

## A Study of Marital Conflict Management among Couples in Ainamoi Division of Kericho County

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### Abstract

Conflict exists everywhere. People experience conflicts in their jobs, families, schools and even in the church. Conflict can neither be avoided nor ignored. Conflict that is not managed correctly diminishes happiness and has the potential to destroy people, it leaves them broken and burnt out. Marital conflict is a part of everyday life and how couples handle conflict in their relationship affects the strength and type of relationship a couple may have. Conflict may have the power to destroy or build a marriage. The study on marital conflict management among couples in Ainamoi Division was conducted through randomly interviewing forty married individuals in Ainamoi Division of Kericho County. The researchers employed a descriptive approach to analyse the data which was displayed through tables, charts, and graphs. The research has shown the following factors causing conflict in marriage in their order of priority: communication problems, financial management conflicts, issues surrounding children, in-laws, sexual issues, and finally, behaviour problems. Therefore, there is a need to counsel and teach married couples skills such as communication, financial management and relational skills in order for them to know how to manage marital conflict. This study concludes that marital counselling is in dire need in the society, and so counsellors, pastors and church leaders should come out and make awareness of it in the society

### Keywords

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#### 1.0 Introduction

In a world of finite human beings, conflict is inevitably. Without conflict there is no major personal change or social progress. On the other hand, unmanaged conflict can destroy what men intended to save by it. Conflict management therefore becomes crucially important. Conflict Management involves accepting or even encouraging such conflict as is necessary, but at the same time, doing everything possible to keep it to the minimum amount essential to change. This is done by confining conflict to the least destructive forms and to resolve it as rapidly and constructively as possible, (Bolton, 1979: 203). Marital conflict is a part of everyday life and how couples handle conflict in their relationship affects the strength and type of relationship a couple may have. Conflict may have the power to destroy or to build a marriage. This makes it essential for married couples to know how to manage conflict effectively.

#### 1.1 Problem Statement

Conflict exists everywhere. Conflicts exist in people's jobs, families, schools and even in the church. This can neither be avoided nor ignored. Conflict that is not managed correctly

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diminishes happiness and has the potential to destroy people, it leaves them broken and burnt out (Mkolesia, 2004: 2). Marital conflicts exist in many marriages; many couples do not have the ability to manage conflict in such a way that will strengthen their marriage. It is important to find ways to equip couples with conflict management skills to curb the effects of many escalated conflicts like fighting among couples, abuse of one another, separation and divorce as a result of conflict, and murder which is the end result of escalated conflict. There is a need to teach couples principles and skills of marital conflict management that will help to build better marriages and better families' and a better society.

## **1.2 Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to begin to understand the principles and skills of managing conflict based on the Bible that married couples in Ainamoi Division in Kericho county need in order to sustain and maintain their marriages.

## **1.3 Presuppositions**

The research was conducted on the following presumptions:

1. The Bible is God's Holy Word and provides solutions to all problems facing mankind.
2. Man was created in God's image and should use all he has including his/her ability to manage marital conflict to bring glory to God.
3. Existence of conflict in any relationship is inevitable but inability to manage may result in sin against others and God.
4. Christians have biblical standards to uphold and should not conform to the patterns of this world. Christians are the salt of the earth.
5. Effective biblical counselling helps couples who have experienced marital conflicts cope with emotional and psychological challenges that come with it.
6. This research was conducted with the hope that the counselling profession will use it to help victims of marital conflicts.
7. It is also presupposed that the final thesis will be useful to churches, various institutions, seminaries and even social gatherings that are concerned with improving society's ability to manage marital conflicts well.

## **1.4 Limitations**

The following are the limitations the researcher was expecting to experience during the research:

1. The research was conducted within Ainamoi Division in Kericho County. It was hoped that the findings were generalizable beyond Kericho County.
2. Some of the participants delayed in responding, which affected the number of participants used in this study and the generalizability of the results.
3. Couples who have experienced intense marital conflicts were not open to share their ordeal due to cultural and religious norms associated with marriage and the negative view of marital discord. This affected the amount and quality of data gathered for this research.

## **1.5 Scope**

The study on the issues of marital conflict among couples and the need to manage it was conducted between through randomly interviewing forty married individuals in Ainamoi Division in Kericho District. The researcher chose the couples who were randomly selected within the area. The data was collected using questionnaires, and interviews. The researcher

employed a descriptive approach to analyse the data. The study in particular sought to answer the following questions:

1. How marital conflict among the couples affected their relationship?
2. What conflict management skills that couples found most helpful in strengthening their marriage?

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

It was hoped that the results of this study would yield information that will be useful to marriage counsellors, pastors and church leaders to evaluate the effects of marital conflict among couples, and the need to manage the conflict based on the biblical perspective of marriage. The research also sets a foundation for future studies on marital conflict and the necessity of counselling and teaching conflict management principles and skills to couples.

### **1.7 Definition of Terms**

This part deals with the definition of terms. It is crucial to understand the meanings of the following terms: conflict, management and marriage.

1. **Conflict:** Nancy Van Pelt defines conflict as “the disagreement that occurs as long as males and females enter into relationship. While trying to hammer out a solution they are left on their own to utilize the skills they have learned all the while vigorously attempting to maintain affection for one another,” (Van Pelt, 1997:102).
2. **Management:** In general, management means to control, monitor or supervise something or somebody with goal to coexist for a better result at the end. In relation to conflict in marriage, management is very essential for peace unity and progress to be realised among the couples.
3. **Marriage:** J.C. Wynn in the Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counselling expounds marriage as, “a central feature of all human societies and as an institution composed of a culturally accepted union of a man and a woman in husband-wife relationship as well as roles that recognize an order of sexual behaviour and legalize the function of parenthood.” (Wynn, 1990: 676) Therefore, marriage is the coming together of two people of the opposite sex with lifetime commitment as husband and wife being bound by love as fore-ordained by God.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

This section deals with the literature review on the subject of conflict management in marriage and an evaluation of Bowen’s Systems theory in relation to Biblical view of marriage. The review of the literature provides the background and the context for the research problem. It has been subdivided into four main parts: marriage, marital conflict, Bowen Systems theory, and Biblical view of marriage.

### **2.1 Marriage**

According to the Bible, marriage is a permanent and intimate joining of a man and a woman to become one flesh. (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5; 1 Corinth. 6:16; and Eph. 5:31) Marriage is a holy institution, a life of commitment, a vocation, sacrament and covenant of love between husband and wife as ordained by God Himself, (Kirishwa, 2000: 85). When a man and a woman unite in marriage, their spirits are inextricably joined before God and with God into a threefold cord (Eccl. 4:9-12) so that their spiritual lives affect each other (Everest, 32). Marriage is then a permanent covenant between two people that joins them physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

The joining together of two people also brings various cognitive structures: world views, values, expectations, and plans for living, and cultural as well as sub-cultural norms. As spouses live together, most of their interactions end up as environmental structures and events, where each spouse's behaviour is part of the other spouse's environment, (Ibid). A spouse's worldview helps him or her to make sense of the marriage, decide what is right or wrong, make decisions, and settle on a specific lifestyle and plans for the future, (Collins, 1993: 13).

## **2.2 The Purpose of Marriage**

Timmons views God's design for marriage as three fold: to reflect the image of God, to reproduce godly children, and to reign in the spiritual warfare, (Timmons, 1974: 16). He further comments that there are two very important reasons why commitment to God is very necessary within the marriage bond: first, to prevent conflict between the two different natures i.e. man is born with nature that is basically self-centred but once changed will lean towards God. This change is needed for both husband and wife- from being self-centred to being God-centred; and the second reason for marriage is for the married couple to commit themselves to God as they promote communication through mutual submission to God as the designer of the marriage, (Ibid, 20-21).

Couples who want to control conflict should be able to maintain the purpose and the goal of their marriage by dedicating themselves fully to the tasks that marriage requires. Florio puts it well when he notes that, "those persons who settle for a kind of aimless lifestyle, without meaning and purpose, are most susceptible to being destroyed. Many do find themselves literally destroyed, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Recognizing the Lordship of Christ is the key for giving purpose to a couple's life and for insuring a happy and abundant life together in marriage." (Ibid, 31)

## **2.3 Causes of Marital Conflict**

According to Kirishwa, causes of conflict among married couples can be categorized into two parts: those emanating from the partners themselves (problems from within) and those from third parties (societal problems) (Kirishwa, 2000: 83). He also views that in the African society, the cultural understanding of marriage may be the main source of conflict, since the view that women are inferior to men greatly affects the power balance in the relationship (Ibid, 55).

Gibli on the other hand observes that the causes of marital conflict are numerous at multiple systems levels. (Gibli, 1993: 315) At the macro level, they may include work, political, social, economic influences, conflict associated with finances, career, house hold responsibilities, management of the individual self, and parenting. The micro level includes unrealistic expectations, lack of marital goals or vision, and lack of essential coping skills. (Ibid) Randy and Thanes' Ginner, in their article "How to Have a Successful Argument ", notes that the more intimate the relationship, the more opportunities there are for disagreement. They discuss the reasons why couples disagree i.e. expectations within a marriage may be different, sinfulness different temperaments, fatigue and stress, relatives and discouragements. The author also gives ways of controlling arguments among the couples based on Eph. 4:26-27 (Ginner & Ginner, 1988: 312-314).

The main causes of marital conflicts among couples are as follows: communication breakdown, physical and emotional abuse, parenting challenges, trauma, infidelity, alcohol and substance abuse, financial issues, infertility and or childlessness, in-laws related problems, and sexual dysfunctions. The following are the findings from a 2005 GEM counselling centre indicating the levels of challenges met by the married couples, (Gichinga, 2005: 25).

Table 1

	COMMON MARITAL CHALLENGES	PERCENTAGE
1	Communication	100%
2	Abuse (physical and emotional)	23.4%
3	Parenting challenges	21%
4	Trauma (chronic and terminal illnesses)	13.7%
5	Infidelity	13.1%
6	Alcohol and substance abuse	12.6%
7	Finances	5.6%
8	Infertility and or childlessness	4%
9	Family of origin (in-laws)	3.4%
10	Sexual dysfunctions	3%

#### 2.4 Solution to Marital Conflict

To be human is to experience conflict. But un-prevented and un-controlled conflict can lead to destruction. So there is a need to prevent conflict as much as possible or at least control it before it escalates to violence. Bolton observes that, One can distinguish between resolution and control as different goals of conflict management. The principles themselves or a third party may attempt to gain resolution, so that the original differences or feelings of opposition no longer exist, or they may attempt to gain resolution, so that the original differences or feelings of opposition no longer exist, or they may attempt to merely control conflict, so that the negative consequences of conflict are decreased, even though the opposing preferences and antagonism persist. (Bolton, 1979: 205)

Bolton further suggests using reflexive listening to help prevent or control conflict. It can help the other dissipate negative emotions and or may help the other solve a problem, which if unresolved could develop into a major conflict. The next thing he suggests is applying assertion skills. This helps enable a person to get her needs met with minimal strife. By asserting when needs arise, one can prevent the building of emotions that so often causes conflict. Using both assertion and listening skills will help to clear up the two major sources of conflict- errors and lack of information. He concludes by suggesting that increased emotional support from family and friends can decrease one's proneness to unnecessary conflict (Ibid, 210).

Other ways to manage conflict may be to engage in characteristics that make a good relationship. This can be done by encouraging the couple to discuss their problems and each couple should be able to study signals indicated by the partner and act in a loving manner. They should not victimise one another on who is in the wrong or who is in the right, instead they need to resolve their conflict in harmony. Especially husbands should love their wives as and wives are expected to submit to them (Page, 1971: 1-57).

Tomasik in her article “Handling Conflict- Good ways and Bad,” notes that there is probably no tougher challenge in marriage than handling conflict, but it must be done. She gave five basic ways people try to handle conflict as follows: - forcing, running, passively pleasing, compromising, and negotiating, (Tomasik, 1988: 314-316). On her side Patricia Sundry, in her article entitled “Settling Disagreement by Dividing Responsibility”, notes on how to settle disagreement by dividing responsibility based on the biblical principle of mutual submission as presented in Eph. 5:21 (Sundry, 1988: 321-325). Evelyn Christenson in her article, “Forgiveness: The Secret of Great Marriage” emphasises the subject of forgiveness. As one way of managing conflict in marriage she refers to Jesus Christ as a role model of forgiveness (Christenson, 1988: 331-333).

## 2.5 Bowen System Theory

The Bowen system theory has its roots in the psychodynamic theories and sees problematic families as stuck together emotionally which he initially referred to as undifferentiated family ego mass (Everest, 334). Bowen defines problems as disorders of the emotional systems and the solution is to assert intellectual control over the disorders.

### Techniques

**Emotional pursuer-distance pattern:** In this pattern, one spouse demands while the other maintains distance forcing the pursuer to stop. This motivates the distancer to retaliate with abusive tactics. This may end up leaving the couple emotionally insulated. The counsellor helps to break up this emotional pattern by teaching to act opposite of their usual behaviour.

**“I” position stands:** The therapist identifies his or her own position and keeps himself from being triangulated in the relationship.

**Explicit teaching by the counsellor:** The couple is urged to apply Bowen’s principles in their emotional functioning. The couple is taught why they act the way they do.

### Process

The process of counselling moves from the marital system (Aymer, pp. 117-125). The therapist begins by changing the emotion in the system. Genogram is useful at the assessment stage to elaborate the family tree and helps the couple understand their relationships within the context of their families of origin.

The researchers prefer Bowen’s systems theory because it encourages social virtues as well as an ethics of personal responsibility. It is consistent with the Bible in that it emphasizes the family as the primary environment in which people can grow. It addresses specifically an approach on how to help couples who are experiencing conflict in marriage with proper understanding of the environment they have been raised i.e. the birth order.

## 2.7 Biblical View of Marriage

The Bible indicates that God is the initiator of marriage. Marriage is a holy institution, a life of commitment, a vocation, sacrament and covenant of love between husband and wife ordained by God. When people marry, they unite. Their spirits are inextricably joined before God and with

God into a threefold cord (Eccl. 4:9-12) so that their lives affect each other. The coming together of the two also brings various cognitive structures: worldviews, values, expectations, and plans for living, and sub-cultural as well as cultural norms. As spouses interact, most of their interactions end up as environmental structures and events where each spouse's behaviour is part of the other spouse's environment (Everett, 32). A spouse's worldview helps him or her to make a sense of the marriage thus deciding what is right or wrong, makes decisions, settle on a specific lifestyle and plans for the future (Collins, 1993: 13).

Marriage is a permanent and intimate joining that is referred to as becoming one flesh (Gen. 2:24, Matt. 19:5; 1 Corinth. 6:16; and Ephesians 5:39) (Ibid). This signifies the purpose of marriage and further implies the needs of one partner are linked without differentiation to the needs of the other partner.

Communication is a major issue of concern in marriage. The Bible exhorts brethren to meet together in fellowship (Hebrews 10:24-25. This translates into talking and sharing. The more a couple continues to talk and listen to one another the less misunderstanding will be encountered. A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Proverbs 15:1). In the Bible, James emphasizes listening by saying that, "my dear brothers, take note of this: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires (James 1:19).

Forgiveness is also another resource in conflict management and relationship building. Jesus Himself emphasised this when he told his disciples to forgive seventy times seven (Matt. 18:22). He further said that, "For, if you forgive men their sins when they sin against you, your heavenly father, will also forgive you (Matt. 6:14). Meaning that there should be a readiness to forgive at all times without counting by a married couple to avoid conflict. In sociological aspect, entertaining un-forgiveness causes one to be anti-social and loneliness sets in.

Submission and love are the key elements to conflict management among the married couples. To submit is to present or to refer to others for decision, consideration, to yield to the action, control, power etc. of another or others; also to subject or allow to be subjected to treatment, analysis or to offer as opinion, suggest, propose to yield to the power, control; to allow oneself to be subjected; or to defer to one another's judgement or decision; to be submissive, obedient, humble etc. (Guralink, 1982:1418). Whereas love is a deep and tender feeling of affection for or attachment on devotion to a person or persons, an expression of one's love or affection, and a feeling of brotherhood and good will toward other people (Ibid, 838). So submission and love are useful in managing conflict from escalating.

The kind of relationship between the wife and the husband is not the one of domination and dictation but the one of submission and love. The idea of submission and love is a great privilege to offer to one another in marriage. Lawrence puts it very well when he notes that: In order to make sure that we do not misunderstand headship in marriage as the right of a husband to dominate his wife, Paul specifies in which way the husband's headship is to be expressed. Specifically the husband is head as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her, to make her holy (vv. 25-26). In marriage headship emphasizes the husband's Christ like role of sustaining and protecting his wife and encouraging her personal and spiritual growth. Each partner in marriage has a privilege. The husband's privilege is to put his wife first, as Christ put the church

first, when he died for the church. The wife's privilege is to set the tone of submission by being responsive and caring. Neither is over the other; each ministers to the other in his or her special way (Lawrence, 1991: 802).

The Bible emphasizes the issue of submission and love among the married couples. In the book of Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul calls upon wives to submit to their husbands and husbands are to love their wives. Wives are to submit to the leadership of their husbands in the home (vv. 22,24), they are to respect their husbands (v.3), they are to love them (Titus 2:4), and live with them until death (Rom. 7:2-3). On the other hand, husbands are to love their wives, lead them (v.23), nurture them in the things of Christ (V. 29), and live with them faithfully for live (Matt. 19:3-9). This kind of relationship between believing husbands and wives illustrates that which exists between Christ (The Bridegroom) and the church (His bride (v.32) cf. (Matt. 25:1-13; Rev. 19:7-8; 21:2) (Ryrie, 1986: 1619-20).

### **3.0 Methodology**

This section describes procedures that were followed in conducting the study. At this stage, techniques of obtaining data are developed and data has been actually collected to test hypotheses. The steps involved in conducting the study are described in details. Here, the following sub-topics are discussed: research design, population, sampling procedure, Data collection and Data analysis procedure.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The researcher employed a qualitative survey design. The researcher identified the potential causes of conflict in marriage, how the couples have been able to manage marital conflict, and what they need in order to manage conflict that may arise in their marriage. This formed the basis of collecting information by administering a questionnaire to sixteen married men and fourteen married women and also interviewed six married men and four married women randomly selected across Ainamoi division of Kericho County. The total number of respondents was forty in number. The subject of the study was to formulate a biblical marital counselling approach that will help couples manage marital conflicts that may arise in their marriage.

#### **3.2 Population**

The study targeted at least forty randomly selected married spouses in Ainamoi Division in Kericho District. The estimated population of the married spouses within the division is one thousand. The ethnic group living in this area are the Kipsigis people, a sub-tribe of Kalenjin in Rift-Valley province. The spouses targeted were those who have been married between five to thirty years. These are spouses who are within the age bracket of 20 to 50 years. Their economic status is middle class. The study tried to determine the causes and effects of marital conflicts among the couples, so as to seek ways on how such couples can be helped by marriage counsellors to manage the conflict without causing disharmony or harm to each other.

#### **3.3 Sampling Procedure**

In a random sampling, every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected (Chanran, 2004: 90). In this research study, forty spouses were studied, ten interviewed and another thirty spouses given questionnaires to respond to. These spouses were twenty two males and eighteen females. The participants were randomly selected throughout the division and the collected data was analyzed and generalized. The researcher visited ten spouses: six males and

four females in different places in the division without biasness. He also identified research assistants in the different points in the division, who assisted in distributing the questionnaires to thirty spouses: sixteen males and fourteen females within the division, all having equal chance to be selected. The researcher did this by training the research assistants on the contents of the questionnaire and how to distribute the questionnaires to the respondents.

### **3.4 Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The researcher identified five research assistants picked across the division, trained them on the contents of the questionnaire and how they were to randomly select spouses in their locations. The spouses who responded to the questionnaires were thirty in number. The researcher also selected ten spouses across Ainamoi division who were interviewed on marital conflict management.

### **3.5 Data Analysis Procedure**

After the data was collected, it was compiled for analysis. Each question was graded as follows: highest ranking was given the value of three, followed by the value of two, and finally zero. The total value of each question was compiled and grouped into three: good, fair and poor. Those who scored 'good' were considered to be doing fine in marital conflict management and do not need any intervention. They were free from marital conflicts. Those who scored 'fair' were considered to be having normal marital conflicts and will need occasional intervention to alleviate conflict from escalating to violence. Those who scored poor were considered to be suffering from acute marital conflict and immediate intervention was needed. The researcher realised how the couples have been performing in managing marital conflict i.e. issues on communication, finances, children, sex, in-laws, differences, love, and expectations issues. The researcher analysed these reports of the marital conflict issues, the outcome was tallied and described by words.

The data collected was analysed through 'SPSS' computer device by computing various statistics on the number of respondents who were managing conflict "good", "fair", and "poor".

This research aimed at studying the issues related to marital conflict among couples i.e. issues of communication, abuse, infidelity, alcohol and substance abuse, finances, infertility and childlessness, in-laws, and sexual dysfunction. The researcher also wanted to know how married couples manage their marital conflict and what they need in order to manage it better. The data collected from the field has been analysed and classified under the following category: introduction, causes of marital conflict, how couples usually manage marital conflict, and what they need to manage marital conflict better.

## **4.0 Research Findings**

This research was conducted in Ainamoi Division of Kericho County where forty spouses both males and females were randomly selected with an aim of knowing how conflict affects their marriage, and what they need in order to manage it. The findings were obtained through a survey that contacted respondents through a questionnaire and interviews. The findings were used in testing two hypotheses and the following factors were established:

- a) Marital counselling is a dire need in the society.
- b) Marital conflicts among the married couples exist.
- c) The top three areas of conflict are communication, finances, and sexual life.

- d) Married couples felt that the following skills are useful to them in developing an effective marriage: love, trust, forgiveness, listening, self-control, submission, and dialogue.
- e) Married couples would love to be given marital counselling on the following areas: love, listening, trust, forgiveness, self-control, submission, and dialogue.

### **Summary of Areas of Marital Conflict among Couples**

The research has shown the following factors causing conflict in marriage in their order of priority: majority of the respondents acknowledged that they have experienced conflict in the area of communication, followed by those who admitted that they have experienced conflict in the area of financial management, then coming third are those who acknowledged that they have issues surrounding children, fourth is relational issues in connection to in-laws, fifth on sexual issues, and sixth on personality/ behaviour.

- a) **Communication:** is a major contributing factor to marital conflict among the married couples. Couples have problem in sharing their thoughts and feelings freely. Majority of the couples also have a problem with listening. Those interviewed and those who responded to the questionnaire admitted that their spouses could not give them the attention they need while talking.
- b) **Financial Management:** is the second leading factor contributing to conflict in marriage. A good number of the respondents admitted that they experience conflict when they are making a budget. Ten percent of them spend money without any consultation hence bringing more conflict and mistrust. Couples need marital counselling on how to be make their budget wisely, communication on the area of finances, more knowledge on financial skills, openness/ transparency, trust and faithfulness.
- c) **Children:** are a blessing to a couple but differences in parenting styles may bring conflict in marriage. Sixteen percent of the respondents admitted that they have problems surrounding children in terms of favouritism, payment of fees for them and even in the area of discipline.
- d) **In-laws:** can be a source of conflict in marriage. A number of the respondents admitted that the in-laws who live with them do affect their marriage negatively. Some of the couples confessed that they cannot manage conflict that arises out of their relationship with in-laws. This kind of attitude may even escalate into violence if not addressed quickly.
- e) **Sexual Life:** is one of the core purposes of marriage. Some of the respondents admitted that they don't always get satisfied sexually, whereas a small percentage never gets satisfied at all. This indicates that sex life is one of the contributing factors to conflict among the married couples.
- f) **Behaviour Issues:** Behaviour is the way an individual acts towards others. Behaviour can be positive or negative. A behaviour that is negative affects others hence conflict. Though only seven percent of the respondents admitted that they have problems with either their behaviours or that of their spouses, this factor still remains as one of the contributing factors to conflict in marriage.
- g) **Domestic Violence and Emotional Abuse:** Couples admitted that they have been physically or emotionally abused by their partners directly or indirectly. This shows that domestic violence and emotional abuse is an indicator of marital conflicts among the married couples.

### **Other Areas needing Marital Counselling**

1. Time Management is one of the factors the couple felt they need help in order to manage conflict. A number of the respondents admitted that they need some help in terms of time management.
2. Career Development in order to avoid conflict that may arise because of failure to develop careers by the married couples, some of the respondents suggested that they need help on how they can develop their careers.

### **5.0 Conclusion**

In conclusion, factors that contribute to marital conflict are dynamic and therefore, keep on changing with time and culture. Marital counselling needs to be updated to fit the changing times and challenges that married couples experience every day. This study concludes that marital counselling is in dire need in the society, and so counsellors, pastors and church leaders should come out and make awareness of it in the society about the importance and value of getting counselling help before marriage goal is distorted and yet it is the core unit that the society relies on and the foundation that God established in order for the married couple to enjoy in companionship, enjoy sex and procreate for God's glory (Gen. 2:18-25).

### **5.1 Recommendations**

After the study on marital conflict management among the married couples, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Marital counselling should be given priority by counsellors, pastors and church leaders.
2. Marital counselling program should cover factors that contribute to conflict in marriage i.e. communication, financial management, sexual relations, in-laws, children, behaviour, domestic violence and emotional abuse, time management and career development.
3. The married couples should be helped to develop and apply the following skills in their marriage: listening, love, submission, forgiveness, dialogue, trust and faithfulness, and self- control.
4. The couples should be taken through a structured counselling program with the word of God being the final authority.
5. More research should be done on the following areas which were expressed by the respondents:
  - a. Financial management
  - b. Time management
  - c. Hygiene
6. The counsellor or pastor should relate with the married couple as individuals needing both meaning and love, each of the spouses should be perceived as pursuing a goal in life to build one another in marriage i.e. companionship, sexual intimacy, and procreation, and be encouraged and motivated through God's word in order to manage conflict in marriage.
7. This research further recommends that marital counselling be divided into lessons and assignments covering issues that contribute to conflict in marriage and skills needed as indicated in the below marital counselling outline. The counselling duration per session should cover between 45 minutes to one hour.

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