

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **GUIDELINES, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1. INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the guidelines, conclusions and recommendations as well as a summary of the research study will be presented.

The themes developed from the data obtained in this study provided the foundation for the development of guidelines, which can be used by social workers and other social service professionals in developing a marriage enrichment programme.

#### **6.2. PRESENTATION OF THE GUIDELINES**

##### **6.2.1. Guidelines: Theme 1: The Need for Marriage Enrichment Intervention**

- **Guideline 1**  
Increase awareness of couples regarding the option of marriage enrichment interventions in order to prevent the rapid decline and breakdown of marriages.
  
- **Guideline 2**  
Help couples to understand the need for marriage enrichment in order to enhance, strengthen and enrich their marriage relationships.
  
- **Guideline 3**  
Use marriage enrichment interventions in order to teach couples skills and techniques to enjoy each other more, and focus on the positive aspects of their relationship, while

finding new constructive ways to deal with and confront negative issues that could threaten the relationship.

- **Guideline 4**

Provide couples with the necessary skills needed to help them resolve problems or deal with problems that may occur during the marriage effectively and without causing harm to the marriage relationship.

- **Guideline 5**

Social workers or marriage enrichment leaders must become skilled in dealing with couples and couple problems. They must be interested in the field of marriage enrichment and they must see the need for marriage enrichment as a couple intervention programme.

- **Guideline 6**

Consider the cultural perspectives of specific cultural groups on marriage enrichment and develop programmes that will address their specific enrichment needs.

### **6.2.2. Guidelines: Theme 2: Mentoring and Support through Marriage Enrichment Groups**

- **Guideline 1**

The social worker or marriage enrichment leader must be aware of group processes and couple processes occurring around them. They must be able to utilize the group dynamics positively to create an environment of sharing and caring for each other.

- **Guideline 2**  
The leader must pay close attention to screening, and a set of criteria must be developed to screen couples in order to ensure that they will be able to benefit from the program and will be able to interact in a group setting.
  
- **Guideline 3**  
Encourage honesty from couples sharing in the group about marital issues and concerns.
  
- **Guideline 4**  
Encourage couples to share their positive strengths with each other in order to facilitate social / interpersonal learning experiences, where couples can learn from the successes of others. In the same light, sharing of negative experiences can help couples prevent making the same types of mistakes / failures.
  
- **Guideline 5**  
Allow couples to support and help each other through the group experience. Consider the value of support and sharing among the different cultural groups present or participating in the programme.

### **6.2.3. Guidelines: Theme 3: Preventive Nature of Marriage Enrichment**

- **Guideline 1**  
Help couples to learn skills and techniques that will help them prevent marital breakdown.

- **Guideline 2**  
Focus on exercises that will help the couple explore the positives in their relationship and assist them to look at ways to enhance these positive experiences to make the marriage more enjoyable and better.
  
- **Guideline 3**  
Focus on growth – oriented exercises that helps the couple to learn how to recognize problems early, and how to cope with change and conflict.
  
- **Guideline 4**  
Help couples focus on changes that have occurred in their own and couple life-cycle and view these changes, and their impact, in a healthy and positive way.

#### **6.2.4. Guidelines: Theme 4: Educational Nature of Marriage Enrichment**

- **Guideline 1**  
Focus on education and skills development which are crucial to any marriage enrichment programme.
  
- **Guideline 2**  
Teach problem-solving skills that will equip couples to deal with problems more effectively.
  
- **Guideline 3**  
Teach communication skills, which is essential to avoiding many unnecessary problems caused by poor communication or no communication at all between spouses.

- **Guideline 4**  
Teach conflict management skills to help couples deal with disagreements and marital conflict. Help couples to understand that conflict is inevitable. However, how the couple manages the conflict will determine the success or failure of the marriage.
  
- **Guideline 5**  
Consider the cultural views of the various cultural groups represented and how each culture's perspective influences the programme.

#### **6.2.5. Guidelines: Theme 5: Marital Satisfaction**

- **Guideline 1**  
Help couples understand that marital satisfaction is a subjective evaluation that a relationship is good, happy, satisfying or successful. Therefore, couples will need to be involved in an assessment process to determine their own marital satisfaction. Take special note of cultural factors involved in marital satisfaction for different cultural groups and address any conflict of opinions between spouses or couples.
  
- **Guideline 2**  
Develop or utilise an assessment mechanism/tool that will help couples to assess marital satisfaction.
  
- **Guideline 3**  
Include a discussion of trust and intimacy as important factors that contribute to a successful marriage, and as being important components for a long-lasting, loving relationship.

- **Guideline 4**  
Include strategies to promote trust and intimacy in a marriage relationship and steps for enhancing intimacy and overcoming barriers to intimacy between marriage partners.

#### **6.2.6. Guidelines: Theme 6: Self Disclosure**

- **Guideline 1**  
Discuss in the group the link between trust and self-disclosure. Couples will need to acknowledge that in order for self-disclosure to occur there needs to be trust in the relationship, and in one's partner.
- **Guideline 2**  
Allow the couple time to reveal their thoughts and feelings to each other regarding their marriage and their marriage partner in an appropriate, honest, direct, explicit and congruent way.
- **Guideline 3**  
Guide couples to share with caution and that there must be a balance between the positive and negative thoughts and feelings that are shared, as high levels of disclosure of highly negative thoughts and feelings may be destructive to the relationship.
- **Guideline 4**  
Develop norms for self-disclosure that would suit the specific needs and risk-level of the couple. Disclosure must be voluntary, positive, and not the result of confrontation. It should be done in a constructive, non-threatening manner, without attacking the self-esteem or self-worth of the other marriage partner.

### **6.2.7. Guidelines: Theme 7: Sexual Enrichment**

- **Guideline 1**  
Include the topic of sexual enrichment and enhancing sexual intimacy between spouses in a marriage relationship as sexual satisfaction of the spouses is one of the factors that affects marital satisfaction.
  
- **Guideline 2**  
Include the link between incomplete self-disclosure and sexual problems within marriages.
  
- **Guideline 3**  
Help couples explore their ability to give and receive sexual pleasure as a mature dimension of adulthood.
  
- **Guideline 4**  
Encourage communication between the couple about their physical relationship, including letting each other know what they desire from sexual intercourse.
  
- **Guideline 5**  
Teach couples that exploring sexual love and intimacy requires that the couple communicate verbally and non-verbally about their desires and expectations and look for ways to please each other. It involves teamwork where each partner gives and receives pleasure in the relationship.

### **6.2.8. Guidelines: Theme 8: Individual Growth and Development in Relation to the Growth of the Marital Relationship**

- **Guideline 1**

Utilize an exercise where couples set individual goals for themselves as well as relationship goals for themselves as couples.

- **Guideline 2**  
Couples should be encouraged to find a balance between their personal goals and their couple/relationship goals. They should try to avoid advancing one area at the expense of another unless it is agreed upon between them.
- **Guideline 3**  
Allow for adequate discussion between spouses regarding their personal and relationship/couple goals and sharing what these are for each spouse.
- **Guideline 4**  
Teach couples to manage conflict resulting from their differences or disagreements with the skills learned in managing conflict effectively.

#### **6.2.9. Guidelines: Theme 9: Consideration of Cultural Diversity**

- **Guideline 1**  
Consider cultural differences regarding specific marital roles and functions.
- **Guideline 2**  
Discuss and explore any cultural differences openly and in a sharing environment within groups, which will also enhance the learning about different cultural views and practices within the group.



- **Guideline 3**  
The leader must be comfortable with working in a multi-cultural group in order to be effective. The leader must be accepting and sensitive to different cultural views and practices and use these different views to encourage discussion and sharing within the group.
  
- **Guideline 4**  
Utilize specifically designed programmes for specific cultures when such a need or request is identified in order to gain optimal results.
  
- **Guideline 5**  
Use pilot studies of designed programmes with representative couples from different cultural groups in order to test the suitability of the programme for different cultural groups.

## **6.3. CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.3.1. THEORETICAL AND CONTENT CONCLUSIONS**

- a) This study shows the need for marriage enrichment as a preventative intervention that can help couples to enhance their marital relationships and prevent marital breakdown.
- b) The respondents appeared to have shared openly and honestly their views regarding marriage enrichment, and they answered questions freely during the focus group interviews. Respondents also appeared to have gained a clearer understanding of marriage enrichment through their participation and sharing of ideas, especially since all of the participants had never used

marriage enrichment in their practice and only one of the participants had been involved in a marriage enrichment programme through the church.

- c) The themes identified from the data were supported by previous literature reviewed in the literature control phase of the research. The results thus confirmed that which was stated in literature. Theme two also developed new information, which was not found in the literature sources reviewed.
- d) All participants agreed that marriage enrichment is needed to help sustain marriages and that it is an important source of support for couples wanting to enhance their marital relationship and prevent marital breakdown.

### **6.3.2. METHODOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS**

- a) This study achieved its primary goal of exploring and describing the elements that will comprise the content for a marriage enrichment programme.
- b) This study did explore the need for a marriage enrichment programme.
- c) This study was able to provide themes for a marriage enrichment programme.
- d) The research design and methodology employed in this study was thus adequate as it was successful in reaching the objectives of the study.
- e) More focus group interviews could have been conducted which would have provided richer information.
- f) The themes that were produced as the results of this study were supported by the literature control.
- g) It can thus be concluded that the results obtained through the research is trustworthy as the objectives of the study were reached.

#### **6.4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the study findings, the researcher recommends the following:

- a) Due to there being limited current literature in the field of marriage enrichment, there is a need for researchers to do further research in this field and to have more literature published regarding marriage enrichment.
- b) In addition, more research needs to be conducted within South Africa in order to further explore the scope for this type of marital intervention tool locally.
- c) A replication of this study with larger samples involving the Non-Governmental Organizations of the social welfare sector is recommended as this can provide more rich and valuable data on this topic.
- d) The themes and guidelines developed in this study may be used in the development of a programme for marriage enrichment through the intervention research process.
- e) More research in the field of marriage enrichment in South Africa especially is recommended.
- f) This research can be further regarded as a focal point in starting to research marriage enrichment further as a proactive and preventative marriage intervention technique.
- g) Social workers need to consider and address the need for preventative marriage enrichment interventions in their clinical practice. This will address the increasing problem of marital breakdown and divorce.
- h) Marriage enrichment must be marketed to social workers, and by social workers as an essential tool for couples wanting to sustain their marriage and maintain marital satisfaction and happiness.

- i) Marriage enrichment programmes developed in South Africa must consider the impact of cultural diversity on the content and implementation of the programme.
- j) The development of marriage enrichment programmes focusing on the preventative, educational and relationship enhancing nature of marriage enrichment is recommended.

## **6.5. SUMMARY**

This qualitative research study aimed to explore and describe the content for a marriage enrichment programme.

An exploratory – descriptive research design was utilized and focus group interviews were used as the data collection method in this study. A structured interview schedule was developed and used as the tool to guide the focus group discussions. The interview schedule was administered during the two focus group interviews held and the discussions were recorded by means of an audio tape-recorder while an assistant took field notes.

The data collected was analyzed by means of an analysis schedule and was coded in terms of seven identified categories. A total of nine themes were formulated from the analysis schedule. As a method of verification, a literature control was conducted to verify the relevance and legitimacy of the findings. The literature control verified and supported the themes formulated as the research results.

Guidelines were then developed based on the themes that were formulated from the research results. These guidelines were discussed and conclusions regarding

the study are made, and recommendations are given based on the guidelines formulated for the development of a marriage enrichment programme.

Conducting this research was an enlightening experience for the researcher. The participants interviewed through the focus groups provided rich and interesting discussions that allowed the researcher to obtain valuable data. This data provided the results needed to reach the objectives of this research study. The research findings give the researcher and social workers as well as other social service practitioners in the field of marriage enrichment a clear description of the elements that comprise the content for a marriage enrichment programme.

The researcher urges all social workers to become aware of the need for marriage enrichment as a preventative intervention technique to help prevent the breakdown of marriages. Social workers are also urged to consider the need for research to design and develop a marriage enrichment programme that will provide support to married couples.