providing an awareness of potential problems that may occur, and to foster the growth and satisfaction of marital unions. Pre-marital preparation comes in different forms in Ghana, including that of the family, community and religious bodies. This study focuses on counselling, which is one aspect of pre-marital preparation systems Christians offer to the would be couples before they get married. In most Ghanaian churches, pre-marital preparation has been a core component of the church socialization process. It has been viewed by churches as an effective means of reducing the high rate of divorce. In view of this, it becomes a social cause of worry when there is frequent breakdown in marriages among Christians. This trend however, appears to be common among Christians in Ghana and elsewhere in the World. It is against this backdrop of concern of the growing level of marital distortion among church members that prompted the attention of the researcher to investigate the effectiveness of pre-marital counselling on marital stability in Ada community using Kasseh as case study. The study employed the qualitative research approach and a case study design with information derived from participants, using purposive and convenient sampling techniques. The study uses data from interviews derived from leaders in six churches, twenty-one Christian couples and relay on documents to do the analysis. The study revealed that the churches have laid down processes to ensure successful counselling to their would-be married couples. The study therefore, recommends other forms of pre-marital systems be studied to unearth where the problem of high divorce rate emanates. It also recommends the establishment of marriage institution and adequate parenting as a way of curbing the rising trends of marital breakdowns in Ghana.
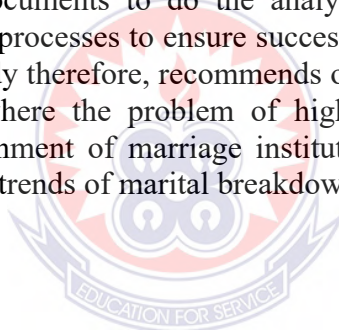
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Pre-marital preparation (PMP) includes educational, counseling, therapy and any preparatory sessions couples engage in prior to marriage (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). According to Stanley (2001), benefits of PMP to couples include: (1) preventing hasty decisions and fostering deliberation; (2) sending a message that marriage is important and worthy of commitment; (3) fostering likelihood of seeking professional advice during marriage; and (4) lowering subsequent marital distress or termination.

It can be deduced from the above that pre-marital preparations are done to equip the individual with skills and training on individual differences to foster the growth of marital union and to ensure greater marital satisfaction. This practice is not different from what is practised among some Ghanaian churches where pre-marital preparation has been a core component of the church socialization process. Marital progress is measured by the satisfactions gained from marital union. Preparation for marriage has been a traditional component of family socialization, supported by religious and social guidance on mate selection and marital role performance (Markman 2010; Oheneba-Sakyi & Takyi 2006).

The ability to develop and maintain relationships is one of the most essential features of human behaviour. Marriage is a type of relationship that is defined as a contractual partnership between two people that marks the start of the family formation process (Brien & Sheran, 2003). For a long time, Ghanaians see marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman, according to Oheneba-Sakyi and Takyi (2006), but in

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recent years, certain countries have begun to recognize same-sex marriage (Chamie & Mirkin, 2011). Individuals planning for marriage frequently select a suitable mate based on a list of desirable characteristics (Lehrer & Chen, 2013).

Marriage is highly valued in many African communities since it is considered as a transitional time into adulthood during which one leaves the parental home to dwell elsewhere (Bartkowski & Shah, 2014). Many people's lives are centered on the institution of marriage (Brien & Sheran, 2003). Marriage is a significant milestone in the lives of young people as they enter adulthood. Many decisions, such as whether to have children, number of children to have, and what type of career to pursue, to name a few, are inextricably sometimes linked to the nature of the married connection in which one finds himself or herself. As a result, policymakers and social scientists are interested in studying marriage (Brien & Sheran, 2003).

Preparation for church marriage has been a major component of Christian socialization, supported by religious and social guidance on mate selection and marital role performance (Silliman & Schumm, 2000). Marriage preparation began with clergy and community counselling and a few college classes prior to World War II, growing into more systematic pastoral counseling and therapy in the two decades after the war (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1987; Silliman & Schumm, 2000b). Pre-marital counselling programmes are offered to couples without distress in their relationship and are aimed to help prevent future distress by providing an awareness of potential problems that may occur, and the information, skills, or resources needed to prevent or improve these issues (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). Some researchers Carrol and Doherty (2003); Stanley, Amato, Johnson, and Markman (2006) have recognized the importance of church marriage preparation for pre-marital couples. Marriage

preparation has been linked to improved marital satisfaction, increased commitment to a spouse, and a 31% decrease in the divorce rate in the view of (Stanley et al., 2006). In Africa, marriage has always placed the family at the centre of the union, which has both positive and negative implications for marital instability (Takyi & Gyimah, 2007).

The importance of pre-marital educational programmes cannot be over looked, they have been designed purposely for couples preparing for marriage and aimed to help prevent marital distortions by providing an awareness of potential problems that may occur. They provide the information, skills, or resources needed to prevent or improve these issues (Carrol & Doherty, 2003. This position has been reaffirmed by researchers (Doss et al., 2003; Hawkins et al., 2004; Lamanna & Riedmann, 2011). According to Stanley (2001), marriage-preparation programmes offer the following benefits to couples: (a) help to avoid hasty decisions and foster deliberation; (b) send a message that marriage is important (c) help couples to know their options in seeking professional advice during marriage; and (d) lower subsequent marital distress or termination. In their view, McGeorge and Carlson (2006) believe that premarital education has become a focus of public policy. Here in Ghana, as part of the preparation it is a common policy that marriages should be preceded by counseling.

Pre-marital 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). The purpose of pre-marital 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

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communication skills to enable them to solve problems as and when they arise (Ambakederemo & Ganagana, 2006). Pre-marital counselling has been viewed by many people, including churches, as an effective means of reducing the high rate of divorce, thereby promoting marital stability among couples.

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). Marital instability is on the rise in Sub-Saharan Africa and Ghana, this is according to some Ghanaian researchers such as (Takyi & Gyimah, 2007; Takyi, 2001)) .For example Clark & Brauner-Otto (2015) found that marital relationships in 33 African nations, including Ghana, were particularly weak, with divorce being the leading cause of marital instability in the continent (Clark & Brauner-Otto, 2015). One aspect of pre-marital preparation in Ghana is counselling. Counselling has been designed for couples prior to marriage by the churches and aimed at preventing future distress in marriage by providing an awareness of potential problems that may occur, and to foster the growth and satisfaction of marital union. But the level of marital distress facing Christians opens a door for exploration. Given the growing level of marital distortion means that more work need to be done to examine the effectiveness of pre-marital counselling on marital stability.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The purpose of pre-marital preparation is to equip the individual with skills and training on individual differences to promote marital stability among couples. Several researches have suggested that marital instability has risen in recent years (Clark and Brauner-Otto, 2015; Garenne, 2004; Lehrer & Son, 2017). A review of marriage literature by Marriage Foundation (2016) suggests that, 50 percent of Christian

marriages end up in a divorce. This suggests that, the rate at which marriages are collapsing especially among Christians cannot be compared to that of decades ago. In an effort to curb divorce, Christians in the Ghanaian community had put in place pre-marital counselling as the surest way of grooming the would-be couples for successful marriage, as it is in many other parts of the world. According to some Ghanaian media sources, the recent upwards of marital breakdowns is due to a lack of marriage preparation, despite the numerous marital counselling that couples undergo prior to marriage. Anita (2023 discussed the television episode. Bonsu (2014), in discussing the phenomenon stressed that ' in recent years a peculiar malady has spread throughout many countries with amazing speed. News source call it "divorce epidemic", and "divorce Fever "split fever". Such a situation certainly sets an alarm for investigation.

The Ada community's inhabitants in Kesseh are dealing with a slew of marriage issues. The recent increase in Christian marriage among the inhabitants in Kasseh as observed by the researcher, seems to suggest that there is a high level of marital stability among Christians in Kasseh. There is no mouth past without a news about newly wedded couples in town. However, news of divorce that accompany such weddings always come as a shock to many, especially when one considers the level of love and happy feelings that characterized Christian relationships before trouble strikes. This has left very many single Christians in great dread of marriage, with many of them vowing to ever remain single. It seems the sanctity of marriage among Christians is something that people in this Christendom takes lightly and therefore do not reflect before pronouncing the vow 'until death do us apart'. As divorce rates are

increasing, many would be- couples in Kasseh spend more time to prepare for wedding ceremony than study their lifetime partners in marriage.

Marital stability refers to a relationship in which two people live together in marriage, having the most loving and meaningful relationship possible, with no plans to divorce (Adesanya, 2002). Considering the impact of the rising number of divorces from the literature Clark and Brauner-Otto (2015 means more work need to be done to ascertain the effectiveness of pre-marital preparation on marital stability.

The purpose of pre-marital counselling is to equip the individual with skills and training on individual differences to ensure greater marital satisfaction. Several researches have suggested that marital instability has risen in recent years (Clark & Brauner-Otto, 2015; Garenne, 2004; Lehrer & Son, 2017). Research in Sub-Saharan Africa and Ghana has shown that marital instability is on the rise and this is supported by empirical findings as documented by some Ghanaian researchers (Takyi & Gyimah, 2007; Takyi, 2001).

According to data available at the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) on customary marriage, 618 marriages were dissolved in 2009 out of 1,511 weddings registered,). In January 2007, 46 out of 136 registered marriages were dissolved, while 49 of 122 registered marriages were dissolved in February 2007. According to the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), there were 1.3 divorces per 1,000 marriages in 2010, and the divorce rate increased to 2.3, 4.6, 4.3, and 6.0 in 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014, respectively. According to the report, over 500,000 Ghanaians divorced, 400,000 separated. The rate of divorced persons to separated couples in the country is

currently at 553,065 to 405,090, according to latest data from the 2021 Population and Housing Census (PHC).2 Mar 2022.

A number of studies have been conducted in Ghana on the impact of pre-marital preparation on marital stability, (Osei-Tutu et al., 2020; Rita & Kyeremeh, 2021; Ansah–Hughes et al., 2015; Ntim, 2014). Ansah–Hughes et al. (2015) conducted a study on the views of married people about pre-marital preparation in the Techiman Municipality of Ghana. The major finding from the study was that pre-marital preparation has positive impact on marriages and married people in the Techiman Municipality have positive views about pre-marital preparation. Ntim (2014) also conducted a study on the impact of pre-marital preparation on marital adjustment among Christian couples in the Cape Coast Metropolis and found that pre-marital preparation is vital to marital success as it helped couples to know each other better.

Findings from the above researchers suggested that people's views on pre-marital preparation have been positive since it has provided them with the necessary tools to conquer obstacles in marriage. However, aftermath of their research, the incidents of marital instability is still on the risen. It must be noted that people's views on a phenomenon is different from their experiences and how the phenomenon affects their lives. Again, if pre-marital counselling will be recognized by Christians as divine and not a social institution from the perspectives of Christians and eventually entered into with a firm determination to make it till death, success will be achieved and even when the downs of life and marital frustrations come in, there should be enough divine motivation to keep it afloat.

Although some work has been done on pre-marital preparation with other variables such as marital success, marital satisfaction, and marital sustainability internationally and locally, the incidence of divorce is still high. One of these factors is the provision of effective pre-marital counselling which will serve as a firm foundation for marriage. If pre-marital counselling is meant to provide a firm foundation for marriage, and given the growing concern of marital instability, it becomes a state of surprise that marriage which have gone through such intensive training and expensive preparation ''should suffer divorce''. Definitely, such a situation creates room for thorough investigation, hence this study.

Previous studies had focused on Christian marriages, but it must be noted that not all Christian marriages have gone through pre-marital counselling. Again, previous studies had focused on the views of participants on counselling without analyzing their experiences on the effects of pre-marital counselling on marital stability. Furthermore, previous researchers in the field of pre-marital counselling were limited to only counselees without examining the perceptions and experiences of church counselors on the effectiveness of premarital counselling on marital stability. Finally, previous studies did not investigate the durations and details of what go into counselling by the various churches. It is in the light of these fallout from the previous researches   that this current study aimed at filling the gaps by examining the experience of married Christians who have gone through pre-marital counselling and church leaders on the essence of pre-marital counselling on marital stability.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the experiences of married Christians and church leaders on the effects of pre-marital counselling on marital stability in Ada community using Kasseh as a case study.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. assess the causes of marital instability from the perspective of Christians in Kasseh.

2. explore the trend of marital instability from 2017 to 2021 among Christians in Kasseh.

3. investigate the forms of pre-marital counselling systems available to Christians in Kasseh.

4. examine the relevance of the knowledge gained from premarital counselling to couple's marital stability.
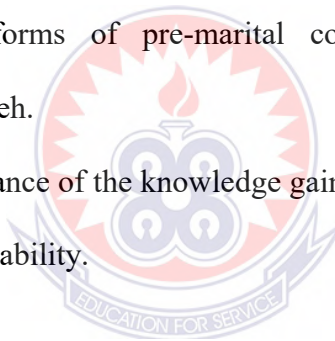
1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the causes of marital instability from the perspective of Christians in Kasseh?

2. What is the trend of marital instability among Christians in Kasseh from 2017 to 2021?

3. What are the forms of pre-marital counselling systems available to Christians in Kasseh?

4. What is the relevance of the knowledge gained from premarital counselling to couples marital stability?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study seeks to draw public attention on the effectiveness of pre-marital counselling to enhance the case of marital stability. In addition, it will assist marriage counselors in Ghana to provide proactive and urgent marriage counselling programs to foster the growth of marital unions. It will also help the counselors and social welfare as well as parents to fully understand the needs of premarital couples, and to provide the necessary leadership skills for marriage-preparation programs. Furthermore, this study will serve as a source of knowledge for those contemplating marriage. Also, because certain leaders in the Ghanaian public have raised concerns about the lack of effective marriage-preparation programs, this marriage counselling program is necessary and will serve as a tool for policymakers in the area of pre-marital counselling.

Issues of marital challenges are societal problems that posed serious threat to human existence. The solutions to these marital problems can be solved through the effective teaching of social studies. Socials studies which aims at addressing the numerous challenges confronting the society will serve as the best medium of solving marital instability. In view of this, the study will be useful to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NACCA) of the Ghana Education Service (G E S) in the writing of books in social studies for improvement of moral education in schools. When this is done, it will go a long way to promote the teaching and learning of social studies in both secondary and higher level of learning. Finally, the study will add to existing literature and serve as a useful tool for social studies teachers and further studies into the area of research in social studies.

CHAPTER TWO
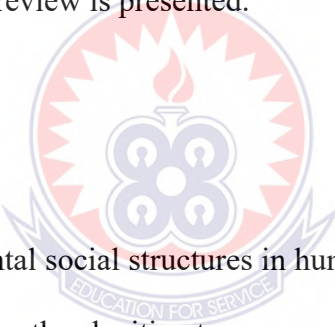
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three sections, which explore literature on pre-marital preparation and marital stability. The first section is a conceptual review section that explains concepts that examine themes related to the objectives of the study. The next section empirically reviews studies that investigated the impact of pre-marital preparation. This is followed by a theoretical review section that examines key theories related to the study. The symbolic interaction theory and the attachment – differentiation model are the two theories found appropriate and discussed. Finally, a summary of the literature review is presented.

2.2 Conceptual Review

2.2.1 Marriage

One of the most fundamental social structures in human life is marriage. Marriage has long been recognized as the legitimate means by which procreation and the perpetuation of the human race can be guaranteed. Marriage allows young men and women to shift from childhood to adulthood. Different studies have classified marriage in various ways, but the underlying issue is that it is a contractual relationship that provides a context for procreation, resource allocation, generational socialization, and household labour organization (Lehrer & Chen 2013). This view of marriage as the union of man and woman is shared by the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths, as well as non-religious ancient Greek and Roman philosophers and numerous enlightenment intellectuals (Girgis et al., 2013). This argument is supported by both common and civil law, as well as ancient Greek and Roman law. Marriage as

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a union between a man and a woman emerged in numerous places over many centuries, and it was never intended to exclude same-sex relationships. Indeed, it arose in societies where there was no concept of sexual orientation, as well as in societies where homoeroticism was commonly allowed and even assumed (Girgis et al., 2013).

Marriage is described by Haviland (2000) as a connection between one or more males (male or female) and one or more females (male or female) who are recognized by society as having an ongoing claim to sexual access to one another. Marriage is a societally recognized transaction and resulting contract in which a woman and a man are seen as having a continuous claim to sexual access to one another, as well as the woman's ability to bear children (Haviland 1996).

Marriage, according to Musick and Bumpass (2006), is a legal contract between two people that lasts as long as the contract is intact. There are various advantages to marriage for all parties involved. Duncan (2004), Lehrer (2008), and Thiombiano et al. (2013) are examples of this. For most people, marriage is the primary source of social, emotional, and marital support. Due to societal goals associated with human race propagation, marriage is a constitutionally protected institution (Duncan, 2004). When compared to single persons, marriage has several advantages, including a lower death and morbidity rate for the spouses involved. Children raised in intact families had superior health and educational outcomes (Thiombiano et al., 2013). Marriage benefits children's cognitive, physical, and emotional well-being, as well as raising the family's income in most cases (Waite & Liilard, 1991).

According to Girgis et al. (2012), marriage is a singularly complete union. It comprises not only a heart-to-heart and mind-to-mind connection, but also – and perhaps most significantly – a bodily union enabled by sexual complementarity. Marriage is fundamentally extended and deepened by family life since the act of forming marital love also creates new life, and it needs an all-encompassing, permanent, and exclusive commitment. In a nutshell, marriage binds a man and a woman for the rest of their lives – emotionally and physically, in acts of conjugal love, and the children that such love generates (Girgis et al., 2012).

Ghana is one of developing countries that are experiencing an upsurge of social change. This is manifested in the changes (both positive and negative) that take place in social lives of Ghanaians, their institutions and customary practices. Some of the institutions that appear to be on the receiving end of social change in Ghana include the institutions of marriage and the family. In Ghana, weddings can take one of three forms: traditional, Christianity (which is sometimes synonymous to the ordinance but differ a little bit), Islamic, or ordinance. In all three circumstances, a marriage must meet certain criteria before it may be regarded as valid (Kunuehia & Aboagye, 2004 as cited in Mensah, 2018). According to Ghana's marriage statute, only persons above the age of 18 who are not related by blood or marriage can legitimately marry (Kunuehia & Aboagye, 2004 as cited in Mensah, 2018). Traditional and Islamic marriages favour polygamy, while Christian and ordinance strongly encourages monogamy. In traditional marriages, the parents and extended family of the people contracting the union, rather than the individuals themselves, are the main protagonists (Baloyi, 2013). Marriage is defined as a lifelong commitment between a

man and a woman, exclusive of all others, according to the ordinance. In this union, the consent of the parties is the most significant factor.

2.2.2 Marital Stability

Marital stability refers to a relationship in which two people live together in marriage, having the most loving and meaningful relationship possible, with no plans to divorce (Adesanya, 2002). Since the mid-1960s, marital instability has increased dramatically in both industrialized and developing countries (Garriga & Härkonen, 2005). A review of the literature demonstrates that after World War II, a number of Christian writers have seen Christian marriage as being just as vulnerable as the modern secular marriage structure. Mace (1975, cited in Syphus, (2007) observed that marriages are breaking down on an unprecedented scale, some three decades ago. Similarly, the Catholic Bishops of Africa at a Synod of Bishops in Rome in the early 1980s, expressed a similar concern for marriage and family life in Africa (Syphus, 2007).

Culture is witnessing a great weakening of the nuclear family system, of which the marriage bond is both a crucial and fundamental structure, according to Wilson (1991). According to Giblin (1994), 60 to 80 percent of first marriages and 30 to 40 percent of second marriages take place in the church. As a result, Christians are said to be slightly more likely than non-Christians to divorce.

There are a number of studies that have examined the individual and social impact of parental divorce and separation on children's living conditions, such as educational attainment, socioeconomic success, intergenerational transmission of divorce, psychological well-being, social relations, children's family behaviour, and intergenerational relations, all these has increased dramatically in recent decades (e.g.:

Amato, 2000, Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004). However, social science research is still far from elucidating all of the micro and macro level reasons and consequences of marital instability. According to Naidoo (1981), cited in Syphus (2007), marriage and family life collapse is caused not only by social and economic situations but also by a lack of proper marriage preparation. The need for marriage preparation, according to Mace (1975), stems from the changing nature of marriage from a hierarchical institution focused on the production of children and the preservation of family traditions to a "companionship" marriage, which he claims is much more difficult to operate and necessitates the skilled management of personal relationships within the marriage.

The level of satisfaction spouses derive from their marriage determines its stability. Because of its complexity, the married relationship is difficult to quantify, forecast, or define. In one way or another, marriage is aimed towards happiness. When two people marry, they hope to enjoy a happy marriage. Some of these expectations may be reasonable, while others may be irrational (Zikhali, 2009). According to Amato (2000), marital satisfaction is a subjective assessment of one's married experience. This is because only the pair can rate their marriage pleasure, not anybody else.

Marital satisfaction is a subjective experience and opinion, not a relational property (CHRISMA, 2006). Marital contentment is unique in that it is a generally steady attitude and attribute that represents an individual's overall assessment of the relationship. The individual's requirements, expectations, and desires for the partnership determine marital contentment. When partners are successful in making the required adjustments in their marriage, the marriage becomes stable. When married partners recognize their respective tasks and strive together to attain them,

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they can have a pleasant relationship. Adesanya (2002) found some elements that contribute to marital stability, including financial stability and responsiveness. Economic contentment, however, is thought to be the most important component in marital stability (Adesanya, 2002).

Inadequate fulfillment of critical requirements for wives and children within the family, according to Owuamanam (1997), can lead to tension, conflict, and poor marital adjustment. Similarly, Owuamanan and Osakinle (2005) found that marital instability in the household can lead to divorce and separation. Ambakederemo and Ganagana (2006) discovered that sex-related concerns, love and trust, socio-cultural variables, anti-social vices, and finally economic reasons all contribute to marital instability. The traditional round-table settlement by both family members of married couples and intervention by close friends are two strategies used by couples in resolving marital issues. In the vast majority of circumstances, these approaches are flawed, one-sided, and potentially harmful. As a result, there is a need for sufficient marriage preparation so that couples can deal with marital problems on their own rather than relying on third parties all of the time.

2.2.3 African Traditional Marriage Process

Marriage is more than a connection between a husband and wife in Africa. According to Hendrix's study (as mentioned in Kyalo, 2012), in the African culture, a marriage relationship is referred to as affiance, which is an agreement or contract between two families or groups of kin. In Africa, marriage is considered sacred because it cements the bonds that strengthen communities and nations, bringing fresh life and hope in African marriage. Apart from the couple and their direct relatives, distant kinsfolk, neighbors, and acquaintances are all included in the marriage ceremony, according to

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Nukunya (2003), who holds a similar perspective that African marriage is a union between two groups. Because Africans are more interconnected than people in other civilizations, Nukunya's position is valid.

The concept of family is not restricted to married members in most Sub-Saharan African civilizations. Lineage, also known as extended family, is a much broader web of ties in which all members are thought to share a common ancestor, male or female. The bond between a person and members of his or her extended family can be as essential as, if not more so, the one between a person and his or her spouse and children (Kutsoati & Morc, 2012).

The payment of bride-wealth is a key feature of the African marriage. Outside of Sub-Saharan Africa, dowry is paid by the prospective wife's parents to the family of the prospective husband, whereas in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is the other way around. The bride-wealth is paid to the parents of the lady by the man's parents (Amevor, 2010).

2.2.4 Types of Marriages in Ghana

The 1992 Constitution of the republic of Ghanaian recognizes three forms of marriages: (a) customary marriages, (b) marriages governed by the Marriage Ordinance, and (c) Islamic marriages governed by the Marriage of Mohammedans Ordinance. Although customary marriage comprises a broad pattern of a gathering at which the bridegroom's family pays a bride price to the bride's family, followed by the bride being asked if she will accept the bridegroom as her husband, slight variations of customary rites are observed from group to group. If the bride agrees and the families are happy with the requisite traditional ceremonies, the pair goes to the metropolitan or district office with one witness from each family and pays the

required sum for the marriage registration process (Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly, 2022). According to KMA (2022), the traditional Ghanaian marriage procedure consists of the following steps: Both the man and the woman must agree to marry. The man and woman's families have given their approval for the couple to marry. The man (or a member of his family) brings gifts to the woman's family and asks for her hand in marriage. The woman's family accepts the prospective bridegroom's presents. A wedding reception is held. The man and woman live together as husband and wife, though not always in the same house. Their communities and family recognize them as husband and wife.

Customary marriages are the oldest type of marriage that Ghanaians are aware of. They are still the most frequent type of marriage in Ghana, outnumbering both Christian and Islamic marriages in terms of numbers. Again, the evidence shows that Christian ordinance marriages are virtually usually preceded by a customary marriage referred to as an "engagement," but they are essentially the same thing (Atuguba, 2003).

Ordinance marriages celebrated according to the register's certificate or the marriage officer's certificate (in this case church marriage), or according to the principal marriage officer's license, must be monogamous. As a result, anyone married by ordinance is legally bound and will be unable to negotiate a lawful marriage under customary law during the duration of the marriage. Those who break this law face a prison sentence. The true enforcement of the punishment, however, is still paperwork (Amevor, 2010).

2.2.5 African Marriage Preparation through the Rite of Passage

Girls and boys in many African societies are groomed for marriage from an early age. Domestic obligations are taught to girls, including how to care for a home, children, and a husband. Various rites of passage have traditionally been used to prepare boys for maturity and the duties of being a man and a husband. In the Xhosa tradition in South Africa, for example, boys go through an initiation process during which they are taught what it means to be a man (McLaren, 2011).

According to Davis (2011), rites of passage are important in African socialization because they define different stages in a person's growth as well as their relationship and function in the larger community. Ampim (2003) identified five key African initiation rites that are essential to human development and growth. He went on to say that initiation is about going through a basic set of ceremonies to begin a new phase or a new existence. The initiation ceremony signifies the transition from one stage of life to the next, more advanced or matured stage. Although many societies have distinct rites, it is the core component of society to guide a person from one stage of life to the next.

Young adults learn about their community's customs and expectations during this initiation, and they play a role in maintaining social order. Young adults are tested and instructed by their elders throughout this stage, according to Davis. They must display mental strength, physical endurance, and intelligence during the testing. Initiation also helps young folks prepare for marriage. For most African societies, this initiation is required before marriage. Young people frequently receive knowledge and training on sex, marriage, family life, and procreation at this time.

In Africa, marriage preparation begins with a "search." As a result, parents or families looking for a wife or son-in-law want someone who will meet their expectations. The individual must possess strong moral traits, be diligent in physical labour, be courteous of elders, particularly in-laws, maintain a healthy distance between in-laws, and have a good reputation (Amevor, 2009). Most families conduct background checks on each other at this point before moving further. Both families value the investigative part since they want to make sure that their family member has a happy marriage. They look for answers to the following questions during the investigation: (a) Are there any communicable or hereditary diseases such as tuberculosis (T.B.), leprosy, insanity, or epilepsy in the family? (b) Is there any criminal record (e.g., murder or stealing?) (c) Is the family quarrelsome? (d) Is the woman lazy? (e) Can the man look after a wife? (Ghana Nation, 2009).

"In societies with no particular initiation rites, or where they are fading out due to modernity, technology, etc., parents and other relatives gradually educate their children on morality and values necessary for marriage and family stability," Amevor (2009) added in response to how Africans are prepared for marriage where there are limited or no initiation rites. For example, girls are taught how to prepare food or make delectable meals, how to act around men, how to care for children, how to welcome guests into the home, how to keep one's body and surroundings clean, how to look after one's husband, and other domestic matters. The boys are taught the things that most concern men, such as caring for cattle, farming, fishing, tapping palm trees for wine, behaving properly towards one's in-laws, how to acquire wealth to give to a girl's parents as part of the engagement and marriage contract, and how to be responsible as the family's leader. In other circumstances, he now has to construct his

hut within his father's compound. If he can't do it now, he should at the very least have his kitchen" Amevor (2009) (p. 91).

Sex education, according to Amevor (2009), is one of the key obstacles in preparing young adults for marriage in African culture. Because sex is a taboo topic in African culture, it might be difficult to pass on sex information from parent to child. Some African religious leaders have previously objected to sexuality education, claiming that liberal attitudes on sexuality are on the rise (Menka, 2003 as cited in Amevor, 2009). This could explain why the majority of young people in Africa have grossly erroneous sexual information (Izugbara, 2005; Mitchell, et al., 2006). Although home-based sexuality education is popular in Africa, studies show that young Africans who receive direct parental sexuality lessons do not necessarily hold or convey more correct sexuality information than those who do not (Ademola, 2003; Izugbara, 2004). The lack of difference may be due to parental sexuality training that is not structured or comprehensive enough, or that it is just based on personal experience. The parent is unable to share information that is not related to his or her sexual knowledge.

The main goal of parent-child sexuality education was to scare them away from sexual activity, according to Izugbara (2008). As a result, parents teach their children about the perils of sex, the meaning of puberty, and the implication that a guy can impregnate a girl. Parents frequently teach their children abstinence and the importance of remaining chaste. Izugbara (2008) goes on to say that interventions targeted at increasing parents' involvement in their children's sexuality education are crucial because parents play such a significant and primary part in their children's overall socialization. To attain this component of adolescent sexuality that focuses on enabling parents' understanding of their children's sexuality, education programs that

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focus on facilitating parents' awareness of their children's sexuality should be developed.

2.2.6 A Brief History of Marriage Preparation Programmes

Before World War II, marriage preparation was a part of the school curriculum. Ernest R. Groves, a professor at Boston University, gave a course called "Preparation for Marriage and Family Living" in 1924. In 1929, Teachers College, Columbia University, offered a comparable course. Pre-World War II marriage preparation content focused on health and heredity issues, the wedding, finances, religious understanding, legal marriage prerequisites, and the necessity for preparation (Wilmoth, 2005). Alfred Kinsey began teaching a marriage education course at Indiana University in 1938 (Miller, 2011). In the 1930s, the necessity for proper marriage preparation to prevent marital misery and divorce became apparent. In 1932, the Merrill-Palmer Institute created the first program (Mac, 2008). The Philadelphia Marriage Council launched a standardized program in 1941 intending to assist young married and premarital couples in better understanding marriage companionship and how to prevent specific sources of marital issues. Before the 1930s, the clergy still met with couples for advice before marriage (Carroll & Doherty, 2003).

To provide intervention services, David and Vera Mace started their first marriage education program for married couples in 1962 (Kirby, 2005). Because interactional theories were still in their infancy in the 1950s and 1960s, professional counselors assumed that marital difficulties were solely the fault of one partner. As a result, premarital education was not a common feature of clinical practice at the time (Carroll & Doherty, 2003).

Religious institutions have traditionally played a key role in marriage preparation programs. The Roman Catholic Marriage Encounter program, which began in Spain in 1962 under the leadership of Father Gabriel Calvo marked the institutionalization of marriage. Marriage enrichment was led by David and Vera Mace, who led Quaker retreats in 1972, and the United Methodist Church's leadership training programs for couples were started in the 1960s under the leadership of Leon and Antoinette Smith (Nadir, n.d.; Wilmoth, 2005). Mace urged marriage counselors to spend much more time on marriage preparation rather than remedial orientation, according to Wilmoth, (2005). Most marriage counselors are more reactive in helping couples deal with existing marriage problems than proactive in helping couples avoid possible marital problems, thus Mace's suggestion makes sense. Premarital programs like PREPARE and Catholic Pre Cana were popular in the 1980s. In 1995, Diane Sollee established the Coalition for Marriage, Family, and Couples Education to promote marriage-education programs (Staier, 2007).

2.2.7 Perceptions on Marriage-Preparation Programmes

According to a study by Martin, Specter, Martin, and Martin (2003), 70.9 percent of adolescents expressed interest or indifference toward premarital therapy, with 47.3 percent indicating a desire for greater information on marital expectations. Previous research with college students demonstrated a preference for learning by experience, according to Silliman and Schumm (2004). However, if led by a competent person in a nonthreatening manner to dating or engaged couples, a short-term, affordable formal marriage-preparation programme piqued their attention. Participants in a premarital education program indicated that overall attendance would be advantageous to their relationship, according to Blair and Cordova (2009). Despite these advantages, some

couples choose not to participate in these programs because the costs and time commitment outweigh the benefits they believe they will obtain. According to Blair and Cordova (2009), one of the most successful strategies to increase participation is to remove such impediments.

The most appealing marriage-preparation programmes for young adults are those that are private (not in a group), conducted by well-known providers who are skilled, respectful, available at educational and religious venues, non-mandatory, and target those in committed relationships (Duncan & Wood, 2003). Previous studies have revealed significant levels of satisfaction among couples who participated in marriage preparation programs. Participants in such seminars have described them as a meaningful experience throughout their early years of marriage (Mac, 2008). Bruhn and Hill (2004), on the other hand, argue that couples in the developmental stage of their relationship before marriage are still emotionally attached to their partner and find it impossible to believe that there could be problems in their premarital relationship that could threaten their marital relationship. As a result, couples in this situation find it difficult to seek counseling since they believe their relationship is fine.

According to Fogarty, Mayberry, Smith, and Echevarria-Doan (2010), perceived societal standards or other people's perspectives on marriage-preparation programs can influence a couple's decision. If conduct is considered normative by others, and a couple is known to profit from such a program, the couple is more likely to follow suit. Couples who have favorable peer perceptions of marriage preparation programs are more likely to join. When respected members of the couple's community advocate such a program, the chances of success increase.

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2.2.8 Premarital Preparation

Many community groups are interested in slowing down the decision-making process for couples considering marriage so that they can think about their choices and better prepare for their marriages (Stanley, 2001). This is part of the preventative approach, which is hoped to result in happier and more functional marriages (Carroll & Doherty, 2003).

Researchers are working to uncover some of the concerns that are motivating the rise in community involvement in the institution of marriage, as well as how premarital preparation might help couples address these challenges before they exchange vows. According to a study, some couples enter marriage unprepared and with false expectations, which can cause pressure in the relationship. For example, according to one study, there are nine prevalent but unrealistic and potentially harmful ideas that people may hold when choosing a mate (Larson, 1992). One of these is the assumption that an individual can only marry one person and that, despite warning signs of marriage failure, all one needs to do is try hard enough to make the relationship work. Poor mate selection is a result of several types of reasoning. Premarital counseling (a type of premarital preparation), according to Larson, can address these types of ideas. Stanley (2001) backed this claim by arguing that premarital education can help couples make more informed decisions by slowing down the deliberation process.

Despite the high rate of divorce, Williams (1992) found that 96.5 percent of the 112 engaged couples he polled believed their marriage would endure a long time and that they would be happy. It appears that very few people marry intending to divorce. While many of these same people believe that premarital preparation is beneficial to

couples, they do not see the need to participate in these programs. Previous research, according to Russell and Lyster (1992), did not look closely at specific components of marital preparation programs. Their main focus was on overall program satisfaction. Their goal was to examine not only the knowledge gained but also the application of that knowledge. They also looked at the couples' characteristics, such as age, program components, and how the timing of the programme affects satisfaction. The authors discovered that pleasure varied depending on the situation. Russell and Lyster (1992) advised that couples who are getting married in less than two months participate in a post-wedding program.

Topics like finances and kids have proven to be particularly beneficial to younger couples. Meanwhile, older couples stated that they would suggest the programme to others, that it improved their understanding of their spouses, that all couples should participate in the program, and that it improved effective communication and gave discussion opportunities (Russell & Lyster, 1992). Consumers also mentioned skill training, conflict resolution, and communication skills as characteristics that aroused their interest in programs (Stanley et al., 2001). Stanley et al. (1995) began a longitudinal study of 135 couples who were about to marry for the first time in 1980 and 1981. These couples were split into two groups: those who received the PREP (Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program) and those who did not (the control group). These couples participated in research sessions every year and a half. They discovered that how men handled problems was a better predictor of the marriage's future state than how women handled problems. Premarital invalidation was also found to be a predictor of future marital dissolution by these researchers. Those who took part in PREP had higher marital satisfaction after three years than

those who were in the control group. There was a significant difference between the husbands who participated in PREP and those who did not in the 5-year pre-and post-test (Stanley et al. 1995).

Williams (1992) sent questionnaires to convenient sample of 170 engaged people, including college students, members of local churches, people identified through engagement announcements in the local newspaper, and people who were referred. One hundred and twelve people replied to the survey, with the majority (72.1%) believing that a good premarital program would help to reduce the likelihood of divorce.

The most desired kinds of premarital preparation were ministerial premarital counseling, a weekend retreat, meetings with married couples, and small groups, according to participants (Williams, 1992). The least popular forms identified were seeing a therapist, attending lessons, reading a book, and completing a workbook. Thirty-one percent were worried that their relationship will end in divorce. Ninety-six percent were optimistic that their marriage will last, and 90.1 percent believed they would be able to handle any challenges that they or their partner could face in the future. Participants were more likely to attend premarital therapy if a family member or friend referred them. If the referral source was the newspaper, they were the least likely to participate. A small percentage of participants (6.3%) confessed that they and their partners were unprepared for marriage, while over 40% reported that there were difficulties that needed to be addressed before marriage (Williams, 1992).

The effectiveness of pre-marital prevention programmes was investigated in a review and meta-analysis. The investigation revealed that these programmes are reaching those who are at risk, the methodologies used to evaluate them, the programmes' characteristics, and their performance.

Carroll and Doherty (2003) defined "pr-emarital prevention" as "premarital education, counseling, treatment, and preparation" in a broad sense. The inclusion of programmes in the study was based on two criteria. Programs have to be uniform and have a mechanism to track results. The writers started with a brief history of premarital prevention programmes, which began in the 1930s and grew in popularity in the 1970s as the divorce rate and preventative programmes increased. The programmes were divided into four groups in the study, albeit the first two were amalgamated. The quasi-experimental group (n = 13), non-experimental (n = 10) and ex-post facto research (n = 3) were also included in the experimental group.

The experimental group's sample was homogeneous, with practically all of the participants being "young, European-American, and middle-class couples" (Carroll and Doherty, 2003, p. 107). This made it difficult to extrapolate the findings to the general population. Communication was a component of all but one of the trials. Conflict resolution was a part of the curriculum in all of the programs. Presentations, discussions, and group experiences were used to teach the students. Only one study (15 out of 13) did not show any improvement in skills at the post-test. Seven of the thirteen initiatives used long-term follow-up metrics to evaluate their success, some of which are detailed below (Carroll & Doherty 2003).

Pre-marital programmes are generally effective, according to Carroll and Doherty (2003), albeit this was not the case for some specific programs. Because of the homogeneous character of the samples utilized in the studies, they cannot be extrapolated to the entire population. As a result, it is unclear if pre-marital counseling is beneficial to all couples. According to the researchers, premarital program participants are not high-risk couples, and premarital programs are not reaching individuals who are at a higher risk of marital conflict and divorce. "...because newlyweds in the United States still face a 40-50 percent chance of divorce, practically every couple can be regarded to be at some degree at risk for divorce," according to the study (Carroll & Doherty, p. 115 2003).

2.2.9. Premarital Assessments/Inventories

Some marriage preparation programs are used to forecast the marital outcome of couples considering marriage by testing various aspects of their backgrounds, personalities, and talents. Assessment inventories are given to couples to assist them to appraise their current relationship. Pre-marital Preparation and Relationship Enhancement (PREPARE), Relationship Evaluation (RELATE), and Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study are just a few examples of assessment inventories. Couples that participate in these examinations typically receive printouts of their results, which may require interpretation by an instructor or counselor (Larson, Newell, Topham & Nichols, 2002).

2.2.9.1 Premarital Education

Pre-marital education programs mainly concentrate on the development of skills such as effective communication, conflict resolution, responsibilities in marriage among others. Couples Communication Program (CCP), Relationship Enhancement (RE),

and Premarital Relationship Enhancement and Prevention are a few examples of pre-marital education programs, (PREP). Classes, talks, lectures, retreats, and workshops are common formats for these programs (Silliman & Schumm, 2000). In a survey of premarital prevention programs conducted by Carroll and Doherty (2003), one skill that frequently emerged in these programs was dispute resolution. The Couples Communication Workshop (CCP) is a systems-based 12-hour program for couples. Its focus is on skill development. Short-term communication improvements were consistently found in CCP studies, albeit such benefits do not appear to endure. Small-group exercises that increase self-awareness and awareness of others were said to benefit participants in the program (Silliman & Schumm, 2000).

Self-disclosure and empathy are central to Relationship Enhancement (RE). The program lasts 16 to 24 hours. In terms of communication, sentiments of inclusion, and affection, these programs have produced more favorable results than CCP (Silliman & Schumm, 2000). Participants' communication and problem-solving skills had greatly improved six months later, according to a Couples Communication Workshop, Empathy, warmth, intimacy, relationship adaptability, and self-disclosure to partners were among the other categories that improved (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). Premarital Education and Training Sequence (PETS) is a program that includes topics such as communication, commitment, problem-solving, and irrational belief as part of its curriculum. The session is offered once a week for 6 weeks and lasts 2 hours. A pair facilitates a small group of three to four couples and leads discussions and training (Bagarozzi, et al, 1984). The PETS program yielded only immediate positive outcomes, such as improved dedication and a reduction in illogical beliefs. After a 3-

year follow-up, there was no difference between the control and treatment groups (Carroll & Doherty, 2003).

PREP (Premarital Relationship Enhancement and Prevention) is a cognitive-behavioral model-based program. Discussions, skill training, workshops, and lectures are frequently included in this program. There is still some indication of program benefits at the 3-year follow-up (Silliman & Schumm, 2000). This program has received the follow-up reviews of any of the others. After treatment, post-treatment evaluations reveal great marriage satisfaction and low relationship instability. The treatment group had more interaction that is positive and fewer aggressive behaviors in their relationship at the 4-year follow-up than the control groups. At the 5-year follow-up, however, there was no significant difference between the treatment and control groups (Carroll & Doherty, 2003).

Stanley et al. (2001) classified a group of 138 couples who were engaged or intended to marry into three categories. Premarital education was offered to the first group by a religious leader who had been trained to execute the PREP program. The researchers' team at the University of Denver also provided premarital education to the second group. Finally, there was a control group that got premarital intervention services that occurred naturally ''p. 67''. Demographic information, religious assessment, commitment inventory, the Commitment Skills Test, the Relationship Dynamic Scale, the Marital Adjustment Test, the Marital Agenda Protocol, the Programme Satisfaction Rating, and the Interaction Dynamics Coding System were all included in the pre-and post-test given to participants. Although the researchers predicted that the University of Denver group would have more positive results due to their knowledge and experience with the curriculum, there was no significant difference between the

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first two groups that were given the PREP programme. At the post-test, the group led by the clergy had considerably greater levels of positive communication than those who did not participate in the PREP program. At the post-test, those who did not receive the program had more negative communication than the PREP group instructed by the church. In comparison to the non-PREP group, the clergy-taught group had a less negative interaction.

2.2.9.2. The Need for Premarital Education

Premarital education programmes are primarily intended for would be couples who are not having trouble in their relationship and are aimed at preventing future problems by raising awareness of prospective issues. They give the necessary knowledge, skills, or resources to prevent or ameliorate these problems (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). Some scholars (Carrol & Doherty, 2003; Stanley et al., 2006) have recognized the value of marriage preparation for premarital couples who attend such programmes before marriage. Researchers have reaffirmed this viewpoint (Doss, Atkins & Christensen, 2003; Hawkins, Carroll, Doherty, & Willoughby, 2004; Lamanna & Riedmann, 2005). According to Stanley (2001), marriage-preparation programmes benefit couples by (a) assisting couples in avoiding rash decisions and encouraging deliberation; (b) sending a message that marriage is important; (c) assisting couples in understanding their options for seeking professional advice during the marriage, and (d) reducing subsequent marital distress or termination. Premarital education has been a focus of public policy, according to them (McGeorge & Carlson, 2006).

Many states have proposed and passed legislation requiring or incentivizing the completion of some sort of pre-marital education. Participants in premarital education programmes, as well as the rest of society, will benefit. According to Halford and Simons (2005), the Australian government encourages couple relationship education as an important component of strengthening marriage and lowering the personal and social costs of divorce and separation. The importance of premarital education is shown by the fact that the Australian government has taken a proactive approach to address the problem of divorce and its accompanying issues. This means that premarital education or marriage preparation programs improve marital stability, and a stable marriage makes society safer by preventing divorce and the financial constraints that come with it. Couples can benefit from participating in marriage preparation programs in a variety of ways. In addition to the Australian government's involvement in promoting and supporting marriage-education programs, Halford, Markman, and Stanley (2008) report that the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States have made financial contributions to their respective countries relationship-education programs. In 2006, the US government provided $150 million in grants to fund demonstration projects with a strong focus on couple relationship education.

According to Duncan and Wood (2003), marriage-preparation programs improve conflict management skills, help couples to be more committed to each other, increase marital positively, and lessen the risk of divorce. Parker (2007) discovered evidence that enrolling in marriage and relationship education programs, particularly those that focus on conflict management, can help couples by improving communication and conflict resolution, as well as improving relationship quality. According to Gardner

and Howlett (2000) cited in Gardner & Boellaard, (2007), there are advantages to investing more effort into teaching young people early marital and relationship skills as part of their school curricula. Early in childhood, family connections often shape, mould and enhance relationship views and behavior patterns, leading to romances throughout the teen years. Carol and Doherty (2003), on the other hand, believe that judgments on the long-term effects of high school relationship education are tricky due to the lack of extensive follow-up research.

Despite Carol and Doherty's positions, it must be noted from the other hand that recommending marriage-preparation programs to high school students is a good idea because it is more important for young people to be exposed to marriage education early in their lives so that they can learn more and ask relevant questions before entering into marital relationships than to be informed briefly before their marriages. Silliman (2003) holds a similar viewpoint, claiming that community-based marriage-preparation programs for engaged couples are beneficial in addressing the pain and divorce issues that plague young marriages. In his opinion, extending commitment and training skills into the teen years, as well as connecting youth to beneficial youth-development programs, could boost advantages, particularly for high-risk couples.

Prevention is often thought to be preferable to treatment. According to the findings, by Silliman (2003), it is difficult for mental health experts to contact the numerous couples that require marriage treatment. The majority of couples who are having troubles in their marriage do not seek treatment. Some of these couples believe that counseling may cause more harm than help and that it is ineffective. This is why marriage-education programs should be implemented before couples become distraught because it is easier for couples who are not distressed to improve on their

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marriage than it is for couples who are experiencing severe relationship problems to change deeply embedded negative thought patterns and feelings (Larson, 2009). Many engaged couples are also blinded by romance, as a result, they miss possible threats and become focused on the wedding rather than the marriage. Religious organizations have turned wedding planning into marriage preparation to assist overcome this problem (Hawkins et al., 2004).

Stanley et al. (2006) discovered that premarital education has become more widespread over the last few decades and that the higher availability of educational programs is connected to more frequent public usage. Pre-marital education is associated with improved marital quality, lower marriage conflict, and lower divorce rates. Couples with greater divorce risk profiles, were less likely to participate in premarital education, Doss et al, 2009). The report concludes that the majority of couples that participate in premarital education have lower risk profiles.

According to Hawkins and Ooms, (2010), significant marital preparation is carried out in some areas. It is not, however, limited to couples who are planning to marry. Marriage and relationship-education (MRE) programs can assist individuals and couples create long-lasting, happy, and successful marriages and intimate partner relationships by providing information and teaching attitudes, skills, and behaviors. This involves assisting participants in making informed partner decisions and avoiding or exiting violent relationships. Several countries have been funding healthy marriage and relationship programs since the late 1990s (e.g., Oklahoma, Utah, Michigan, Florida, Louisiana, Arizona, Texas, and Alabama). In 2002, the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families developed the federal Healthy Marriage Initiative and began sponsoring MRE trial

programs. Policymakers believe that investing public funding in these programs will assist to increase public and private efforts to improve a couple of relationships, marriages, father engagement, divorce and non-marital childbearing rates, child poverty, and child well-being (Hawkins & Ooms, 2010). The fundamental motives for these projects are to act on scientific findings that show that children, who are fostered in stable, well-functioning two-parent homes, including father perform best on measures of adjustment and accomplishment (Brown, 2010).

According to reports from 2004, more than 40 states in the United States have started programs to support marriage and couple relationships (Dion, 2005). This shows that marriage-preparation programs are gaining popularity. The government understands the necessity of such programs as well. Marriage and relationship education is now being used as a tool in public policy, moving beyond the traditional confines of private professionals or lay practitioners (Hawkins, Markham, & Stanley, 2008). According to Hawkins, et al, (2013), the federal government has financed educational programmes targeted at supporting people and couples in developing and maintaining healthy relationships and marriages, commonly referred to as Healthy Marriage Initiatives, over the previous ten years (HMIs).

Some critics have expressed their displeasure with some countries government's role in marital education. The first issue is that people may be pressured to marry in general, and to marry (or stay married to) inappropriate (for example, abusive) partners in particular. The second issue is that funds intended for other purposes would be diverted to marriage initiatives. Policymakers and curriculum developers, according to Markman and Halford (2005) must work together to make it clear that the goals of government initiatives are to provide research-based marriage-education

services to couples who "choose marriage for themselves" and that no programs are offered to pressure people to marry or stay married to an abusive partner. Because the initiatives promote healthy marriages, any aggressiveness, coercion, or victimization is not part of a healthy marriage, such an objective would be a strong indication that the program contradicts its ideals. Third, contrary to detractors' claims, funds for other programs such as housing, medical care, jobs, education, childcare, and schooling will not be diverted. According to Markman and Halford's (2005) explanation, the critics' concerns or arguments, while valid, will not have the bad repercussions that they have predicted.

2.2.9.3. Pre-marital Therapy/Counselling

Pre-marital counselling is always aimed at preparing would-be couples to begin a good and healthy relationship that leads to marriage (Myrick, Green & Crenshaw, 2014). It is a form of training that according to Harway (2005) equips couples with the necessary skills needed by couples to advance in their relationships. Doria, et al, (2014) have argued that if family lives and relationships would improve, then institutions must highlight and intensify their counselling interventions and activities. Although pre-marital counselling is aimed at ensuring that individuals relationships are enhanced, it also helps to prevent problems associated with courtship or marriage and any problems that could lead to conflicts in the relationship or divorce, but could also enhance relationship quality (Stanley, Amato, Johnson, & Markman, 2006 as cited in Carlson, et al, 2012).

Counselling is a process in which one person assists another by having a deliberate dialogue with them. It is also a way of coming up with a viable answer to an issue, there are a variety of ways to define counselling. According to Tan (2011),

counselling is described as a relationship between two or more people in which one person (the counselor) strives to advise, encourage, and/or support another person or persons (the counselee[s]) in dealing more successfully with life's issues. "Unlike psychotherapy, counselling rarely tries to dramatically modify or remould personality,". The majority of people believe that counselling is just for persons who are mentally ill or emotionally unstable. Although people who are mentally ill or emotionally unstable require assistance, counselling is beneficial to everyone in some way (Waters, 2003). Counselling may assist people with more than just a crisis or a serious situation. It is a relationship that has been described as healing, and it is one that has been provided and entered into formally rather than casually or by happenstance (Feltham, 1995).

Counselling is a type of psychotherapy that provides reassurance, support, understanding, and assistance to help people adjust to their situations (Stafford-Clark, 1952). That is an intervention that uses psychological interviews, procedures, and testing tools to help an individual find and grow their or her psychological or relational well-being. Counselling and psychotherapy are also used interchangeably by Flanagan and Flanagan (2012), who define it as a process involving a trained person who uses the artful application of scientifically derived principles to establish professional helping relationships with people seeking help with large or small psychological or relational problems. This is accomplished by ethically defined techniques that include some type of learning or human development in the broadest sense. Clients, according to Winmill (1994), have their preconceived notions of what counseling is, which is frequently that it is a prescriptive activity addressing specific problems and avoiding unpleasant feelings. No amount of speculation about what

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counselling and psychotherapy are will be conclusive if the prospective client is the frame of reference for the definition (Winmill, 1994). Counselling is thought to be based on the following principles:

1. Counselling respects the client's self-awareness and autonomy, and it does not imply that counselors have special access to or the authority to understand their clients' complicated inner lives.

2. Counselling recognizes that clients' goals must be honored and that these goals often reflect a desire for "symptom-removal" in a short amount of time. This cannot be considered an illegitimate or inefficient objective.

3. Counselling is a non-medical profession that emphasizes the need for non-judgmental, attentive listening, as well as a philosophy of helping and empowering people from all lifestyles.

4. Counselling is a skill and not an elitist activity.

5. Individuals' complexity, the range of ideas of human behavior, and the usefulness of both a pragmatic and an idealistic perspective are all recognized in counselling. With this in mind, pre-marital counselling is founded on the same ideas that are aimed at supporting couples in having a happy marriage. Pre-marital counselling is discussed, as well as some thoughts on why people do not attend premarital counseling.

2.2.9.4.3 The concept of Christian marriage

According to the Bible in Genesis 2; 24 God created man and woman to be joined together in marriage and not outside marriage. ''That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife, and they become one''. Marriage in the Christian perspective is to be seen as a commitment to one another and not as

contentment (Brown & Brown, 1999). This means partners in marriage should not seek to derive benefits from their marriage partners but rather they should be content in their marriage and show concerns for one another with what they can provide for their partners. In his view, Collins (1988) (as cited in Abra, 2001) the bible describes the purposes for marriage, the roles of husband and wife, the importance of sex, and the responsibilities of parents. The biblical's viewpoint about marriage one can expediently construe what to do so as to expect a satisfying and cheerful marriage. In the same way one can as well envisage what conditions will make a marriage unsatisfactory. For instance, the bible speaks about two people becoming "one" which implies intimacy and companionship, (Gen. 2:22). From 1 Corinthian Chapter 7 one can deduce marital roles, commitment, Communication and Decision making. Ephesians 5:22 also talks about the need to love in marriage (Abra, 2001). God planned that in marriage, man will cut off all other earthly relationships which are likely to interfere in the affairs of his family, keep them afar and be cemented together with his wife (Gen.2; 24). From the above going, the institution of marriage has a divine origin. Marriage is embedded in the creation of the World to provide conditions to satisfy human needs. These includes closeness and companionship, communication, decision-making, steadfastness, marital roles, love and belief systems (Abra 2001).

2.2.9.5. Pre-marital Assessment Programmes

Counselling recognizes the complexity of individuals, the range of ideas about human behavior, and the utility of both a pragmatic and an idealistic perspective. With this in mind, pre-marital therapy is based on the same principles that aim to help couples have a happy marriage. Pre-marital counselling is explored, as well as some theories

on why people do not attend it. Practitioners in relationship-education programmes for couples typically utilize one of two approaches: (a) organized, inventory-based assessment and feedback, or (b) curriculum-based instruction that focuses on specific relationship skills and knowledge (Halford, Markman, & Stanley, 2008). The inventories are devices that are used to evaluate couples and provide comments afterward. Assessment tools combined with skills training offer a viable approach to pre-marital education since they allow for the customization of interventions to match the specific needs of each couple (Busby et al., 2007).

Pre-marital Preparation and Relationship Enhancement (PREPARE), Facilitating Open Couple Communication Understanding and Study (FOCCUS), and relationship Evaluation (RELATE), according to Halford (2004), are the most extensively used inventory. PREPARE was developed to assist counselors and clergy in assisting pre-marital couples in preparing for marriage. Each couple must complete a PREPARE couple inventory, which consists of 30 background questions and 165 items, during the first stage of the programme.

The response sheets from the pair are sent for scoring once they have completed the inventory. The computer-based report of the couple's outcomes is then given to the program's counselor or facilitator, who then uses it to guide the counseling sessions (Knutson & Olson, 2003). Counselors are also instructed to focus their counselling sessions on six goals with related exercises when using the PREPARE program: (a) explore couple strengths and growth areas, (b) strengthen couple communication skills, (c) learn how to resolve couple conflict, (d) explore family-of-origin issues, (e) develop a financial plan and budget, and (f) develop personal, couple, and family goals, Knutson & Olson 2003) According to Barton, et al, (2014), as part of its

evaluation or assessment, the PREPARE inventory classifies couples into one of four couple typologies: (1) Vitalized couples—those with the highest relationship quality and high scores across all inventory areas; (2) Couples who are harmonious have a moderate relationship quality, above-average scores on relationship interaction dimensions (e.g., communication, conflict resolution), and lower scores on characteristics more commonly linked with marital institutional quality (e.g., children and parenting; religiosity); (3) Traditional couples—those who have a poor relationship quality, particularly on relationship-interaction aspects, but higher scores on marriage's institutional characteristics; and (4) Conflicted couples−those with the lowest relationship quality and the least degree of consensus and positive responses across all inventory dimensions.

The RELATE model incorporates a variety of constructs into several relationship contexts or subsystems that influence the couple's connection. Individual, couple, familial, and cultural settings are the most common contexts associated with premarital and marital relationships. These environments are not static, but rather evolve throughout time (Childs, 2009).

Couples are not needed to use a facilitator in the RELATE program, according to Thompson (2006). They can choose between filling out a web questionnaire and filling out a paper questionnaire. They get the results of probable problem areas that could lead to major conflict when they finish the questionnaire (Duncan, et al, 2010). The RELATE program generates a complete printout for couples to peruse to learn more about their relationship's strengths and issues or to seek professional counseling or therapy. The ease of interpretation, its usage for large groups of individuals, the cost-effectiveness of computer scoring, its comprehensiveness, and its availability on

the internet are all advantages of adopting RELATE. The inability to evaluate the similarity of absolute status in a couple's age, education, income, and social-economic position of one's parents, which are regarded to be characteristics that predict marital quality, is one of the downsides of employing RELATE (Mac, 2008).

The FOCCUS pre-marriage inventory is a thorough, user-friendly tool for professionals, couples, and laypeople who have completed the FOCCUS facilitator training to assist couples who are preparing for marriage. The FOCCUS inventory's goal is to help couples understand their individuality, their relationship, and important themes that will affect their marriage for the rest of their lives (Hudson, 2008). The Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study (FOCCUS) have 156 items in 19 scales, with an optional 33 items for interfaith couples, cohabiting couples, and couples who are remarrying one or both partners. Catholic and Protestant churches, as well as nondenominational counseling agencies, all use FOCCUS. The questionnaire was created to reflect the qualities and ideals of marriage as a sacred institution, such as permanence, fidelity, openness to children, forgiveness, shared faith in God, and unconditional love. FOCUS's strengths include its multilingual variants, which include a version for people who have difficulty reading. The inventory result can be assessed in three ways: by computer, by hand, or by using a computer program. On a single scale, the relationship's trouble areas are listed. The lack of measurement of the three components that predict marital satisfaction is one of its flaws, and the validity of the ideal response is uncertain (Hudson, 2008).

There are five sections to the FOCCUS inventory (Thompson, 2006). The first portion covers the basics, including lifestyle expectations, friends and interests, personality compatibility, and personal difficulties. The inventory's second component covers topics including religion and morals, finances, extended family, sexuality, and parenting. Individual communication patterns, such as communication skills and conflict-resolution techniques, are addressed in the third section. The marital is the focus of the fourth segment, which includes marriage readiness and the marriage covenant. The programme's last component addresses significant issues such as dysfunctional families of origin and dual-career homes.

Relationship education focused on skills shows significant potential in strengthening couples' relationship skills and lowering their risk of future relationship issues (Halford, et al, 2003). Skills programs are approaches that focus on active skill training, but they usually also involve a considerable emphasis on awareness and cognitive change (Stanley, 2001). The Relationship Enhancement (RE) program, the Premarital Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), the Couple Commitment and Relationship Enhancement Program (Couple CARE), the Couples Communication Program (CCP), and Couples Coping Enhancement Training are all examples of skills training programs, according to Halford et al (2004).

Couple Commitment and Relationship Enhancement (Couple CARE) is a relationship-education curriculum with a skills-based approach that can be delivered in a variety of ways (Halford et al., 2004). Couple CARE is a flexible delivery program since it allows for easy access (even from home) and encourages self-directed learning, as opposed to group forms where program directors supervise the sessions (Jakubowski, et al., 2004). The approach involves a small bit of professional

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initiative to help couples retain their focus and enhance their skills (Wilson & Halford, 2008). Couple CARE, according to Wilson and Halford (2008), has significant content overlap with other couple relationship education programmes, but it is distinctive in its learning mechanisms. Couple CARE shares certain features with other skilled-based relationship-education programmes in areas like constructive communication, conflict management, positive expression of affection, and the establishment of realistic expectations, so the material is not much different.

Individuals and couples that participate in such programmes are thought to prefer self-directed marriage preparation programs that are carried out through books, websites, and online evaluations (Duncan et al., 2009). The efficiency of such initiatives, on the other hand, is not extensively demonstrated (Duncan et al., 2010).

2.2.9.6 Causes of Marital Instability

Marital instability, which simply refers to the interpersonal difficulties within the marital relationship, has many causative factors. Garba (2006) posits that the rate of divorce in some town depends on economic situation. He noted that in Ibadan, rich traders entice people's wives with their money. This is common in our contemporary marital institution than before. In another development, marital instability has been described as a situation whereby the couples deliberately decided to separate for one reason or the other. The concept of marital instability is associated with separation, divorce and widowhood (Manir & Adeyinka, 2021).

Marital instability may be product of many factors such as level of education of the families, religion, socio-economic status, family setting, pattern of marriage, employment status of one or both partners, in-fact, all these have been identified as

one of the causes of marital instability or maladjustment (Folaranmi, 2014). Another researcher's work on the causes of marital conflicts amongst couples in Nigeria: Implication for Counselling psychologists in Zuba, Abuja studied 1000 couples among the Ijaw, Ilaje, Yorubas and the Baribas (Tolorunleke, 2014). The findings of his work showed that, communication, cultural background, family type, educational attainment, childbearing, religious affiliation, type of marriage, income and age of marriage are some of the major factors responsible for marital instability.

In their study, Ambakederemo and Ganagana, (2006) examined the causes of marital instability in the Port-Harcourt Municipality, Nigeria. A sample size of 150 subjects was thus interviewed in the Port Harcourt Municipality of the Rivers State of Nigeria. Results indicated that these causes are in clusters of five, viz; absence of love and trust, anti-social vices, economic, socio-cultural and sex-related conditions. It was also discovered in this study that self-control, peer group influence and spending quality time at home are the most positive indicators to marriage stability in Nigerian homes.

Using national-level data, Takyi, (2012) explored the factors influencing one indicator of instability and divorce in Ghana. He found that previous marital history, the duration of marriage, religion, and parity (children ever born) were strong predictors of marital instability in Ghana.

2.3 Empirical Review on the impact of pre-marital preparation
Stanley et al. (2006) conducted a study on Pre-marital Education, Marital Quality, and Marital Stability from a Large, random household survey. The authors discovered that pre-marital education was linked to better levels of pleasure and commitment in

marriage, as well as lower levels of conflict and a lower risk of divorce, using a large random survey of four middle American states. These estimated impacts were consistent across races, economic levels (including the poor), and educational levels, implying that pre-marital education is advantageous to a wide variety of couples.

In another study by Weiss (2000), she presents findings regarding marital preparation and the socialized meaning of marriage for couples in great marriages. A self-reported questionnaire was used to collect data from a national qualitative study of couples in great marriages. Thirty-eight people were identified as having been married for fewer than 20 years and were thus chosen as the study's sub sample. Using a qualitative method, their narrative replies were evaluated and coded to determine what marriage preparation, socialized experiences, and personal attributes existed for these couples before marriage and contributed to their successful marriages. The findings of this study not only confirm previous research on prevalent kinds of marital preparation, but they also give important descriptive data on how people's experiences and socialization influenced their choice of a marriage partner and later marital success.

Tuffour (2017) conducted a study on the marriage preparation programme in the South Central Ghana Conference of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. In February 2014, eight ordained pastors from the South Central Ghana Conference were chosen for interviews. The goal was to analyze their perspectives on marital preparation, their levels of competency, and the resources they utilize to deliver the programs. Three pastors in the South Central Ghana Conference were trained to perform marital preparation based on the findings. The implemented programme was assessed to see how it affected pastors and couples, as well as its strengths and limitations. All of the pastors interviewed in the survey agreed that premarital counseling is important in the

church. Pastors in the South Central Ghana Conference, on the other hand, did not use any documented or written marriage preparation program. There is no standard or guideline for the number of times or sessions for premarital counseling at the conference. Most pastors who offer premarital counseling do not use inventories or assessment tools, and they do not have a detailed follow-up strategy following their premarital counseling. The conference's pastors needed a marriage-preparation resource guide, according to the post-implementation study. The tools increased their confidence and preparedness to run such workshops in the conference to assist pre-marital couples.

Ntim (2014) investigated the impact of premarital counseling on marital adjustment among Christian couples in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The study's design was based on a case study. The three churches from the metropolis were chosen using a convenience selection approach. The data for the study was collected using a standardized questionnaire. A sample size of 300 Christian couples was chosen for the study using the Tabacknik and Fidell (1996) approach for sample size selection. The study found that the majority of Christian husbands and wives had a good attitude about premarital counseling, with only a few having a negative perspective. It was also discovered that many Christian husbands and wives considered the experience and information gained from pre-marital counselling to be extremely useful in their marriage. Christian husbands and wives who had had pre-marital counselling did not differ significantly from those who had not. Furthermore, there was no noticeable difference between Christian husbands and wives who had had pre-marital counselling and those who had not.

Todd, (2008) examined the influence that pre-marital preparation had on the level of complaints in marriages and the amount of perceptual accuracy that couples had in their marriage. The data came from the Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage's Wave I and Wave II studies on newlyweds. The findings revealed that individuals who said premarital preparation activities were helpful had fewer complaints than those who said they were not. The perceived usefulness of pre-marital preparation activities and perceptual accuracy is found to have no statistical value in this study.

Udofia et al. (2021) examined the effect of pre-marital counseling on marital satisfaction and the relationship of three psychological variables, intimacy, self-esteem, and locus of control among married couples who received marital counseling and married couples who did not receive marital counseling. The data for this thesis originated from the Wave I and Wave II studies on newlyweds conducted by the Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage. According to the findings, people who believed pre-marital preparation activities were beneficial had fewer complaints than those who indicated they were not. In the study, the reported benefit of pre-marital preparation activities and perceptual accuracy was shown to be of no statistical significance. The findings revealed that couples who had pre-marital counselling before marrying were more satisfied with their marriages [t (718) = 2.050, p.05] than couples who did not receive pre-marital counselling before marrying. Intimacy and self-esteem both had a significant impact on marital happiness among married couples who had pre-marital counselling, while only intimacy had a significant impact on couples who did not get pre-marital counselling.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 Symbolic Interactionism Theory

George H. Mead, one of the founding theorists of Symbolic Interactionism, explained the development of self-concept as a process of social interaction as individuals become aware of the impact of their behaviour on others and, consequently, begin to anticipate others' responses and slowly develops self-identity through role taking (as cited in LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). These roles are distinguishable sets of social norms that have come to be associated with that role through interpersonal interaction (Burr et al., 1979). In Symbolic Interactionism Theory, neither meaning nor self-concept and identity can be separated from the society or culture in which one resides. Symbols in meanings or roles are acquired through interaction with others who have already learned the shared meanings that are part of a larger culture. Interaction in the society is not only influenced by society culture but also by the meanings and definitions held by interacting individuals (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993).

The Symbolic Interactionism Theory asserts, "Behaviour can only be understood in terms of the meanings the actor attributes to it" (Chibucos, Leite, & Weis, 2005, p. 237). Therefore, seeking to understand behavior in marriage must begin with an investigation of the socialized meaning associated with marriage and the marital relationship.

In an attempt to understand pre-marital contributors to marital success, Symbolic Interactionism Theory provides insight into the socialized definitions and meaning of marital roles as well as how individuals are expected to carry out these roles. Symbolic Interactionism Theory explores patterns regarding roles and societal expectations in the 5 family and how these roles are constructed, learned, and enacted

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in society. Symbolic Interactionism Theory is divided into three main themes; the importance of meaning, the development and importance of self-concept, and the interaction of self and society (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993).

Understanding the interactions of individuals in a successful marriage can be greatly enhanced by viewing those interactions through the lens of Symbolic Interactionism. The successful marriage of two individuals requires the bringing together of attitudes, expectations, cultural meanings, and symbols regarding marriage and marital roles. Often couples are unclear or even oblivious to their personal biases and expectations of the marital relationship (Juvva & Bhatti, 2006). Informal and everyday marital preparation comes into play as individuals have the opportunity to recognize personal beliefs regarding marriage and how those beliefs were ascribed to through social interaction with family and culture. Symbolic Interaction theorists recognized the importance of the family as the setting for learning social norms and values (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). These theorists postulated that success in the family is based largely on the ability of its members to interact symbolically and successfully take on and perform their socialized roles. Symbolic Interactionism theorists suggest that it is not only from formal forms of premarital education, but also largely from the informal sources of family and symbolic social interaction that we learn the knowledge and tools necessary to creating an enduring marriage. While family plays a contributing role in the preparation for marriage, identifying personal perceptions and expectations contributes to a healthy marriage both before and during the relationship (Juvva & Bhatti, 2006). Informal marital education and socialization to marital roles can play a significant role in helping young adults increase confidence in their ability to commit to marriage, develop positive relationship skills while improving personal

characteristics, and become aware of the socialized symbols and expectations they have subscribed to in their life thus far.

2.4.2 The Attachment-Differentiation Premarital Model

The proposed Attachment-Differentiation Premarital Model, ADPM is informed by Bowen family systems theory (specifically, differentiation of self; Bowen, 1978) and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969). The theory of differentiation of self—developed by Bowen (1978) and elaborated upon for couples by Schnarch (1997), describes a person's ability to balance connectedness and intimacy with personal autonomy and separateness in relationship. According to this theory, well-differentiated people are emotionally grounded, non-reactive, and maintain a stable sense of self, and are thus more equipped to connect and empathize with others. A person's degree of differentiation is highly dependent on his or her family of origin. In highly differentiated families, individuals are encouraged to develop a sense of self and identity apart from family allegiance.

Infants are necessarily reliant on their parents (especially their mothers), and as such, the differentiation process occurs gradually, in step with the person's level of maturity. The goal is to develop a cohesive couple system consisting of independent, emotionally separate individuals, rather than a family system that contains a single emotional entity, where "individuality is so undeveloped that people are literally clinging to one another for emotional support" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 94). In short, if a couple is composed of highly differentiated individuals, the overall couple dynamic will be healthier; "the more differentiated a self, the more a person can be an individual while in emotional contact with the group" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 94). A young person raised in a highly differentiated family is more likely to be a highly

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differentiated adult. This is important, as high levels of differentiation—as marked by generally low levels of emotional reactivity, fusion with others, and emotional cutoff, and high levels of ability to take an "I" Position on the Differentiation of Self Inventory-Revised (Skowron & Schmitt, 2003)—have been associated with numerous positive relationship outcomes (e.g., Skowron & Dendy, 2004). Differentiation can be difficult to quantify—and indeed, there is room for improvement in its measurement—but the extant literature points to its importance, especially in the context of romantic relationships.

The tenets of attachment theory are complementary to those of differentiation of self and are integrated into the ADPM. According to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), a person's ability to engage in healthy ways with other as an adult is largely dependent on his or her relationship with a primary attachment figure—usually the mother— while growing up. The attachment figure's consistent presence and availability for the infant— especially when the infant feels threatened—determines the infant's future attachment tendencies. In adulthood, two main types of attachment have been defined: secure and insecure (anxious or avoidant; Mikulincer and Shaver, 2012). Those with anxious attachment style feel insecure about the status of their relationships when they feel threatened. They live in fear that they will be left, and thus engage in desperate efforts to maintain a sense of closeness. Those with avoidant attachment styles tend to avoid direct confrontation when the relationship feels threatened, and may behave in ways that seem to imply, "I don't need anyone," or "No one is good enough for me." Closeness is avoided due to believing that any attempt at connection will likely make things worse, so their rational choice is to handle this anxiety with distancing. Securely attached adults report generally positive perceptions of their families of

origin, and both avoidant and anxious adults were more likely to report separation, mistrust, or lack of support from important attachment figures (Corriveau et al., 2009; Feeney & Noller, 1990). Further, securely attached adults report more positive relationship outcomes than anxious and avoidant adults (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012a). In romantic relationships, a secure attachment is associated with numerous positive outcomes, including positive communication styles (Domingue & Mollen, 2009) and relationship satisfaction (Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Campbell et al., 2005).

2.5 Conceptual Framework

This section focuses on the conceptual framework that guided the study. A conceptual framework developed reveals the constructs of Symbolic Interactionism Theory and the Attachment-Differentiation Premarital Model. It also shows the relationship that exists between the theories under consideration and marital stability.

The Symbolic Interactionism Theory sheds light on the social construction of marital roles and the norms that govern their performance. Family role patterns, as well as the construction, learning, and enactment of these roles, are investigated under the Symbolic Interactionism Theory. The significance of meaning, the importance of self-concept formation, and the interaction between the individual and society are the three core themes of symbolic interactionism (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993).

The goal of the Attachment-Differentiation Pre-marital Model is to create a cohesive couple system made up of independent, emotionally separate individuals, rather than a family system made up of a single emotional entity in which "individuality is so undeveloped that people literally cling to one another for emotional support" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 94). There are two primary types of attachment in adulthood: secure

and insecure (anxious or avoidant; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012). When their relationships are jeopardised, those with an anxious attachment type feel worried about their status. They live in constant fear of being abandoned, and as a result, they make tremendous measures to retain a sense of proximity. When a relationship is endangered, those with avoidant attachment styles tend to avoid direct confrontation and may act in ways that imply, "I don't need anyone," or "No one is good enough for me." Because they believe that any attempt at connection will certainly make things worse, they rationally choose to manage their fear by isolating themselves.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

Source (author's construct)

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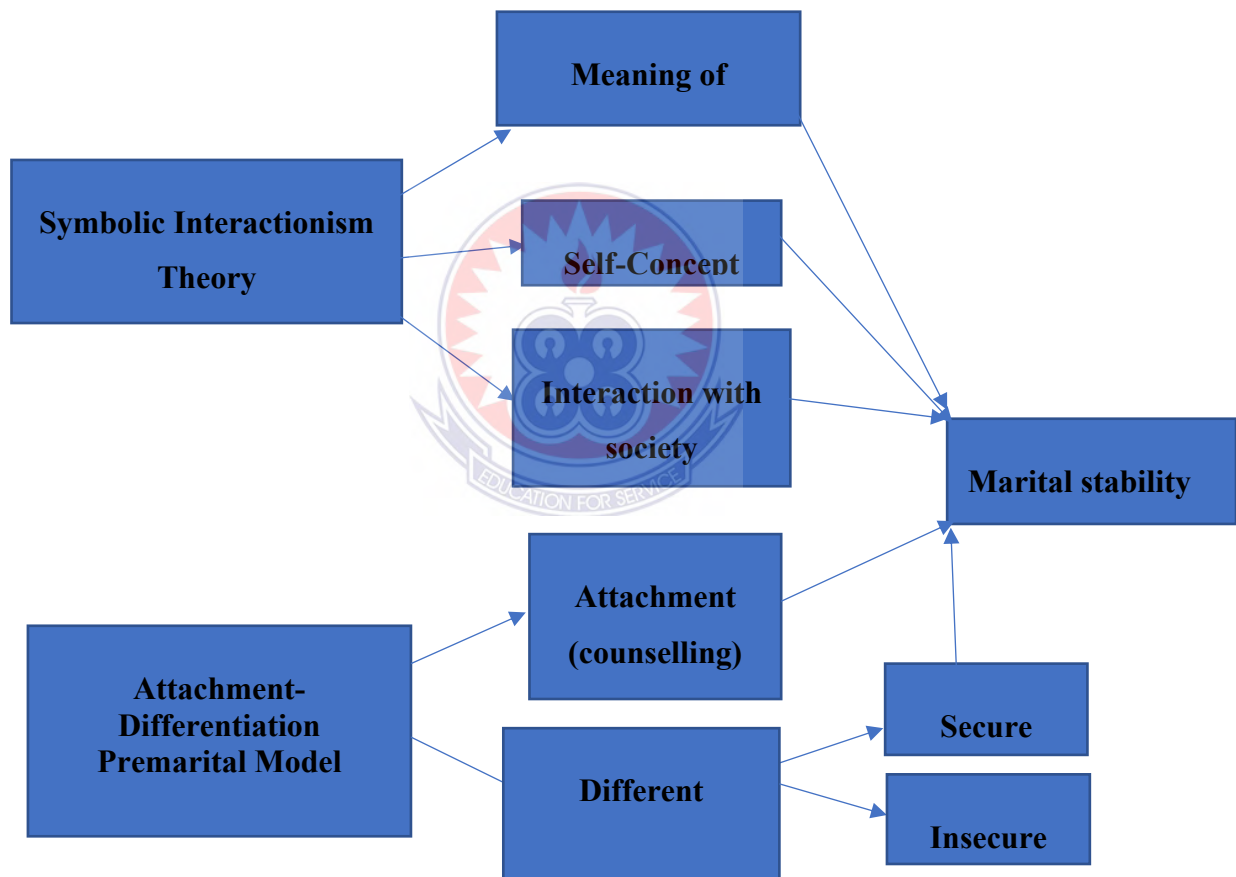
2.6 Summary of Literature Review

Many researchers posit that marriage is a union between a man and a woman. In this union, the consent of the parties involved is the most significant factor. In Ghana, we have the Christian, Islamic and traditional marriage. In all three circumstances, a marriage must meet certain criteria before it may be regarded as valid. People who have consented to marry are prepared in various ways for marriage. In Africa, girls and boys in many African societies are groomed for marriage from an early age. Rites of passage is an important tradition in the African society that are used to prepare boys and girls for maturity and the duties of being a husband and a wife. Currently, couples are taken through marriage preparation programs which started in the 90's with the likes of Alfred Kinsey who began teaching a marriage education course at Indiana University in 1938 (Miller, 2011); David and Vera Mace started their first marriage education program for married couples in 1962 (Kirby, 2005) and the Roman Catholic Marriage Encounter program led by David and Vera Mace to prepare them adequately for marriage. Studies reveal that couples perceive marriage preparation programme to be beneficial to their relationship (Blair & Cordova, 2009; Mac, 2008; Fogarty et al., 2010).

While many of these same people believe that pre-marital preparation is beneficial to couples, they do not see the need to participate in these programs (Williams, 1992). Pre-marital counseling which is the focus of this study is the most implemented pre-marital preparation aimed at preparing the would-be couples to begin a good and healthy relationship that leads to marriage (Myrick, Green & Crenshaw, 2014). According to literature, it is not enough to counsel couples but there is the need to use assessment tools counselling with inventories that allow for the customization of

interventions to match the specific needs of each couple (Busby et al., 2007). The empirical review on the impact of pre-marital preparation revealed pre-marital preparation used in different contexts have a significant impact on the choices of marriage partners and their marital success. Although some work has been done on pre-marital preparation with other variables such as marital adjustment (Ntim, 2014), marital satisfaction (Udofia et al., 2021), and marital sustainability, there are few studies which have looked at the experiences of married Christians and perceptions of counselors concerning the impact of pre-marital counselling on marital stability in the Ghanaian context. Little research has been done that focuses on counselling as one aspect of marital preparation which this study seeks to fill.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter covers the methodology of the study. The methodology section presents the methods and design, which the researcher used to conduct this study; this includes the study area, research design, study site, population of the study, sample and sampling procedure, data collection procedural, data analysis and ethical consideration.

3.1 Study Area

Ada is a quaint coastal town located about 100 kilometres east of Accra on the Accra Lome Road. It marks the eastern boundary of the Greater Accra Region. The main occupation of people of Ada is fishing and its related activities along the coast. The town is also popular for its thriving salt mining industry and boasts of a breath-taking landscape at the Estuary at Azizanya, where the river Volta (the largest river in Ghana) enters the sea. This touristic appeal has necessitated the planning of a Tourist Village at Azizanya where watersports such as yachting, skiing, boating and fishing take place. A number of companies and resorts belonging to individuals have developed chalets at the waterfront and are equipped with motorboats and paraphernalia for engaging in watersports especially at the weekends.

The people of Ada celebrate their yearly Asafotufiam War Festival in the first week of August. Most of the inhabitants (85.9 %) belong to the Dangme Tribe. The local language in the Dangme East and West District is Dangme, also called Adangme. It is a Kwa language and is spoken by around 800.000 people in the Dangme East,

Dangme West, Volta Region and Togo. They are part of the Ga-Dangbe ancestrial lineage. The Dangme speak und understand Ga Language as it is similar to Dangme. English is also spoken by nearly everyone since it is the official language of the country. Many people in Ada also speak some Ewe (to communicate with the neighbouring people of the Volta Region, Togo and Benin).
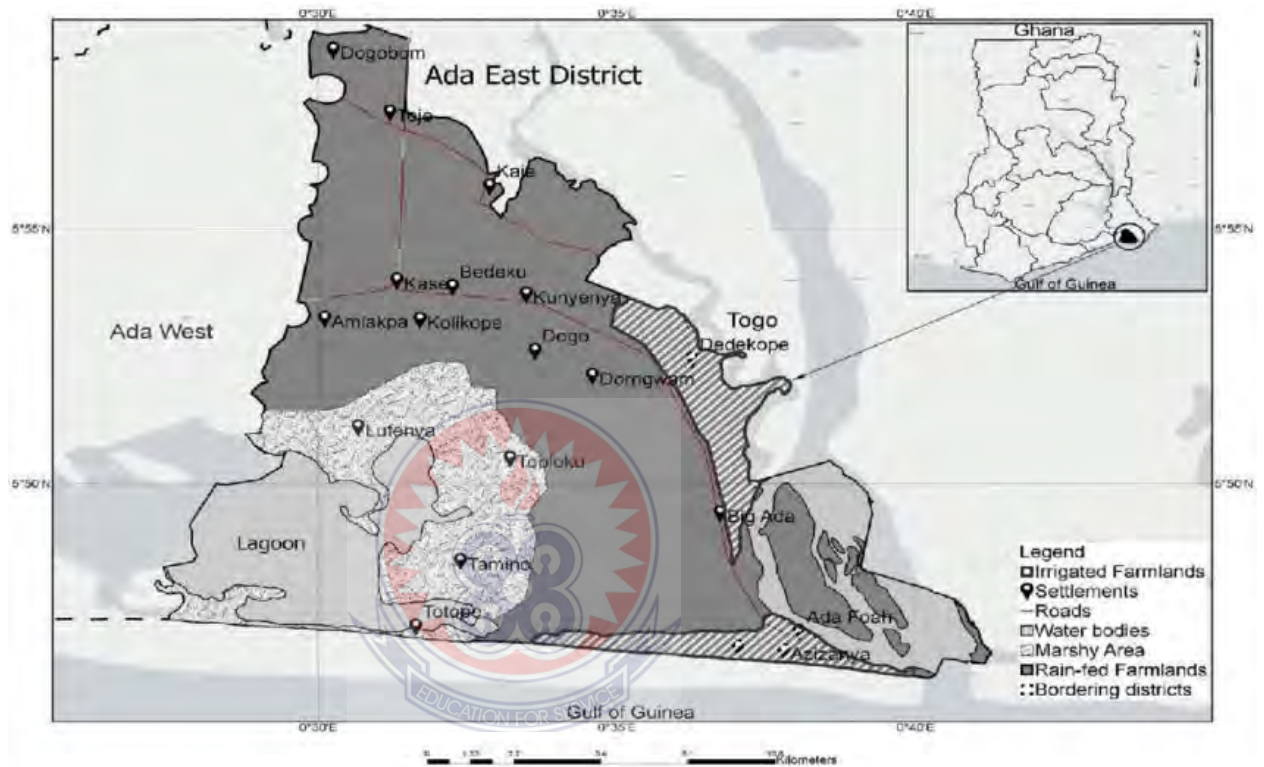
Figure 3.1: Map of Ada showing the study area
 (Source: https://wikitravel.org/en/Ada).

3.2 Study Site

Kasseh is a town in the Ada East Dstrict, an area in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. It is a major town situated between Sege and Sogakope on the Accra-Aflao Street. Kasseh has the greatest market in four districts (Ada West, Ada East, South Tongu and North Tongu) in its area. Kasseh is connected with practically all the towns and villages in the Ada East District by street or path. It is the most effective accessible town in the district. It is connected by a street to the District capital town of

Ada Foah and the Traditional Town called Big Ada. Kasseh is a cosmopolitan town and have about 85% of its inhabitants being christians. Sundays are busy days these Christians who saturate the churches to seek for divine interventions from their maker. There seem to be an upwards in Christian marriage among the inhabitants in Kasseh which appears to suggest that there is a high level of marital stability among Christians in Kasseh. There is no mouth past without a news about newly wedded couples in town. Wedding ceremonies seem to be on hyper rate among Christians in Kasseh. This phenomenon has become one of the social issues being discussed among the inhabitants of Kasseh, especially when such weddings which have gone through pre-marital counselling and considering the love and happy feelings that characterized such weddings and eventually such marriages do not last.

3.3 Research Approach and Design

A qualitative research approach was used in this study. In qualitative approach, participants are free to express their personal experiences in preparation for their marriages. This study used a qualitative approach to better understand and explore the individual experiences of participants in preparing for marriage, and developing meaning associated with the marital relationship, as well as how these experiences contributes to the level of success in their marriages.

The purpose of qualitative research is to learn from people's own experiences with a subject of study and to gain a better understanding of human behavior in its natural environment (Bryman, 2012). In a qualitative study, data is collected in the participants' own words, with the goal of portraying the individual's experiences and viewpoints in order to better understand the meaning they assign to the topic under investigation (Creswell, 2009). While their story cannot be used to draw causal

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inferences, it does provide a deeper understanding of marital preparation that educators and academics may utilize to better understand why and how these couples have successful or unsuccessful marriages.

The study also used a case study research design. Case study entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case - a case referring to a community or an organization where a research is conducted (Bryman, 2008). The case for this study is therefore, the Kasseh District in the Ada Community. The case study's strength allows for the collection of thorough information about couples. The method is capable of capturing and exploring the complexities of phenomena in order to gain a deeper understanding. It also necessitates the collection of data through numerous ways in order for it to be triangulated and validated (Denscombe, 2003, Yin, 2003). Because the case study is action-oriented, the findings can be used to improve practice (Cohen et al., 2000). The method can be used to develop and test theories (Denscombe, 2003). However, there are certain flaws in this design, that case studies take a long time to complete and the results may be constrained by the fact that the subject is typical. Furthermore, because the method necessitates a protracted stay in the participants' sociocultural setting for data gathering, gaining access to such a location can be problematic. Despite these flaws, the case study was nevertheless deemed the most appropriate design for the study given the nature of the subject. It is hoped that the choice of the case study design would aide in the development of a comprehensive research on the current impact of pre-marital counselling on marital stability among couples in Kesseh.

3.4 Population of the Study

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 target

population defines those units for which the findings of the survey are meant to generalize and draw conclusions (Cox, 2013). In this study, the target population was all married Christian couples who had gone through pre-marital counselling and church leaders who engages would-be couples in counselling and are living in the Kasseh community.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample size is the number of observations used for calculating estimate of a given population (Smith & Price, 2010). 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. In this study, two main sampling techniques were adopted to select the sample for the study.

The first stage involved the selection of churches and church leaders using the purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling was used to select six dominant churches who have counsellors. These churches include, the Pentecost church, the Presbyterian church, the Apostolic church, the Methodist church, the Assemblies of God church and the International Central Gospel church. Fraenkel and Wallen (2003, p. 103) are of the view that purposive sampling is chosen when a researcher believes that the sample possesses the necessary information about the topic at stake. The purposive sampling was used to select the six churches based on the fact that they have counselors who engages would-be couples in counselling and these counselors might acquire much experiences in counselling due to the long existence of their respective churches. For the purposes of anonymity, the church leaders were identified as Elder, Presbyter, Senior pastor, Steward, Reverend minister, and Senior pastor respectively.

Convenience sampling was used to select married Christians who have gone through pre-marital counselling and are available. This sampling procedure involves selecting research participants solely because they are the most available to recruit for the study. When conducting a research study, convenience sampling is the sampling procedure that involves selecting research participants solely because they are the most available to recruit for the study. (Adzahlie-Mensah, Agordah et al (2017). The researcher does not take into account whether or not these participants are representative of the entire population when conducting the study. Many researchers like the convenience-sampling technique because it is quick, inexpensive, and simple, and because the volunteers are easily available in large numbers. Researchers utilize convenience sampling not just because it is simple to use, but also because it offers a number of other advantages in research. Adzahlie-Mensah, Agordah et al (2017), note that, this sampling technique can be used to demonstrate that a specific quality of a material or phenomena occurs within a given sample. Such investigations are also quite beneficial in identifying links between various occurrences (Sarantakos, 1998).

In selecting the size of the population for the study, the researcher depended on reaching a saturation point. This is when the researcher reaches a point where no new information is obtained from further data (Saunders et al., 2019). When the saturation point was reached, the researcher ceased to collect more data and proceeded to analyze the data. Based on the principle of saturation, twenty-one married participants who have gone through pre-marital counselling were interviewed.

3.6 Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), cited in De Vos (2001), refers to trustworthiness the true value of the study. To ensure that the data for the study is

trustworthy, the researcher, relied on tape recording of the interview, and documents from the participants as well as field note. Again, Robson (2002) states that the aim of a piece of research is to have a measure that is valid, to achieve this validity, the researcher made sure that the recorded interviews were played to respondents for them to authenticate the responses. Moreover, to develop trustworthiness in the research, the researcher ensured credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the data.

3.6.1 Credibility

Credibility is how confident the qualitative researcher is in the truth of the research study's findings. Credibility is the accuracy of the information or the participant's perspective, as well as the researcher's assessment and representation of it (Polit & Beck, 2012). The researcher outlining his or her experiences as a researcher and checking the research results with the participants' increases credibility. A qualitative study is deemed credible if those with similar experiences can easily identify the descriptions of human experience (Sandelowski, 1986).

The researcher showed engagement, methods of observation, and audit trails to establish credibility while reporting a qualitative study. To ensure this, the researcher interacted with the subjects over a period of not less than four weeks so as to develop an acquaintance with participants. To achieve this, the researcher engages regular visits to the participants in their homes and making telephone call conversations. This enables the researcher to develop a relationship with them. In this way, the researcher was able to build a strong trust between himself and each participants. This trust made it possible for all the participants to readily open up for discussions of all sensitive issues that were covered by the interview for the study.

3.6.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to the constancy of the data over similar conditions (Polit & Beck, 2012; Tobin & Begley, 2004). This can be achieved when another researcher concurs with the decision trails at each stage of the research process. The researcher ensured dependability by conducting a systematic repetition of the study to identify similarities in results or to enhance findings. Information obtained from the literature review and the theories were helpful in the development of the questions that elicit responses to the research questions that are formulated to direct this study in the achievement of the research objectives. This direction also ensures the appropriateness of the questions that the participants were asked. Besides, the interview format helped to develop categories and themes related in the findings.

Furthermore, both the positive and the negative responses were listed, this way, the researcher sought clarification for answers to some of the negative and positive questions that were not clearly stated during the interview.

3.6.3 Confirmability

Confirmability is the ability of the researcher to show that the data accurately reflect the participants and do not reflect the researcher's prejudices or perspectives (Polit & Beck, 2012; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Confirmability is the degree of neutrality in the research study's findings. This means that the findings are based on participants' responses and not any potential bias or personal motivations of the researcher. This involves making sure that researcher bias does not skew the interpretation of what the research participants said to fit a certain narrative. By include numerous insightful quotes from the participants that illustrate each emerging theme, the researcher showed confirmability by making sure that the researcher dose not interfere into the

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response from the participants. Again, to achieve confirmability, the researcher made sure that the recorded interviews were played to participants for them to authenticate the responses. This created opportunity to participants to add more information that they have forgotten and also to nullify some information that were said unknowingly.

3.6.4 Transferability

The term "transferability" refers to outcomes that can be applied to different situations or groups (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Polit & Beck, 2012). Transferability is how the qualitative researcher demonstrates that the research study's findings are applicable to other contexts. In this case, "other contexts" can mean similar situations, similar populations, and similar phenomena. If the findings are meaningful to people who were not engaged in the study and readers can connect the findings to their own experiences, a qualitative study has met this requirement (Sandelowski, 1986). The study's conclusions can be extrapolated to participants in other churches who were not included but who may in some way connect to them. Also, this study has expanded the discussion on pre-marital preparation which will serve as a guiding tool to further expand the discussion on pre-marital preparation to include other forms of pre-marital preparation and its outcome on marital stability.

3.7 Data Collection Instrument

According to Gay (2008), all research studies involve data collection with the help of research instruments. There are therefore, various data collection instruments that could be used, but with this study, the data collection instrument used in collecting the data from the respondents was an interview guide. An interview guide is a list of topics or questions that the interviewer hopes to cover during the course of an interview (Ryan et al., 2009). Since the participants and the researcher are members of

the same community, data was collected through the face-to-face semi-structured interviews and using the Dangme dialect and English language as mediums.

Two different face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used, one for the church leaders and one for Christian married couples who has gone through pre-marital counselling. The semi- structured interview was adopted because by their nature, interviewees are allowed to develop their ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the interviewer (Denscombe, 2007). A week prior to the interview, the researcher visited each of the respondents to book an appointment with them. On the appointed day, the researcher called on the respondents to conduct the interview. The researcher first of all adhered to the ethical considerations, and to make sure the participants prepared before proceeding with the interview.

As a facilitator, the researcher made an effort to ensure that the study participants are comfortable. Before each interview session, the researcher created a conducive atmosphere which allows participants freedom and independence to participate. The researcher asked the questions one after the other, giving the respondents enough time to react to each question. The researcher inquired for clarifications which were not clear from the responses of the participants whenever the need aroused. The choice of the interview guide was because it helps to gather detailed and broad-spectrum information about the research questions directly from the respondents.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

The first approach to the data collection procedure was that, 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. The researcher made sure that both

church leaders and married couples who participated in the study were fully informed of the purpose of the study. Since the participants and the researcher are members of the same community data was collected through the face-to-face semi-structured interviews using the Dangme dialect and English language as mediums. A week to the interview, the researcher visited each of the participants, both church leaders and married couples to book an appointment with each of them. On the appointed day, the researcher called on the participants to conduct the interview.

Before each interview session, the researcher creates a conducive atmosphere to ensure that the study participants are comfortable and free to participate. The researcher asked the questions one after the other based on the interview guide, giving the participants enough time to react to each question. The researcher probed for clarifications whenever there is the need. Data from the interview was audio-taped with the consent of the participants, and it was later transcribed. Through the face-to-face interview, the researcher was able to probe and made follow up on nuclear responses. During each interview sessions, there were audio recorded, and notes taken to aid the researcher in the final analysis.

3.9 Data Analysis

The data collected constituted the key findings of the research, which helped to disaggregate the raw data into meaningful form. Cooper and Schindlier (2000), described data analysis as the process of editing and reducing accumulated data to a manageable size, developing summaries, seeking for patterns and using statistical methods. The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Initially, the researcher studied the field notes, reduced the tape into transcripts and carefully read through them. This was done to look for themes and similar ideas or responses to the

questions posed to the respondents of which the respondent's information or speeches were translated into specific categories for the purposes of analysis.

This exercise, according to Cohen, et al, (2003), is referred to as coding which enables the researcher to organize large amount of text and to discover patterns that would be difficult to detect by just listening to a tape or reading a transcript. Similarly, Goldenkoff (2004) is of the view that a brief summary and analysis, highlighting major themes, is sufficient when decisions must be made quickly, the results are readily apparent or the purpose of the group is purely exploratory. Goldenkoff warns that to get an in-depth understanding of a complex issue, one should conduct a systematic analysis using full transcript. In all, a qualitative approach was used in the analysis and interpretation of interview data. The interview was analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis. The participants' responses were recorded after which they were transcribed. When the researcher gets familiar with the data, a set of initial codes that represent the meanings and patterns seen in the data was created automatically using a thematic analysis software called NVivo. The codes were sorted into potential themes that have enough data to support them.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

Ethics focus 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 recognized professional as well as legal obligations (Cohen, et al, 2007). Protecting the rights of the participants in this study was ensured. Participants were given options to be part of or withdraw from the study. Information provided by the couples was kept confidential. 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. The researcher made sure that both church leaders and married couples who participated in the study were fully informed of the purpose of the study and also assured them of the confidentiality of any information they provided concerning the study. Concerning scientific integrity of the study, an honest conduct, reporting of the study results was done (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

Even though, the researcher come from Kasseh where the study took place, the researcher distanced himself from the participant's responses and reported exactly what the participants said. Again, the church that the researcher attends was not selected for the study. All these were done to ensure that the researcher's presence in Kasseh did not in any way influence the findings.

3.9.1.1 Confidentiality

Confidentiality indicates the handling of information in a way that no third person can have access to. This implies that the researcher must jealously guard all the information disclosed by the participant so that only the researcher has access to it. The interviews took place at the participant's residence to allow privacy, non-interruptions and the creation of an atmosphere in which the participant felt comfortably engaged. The purpose of the research, the role of the interview(s) and the confidentiality of the selected material was explained to the participants before the commencement of the interview. A tape recorder was used during the interviews and all information collected had been transcribed and the recordings deleted.

3.9.1.2 Anonymity

The names of the church counselors and marriage couples who participated in this study were not revealed anywhere instead, code names were used. The recorded

responses and the written report were silent on the true identities of the participants. In this study, the six study participants from the various churches were identified with senior pastors, elders, steward, reverend minister, presbyter as codes. The married couples who took part in the study from the various churches were also identified as female participant 1 or 2 or 3 or 4 in that order. The males were also identified as male participant 1 or 2 or 3 or 4 in that order.

3.9.1.3 Voluntary participation and informed consent

In this study, the researcher clearly spelt out the purpose, the nature of the study and its significance to the participants. To this end, the participants made rational decisions to participate in the study. No participant was forced to participate. This is done to ensure that informed consent is a necessary prerequisite to any research in which human beings are involved as participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the findings from qualitative data analysis of twenty-seven participants who participated in the study. These twenty-seven participants specifically answered interview questions on effects of premarital preparation on marital stability. It is important to note that participants were selected based on convenient sampling and upon reaching saturation point. The participants were made up of six church leaders and twenty-one married couples. Using the participants' own words, the findings associated with four particular research objectives are presented in order of prevalence for each main theme and subtheme. The research objectives are to:

- Unearth the causes of marital instability from the perspective of Christians in Kasseh.

- Explore the trend of marital instability from 2017 to 2021 among Christians in Kasseh.

- Investigate the forms of pre-marital counselling systems available to Christians in Kasseh.

- Examine the relevance of the knowledge gained from pre-marital counselling to couples' marital stability.

4.2 Demographic Analysis of Participants

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of data collected. The purpose of the study is to examine the experiences of married Christians and church leaders on the effects of pre-marital counselling on marital stability. It comprises the socio-demographic data of the participants and the various themes that emerged from the data in response to the research questions.

Table I. Sex distribution of participants

Sex	Number of participants	Percentages
Male	20	74.07 %
Female	7	25.93 %
Total	**27**	**100 %**

Among the participants interviewed, twenty were males representing 74.07 % of the total participants and seven were females representing 25.93 %. It is observed that the study participants were of more male to female.

Table 2. Participants representation in the various churches

Churches	Number of participants	Percentages
Pentecost	6	22.22 %
Presbyterian	5	18.52 %
Apostolic	4	14.81 %
Methodist	4	14.81 %
International Center Gospel	3	11.11 %
Assemblies of God	5	18.52 %
Total	**27**	**100 %**

The study had six participants from the church of Pentecost, five participants from the Presbyterian Church, four participants from the Apostolic church, four participants from the Methodist church, three participants from the International Central Gospel church and five participants from the Assemblies of God church. The choice of these churches was based on the fact that they have counselors who engage the would-be couples in counselling and might have more experiences due to the long existence of their respective churches.

Table 3. Marital status of participants

Marital status	Number of participants	Percentages
Separation	11	52.38 %
Annulment	7	33.33 %
Divorce	3	14.29 %
Total	**21**	**100 %**

Out of the twenty-one married participants interviewed, eleven of them have separated, representing the highest percentage of 52.38 %. Seven participants representing 33.33 % of the married participants are experiencing annulment in their marriages. However, three participants representing 14.29 % of the sampled population were divorced.

Two participants were between ages 20-30 years. Twelve of the participants were between ages 31- 40 years, seven participants were between 41-50 years and six participants were 51 and above. Ten of the participants were 3-7 years in marriage, eight of the participants were 1-5years in marriage, six of the participants were 11-15 years in marriage and three of the respondents were above 15 years in marriage.

4.3 Description of churches and nature of counselling in Focus

Introduction

This section presents brief descriptions of the churches and the nature of counselling in the respective churches. These churches were selected based on the fact that they have counselors and might have more experiences in counselling due to the long existence these churches. These churches include the church of Pentecost, the Presbyterian church of Ghana, the Assemblies of God church Ghana, Apostolic church of Ghana, The International Central Gospel Church – ICGC and the Methodist church of Ghana.

4.3.1 The church of Pentecost

The Church of Pentecost is an internationally recognized Pentecostal church. Having begun way back in the nineteenth century, this church has grown widely. Many people today are faithfuls of the Church of Pentecost. Over the years, the Church of Pentecost in Ghana has gained a worldwide fellowship of over 3 million members. *Source; https;//www.penteagle.org Retrieved. (5 /6 /2022)*

As a way of maintaining its Christian values and believes through the perpetuation of the human race, the church has developed a pre-marital counselling handbook to usher its members into the institution of marriage. The book aims at helping pastors and lay leaders in addressing the neglected problem of taking the pain to effectively prepare the prospective couple within the church and beyond for sound and lasting marriage. The church spends six months for intensive pre-marital counselling to the would be couples in order to foster successful marriage. Pre-marital counselling is compulsory for would be couples who want to have church marriage in the church of Pentecost. The church takes it would be couples for six months or more for

counselling. This duration is to enable the counsellors ascertain the holiness of the would be couples before joining them.

The church of Pentecost first starts counselling with groups counselling which involves the would be couples and their parents. This is followed by one on one and the group counselling. The church has developed a pre-marital counselling handbook to usher its members into the institution of marriage.
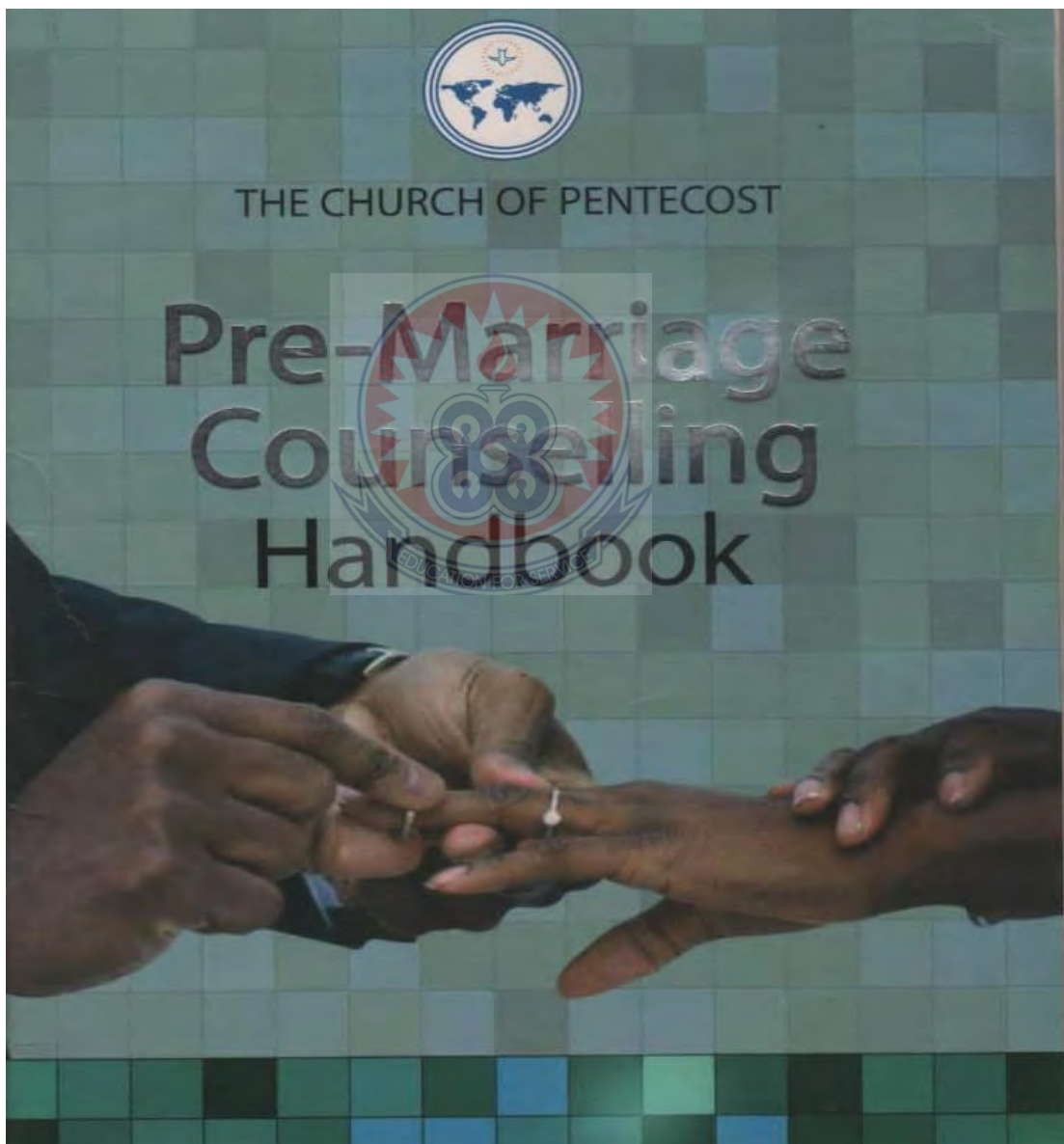
Figure 4.1: Counselling handbook (Pentecost church)

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4.3.2 The Presbyterian Church of Ghana

Big things have small beginnings"; so is the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. The Presbyterian church of Ghana is one of the mainline protestant churches rooted in the Orthodox churches with a worldwide fellowship. The Presbyterian church of Ghana is symbolized in the Swiss Cross which stands for the Basel Mission as its missionary movement. Like many other mainline Protestant churches, the church provides formal education through schooling for Ghanaians and played a key role in the expansion and growth of the church, binding all together and expressing the essential unity of the Presbyterian church of Ghana is the motto "That they all may be one". It is from this motto that the Presbyterian Church see pre-marital counselling as a way of cementing would-be couples for everlasting marriage. *Source; https;//ugpace.ug.edu.gh. Retrieved (5 /6 /2022)*

The duration for pre-marital counselling in the Presbyterian Church depends on the responses from the society in which the church fulfils her mission without negating the beliefs, principles and doctrines upon which the Presbyterian denomination was established. But in most assemblies, a minimum of three months is used for pre-marital counselling. The churches start their counselling with one on one counselling with the would-be couples. This is followed by group counselling with would be couples and parents. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana also has pre-marital counselling forms to guide the individual counsellors and would -be couples.
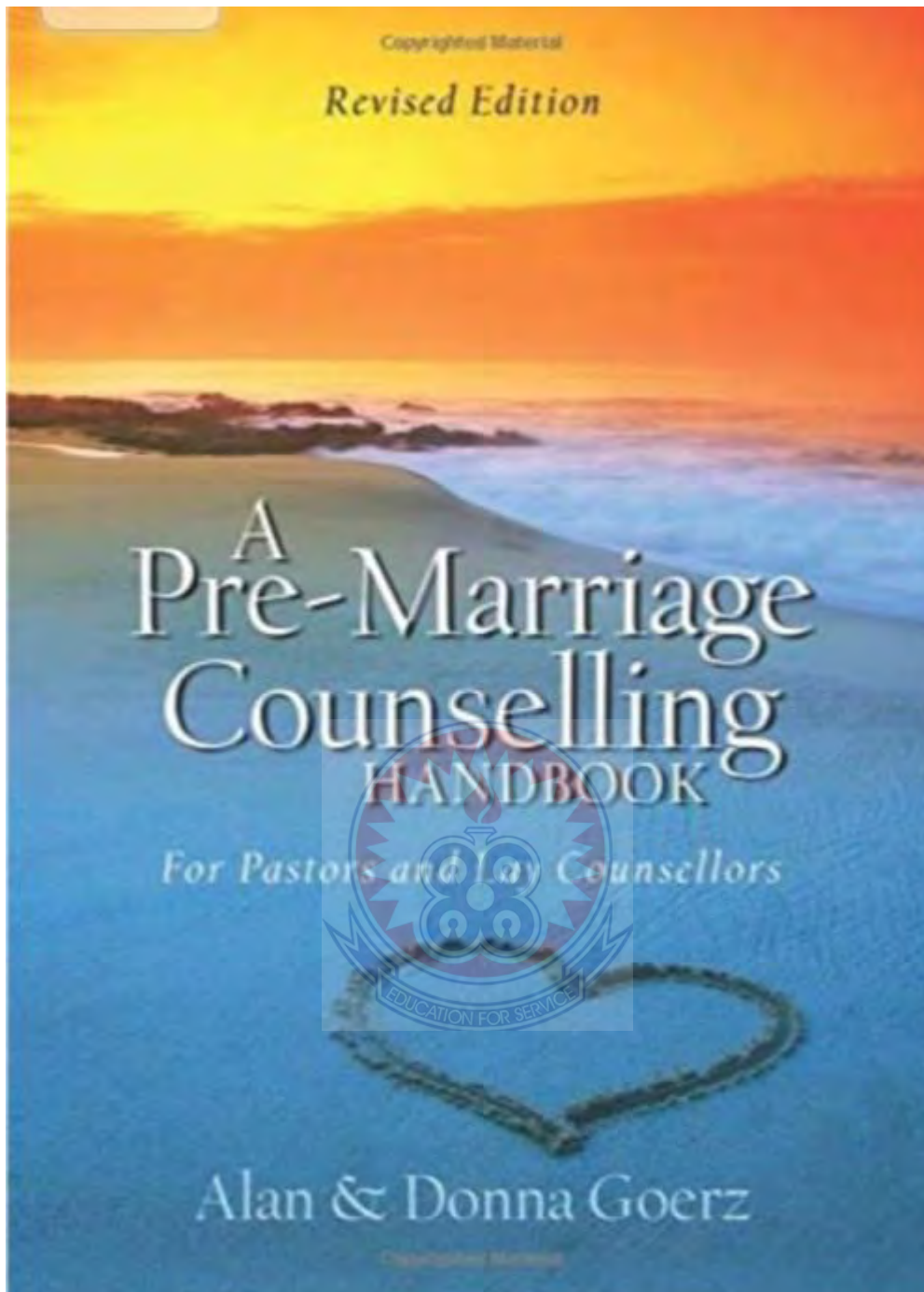
Figure 4.2: Counselling handbook (Presbyterian Church)

Source; https;//northernghana.net.Blog. Retrieved (10 /6 /2022)

4.3.3 The Assemblies of God Church

The Assemblies of God denomination has its roots in the Pentecostal churches in the nineteenth century as a result of religious revival that started during the late 1800's. The revival was characterized by a widespread experience of spiritual manifestations such as speaking in tongues. The Assemblies of God denomination trace its belief that "Speaking in Tongues" is the biblical evidence for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. This church has also laid down adequate procedures of preparing its would-be couples for fruitful marriages. These procedures are anchored in their four months intensive marital counselling forms. The church has four months intensive pre-marital counselling. The church starts their counselling by firstly engage in medical examination of the would be couples. This is followed by one on one counselling, then group counselling. The church also has pre-marital counselling form to guide the counsellors and couples.

STUDY 2

PRE-MARITAL AND MARRIAGE COUNSELLING

A. PRE-MARITAL COUNSELLING:

1. DEFINITION:

This is Counselling given to individuals anticipating to marry with the purpose of equipping them with the knowledge necessary for them to cope with the problems that arise during courtship, the planning of the marriage and the marriage life. It is a preventive counseling.
∗ Not to be in troble sofre redoming them)

2. THE GOALS OF PREMARITAL COUNSELLING:

The basic aim of pre-marital Counselling is to assist prospective mates to

a) Gain better understanding themselves
b) Gain better understanding of each other
c) Gain better understanding of what marriage involves.
d) To prevent crisis rather than the solving of crisis that may arise due to ignorance.

3. TOPICS TO BE TREATED:

The following topics or some of them and other may be treated to equip the potential couples for a successful marriage journey.

i. How to prepare for marriage
ii. How to enter marriage
iii. Responsibilities of husbands and wives
iv. Conflict resolution
v. Divorce
vi. In-law relationships

4. DURATION

Pre-marital Counselling should be done over a period of time. The time duration depends on the number of times the Counsellor can arrange to meet the Counsellees per week or so. Any period of time to cover the above topics is satisfactory. This may span between six weeks and three months. It should not be unnecessarily long period.

Figure 4.3: Counselling guiding form (Assemblies of God church)

4.3.4 The Apostolic Church – Ghana

The Apostolic Church-Ghana is a Christian denomination that arose from Pentecostal movement in the early 19th century. The name "Apostolic" stemmed from the twelve apostles that followed Jesus, whose teachings are paramount for the beliefs of the Apostolic Church. Apostolic members strive to promote first-century Christianity in its faith, traditions, and politics with adherence to the doctrines of the Gospels. The church is firmly identified as a Pentecostal, Trinitarian, Evangelic and Bible-believing church with the aim of bringing the good news of Jesus Christ as saviour and lord to

all people. It is further dedicated to teaching and living with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Source; https;//www.theapostolicchurch.org.gh Retrieved (10 /6 /2022)

Like other Christian denominations, the Apostolic church -Ghana embrace four months pre-marital counselling as core duty of their church doctrines. In their pre-marital counselling handbook, the church sees pre-marital counselling as a remedial and the tool to solve marital problems and promotes sustainability in marriage. This can be found in page twelve of their pre-marital forms where they stressed the need for all prospective would-be couples to undergo pre-marital counselling as it is seen as the surest way of promoting free marital distortions. Counselling in the Apostolic church firstly start with family counselling, then groups counselling which involves the would be couples, this is followed by one on one and the group counselling and then parents counselling. The church also has pre-marital counselling book to would be couples and church counsellors.

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Carl Rogers refers to couselling as a series of **direct contacts** with the individual which aims to offer **assistance** in changing attitudes and behaviour. Rogers further writes that "effective counseling" consists of a definitely structured, permissive relationship which allows the client to gain an understanding of himself to a degree which enables him to take positive steps in the light of new orientation.

Joseph Perez (1965) summarized the definition of counseling as "counseling is an interactive conjoining the counselee who is vulnerable and who needs assistance, and the counselor who is trained and educated to give this assistance, the goal of which is to help the counselee learn to deal more effectively with himself and the reality of his environment".

The ordinary meaning attached to counseling is that Counselling is a service designed to help an individual analyse himself by relating his capabilities, achievements, interests and mode of adjustment to what new decision he has made or has to make. In other words, counseling is designed to provide an interacting relationship where the counselor is attempting to help a counselee to better understand himself in relating to his present and future decisions or problems.

B.   PURPOSE (GOALS) OF CONSELLING:

Arbuckle says the broad objective of counseling is to help the individual clear away the "entangling and hampering tentacles" so that he can be what he really is, and contribute more both to self and to his fellows. According to Ellis the goals of counseling are to demonstrate to the client that the way that client perceives his situation is the source of his emotional disturbance, and also to bring into focus the illogical and irrational ideas so as to help him to readjust his thinking in a national and logical way.
We may therefore summarise the goals of counseling as bellow:

a. **Counselling is remedial:** It is remedial in the sense that it helps the clients to become aware of their problems and at the same time assis them to identify and adopt realistic plans to resolve the problems. In the counseling process, the counsellor's duty is "the curing of unreason by reason" In doing this, the counsellor

(i)   Shows the client that he is illogical and points out the relationst between his illogical ideas and his unhappiness or emotional disturbance;

(ii)   Lets the client realize that as long as he maintains his irration ideas, his unhappiness will persist;

(iii)   Encourages the client to change his thinking and ideas, and t accept more rational philosophies of living so that he will no become a victim of irrational ideas and beliefs again.

Figure 4.4: Counselling guiding forms (Apostolic Church)

4.3.5 The International Central Gospel Church – ICGC

Little drop of water makes an ocean is the story behind the International Central Gospel church. The International Central Gospel Church – ICGC – is an Evangelical, Charismatic Christian Church. It was officially inaugurated as a church on the 26th of February 1984, in Accra, Ghana. Over the years, the church saw astronomical growth in membership activities with local assemblies established in almost all the major

towns and cities of Ghana. Several other churches were also planted in cities in Europe and the United States.

The International Central Gospel Church is a socially conscious Christian church which upholds the philosophy of human dignity and excellence. It engages in promoting and staging events whose impact have reached the depths of the Ghanaian society and brought Christ to the doorsteps of the people.

Source;https;//www.centralgospel.com. Retrived (15 /6 /2022)

The church seeks to help individuals, couples, would-be couple and groups of couples to prepare for and build happy, fulfilling and successful marriages through their four months pre-marital counselling. The church sees pre-marital counselling as self-evaluation tool which helps to stimulate effective communication skills and assessing readiness in marriage. The church use four months for counselling this involve counselling with the parents of the would be couples. This is to first know their concern of the marriage contract. This is followed the counselling of the would be couples and the one on one counselling. The church also has pre-marital counselling book to promote the counselling in the church.

Figure 4.5, counselling guiding form (I.C.G.C)

4.3.6 The Methodist Church Ghana

The Methodist Church of Ghana is one of the largest and oldest mainline Protestant denominations in Ghana. The Methodist Church of Ghana follows the same Sunday worship practices as other Methodist Church branches. This approach to worship displays a more vibrant and energetic form of praise. The Methodist Church of Ghana is responsible for a large part of its community's outreach.

Source; https;//africaworldpressbooks.com. Retrieved (15 / 6/ 2022)

Like many other mainline Protestant churches, the church provides formal education through schooling for Ghanaians. This educational role for Methodist Church of Ghana in particular has helped the country provide a strong educational system that can accommodate the Ghanaian population. The Methodist church, like other denominations in Ghana attach a strong approach to pre-marital counselling as a means of solving marital disputes in marriages. This is manifested in the four months intensive pre-marital counselling for would-be couples.

The study revealed that, all the churches the researcher had interaction with have pre-marital counselling form to guide the counselling of the would-be couples. The debate about how long pre-marital counselling sessions should last still lingers and continues to remain a debate among counselors. In some cases, pre-marital counseling is a brief form of therapy that helps couples outline their goals and align their expectations before getting married (Howe, 2011). It came out from the findings of the researcher that there are different durations for pre-marital counselling which depends on the doctrine, the origin of the church and the responses from the society in which the church fulfils its mission. One thing that also came out was that the procedures and the things they counsel on are the same for all the churches interviewed.

The issues discus during pre-marital counselling include, how to prepare for marriage, how to enter into marriage, responsibilities in marriage, conflicts in marriage and the resolution mechanism, divorce, sex in marriage, communication in marriage, parenting in marriage, financial management in marriage, in-law relationship in marriage, understanding of partners in marriage, faithfulness in marriage, barrenness and impotence in marriage, health issues in marriage, occupational choice in marriage and others.

At the end of the counselling duration, the would-be couple are given a counselling questionnaire, where information about themselves, information on customary marriage, background information as well as information on personal health are obtained by the churches for assessment and evaluation. All these are done by the churches to ensure smooth transition of would-be couple into the institution of marriage for greater marital satisfactions.

Figure 4.6: Counselling guiding form (Pentecost Church)
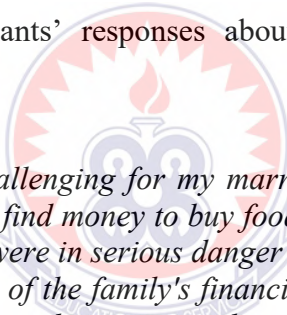
4.4 Causes of marital instability

The first research question sought to find out the causes of marital instability from the perspective of the married Christians from their own experiences and also from the church leaders. This is to help the researcher access if there are other causes of marital

instability which are different from the once in the literature. It became clear from the conversations that the researcher had with the participants that the following factors are the key factors to the marital instability: financial challenges, unfaithfulness, sex issues, inadequate marital counseling, neglect of marital responsibilities, and lack of communication.

4.4.1 Financial challenges

After reading through the field notes and the recorded audio from the interviews, it became clear that the participants' perception of financial issues in the marriage was a significant contributing factor to marital instability. Six of the participants mentioned this from their own experiences and what is affecting their marriages. Some of the excerpts from the participants' responses about their financial problems are as follows:

> "*Things grew so challenging for my marriage to the point where we were unable to even find money to buy food, much less pay our rent or utility bills, and we were in serious danger of losing our home. My wife took on the majority of the family's financial responsibilities, and as a result of this, she desired more control over our marriage which made our union became unstable and it got to a point I wanted divorce.*" (Male participant #18)

> "*Up until he lost his job, my husband and I were living peacefully together and taking pleasure in our marriage. Because of this circumstance, our marriage faced significant financial troubles, and since I was jobless, things became difficult for the family as a whole. As a direct result of these difficulties, my spouse began drinking alcohol and returning home late.*" (Female participant #23)

> "*Because my husband was unemployed, I had to travel most of the time to satisfy the family's financial needs. My husband began to assume that I was having extramarital encounters with other men as a result of his circumstance, which resulted in a series of disagreements and contention between the two of us.*" (Female participant #27).

Financial difficulties can destabilize marriages, according to the above quotes from some of the participants. The perspective of the church leaders supported the idea that problems with one's finances are a big factor in marital instability. This is also highlighted in the church of Pentecost counselling handbook (Page 10) as one of the factors that could lead to misery in marriage and ultimately destabilize a marriage union which started as promising. The finding agrees with research finding of Ambakederemo and Ganagana (2006) who also listed financial difficulty as a factor for marital instability. This was also highlighted in the counselling manual of the Apostolic church (Page 12) that financial challenges are one of the key factors that destabilize marriages of couples and failure to manage it could lead to divorce.

4.4.2 Unfaithfulness

The participants cited unfaithfulness as one of the primary reasons for marital instability, and five of participants named it as the primary reason for marital instability. The following quotations highlight the responses to the question:

> *"A man with whom I had suspicions that he was having an affair with my wife eventually confessed to having an affair with her, when I threatened him. He finally said that my wife had not disclosed to him she was engaged." I lost trust in my wife, my good relationship with her was not the same again and I thought about divorcing her*. (Male participant #23)

> "*My spouse became an embarrassment to me in the church and in the town because he was stalking young girls in the town. He was constantly complaining to me that he didn't have any money, despite the fact that young girls were just squandering his money all the time. This resulted in lack of trust and unusual quarrels*." (Female participant #16)

> "*It was so embarrassing that my husband got a girl who was young enough to be his daughter pregnant. I could not stand the shame in the community, and he showed no remorse or regret for what he did, so I decided to get a divorce*." (Female participant #10)

The preceding quotes from the participants make it quite evident that one of the primary reasons Christian couples may end up in divorce is because one of the spouses was unfaithful during the marriage.

The above responses from the participants are congruent with the research findings of some scholars. For instance, marital infidelity has been cited by DeMaris (2013) and Apostolou et al. (2019) as one of the most cited causes for divorce and one of the most commonly cited reasons why couples seek for counselling. In the Presbyterian counselling book (Page. 22) this is considered an abominable act by any party and instances of unfaithfulness give room for distrust and loss of confidence in the viability of the marriage. Sex outside one marriage is considered abnormality by all the churches and it is one of the factors that can guarantee a divorce by the churches.

4.4.3 Sex issues

Sex-related problems in marriage is one of the chief factors that lead to marital instability. This indicates that sex-related problems in marriage are a significant factor in the divorce rate. The following quotation illustrates some of the responses that were received from the study participants:

> "*After the birth of all of our children, my wife began to reject me whenever I asked for sex; she always gave me reasons why she could not have sex, and at times it would be three months before we had sex. This ultimately resulted in tension between my wife and I in the marriage.*" (Male participant #23)

> "*There came a point in my marriage when my former wife insisted that I either make a commitment to her or give her some money before we went to bed together. I was forced to part ways with her in order to find a partner who would not place sexual limitations on us.*" (Male Participant #22)

> "*My spouse was completely unable to satisfy me in any way, and he was not making any efforts to improve the situation. This went on for a*

while, and I didn't enjoy anything about my marriage because of that."
(Female participant #16)

It is clear, based on the responses that were received from the participants, that sex issues in marriage are a major factor that contributes to the instability of marriage. This was congruent with Ambakederemo and Ganagana (2006) finding and because of this, special attention, needs to be devoted to this issue. Counselling should be sought as soon as possible for married couples who have not discussed their sexual lives.

In order to provide effective and relevant solutions to sex issues that couples in churches are experiencing, the church must likewise increase its teaching and programmes on marriage. It is in view of this that sex has being a major topic in the pre-marital handbook of the various churches. Sex is considered an important part of marriage and couples need not deny each other of their conjugal right.

4.4.4 Inadequate marital counselling

The participants cited inadequate marital counselling as one of the factors that contributed to the occurrence of marital challenges. Four out of the 21 participants cited examples that lend credence to the notion that marriage counselling in the church is lacking, which is responsible for a number of marital instabilities that have occurred in the church. The following are some of the remarks made by participants.

> "*Some of the counselling that is scheduled for singles before marriage does not address some of the significant issues that are faced by married couples, and in some cases, just one of the spouses attends the marriage counselling session.*" (Male participant #23)

> "*I was married before I joined the church, and despite the fact that I had been a member of the church for the previous ten years, no one had ever offered me post-marital counselling; furthermore, we do not have an organised marriage counselling programme designed exclusively for married couples.*" (Female participant #7)

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"*I do not understand why some couples have to go to counselling for a long time while others only have to go for a short time. I think the church is sometimes unfair when it comes to how long couples have to go to counselling. I faced similar situation and in my judgment did not help me to prepare well enough for marriage.*" (Male participant #27)

Taking into account what the participants said and what the church leaders said, "*some would-be couples find it difficult to make use of the church counselling programs, thinking that it is time wasting.*'' (Reverend minister Assemblies of God church) it is clear that there is not much coordination when it comes to marriage counselling and that couples do not use the church's marriage counselling programme. Marriage counsellors and pastors need to teach more about how to make a marriage work, and couples should not wait for problems to get worse before getting help.

4.4.5 Neglect of marital responsibilities

Neglect of marital responsibilities happens when one or both partners decide to stop doing their part in the marriage. Participants who were interviewed said that people in the church get divorced because they do not take care of their marriage responsibilities. Here are some of the quotes the researcher found on the theme:

"*When it came to sustaining the family financially, my husband had the means, but he willfully neglected his responsibilities to me and my children, such that, he no longer paid the utility bills and provided us money for housekeeping needs, even though he was still working and receiving income. I couldn't live with a husband like that, so I had to tell myself to do something about it.*" (Female participant #24).

"*I did not understand why my wife had to abandon all of her household responsibilities and delegate them to the kids. She does not cook, wash my clothing, or even make our bed anymore. Because of this mindset, I did not enjoy my time at home.*" (Male participant #20)

Therefore, disregard of marital duties is one of the factors that is ascribed to relationship breakdown. Despite the numerous steps taken by the churches to tackle the issue of responsibility in marriage, much efforts need to be put in place to make

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couples aware that duties in marriage is a shared responsibility. It is therefore necessary for the church to handle and control this situation through post-marital counselling and the teachings of the Bible on Christian marriage. Marriage is going through many changes, and one of such change is the issue of responsibility in marriage. Until couples come to the realization that duties in marriage are a shared responsibility, the issue of responsibility neglect will continue to be an obstacle in marital unions.

4.4.6 Lack of communication

Lack of communication was one of the contributing factors ascribed to the instability of their marital relationships. As a result, participants named "lack of communication" as a potentially dangerous cause of marital instability. The following are selection of the feedback provided by the participants regarding this theme:

> "*My husband covertly sold our salt mining site which belonged to both of us, and never informed me. After finding out, my husband flatly denied this allegation when I asked him about it, but after more investigation, the entire family discovered the case was true. Because I felt betrayed and duped, I became enraged and nearly filed for divorce if not for the intervention of our church leaders*." (Female participant #26)

> "*My husband is always on his phone or watching football. We hardly communicate and I sometimes feel like a stranger in the house. Due to his behaviour, I hardly communicate with him and so does he. I always feel tension anytime we communicate as a couple. Sometimes I feel my marriage is hitting the rocks*." (Female Participant #9)

The research finding supported the finding of Tolorunleke (2014) who also listed lack of communication as a factor in marital instability. The church of Pentecost counselling book emphatically mentions in page 11 that failure or inability to communicate is one of the most fundamental problems in troubled marriages.

Communication is considered to be the hub of marriage. Marriage without adequate communication can lead to distortions and subsequently fuel marital instability. It is important to know that no one was born a good communicator. Communication however is an art and skill to be learnt from the home of the individuals and is likely to have significant impact on how the prospective couple learned to communicate

4.5 Trend of Marital Instability among Christians in Kasseh from 2017 to 2021

The second research question explore what church leaders said about trends of marital instability among Christians in Kasseh. Six of the church leaders interviewed which included; Senior Pastor of Apostolic church; Elder of International Central Gospel church; Senior pastor of Presbyterian Church; Steward of Methodist Church; Senior Pastor of Pentecost Church; Reverend minister of Assemblies of God church.

According to all the participants, the trend of marital instability among Christians is increasing. One of the participants was of the view that "*marital instability was not common in the past as it is currently*" (senior pastor of Apostolic church). He further accounts that from 2017 to 2019, out of six marriages contracted in the church, four had reported to the church various causes of marital instabilities. These include interference by in-laws, issues of trust, non-performance of marital responsibilities and financial problems. He added that from 2019 to 2021, the church had contracted three marriages of which one couple called for divorce. Another participant shared, "*marital instability in the past was far-fetched unlike today that it is common"* (senior presbyter Presbyterian Church). He explained that "*the church counselling committee has received several reports from five couples who got married between 2017 and 2019 out of seven couples who were registered.*" The interview with him further revealed that 2019 to 2021 recorded a decline in marriage contract with four

marriages been registered in the church and an increase in marital instability cases of three couples. These cases include adultery, desertion, poor communications, bad manners and disrespect.   Another church leader shared how in the space of three years, seven out of eleven newly married couples have come to him asking him to initiate divorce process for them due to a number of marital instability cases, which he further described the trend as "*bad and alarming in the church*'' (Senior Pastor of Pentecost church). He further said "*in 2017 to 2018, one couple out of three marriages contracted came for divorce process due to some problems which I will not share with you, but I referred the couple to the district pastor for further action*". He added that 2019 recorded no marital instability case out of two marriages contracted but the year 2020 to 2021 saw four marriages at the bench of collapsed as a result of issues such as family of partners, travelling problems, financial challenges, infidelity and personality lifestyle.

This finding is in support of Osafo et al. (2021) study that the highest divorce instances of 633 were registered in 2006. Divorce cases were also reported in 427 instances in 2013, 468 cases in 2012, and 426 cases in 2010. The findings are also in line with studies, which are backed up by actual data documented by some Ghanaian researchers (Takyi & Gyimah, 2007; Takyi, 2001)). Clark and Brauner-Otto (2015) found that marital relationships in 33 African nations, including Ghana, were particularly weak, with divorce being the leading cause of marital instability in the continent.

This trend and data from the church leaders shows that marital instability is on the rise in Ghana despite the numerous counselling interventions being put in place by the various Christian denominations to ensure glorious marriages. This means that more

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work need to be done to rescue the Ghanaian society from the growing marital distortions. On the reason for this trend, the prevalent response surrounding the rise of marital instability in the community from the perspective of the church leaders are (a) materialism, (b) inadequate preparation and (c) absence of love.

On materialism, 5 out of 6 participants mentioned love for material things as the reason for this growing trend of divorce. One leader said that "the economic crisis is worsening the situation, making couples crave for material things causing tension in their marriage" (senior presbyter of Presbyterian Church). To support this assertion another participant reiterated that, 'unrealistic expectations and love for material things (Senior Pastor of Apostolic church)' are reasons for this growing trend of marital instabilities in the community. Another church leader added, "Most wives give their husbands financial pressure and this leads to undue tension in the marriage (Elder of Assemblies of God church)." This is in alignment with Galba's (2015) study posited that economic situation plays a role in marital stability.

On inadequate preparation, 4 out of 6 participant mentioned this. One leader felt that 'couples rush into marriage without adequate preparation" (Presbyter of Pentecost church). Other participants talked about issue of couples failing to find out if they are compatible before they venture into marriage. A leader added that, "in the course of counselling we sometimes realise couple are not compatible. We try to talk to them to exercise patience and know themselves better before entering into the marriage but they do insist they will be fine and go ahead despite the call for them to wait" (senior pastor of Presbyterian Church). Elder of International Central Gospel church specifically mentioned, "It's sad to see couples rush into marriage without going through counseling – they see the counseling session as waste of time".

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This finding from Presbyter of Presbyterian and Elder of International Central Gospel church was consistent with the findings of previous studies. For instance, a study conducted by Udofia et al. (2021) found that couples who received pre-marital counselling before getting married were more content with their marriages than couples who did not receive pre-marital counselling before getting married. The findings are also supported by the Symbolic Interactionism Theory and the Attachment-Differentiation Premarital Model. In the Symbolic Interactionism Theory for instance, people who have interactions (counselling) in the society before marriage are likely to be fruitful in their marriages than those who do not. Throwing more light on this is the Attachment-Differentiation Premarital Model which describes a person's ability to secure attachment (counselling) are likely to see progress in their marital union than those who are do not have pre-marital counselling.

On absence of love, three out of the six participants mentioned this. One of the participant was of the view that, "husbands do not love their wives enough" (Presbyter of Presbyterian church). Another participant mentioned, "I think a lot of wives don't respect their husbands, therefore making it difficult for their husbands to love them and it could be the other way round. He continued by saying, "I always have to make couples understand that they have to play their part to make the marriage work" (Elder of Apostolic church).

This finding supports empirical finding of Ambakederemo and Ganagana, (2006) who listed absence of love as one of the top reasons why couple seek for divorce in Nigerian homes. To support this finding, adequate preparations were put in the pre-marital counselling forms by the various Christian denominations to address the issue of love. For instance, in page fifteen of pre-marital counselling form of the

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Presbyterian Church, would-be couples were counseled on how to make their bodies available for one another in their marriage to enhance marital intimacy. Also, in page ten of the pre-marital counselling form of the International Central Gospel church call on the new couples not to hide their sexual fillings from one another and must be open to each other.

4.6 Forms of pre-marital counselling by the churches

The third research question sought to investigate the perception of participants on the forms of pre-marital counselling practiced by the church by seeking the opinion of the church leaders. The researcher first wanted to know if the participants had knowledge about pre-marital preparation. Due to years of experience in handling marital issues, all the six participants expressed satisfactory knowledge and awareness of pre-marital preparation. All the six participants interviewed were well informed of the meaning of pre-marital preparation when asked to express their opinion. Some of their responses are seen in the following quotations:

> *"Premarital preparation is a period that prepares couples to embrace and overcome the challenges in marriage." (Elder the church of Pentecost)*

> *"Premarital preparation is a period that couples prepare themselves; know about God's plan in marriage and know how to prepare a sense of adventure in marriage." (Reverend minister Assemblies of God church)*

> *"It is a period that prepares couples adequately for the challenges ahead of the marriage." (Steward Methodist church)*

> *"It is a period that allows couples to know themselves and what is entailed in the marriage.*" (*Senior pastor, International Central Gospel church*)

Based on the knowledge that the participants had about pre-marital preparation, it became known that the pre-marital preparation forms adopted by the church was pre-marital counseling. The pre-marital counselling system adopted by the churches include one-on-one counselling, group counselling and family counselling However, there were differences in opinion on the duration of the pre-marital counselling period. Participants mentioned they take couples through six months of counseling while two of the participants stated they only use three months for their counseling.

A senior pastor of the church of Pentecost shared his own experience on the six months of counseling that couples found it 'laborious' whiles steward of Methodist church also recalled instances of marriage couples complaining it was too long to go through the process. A Senior pastor of Apostolic church cited that "having considered the duration for pre-marital counselling, the church cut down the counseling session to 3 months and they offered a post counseling session after marriage." A presbyter of Presbyterian Church was also of the view that counselling session has been embraced by the church. He continued by saying that "Although couples are a bit skeptical about the duration, they have to look at and listen to the responses from the society in which the church fulfils her mission and accept it for their own good." It must be noted that the duration of pre-marital counselling differs from one church to another, but the impacts and what goes into the pre-marital counselling are the same for all the churches interviewed.

In an attempt to enhance effective delivery of pre-marital preparation and counselling for its church members, the church of Pentecost Ghana has developed a book titled" Pre-marriage Counselling Handbook". This book aims at helping pastors and lay leaders in addressing the neglected problem of taking the pain to effectively prepare

the prospective couple within the church and beyond for sound and lasting marriage. The book carefully outlines step by step procedures in contracting marriage in the church of Pentecost and basic information the prospective couples must know to usher them into the institution of marriage. It also, provided legal procedures for marriage under ordinance as well as divorce procedures.

The data from the church leader and evident from the church's counselling hand book are consistent with Musa (2010) study. In his article titled "The Significance of Pre-marital Counseling to the Stability of Christian Marriage," Musa (2010) discusses the significance of pre-marital counselling to the stability of Christian marriage. He states that "the better one prepares in any endeavor in life, it creates better and higher chances to succeed meritoriously." Musa (2010) provides further clarification by stating, "You will find that more often than not, the area we are least seriously prepared for in this life time partnership destabilise Christian marriages (p.33)."

Similarly, studies conducted on 112 couples engaged to be married indicated that 96.5 percent of them believed their union will last for many years and were content with their union, according to Williams (1992). It seems like not many people get married with the plan to get a divorce. While many of these same people agree that pre-marital counselling is advantageous to couples, they do not see the need to enroll in these pre-marital programmes. The findings from the church leaders as supported by the literature is in consistence with the Symbolic Interactionism Theory and the Attachment-Differentiation Premarital Model. These two theories throw more lights on the findings that pre-marital counselling primarily aims at providing solutions to marital distress among couples.

4.7 Relevance of the knowledge gained from premarital preparation

Research question four sought from the married couples who had gone through premarital counselling, the relevance of the information gained from their premarital counselling. Based on the interaction that the researcher had with the participants it came to light that the relevance of the knowledge gained from premarital counselling can be seen in the following ways: Preparation for marriage, its vitality to the success of their marriages, deepens knowledge of partner before marriage and how to handle marital disputes maturely.

4.7.1 Preparation for marriage

Preparation for marriage was one of the major relevance of pre-marital counselling cited by the participants and five out of twenty-one participants cited preparation for marriage as a main relevance of premarital counselling. Some of their responses are seen in the following quotations:

> "*The knowledge I gained from the premarital counselling helped me to be prepared emotionally before I entered into the marriage. I thought I was all-good until certain things were revealed to me during the counseling process.*" (Male Participant #15)

> "*Since I was exposed to what to expect in marriage during the counseling sessions, I was not taken by surprise when my husband changed after some few months of our marriage. I was prepared to face that challenge and thanks to the marriage counseling, I received, I am still into the marriage.*" (Male Participant #12)

> "*Oh, yes! To me premarital preparation helped me to be better prepared for what was ahead. I cannot imagine a successful marriage without preparation. I was taught many things which I did not know especially on sex and living with your spouse harmoniously.*" (Female Participant #9)

> "*I was very bad with communication before counseling. During the counseling, our counselor taught us the importance of communication in marriage. He taught us how to be receptive to our spouse's feelings and communicate in marriage. This*

preparation period was quite helpful and I am seeing the results
in my marriage." (Male Participant #22)

The above quotations from the participants clearly indicate that, preparation for marriage is one of the major relevance of pre-marital counseling. Carroll and Doherty (2003) believe that marital preparation is a preventative approach, which is hoped to result in happier and more functional marriages.

Findings from the church leaders suggested that preparations for marriage are pre-requisite activity needed to ensure marital sustainability. For instance, in page nine and sixteen of the pre-marital counselling forms of both the Assemblies of God church and the Apostolic church respectively, it is stressed that preparations for marriage are divine call for every Christian to achieve glorious marriage to the glory of God. The church leaders further mentioned that preparations for marriage help the individual to understand each other, relate well with the society, communicate well with one another, and make it possible to know one's responsibilities, financial preparations among others.
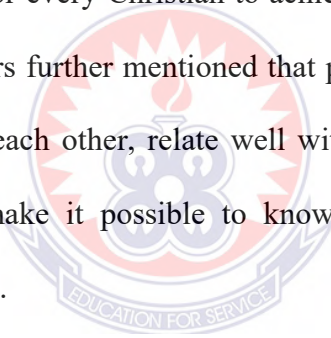
4.7.2 Enhance communication

Enhanced communication is one of the outcomes of pre-marital counselling on marital stability by the participants. This was what some of the participants had to say on 'enhanced communication' as one of the outcome of premarital counselling on marital stability:

> "*It improved my communication with my spouse, which has made our marriage stable. There are certain subject areas of interest we could not discuss freely but our counselor advised us to be open about everything. In our marriage, we discuss about everything and we have made a vow not to keep secrets.*" (Male Participant #22)

> "*We used to have misunderstandings on our finances especially on how and when to spend, before our premarital preparation. During*

our counseling session, our counselor cautioned us on finances destabilizing our marriage. He gave us some few cues that proved beneficial in our marriage. My husband and I disagree to agree on family finances and we don't allow it to come between us." (Male participant #14)

"Yes, I would say one area I see improvement is communicating with my wife. We used to have series of miscommunications during our dating period. However, our premarital counselling addressed some of these issues of communication. There are sometimes instances where we do have miscommunication in our marriage but we are always reminded of lessons we took from our counselors." (Male participant #9).

The participants' responses' are in line with the pre-marital counselling hand book of the various churches where greater emphases are placed on communication as effective tool needed to solve marital troubles. For instance, pages eleven and thirteen of the pre-marital counselling handbooks of both the Pentecost and Assemblies of God church respectively encouraged would-be couples to discuss their feelings, expectations, differences, attitudes and personal needs in their marital unions. They have also been encouraged to develop listening behaviour as they try to understand each other and to talk through problems without putting down each other or hiding what they feel.

The findings of this study are again consistent with the findings of a number of researchers (Russell & Lyster, 1992) The study revealed that premarital program increased effective communication, and provided discussion opportunities. Ngunjiri and Muiru (2021) found that communication skills have a positive and significant effects on marital stability among newly married couples in Kamukunji1sub-county, Nairobi1County. Premarital counselling enables partners to communicate honestly with their spouses. The participants' responses also revealed agreement with the Attachment-Differentiation Premarital Model, because participants feel so much

emotionally attached to their spouse that when communication is jeopardized they live in constant fear of being abandoned or manage their fear by isolating themselves.

4.7.3 Vital to success of marriage

On the relevance of knowledge gained from premarital counseling, married participants indicated that it is vital to the success of marriage. Some of the responses from the participants are indicated in the quotations below:

> *"I cannot imagine how shattered my marriage will be without premarital counseling. The words of the counselor still echo in my mind which for me has proven very vital to the success of my marriage."* (Male participant #21)

> *"I have been married for 15 years now and I can confess giving time to be trained, taught and counseled has played a role in my 15 years of marriage. Until date, I go for counseling with my husband. We don't want our marriage to hit the rocks."* (Male participant #14)

> *"There is a saying that to every successful husband, there is a wife behind him. I would also say that to every successful marriage there is a preparation beforehand. If I am enjoying my marital bliss today, it is because I have given myself time to be counseled. My husband and I patiently endured the process and we are seeing the results now in our marriage."* (Female participant #24)

> *"Well, I would say, the knowledge gained speaks volumes of the success I am enjoying in my marriage."* (Female participant #7)

> *"My partner and I have mutual respect for one another because of the knowledge gained from premarital counselling. We as well understood what makes a marriage successful and the skills that we must develop to make our relationship stronger."* (Male participant #23)

> *"Since we learned from our counseling programme that managing finances hampers marital bliss, my wife and I prepared ourselves for the challenge ahead. There is not a day we do not talk about our financial situation, how we would manage it so that unnecessary conflicts do not arise. We are enjoying stability in our marriage because there is no cause for concern in our finances"* (Male participant #19)

Based on the responses gathered from the respondents, it is evident that the knowledge gained from premarital preparation is vital to the success of most

marriages as agreed by Weiss (2000), which is likely to reduce the incidence of divorce. This is also in line with the research finding of Williams (1992), found that a good pre-marital program helps to reduce the likelihood of divorce among members of local churches.

The findings also agree with the Symbolic Interactionism Theory which mentions that interaction with the society and role-taking is a key mechanism through which an individual can appreciate another person's perspective and better understand the significance of a particular action to that person. Counselling is the tool with which the couples interact with the society and through the counselling process; couples are informed of the roles they must play to make the marriage work.

Marital success is measured when couples live together in marriage, enjoying the closest possible loving and fulfilling relationship without any marital distortion and intention of breakup. From the pre-marital counselling forms of the churches interviewed, factors that account for a vitality of success in marriage includes, good communication, love and care for each other, commitment to the marriage, faithfulness, hard work, respect, maturity among others. These issues were carefully discussed with would-be couples who undergo pre-marital counselling in the various churches that the researcher interacted with.

4.7.4 Good knowledge of partner

From the analysis of the data collected, one of the relevance of premarital counselling according to four of the participants was getting to know your partner better. Some of the direct quotations from the respondents on this are as follows:

"During counseling with my husband, the counselor demanded that we would be open as much as we can to our spouse. It was then that my husband revealed to us he had a child. If not for the counseling, I wouldn't have known about this." (Female participant #10)

"To me premarital counselling was an eye-opener. I always thought I knew my wife enough. The counselor took us through some series of topics and that made me know my wife and I had high levels of disagreement in certain subject areas. These were issues we had not ever considered during our dating period." (Female participant #16)

"Will there be one bank account in your name? We were both at a crossroad when our counsellor posed that first question. The premarital therapy helped shed light on aspects of ourselves that we had previously been unaware of." (Male participant #27).

"Premarital preparation helped me to understand my partner better. I learned a lot about my partner during that period. I think that helped us to have a stable marriage because during the beginning stage of our marriage nothing took us by surprise." (Male Participant #24)

"Through premarital counselling, my husband made it clear to me he is the type that loves to drink alcohol sometimes. When I learned this about him, it was difficult to accept but I had to adjust to his lifestyle. I understand him now and we do not have issues with it." (Female Participant#9)

"I think understanding your partner is crucial to a stable marriage and this for me is the knowledge I gained from my premarital counselling. I was taken through 6 months of intensive counseling and I got to know my partner better day by day." (Female Participant#7)

"My dating experience with my wife was hell. We did not agree on so many things and this could lead to us being at loggerheads with each other for days. Our premarital counselling was a revelation; we learned a lot about ourselves and on handling misunderstanding. We still implement these lessons we learned which has given us a stable marriage." (Male participant #11)

All the above quotations from the four participants indicated that, understanding your partner is the impact of the relevance of the knowledge gained through premarital counselling on marital preparation. The perspective of McGoldrick (2022) corroborates the findings of this study by affirming that it can help one's relationship

become more meaningful and even provide the opportunity to discover something new about one another.

A view taken from leaders of the various churches also buttressed the point that, premarital preparation helps the couple to know themselves well before they walk down the aisle. This position by the church leaders is expressed in their pre-marital counselling forms. For example, in page eleven and fourteen of both Presbyterian and Apostolic marital forms, it is stated that the focus of pre-marital preparation is to create platforms for prospective would-be couples to study each other and have knowledge about each other's strength and weaknesses in order to foster the growth of marital unions.

The findings also agree with the Symbolic Interactionism Theory which stresses on behaviour modification as one develops 'self-concept' of himself or herself through his interactions with the spouse or society. Counselling serves as the channel for couples to evaluate themselves which is also captured in Pentecost Counselling book (p.11) as one of the prerequisites of pre-marital counselling.

4.7.5 Reduction in conflicts

Reduction in conflicts is a theme that became known upon interaction with the participants. The participants cited low level of conflict as an effect of premarital preparation on marital stability and few of their quotation are found below:

> *"Premarital counselling trained us to resolve conflicts amicably which has proven vital in my marriage."* (Male participant #23)

> *"I used to quarrel and have unnecessary conflicts with my husband who was then my fiancée before our premarital programme. Premarital preparation was the turning point. As a wife, I was taught to be submissive and arguing with my husband was a sign of disrespect."* (Female participant #7)

> *"My husband and I used to engage in series of fights. My marriage will have been history if not for the intervention of our counselor."* (Female participant #16)

> *"I must confess, so many marriages would have collapsed if not for premarital preparation programmes. I remember the last thing my husband did after our marriage provoked me like not helping with house chores and giving me 'chop money'. I complain bitterly that it mostly led to angry reactions from my husband. The next moment, we were quarrelling. We had to go for post-premarital programme and things calmed down in our marriage."* (Female participant #20)

The findings on reduction in conflicts as a relevance of knowledge gained from premarital preparation on marital stability supports some earlier studies too. An example is the result of a study by Stanley et al. (2006) who discovered a lower level of conflicts among a large, random household survey of four Middle American states who were taken through premarital counselling. These projected impacts were consistent across racial groups, income levels (including the poor), and levels of education, indicating that premarital education is typically advantageous for a variety of couples.

Conflict in marriage is a catalyst for marital distortion and this is according to page ten of the pre-marital counselling form of the International Central Gospel church. To address this, various churches have incorporated measures in their pre-marital counseling forms to drastically reduce the growing conflicts associated with marital unions. These measures include, parents' approval of the marriage, background checking, medical examinations, age, educational level, religious backgrounds, occupations and others. Aside these measures, would-be couples are made to understand that conflicts in marriage is inevitable since they are different people with different culture background and different orientations. Therefore, couples need to iron their differences and not allowing the sun to settle on their anger.

4.7.6 Handling marital disputes maturely

Handling marital disputes maturely was among the importance attributed to pre-marital counselling by the participants, participants cited situations that infer that, premarital counseling contributed to better handling of marital disputes. Commenting on the relevance of marital counseling in handling marital disputes, the following were comments some of the participants made:

> "*One revelation our counselor made known to us was that conflicts were inevitable in marriage but knowing how to deal with these conflicts as they arise will determine the success of our marriage. So in one of our sessions the counselor took us through conflict management in marriage. The knowledge gained from this session came in very handy and it has helped all these years in handling conflict in our marriage.*" (Male participant #23)

> "*The information that we learned during premarital preparation helped us strengthen our communication, particularly, when it came to finding solutions to problems. When we are talking about touchy matters, I make sure to take into account how my spouse is feeling, and we work together to find a compromise or a solution.*" (Male participant #11).

> "*In contrast to our dating process, if we get upset with each other, we might not talk to each other for several days. Following the completion of our premarital preparation, we were instructed on how to resolve healthy conflicts in a manner that is reasonable and respectful.*" (Female participant #18).

Considering the responses from the respondents and that of the key informants in the church, it is obvious that, pre-marital preparation is relevant in handling marital disputes maturely. This is in line with Duncan and Wood (2003) who asserted marriage-preparation programmes improve participants' ability to manage conflict, assist couples in becoming more devoted to each other, boost marital satisfaction, and reduce the likelihood of getting a divorce.

The church of Pentecost manual emphatically states under its topic that the reason for pre-marital counselling is for married couples to have the "willingness to face problems and seek solution". The ability to manage conflicts in marital union is a duty for all married couples. Marital dispute is inevitable, but would-be couples who undergo pre-marital counselling have the tool such as respect for each other, tolerant, good communication and others to manage marital conflicts in order to yield marital progress. All these are evident in the pre-marital counselling forms of the various churches that the researcher had interactions with. Therefore, there is the need for couples to show total commitment and willingness to persist in times of marital pressure. This will help them build stable attitudes and behaviors that will undergird the new marriage and help them endure.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presents the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations. As indicated earlier in chapter one and four, divorce is a common problem for Christian couples in Ghana, and it is wreaking havoc on the country's churches and communities. Therefore, this study examined the experiences of Christian couples and church leaders on the effects of pre-marital counselling on marital stability in Ada community

5.2 Summary of Findings

God created marriage as an institution, and He intended for it to be a satisfying union for the two people involved according to Christians. However, many Christian marriages are facing marital instabilities just like any other marriage. Divorce has been perceived as a common problem for both Christian and non-Christian couples all over the world and in Ghana, and it is creating havoc on the country's churches and communities. Therefore, this study was carried out to assess the effect of pre-marital counselling on marital stability among selected churches in Ada community.

The study highlights the effectiveness of pre-marital counselling on marital stability. This study focuses on counselling, which is one aspect of pre-marital preparations Christians offer to their members. The study employed the qualitative research approach and a case study design. Data were collected from participants through purposive and convenient sampling techniques procedural to select the sample for the study and after reaching saturation point. The study used data from interviews

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collected from leaders in six churches, twenty-one Christian couples and related documents for the analysis. The data were collected from the field interview were transcribed in order to ensure consistency of participants in the final analysis.

A theoretical framework was constructed to connect the findings and analysis. The basis of the analysis was weighted according to the participant's responses from the sample for the study. Significant conclusions were drawn to reflect the participant's responses.

With regard to the demographic characteristics of participants, six church leaders representing six different churches were selected and twenty-one married Christians who have gone through pre-marital counselling. Out of the twenty-one married participants interviewed, eleven of them have separated, seven have annulled and three have divorced.

The first objective of the study was to assess into the causes of marital instability from the perspective of Christians in Kasseh. From the study, it became known that, the major causes of marital instability cited by the participants were financial challenges, unfaithfulness, sex issues, inadequate marital counseling, neglect of marital responsibilities, and lack of communication.

The second objective of the study was to explore the trend of divorce among Christians in Kasseh. According to all the church leaders the trend of marital instability among Christians is on the rise. The church leaders gave yearly account of the trend of marital instability from 2017 to 2021 which were the focus of the study. On the reason for this rising trend, the participants mentioned that marital instability

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in the community was mainly attributed to materialism, inadequate preparation and absence of love among couples.

The third objective of the study was to investigate the forms of pre-marital preparation available to Christians in Kasseh. The result revealed that the pre-marital preparation system adopted by the church leaders was predominantly pre-marital counselling. To carry out pre-marital counselling, all the churches use a counselling manual to moderate the process.

The fourth objective sought to investigate the relevance of the knowledge gained from pre-marital preparation to couples marital stability. Based on the interactions it became known that the relevance of the knowledge gained from pre-marital counselling could be seen in the following ways: preparation for marriage, its vitality to the success of their marriages, deepens knowledge of partner before marriage and helps couples to handle marital disputes maturely.

5.3 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn. The present study confirms some previous findings that pre-marital counselling is positive to participants and provides additional evidence to that effect. The study highlights the effectiveness of pre-marital counselling on marital stability. The study reveals that the churches have laid down adequate processes to ensure successful counselling to the would- be married couples in order to yield marital success. The counselling is aimed at assessing the readiness of would be couples for marriage. This involves observation and discussion of several issues such as personality difference communication skills,

giving, backgrounds checking, and ability to solve conflicts, parent concern among others.

The findings of the study also demonstrated that participants, overall, had a positive attitude toward pre-marital counselling. To Christian husbands and wives within the Ada community, pre-marital counselling is still the most widely used marriage preparation tool. The couples who participated in pre-marital counselling reported that the experiences they had and the knowledge they obtained were very useful in their married lives. The vast majority of the couples engaged in the interview, reported that pre-marital counselling was helpful in preparing them for marriage. Because of this, the transition from life as a single person to life as a married person was made significantly simpler, and the greater contentment and stability of the couple led to an improvement in their capacity to communicate with one another. Participants expressed the belief that pre-marital counselling improved skills in the areas of problem solving and decision-making in areas such as marital roles and the management of family finances. Participants also believed that pre-marital counselling increased friendship and commitment to relationships.

Therefore, based on the literature reviewed, the increasing trends of marital instability among Christian can be traced to the fact that the ways of getting married in Ghana had gone through a lot of changes as a result of modernity, social changes and economic challenges facing the globe. As a result of these global changes, the twenty-first century is witnessing increasing trends in marital breakdown despite the numerous pre-marital counselling sections organized by the various churches. The inclusion of women in the capitalist market, women's movements and feminism, the Liberalization of sexual attitudes, the gradual erosion of the traditional family system,

a shift to the nuclear family and companionate marriages, rapid urbanization, liberal attitudes on family forms appear to have increased the rate of marital breakdown thereby reducing the impact of pre-marital counselling. The conceptual review of literature provides sufficient evidence for this conclusion.

To assist couples in addressing the issues that are most important to them, it is essential to participate in a comprehensive pre-marital preparation programme that reflects the new changes in the society. Also, pre-marital programmes should cover a wide range of aspects of marital relationships, including those aspects that are the most likely to result in ongoing conflict; this programme should also teach relational skills, ways to improve stability, and techniques for conflict resolution. It is also vital to make use of relevant inventories in order to find out the specific challenges that the couple is facing in order for the church leaders to support them. On the other hand, it is essential to stress that pre-marital counselling is not only for those who have never been married but also for individuals who have been married in the past.

5.4 Recommendations

From the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

1. Pre-marital counselling programmes by the churches leaders should be designed to reflect the changing needs of the people by taking into account the needs of the larger society and the global changes.

2. Couples in the church should be trained and educated through regular marriage-related programmes held by the church. Such events should aim at addressing current changes in marriage contracting, such events should not be held in conjunction with yearly fund-raising, efforts should be planned with considerable care and attention to detail. The church should look for

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innovative approaches to organise these kinds of events if it wants its members to get involved.

3. Churches leaders should provide post-wedding counselling to help married couples work through whatever difficulties they may be having as they settle into their new lives together.

4. Before beginning formal counselling with a prospective couple, church leaders or counsellors should do a pre-counseling evaluation to determine any areas in which the couple might face difficulties and then counsel them on how to address those issues.

5. The counselling relationship ought to be based on the goals that have been established, but in the vast majority of situations, it is severed without the accomplishment of any of the goals that have been established. The counsellor and the couple seeking counselling should work together to establish a list of objectives that must be met before the counselling sessions will end.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

The current study focused on counselling, which is one aspect of pre-marital preparation Christians offer to their members. Further studies can be undertaken to look at how the situation is with respect to other religious bodies to pave way to create greater understanding of the issue of effectiveness of pre-marital programmes on marital stability.

It would be appropriate to conduct a study similar to this one in other churches located in other districts of the region and in other parts of the country taking into consideration the scope of the present study. To draw broad conclusions, it would be helpful to include non-Christian couples in this analysis. It is strongly suggested that a

larger sample be drawn, one that includes churches located in rural areas and covers a wider geographical area. This should be done in order to improve the findings' propensity to be generalised to a wider audience.

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APPENDICES

APENDIX A
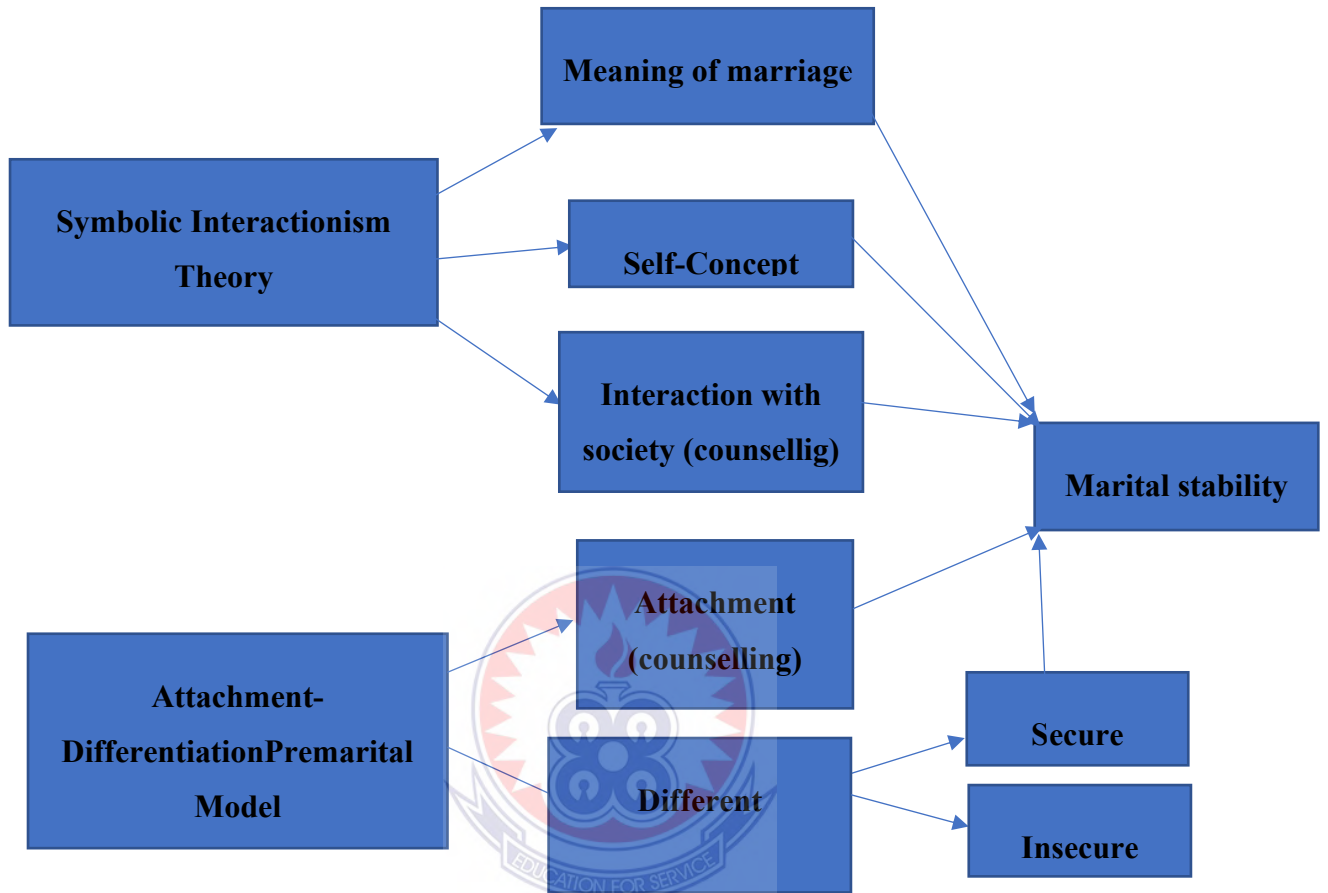
Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework (Source (author's construct)

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide for Marriage Couples

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

Effects of pre-marital preparation on marital stability

This interview aims to collect information on the effects of pre-marital counselling on marital stability among Christians in Kasseh Community. Your candid and objective responses on this interview will go a long way in assisting the researcher get the needed information. This interview is strictly for an academic exercise and as such, your responses will be treated in strict confidentiality.

SECTION A: Demographic Information

1. Gender: Male ( )   Female ( )

2. Marital Status;   Single ( ) Married ( ) Divorced ( )

3. Age: 20-30 ( ) 31-40 ( )   41-50 ( ) 51 and above ( )

4. Years of married   (   )

5. Name of church attending ………………………………………………….

SECTION B: RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

1. What pushed you into pre-marital counselling?

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2. How useful is pre-marital counselling to your marriage?

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3. How has pre-marital counselling contributed to your

marriage?...

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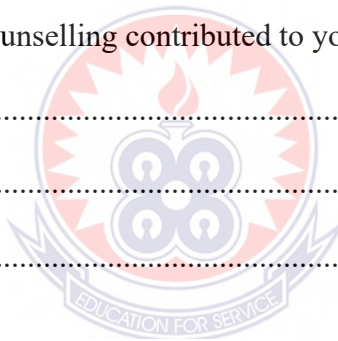
4. How have you made use of the knowledge gained from pre-marital counselling?

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……………………………………………………………………………………………

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RESEARCH QUESTION FOUR

1. In your view how will you assess marital instability in your marriage, I mean challenges in your marriage?

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2. On what ground will you consider these factors as cause of marital instability?

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3. What from your experience are the contributing factors of this marital instabilities or challenges?

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Why will you say these factors of marital challenges could leads to separation, annulment or divorce of your marriage?

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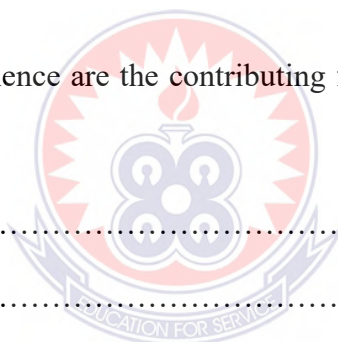
RESEARCH QUESTION FIVE

1. Why will you consider the knowledge gained from pre-marital counselling as useful to your marriage?

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    ....

    ....

    ....

2. How does the knowledge gained from pre-marital counselling imparted on the stability of your marriage?

    ....

    ....

    ....

APPENDIX C

Interview Guide for Church Leaders

This interview aims to collect information on the effects of pre-marital preparations on marital stability among Christians in Kasseh Community. Your candid and objective responses on this interview will go a long way in assisting the researcher get the needed information. This interview is strictly for an academic exercise and as such, your responses will be treated in strict confidentiality.

 SECTION A: Demographic Information

1. Gender: Male   ( )   Female ( )

2. Marital Status;   Single   ( )   Married ( )   Divorced ( )

3. Age: 20-30 ( ) 31-40 ( )   41-50 ( ) 51 and above ( )

4. Years of married   (   )

5. Name of church attending

……………………………………………………………………………………

6.   Position held in church? ………………………………………………
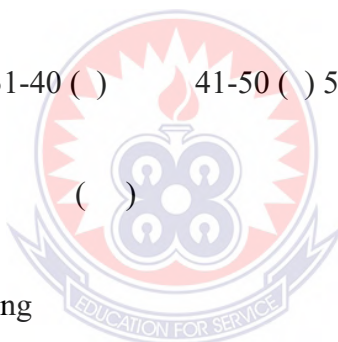
SECTION B

Questions on Research question one

1. As a church leader, how will you access divorce in your church?.

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2. From where you site what are the trends of marital instability among Christians in Kasseh from 2017 to 2021?

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3. As a good leading member of this church, how was the trend of divorce before today?…………………………………………………………………………………

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4. What do you think is contributing to this current trend of divorce? ....

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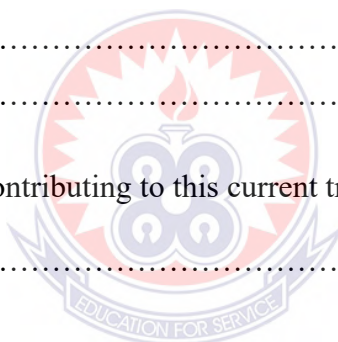
5. In your opinion what solution/solutions do you think should be put in place to stop

this growing trend of divorce among Christians?

....

....

RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

In your position as the church leader, what do you known about pre-marital preparation from the angle of your church?

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2. What system of pre-marital preparation do your church engage in as a Christian?

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3. How do your church embrace this system of pre-marital preparation?

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APPENDIX D

Map of Ada showing the study area

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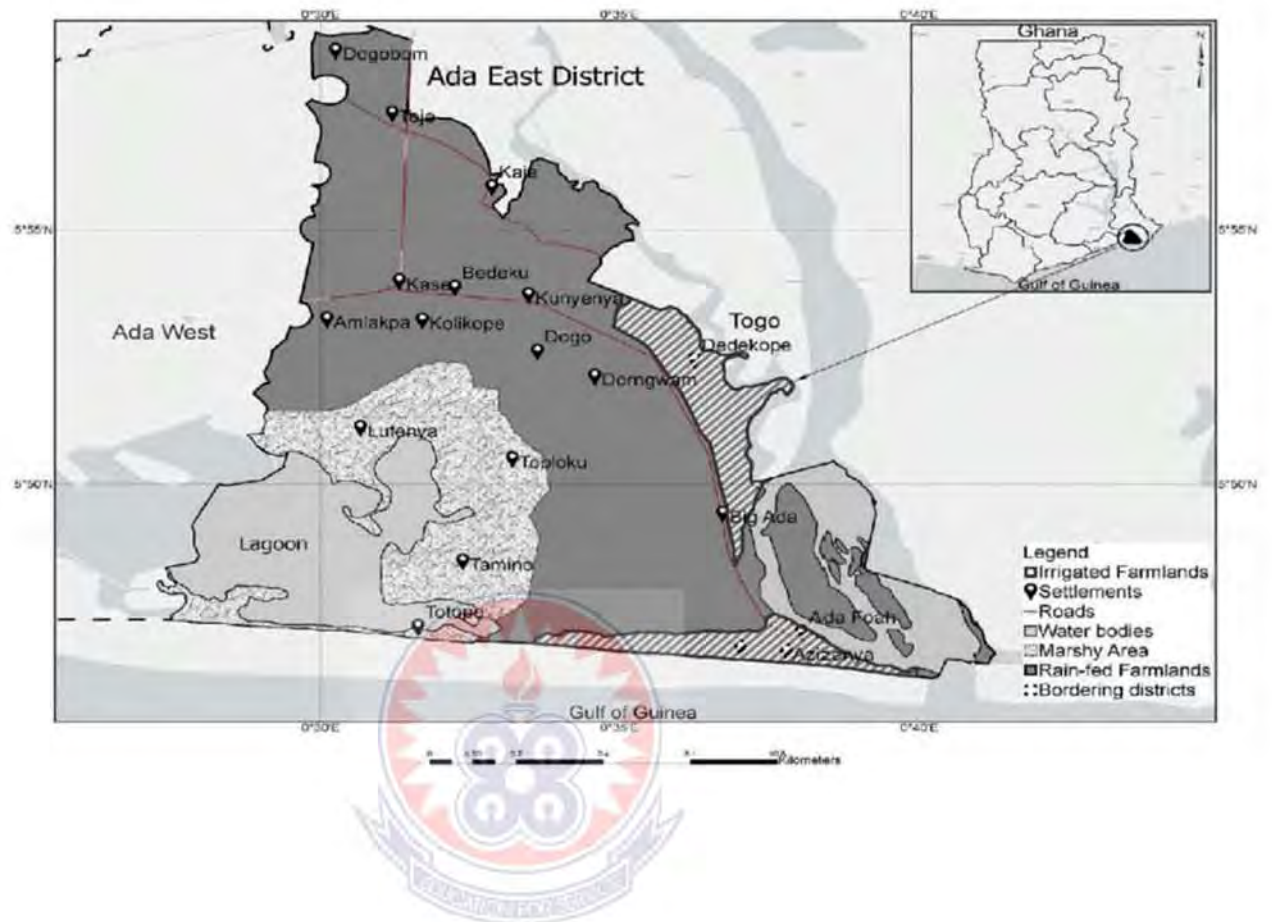
APPENDIX E

Counselling handbook (Pentecost Church)

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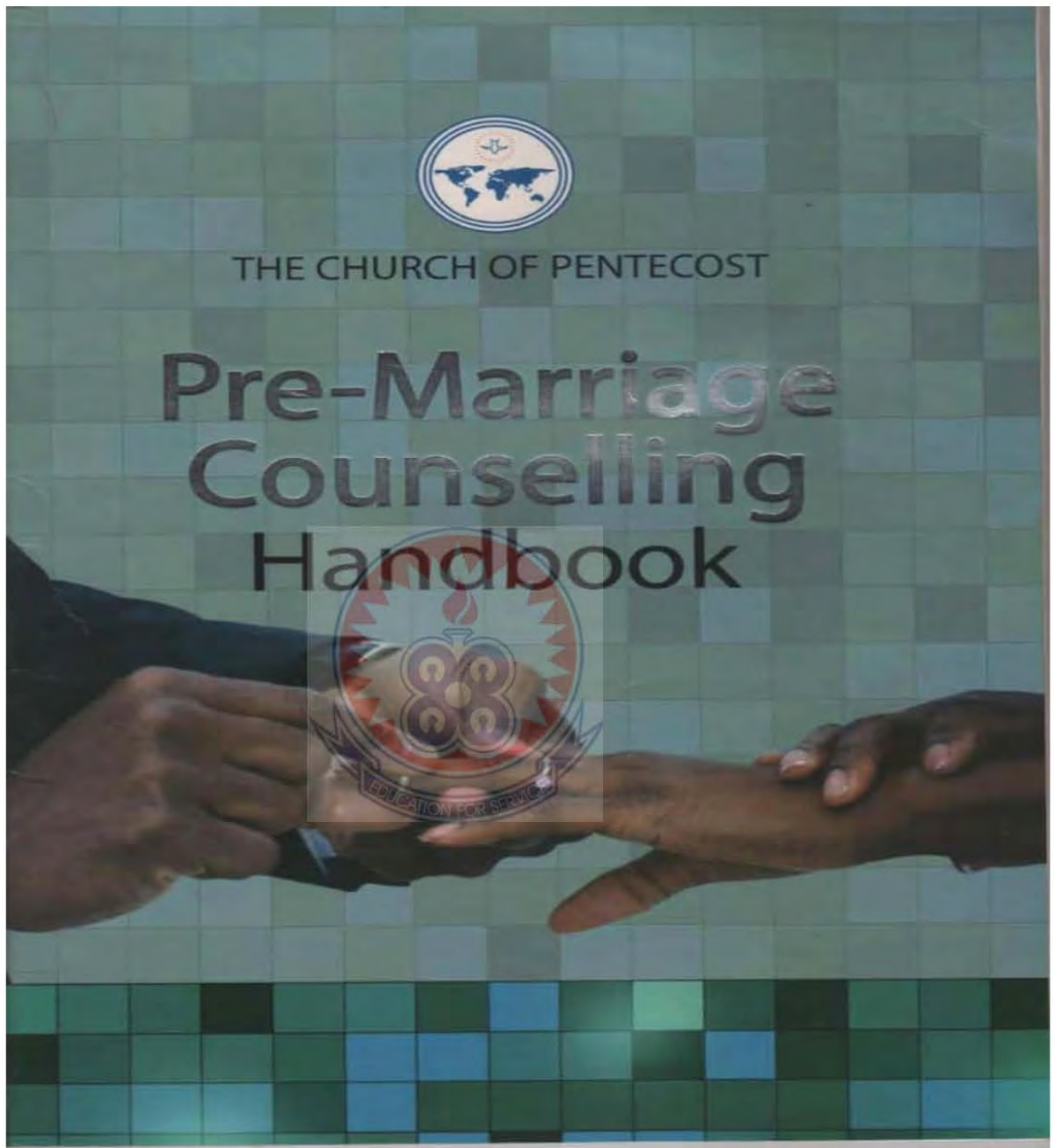
APPENDIX G

Counselling handbook (Presbyterian Church)

Revised Edition

A
Pre-Marriage
Counselling
HANDBOOK

For Pastors and Lay Counsellors

Alan & Donna Goerz

APENDIX H

STUDY 2

PRE-MARITAL AND MARRIAGE COUNSELLING

A. PRE-MARITAL COUNSELLING:

1. DEFINITION:

This is Counselling given to individuals anticipating to marry with the purpose of equipping them with the knowledge necessary for them to cope with the problems that arise during courtship, the planning of the marriage and the marriage life. It is a preventive counseling.
* Not to be in troße before redoming them)

2. THE GOALS OF PREMARITAL COUNSELLING:

The basic aim of pre-marital Counselling is to assist prospective mates to

a) Gain better understanding themselves

b) Gain better understanding of each other

c) Gain better understanding of what marriage involves.

d) To prevent crisis rather than the solving of crisis that may arise due to ignorance.

3. TOPICS TO BE TREATED:

The following topics or some of them and other may be treated to equip the potential couples for a successful marriage journey.

i. How to prepare for marriage

ii. How to enter marriage

iii. Responsibilities of husbands and wives

iv. Conflict resolution

v. Divorce

vi. In-law relationships

4. DURATION

Pre-marital Counselling should be done over a period of time. The time duration depends on the number of times the Counsellor can arrange to meet the Counsellees per week or so. Any period of time to cover the above topics is satisfactory. This may span between six weeks and three months. It should not be unnecessarily long period.

Figure 4.3 Counselling guiding form (Assemblies of God church)

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APENDIX J

Carl Rogers refers to couselling as a series of **direct contacts** with the individual which aims to offer **assistance** in changing attitudes and behaviour. Rogers further writes that "effective counseling" consists of a definitely structured, permissive relationship which allows the client to gain an understanding of himself to a degree which enables him to take positive steps in the light of new orientation.

Joseph Perez (1965) summarized the definition of counseling as "counseling is an interactive conjoining the counselee who is vulnerable and who needs assistance, and the counselor who is trained and educated to give this assistance, the goal of which is to help the counselee learn to deal more effectively with himself and the reality of his environment".

The ordinary meaning attached to counseling is that Counselling is a service designed to help an individual analyse himself by relating his capabilities, achievements, interests and mode of adjustment to what new decision he has made or has to make. In other words, counseling is designed to provide an interacting relationship where the counselor is attempting to help a counselee to better understand himself in relating to his present and future decisions or problems.

B. **PURPOSE (GOALS) OF CONSELLING:**

Arbuckle says the broad objective of counseling is to help the individual clear away the "entangling and hampering tentacles" so that he can be what he really is, and contribute more both to self and to his fellows. According to Ellis the goals of counseling are to demonstrate to the client that the way that client perceives his situation is the source of his emotional disturbance, and also to bring into focus the illogical and irrational ideas so as to help him to readjust his thinking in a national and logical way.

We may therefore summarise the goals of counseling as bellow:

a. **Counselling is remedial:** It is remedial in the sense that it helps the clients to become aware of their problems and at the same time assis them to identify and adopt realistic plans to resolve the problems. In the counseling process, the counsellor's duty is "the curing of unreason by reason". In doing this, the counsellor

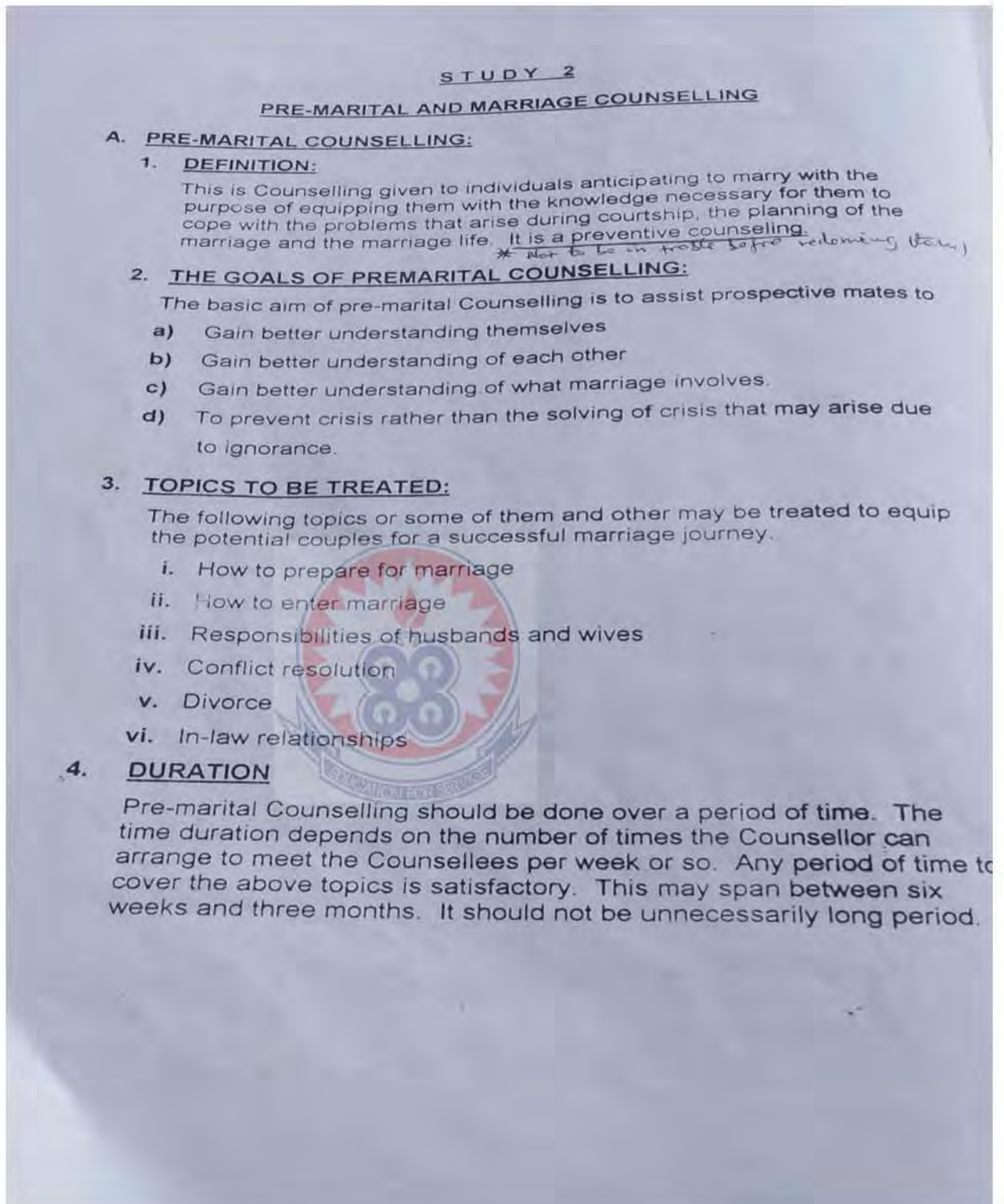(i) Shows the client that he is illogical and points out the relationsh between his illogical ideas and his unhappiness or emotional disturbance;

(ii) Lets the client realize that as long as he maintains his irration ideas, his unhappiness will persist;

(iii) Encourages the client to change his thinking and ideas, and accept more rational philosophies of living so that he will no become a victim of irrational ideas and beliefs again.

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APENDIX K

SOME USEFUL PURPOSES OF PRE-MARITAL COUNSELLING

Premarital counseling seeks to help individuals, couples and groups of couples to prepare for and build happy, fulfilling, Christ-honoring, and successful marriages.

1. **Assessing Readiness for Marriage:** This involves observation and discussion of several issues. Why does the couple really want to get married? What do they expect from marriage? How similar are their backgrounds in terms of education, place of residence, religious beliefs, age, race, or socioeconomic level? etc.

2. **Teaching the Biblical Guidelines for marriage:** The Bible makes a number of statements and the God-ordained roles for the husband and wife. The family is modeled after the relationship that Christ had with his Church, and although no two marriages are alike (since each individual and each couple is unique) every marriage should reflect the influence of Christ in the home. Sometimes a couple will have little interest or knowledge of spiritual matters, but the Christian counsellor must gently raise such issues.

3. **Guiding Self Evaluation:** The realities of marriage sometimes cause people to grow quickly, but it is better if there is a strong element of psychological and spiritual maturity prior to the wedding. An experienced marriage counsellor concluded that "no marriage will survive the pressures of life and the stresses of our age unless the bride and groom are truly matured. Signs of maturity will include (i) an ability to give up an immediate gratification in order to receive a greater benefit in the future, (ii) an ability and willingness to share and compromise, (iii) a concern for the well-being of others, (iv) an ability to look at life realistically, and (v) a willingness to face problems and seek solution".

4. **Stimulating Effective Communication Skills:** It is well known that a failure or inability to communicate is one of the most fundamental problems in troubled marriages. Every couple must be shown the value and importance of spontaneous, honest and sensitiveness of effective communication. As they are encouraged to discuss their feelings, expectations, differences, attitudes and personal hurt, they can learn to communicate about significant issues, to listen carefully as they try to understand each other, and to talk through problems without putting down each other or hiding what they feel.

5. **Anticipating and Discussing Potential Stress:** There are certain to be adjusted problems when two people of different sex and family backgrounds come together to share life intimately. How does a couple plan to handle finances, different values, in-law pressures and expectations, vocational demands, political differences, conflicts over choice of friends, and variations in spiritual beliefs or maturity; then the issue of sex. Are there fears, unhealthy attitudes or different expectations for the honeymoon? Couples should be encouraged to discuss potential stress such as these, although all the discussion does not have to be in the counsellor's presence.
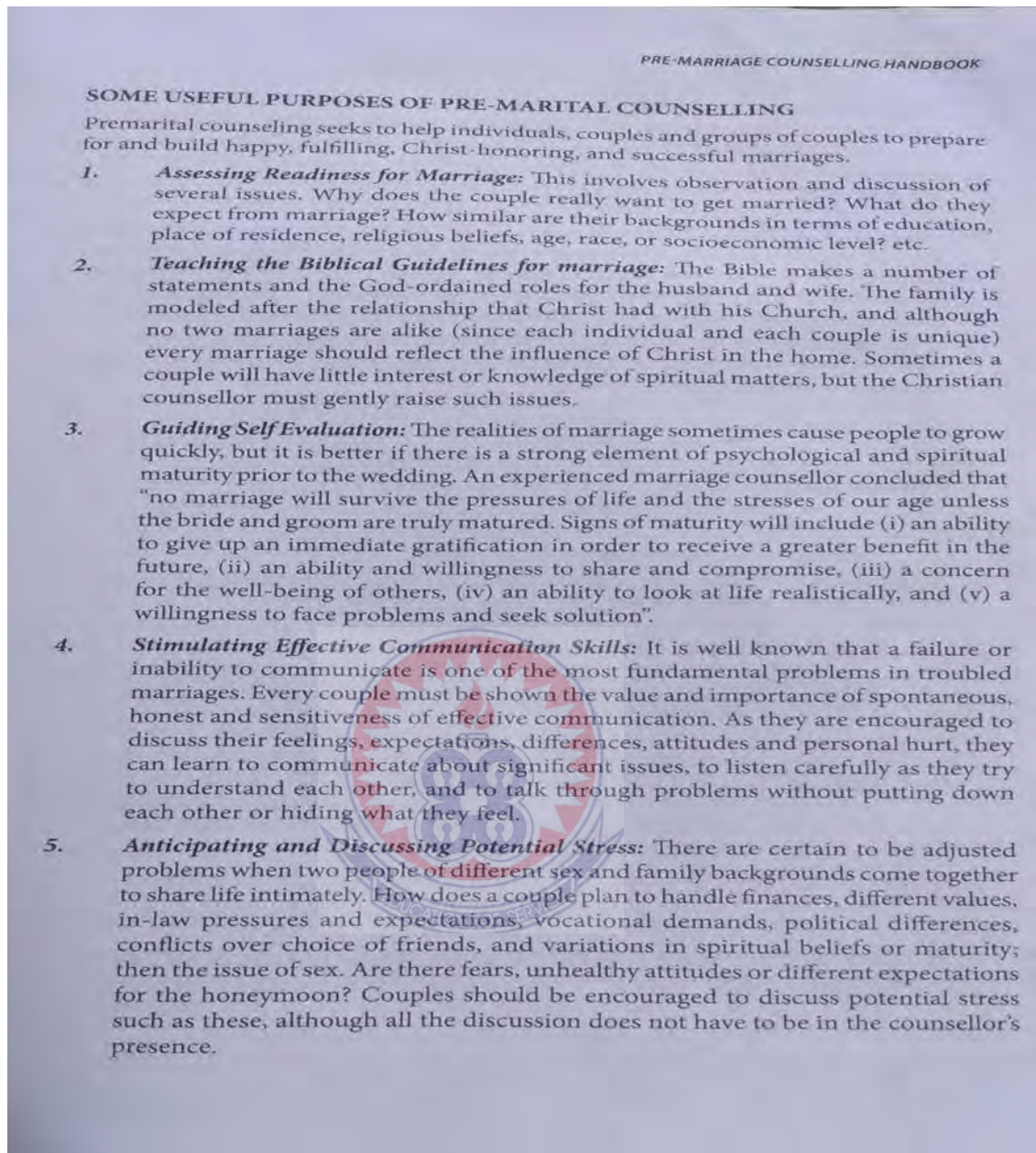
figure 4.5, counselling guiding form (I.C.G.C)