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TOPIC

**EFFECT OF MARRIAGE COUNSELING ON MARRIED COUPLES: A
COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN GHANA AND MALAYSIA**

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ABSTRACT

Most marital problems in Ghana, especially, in the Muslim communities are addressed through traditional marriage counseling methods by experienced imams, scholars and individuals. However, studies have shown that there are lapses in the traditional counseling approach. To address these lapses, some individuals and Muslim NGOs initiated formal marriage counseling. It is important to know the effectiveness of the formal marriage counseling and its effects on couples. Thus, the aim of this research was to assess the impact of formal marriage counseling on couples in predominantly Muslim communities (Madina and Nima/Mamobi) in Ghana by mutual comparison with Malaysia. The study used comparative analysis where, purposive sampling was conducted to gather the data. Also, the participants' views were gathered using Questionnaires and interviews. The findings show that the traditional counseling method is predominant in Ghana compared to Malaysia, where formal counseling is mostly used. Furthermore, most of the traditional counseling in Ghana uses not more than a day, while in Malaysia, it takes about three months. Moreover, the study found that marriage counseling is very important and plays a major role in sustaining marriages. Therefore, the study recommends that the Ghanaian Muslim community should constitute a proper way of administering counseling

Keywords: Marriage Counseling, Traditional Marriage Counseling, Formal Counseling

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAIR: Al-Azhar Academy of Islamic Researches

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

JAKIM: Jabatan Kumajuan Agama Islam Malaysia OR Department of Islamic Development in Malaysia

JPN: Jabatan Pendaftaran Negara

MBKPI: Module Bersepadu Kursus Perkahwinan Islam or Integrated Islamic Marriage Pre-Wedding Course Module

PBUH: Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 General Introduction

Marriage counseling is very important in addressing marital concerns. Pre-marital counseling, on one hand, provides couples with firsthand information on what to expect in their new life and the possible ways to solve them. Post-marital counseling on the other hand, helps couples to address unexpected challenges that may arise during their marital lives. From an Islamic perspective, the focus of marriage counseling is to improve communication between spouses and to address specific issues that are causing problems in relationships (Al Balagh Academy, 2023).

Marriage is a noble institution decreed by Allah for His slaves as a means of procreation and the observation of continence. Marriage is the union between a man and a woman. In Islam, marriage is a religious duty, a moral safeguard, and a social commitment. As this is a religious duty, it must be fulfilled; but like all other duties in Islam, it is enjoined only upon those who are capable of meeting the responsibilities involved (Meraj, 2018)

Marriage has been ordained through the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and juristic consensus. Allah says: "...then marry those that please you of other women, two or three or four....."(Qur'an 4:3). The prophet Mohammed is quoted to have said, "O young men, those among you who can support a wife should marry, for it restrains eyes from casting (evil glances), and preserves one from immorality; but those who cannot should devote themselves to fasting for it is a means of controlling sexual desire" (Sahih Muslim, Book 16 Hadith 1). Other virtues derived from marriage include maintaining chastity and keeping away from the unlawful sexual intercourse that ruins human communities; and the responsibility of men towards women which includes sheltering them and providing for them. In essence, marriage should create an atmosphere of tranquility, mutual concord, security, and spiritual comfort between both husband and wife. Allah says: And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between spouses affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought" (Qur'an 30:21. Although tranquility should be the hallmark of every marital home, marital challenges and concerns sometimes arise which requires solutions through mediation and counseling.

In the Ghanaian Muslim community, marriage counseling took on a discouraging trend until a few years back when resolute advocacies and steps were pioneered, though on a minimal level. While preparing for marriage, most individuals rarely avail themselves of any form of counseling. Thus, marital issues between spouses are often addressed by Imams or scholars and sometimes relatives or friends in the form of traditional counseling or through simple advice. The traditional counseling method is the system where couples are provided with some advice by imams and family members on the wedding day. Previous studies revealed that; the traditional counseling had been the main method employed by the Muslim community in Ghana (Khamis, 2017). This traditional method of counseling however had some lapses.

Consequently, Islamic NGOs and few individuals initiated the formal counseling method. According to the findings of Khamis (2017), though individuals and NGOs had taken up the role of providing formal counseling, concerns that emerged were that these “counsellors were untrained and therefore may be offering their services unprofessionally and out of passion and marriage experience, which does not make a person a good marriage counsellor. Training gives the marriage counsellor the requisite skills to enable him/her to counsel effectively and help in sustaining marriages. So, although they may be sincere and passionate about helping to check the spate of divorce and challenges in marriages: they may be doing the wrong things with passion and sincerity which is a challenge” (Khamis, 2017). The study also revealed that, most of the NGOs who offered these formal counseling services had no proper structure.

Malaysia is situated in the Southeast Asia and consists of 13 states. It is a country of multi-cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. In Malaysia, Counseling grew over the course of time. ‘Crucial groundwork and major milestones for professional counseling have since been laid. Currently, professional counseling in Malaysia is poised to transition into its pubescence’ (See, 2010). Counseling is not a new phenomenon in present-day Malaysia. Counseling has been present since the 1960s when the Ministry of Education during that era introduced and accepted the importance of school guidance and counseling in its schools. Thus, in Malaysia most secondary schools have full-time counselors. In the 1980s, most public universities and teacher training institutions started to offer guidance and counseling courses as part of efforts to produce qualified and trained counselors (Asyraf et al. 2014). Currently, counseling is being used as a method of intervention in resolving marital problems Many religious departments have employed such methods as a means

of resolving marital disputes to improve relationships between couples. According to Asyraf et al (2014) there are eight Islamic Religious Departments in Malaysia that took the initiatives to establish guidance and counseling units.

1.1 Problem Statement

Most marital problems in Ghana, especially, in the Muslim communities, are addressed through traditional counseling methods. They are normally supervised by imams and relatives of new couples on the wedding day. Also, the same group of people supervises the counseling for already married couples. However, studies have shown that there are lapses in the traditional counseling method. Consequently, some individuals and Muslim NGOs initiated formal marriage counseling to address the lapses in the traditional methods. Thus, the effectiveness of the formal counseling and its impact on couples needs to be assessed. Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate and the effectiveness and impact of the formal marriage counseling on couples in Ghana, in comparison with marriage counseling system in Malaysia.

1.2 Significance of Research

This research is very vital as it will help determine the impact of marriage counseling on marital homes. The study will also help identify the different standard approaches and models to apply in administering marriage counseling.

1.3. Research Questions

This study seek to answer the following questions:

1. What is the impact of formal marriage counseling on marital homes in Ghana?
2. What structures are employed in administering formal marriage counseling in Ghana and Malaysia?
3. What factors determines that a marriage that has gone through formal counseling is successful?

1.4 Objectives of Research

The objectives of this research are:

1. To determine the impact of formal marriage counseling on marital homes in Ghana.
2. Determine the structures employed in administering marriage counseling in Ghana and Malaysia.
3. Determine the success factors of good formal marriage counseling.

1.5 Scope of Research

The scope of this research is limited to the Madina and Nima/Mamobi Muslim communities in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. This is because these communities are Muslim-dominated and there exist quite a number of marriage counseling centers.

1.6 Methodology

The study will be qualitative in nature; the data were be collected from Muslim married couples, Traditional and Formal marriage counselors, Islamic scholars' and Islamic NGOs using the interview guide and findings from different books, and previous research papers. Such a study will be analysis themes that will emerge from the study.

1.7 Data Collection

Primary and secondary data sources were used. The primary data includes interviews, questionnaires, and observations while the secondary data was information collected from previous studies. Three individuals currently supervising formal marriage counseling in the Muslim communities in Ghana were interviewed. This was to assist in acquiring information on the counseling methods, structures, qualifications, and topics discussed. Also, questionnaires were used in gathering information to help determine how many respondents had gone through marriage

counseling, the counseling methods, duration, and topics discussed. The second part of the questionnaire was used to determine couples' satisfaction level of the counselor, the effectiveness of the counseling on them and their marital home, and the factors they can perceive aided in successful counseling. It was also used to inquire whether couples go through post-marriage counseling as a means of sensitization or only after encountering marital challenges.

1.8 Literature Review

Marriage Counseling and its Effectiveness in Ghana

According to a study "Marriages in Ghana are usually preceded by counseling. It is believed that premarital counseling helps to sustain marriages because it gives couples the initial skills needed to enable them to start their marriage and solve minor problems that may be encountered in the relationship" (Cobbinah & Osei-Tutu, 2019). This is usually in the context of the Christian community as most churches have established formal marriage counseling sessions for prospective couples and already married couples. Findings from this research indicated that, though couples went through counseling before marriage, it did not help sustain some marriages. Some couples who went through pre-marital counseling were separated as well as those who never had any form of counseling. The study therefore suggested that, it was necessary for couples to still continue with counseling even after marriage. The study is relevant to this research because it was able to identify that, counseling helps couples with the initial skills to solve minor problems in their marital homes. This research will however support it with findings on the effects of post marriage counseling on marital homes.

Findings from a research in the Techiman Municipality of Ghana, revealed that, premarital counseling has positive impact on marriages and the married people within the Municipality have positive perception about premarital counseling (Ansah-Hughes, Akyina & Oduro, 2015). The study also suggested that, marriage counseling should be maintained and encouraged, and this will be possible if more counselors are trained by encouraging universities to increase the intake students in guidance and counseling so that more professional counselors can help in this direction (Ansah-Hughes, Akyina & Oduro, 2015). This study is relevant to this research as it has

highlighted the perception of couples about premarital counseling which indicates the impact of marriage counseling on marital home.

Method of Marriage Counseling in the Ghanaian Muslim community

In the Ghanaian Muslim community, marriage counseling took on a discouraging trend until a few years back when resolute advocacies and steps were pioneered, though on a minimal level. While preparing for marriage, most individuals rarely receive any form of counseling. In the Ghanaian Muslim community, marital issues between spouses are often addressed by Imams or scholars and sometimes relatives or friends in the form of traditional counseling method. The traditional counseling method is the system where couples are provided with some advice on the day of the marriage by imams, scholars, relatives and even friends. Various efforts have been made to improve the readiness for married life of prospective brides and couples, so that divorce does not occur, one of which is through Islamic marriage counseling (Irman et al., 2021).

Khamis Kauthar discusses the traditional method of marriage counseling prospective couples in the Nima/Mamobi community which is predominantly Muslim. The traditional method of counseling takes the form of a short advice given to the couples on the wedding day by an Imam, and specifically to the bride during the wedding initiation by individuals known as *Aluwanka* (Khamis, 2017). This method of counseling however poses some challenges which lead to the introduction of formal marriage counseling by some individuals and Muslim NGOs. According to Khamis, the traditional counseling had been the main method of counseling employed by the Muslim community in Ghana. Though this method of counseling played some important role, it however has some lapses. For example, it is usually biased towards the wife and vital topics such as parenting and sexual relations between couples were not thoroughly discussed. This led to the introduction of formal pre-marriage counseling centers by some Muslim organizations and individuals. Though this formal marriage counseling also played an important role, the findings from the study of Khamis indicated that the various individuals and organizations who established and introduced the formal marriage counseling services have no structure for administering marriage counseling and had not receive any training in professional marriage counseling which raises questions if they are able to counsel appropriately and effectively” Khamis, (2013).

The research of Khamis is relevant to this research because, it was able to identify the methods of marriage counseling currently being practiced in the Ghanaian Muslim community, and has highlighted challenges associated with them. It was also difficult to determine the impact of these marriage counseling systems on couples because, it would be unfair to weigh the traditional method of counseling against the formal counseling which is a new development gaining grounds within the Muslim community. This research aims to fill this gap, because it goes further to identify what structures are required to carry out marriage counseling and also determine the impact of the of the formal marriage counseling on couples.

A study conducted in the Greater Accra Region revealed that, conflict resolution, communication, adjusting to individual differences, sex and romance, lifecycles in marriage and separation from past memories and families were some of the elements discovered as being discussed during pre-marital counseling to help sustain marriages (Abroka & Aboya, 2021). The study also found that, marital counseling was vital for the sustainability of marriages and should therefore be made compulsory for new couples (Abroka & Aboya, 2021). Another revelation made was that the philosophy of pre-marital counseling was not only being aware of potential challenges in marriage, but to also equip couples to learn skills necessary to successfully deal with the challenges in their marital homes to help sustain it (Abroka & Aboya, 2021). The study is relevant to this research because, it has highlighted some of the key issues discussed during marriage counseling. This research is distinct from Abroka and Aboya's study because, it seeks to identify a marriage counseling model that fits within the Ghanaian context.

Marriage Counseling and its Effectiveness in Malaysia

In Malaysia, family or marriage counseling in community is required in order to boost personal development and harmony of all individuals and community (Ahmad, 2007 as cited by Noor, 2014). According to a study, "counseling, also called couples therapy, is a type of psychotherapy that is conducted by licensed therapists usually involving both partners, marriage counseling helps couples to recognize underlying conflicts and improve their relationship" (Ganesan & Amuta, 2016). It further states that, counseling help couples to make thoughtful decisions, identify and overcome their differences and enrich the level of communication between themselves.

According to Koh (n.d) “Divorce rates in Malaysia have doubled in the last 8 years and has been a source of concern for marriage advocators, counselors and pre-marriage educators”. According to the report major reasons for divorce rate may be attributed to the breakdown of communication, frequent and unresolved conflicts, as well as difference in partner’s value systems. The report also indicated marriage researchers found that premarital counseling might be the key panacea to the staggering rate of divorce in Malaysia (Koh, n.d). According to Olsen (2000) couples who went through marriage counseling programs experience a 31 percent increase in marital success over those who do not. The study also found that 85 percent of couples who went through the inventory and skills-building exercises stayed together (Olsen, 2000). Also, marriage counseling strengthens a marriage and allow couples to prepare and anticipate challenges and conflicts that may arise in the course of marriage.

Method of Marriage Counseling in Malaysia

In 1963, the Malaysian government introduced guidance and counseling. Guidance became an integral part of education aimed at promoting or stimulating the gradual development of the ability to make decisions independently without undue influence from others. “However, because of the lack of financial and human resources, the guidance plans went awry” (Ching & Kok-Mun, 2010). In the 1980s, the guidance and counseling plan was revived and universities and teacher training institutions began to offer guidance and counseling courses for pre-service and in-service teachers. In 1982, the development of counseling reached its professional milestone. The Malaysian Counseling Association, known as PERKAMA (Persatuan Kaunseling Malaysia) was established with more than 200 members and regularly organizes counseling conferences and counseling training workshops for its members. In 1996, the Malaysian Ministry of Education specified modalities for this new profession and by the end of the 1990s, counseling services grew in other government departments, industry and business corporations, religious institutions, rehabilitation centers, non-government organizations, and the community. Counseling in Malaysia reached its peak and major milestone and gained its legitimacy when the Malaysian parliament enacted the Counsellors Act 1998 (Act 580; Commissioner of Law Revision and Percetakan Nasional Malaysia Bhd, 2006) to regulate the practice of professional counseling (Ching & Kok-Mun, 2010)

Norhayati Mohd Noor (2014) explores issues and practices in family and marriage counseling among the family counsellors at few counseling centers in Malaysia. The study found out that, family and marriage/counseling practitioners choose to use and focus on the individual counseling and not the system. Therefore training for the counsellors who are practicing family counseling should be improved by relevant stakeholders.

According to Hasyim, et Al, (2020) this study, the Malaysian government has made a rule for the purpose of training prospective brides which is presented in the form of a pre-marriage course. This course was initiated by the Family, Social and Community Section of the Jabatan Kumajuan Agama Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) OR Department of Islamic Development in Malaysia, and continued by the State's Islamic Department (Sallah, Omar & Embong, 2019). In 1996, the Section of Family, Social and Mosque Management reformed this course by adding and introducing the Integrated Modules for Islamic Pre-Marital Course (MBKPPI) in their existing modules with the aim to consolidate Islamic family institution. In this course, the participants are given modules to make it easier to understand its contents. The contents of the modules are an illustrated slide, a short video and income docudrama Eternal Love. The introduction of this course is one of the initiatives taken by Malaysia as a country to provide initial household knowledge to prospective couples (Abdullah, 2002, as cited in Hasyim,et al.,2020). Because marriage is considered a very part of religion and included in the field of state power in Malaysia, prospective Muslim couples are required to undergo pre-marriage course to qualify them register their marriage. This is because, at the time of registering marriage, it is required to attach a certificate of pre-marriage course and an HIV- free letter. The pre-marriage course is held for three months, with eight to ten meetings. The course also different statutory provisions in each state in Malaysia. And as an enacted law as stated in the Enakmen 11 of 2003 Enakmen of the Islamic Family Law (Negri Sembilan), 2003 Part II Marriage Section 16 on Requests for Marriage Right, any Malaysian citizen who wishes to get married is required to go through a pre-marital course (Hasyim,et al.,2020, p.104).

Marriage Counseling in other Culture Settings

Due to the upsurge in domestic violence cases in Zimbabwe and the debate on marriage counseling in many countries in Africa and the world, a research was undertaken to find out the perceptions

of Zimbabweans towards marriage and family counseling (Mutanana & Gasva, 2014). The study revealed that married couples had a positive view on four modes of counseling which includes: traditional, pastoral, counseling by police officers from Victim Friendly Unit and professional counseling (Mutanana & Gasva, 2014). However, of the four modes of counseling, couples preferred the pastoral counseling most because it has element of spiritual guidance associated with it. The study also showed that community also supported the traditional counseling though some married couples viewed that, individuals who provided traditional counseling which involves elders are usually harsh during counseling. Again, the result from the study indicated the community were not fully aware of the existence of professional counseling which was evident from the low rate of respondents who preferred professional counseling to pastoral and traditional counseling (Mutanna & Gasva, 2014). According to Deva, Lepcha & Giri (2022) marital counseling is very important to marital satisfaction in any community, religion, and culture. Also people found marital counseling more successful than no treatment in decreasing marital unhappiness.

Sodi et.al. (2010) explored a variety of marital counseling approaches. “The study reveals that, there a potential to develop innovative approaches to marital counseling in the African context which can further build on the rich traditions of historical practices and the promises of the changing global socio-cultural milieu” (Sodi et al., 2010).

Determining Successful factors of Marriage Counseling in couples

Couples' capacity to handle marital issues as a result of pre-marriage counseling is one factor that influences whether marriage counseling is beneficial. The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy reports that 93% of its patients said they were able to deal with marital problems more effectively after receiving counseling, despite the fact that determining the factors that make marriage counseling successful for couples may be a challenging task because it involves studying and observing a combination of several positive elemental outcomes (Smith, 2020).

According to additional statistics, 70–75 percent of couples who underwent emotionally focused marriage counseling were able to transition from a state of distress into healing. Marriage counseling sometimes succeeds by persuading a couple that their union is unhealthy and by giving

them the support they require to call it quits (Tasker, 2023). This suggests that counseling may occasionally result in a healthy divorce that may be advantageous to both couples.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE COUNSELING

2.0 Introduction

Marriage counseling is a social practice that requires a guided theory (Mangus, 1957). This theory is needed to give counseling a more scientific orientation and to help in the advancement toward a more certain status as a profession. This will provide a potentially useful approach to marriage counseling. When resolving marital issues, marriage counseling is crucial. Couples receive first-hand information about what to expect in their new life and potential solutions during pre-marital counseling. On the other hand, post-marital counseling assists couples in addressing unforeseen difficulties that may occur throughout their married lives. People seek out the services of qualified counselors, who must justify their actions to their clients. On the basis of precisely specified definitions, concepts, and principles that make sense to all parties involved, the justification for the practice can be communicated. Therefore, in order to provide an adequate response, a sound theoretical framework for marriage counseling is needed. In order to give those who require counseling a strong foundation, it is crucial to establish a valid body of systematic concepts and principles. The idea of marriage counseling is covered in this chapter, as well as how it affects relationships.

2.1 Marriage Counseling

Marriage counseling can be defined as the act of seeking guidance on how to live as couples towards achieving a harmonious marital home. According to Aririguzoh (2019, p. 17), counseling deals with the needs of individuals by finding solutions to their needs. People go for counseling when the pillars that hold their marriage are under threat. Shanmugavelu & Arumugam (2020, p. 159) build on this definition, stating that the benefits of marriage counseling are to help couples handle the difficulties of married life and to keep their marriage on track. It creates a platform for couples to talk about their opinions, choices, and compromises. Burgess (1943, p. 8) reports that "the main objective of marriage counseling is to promote an increase in human happiness and personal development".

According to Heber & Jarvis (1970, p. ix), "marriage has its own normalities and abnormalities. The abnormalities threaten the marriage, and the object of marriage counseling is to help couples deal with these abnormalities in order to preserve the marriage" For this reason, marriage counseling is a powerful tool to enhance the relationship between couples and overcome their difficulties. In marriage, many challenges may come up that can impact the relationship between couples. If they are unable to solve these problems on their own, counseling can provide the required tools and strategies they need to solve and overcome those challenges effectively. In marriage, communication is a key factor, and counseling helps both couples master the art of communication. No matter how much a man and woman love each other, disagreements and misunderstandings are inevitable, and while making an effort to avoid or eliminate tension from a relationship, which is a hopeless endeavor, there are many ways one can limit to a certain degree the tensions that come up.

2.2 History of Marriage Counseling

As a professional activity, marriage counseling began in 1929 in the United States with the opening of the first marriage consultation center by Drs. Abraham and Hannah Stone in New York City. Similar consultation centers were established afterwards to provide guidance and information to prospective couples and existing couples. Some of the consultation centers that were established during this era included Paul Popenoe's American Institute of Family Relations in Los Angeles in 1930 and the Philadelphia Marriage Counsel in 1932 (Goodman, 1972, p. 2). Marriage counselors were and are a markedly interdisciplinary group who received basic training from various fields, which include medicine, psychiatry, social work, psychology, education, theology, sociology, and law (Goodman, 1972, p. 2). Due to the heterogeneity of this field, continual controversies have been generated, which have raised a number of fundamental questions: What is marriage counseling? What are its goals? How should it be done? Who should do the counseling? What training is necessary for counselors?

Findings from a study revealed that partial histories of marriage counseling have been written, which were incomplete (Goodman, 1972). According to Goodman, written histories present a narrow perspective of the authors' own professional backgrounds or give little account to historical details and documentation. In one of the studies carried out by Sagar (1966), discussion is limited

to the development of psychoanalysis and psychiatry, completely ignoring events of the 1930s and 1940s that occurred in other fields and were important in the emergence of marriage counseling as a professional specialty (Goodman, 1972, p. 13). Experts in the field of marriage counseling dealt severally with the problem of providing reasons for its emergence during the first half of the twentieth century. In their efforts to provide explanations, they related the function of marriage counseling to wide-spread and rapidly changing cultural changes, which resulted in increased stress on marital relationships and shifts in the source and availability of help for individuals attempting to adjust to such stress.

In discussing changes in American family patterns, the summarized work of major sociologists who identify increasing urbanization and industrialization with attendant social, geographical and occupational mobility as processes responsible for rapid changes in social structure (Fellin, 1964, cited by Goodman, 1972).

According to Goodman (1972), persons involved in the development of marriage counseling utilized the basic work of family sociologists and concentrated on the implications of this work in three major areas: the increased stress being placed on marital relationships, including both sociological and psychological factors; the lessened availability of traditional sources of help; and the availability of new sources of help. In essence, four aspects of the development of marriage counseling are considered: the socio-cultural conditions fostering the emergence of a specialty profession; the different lines of development that contributed to the specialty; the rise of national organizations that actively promoted marriage counseling; and the establishment of academic training programs to provide personnel. This fact is supported by Burgess (1943, p. 8), who indicates that marriage counseling is important in modern society due to the drastic changes happening in the family system. The family system in modern-day society has shifted from the authoritarian family of the colonial period to the companionship form. In a typical household, the husband was dominant and the wife had a subordinate role. Children were seen and not heard. Due to these traditions and customs, there was strict supervision on matters of marriage when any family wanted to marry one of their children. The companion family system is based on affection, congeniality, and mutuality of interests, and children are given more rights and a voice in family matters. Young fellows, when considering marriage, do not consult parents for advice and feel they have a know-how over their destinies. The more intelligent ones among them search for

information about marriage and family life. The demand for such information is what has led to the introduction of courses on marriage preparation and the establishment of marriage counseling centers.

2.3 Importance of Marriage Counseling and its Impact of Couples

According to Shanmugavelu & Arumugam (2020) marriage counseling needs are greater for persons with a positive attitude towards seeking marriage counseling and those who had already gone through marriage counseling. For marriage counseling to be effective, both spouses need to have the will to take responsibility for their part in the problems, to accept each other's faults, and to be motivated to repair the relationship. The study also revealed that, persons with no history of marriage counseling turn to have a supportive subjective norm towards seeking marriage counseling. This is indicative that, for a couple to benefit from marriage counseling, they need to hold positive thoughts about finding solutions to their problems. Once this is achieved, the benefit and effectiveness of the counseling can be realized. Some importance of marriage counseling are:

Enhancing Communication

In every marriage and among partners, communication is crucial. Every wholesome relationship is built on effective communication. However, communication problems between partners can cause misunderstandings and arguments. Counseling can assist couples in developing excellent communication, listening, and expression skills. Couples can resolve disputes after improving their communication abilities. Couples' communication, which may have deteriorated during the course of their marriage, is improved by marriage counseling.

Skills in Problem Solving

With the help of the tools supplied by counselors, couples become more motivated and can start to approach their issues from a different angle. They also discover fresh methods for identifying and resolving difficulties. Counseling can teach couples how to pinpoint the source of their issues, generate ideas, and collaborate to find solutions. This increases the couple's confidence in their ability to overcome obstacles as they emerge.

Sense of Connection

Over time, emotional difficulties, including stress, family obligations, and work obligations, may make it difficult for couples to stay emotionally connected. Marriage counseling can assist couples in overcoming these emotional difficulties by providing a secure and encouraging setting in which they can explore their emotions and develop a deeper knowledge of one another.

Trust

In every marriage, trust is a crucial element. A marriage may suffer if a couple does not trust one another while they are living together as husband and wife. After a conflict, it can be quite challenging for couples to rebuild their trust. By improving open communication, identifying the problem that caused the trust to be broken, and offering a strategy for moving forward, marriage counseling can assist couples in reestablishing their trust.

Improved Intimacy

One of the foundational elements of every marriage is intimacy, and a marriage cannot live without it. Couples occasionally encounter difficulties sustaining intimacy over time, which can cause frustration or separation. The underlying causes could be anything from health issues to stress and worry to past traumas. Marriage counseling can assist couples in locating the root of the issue and selecting the best course of action for resolving it.

Knowledge of each other's personalities

As a result of our unique creations, our personalities and choices vary. Our worldview of problems is also influenced by the environment we live in while we are developing. Couples may occasionally find it difficult to comprehend one another's viewpoints, desires, and emotions as a result. Marriage counseling can assist couples in understanding and appreciating one another on a deeper level by examining their unique personalities, values, and communication styles. Couples will develop respect, empathy, and appreciation for one another as a result, resulting in a good relationship. Additionally, it offers couples a safe space to discuss problems or put aside disagreements that are keeping them from moving on.

2.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the various theories presented on marriage counseling indicate that marriage counseling plays a significant role in solving challenges that couples usually go through in their marriages. Marriage has advantages and disadvantages, and the object of marriage counseling is to help deal with those disadvantages. Some of the topics usually discussed during marriage counseling are: conflict resolution, communication, adjusting to individual differences, sex and romance, lifecycles in marriage, and separation from past memories and families. These were some of the elements discovered during pre-marital counseling to help sustain marriages. Some of the benefits of marriage counseling are that it improves communication, provides problem-solving skills, connects couples emotionally, and enhances intimacy. Also, though partial histories of marriage counseling have been written that are incomplete, marriage counseling began as a professional field around the 1920s in the United States.

CHAPTER 3

ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON MARRIAGE

3.0 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to determine the effects of marriage counseling on couples; however, it is also important to discuss marriage from the Islamic point of view. This is because marriage counselors are required to explain and give couples an in-depth understanding of what marriage entails. In Islam, marriage is a means of procreation and the observation of continence. According to the AAIR (1984, p. 18) "marriage in Islam is a civil contract made by mutual concern between man and woman". In the Arabic language, the word nikkah, which is usually translated as marriage in English, has a wider meaning than is referred to. According to the introductory note on the translation of Sahih Muslim, Book 8, Kitab Al-Nikah (The Book of Marriage),

Marriage is a social institution that goes back to the beginning of creation and may be defined as a relation between a man and a woman which is recognized by custom or law and involves certain rights and duties, both in the case of the parties entering the Union, and in case of the children born of it (International Islamic University Malaysia, n.d)

Due to the importance of the subject of marriage, Muslim jurists have dedicated great parts of their books to tackling it, explaining its rulings as well as its purposes and virtues. In the Qur'an, Allah speaks about marriage in several verses, highlighting its importance and rules. Allah says, "And marry those that please you of other women, two, three, or four." (Qur'an, 4:3).

The prophet also exhorted people to marry and made marriage desirable and recommendable. The prophet said, "O young people! Whoever among you has the ability to marry should marry, for it helps in lowering one's gaze and guarding one's chastity" (i.e., it guards one's private parts against immorality) (Sahih Muslim Book 8, Number 3231). Among the glorious virtues of marriage are: it leads to maintaining chastity and keeping away from the unlawful sexual intercourse that ruins human communities; it involves the responsibility of men toward women that includes sheltering them and providing for them; and marriage also creates an atmosphere of tranquility, mutual concord, security, and spiritual comfort between both husband and wife.

3.1 Rulings on marriage in Islam

In Islam, there are certain rulings according to Islamic law. These rulings have been established on account of all genuine human instincts, such as physical, spiritual, intellectual, emotional, etc. (Islamonline, 2023). Islam recommends marriage as the only legitimate medium for regulating and fulfilling human instincts. The Islamic law rulings pertaining to marriage differ according to the state and conditions of each individual. According to the sha'ria, there are five rulings on marriage: it can be obligatory, desirable, allowable, prohibited, and detestable (Al-Fawzan, 2005, p. 350–353). Marriage becomes obligatory for the one who fears committing adultery or fornication, as marriage is a means of chastity and avoidance of what is prohibited. Marriage becomes desirable for an individual when there is a desire or libido, but there is no fear of committing unlawful sexual intercourse. Again, marriage becomes allowable for an individual when there is lust, but there is also a desire for marriage itself. An example in this case is the impotent and the old. Lastly, marriage becomes prohibited for a man who cannot observe his wife's rights because he is undesirous of sexual intercourse due to a physical defect or because of his inability to afford marriage. Marriage may also become prohibited for a Muslim who lives amongst people engaged in a war with Muslims. Marriage in this case may expose his family to danger and be captured by the enemy. He may also live in fear and feel insecure about his wife living among them (Al-Fawzan, 2005, p. 353).

3.2 Integral part of Marriage

There are three integral parts of marriage in Islam: First, the couples must be free from barriers that may deter the validity of their marriage. E.g., the woman must not be from among those the man is prohibited from marrying, such as close relatives; Secondly, the woman's consent must be verified, which is expressed by the woman's legal guardian or anyone in his place through the words "I marry you so-and-so"; and thirdly, the man's acceptance must be verified through the expression "I accept her" by his guardian. Islamic jurists such as Shaykul Islam Ibn Taymiyah have further mentioned that marriage can be concluded by any wording that indicates the same meaning and is not just restricted to the aforementioned spoken forms (Al-Fawzan, 2005, p. 362–363).

3.3 Conditions for the validity of Marriage

According to Sheikh Al-Fawzan, four conditions need to be met for a marriage to be valid in Islam. They are: Accurate specification of the two spouses by referring to them by name, pointing at them, or mentioning certain qualities that distinguish them; through mutual consent between the two spouses where the individuals involved should have agreed to marry, meaning, the marriage is deemed invalid if any of the two are forced to accept it. Permission from the bride's guardians for their daughter to be married off: the final condition for a marriage to be valid is for the marriage contract to be carried out in the presence of two just witnesses (Al-Fawzan, 2005, p. 365).

3.4 Islamic Perspective on Marriage Counseling

In Islam, the focus of marriage counseling or relationship counseling is to improve communication between spouses and address specific issues that are causing relationship problems (Al-Balagh, 2023). It is recorded that the first recorded counseling among Muslims was when Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) came to his wife Khadeeja worried, confused, and unsure of what transpired after he received the first revelation. Khadeeja (Radi Allah Anha) counseled him by 1) comforting him with warmth and love, 2) reassured him that he has always been kind and sane, and 3) provided expert opinion on the situation he was facing (Iqbal, Rahma Institute). Islamic counseling emphasizes spiritual solutions based on love and fear of Allah and the duty to fulfill our responsibility as the servants of Allah on this earth. Islamic counseling is offered for marriage and family issues, for mental health cases, and for religious guidance (Rahma Institute, n.d.).

According to Magid (Rahma Institute, n.d.), the principles of counseling are the following: confidentiality, trust, respect, recognizing the difference between arbitration and counseling, loving what is good for other people, making peace between people, concern about Muslim affairs, good listening habits, understanding others' cultures, the partnership between Imams and professionals, awareness of the law of the land, and the ultimate goal of connecting people with Allah and offering spiritual solutions to them. The Quran reminds us that in any form of counseling or private talk, Allah is present and hears what we are saying (58:7). The Quran also teaches that the private talk in our counseling is to help others to be righteous and to be obedient to Allah

(58:9). Any effort that we make in bringing people together is considered 'sadaqah' (charity), and Allah will reward us for it. Also, marriage counseling has three main areas: before marriage, post-marriage, and family counseling during marriage (Rahma Institute, n.d.). In Islamic marriage counseling, the issues that need to be discussed are: understanding important concepts such as marriage, religion, and the role of man and woman; and issues of communication, which is the most significant issue in marital relations. Discussion should revolve around effective communication, listening, and feedback. Issues of abuse, child upbringing, and parenting. Other very important issues are financial planning, intimate relationships in marriage, and conflict resolution. These are very important issues to consider in Islamic marriage counseling, and imams and counselors need more training on them.

3.5 Conclusion

In Islam, marriage is considered a civil contract made through mutual agreement and concern between a man and woman (AAIR, 1984, p. 18). Marriage is therefore a social institution recognized by custom or law and involves certain rights and duties on the part of both men and women. Among its virtues are that it leads to maintaining chastity and keeping away from unlawful sexual intercourses that ruin human communities; it also involves the responsibility of men towards women; and it is also a means of procreation to keep the human race. According to the Islamic shari'ah, there are five rulings on marriage: it can be obligatory, desirable, allowable, prohibited, and detestable (Al-Fawzan, 2005, p. 350–353). There are also integral parts of marriage, which are: the couple must be free from barriers that deter the validity of the marriage, i.e., being free from those whom the man is prohibited from marrying, such as close relatives; the woman's consent must also be sought; and thirdly, the man's acceptance must also be verified through an expression of acceptance by his guardian. Conditions also exist for the marriage to be valid. These include: accurate specification of the two spouses by referring to them by name, pointing at them, or mentioning certain qualities that distinguish them; mutual consent between the two spouses where the two should have agreed to marry; permission to be sought from the bride's guardians for their daughter to be married; and lastly, the marriage contract is to be carried out in the presence of two just witnesses (Al-Fawzan, 2005, p. 365). Due to the crucial nature of

marriage, marriage counseling is very important, and its aim is to improve communication between spouses and address specific issues that are causing relationship problems.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The findings are presented in two (2) folds. The first part describes the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants for the study, and the second part describes the results gathered about the objectives set for the study.

4.1 Bio Data

This section presents data reflecting the opinions of the participants in the study. These include gender, years of marriage, whether they received counseling, the counseling utilized, the length of the counseling, their level of satisfaction with the counseling, and how helpful they found the counseling to be.

4.1.1 Gender

Out of a sample of 20 respondents, only 19 responded. The study revealed that out of 19 respondents who participated, 12 were male and 5 were female. This means more males participated than females. Below is a pie chart depicting the representation of gender participation.

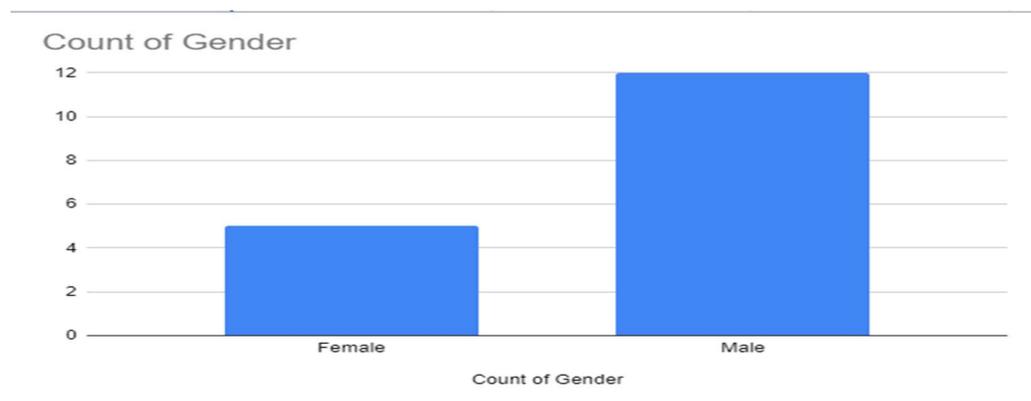


Figure 1: Number of male and female who participated in the survey

4.1.2 Number of Years of Marriage

The study sought to find out how many years a couple have been married. It was revealed that out of 18 respondents, 4 said they had been married between 3 and 5 years. Seven couples were

married between 6 and 10 years old. It also revealed four couples were married between 11 and 20 years old. Three couples were married for 20 years.

4.1.3 Marriage Counseling

The study sought to find out how many respondents had gone through marriage counseling. It was revealed that out of 18 respondents, 9 had gone through marriage, and 9 other couples had not gone through marriage counseling.

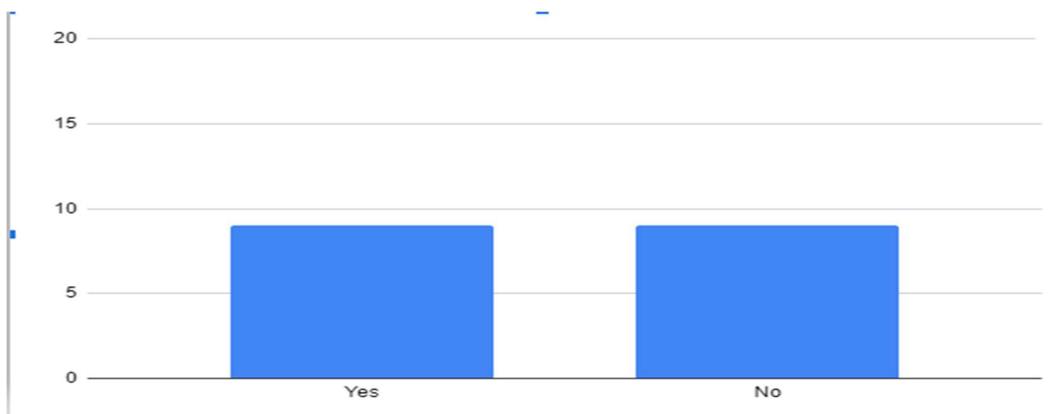


Figure 2: Count of respondents who received marriage counseling

4.1.4 Couples participation during Counseling

The study sought to find out how many respondents (husband and wife) participated in marriage counseling. It was revealed that out of 12 respondents, 3 respondents said they participated in the counseling session with their spouses, while 9 respondents also indicated they had personally gone through counseling without their partner.

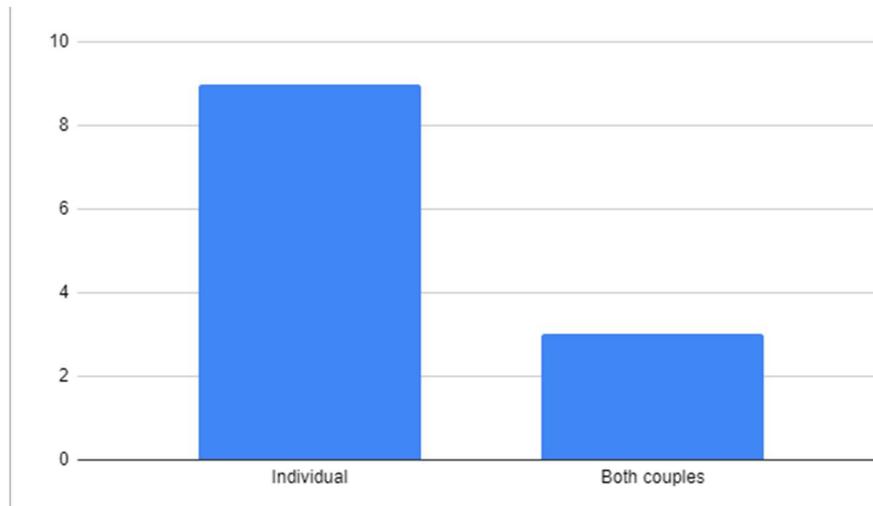


Figure 3: Count of respondent who went through marriage counseling with their partners

4.2 THE IMPACT OF FORMAL MARRIAGE COUNSELING ON MARITAL HOMES IN GHANA

This section discusses the impact of formal marriage counseling on marital homes. Some sub-areas emerged, such as the benefits of marriage counseling.

4.2.1 Benefits of marriage counseling

The study sought to find out factors in marriage that determine if the counseling respondents received was successful. Out of 9 respondents, factors mentioned included choosing the right spouse, remembrance and the fear of Allah, and patience. Other factors mentioned were respondents' ability to avoid quarrels, tolerance, and maintaining a peaceful marital home. A respondent explained further that they had been going through counseling three years before marriage. From the information they gathered from the counseling, they could relate often to what they were taught during the counseling, and it always resonated in their thoughts. They also indicated that they were offered some counseling or advice on their wedding day, but they cannot remember or reflect on anything that was said. This revelation actually confirms what has been

mentioned in Chapter 1 about the challenges that traditional counseling poses due to it being given on the wedding day, during which couples can hardly focus on happenings around them.

4.2.2 Effectiveness of Marriage Counseling on Marital Homes and Level of Satisfaction

The study sought to find out the satisfaction level of respondents with the counselor. Out of 12 respondents, 3 said they were very satisfied, another 3 indicated they were satisfied, and 6 mentioned they were partly satisfied. Again, out of 12 respondents, 3 said the content the counselor presented was extremely helpful, 5 said it was very helpful, and 4 mentioned it was somewhat helpful.

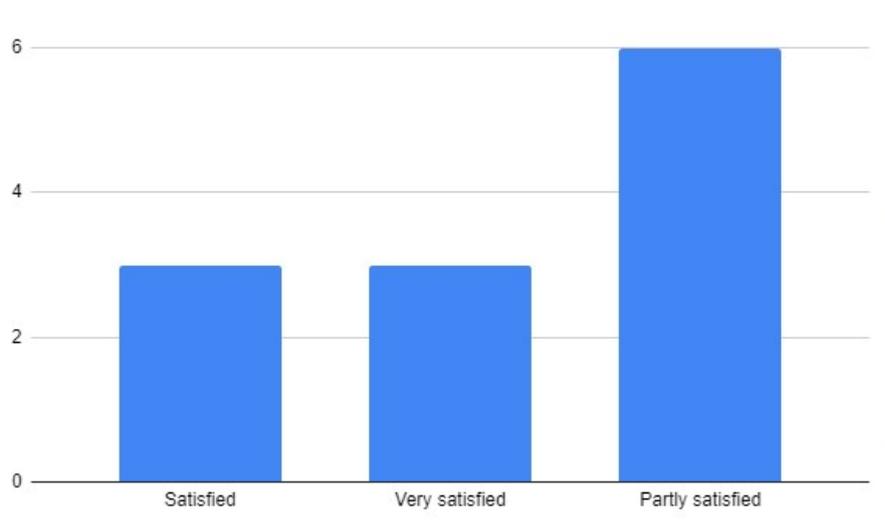


Figure 4: Satisfactory level of respondents with marriage counselor

In an interview with one of the counselors, he revealed that he had kept track of couples for whom he provided counseling and can attest that their marital homes have been successful.

It further indicated that couples who went through marriage counseling programs experienced a 31 percent increase in marital success over those who did not. Dr. David Olsen, a marriage researcher and creator of the premarital inventory PREPARE/ENRICH, found that 85 percent of couples who went through the inventory and skills-building exercises stayed together (Olsen, 2000). Marriage counseling strengthens a marriage before it takes place, as this allows couples to prepare for and anticipate challenges and conflicts that may arise in the course of their marriage.

The study is therefore in line with the findings of Cobbinah & Osei-Tutu (2019), which revealed that premarital counseling helps to sustain marriages because it gives couples the initial skills needed to enable them to start their marriage and solve minor problems that may be encountered in the relationship".

4.3 THE STRUCTURE EMPLOYED IN ADMINISTERING MARRIAGE COUNSELING IN GHANA AND MALAYSIA

This section discusses the structure involved in administering marriage counseling. Some sub-areas were considered in this section: method of counseling, duration of counseling.

4.3.1 Method of Counseling, Duration of Counseling & Topics

The study sought to find out what method of counseling respondents had gone through. Out of 13 respondents, six had gone through traditional marriage counseling at their wedding. Another six had gone through counseling in the form of seminars and lectures. One respondent had received private (formal) counseling. This revealed that many in Ghana go through traditional counseling rather than a formal one.

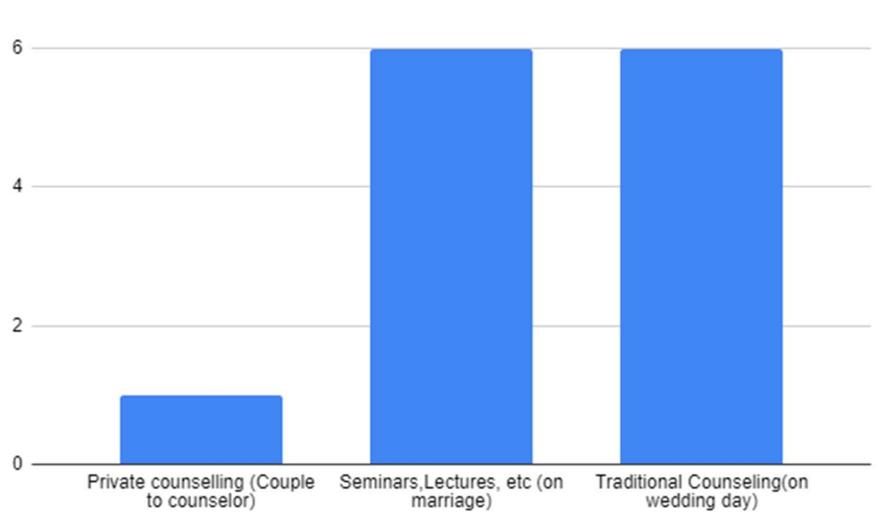


Figure 5: Method of marriage counseling received by respondents

In an interview with one of the marriage counselors on his view on the method of counseling, he indicated the best practice of marriage counseling is in the form of formal counseling, where there is a laid-down structure to be followed, as he stated:

‘In the method of counseling, the best approach is the formal method, and as a professional counselor, he perceived the traditional method of counseling as a piece of mere advice being given to couples on their wedding day rather than a form of counseling’. (Marriage Counselor, 1). In another interview, one counselor indicated that ‘she considered her method of counseling as traditional since she was not a certified marriage counselor and had not received any training in marriage counseling’. She further explained that her structure of counseling was based on proposals, recommendations, and suggestions. (Counselor, 2)

In view of Malaysia's method of counseling, the Malaysian government has made a rule for the purpose of training prospective brides (Hasyim et al., 2020). This comes in the form of a pre-marriage course conducted and assisted by an institution known as the Jabatan Kumajuan Agama Islam Malaysia (JAKIM), or Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, in 1996. In this course, the participants are given modules to make it easier to understand the contents of the course. The module is called the Islamic Pre-Marriage Course Combined Module (MBKPI), which was produced by Jabatan Kumajuan Agama Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) or the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia in 1996. The contents of the modules are an illustrated slide, a short video, and the income docudrama *Eternal Love*. The introduction of this course is one of the initiatives taken by Malaysia as a country to provide initial household knowledge to prospective couples (Abdullah, 2002, as cited in Hasyim et al., 2020).

The finding from the study is in line with the findings from previous studies reviewed in Chapter 1 that traditional marriage counseling is not effective; hence, the best method of counseling is formal marriage counseling.

4.3.2 Duration of Counseling

Out of 12 respondents on the duration of counseling, 10 had received counseling on their wedding day lasting between 30 minutes and 1 hour, while 2 respondents had also gone through counseling for a period of six months and frequently.

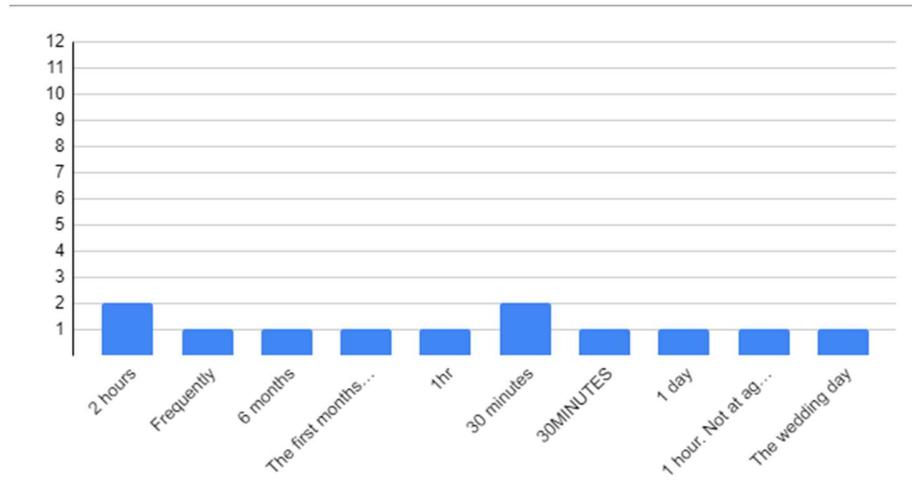


Figure 6: Duration of counseling session

It is clear that people only get counseled on the very day that the marriage is tied. When the view of the counselor was asked, he pointed out that, in the moment of celebration, the counseling given does not really sit well with the couples, as he stated:

Marriage counseling is a process, and therefore a one-day event cannot give out all the information couples need to know; however, when counseling is done over a long period, it allows topics to be taught that will give couples a better understanding of marriage. I therefore offer counseling for more than three months. (Counsellor 2).

4.3.3 Topics Discussed

The study found out from the couples the lessons learned during their counseling. The following were the responses: Topics that were discussed during counseling include patience, tolerance, love for the sake of Allah, treating spouses in the best manner, communication in marriage, conflict resolution, sexual issues, and spiritual matters. Most of the discussions, however, centered on bearing patience. In an interview with the counselor, she revealed that topics she usually discussed with her client were family, couples, and the upbringing of children. (Counselor 3)

In view of Malaysia's duration of counseling, it was revealed from the literature that the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office established the initiative to implement a pre-marriage course program. In view of this, every Malaysian citizen is required to undergo a pre-marriage course to qualify them

to register their marriage. This is because, at the time of registering marriage, it is required to attach a certificate of pre-marriage course and an HIV-free letter. The pre-marriage course is held for three months, with eight to ten meetings (Hasyim et al., 2020, p. 104).

The finding from the study is in line with the findings of Khamis (2017) that marriage counseling centers in the Nima/Mamobi community do not have a structure for offering marriage counseling.

4.4.4 Post Marital Counseling & Reasons

The study sought to find out the number of respondents who had gone through post-marital counseling and the reasons. Out of 17 respondents, 3 indicated they had gone through post-marital counseling. 14 said they had not gone through post-marital counseling. To also find out why respondents sought pre-marital counseling, out of 6 respondents, 4 said it was after encountering marital challenges, while 2 respondents indicated it was to sensitize and strengthen their relationship.

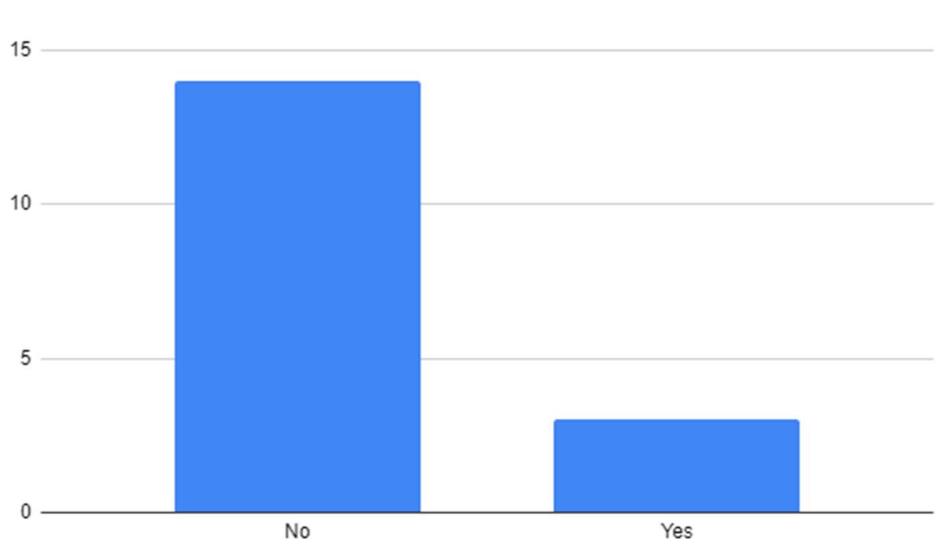


Figure 7: Count of respondents who received post-marital counseling

In an interview, one of the counselors indicated that most couples sought solutions to marital challenges by reaching out to imams in the community. As an imam and now a professional

counselor, most of the couples who reported marital challenges and sought the assistance of counselors only did so after encountering problems in their marriages (Counsellor 1).

According to DivorceLawyer.my (2023), marriage counseling is not legally required before filing for mutual divorce (commonly known as a joint petition) in Malaysia. However, if one is filing a single petition for divorce, there is a need to attend marriage counseling by a certified conciliatory body before you can file your divorce petition. The conciliatory body is a group of people appointed by a religious authority, community, clan, or association to help couples reconcile their differences. It can also be a marriage tribunal under the Jabatan Pendaftaran Negara (JPN) law in Malaysia. Reasons for seeking post-marriage counseling are to try to reconcile couples' differences to save their marriage, to protect the interests of children, and to help reduce the stress and conflict associated with divorce (Divorcelawyer.my, 2023).

4.5 FACTORS OF SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE COUNSELING

The study sought to find out factors in marriage that determine if the counseling couples received was successful. Out of 9 respondents, factors mentioned included choosing the right spouse, remembrance and the fear of Allah, and patience. Other factors mentioned were couples ability to avoid quarrels, tolerance, and maintaining a peaceful marital home. A couple explained further that they had been going through counseling three years before marriage. From the information they gathered from the counseling, they could relate often to what they were taught during the counseling, and it always resonated in their thoughts. They did also indicate that they were offered some counseling or advice on their wedding day, but they cannot remember or reflect on anything that was said. This revelation actually confirms what has been mentioned in Chapter 1 about the challenges that traditional counseling poses due to being given on the wedding day, during which couples can hardly focus on happenings around them.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the summary of the findings, in relation to the objectives, are presented. Also, conclusions are drawn from the findings and guidelines are suggested to address marriage counseling. Some recommendations are made on marriage counseling practices.

5.1 Summary of findings

This study found that formal marriage counseling is very important and plays a major role in sustaining marriages. Formal counseling gives couples the initial skills needed to solve minor problems that may be encountered during their marriage. Its positive effect on couples include: improved communication, problem-solving skills, emotional connection, building trust, enhancing intimacy and understanding each other's personality.

Also, it was found that the best method of marriage counseling is the formal marriage counseling because it is more professional and well-structured in its application. Further, factors in marriage which determined the success counseling were checked and they included: choosing the right spouse, tolerance and having a peaceful marital home, avoidance of quarrels, healthy communication, and the fear of Allah.

5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study affirmed that the formal marriage counseling which was introduced in the Madina and Nima/Mamobi communities in Ghana lacks structure. Although the formal marriage counseling was introduced in the Muslim communities in Ghana to address the lapses in the traditional method, which was considered ineffective, it is still not popular and not known to the people. Rather, the traditional counseling method is still prevalent and patronized by most

people. However, the Malaysian marriage counseling system is better structured and can be adopted and studied to fit within the Ghanaian context.

5.3 Recommendation

The following recommendations are suggested: the imams, scholars, chiefs, and opinion leaders in the Muslim communities need to work together in educating the masses on the need for and importance of formal marriage counseling. Also, Individuals who provide marriage counseling need to go through professional marriage counseling training and be licensed in order to appropriately practice. Furthermore, prospective Muslim couples should be encouraged to go through formal marriage counseling and be issued with certificates before their marriage can be registered as done in Malaysia. In essence, the Ghanaian Muslim communities should constitute a proper way of administering marriage counseling to help tackle challenges in the institution of marriage.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Questions for Respondents

Gender.....

How many years have you been married?

Did you receive any kind of counseling/advice before marriage? Yes/No

If yes, did it involve either couples or an individual? Both Couples/Individual

What was the method of counseling/advice? Formal Counseling (Certificate issued)/Traditional Counseling (on wedding day)/Seminars, Lectures, etc. (on marriage)

What was the duration of the counseling/advice or how long did it last?

What were some of the lessons/topics discussed during the counseling/advice?

What was your satisfactory level after the counseling/advice, did the counselor or individual(s) meet your expectations? Very satisfied/Satisfied/Partly satisfied/Dissatisfied/Very dissatisfied

How helpful was the content presented to you by the counselor been to you as a couple and your marital home? Extremely helpful/Very helpful/Somewhat helpful/Not so helpful/Not at all helpful

Have you gone through post-marriage counseling? Yes/No

If yes, was it after you encountered marital challenges as a couple, or was it to sensitize yourselves? After encountering marital challenges/To sensitize ourselves

What successful factors do you see in your marriage which makes you think are results of the counseling you went through?

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Marriage Counsellors

In your view, how would you classify your method of counseling, is it a traditional or formal counseling method?

Have you received any kind of training on marriage counseling? If yes, from which institution and how is the course structured?

What structure do you use in counseling couples?
What is the duration?

What topics are discussed?

Are certificates awarded to couples?

Do you have a database of people you have counsel?

What measures should the Muslim community put it to improve formal marriage counseling?

Should marriage counselors be licensed?