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The Impact of Pre-Marital Counseling and Psychological Variables on Marital Satisfaction Among Married Couples in Laterbiokoshie, Accra, Ghana

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the effect of pre-marital counseling on marital satisfaction and the relationship of three psychological variables, intimacy, self-esteem and locus of control among married couples who received marital counseling and married couples who did not receive marital counseling. The study employed a cross-sectional survey. Standardized questionnaires were used to assess all variables of interest. Data entry, validation and analysis was done using the Statistical Product and Services Solution software (SPSS version 25). The total number of study participants were 720. The sample was predominantly female, 430 (60%) and Christian, 675 (94%). Study participants who were married by ordinance comprised 400 (56%) and most of them attended pre-marital counseling 470 (65%) for at least five months (Mean, S.D. = 5.54±3.44). The results showed that couples who attended pre-marital counseling before marriage were more significantly satisfied with their marriages than those who did not attend pre-marital counseling before marrying [t(718) = 2.050, p<.05]. Intimacy and self-esteem significantly influenced marital satisfaction among married couples who received pre-marital counseling, whereas only intimacy had a significant influence among couples who did not receive pre-marital counseling. Pre-marital counseling should be encouraged in all counseling centers and churches.

1. Introduction

The main objective of the study was to explore the role of pre-marital counseling on marital satisfaction and the relationship of three psychological variables, intimacy, self-esteem and locus of control among married couples who received pre-marital counseling and married couples who did not receive pre-marital counseling in Laterbiokoshie, Accra.

Almost any variable that is related to human race, (psy-

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chological, physiological, socio-economical, etc.) either has a positive or negative impact on marital satisfaction, and an even more complex impact when there is a relationship among the variables [1-4]. These variables which may ultimately lead to the undesirable point of separation or divorce include personality, intimacy, demographic factors, socio-economic status and communication, gender, social support, infidelity, children, partner violence, religion, spirituality, sexual satisfaction among many others.

Divorce is perceived as something against societal norms as marriage is regarded as a lifelong institution [5]. But Kepler [6] reported that up to 40 - 50 percent of marriages could end in divorces even though most Americans wished they were in happy marriages. In Botwana, Mbulawa (2012 as cited in Lopang[5]) reported that divorce cases registered with Lobatse High Court rose steadily from three hundred and ninety-four (394) cases in 1994 to 1172 cases in 2010.

In Ghana, divorce is no exception to married couples and when that happens, it is done by the elders in the presence of witnesses from both families [7]. According to Onlinedivorce.com (2019 as cited by Oluwakemi[8]), Ghana has recorded about four thousand (4,000) divorces in 2019 alone, statistically representing about ten (10) percent divorce rate. Comparing this rate to previous years (6.2 and 3.4 percent for 1960 and 1998, respectively), the year (2019) has recorded the highest so far.

In Ghana, the effort put into studying role of pre-marital counseling on marital satisfaction is inadequate. Although pre-marital counseling is practiced in many parts of Ghana, its influence on intimacy, locus of control and self-esteem in relation to marital satisfaction is unknown. In connection with this, the current study seeks to investigate the role of pre-marital counseling on marital satisfaction and the relationship of three variables, intimacy, self-esteem and locus of control among married couples who received pre-marital counseling and married couples who did not receive pre-marital counseling.

Marital Satisfaction: Marital satisfaction denotes the measurement of individual perceptions regarding their marital relationships and a measure of excellence of their marriages. It is the most central subject in marital life, and can either lead to stability or failure of the relationship [9]. Groza [10] posit that it is a perceptual state that echoes the supposed remunerations and prices of marriage to an individual, and when the marriage puts more cost on one partner, the more unsatisfied that partner becomes. Similarly, when the observed remunerations are high, the more content one becomes with both the marriage and the partner. Odero [11] in other terms, referred to it as a sense of gratification experienced by couples throughout their marriage. Marital satisfaction is usually characterized by "strong free-flowing communication abilities and visibly deep satisfaction as per affection, sexuality, shared time and finances" [12].

Although marital satisfaction is the most significant indicator of success in marriage, the dream of having a smooth marital journey associated with all the love and romance does not always play out as expected, as some married persons immediately start experiencing hitches within the very first years of marriage and their assessment of marital satisfaction indicates a decline [9].

Pre-marital Counseling: To attain marriage satisfaction among couples studies have shown that pre-marital counseling has a role to play in the union [6,13,14]. Pre-marital counseling is defined as a technique or a learning package that seeks to prepare couples with facts on how they could improve their bond once they are legally married [5]. Similarly, Kepler [6] defines it as a "method that is intended to improve and enhance pre-marital relationships leading to more pleasing and established marriages" with the aim of avoiding divorce. These definitions suggest that pre-marital counseling is teaching the would-be couples practical ways of perceiving problems that may arise in marriage and practical ways of dealing with them to limit conflicts [11]. Ansah - Hughes [15] also asserts that pre-marital counselling is a therapeutic intervention that would-be couples undertake and Senediak [16] expatiated that it is a set of skills' trainings that seeks to inform these couples on more ideal ways of addressing issues that might arise when they get married. McGrath [17] asserts that since marriage has been ordained and blessed by God and is intended to form the building blocks of a strong society; pre-marital counselling is a good way to start.

Pre-marital counselling has been in existence since the 1930's with the first program being established at Merrill-Palmer Institute in 1932 [6]. A comprehensive program was developed later in 1941 by the Philadelphia Marriage Council to enable couples understand what is entailed in a marriage relationship and how they can best avoid some basic marital distresses [6].

Nowadays, pre-marital counselling programs for would-be couples are being offered through a number of modalities including workshops, conferences, couple counselling, individual counselling, courses offered in schools, online, books amongst others [6]. However, Murray [18] and Gichinga [19] have observed that pre-marital counselling of would-be couples is predominantly provided by the clergy although not all members within the clergy have been professionally trained as counsellors.

Ansah- Hughes [15] categorizes topics taught during counselling under three main subjects namely: toxic sub-

jects, conflict resolution and communication. Toxic subjects include finances, sex, in-laws, child-rearing, roles of each person within the marriage and religious or spiritual leadership; for conflict resolution - stonewalling (withdrawal), defensiveness, criticism and contempt; and all aspects of communication are discussed. Murray [18] posits that common topics addressed during pre-marital counselling include careers, finances, parenting and children, friendship and support, family of origin issues, religion, attitudes and beliefs toward marriage, gender role expectations, values, personality characteristics, adjusting from single to married life, commitment to marriage, conflict resolution skills, communication skills, emotional management, problem solving, coping skills, emotional management, essence of spending time together as a couple, romance, sexual relationship, and fun and leisure.

Succinctly, would-be couples are offered counseling through a number of counseling sessions to help them transition from their single into married lives; encourage intimacy between couples; develop their communication skills; encourage companionship among them whiles simultaneously imbibing in them problem-solving and decision-making skills in relation to their finances and other marital responsibilities [6]. To add to the list, Newman [20] takes pre-marital counselling from the spiritual angle. The researcher is of the view that couple's spiritual practices as well as men and women's need and how they can be met must also be discussed during pre-marital counselling. According to Kepler [6], many modern forms of pre-marital counselling exist including Community Marriage Policy (CMP), Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), Pre-marital Assessment Program (PAP), Pre-marital Communication Inventory, (PCI), Pre-marital Personal and Relationship Evaluation (PPRE) and (Save Your Marriage Before It Starts (SYMBIS).

In line with establishing a positive relationship between pre-marital counselling and relationship satisfaction, Yilzmaz & Kalkan [21] in a study among couples in Ondokuz Mayis University reported that there was a significant difference between scores recorded for couples who had been subjected to the counselling session as against those who were not. This implied that pre-marital relationship enrichment program enhances relationship satisfaction levels significantly.

Additionally, Nsanga [22] assessed the existing pre-marital counselling programs offered at PCEA churches in Kiambu district and the findings depicted the fact that most couples (ninety (90) percent) were of the view that pre-marital sessions were helpful. They were of the view that most helpful topics treated during the session such as sexuality, communication, finances and their roles and responsibilities gave them insights into their marital lives. These insights are believed to help these couples adequately manage issues related to these topics that might arise in their marriages, ultimately leading to marital satisfaction.

Egbo [23] undertook a study to determine the relationship between pre-marital counselling and stability in marriage. Findings from the study showed that pre-marital counselling had a significant influence on marital stability. This implied that couples who underwent pre-marital counselling had a more stable marriage which is more peaceful and devoid of conflict than their counterparts who did not.

A study conducted by Ansah - Hughes [15] involved married people in Techiman, Ghana. The study sought to find out couples' general perceptions about pre-marital counselling; and what those who went through it perceived about it.

From the research findings, it was concluded that most of the couples perceived pre-marital counselling as necessary and should be continued; be made compulsory in all churches; should begin as soon as the man and woman in question would want to get married; and that counselling helped couples to know what makes marriage and the possible differences they are likely to face between themselves. Additionally, couples perceived pre-marital counselling brings out issues would-be couples could be facing but that had not been brought to the fore; it provides an opportunity for couples to discuss each person's responsibilities in the marriage. Even though the study brought out couples' positive perceptions about pre-marital counselling, it did not address the impact that pre-marital counselling had on their marriages unlike the study by Kepler [6] so, it is only implied that those who received counselling were more satisfied in their marriages than their cohorts who did not receive any counselling prior to their marriage.

A cross-sectional study was conducted by Kepler [6] to determine if couples who went in for pre-marital counselling were more satisfied in their marriages. The report implied that married persons who received pre-marital counseling rated their marital satisfaction higher than their counterparts who did not go through pre-marital counseling

To confirm the earlier studies by Kepler [6] and others in a more recent study, Odero [11] aimed at studying pre-marital counseling and its influence on marital quality within the Seventh Day Adventist Churches, Kibera District in Nairobi County, Kenya. The results of the study showed that a greater number of the sample who attended pre-marital counseling rated their marital satisfaction higher than

their counterparts who did not receive any pre-marital counseling. Odero's [11] study was more comprehensive than that undertaken by Ansah-Hughes [15]. Whereas Ansah-Hughes [15] only brought out participants' perception about pre-marital counselling, Odero [11] not only finds out how satisfied they are being counselled before marriage but actually goes further to find out exact areas that participants thought the counselling sessions had helped.

Intimacy and marital satisfaction: One of the factors affecting marital satisfaction is intimacy [24]. Therefore, partner responsiveness in the intimacy process for married persons is very significant for the upkeep of a healthy union [25]. The role of intimacy in marriage has been given attention in different marriages which also gives a lead as to its significance [24,26]. Intimacy is a process in which individuals try to get close to one another and discover similarities and differences in their emotions, thoughts, and behavior [27]. Intimacy is the capability to communicate with others while you maintain your individuality; this implies that as a person one must reach a point of individual growth where one can establish communication with others [24]. Intimacy has been linked with variances in marital satisfaction owing to the fact that, it is the start point in initiating almost any process in the marital relationship [24].

Locus of control and marital satisfaction: Contemporary studies of the locus of control literature showed an increasing number of studies on the relationship between the type of control (internal and external) in marriage [28,29]. According to Kahler [30], locus of control as assessed in middle adulthood predicted marital satisfaction assessed contemporaneously. However, before this, Sheth [31] asserted in his work that external locus of control was linked with higher marital change compared to the people with internal locus of control. The work of Asgharianji [28] revealed a similar pattern of results indicating that there is a substantial interrelationship between internal locus of control and marital satisfaction.

Self-esteem and marital satisfaction: One of the important psychological factors that promote harmony in a marriage is the self-esteem of the partners involved which brings improvement in the social life [32]. In the domains of psychology, self-esteem is an individual's rating of his or her worth in life [12]. The marital union is governed by both social and psychological factors, and self-esteem is one of many psychological factors that have been investigated in association with marital satisfaction by several studies [33-37]. Self-esteem has gained attention because of its profound influence on marital satisfaction, with higher self-esteem having a positive correlation [35].

Hypotheses: it was hypothesized that:

(1) Ho: There is no significant difference in Marital Satisfaction between married couples who attended pre-marital counseling and married couples who did not attend pre-marital counseling

(2) HA: There is a significant difference in Marital Satisfaction between married couples who attended pre-marital counseling and married couples who did not attend pre-marital counseling.

(3) Ho: There is no significant relationship between intimacy, locus of control and self-esteem among married couples who received pre-marital counseling and married couples who did not receive pre-marital counseling.

(4) HA: There is a significant relationship between intimacy, locus of control and self-esteem among married couples who received pre-marital counseling and married couples who did not receive pre-marital counseling.

Limitations of the Study: The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design which precludes no conclusions regarding causality. The use of a non-probability-based sampling within the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic limits generalization of the study beyond the sample. However, the study used an adequate sample size for the analysis proposed and findings can inform conceptualization of future research.

2. Materials and Methods

Study Design: The study employed a cross-sectional survey design with a quantitative approach to test the research hypotheses. A survey is able to study both large and small populations by selecting the study samples chosen from the populations in order to discover the interrelations of sociological and psychological variables [38]. This allows for inference as to what people may think or feel is responsible for a certain behavior.

Study area: The study was undertaken in Laterbiokoshie, a suburb under the Ablekuma South Constituency in the Greater Accra Region, Ghana. The population of this area was not particularly dominated by any group of people and can be described as cosmopolitan. The area was therefore suitable for the study. The choice of the area was influenced by proximity, and the mixed nature of the people in terms of different cultural and socio-economic background.

Study population: All married persons in the study area, married by any of the three main types of marriage recognized by the law in Ghana were invited to participate in the study. The three main types of marriage were Traditional/Customary, Marriage under Ordinance and Islamic/Mohammedan Marriage. Participants were required to still be in the union and not separated at the time of data col-

lection and they should have been married for six months or more which should afford enough time for a fair assessment of marital satisfaction. A participant who has been married for less than six months may still be reminiscing honeymoon moments. Separated and divorced persons may have answers that are skewed from the hurt they have felt and other issues that brought about the separation and divorce.

Persons aged 18 years or older were selected as this is the acceptable age of marriage. The study population also included individuals across different levels of education. Eligible persons who provided written and/or consent were included in the study. Participants who were unable to communicate in English, Ga or Twi, a commonly spoken dialect in the suburb were excluded, due to the language barrier which may affect the correct interpretation of constructs.

Sample size/Technique: An estimated sample size of 633 married persons was calculated for this study. The sample size was estimated using the Cochrane's formula:

$n = \dfrac{z^2 Xpx(1-p)}{e}$, assuming 95% confidence level and

assuming the prevalence of marital satisfaction to be 50% yielded a minimum sample size of 384. A non-response rate of 10% and design effect of 1.5 was allowed for resulting in a final sample size of 633. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample, however selecting the sample required that the geographical area should be divided into clusters to afford the researcher the opportunity to select equally from each cluster to avoid a skew. Purposive sampling is an attempt to select people who meet a certain pre-determined criterion [38].

Study instruments: Standardized questionnaires were used to assess all variables of interest. Marital satisfaction was measured using the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMS), while the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) was used to measure self-esteem. The Locus of control of behavior scale (LCB) was utilized on to measure locus of control, and intimacy was measured using the Intimacy Scale by Walker & Thompson [39].

Data collection: On the days of data collection, questionnaires were distributed to participants in their homes. Study participants were approached in their homes due to the ban on public gathering including churches, mosque and clubs by the Government of Ghana following the COVID-19 pandemic. Eligible persons responded to the questionnaire in a neutral area of their house that offered privacy to encourage honest responses. Social distancing was strictly observed. Research assistants were trained in the basic ethical and hygiene measures to minimize the risk of spread of COVID-19. Personal protective equipment such as face masks, sanitizers, disposable gloves and household wipe for surfaces were provided for all the research assistants and provision were made for research participants who did not have access to face masks during the study period. The research participants were requested to wash their hands and use sanitizer before and after the data collection process.

When consent was obtained from willing participants, questionnaires were administered. All questionnaires were collated daily by the researcher, scoring completed for each relevant section and coded for entry in an electronic database. The data were password protected with the password known only to the researcher.

Study Variables

Outcome variable: The outcome variable was marital satisfaction, which was measured using the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction (EMS) Scale.

Predictor variables: The variables investigated in this study were Locus of Control, Self-Esteem, and Intimacy. Locus of control was measured using the Locus of control behavior scale (LCB). Self-esteem was measured with the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSE). This involves a method of combined ratings. Intimacy was measured with the Intimacy Scale (IS; Walker & Thompson [39]) which is a 7-point Likert scale and a 12-Item Scale Adopted from Ansah-Huges [15] was used for Impact of Pre-marital counseling

Statistical analysis: Data entry, validation and analysis was done using the Statistical Product and Services Solution software (SPSS version 25). Three main analyses were conducted. Descriptive statistics were generated for sociodemographic characteristics of the study participants and presented in frequency distribution tables with corresponding percentages. Preliminary analysis was done to ensure that study variables were accurate in terms of reliability estimates, normality and homogeneity, prior to inferential analysis and partial correlation matrices were generated. Statistical significance was set at $p<0.05$ for all analyses.

3. Result

The total number of research participants were 720. The number of female participants were 430 (60%) and Christian, 675 (94%). The modal age group for participants and spouses was 31-45 years 387(54%) and 400 (56%) respectively. Study participants who were married by ordinance were 400 (56%) and most of them attended pre-marital counseling 470 (65%) for at least five months mean = 5.54±3.44. One hundred and fifty study participants (21%) had the same ethnicity with their spouses. The mean years of marriage was 13.15±10.70 and the

mean number of children from the marriage was two children= 2.42±1.44).

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Table 1. Distribution of Demographic Information on Participants

Variables	Statistics	
	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	290	40
Female	430	60
Religion		
Christianity	675	94
Islam	44	6
African Traditional Religion	1	0
Age (years)		
30 or less	90	13
31 - 45	387	54
46 - 60	184	25
61 +	59	8
Mean (s.d.) 39.43±3.89		
Age of Spouse (years)		
30 or less	63	8
31 - 45	400	56
46 - 60	193	27
61 +	64	9
Mean (s.d.) 39.79 ±3.18		
Type of Marriage		
Ordinance	400	56
Islamic	45	6
Customary	275	38
Pre-marital Counseling		
Yes	470	65
No	250	35

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis of Major Study Variables

Variables	Data Normality Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Intimacy (I)	99.40	21.73	-1.60	2.02
Self-esteem (ES)	23.03	2.66	-.281	1.37
Locus of Control (LoC)	43.90	9.09	1.27	2.15
Marital Satisfaction (MS)	50.10	7.02	1.03	1.78
Impact of Counseling (IC)	71.95	33.32	.77	-.86

Table 3. Correlation Matrix of Key Study Variables

Variables	Key Study Variables				
	1	2	3	4	5
Intimacy (I)	-	.004 [ns]	-.116**	.460**	-.090*
Self-esteem (ES)	-	-	-.176**	-.027 [ns]	-.131**
Locus of Control (LoC)	-	-	-	.041 [ns]	.060 [ns]
Marital Satisfaction (MS)	-	-	-	-	-.060 [ns]
Impact of Counseling (IC)	-	-	-	-	-

Note: ** = <.01, * = p<.05, [ns] = not significant, 1 = PSS, 2 = BCS, 3 = GHQ.

Hypothesis 1: Marital Satisfaction and Pre-marital Counseling

(1) Ho: There is no significant difference in Marital Satisfaction between married couples who attended pre-marital counseling and married couples who did not attend pre-marital counseling

(2) H_A: There is a significant difference in Marital Satisfaction between married couples who attended pre-marital counseling and married couples who did not attend pre-marital counseling.

The mean marital satisfaction score recorded by couples' who attended pre-marital counseling before marrying was 50.46 and that of their counterparts who did not attend pre-marital counseling was 49.33. Independent samples t test was conducted and results showed that couples who attended pre-marital counseling before marriage were more significantly satisfied with their marriages than those who did not attend pre-marital counseling before marrying [$t_{(718)}$ = 2.050, p<.05].This implied that the alternative hypothesis was supported.

Table 4. Independent Samples t-Test Analysis of Marital Satisfaction of Participants Categorized by Pre-marital Counseling Attendance

Predictor Variable (Pre-marital Counseling)	Marital Satisfaction Variable			
	x	df	t	sig
Couples who had Pre-marital Counseling	50.46			
Couples who not have Pre-marital Counseling	49.33	673	2.050*	.025

Note: * = <.05.

Hypothesis 2: Intimacy, Locus of Control and Self-Esteem

(1) Ho: There is no significant relationship between intimacy, locus of control and self-esteem among married couples who received pre-marital counseling and married couples who did not receive pre-marital counseling.

(2) H_A: There is a significant relationship between intimacy, locus of control and self-esteem among married couples who received pre-marital counseling and married couples who did not receive pre-marital counseling.

3.2 Intimacy and Marital Satisfaction

The mean score for Intimacy was 99.40 ± 21.73, while the corresponding score for Marital Satisfaction was 50.10 ± 7.02. These means were subjected to bivariate analysis using partial correlation to control for demographic variables such as sex, gender, years of marriage and number of children. Results revealed a significant positive correlation between the two variables [$r_{(718)}$ = .460, p< .000]

Table 5. Partial Correlation between Intimacy and Marital Satisfaction

Predictor Variable	Marital Satisfaction Variable		
	df	r	sig
Intimacy	718	.460**	.000

Note: ** = <.01.

3.3 Locus of Control and Marital Satisfaction

The mean score for Locus of Control score was 43.90 ± 9.09 and the corresponding score for Marital Satisfaction was 50.10 ± 7.02. The mean scores were subjected to bivariate analysis using partial correlation to control for demographic variables. There was no significant correlation between the two variables [$r_{(718)}$= .041, p>.05]

Table 6. Partial Correlation between locus of Locus of Control and Marital Satisfaction

Predictor Variable	Marital Satisfaction Variable		
	df	r	sig
Locus of Control	718	.041ns	.270

Note: ns - not significant

3.4 Self-Esteem and Marital Satisfaction

The mean self-esteem score was 23.03 ± 2.66 and the corresponding score for marital satisfaction was 50.10 ± 7.02 were subjected to bivariate analysis using partial correlation. This yielded a negative correlation between the two variables [$r_{(718)}$= -.027, p> .05]

Table 6. Partial Correlation between Self-esteem and Marital Satisfaction

Predictor Variable	Marital Satisfaction Variable		
	df	r	sig
Self-esteem	718	-.027	.471

Note: ns - not significant

Intimacy predicted 50.5% variability in marital satisfaction among couples who received pre-marital counseling and 42.8% of variability among couples who did not receive pre-marital counseling. Self-esteem predicted 3.2% variability in marital satisfaction among couples who received pre-marital counseling and 1.9% of variability among couples who did not receive pre-marital counseling. Locus of Control predicted 18.9% of change in marital satisfaction among couples who received pre-marital counseling as compared to 1.9% of change in marital satisfaction among couples who did not receive pre-marital counseling. Intimacy and self-esteem significantly influenced marital satisfaction among married couples who received pre-marital counseling, whereas only intimacy had a significant influence among couples who did not receive pre-marital counseling.

Table 7. Relationship between Intimacy, Self-esteem, Locus of Control and Marital Satisfaction among Couples

	Couples who Receive Pre-marital Counseling				Couples who did not Receive Pre-marital Counseling			
Variables	B	SEB	Beta	Sig	B	SEB	Beta	Sig
Constant	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Intimacy	.146	.012	.505	.000	.158	.022	.428	.000
S. Esteem	-.067	.087	-.032	.443	.068	.211	.019	.747
LoC	.136	-.008	.189	000	.015	.049	.019	.754

Note: LoC - Locus of Control, S. Esteem - Self-esteem

4. Discussion

4.1 Pre-marital Counseling and Marital Satisfaction

This study showed that couples who attended pre-marital counseling before marriage were more satisfied with their marriages than those who did not attend pre-marital counseling before marrying. This study is consistent with the findings of a number of researchers. For instance, Yilzmaz [21] found a positive relationship between pre-marital counseling and marital satisfaction.

Pre-marital counseling is stated as a technique or a learning package that seeks to prepare couples with facts on how they could improve their bond once they are legally married.[5] Similarly, Kepler [6] defines it as a "method that is intended to improve and enhance pre-marital relationships leading to more pleasing and established marriages" with the aim of avoiding divorce. Ansah - Hughes [15] also asserts that pre-marital counselling is a therapeutic intervention that would-be couples undertake to prepare them for the marital journey. It is therefore not surprising this preparation contribute to marital satisfaction. This is because pre-marital counseling is believed to give insights to the to-be couples. These insights are believed to help these couples adequately manage issues related to problems that might arise in their marriages, ultimately leading to marital satisfaction.

4.2 Pre-marital Counseling and the Study Variables

The present study indicated a significant difference between married couples who received pre-marital counseling and married couples who did not receive pre-marital counseling. This finding is consistent with the findings of other researchers who observed pre-marital counseling as a main factor that improves the relationship between other factors and marital satisfaction.

One such finding is a study conducted by Ansah - Hughes [15] which involved married people in Techiman,

Ghana. The study sought to find out couples' general perceptions about pre-marital counselling; and what those who went through it perceived about it. From the research findings, it could be concluded that most of the couples perceived pre-marital counseling helped couples to know what makes marriage and the possible differences they are likely to face between themselves. Additionally, couples perceived pre-marital counselling brings out issues would-be couples could be facing but that had not been brought to the fore; it provides an opportunity for couples to discuss each person's responsibilities in the marriage. This is similar to the findings of Kepler [6] which showed couples who received counseling were more satisfied in their marriages than their cohorts who did not receive any counselling prior to their marriage. Similar to this is the findings of Odero's [11] who found out the exact areas that participants thought the counselling sessions had helped. It was revealed that pre-marital counseling improves marital quality and satisfaction of the couples.

One reason why pre-marital counseling improves the relation between all study variables and marital satisfaction is the fact that pre-marital counseling improves the quality of the marriage and that impact spills over onto the role other factors such as intimacy, locus of control and self-esteem play on marital satisfaction. This view was shared by Lopang[5] through their finding which indicated that most of the participants thought pre-marital counselling was critical in influencing marital stability.

5. Conclusion

The research findings also confirmed a significant positive relationship between pre-marital counseling and marital satisfaction [$t_{(718)}$ = 2.050, p< .05] confirming that couples who attend pre-marital counseling before marriage are more satisfied with their marriages than those who did not attend pre-marital counseling before marrying.

Intimacy, self-esteem and locus of control had a stronger relationship on the outcome marital satisfaction among couples who received pre-marital counseling than couples who did not receive pre-marital counseling.

6. Recommendation

Counseling Centres and churches: Pre-marital counseling should be encouraged within appropriate and approved settings due to the significant influence demonstrated in this research. Both counseling centres and churches are major sources of pre-marital counseling. Future research could examine the impact of context of pre-marital counseling to further improve this service and enhance marital

satisfaction.

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