

Role of Counselling on Psychological Wellbeing among Married Individuals at Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Nyeri County, Kenya

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Abstract:

Counseling has remained a need for married individuals in the wider society and third-world nations such as Kenya. This is because many interventions like retreats and workshops are not always effective. At times they are effective depending on the issue at hand. The study explored and analyzed the role of counseling on the psychological well-being of married individuals at Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Nyeri County, Kenya. The study was guided by Bowen family system theory and emotion-focused theory as a theoretical framework.

Materials and Methods:

Quantitative research method was used and utilized descriptive survey research design. The study used probability sampling technique in a form of cluster sampling of sample size of 100 of married individuals aged between 20 to 60 were selected from a target population of 200 participants. Data was collected using researcher generated socio-demographic questionnaires and standardized instruments namely psychological wellbeing (PWB). The scale was valid and reliable. The Cronbach's alpha for PWB was a $\alpha = .87$. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results: *The findings showed that the highest attendance of the participants were between 40-49 years at 30% (n=29) compared to the other age groups. The psychological wellbeing was moderate level by 3.422.*

Conclusion: *The study concluded that counselling plays a major role among married individuals at Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Nyeri County, Kenya by cultivating self-awareness, improve communication, and create a peaceful environment.*

Key Word: *Counselling, Psychological Wellbeing, Married Individuals.*

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I. Introduction

The rate of divorce and separation is startling in the world which affects the psychological wellbeing of married individuals. This gave credibility to this study. The researcher needed to know whether counselling plays a role on psychological wellbeing of the married individuals at Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Nyeri County, Kenya.

In the past married individuals were depending on their doctors or pastors in the church to solve their relationship conflicts. These were not efficient enough because they did not have the counselling skills to handle the conflicts. Hence counselling was established to offer the appropriate and professional way to explore, solve and improve the wellbeing of the married individuals (Robert, 2017). Counselling plays an important role in creating self-awareness, improves communication and creates a peaceful environment among the married individuals (Borofsky & Borofsky, 2012). This enhances growth and coping skills during any conflictual moments hence leading to a happy marriage.

Counselling plays a role in psychological wellbeing of the married individuals by helping them to acquire personal growth, self-awareness, improves communication and creates peaceful environment. A professional counselor accompanies the married individuals especially during conflicts or discovering of potential capability. The married individuals are followed individually, as a family or group until the required sessions with an exploration of their problems and strength (Endris, 2015). Counselling has a positive role by targeting in enhancing awareness of oneself, able to make decisions and promote healing in their life and utilize the hidden potentials. It also enlightens them to be fair to one another and this could help in improving their psychological wellbeing (Kamunyu et al., 2019). Counselling reduces conflict issues, less use of substance and

alcohol use, and less physical symptoms of annoyance. The married individuals are helped to process any betrayal aspect in their marriage through forgiveness in a professional way (Arafani, 2017).

According to the world population review report for 2022, in the United States of America, family structures were continuing to change rapidly. According to the statistics, the United States of America saw 4-5 million marriages annually, with 42%–53% of these individuals ending in divorce. This was possibly caused by infidelity, financial crisis, lack of intimacy, domestic abuse, lack of commitment, and religious differences (UN DESA, 2022). Changes in family structures led to increased stress-induced conflicts, prompting the practice of counseling to support married individuals (Jojic et al., 2012). The United States of America's government initiated the sponsorship of voluntary marriage and relationship education (MRE) programs to aid and enhance the psychological well-being of married individuals. Individuals, families, or groups participated by encouraging and teaching the skills, approaches, values, and manners necessary for self-support in a healthy way (Hawkins & Ooms, 2012). In Australia, 73% of married individuals improved their psychological wellbeing due to seeking counseling. Workshops, seminars, and individual sessions served individuals, families, and groups (Schofield et al., 2015).

Professional counselling had a positive impact among the Mexican-American married individuals being the largest Hispanic subgroup of 63% in the United States of America. It was useful especially to the low income married individuals and those in distress of immigration processes. They were offered workshops and individual sessions on rapport skills like healthy communication, how to solve conflicts and relationship skills. The outcome of the workshop was positive (Orengo-Aguayo, 2015). During counselling the married individual were encouraged to appreciate and strengthen each other in life. This helped them to work out on their feelings and emotions in order to appreciate each other in their marriage and builds intimacy relationship (Stewart et al., 2016). This showed commitment in their relationship and improved their psychological wellbeing.

Among the married individual Koreans-Americans immigrants that settled in United State of America underwent several challenges. This included in adopting the life style in United State of America. Due to changes of the lifestyles, lack of English language, slow in adopting new culture, health issues and absence of social support. The Korean-American churches felt the need to give a religious support. Later they realized they needed to support them in a professional counselling to improve their psychological wellbeing. After the counselling sessions, the married individuals improved their psychological wellbeing and they had reduced conflicts issues. This enhanced unity, taking of the responsibility, having time together, being flexible, good communication skills and appreciation of each other as married individuals (Kim Suk-Sun, 2016).

In South Africa the families were affected by high level of poverty, like lack of employment leading to financial crisis among the married individuals. This issues affected the married individuals by leading to conflicts, separation and divorce. To address these challenges among the married individuals, the government and churches introduced among the married individuals and community at large that could help them to grow and cope up with the situation. They did by integrating the traditional counselling by involving a professional counselor to care for the married individuals. The counselor helped the married individuals to grow financially, sharing of community assets, growth in personal responsibility and acquiring leadership skills. This helped the married individuals by empowering them and enhancing their psychological wellbeing (Kasiram & Thaver, 2013).

In Botswana, the divorce rate was 16% in 2005, compared to 18% in 2014 (Moeti et al., 2017). Statistics from 2018 in South Africa showed that 25,390 married individuals had divorced. Religious rites accounted for 46.6% of marriages, civil marriages for 43.3%, and other methods officiated for 10.1%. This indicated that the church was responsible for the highest percentage of divorces (Clark & Brauner, 2015). This indicates the need for attention from married individuals, which can be enhanced through counseling for their psychological well-being. Similarly, in Kampala, Uganda, the local government realized new challenges affecting married individuals. There were economic changes, as well as an increase in the human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS). In the past, they used traditional family rituals but later abandoned them due to their ineffectiveness, thus leaving married couples more vulnerable. This led to the provision of professional counseling programs for married individuals (Evarist , 2019).

Kenya has also experienced its fair share of sexual and gender-based violence that predominantly affects women. According to the Center for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence report, 21,314 individuals have been affected (Awuor, 2019). About 3% of the number were men, while 56% were women, both in marriage, who reported having received help through professional counseling services (Josephine, 2018). When married individuals understand their difficulties and seek counseling, it is possible that it improves their psychological well-being.

In 2020, the statistics of divorce and separation among married individuals increased in Kenya. According to the data on the Kenyan population, the number of married individuals has increased from 12.6 million to 16.7 million in 2020. At the same time, the divorce rate has gone up. For instance, in 2015, it was

10.5%, while in 2020, it stood at 17.7%, which is alarming. According to the Judiciary Annual Report (2022), there was a higher rate of divorce at 5694 compared to 4740 in 2021. That is, an increase of 954. The magistrate courts across the country received 3784 divorce cases, while the Kadhi courts received 1820 cases (GoK, 2021). Hence, this indicates attention to the married individual. A study revealed that 42% of married individuals had divorced by their fifth anniversary, 77% had divorced on their tenth anniversary, and 23% had divorced after more than ten years of marriage (Mwangi, 2021). This situation creates a need for counseling for married individuals in order to determine the underlying cause of divorce and address it.

According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), 245,301 were married individuals in 2020. Married individuals reported 4647 divorces and 9532 separations during the year (GoK, 2020). Particularly, Nyeri County had one of the highest rates of gender-based violence (GBV) among married couples, despite a lack of psychosocial support systems (Awuor, 2019). As a result, many cases go unreported due to a lack of resources and community members' negative attitudes toward counseling. This affects the psychological well-being of married people, making them more vulnerable. The local government has since realized and emphasized the need for training and raising awareness about professional counseling in order to improve the psychological wellbeing of married individuals. This is recognized because of the growing society in aspect of social and economic issues. This creates a necessity for married individual to seek counselling to cope up with forthcoming challenges (Kamunyu et al., 2019) . This study therefore explored the role of professional counseling on the psychological wellbeing of married individuals at Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Nyeri County, Kenya.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bowen portrayed that all living system behaved according to naturally planned patterns that developed in order to defuse anxiety (Lorna, 2015). Hence he started to help the family by reducing the level of anxiety to ensure healthy relationship.

The goal of the theory is twofold. Firstly, it is to raise the level of differentiation by helping one to focus on his or her individual growth. Secondly, it creates awareness and decreases the level of anxiety among individuals. These two goals are useful for married individuals to improve their psychological wellbeing (Gerhart, 2014). He employed strategies to achieve the objectives, understanding that family rules bind members together to ensure optimal functioning. The rules assist in developing values that guide married people to function well. However, they encounter conflicts along the way, which can lead to violence, separation, and divorce. Therefore, married couples must determine how to manage rules and responsibilities to improve their psychological well-being. In a stable family structure, they raise the level of diversity by helping one to focus on his or her individual growth. Married individuals create awareness and decrease the level of anxiety between themselves (Gerhart, 2014). They recognize how their conflicting patterns affect them, their relationship, and the entire family.

According to Gerhart, (2014), professional counselling could help the married individuals to take up responsibility and make clear decisions to enhance their psychological wellbeing. This could enhance a stable family structure, raising the level of differentiation by helping one to focus on his or her individual growth. Professional counseling helps in creating awareness and decreasing the level of anxiety among individuals. This encourages them to assess and understand the conflictual pattern and how it impacts their relationship by owning their ideas, emotions, and feelings. This encourages clear boundaries and ownership of responsibility. In addition, professional counseling emphasizes having the capacity to expose and change the dysfunctional relationship process in the family system and listen to each other, thereby promoting psychological wellbeing. Counselors could become one of the outsider resources that can assist married individuals in maintaining and acquiring psychological well-being. However, there are three critiques of Bowen Systematic Family Theory. Firstly, the theory has not undergone further research to enhance its effectiveness, nor has it undergone empirical testing to confirm its universal applicability. Secondly, it encourages the family to deal with their past history rather than the present situation. Thirdly, it consumes a lot of time and money before clients are able to finish the sessions (Samuel, 2015). In response to these limitations, this study adopted the emotion-focused theory to address the attachment needs and inner emotional processes of married individuals.

The second theory used by the researcher was Emotionally Focused Theory (EFT). It was developed in early 1980's by Leslie Greenberg and Susan Johnson. The authors identified the need for clients to change their inner emotional processes by working hard and developing their communication styles and sequences. The theory demonstrates that married individuals who are stable and compassionate at the beginning of their relationship tend to have positive attachment styles. On the other hand, married individuals who are indifferent and unpredictable in their relationships portray uncertain attachment styles (Samuel, 2015). This is due to their relationship's unmet needs. This theory is appropriate for this study because married individuals need to learn new skills to identify their emotions and experiences in life and enhance their psychological wellbeing.

Counseling, according to this theory, could help married individuals build strong attachment needs and discard negative routines. Therapists or counselors receive training to avoid emotional attachment with their clients, promoting joint emotional processing. Instead, by adhering to the same therapeutic map, counselors could assist married individuals in building trust. Additionally, counselors could effectively work with emotions and help couples bond in their relationships in order to enhance each other's psychological wellbeing. Finally, counselors could first recognize and process their own emotions and attachment needs in order to avoid harming the clients (Karin, 2016). The researcher used this theory to help married individuals bring out positive interactions and discard negative ones. It brings out a self-healing relationship for both partners and enhances psychological wellbeing. This process reduces marital conflicts due to learning and enables married partners to express their deep emotions instead of being vulnerable when their needs are met. Married couples graduate from undesirable behaviors like withdrawals and anger outbursts to desirable behaviors such as being emotionally available and being empathetic (Johnson, 2019) . The theory provides a resource guide that serves as a tool for counselors, making it suitable for this study.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out among the married individuals at Our Lady of Fatima parish, Nyeri County, Kenya. Quantitative research method was used. The study was guided by Bowen family system theory and Emotion focused theory as the theoretical framework. The study used descriptive survey research design and probability sampling technique in a form of cluster sampling of sample size of 100 of married individuals aged between 20 to 60 were selected from a target population of 200 participants by use of Yamane’s formula 1967. Data was collected using a researcher-generated socio-demographic questionnaire and standardized instruments namely Psychological Wellbeing Scale (PWB). The completed questionnaires were analyzed for consistence and then coded according to Ryff’s scale of psychological wellbeing scale. The scores were interpreted by mean; considering the upper 25% (quartile) as higher level of psychological wellbeing, and score below 25% (quartile) as low level of psychological wellbeing. The mean of three categories low, moderate and high. Descriptive statistics was adopted in the data analysis with the help of the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0. The results were presented in the form of frequencies, means, percentages. The researcher found that counselling has a significance role on psychological wellbeing among married individuals acquiring a high and moderate levels. The collection of data ensured a clear observation of ethical conduct and permission was obtained from Tangaza University College Ethics Committee (TUCREC), National Committee for Science Technology and Innovation, Prisons Headquarters and the respondents.

IV. FINDINGS

The demographic information of the respondents is presented in the first section, while the second section presents the research findings according to the research objective which was to examine the level of psychological wellbeing of 98 married individuals who attended counselling at Our Lady of Fatima parish, Nyeri county, Kenya.

Table 1: Social-Demographic Characteristics

Gender	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Male	50	51%
Female	48	49%
Distribution of respondents by Age		
20-29	10	10.0
30-39	20	20.0
40-49	30	30.0
50-59	20	20.0
60and above	18	18.0

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Levels Psychological Wellbeing of Married Individuals by gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Levels
Autonomy	M	50	3.68	high
	F	48	3.71	
Environmental Mastery	M	50	3.12	moderate
	F	48	3.27	
Positive Relation	M	50	3.79	high
	F	48	3.77	

Personal Growth	M	50	3.19	moderate
	F	48	3.16	
Purpose in Life	M	50	3.17	moderate
	F	48	3.09	
Self-acceptance	M	50	3.67	high
	F	48	3.64	

Table 3 : Descriptive Statistics on Levels Psychological Wellbeing of Married Individuals by years

Age	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 & above
Autonomy	Moderate	high	high	high	high
Environmental Mastery	moderate	moderate	moderate	moderate	moderate
Positive Relation	high	high	high	high	high
Personal Growth	moderate	moderate	moderate	moderate	moderate
Purpose in life	moderate	moderate	moderate	moderate	moderate
Self-Acceptance	moderate	high	high	moderate	moderate
Total Overall	moderate	moderate	moderate	moderate	moderate

As shown in Table1, it indicates that 51% of respondents were male and 49% females married individuals. It was arranged into five groups with a ten-year range: 20-29 years, 30-39 years,40-49 years,50-59 years and 60 years and above. The result showed the utmost number of the participants was ranging from between 40-49 years (30,30.6%) followed by 50-59 years (20,20.4%), 30-39 years (20,20.4%), 60 and above years (18; 18.4%) and 20-29 years (10; 10.2%).

Table 2 presents the results finding of the participants on the level of psychological wellbeing among gender, it indicates the results for male and female were, Autonomy (high) Environmental mastery (moderate), Positive relation (high), Personal growth (moderate), Purpose in life (moderate), Self -acceptance (high).As indicated on the table 3, the result showed that levels of psychological wellbeing was high for all the ages on positive relation while others varied from moderate to high levels accordingly.

V. DISCUSSION

Socio-Demographic Characteristic of Participant

The data indicated majority of married individuals aged 40-49 years attended the counselling session. The report revealed that in that age they are faced with more issues as their marriage advances in time and hence they seek and trust the counselling services that are offered (Odhiambo et al., 2021).

Psychological wellbeing among the married individuals

The level of psychological wellbeing was calculated by subtracting the minimum score from the maximum and classified into 3 categories, low (2.0-2.81), moderate (2.82-3.62) and high (3.63-4.43). The researcher used descriptive analysis to determine the level and pattern of married individuals psychological wellbeing on six of its dimensions. The findings indicated high and moderate levels on the following; autonomy (high), environmental mastery (moderate), positive relation (high), personal growth (moderate), purpose in life (moderate), self -acceptance (high). The results indicated that married individuals at Our Lady of Fatima had moderate and high level of psychological wellbeing. However, the highest level was autonomy, positive relation and self-acceptance.

According to De-Juanas et al. (2020) this shows that one could have high autonomy because the married individuals had a capability to uphold their independency in diverse contexts and situations of being determined, independent and individual authority which is linked to their personal autonomy (De-Juanas et al., 2020). The married individuals at Our Lady of Fatima parish Nyeri county had a higher level of positive relation as stated by Robison(2021) they had acquired warm, nourishing, trustworthy affairs with others and one is concerned about wellbeing of others, is empathetic, affectionate and caring and appreciated others. They had a higher level of self-acceptance of having an optimistic attitude towards self, recognizes and embrace several aspects of his personality including strong and weak qualities and is positive about past life (Robinson, 2021).

According to Alibeli et al (2019) stated that married individuals attained positive relations in United Arab Emirates once they had grown in the aspect of sharing their feelings and thoughts in a positive way and spent more time with each other. Hence the married individuals of Our Lady of Fatima had grown in sharing positively their feelings, thoughts and spending more time with each other. This helps the married individuals in developing and sustaining good quality relationships or network with other people (Heshmati & Donaldson, 2020).

According to Garcia et al (2014) positive relations helps one to be empathetic and affection to all people, have a capability to love, create warm friendship and have a clear identity with others. The results

indicated high level on self-acceptance among the married individuals at Our Lady of Fatima. The level of psychological wellbeing of married individuals of Our Lady of Fatima parish, Nyeri county Kenya through gender, it indicates that male had a mean of 3.43 and women had mean of 3.44 which is showed their level of psychological wellbeing was moderate. The overall statistic had a mean of 3.44. This presented that the married individuals had a moderate level of psychological wellbeing. Table 11 presented the level of psychological wellbeing among the age group, it indicated that the level of psychological wellbeing was among different age groups. The married individual were satisfied about themselves by becoming aware of their own strength and weaknesses.

According to Bingol and Batik (2018) research identified that to achieve the self-acceptance one has to do the following; first is self-evaluation, the second is to acquire self-esteem by accepting oneself without approval of others and the third is to accept their living conditions as they go on with life. This helps the individual to feel that they have a unique value and accepting it without the concern about others love, respect and approval in their daily lives (Bingöl & Batik, 2018). The result indicated the married individuals had acquired and grown in self-acceptance of whom they were as individuals. The aspect of environmental mastery (3.20) had a moderate level results among the married individual participants at Our Lady of Fatima. According to Fatima and Ajmal (2012) the married individual attains environmental mastery by having the capacity to create, manage and develop their capability powers as married individuals. This was seen among the married individual since they had reached the ability to choose or form environment that was appropriate for them in their daily life (Garcia et al., 2014).

The result finding indicated that the aspect on personal growth (3.18) of the married individuals had a moderate level. According to Ryff (2013) underlined that personal growth was achieved when the individuals developed their potentials and powers in a positive way. Hence the results of the participants indicated the personal growth. This involved the development and improvement of all aspects of the person, how they felt about themselves and others and becomes productive in life. This showed that a person had actively and intentionally involved in the self-change processes (Ayub & Iqbal, 2012). The result finding on purpose in life (3.13) among the married individuals had a moderate level.

According to Ryff (2013) underlined that purpose in life is achieved when the individuals have a direction and meaning of life. The results presented that married individuals of Our lady of Fatima had aquired a sense of direction and their actions were guided by having a certain aim in their life due to the help of counselling. This helped in guiding the married individuals in their life goals and support commitment in a healthy ways (Lewis et al., 2017). The results showed that the married individuals according to the different age groups had moderate level of psychological wellbeing at Our Lady of Fatima parish, Nyeri county, Kenya.

VI. Conclusion

This study focused on finding out the role of counselling on psychological wellbeing among the married individuals. This was indicated through the high and moderate level of psychological wellbeing of the married individuals. The study has established that counselling plays a role among the men and women married individuals in that those that attended acquired high and moderate level of psychological wellbeing. Hence counselling creates self-awareness, improves communication and create a peaceful environment which enhances psychological wellbeing of married individuals.

VII. RECOMMENDATION

This study revealed the effectiveness of the role of counselling on psychological wellbeing among married individuals. Since the effectiveness of counselling has been proven. The parishioners should prepare and accept the counselling services that is offered in the parish freely. The following recommendations can be made against the backdrop of the study findings. Firstly, the use of professional counsellors should be encouraged by administration and in the diocese to embrace more counselling services in an effort to advance the level of psychological wellbeing of the married individuals. Secondly, there is need to continue providing married individual counselling through individuals, group and family to promote the psychological wellbeing of the married individuals. Thirdly, future research should be conducted to find out the sources of psychological wellbeing for married individuals so as to create interventions to support them. Lastly, further research should be done on the effectiveness of counselling services on psychological wellbeing of married individuals.

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