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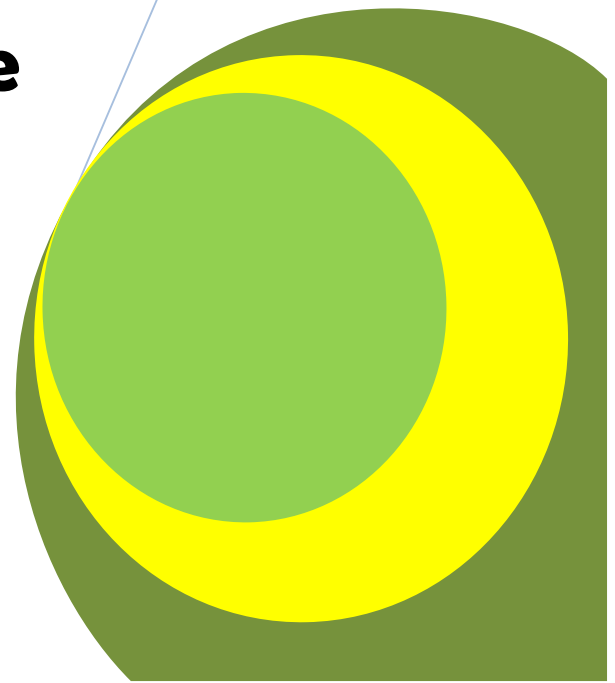
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Community Perceptions on Marriage and Family Counselling: A Survey on Married Couples in Hintonville Community of Chegutu in Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe

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Community Perceptions on Marriage and Family Counselling: A Survey on Married Couples in Hintonville Community of Chegutu in Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the perceptions of the Chegutu Town community on marriage counselling, using different modes of counselling, namely, traditional counselling, pastoral counselling, counselling by police officers from the Victim Friendly Unit and professional counselling. The researchers targeted the population of married couples in Hintonville Low Density Suburbs, a location that is situated in Chegutu Town in Zimbabwe. A sample of 30 married respondents comprising 17 married men and 13 married women of various ages ranging from 21 years upwards who had plus/minus eleven years of experience in marriage, were conveniently selected. The descriptive survey and structured questionnaires with closed and open ended questions were used to collect data. A pilot study was carried out to ensure validity and reliability of the research instrument. The study findings revealed that married couples generally have a positive perception on all the four modes of counselling. However, of the above mentioned modes of counselling, the community in question prefers pastoral counselling most because of the spiritual guidance associated with it. The community also supports traditional counselling though some married couples are of the view that elders are too harsh, unlike pastoral counselling and professional counselling. The results also suggest that the community is not fully conversant with professional counselling as evidenced by the low rate of respondents who prefer professional counselling as compared to pastoral counselling and traditional counselling.

Key words: marriage, family, counselling, marriage and family counselling.

INTRODUCTION

Owing to the rise in domestic violence cases at police stations in Zimbabwe and the current debate on marriage counselling in many countries in Africa and the world, this research broadly sought to find out the perceptions of Zimbabweans towards marriage and family counselling. Marriage conflicts have been known to be resolved through the traditional mode of counselling, which appear to be losing ground because of many factors including modernisation. As such, some couples have opted for pastoral counselling with some seeking help from the Police's Victim Friendly Unit in Zimbabwe, which is known for offering marriage and family counselling services at zero charge. It would appear that professional counselling is yet to gain ground because many Zimbabweans are used to free counselling, as professional counsellors provide their services for a fee. Zindi and Makotore (2000) observed that 'counselling' is a process that is designed to help an individual to solve some of his or her problems or assist the individual in planning the future. This research sought to find out the perceptions of the community of Chegutu Town in Zimbabwe towards marriage counselling.

Background to the study

Generally, there are various reasons that can pressurise married couples in Zimbabwe and elsewhere to seek counselling. Some of the common problems are financial disagreements, conflict with in-laws, premarital guidance, HIV and AIDS status or testing, domestic violence or abuse of any kind including substance abuse. Mamwenda (2006) believes that the reasons for seeking counselling can be social, economic or psychological. However, it would appear that some married couples do not seek counselling when they encounter these

problems because of various perceptions towards marriage and family counselling. It could be because of several reasons, including, greediness, modernization, pride, authority, lack of understanding of love, counselling being taken as an interference, enmeshment, and unethical behaviour by some counsellors, lack of protection after counselling, lack of trust and failure to lead by example by some counsellors among other things.

In traditional Africa, family rules dictate that if married couples experience marital conflicts in the community, they should consult their elders to resolve their problems. In the modern world, some married couples in Zimbabwe and elsewhere are making use of Pastors or different Church Ministers. Of late, the Zimbabwe Republic Police introduced a counselling unit, known as the Victim Friendly Counselling Unit (VFU); whose major focus is counselling victims of domestic violence and child abuse. However, in spite of all these efforts, it would appear that married couples do not always seek counselling when in need. In collectivist communities like Zimbabwe, some married partners may be exposed to the belief that the intervention by Professional Counsellors, Pastors or VFU officers is tantamount to interference. This could be because some married couples may lack trust and may view counsellors as strangers. Ncube et al (1997) argued that in non-individualistic societies like Zimbabwe, society does not interfere in the couples' fights because the argument used is that either it is a 'domestic affair' or the man is doing that because he loves his wife. Thus, that could also explain the reason why some married couples do not opt for marriage counselling.

There are also claims that the Zimbabwean community lacks the real understanding of love. It would appear that some married couples in this community may marry 'temporarily', making counselling to be worthless. This could be the case of the Zimbabwean community because it would appear that the moment either person is unhappy, one simply walks out of marriage, which consequently deems the idea of counselling useless. It could be that couples do not understand that love is holistic, whereas, a marriage aspect like sex, is there to compliment love. According to Kaye (unpublished), a difference in level of commitment between partners can affect the way couples perceive marriage and family counselling, which could be the reason why criminal cases have overwhelmed the police rather than counselling sessions.

Some women, often of the working class, may resent counselling because they perceive that they can live alone or in singlehood. They may think that they no longer need a man in their life, thus, they may not seek counselling. Women, who used to be oppressed, have been empowered educationally and psychologically. The media has also campaigned for equal rights and with the technological advancement in the form of Internet; women have been made to be aware of their rights. The enactment of laws which protect women like the Zimbabwe Domestic Violence Act Chapter 5: 16 (1997) have been put in place, though it would appear that women do not understand the Act. Being educated, a breadwinner; women can choose to live with or without a man in their life. It seems elite women no longer have the pressure to seek recourse through counselling because they are now able to take care of themselves. Because of these and other varied reasons, it would seem that many Zimbabweans do not understand the efficacy of marriage and family counselling in their marriages. Accordingly, this study sought to find out the perceptions of the Zimbabwean community on marriage and family counselling.

Statement of the problem

Married couples in the Zimbabwean community have been resenting marriage and family counselling due to their varied perceptions. Reasons that may have caused married couples to perceive such counselling in a negative or positive way may include lack of respect for traditional counselling, the mode of treatment used by professional counsellors, confidentiality by Pastors, impartiality by Police Officers, and generally, intervention by counsellors who are judgmental and lack respect for the married couples.

Research questions

This study was fundamentally guided by the following research questions:

- What are the perceptions of the Zimbabwean community towards traditional marriage counselling by family and community elders?
- Does the Zimbabwean community have faith on marriage and family counselling by Pastors?
- What is the community's attitude towards marriage and family counselling by professional counsellors?
- What efforts do married couples generally put on preserving their marriages and families?

Significance of the study

The study will help the Zimbabwean community to understand the importance of marriage and family counselling and also to assist the government of Zimbabwe to set up more counselling and other supportive structures to help married couples in need. Pastors and members of the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) will also benefit in that they will improve their methods of dealing with troubled married couples. The study will also benefit academics in providing literature for further study on the contemporary topic of marriage and family counselling.

What is Marriage Counselling?

Kanyowa (2003) observes that people staying together are not independent of each other, but relate and mutually influence each other and establish set ways of communicating with each other. Counselling is, thus, a process designed to help married couples to solve their problems and to assist them in planning for the future (Zindi and Makotore, 2000). Counselling may also be described as a process that enables a person to calmly address their psychosocial problems and issues in a supportive environment so that a greater understanding can be achieved. This can assist a person to make positive changes or it may help someone accept a difficult situation and become more resilient.

Marriage counselling is, thus, a conjoint work where both partners are seen together from the beginning in order to assist partners in resolving marital conflicts. Some have described marriage and family counselling as marital counselling, relationship counselling or couples counselling and, thus, these terms will be used interchangeably. Marriage counselling helps clients in improving their communication and interactive skills. Marriage and family counselling entails that type of psychotherapy where a married couple or established partners try to resolve problems in the relationship. Typically, the couple attends counselling sessions to discuss specific issues, for instance, financial problems. Marriage and family counselling helps partners who need continual revitalisation due to the changes in the family cycle, careers, finances and so on (Mafumbate et al, 2010). Couples often argue about how to bring up children, how to handle family finances and not getting enough support from each other. Generally, getting a divorce or separation is not the best way to find a solution to a couple's problems in its marriage.

Perceptions of various modes of marriage counselling

In Zimbabwe, there are basically four modes of counselling that would benefit couples. These are: Traditional Counselling, Pastoral Counselling, Victim Friendly Unit of the Zimbabwe Republic Police, and Professional Counselling. Depending on the client's preference, he or she could choose where he or she would want to seek help (i.e. counselling).

Traditional Counselling

In traditional Africa, family rules dictated that if married couples experience marital conflicts, they should consult their elders to resolve the problems. This view is further explained by Amo Kalende (2002) who states that some methods employed by couples in resolving marital conflicts include a 'round table' settlement by both family members of married couples and intervention by close friends. However, it seems the 'round table' as a traditional way of resolving marital conflicts has since been affected by several factors among them, socio-cultural and economic factors (Ambakederaemo and Garangana, 2006). In Africa, long before colonisation, the 'round table' as a way of resolving marital conflicts used to be quite effective. However, some researchers have proved that it has been affected by modern styles of living including the disintegration of the extended family, education and media. In such mode of counselling, the aunt or uncle played a pivotal role. Interestingly, Chakuchichi and Zvaiwa (2010) posited that boys and girls receive pre-marriage counselling before they even get married. For them, even when partners want to divorce, they often consult the aunt or uncle and counselling is offered at family level.

Pastoral Counselling

Mafumbate et al (2010) observe that religious communities have traditionally sought to provide spiritually-based solutions for those in trouble. Traditional spiritual counselling has helped as the clergy have been able to listen intently to personal problems of Christians for centuries. However, there was a paradigm shift from traditional spiritual counselling which basically involves Pastors who were not certified mental health workers to pastoral counselling where Pastors were placed in supervised contact with patients in mental hospitals, thus connecting faith and mental health. Pastors who are certified mental health professionals are mainly found in developed countries. For instance, Mafumbate et al (2010) claim that in America they have the American Association of Pastoral Counsellors (AAPC) which represents and sets standards for over 3, 000 pastoral counsellors and 100 counselling centers in North America and around the world. Pastoral counselling offered in developing countries like Zimbabwe is still traditional, but all the same it is popular because it helps people with different social problems.

Clinebell (1994) argues that pastoral counselling is a structural and informed caring dialogue with individuals or groups who have problems. In the same view, Gerkin (1994) identified a Pastoral counsellor as a 'listener of stories' and in a certain sense, he or she becomes an 'interpreter of stories' embedded in the culture and language of the person's experiences. Basically, it follows that pastoral counselling is a process of interpretation and re-interpretation of human experiences. Mafumbate et al (2010) made reference to pastoral counselling as Christian counselling though some non-believers would sometimes also opt for pastoral counselling. It is, thus, a unique form of psychotherapy which uses spiritual resources as well as psychological

understanding in helping married couples. Pastoral counsellors are certified mental health professionals who have a lot of knowledge in religious and/or theological training.

People in marriages or relationships may face various spiritual or other problems which may compel them to seek help from Pastors. It would seem people in the area under study are not making use of Pastors in spite of the fact that there are various Pastors from various churches in Hintonville community of Chegutu Town in Zimbabwe. It would appear the community generally perceives Pastors as preachers of the gospel only, and hence, non-believers do not have business with them. Consequently, the ones who are believers could be the only ones benefitting and if a marriage partner does not affiliate to the church, they may not agree to join their partner for marriage and family counselling.

Professional counselling

Professional counselling is in some instances named modern counselling. The researcher opted to refer to it as 'professional' because, unlike the above stated modes of counselling services, it is guided by an ethical code, for instance, the Zimbabwe Professional Counsellors Association (ZPCA) even though it is yet to be registered with the Allied Health Practitioners Council (AHPC). Marriage and family counsellors are trained in psychotherapy and family systems, and generally focus on understanding their clients' symptoms and their interactions contribute to alleviating problems in marriage relationships. Professional marriage and family counsellors are also trained to use various counselling theories. In this regard, Gladding (1998) identified some of the strongest and most widely used approaches as psychodynamic, social-learning theory, and systemic theory. Ideally, in professional marriage and family counselling, couples seek counselling for a wide range of reasons, including finances, children, leisure time, communication, compatibility, and so on.

Empirical Evidence

➤ **Intentions to seek marriage counselling**

Robert and Diane (1997) noted that intentions to seek marriage and family counselling were greater for persons with a positive attitude towards seeking counselling, those who had previous marriage counselling, and females. Robert and Diane also observed that among persons with no history of marriage counselling, those who have a subjective norm were more likely to seek marriage counselling. A research that was carried out by Bowen and Richman (1991), revealed that in spite of the widespread availability of counselling services, many married persons, as individuals or as a couple, do not seek marriage and family counselling.

Vogel et al (2007) claim that one way to conceptualise help seeking is to view the decision to seek help as a classic approach/ avoidance conflict. The likelihood that marriage help will be sought is, in part, a function of the degree to which there is a perception that one has the resources to cope with the problem. What it shows is that the individual's internal and external locus of control might have relevance to the interpretation of perceived adequacy of one's own experiences. For instance, people with an internal locus of control believe that taking action can change their circumstances. It has been noted that people with internal locus of control unlike those with external locus of control, may try various interventions because of the belief that it will work out for them. Carl Rodgers, for instance predicted that personality change would occur in clients who perceive the counselling conditions positively in a therapeutic relationship (Klassen and Turgeon, 1981). Such individuals have a more positive attitude towards professional counsellors.

➤ **Men's perceptions towards marriage counselling**

Men in general, are far less likely than women to seek professional help for marriage problems and other mental problems. It would appear that some men are more resistant than women when it comes to marriage counselling, with the main reason identified as masculine norms. Ideally, these are norms for success, power, emotional control, and self-reliance. Another reason identified in the research study was education. Some researchers have shown that men with the least amount of education resisted counselling. Some men resent marriage and family counselling because, they think it is a taboo in their communities. Some think they will be dressed down. Some men think that counselling is only meant for women, which may explain why most women are seen queuing for HIV and AIDS tests whilst their husbands are home. Pregnant women are also compelled to undergo HIV and AIDS tests.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since the current study is all about the perceptions of the Zimbabwean community on marriage and family counselling, the research design adopted was the descriptive survey. A survey research is a scientific tool suitable to employ when one is interested in the opinions and attitudes of overt behaviour (Dimkapa and Wilcox, 2010). Best and Khan (1993) perceive that descriptive surveys describe and interpret what the study is

concerned with, conditions or the relationships that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are evident or trends that are developing.

The population of the study included all married couples to whom the findings of the study apply. Best and Khan (1993) define a population as any "group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher". The population for this current study is +/-100 married couples. Of the population of about 100 married couples or beyond, a sample of 30 married couples should be adequate, and this was the case. A sample is a small proportion of the population selected for the purpose of observation and analysis (McMillan and Schummacher, 1993, Best and Khan, 1993). Convenience sampling method was used to select the 30 married couples, a technique in which samples were chosen on the proximity of the interviewer or researcher (Muchengetwa, 2010). In order to ensure diversity of and that a balanced representation of views is obtained; the researcher included married couples from different backgrounds in Hintonville Low Density Suburban community in Chegutu town, Zimbabwe.

The researchers also identified four key informants who are specialised in the different areas of marriage and family counselling under study. These included a Senior Lecturer at Zimbabwe Open University in the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences; Department of Counselling, a Pastor with the United Methodist Church of Zimbabwe, a District Victim Friendly Unit Coordinator with Zimbabwe Republic Police and a Zimbabwean Traditional Chief. All these were interviewed to find out their perceptions on marriage and family counselling.

Research instruments can basically be described as tools used to collect data in research, and they contain questions presented in a systematic, highly precise fashion and enable the researcher to obtain uniform data that can be compared, summed, and discussed. Research instruments can, therefore, be termed as data gathering instruments (Best and Khan, 1993). This study employed a multi-technique approach to data collection in order to obtain a holistic or total view of the subjects under investigation (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). A combination of the questionnaires and interviews, as data collection instruments, was therefore, used in order to collect qualitative data. The questionnaire and the interview schedule were subjected to a pilot study to test for reliability. The researcher carried out a pilot study with 15 married couples who have the same characteristics as the study sample in another section of the community of Hintonville Low Density Suburb. These enabled the researcher to make improvements to the questionnaire and interview schedule to ensure validity and reliability.

The data, both qualitative and quantitative, was collected and presented according to logical themes; using tables and frequency tables. The data was processed using an electronic calculator. Frequency and corresponding percentage (%) on demographic data was presented on tables. All quantitative data was tabulated in numbers and finally expressed as percentages (%) in each table. Such calculations were made easier for the researcher to draw conclusions from each set of the response items. A comparison was then made with the literature reviewed in order to ascertain replication and/or areas of contradiction between current findings and those by previous researchers.

Respondents' Bio data and Analysis

(N=30)

Variable	Frequency	F (%)
Gender		
Male	17	57
Female	13	43
Age		
Below 20 years	0	0
21-30 years	7	23
31-40 years	8	27
41-50 years	9	30
Above 50 years	6	20
Religion		
Christianity	28	93
African Traditional Culture	2	7
Muslim	0	0
Hinduism	0	0
Other	0	0
Number of years in marriage		
0-2 years	4	13
3-5 years	4	13
6-8 years	5	17
9-11 years	3	10
Above 11 years	14	47

Table 1 above shows that 57% were male respondents whereas 43% of the respondents were females. On the age groups, the respondents below the age of 20 years were not represented, whereas 23% were among the 20-30 years age group, 27% were aged 31-40 years, 30% were between 41 and 50 years and represented the highest number of respondents. Those above 50 years of age covered 20% of the respondents.

The bio data also indicates that the majority of the respondents interviewed were married for more than 11 years, as this group has the highest percentage, which is 47% followed by those who have been in marriage for between 6-8 years that had 17%, whilst those who have been in marriage for between 0-2 years and those in the 3-5 years period were both 13%. Those in marriage for between 9-11 years were only 10%.

As for the four individuals who are specialised in different modes of marriage and family counselling, the Senior Lecturer is a holder of a Master of Science in Counselling, aged 40 years and has been married for the past 15 years. The Pastor is a holder of a Bachelor of Arts in Theology, aged 45 years and has been married for the past 20 years. The District Victim Friendly Unit Coordinator is a holder of a Bachelor of Science in Counselling, aged 30 years and has been married for the past 5 years. The final interviewee is a Traditional Chief aged 60 years, and has been married for the past 35 years and holds a Master of Science in Peace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings include responses from both the questionnaires and interviews.

Table 2: Responses on whether married couples were once involved in marital conflicts
(N=30)

Question	Variable(Gender)	Yes	No
Have you ever been involved in marital conflict?	Female	9	4
	Male	12	5

Table 2 shows that 69% of the female respondents said they had been involved in marital conflicts in their lifetime whereas 31% said they had not. On the other hand, 71% of the male respondents indicated that they had been involved in marital conflicts whereas 29% said they had not. Findings from interviews carried out revealed that the key informants have handled several cases of marital conflicts, with the Chief emphasising that it is impractically impossible to do without marital conflicts in a family. The District Victim Friendly Unit Coordinator pointed out that many of these marital conflicts arise from financial problems, infidelity, substance abuse and interference by in-laws, among some other things. Interestingly, the Pastor attributed these marital conflicts to spiritual problems.

Table 3: Responses on whether married couples who were once involved in a marital conflict did seek counselling
(N=30)

Question	Variable(Gender)	Yes	No
If your answer to question 9 above is "Yes", did you seek for counselling services?	Female	6	7
	Male	7	10

Table 3 above shows that 46% of the female respondents who were involved in marital conflicts sought for marriage counselling against the higher percentage of 54% who did not. The table also shows that a lower percentage of 41% male respondents sought for marriage counselling against a higher percentage of 59% who did not. Findings from the interviews with the four informants revealed that professional counselling is not yet fully fledged, unlike in countries like Botswana, South Africa and Kenya. The Pastor noted that married couples do not seek counselling because, some Pastors are in the habit of taking the counselling issues that are brought to them to the podium as they preach, which tends to embarrass the married couples. The Victim Friendly Unit Coordinator was of the view that married couples do not seek counselling because, they are economically dependent on men, and they do not come with their problems to the police because they think that their spouses will be arrested and jailed. The Chief was of the view that the round table way of resolving marital conflicts is almost dead because relatives are no longer as active as they used to be in the past in handling marital conflicts.

Table 4: Responses on whether married couples have benefited from marriage counselling after a marital conflict

(N=30)

Question	Variable (Gender)	Yes	No
Have you benefited from marital counselling after a marital conflict?	Female	7	6
	Male	6	11

Table 4 shows that 54% of female respondents claimed that they had benefited from marital counselling after a marital conflict. On the other hand, only 35% of their male counterparts admitted that they have benefited from marriage counselling after marital conflicts. However, the Senior Lecturer was of the view that counselling is quite beneficial, particularly if Professional Counsellors stick to their ethical obligations. The Pastor was also of the same view, also arguing that counselling, combined with prayers is quite beneficial to those involved in marital conflicts. The Chief said that if the round table way of resolving marital conflicts is implemented well, wherein members from both families of the spouses are called together to help married couples, marital conflicts can be resolved amicably. The Victim Friendly Unit Coordinator was also of the view that counselling married couples at the Police Station may not be as beneficial as some spouses may not open up.

Table 5: Responses on whether married couples think family and community elders are helpful in resolving marital conflicts

(N=30)

Question	Variable (Gender)	Yes	No
Do you think family elders are helpful in resolving marital conflicts?	Female	12	1
	Male	16	1

Table 5 shows that both sexes have a strong belief that elders are helpful in marriage and family counselling. From the table, 92% of the female respondents said that elders are helpful in resolving marital conflicts while 94% of the male respondents also said so. However, some respondents were of the perception that the environment in which counselling is offered by elders is not conducive, and that some elders are too harsh when resolving marital issues. The Chief maintained his stance on the round table way of resolving marital issues arguing that family elders are helpful in resolving marital conflicts. The Senior Lecturer was in agreement with this notion, emphasising that as Africans; that has been the traditional way of resolving marital conflicts. However, the Pastor and the Victim Friendly Unit Coordinator differed sharply with this perception, arguing that the same elders are often the causes of these marital conflicts, with the Pastor giving an example of the commonly known 'mother and daughter in-law conflict'.

Table 6: Responses on whether married couples think friends are helpful in resolving marital conflicts

(N=30)

Question	Variable (Gender)	Yes	No
Do you think friends are helpful in resolving marital conflicts?	Female	9	4
	Male	14	3

Table 6 shows that 69% of female respondents believed that family friends are helpful in resolving marital conflicts, whereas, as many as 82% of male respondents are also of the same view. It would appear that men unlike women are more comfortable with the marital help from friends. Interviews carried out from the key informants revealed that friends are not really helpful, as some may also be behind the marital conflicts.

Table 7: Responses on whether married couples think religious leaders are helpful in resolving marital conflicts

(N=30)

Question	Variable (Gender)	Yes	No
Do you think religious leaders are helpful in resolving marital conflicts?	Female	13	0
	Male	16	1

Table 7 above shows that all (100%) female and 94% of male respondents think that religious leaders are quite helpful in resolving marital conflicts. Findings from interviews carried out from the key informants showed that all the respondents agreed with the notion that religious leaders are helpful in resolving conflicts. Married couples are not only assisted psychologically, but they are also empowered spiritually. However, some married couples expressed concern over the behaviour of some Pastors who are in the habit of taking their issues to the podium during preaching. Confidentiality is not assured, and as such, some were of the view that this may scare away individuals in need of marital counselling.

Table 8: Responses on whether married couples would opt to go to a professional counsellor for marriage and family counselling

(N=30)

Question	Variable (Gender)	Yes	No
Would you opt to go to a professional counsellor for marriage counselling?	Female	8	5
	Male	12	5

Table 8 above shows that 62% of female and 71% of the male respondents would opt to go for professional marriage counselling. Findings from the interviews with the four informants suggests that even though professional counselling is not yet fully fledged in Zimbabwe, given an opportunity, Zimbabweans will go for professional counselling (Senior Lecturer). From the Senior Lecturer's perspective, this is because people believe that Professional Counsellors are trained. However, some married couples indicated that they were not comfortable to discuss their issues with strangers. This clearly shows a lack of knowledge about professional counselling among some married couples.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study investigated the perceptions of the Hintonville community in Chegutu town of Zimbabwe on marriage and family counselling. About 30 questionnaires were distributed to married couples using convenience sampling and interviews were carried out with four key informants who were specialised in providing each of four different modes of counselling. The descriptive survey research design was used and this had a focus on the real situation including the influence of gender and number of years in marriage on individual subjects' perceptions. The study addressed perceptions of married couples regarding different modes of counselling, i.e. traditional counselling, pastoral counselling and professional counselling. The discussion of findings focused on the research questions.

From the study, the researcher concludes that married couples in the Hintonville community generally support the different modes of counselling that were investigated, i.e. traditional counselling, pastoral counselling and professional counselling. However, of the above mentioned modes of counselling, the community in question prefers pastoral counselling most, followed by traditional counselling. Married couples in the community of Hintonville are in favour of pastoral counselling because of the spiritual guidance associated with it. They are of the perception that the counselling is Godly and is backed by the Bible, which makes it easy for them to unite. The community also supports traditional counselling; however, some married couples are of the view that elders are too harsh, unlike pastoral counselling and professional counselling. Some couples also feel that elders are not trained and experienced, and that counselling is not done in a conducive environment.

However, the results suggest that the community is not fully conversant with professional counselling as evidenced by the low rate of respondents who prefer professional counselling as compared to pastoral counselling and traditional counselling. Zimbabwe, like the majority of African countries, is yet to formalise professional counselling which is known for its association with the confidentiality of counsellors, unlike

counsellors from the other modes of counselling. The community is also often not comfortable to discuss private marital conflicts with professional counsellors because, they are regarded as strangers.

Regarding what efforts Hintonville married couples put on preserving their marriages, findings were that the majority of the couples are keeping their lines of communication open. Respondents interviewed claimed that they wanted problems discussed in the presence of a counsellor. Findings were also that some partners are learning from each other and that they are attending couples fellowships at the churches. Some are attending group discussions. Some claimed they have not done away with elders as they still go to family and community elders for advice, including on marriage and family matters and challenges.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the study makes the following recommendations:

- The concept of professional counselling need to be brought to the attention of the community through awareness campaigns, fliers, posters and literature on marriage and family counseling.
- Professional Counsellors should open counselling clinics to help married couples
- Professional Counsellors should attend workshops/seminars on marriage and family counselling to keep them updated.
- Pastors should encourage couples fellowships in which marriage and family counselling issues are discussed.
- Elders, Pastors and Professional counsellors must work in collaboration in helping married couples who are experiencing marital conflicts

Finally, the perception of married couples on the value of four types of marriage and family counselling suggests that the community generally has a positive attitude towards marriage counselling, but married couples are not generally comfortable in discussing their private marital affairs with strangers. The researchers, therefore, recommend that further studies which should assist communities to trust counsellors be conducted which would help married couples to seek marriage and family counselling in the event that they experience marital conflicts. Other researchers can take this research as a spring board to further explore the nitty-gritty perceptions of married couples on marriage and family counselling.

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