Marital Satisfaction Blues among Ghanaian Spouses: Can Premarital Counselling be a Panacea?

Paul Kobina Annan Bedu-Addo [a*] and Michael Asare [a]

[a] Univeristy of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

Author's contribution

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

The study aimed at determining whether premarital counselling actually influenced marital satisfaction. A self-developed structured questionnaire (α = 0.89) was utilized on a sample of 322 premarital counselled and non- premarital counselled spouses in Ghana. Linear multiple regression, independent sample t-test and Pearson product moment correlation were used to analyze the data. The nature of premarital counselling significantly influenced spouses' experience of marital satisfaction (β = .401, t = 5.241, p = .000), together with topics adequately discussed during premarital counselling (β = -.181, t= -2.370, p= .019). Additionally, premarital counselled spouses were more likely to experience marital satisfaction than non- premarital counselled spouses (M =3.39, SD = .359, t (193) = 2.571, p = .011; M = 3.26, SD = .489). Premarital counselling moderately correlated with and marital satisfaction (r = -.153, n = 322, p < 0.01).

Keywords: Marital satisfaction; marital dissatisfaction; premarital counseling; family satisfaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

"The world over marriage is seen as a recognized social institution, not only for establishing and maintaining the family, but also for creating and sustaining the ties of kinship; indeed without the institution of marriage there would be no family, nuclear or extended and therefore no kinship ties" [1]. "Marriage is also considered as one of the highlights of adulthood, especially in the African context" [2].

_____

Corresponding author: E-mail: pkabaddo@uew.edu.gh;

Shackelford & Buss [3] explain marital satisfaction as mental state that "reflects the perceived benefits and costs of marriage to a particular person. The more costs a marriage partner inflicts on a person, the less satisfied one generally is with the marriage and with the marriage partner. Similarly, the greater the perceived benefits are, the more satisfied one is with the marriage and with the marriage partner. Generally, marital satisfaction can be said to being happy and content with the marriage relationship in terms of certain determinants which may vary from one person to another". Ashdown, Hackathorn, and Clark [4] on the other hand, stated that "the trend of high divorce rates is apparent in countries around the world with Ghana not being an exception".

Furthermore, Ashdown, Hackathorn, and Clark [4] explaining "the National Vital Statistics Reports (NVSR) USA of 2009, stated that approximately 50% of marriages in the United States end in divorce, and this trend of high divorce rates is apparent in countries around the world. Divorce data in different parts of the world show a similar situation. In Europe, according to the National Statistics Institutes, Spain and France reported 110,764 and 134,000 divorces in 2011 and 2010 respectively. In America, particularly the United States, one in four marriages ended in divorce in 2009; in Mexico, 16% of all married couples divorced in 2011; in Costa Rica 12,592 divorces were reported in 2011; in Brazil the divorce rate rose 0.4% and in Colombia, divorce rate has increased 26.2%, in the first semester of 2011, there were 6,889 cases, while in the same period in 2012, the number of couples who decided to end their marital union rose to 8,694" [5,6].

"The situation in Ghana is not different. For instance, the 2010 Population and Housing Census of the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) indicated that the national divorce rate is 4.2 percent for population 18 years and older, with a total number of 573,235 divorced cases recorded. Out of this total number, Ashanti region alone recorded 124,406 divorced cases. The report also specified that Kumasi metropolis which is part of the Ashanti region recorded 3.0 percent of divorce cases during the 2010 census" [7].

Indeed, Adjassah [8] reports in "the Graphic online by quoting the GSS report which indicated that about 600,000 marriages contracted in Ghana in the year 2014 collapsed". Furthermore,

Okyere [9] "reports of mad rush for divorce as more cases pile up in Ashanti region. He stated that statistical records from the legal department of the Registrar of marriages and divorce at the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (K.M.A) of the Ashanti Region point to a rather disturbing fact where a lot of divorce cases were recorded".

It was revealed that the dissolution of customary marriages in the region and declaration of customary divorce at the law courts had increased at a high rate from the year 2009 through 2014. Supporting these assertions with figures, the report further indicated that, the declaration of customary divorce at the law courts increased from 200 in 2009 to 268 in 2013, whiles in 2014 recorded a slight decrease to 150. These figures seem significant and alarming after churches and other religious bodies have introduced premarital counselling programmes and other marriage preparatory programmes to curtail marital dissatisfaction.

"According to the National Centre for Health Statistics in the USA in 2020 out of a total of 2,015, 603 marriages contracted, 746,971 ended in divorce. The divorce rate was 2.7 per 1,000 population (45 reporting States and D.C.) Even though divorce is prevalent in sub-saharan Africa it is most frequent in Ghana and DR Congo (*33.2% and 28.8% of first marriages* ended in divorce, respectively) and less frequent in Nigeria and Senegal (11.8% and 19.7% of first marriages ended in divorce, respectively"; Clark & Brauner-Otto, 2015). According to Onlinedivorce.com, in 2019, there have been almost four thousand divorces, which statistically means the divorce rate in Ghana is around 10% average if not slightly more.

Literature is replete with evidence indicating the effect of divorce on individuals and society as a whole. According to Waite and Gallaher (2000), "the devastating effect of divorce on individuals, families, especially children, globally, is well documented. Indeed married people tend to live longer than unmarried or divorced people. Compared to married people, the unmarried have higher rates of mortality than the married: about fifty percent higher among women and two hundred fifty percent higher among men. They further posit that married individuals are significantly less likely to be problem drinkers than those who are divorced, separated or single; married people are more successful in their careers, earn more, and have more wealth than single, divorced, or cohabiting individuals. They finally assert that married people are

happier than single, widowed, or cohabiting people".

Again Heffeman et al. (1992) argue that, "divorce among adults signifies the loss of an intimate relationship that also lack of security and support. It also signifies a loss of hopes and dreams as well as feelings of failure. And although there may be relief over the divorce, being alone also brings fear, anxiety, loneliness, and guilt, especially if there are children involved (187-192)".

Additionally, Schlesman [10] explained that "divorce is a death of a union, and therefore the death of a dream, a promise, a life, and a family unit. Everyone involved even a perpetrator will feel grief and loss during a divorce. If there are children involved, they will experience severe grief over the loss of being with both parents together, living under the same roof". Yet again Yusuf and Solomon [11] assert that divorce always leave the couple with devastating effects such as; sleeplessness, decreased levels of happiness, tiredness, loss of appetites, loss of weight, increase in illness, increase anxiety and death.

This seemingly gloomy picture of the effects of divorce on individual and society brings to the fore the need for proper appreciation and planning towards marriage; hence the role of premarital counselling in assisting married couples achieve marital satisfaction and probable eventual marital success. The vital role of premarital counselling in ameliorating the effects of divorce on society cannot therefore be underestimated.

A plethora of literature allude to the link between the quality of premarital counselling and marital satisfaction and stability. For example Khulman (2007), points out that good, "skill-based pre-marital counselling or classes can reduce the risk of divorce by up to 30% and lead to a significantly happier marriage". Caroll and Doherty (2003), also report that "pre-marital counselling can help build a stronger, more successful marriage. Reviewing 23 studies on the effectiveness of premarital counselling, they found that the average couple who participated in a premarital counselling and education programme reported a 30% stronger marriage than those who did not. They additionally found that premarital counselling programmes were generally effective at producing immediate and short-term gains in interpersonal skills and overall relationship quality".

Ratson, (2015), assert that "premarital counselling helps couples prepare for marriage by providing a good avenue for learning more about each other which includes developing better communication skills, and ensuring that couples have a strong, healthy relationship, and are given a better chance for a stable and satisfying marriage. Ratson finally points out that premarital counselling also help couples identify weaknesses that could become bigger problems during marriage" .

Teal [12] notes that "premarital counselling allows couples an opportunity to improve their relationship and work toward a successful marriage. Teal further posits that during premarital counselling couples discuss numerous topics, including: intimacy, affection, sex, communication skills, finances and money management, children and parenting, as well as roles in marriage. A proper appreciation and the acquisition of the relevant strategies to deal with these aspects of marriage that Teal alludes to as topics in premarital counselling programme may ultimately inure to the benefit of any married couple".

This is given credence by Stanley et al. [13] and Teal [12], "who inter alia, allude to the fact that participation in premarital education is correlated with higher levels of satisfaction and commitment in marriage and lower levels of conflict, while reducing the odds of divorce. These estimated effects, according to them were robust across race, income, and education levels, which suggest that participation in premarital education is generally beneficial for a wide range of couples". Thus in the opinion of Adzovie and Dabone [14] "it seems wise for would-be couples to consider seeking guidance to explore important and complex issues that are inherent in marriage before they take the vows (p.10)".

There seem to be an upward surge of of the number of couples seeking premarital counselling in before marriages in churches in Ghana Adzovie and Dabone [14]. Such premarital counselling programmes normally last from anything between three to six months, with the ultimate aim of equipping the would-be couples with the needed knowledge, skills and competences for navigating the 'marriage terrain' with some degree of confidence. The concomitant expectation of such an upsurge in demand for premarital counselling among would-be married couples in Ghana would have been a decrease in divorce rates among Christian

couples. Since there seem to rather an upsurge in divorce rates among this coterie of people in Ghana [8], (Clark & Brauner-Otto, 2015), [14], it is proper to revisit the role premarital counselling play in assisting couples dealing with issues in marriage should they come up.

▪ The agitations that arise are why are the rates of divorce among Christians are still on the rise in Ghana in general and in Kumasi in the Ashanti Region in particular, when most churches in Ghana have made premarital counselling a compulsory precondition for blessing marriages in churches? Are there any deficiencies in the premarital counselling programmes offered in Christian churches in Ghana, that seem to account for the increases in divorce rates in Ghana? The study was underpinned by two main theories namely: Solution Focussed Brief Therapy and the Dynamic Goal Theory of marital satisfaction. While the Solution Focussed Brief Therapy is hinged on the optimistic assumption that people are healthy and competent and have the ability to construct solutions that can enhance their lives, the Dynamic Goal Theory of marital satisfaction posits that people have multiple goals to achieve in their marriage which is termed marital goal. These include personal growth goals, companionship goals and instrumental goals.

The choice of these theories emanates from the fact that it is assumed that couples preparing for marriage via premarital counselling or couples pre-marital education possess the innate capacity to construct their own solutions in marriage, in alignment with their personal, companionship and instrumental goals.

This study thus sought to determine empirically whether premarital counseling, specifically influences Christian couples' experience of marital satisfaction. Additionally, the nature and issues discussed by Christian couples in Christ Apostolic Church International Bantama, in the Kumasi Metropolis during premarital counselling sessions also was investigated.

2. METHODS

The study adopted the ex post facto research design. The correlation survey design was used in obtaining data quantitatively. The population comprised all Christian married men and women in the Kumasi Metropolis. The population was purposively chosen because the Ashanti Region has been recording increasing numbers of divorce cases in Ghana Adjassah [8]. Also, married people in churches were used for the study because churches are much more particular about premarital counselling and therefore a lot of their members are compelled to go through it even though some did not go through owing to various reasons. Consequently the Christ Apostolic Church, Bantama District (consisting of nine different churches) in the Kumasi Metropolis was the target population. A sample of 322 consisting of 193 premarital counselled spouses, and 129 spouses who did not have premarital counselling before marriage was purposely selected for the study.

Based on reviewed literature a self-developed instrument was utilized for data collection. The instrument had four sections. Section I employed a three-item demographic data collection template – gender (male or female), number of years of marriage and either having premarital counselling before marriage or marrying without going through premarital counselling.

Consisting of 10 items and further categorized into two, Section II dealt with general practice of counselling and ethical issues on one part as well as a counsellor's personality and subject-matter knowledge on another part. Section III on the other hand, consisted of 15 items which sought to ascertain whether or not the content of the premarital counselling programmes sufficiently prepared couples for marriage life. Finally, Section IV contained 20 items, part of which were adapted from the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) Essuman [15]. Section IV sought to collectively measure couples' experience of marital satisfaction.

The instrument was validated by utilizing the expertise of two counselling psychologists from the University of Ghana and University of Cape Coast. Pilot testing was done with 50 pre-marital counselled couples and 50 who had not undergone premarital counselling within Kwadaso District of the Christ Apostolic Church, also in the Kumasi Metropolis who were not part of the main study. Utilizing the Cronbach alpha, the instrument yield a reliability coefficient of 0.89, which was deemed robust enough, Koo and Li [16], to utilize. Consequently, the study proceeded by employing descriptive and inferential statistics as the analytical regime.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Research Question 1

Which topics were sufficiently discussed during premarital counselling that were likely to be beneficial to couples in the future? This research question was aimed at eliciting from respondents the content of premarital counselling that was sufficiently covered during their counselling sessions. Table 1 depicts the means and standard deviations of the various topic treated in premarital counselling for the study sample.

Table 1 reveals that all the topics were covered during their counselling sessions. Nonetheless a greater number of respondents indicated that 'Communication in marriage'(M=3.38, SD=0.52) was the most sufficiently covered topic during their premarital counselling sessions. This was followed by 'Respect, appreciation and understanding in marriage' (M= 3.32, SD = 0.71) and 'How to play marital roles (M=3.23, SD=0.78). Respondents interestingly indicated that the least sufficiently covered topics during their premarital counselling sessions were 'Fun and leisure with partner' (M=2.61, SD=0.75) and 'Emotional management in marriage'(M=2.74, SD=0.70).

3.2 Research Question 2

To what extent does the nature the counselling[1] offered and topics sufficiently discussed during premarital counselling influence satisfaction in spouse's marital life? This question was aimed at investigating the relative predictive strength of the nature of premarital counselling and the topics sufficiently discussed during premarital counselling. Table 2 displays unstandardized (B) and standardized (β) regression coefficient, the multiple correlation coefficient (R), adjusted R^2 and the value of t and it associated p-value for each variable entered into the model.

As shown in Table 2, the nature of premarital counselling and the topics discussed collectively explained 12.6% (adjusted R^2 = .126) of the variance in marital satisfaction of spouses. The

---

[1] *The nature of premarital counselling involves the place for the premarital counselling, the personality and competence of the person offering it, as well as adhering to the ethical issues such as confidentiality and privacy. All these are aimed at equipping couples in making informed decisions towards the attainment of future marital satisfaction.*

model therefore did not perform well with about 87% shrinkage in the variance explained in the population. The shrinkage may be the result of other factors apart from the nature of premarital counselling and the topics discussed.

From Table 2, the nature of premarital counselling was the highest contributor to the variance in marital satisfaction (β = .401, *t* = 5.241, *p* = .000). It is the highest predictor and also significant at the 0.05 alpha level. This implies that the nature of premarital counselling relatively plays a very important role in spouses' marital satisfaction as compared with the other variable (topics sufficiently discussed).

From the analysis, topics sufficiently discussed during premarital counselling was the next contributor of the variance in marital satisfaction (β = -.181, t= -2.370, p= .019). This indicates that topics discussed during premarital counselling is also a predictor of marital satisfaction. It was also statistically significant . Consequently, topics adequately discussed during premarital counselling , can influence couples' experience of marital satisfaction in the future. In sum the linear regression indicates that nature of premarital counselling and topics sufficiently discussed during premarital counselling are all contributors of marital satisfaction with a predictive strength of 12.6%.

3.3 Research Question 3

What is the correlation between premarital counselling and spouses' marital satisfaction?

This research question was aimed at ascertaining the existence of any relationship between spouses attending premarital counselling and their subsequent experience of marital satisfaction. The relationship between premarital counselling and marital satisfaction was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

As shown in Table 3, the test analysis revealed that there was a moderate statistically significant correlation between premarital counselling and marital satisfaction (r = -.153, n = 322, p < 0.01). The table further reveals that this relationship was a small but negative correlation between the two variables (premarital counselling and marital satisfaction). It can be inferred from the analysis that as premarital counselling increases; marital satisfaction also decreases.

Table 1. Topics sufficiently discussed during Premarital Counselling Sessions

Items	Mean (M)	Std Deviation (SD)
Planning the wedding	2.89	0.91
Communication in marriage	3.38	0.52
Pregnancy, Labour and Childcare in marriage	2.79	0.83
Parenting and child upbringing in marriage	2.87	0.80
How to cope with marital stress	2.96	0.64
Emotional management in marriage	2.74	0.70
Financial management in marriage	2.92	0.84
How to play marital roles	3.23	0.78
Romance and Sexual issues in marriage	3.11	0.80
Religiosity	2.93	0.72
How to deal with In-law issues	2.85	0.73
Fun and leisure with partner	2.61	0.75
Commitment to the marriage	3.21	0.58
Respect, appreciation and understanding in marriage	3.32	0.71
Conflict resolution in marriage	3.03	0.67

Table 2. Nature and Topics sufficiently discussed during Premarital Counselling and its influence on Marital Satisfaction

Variable	B	Beta	R	R^2	T	Sig.(p)
(Constant)	2.572				12.430	0.000
Nature of premarital counselling	.378	.401			5.241	.000
Topics sufficiently discussed during premarital counselling	-.122	-.181			-2.370	.019
			.355[a]	.126		

(α) = .05

Table 3. Correlation between Premarital Counselling and Marital Satisfaction

		PMC Attendance	Marital Satisfaction
PMC Attendance	Pearson Correlation	1	-.151[**]
	Sig.		.003
Marital Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-.151[**]	1
	Sig.	.003	

[**]p< 0.01 level, (1-tailed). N=322. Significant at the 0.01 level. PMC=premarital counselling

Table 4a. Group Statistics for Mean Difference between couples who attended premarital counselling and couples who did not

	Premarital counselling Attendance	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Marital Satisfaction	Yes	193	3.39	.359	.026
	No	129	3.26	.489	.043

3.4 Hypothesis 1

There is no statistically significant difference in marital satisfaction between spouses who attended premarital counselling and those who did not. This hypothesis was tested using group means as well as independent sample t-test. The results are presented in Tables 4a and 4b.

Table 4a reveals that couples who attended premarital counselling reported a higher experience of marital satisfaction (M=3,39, SD=0.36) than those who did not (M=3.26. SD=0.49). The table further reveals that the difference in means is not much. To probe further a independent t-test was utilized to test the hypothesis. The results are presented in Table 4b.

Table 4b. Independent Samples Test for couples who attended premarital counselling and couples who did not

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std Error Diff.
Marital Satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	44.275	.000	2.729	320	.007	.129	.047
	Equal variances not assumed			2.571	218.109	.011	.129	.050

According to the table, the significance level of Levene's test is less than .05 (.000). This means that the variances for the two groups are not the same. Therefore, the data violates the assumption of equal variance. Thus, equal variance not assumed is used in assessing differences between the groups. Since it corresponding value in the Sig. (2-tailed) column is less than .05 (.011), then there is a significant difference in the mean scores on the dependent variable (marital satisfaction) for each of the two groups.

The table further indicates that the independent-sample t-test conducted to compare the marital satisfaction scores for premarital counselled spouses and non-premarital counselled spouses reveals that, there was a statistically significant difference in scores for premarital counselled spouses (M =3.39, SD = .359, t (193) = 2.571, p = .011) and non-premarital counselled spouses (M = 3.26, SD = .489). Consequently, the hypothesis which states that there is no statistically significant difference in marital satisfaction between spouses who attended premarital counselling and those who did not was rejected. This is because the above findings implies that couples who attended premarital counselling before marriage had the highest mean and thus are reporting experiencing more marital satisfaction than those who did not.

3.5 Hypothesis 2

There is no statistically significant difference in marital satisfaction between male and female spouses. This hypothesis was also tested using group means as well as independent sample t-test. It must be emphasized that for this particular test both couples who had undergone premarital counselling and those who did not were part of the analysis. The results are presented in Tables 5a and 5b.

From Table 5a it is apparent that females reported experiencing more marital satisfaction (M=3.45, SD=0.48) than their male counterparts (M=3.25, SD=0.35). Further analysis was conducted to confirm or disconfirm this finding using independent sample t-test, the results of which a presented in Table 5b.

The significance level of Levene's test is less than .05 (.000), implying that the variances for the two groups are not the same. Therefore, the data violated the assumption of equal variance. Thus, equal variance not assumed was used in assessing differences between the groups. The corresponding value being less than .05 (.000), pointed to a significant difference in the mean scores on the dependent variable (marital satisfaction) for each of the two groups.

Table 5a. Group Statistics for Mean Difference in Marital Satisfaction for Gender.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Marital Satisfaction	Male	186	3.25	.351	.026
	Female	136	3.45	.478	.041

Table 5b. ndependent Samples Test for marital satisfaction by gender

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std Error Diff.
Marital Satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	17.029	.000	-4.213	320	.000	-.195	.046
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.020	235.560	.000	-.195	.048

Consequently, an independent sample t-test conducted to compare the marital satisfaction scores for male and female indicated a statistically significant difference in scores for male (M =3.25, SD = .351, t (186) = -4.020, p = .000) and female (M = 3.45, SD = .478). In effect, the hypothesis which states that there is no statistically significant difference in marital satisfaction between male and female was rejected.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of Research question 1 revealed that even though the content of the premarital counselling in the study area was quite comprehensive, the most sufficiently discussed topics included 'communication in marriage', 'respect, understanding and appreciation in marriage' and 'how to play marital roles'. This finding seems to partially confirm Osei-Tutu et al. [17] who inter alia reported that the most common issues covered in premarital counselling included medical screening, beliefs and values, expectations, partner knowledge, roles and duties, sex, parenthood, financial management, communication, and conflicts.

Additionally, this finding also partially confirms Smith's [18] study with particular reference to communication in marriage being the most sufficiently discussed topic during premarital counselling. Indeed Smith points out that communication is the binding glue of any successful relationship, and it has the capacity to reduce suspicions, acrimony and bad intentions in marriage. It is pertinent to note that in the present study the main focus with this particular research question was to find out which topics were sufficiently discussed during premarital counselling. It is also instructive to point out that

thoroughly discussing topics during premarital counselling, may stand would-be married couples in a good stead, in experience marital satisfaction in the future, especially if they are able to implement the suggestions that are made and also limit their expectations as they enter the marriage ecosystem [19].

On the extent to which the nature of counselling, and the sufficiency of coverage of topics influenced couples' experience of marital satisfaction, the findings indicate that both variables contributed to couple's experience of marital satisfaction even though they collectively accounted for only 12.6% of the variance (Table 2). This finding seems to collaborate Waititu [20], who inter alia pointed out that relevant topics which were discussed during premarital counseling, had a positive effect on couples' future marital satisfaction. This additionally seem to partially confirm Kepler's [21] study which among others found that couples who undergo premarital counseling and studied relevant and beneficial topics during premarital counseling sessions, were more likely to report greater marital satisfaction later in married life than those who did not.

On the correlation between premarital counseling and marital satisfaction, the study finding was quite curious. The findings indicated a reduction in marital satisfaction, with increases in premarital counseling. This goes again the train of literature. For example Farnaz, Pakgohar and Mir-mohammadali [22], using a sample of Iranian couples, reported that, four months after marriage, sexual, nonsexual and marital satisfaction among couples who underwent premarital counseling, was significantly higher than those who did not. Yet again this finding disconfirms Karney and Bradbury [23], who

reported that marital satisfaction does not decrease over time especially for couples, but rather remain stable. It is thus probable that other variables (which were not addressed by the current study) other than premarital counseling may be accounting for this negative correlation. Indeed it is known that couple's communications style and maladaptive schemas [24], individual personality (Sayehmiri, Kareem, Abdi, K. et al. 2020) and resilience [25] can affect a couples experience of marital satisfaction.

The first hypothesis which stated there was no statistically significant difference in marital satisfaction between spouses who attended premarital counseling, and those who did not, was rejected. This is in consonance with Kepler [21] "who inter alia found that individuals who took part in premarital counselling indicated greater marital satisfaction than those who did not take part in premarital counselling". This finding is again is in agreement with Dasmain [26] who reported that participants who underwent premarital preparation before marriage indicated a higher level of marital satisfaction than those who did not undergo any preparation.

Yet again this in consonance with Teal [12], "who among others reported that participation in premarital education, is associated with higher levels of satisfaction and commitment in marriage and lower levels of conflict, and also reduced odds of divorce". However, this particular finding seem to contradict Adjovie and Dabone [14], "who, reporting on a study using a Ghanaian sample, indicated that Christian married couples held a negative perception of the effectiveness of pre-marital counselling in the marital satisfaction paradigm".

The second hypothesis which stated that there is no statistically significant difference in marital satisfaction between male and female spouses was rejected. This finding is supported by Adjovie and Dabone [14], "who even though had reported a negative perception of the efficacy of premarital counselling, found a significant mean difference between male (M=1.24, SD=0.16) and female (M=1.19, SD=0.15) married Christians regarding their perception on the essence of pre-marital counselling in the marital satisfaction ecosystem".

5. CONCLUSION

The concomitant effects of the findings of the study indicate the following: Firstly all the topics addressed during premarital counselling were relevant, as well as sufficient in assisting married couples deal with issues in their marriages, and ultimately enhancing marital satisfaction. This implies that counsellors in Ghanaian churches undertaking premarital counselling must not only be versed in the topics under discussion, but must also extend their horizons and include topics like the effect of social media on marital communication, and digital counselling especially for couples within the churches who are into long distance relationships [27]. This will go a long way to ensure not only marital satisfaction in Christian marriages, but also their longevity.

Additionally, the study revealed that the nature of premarital counselling relatively plays a very important role in spouses' marital satisfaction. This implies that churches must endeavour to use trained counsellors, who have the requisite personality, competences, as well as the ability to adhere to ethical principles. These, together with conducive environments for premarital counselling sessions and comprehensive marriage topics, all things being equal, will enhance the future experiences of marital satisfaction among Christian couples in Ghana.

Finally, the study revealed significant difference between couples who took part in premarital counselling and those who did not, as well as gender differences, vis a vis marital satisfaction. Couples who underwent premarital counselling reported experiencing better marital satisfaction, than the cohort who did not; while men reported more marital satisfaction than their female counterparts. This brings to the fore the essentiality of premarital counselling in the marital satisfaction paradigm among Ghanaian couples. Indeed the study has shown that this notion cuts across cultures; and therefore counsellors and family therapists especially within the Ghanaian Christian ecosystem must endeavour to put in the needed structures to offer the appropriate premarital counselling session to couples intending to marry. This will go a long way to ensure longevity and resilience in marriages.

CONSENT

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

REFERENCES

1. Gyekye K. African cultural values. An introduction. Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company; 1998.
2. Awuah D. The Relationship Between Parenting Style, Attachment Style and Marital Satisfaction Among Married Men and Women. An unpublished M. Phil thesis university of Ghana. Legon; 2013.
   Available: http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh.
3. Shackelford TK, Buss DM. Marital satisfaction and spousal cost-infliction. Pers Individ Dif. 2000;28(5):917-28.
4. Ashdown BK, Hackathorn J, Clark EM and out of the bedroom: Sexual satisfaction in the marital relationship. J Integr Soc Sci. 2011;2(1):40-57.
5. Pebryatie E, Paek SC, Sherer P, Meemon N. Associations between spousal relationship, husband involvement, and postpartum depression among postpartum mothers in west Java, Indonesia. J Prim Care Community Health. 2022;13: 21501319221088355.
6. Cabrera García V, Aya Gómez V. Limitations of evolutionary theory in explaining marital satisfaction and stability of couple relationships. Int J Psychol Res. 2014;7(1):81-93.
7. Ghana Statistical Service. Population & housing census summary report of final results. Vol. 2010. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service; 2012.
8. Adjassah A. Divorced rates high in churches. Retrieved from Graphic Online; 2015.
   Available:http://graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/40439-divorced-rates-high-in-churches.html.
9. Okyere I. Mad rush for divorce as more cases pile up in Ashanti region. Regional News of Modern Ghana on [cited Sep 26, 2015]; 2015.
   Available:https://www.modernghana.com/news/593295/1/mad-rush-for-divorce-as-more-cases-pile-up-in-asha.html.
10. Schlesman S. 10 hidden consequences of divorce: especially of you have kids. Crosswalk.com, gotten from; 2019.
    Available: http://www.crosswalk.com › family › marriage › divorce-and remarriage, [accessed Jun 13, 2021].
11. Yusuf IE, Solomon AY. Divorce as a problematic area in Christian marriages in Nigeria. Int J Relig Cult Pract. 2020;5(1).
12. Teal W. Premarital counselling is a must—even if You're not Religious; 2018.
    [Cited Jun 14, 2021]
    Available:https://www.weddingwire.com/weddingideas/premarital-counseling.
13. Stanley SM, Amato PR, Johnson CA, Markman HJ. Premarital education, marital quality, and marital stability: findings from a large, random household survey. J Fam Psychol. 2006;20(1):117-26.
14. Rita HA, Kyeremeh TD. Relationship between premarital counselling and marital success: perceptions of married Christians in Ghana. Int J Psychol Couns. 2021; 13(1):10-6.
15. Essuman JK. Marital satisfaction inventory manual (Non-technical). University of Cape Coast: counselling Centre; 2010.
16. Koo TK, Li MY. A guideline of selecting and reporting intraclass correlation coefficients for reliability research. J Chiropr Med. 2016;15(2):155-63.
17. Osei-Tutu A, Oti-Boadi M, Akosua Affram A, Dzokoto VA, Asante PY, Agyei F et al. Premarital counseling practices among Christian and Muslim lay counselors in Ghana. J Pastoral Care Counsel. 2020;74(3):203-11.
18. Smith J. The relationship between marital interaction and marital stability. J Couns Psychol. 2017;5(7):39-52.
19. Odero MEA. Premarital counselling and its influence on marital quality among Seventh day Adventist members in Kibra Division of Nairobi, County, Kenya [MA thesis]. Nairobi, Kenya: Pan African Christian University; 2018.
20. Waititu PVW. Effects of premarital counseling on marital success among couples in Kasarani Division, Nairobi. [MA thesis] Pan African University Nairobi. Kenya; 2017.
21. Kepler A. Marital satisfaction: the impact of premarital counseling and couples counseling [MA thesis]. St. Catherine University and St. Paul, MN: University of St. Thomas; 2015.
22. Farnam F, Pakgohar M, Mir-mohammadali M. Effect of pre-marriage counseling on marital satisfaction of Iranian newlywed

couples: A randomized controlled trial. Sex Cult. 2011;15(2):141-52.

23. Karney BR, Bradbury TN. Research on Marital Satisfaction and Stability in the 2010s: challenging Conventional Wisdom. J Marriage Fam. 2020;82(1):100-16.

24. Eftekhari A, Hejazi M, Yazdani K. Predicting marital satisfaction through early maladaptive schemas and communication styles of couples. Int J Psychol. 2018; 12(2):118-46.

25. Naemi AM. Relationship between basic psychological needs satisfaction with resilience and marital satisfaction in teachers. Int J Educ Psychol Res. 2018;4: 78-83.

26. Dasmain J. The effectiveness of premarital counselling assessments on marital satisfaction. MI: ProQuest; 2015.

27. Mutunga T. Effects of premarital counseling on marital satisfaction among couples in the Archdiocese of Nairobi: A case of Ruaraka C atholic Deanery [MA thesis]. Nairobi, Kenya: Daystar Univeristy; 2020.