

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a theoretical and theoretical background to the study. This encompasses a few recounts of the history of premarital counselling globally and locally up till this moment. The background also discusses the current marital issues that are faced by couples and society, hence, setting the context of the study. The chapter also states a statement of the problem, the purpose, and objectives of the study as well as the research questions. The study assumptions are then explained, along with the rationale, significance, and scope of the study. The chapter ends with a discussion of the limitations of the study.

### 1.2 Background of the Study

Choosing to get married is something that delights an individual's mind especially when one is in love, unfortunately, marriage goes beyond love. It is a complicated thing. Marriage is an institution where most times graduation is not assured, therefore, it requires a great deal of preparation. Preparation for marriage has been a traditional component of family socialisation, supported by religious and social guidance on mate selection and marital role performance (Higdon, 2021; Nasir et al., 2021; Oladokun & Olatunji, 2022; Rita & Kyeremeh, 2021).

One option for couples to get ready for marriage is through premarital counselling. Pre-marital counselling refers to services provided to help engage couples improve their ability to communicate and solve problems together (Brown, 2019). According to Mutunga (2020), pre-marital counselling is a process that aims at equipping those who plan to get married with knowledge, on how to improve their relationship once they are married. Before getting married, it is recommended that

couples seek counselling from a professional counsellor. This will help them better understand what marriage is all about, the good and bad times, get to know their spouses better, and know the adjustments and coping mechanisms to use in their marriage lives. Through pre-marital counselling, the counsellor can provide couples with the tools needed to keep their relationship healthy and strong. The counsellor is also able to provide therapeutic information which helps couples to eliminate bad habits that destroy relationships and inculcate good habits that foster healthy relationship (Cobbinah & Osei-Tutu, 2019; Udofia et al., 2021). Premarital counselling can help couples manoeuvre the struggles they will face in their first few months or years of marriage and help them resolve conflicts before they escalate.

(Chinoyelum Egbo, 2012.) revealed that pre-marital counselling leads to improved empathy skills and self-concept of couples and enhances personal adjustment and interpersonal relationships among couples. (Rita & Kyeremeh, 2021; Udofia et al., 2021) reported that pre-marital counselling contributes to an overall improvement of behaviour of couple's marital stability. Adjustment is the process of adapting or becoming used to a new situation. Marital stability refers to a firm, steady, well-balanced, and healthy marital relationship between couples. Stability is ensured as each member fulfils his/her role in the relationship.(Chinoyelum Egbo, 2012).

Premarital counselling is an important part of helping to-be couples enter into the marriage covenant with an open eye and well-equipped to build and maintain a strong union.

### 1.3 Statement of the Problem

The single life is an important time in individual stage. This is life because they are both used to their freedom and independence. At this stage, individual only focuses on their personal growth, and well-beings, even though they have fallen in love with someone, they still focus on their personal interest and aspirations but as soon as they think of marriage, a lot of things must change that they need to adjust to. Marriage is the union of two people, yet, it is not always a bed of roses. Therefore, several premarital counselling programs were being used to prepare couples for marriage life.

In Africa, marriage is regarded as an indispensable part of life, hence, people get married in different places and situations. Individuals can get married through civil, religious, or customary law according to what they believe in. Despite this, many married couples in Africa file for divorce after a short time of getting married, including Christian couples, Muslim couples, and others (Mutunga, 2020). Kenya, one of the African countries experienced a continuous increase in the divorce rate from 2005 to 2015, when it reached 1246, an increase of 296.

Meanwhile, Nigeria, also experienced a continuous increase in the divorce rate. A report published in 2018, revealed that a total of 3,000 divorce cases were recorded in Badagry, a Lagos community and there are over one million registered divorcees in Kano, the Northern part of Nigeria (Vanguard News, 2023). In 2018, separation rates in Nigeria recorded a 14 percent increase. (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Recently, there have been over a hundred cases of divorce in different parts of the state filed every day in court, this number excludes informal marriage. It is believed that the increased divorce rate is due in part to a lack of orientation, high expectations prior to marriage,

poor communication, a lack of love, a lack of happiness, financial difficulties, and infidelity (Pulse News, 2023).

According to report by Vanguard (2023), the high divorce rate among Nigerian celebrities over the past five years is concerning. report states that a total of 14 divorce cases in the entertainment business were documented in 2022. Comparing the number to the previous year's figures, there was a five percent increase. It was reported that the causes stated by the parties for filing for divorce included irreconcilable differences, infidelity, domestic abuse, denial of sex, and others. Many young couples look up to celebrities because of their fame and materialistic life, which contributes to the high divorce rate. This will have an impact on some young couples' marriages since they may judge the quality of their marriage based on these celebrities. In this report also highlighted that many people are going into marriage nowadays for the wrong reasons.

All that you elaborate on above was the issues based on the previous research mentioned above, it is safe to say that premarital counselling is an important step for couples who are planning to get married because it provides an opportunity for couples to identify and address any potential areas of conflict or disagreement before they get married.

Therefore, this research come out with the research questions as stated below; to investigate the influence of premarital counselling on marital quality among the Muslim community marriage.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. How does the practice of pre-marital counselling in the Muslim Community of South-West Nigeria?
2. How does pre-marital counselling impart positively the lives of married couples among the Muslim Community of South-West Nigeria?

3. How does pre-marital counselling influence marital quality in the Muslims community Marriage of South-West Nigeria?

### **1.5 Research Objectives**

RO1: To identify the practice of pre-marital counselling among Muslim community in South-West Nigeria.

RO2: To explore the importance of pre-marital counselling among Muslim community in South-West Nigeria.

RO3: To explore the influence of pre-marital counselling on marital quality of Muslim community marriage.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study would be used to improve the awareness of premarital counselling among married couples and provide solution to the issue of domestic violence. Also, the findings of this study would help on how premarital counselling programmes offered to them can have impact on how they deal with issues like communication challenges in their marriage, their love and happiness inside the marriage, financial issues, conflicts and therefore, their marital quality.

Additionally, in case the results of the study show a weak relationship between premarital counselling and marital quality, the counsellors may be called forth into reviewing their premarital counselling programme. The findings of a weak relationship between the two variables would be an indication that the intended objective of the counselling programme has not being fully realized.

### **1.7 Scope of the Study**

The scope of the study will involve the Married Muslims in the South-Western States of Nigeria, which comprises of six states. These are Men and women who are still married, divorced, or separated. The study will focus on these states because it has

higher rate of divorce according to the (Nigeria Living Standards Survey A Survey Report by the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (in Collaboration with the World Bank) Section IV: Employment and Remittances, 2018). Also, the States are dominated by highly educated people that undergone the process of the court marriage and follow the process of dissolution based on court and Sharia. (National Population Census). As such, the South West Married Muslim will represent the scope of the study. The researcher will conduct the interview session using self-developed set of questions. Next, a transcript and coding of raw data obtained from the interview sessions will be made into themes and subthemes that has been decided.

### **1.8 Research Theoretical Framework**

Two theories supported the study viz: Attachment Theory and Emotional Focused Family Therapy. Attachment Theory was developed by a British Psychologist known as John Bowlby in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1930-1940, during the World War II, John Bowlby observed the separateness of children from their caregivers (Partridge, (2021); van der Horst et al., 2020; and Xu, 2022). He took notes of their emotion distress and behavioural patterns during this period and the consequences of it. This made him develop his interest in understanding the nature of attachment bonds. In 1950, he developed attachment theory and in 1969-1980, he published a book titled 'Attachment and Loss.' Bowlby described attachment as a "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings.

Attachment is an emotional bond with another person (Xie & Pentina, 2022). (Jarvis, 2022; Robledo et al., 2022; Xie & Pentina, 2022) assert that Bowlby believed that attachment was characterized by clear behavioural and motivation patterns and that the earliest bonds formed by children with their caregivers have a tremendous impact that

continues throughout life. Some of the theorists of attachment theory agreed that attachment is a learning process.

Doyle & Cicchetti, (2017); Mónaco et al., (2019); Nganyu, (2023) state that the approach of attachment theory focuses on early experiences with caregivers' shape individuals' internal working models of relationships, influencing their emotional development, social interactions, and psychological well-being throughout life. Attachment theory emphasizes the importance of early relationships between a child and their caregivers in shaping the child's ability to form healthy, secure relationships in adulthood. Brandão et al., (2020) asserts that attachment is a system that manifests itself in the adulthood. The theory suggests that babies have an innate need to form attachments, and that these attachments play a crucial role in their psychological development. Bergeron et al., (2020); Brandão et al., (2020) posit that attachment theory is unique in its way as it can be applied to romantic relationships, parent-child relationships, friendships, and even work relationships.

The theory proposes that there are four main attachment styles: secure, avoidant, ambivalent, and disorganized (Urban, 2020). The type of attachment formed in infancy can impact the individual's ability to form and maintain intimate relationships in adulthood, as well as their sense of self-worth and emotional security (Doyle & Cicchetti, 2017; Ungureanu et al., 2020).

Attachment in adults is not the same as that of a baby but Adults who were securely attached in childhood tend to have good self-esteem, strong romantic relationships, and the ability to self-disclose to others. According to (Bergeron et al., 2020), Attachment theory can help explain individual differences in the capacity to commit to a romantic

relationship. These characteristics have influence on marital quality. Couples come from different background and they, therefore, will have different upbringing, if one of them have attachment disorder, it may have negative impact on their marital quality (Knies et al., 2021). Individuals who formed secure attachments in infancy may have higher levels of trust and comfort with intimacy, which can lead to healthier, more satisfying marriages and Individuals with avoidant attachment styles may struggle with intimacy and emotional closeness, which can lead to difficulties in their marriages, while, Individuals with ambivalent attachment styles may be overly clingy or dependent on their partners, which can cause problems in their relationships (Bradford et al., (2020); Knies et al., (2021); Leonhardt et al., (2020); & Ungureanu et al., (2023). This study is supported by Emotional Focused Family Therapy.

Emotions are crucial to survival, communication, and problem solving (Majeed et al., 2020). It tells people about the nature of their relational bonds. Emotions in intimate partners produce little squirts of neurotransmitters in each other that send messages pouring through each other's body. Affection is associated with pleasure, and the look or touch of a loved one launches endorphins on a complex body through one's body (Dong et al., 2022; Engelman, 2005; Journal et al., 2018). A relationship in a marriage is a physiological process whereby one's partner affects one's heart rate, breathing, perspiration and physical well-being, therefore, emotional-focused aimed at helping couple and people in a relationship develop their emotional intelligence so that they can deal with their problems and live peacefully with themselves and others (Greenman & Johnson, 2022; Mind & Education, 2020; Riggs Skean et al., 2024). Awareness of our emotions and learning to manage and use them give individual a sense of consistency and wholeness.

Emotional-focused therapy is a humanistic-experiential therapy. It is a short-term psychotherapy that has specific model of relationship therapy that integrates systems and experiential approaches and places (Enez, 2021; Jones et al., 2022)

In the mid-1980s, Sue Johnson and Les Greenberg conducted research and clinical trials to help couples. They focused on how emotions organize attachment behaviours and how understanding these emotions could lead to changes in interaction patterns among couples. Their work led to the publication of seminal articles and the book "Emotionally Focused Therapy for Couples" in 1988, which outlined the theory and practice of EFT. (Wikipedia-EFT)

In 1990s and 2000s, EFT gained empirical support through numerous studies demonstrating its efficacy. Research showed that EFT significantly improved relationship satisfaction and emotional engagement among couples (Najafi et al. (2015) & Wiebe et al. (2017) . Research on the brain's response to attachment-related stimuli supported the notion that secure emotional bonds are critical for mental health and relational stability (Dong et al. (2022); Engelman, (2005) & Long et al. (2020) . EFT practitioners began incorporating findings from neuroscience to explain how emotional experiences are processed and how therapy can facilitate changes in brain patterns related to attachment and emotional regulation.

EFT has since been adapted for individual therapy (Emotionally Focused Individual Therapy - EFIT) and family therapy (Emotionally Focused Family Therapy - EFFT). The process of EFT involves three main stages: de-escalation, restructuring interactions, and consolidation and integration (Bosmans & Borelli (2022); Coppola (2020) & Yıldızhan et al. (2024).

De-escalation is the process of deducing emotions out of a highly emotional reaction in order to know the patterns of behaviour behind the emotion (Coppola (2020) & Yıldızhan et al. (2024) . The therapist after assessing the couple's interaction pattern, then identify and articulate the negative cycles of interaction that perpetuate distress and conflict. The therapist helps and guides each partner to access and express underlying vulnerable emotions (e.g., fear, sadness, longing) that fuel the negative interaction patterns before reframing the problem in terms of the cycle. The Second stage is Restructuring, this is the process of creating new behaviour patterns. The therapist encourages partners to validate each other's emotional experiences and needs, fostering empathy and acceptance, this promotes acceptance and validation (Coppola (2020); Elliott & Macdonald (2021) & Yıldızhan et al. (2024). In this stage, each partner expresses their emotional needs and fears and addresses their past injuries and facilitate healings through conversation. The third stage which is consolidation, is when partners practice these new ways of interacting both in and outside of therapy sessions and then reinforce their secure attachments bond by continue to support and respond to each other's emotional needs (Coppola, 2020) .

The techniques used in EFT include Reflection: This is when the therapist actively listens and reflects back to the client what they hear the client saying, Validation: The therapist validates each partner's emotions and experiences, fostering a sense of safety and acceptance, Evocative responding: The therapist uses open-ended questions and prompts to help partners explore and express their deeper emotions, Reframing is when the therapist reframes the couple's interactions and conflicts in terms of underlying attachment needs and vulnerabilities and lastly is Enactments which is when partners are encouraged to directly express their emotions and needs to each other in session,

facilitating real-time emotional engagement and connection (Aponete (2022); Elliott & Macdonald (2021); Falicov et al. (2020); ŞENOL et al.(2023) & Yıldızhan et al. (2024).

## 1.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed about the background of the study, and then came up with the problem statement in which the basis of the study was built on. Research questions and Research objectives have been clearly stated. The chapter also present the significance of the study and the theoretical framework are hoped to clarify the concepts of this study.