Prospects and Potential in Pastoral Theological Counseling Approaches and Implications on Premarital Counseling during Naomi/Laban Bridal Showers in Botswana

By

Madigele Tshenolo Jennifer, Dube Musa, Motswapong Elizabeth, Kebaneilwe Mmapula Diana, Setume Doreen, Gabaitse Rosina, Modie-Moroka Tirelo, Kgalemang Malebogo

Abstract

Little is known on the area of pastoral theological approaches used for premarital counseling during bridal showers in Botswana. Pentecostal pastoral counselors during Naomi/ Laban showers were interviewed about their pre-marital pastoral counseling work, on values and ethics of Botho/Ubuntu, how the ethic is manifested in a traditional society and how it can be used to construct and reconstruct gender. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected on 66 Naomi- Laban pastoral counselors who took part in the study in Gaborone and semi villages of Kanye, Ramotswa, Mochudi and Tlokweng between 1st August 2016 and 31st March 2017. The Naomi- Laban marital counseling group use the communal contextual, cross-cultural and hermeneutic pastoral theological approaches in their deliberations. They have adopted a new church family model that retains traditional values while taking contextual issues into cognizance. Naomi/ Laban constitute an engaging and useful group with experiences and skills that can be tapped by pastoral marital counselors. Their work represents a significant premarital counseling resource. Their approaches could however be made more relevant if they are beefed up with a participatory approach. The latter allows couples to explore their positions on several issues relating to marriage.

Key words: Marriage, family, pastoral care, pastoral counselling, communal, contextual, hermeneutics, cross-cultural
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Introduction and Background

Communal, contextual, cross-cultural and hermeneutic premarital pastoral counselling has become an accepted way to assist couples from in creating a healthy marriage, family and relationship. The emphasis on this approach of premarital counselling emanated as a result of high divorce rates, rapidly changing economic conditions, sexual freedom, urbanization and migrations among other forces. Naomi/Laban pastoral movement, which comprises of mainly elderly married women rose to attempt to address the mentioned forces. They want to participate in decreasing disharmony within marriages and the damaging effects that divorce could have on couples and their families (Interview, 20/11/2016).

The above-mentioned forces forced the group to reconstruct marriage and family. In a context that is becoming highly individualistic, Naomi/Laban pastoral movement becomes a family of families. This is in line with Clinebell (1992: 283) who reckons that the church is a family of families. John Patton highlights that pastoral care is a mission of the whole Christian community and focusing on the holistic or contextual dimensions of human beings (1993: 5). The new family therefore bridges the gap that had been created by urbanization, globalization and migration. Buffel (2007:202) argues that Africans are community oriented. He, recommended Gerkin’s hermeneutical model of pastoral care which recognises the importance of caring for the whole family. Gerkin’s model of pastoral care has been therefore been adopted by the Naomi/Laban pastoral care movement as their intention is not only to bring harmony between the marrying couple, they also want that harmony to extend to their respective families and extended families.

Traditionally, a family is understood as a group of people with common descendants, clan and who follow same principles, rules and are interdependent on each other. It is a place of belonging where sharing, altruism and solidarity happens naturally (Mbiti, 1969). Marriage on the other hand was understood as a union between two people who mostly are of opposite sex and unite sexually, with economic cooperation; they may have their biological children, adopt or just raise children (Strong and Cohen 2014). From an Afro-Christian perspective, Naomi/Laban premarital counselors view marriage as not a two people affair but as an interfamily affair. They emphasize acceptance of the couples to wed by their in-laws as their own children and generally prepares both families from the bride and groom to unite and support the marriage of their children (interview, 09/08/2016). The idea of interdependence is being resuscitated by the Naomi/Laban pastoral movement. They are the new family that is not only related through the common ancestry in Jesus Christ. They are also related through the waters of baptism (interview, 07/07/2016).

The African maxim, “I am because we are, therefore I am” (Mbiti, 1969:107) is practiced by this movement. As a new extended family, they feel that it is upon their mandate to provide a stable support system to the newlyweds and their families. According to Shutte,
(2001:9) it is the concept of Ubuntu that provides insights into our present time and it also helps in rediscovering a positive family valve system. This concept puts more emphases on the community. In that case, care is communal, interrelation and even extends to everyone regardless of culture, age, sex, cultural background, and so on. According to Mmualefhe (2004:1), the interrelatedness and interconnectedness of human beings is not only limited to family and tribe, but it also extends to the country, the continent and the rest of the world. From this perspective, one’s pain is everybody’s pain.

Although they are a family in a new world order, Naomi/Laban pastoral movement take into account traditional Setswana concepts of family, marriage and relationships as well as Setswana instructions and practices. Their approach is culturally informed. They retain traditional values while at the same time appreciating rapid changes in family dynamics, politics, economy, religion and politics. This approach is termed as cross-cultural. All participants, the pastoral team and the marrying couple alike share cultural thoughts, beliefs, feelings and ideas which are easy to last for generations as they share a language. The pastoral movement has a clearly structural formation and intention. During bridal showers, elderly married women would share their experiences and wisdom with a marrying couple on issues pertaining to marriage, communication, religious aspect, sex enrichment and growth. In short, they highlight the sticky problems that might lead to divorce and discuss possible ways of avoiding it. They would take turns using the art of counselling, that is mainly enriched by their experience, knowledge of the Bible and contextual issues. They are indeed a great resource that could help in the survival of marriage struggles.

In a nutshell the pastoral movement use a hermeneutic, communal contextual and cross-cultural contribution to enrichment and growth through pastoral counselling extended to couples and their families in Botswana. In their approach, they mainly focus on reaching out to the person or individual soul through preaching the Word and Biblical counselling in the mode of a prescriptive and directive approach. This paper however argues that the movement should also focus on self-development and awareness. They should also encourage individual autonomy and independent personality using inner potentials. The Scripture and prayer remain unique resources of pastoral care. However, there is also a need to pay more attention to human or individual experience and need. The existential needs of human beings should be connected to fulfilled promises found in the Bible. This would be the interplay between appropriate images of God and existential life needs (Clinebell 1984:31–50).

**Statement of the Problem**

There is high alarming rate of divorce cases in Botswana and that has impacted the lives of children negatively. About 1, 301 divorce cases were registered at the High Court in the period between January and December 2016 while 1, 435 cases were registered in the year 2015. 971 cases were recorded in the year 2012 (The Midweek Sun, Wednesday March 11, 2011) while 200 cases were registered in the year 2011 (Ahmed & Letamo, 1989 and Bakadzi, 2015). In a small populated country of 1.5 million, a total of 40 901 cases were recorded (The Midweek Sun, Wednesday March 11, 2011). Moreover, a context of globalization, industrialization and rural urban migrations had brought changes in all aspects of life. It had impacted the idea of marriage, family and relationships negatively. The study aimed at investigating and analysing how Botho/Ubuntu ethic is expressed in contemporary urban settings of Botswana. It is an informative study that aims at highlighting how
Botho/Ubuntu spirituality can inform the building and maintenance of justice-loving communities.

Theoretical Framework
This paper is informed by a Pastoral Care perspective within the framework of Practical Theology. Practical Theology is understood to be “actions that propagate the Gospel and promote God’s coming into the world” (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:6). In other words, Practical Theology refers to God’s action and our response as human beings. Pastoral care on the other hand “is the caring task of a pastor in relation to individuals and communities” (Gerkin, 1997:19). It is also referred to as a caring ministry of the church community (Magezi 2017) reaching out to all even beyond denominational boundaries, acknowledging the complexity of human beings and attending to them holistically (Hampson 2010:19). Pastoral counselling is characterised by helping people to deal with their problems by using a variety of healing methods in ways that are consistent with biblical and theological teachings (Collins 2007:36). It has mainly to do with the interaction between people (Allender 1997:40). Laban premarital counsellors make use of an integrated approach; they use Communal Contextual, hermeneutics and cross-cultural Pastoral Theological Approaches. These approaches correlate with the Setswana worldview where care is communalistic. Over above acknowledging that counselling during Naomi/Laban premarital counselling sessions speaks to people in their contexts, meaning, their cultural, ethnic, environmental and communal context. This paper argues that for the movement to be holistic; they must know and address all the needs and challenges of individual persons. It, therefore, recommends that pastoral practice of Naomi/Laban pastoral counselling movement should consider characteristics during pastoral counselling:

1. Understanding human behaviour from different perspectives (holistic approach); and
2. Focusing on an explicitly articulated need or concern (Intrapersonal/Person-centred).

It is imperative at this juncture for pastoral counsellors to have the ability to actively listen individual life stories, respect for the personal story of religious or spiritual development of the person and assistance in discovering and reinforcing their marriages, families and relationships.

Methodology
Data for the study was collected between 1st August 2016 and 31st March 2017 in Gaborone, the capital city of Botswana and its surrounding villages of Ramotswa, Mochudi and Tlokweng. A total of 10 showers were attended and 66 Naomi-Laban pastoral counselors took part in the study. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were used in collecting data. Qualitative Research Methodology helps the researcher to uncover underlying meanings and patterns of relationships through interpretations of observation (Bryman, 2001:291). However, the research is largely a qualitative inquiry. This method gives a room for the researcher to explore the world from different and broad dimensions and perspectives hence provide new ways of understanding the world. It can also be used to understand thoughts and opinions that can lead to decision making (McLeod, 2001:2).

Through participant observation, the researcher observed how pastoral counselors address issues of marital conflict as well the approaches they used and the sources they used to deliberate on these issues. Other sources such as the internet and libraries were used to discover the reason behind culminating numbers of divorce cases, how the concept of
Ubuntu/Botho could be used in building marriages in today’s societies. The selected papers were then screened, and the data were classified, organized and categorized according to the objectives of the study.

Shower events and teachings during showers were recorded on audio and video. The interview guides were used to ensure that general ideas were captured from each respondent as suggested by W.D Turner (2010). Interviews provided an opportunity of direct interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer, gain more information on the subject matter and gives clarity to obscurities. Data collection however could be complicated when one needs information of sensitive subjects. Questionnaires were also used to collect data about ‘ideas, experiences, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviors of the participants. It included all possible answers and respondents were asked to choose among them (Turner, 2010:34). Participation in the study was voluntary.

Findings and Discussions
This session would discuss the Naomi- Laban major trends in the field of pastoral counseling to marrying couples. The areas that receive more attention such as post-modern culture, renewed interest in addressing issues of, marriage and relationships and the way they are addressed, the outstanding contribution by the Naomi/Laban pastoral movement, their use of theological knowledge; their usage of pastoral anthropology and the attention given to their use of the communal contextual, cross-cultural and hermeneutic pastoral theological approaches in their deliberations. A model is proposed for their pastoral work which recognizes a participatory approach where couples explore their positions on a number of issues relating to marriage; where human behaviour is understood from different perspectives and where counselling is directed at addressing an explicitly articulated need or concern of individuals who are tying the knot.

Communal Contextual Pastoral Theological Approach
In a context of globalization, industrialization and rural urban migrations, there arose the Naomi/Laban pastoral movement. The mention forces bring changes in all aspects of human existence such as social, religious, economic, psycho-emotional and political entities of people. They also have a negative impact on the idea of marriage, family and relationships. The pastoral movement intends on resisting and transforming dehumanizing way of life that has been imposed by the “new world order.” They want to liberate their own from distorted relationality towards coherent relations between humans and God and humans and humans.

According to John Patton (1993) the communal contextual highlights the task of pastoral care as a mission of the whole Christian community and focusing on the holistic or contextual dimensions of human beings. This means that pastoral ministry should touch all the aspects of human existence such as the social, economic, political and psycho-emotional aspects. He emphasises that pastoral care and counselling is not only a minister’s or counsellor’s role but a role of the whole church community.

Naomi/ Laban is a Pentecostal pastoral movement that was formed to address pastoral needs in marriage, family and relationships. Their services are only extended to members of their churches now. Their approach has its main focus on their church members. This approach ignores the existence of humanity outside the walls of the Church. In one interview addressing the purpose of Naomi//Laban showers, the informant said: ‘Go aga sechaba; ka
The informant emphasized that the showers build the community, because in most cases, when people marry, they are not adequately prepared, so by educating the couples and in-laws, it’s a step towards community building.

It is from this background that the Church should be made visible in a particular family (Romans 16:3-5) and a particular city, i.e. Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2). Similarly, Buffel (2007:202) recommended Gerkin’s hermeneutical model of pastoral care which recognises the importance of caring for the people in need. The mission of God could also be extended to people of other faiths. Matthew 8:5-13 and 15:21-8 recalls Jesus attending to the needs of people of other faiths. Therefore, the principle of dynamism is essential Lartey (2006:136) especially in a context like ours, where divorce and family disharmony is a national concern (Ahmed & Letamo, 1989 and Bakadzi, 2015).

A remarkable thing about the movement is that they have shared vision, and which commits to be responsible towards one another. This approach is based on the biblical tradition’s presentation of a God who cares and who forms those who have been claimed as God’s own into a community celebrating that care and extending it to others (Patton 1993: 5). However, coping mechanisms through marital, family and relationship challenges have communal empathic connections. This means that only interdependent challenges are thrashed through counselling while self-agency and personal fulfilment within the community are ignored. In that way, personal narratives are disengaged from both biblical and communal narratives. Therefore, collaborative or participatory coping style is encouraged.

Moreover, since social structures had been weakened by modernism, urbanisation, civilisation, and there is a need of a community of care; a community that is not confined by space, location or time; a dynamic community that reaches out to the people in need wherever they are. There is a need of a community that acknowledges pluralism and thus ecumenist in approach; a community that will not undermine people’s cultures but will use culture to liberate people if not reasoning on cultures (Patton 1993:70, Clinebell 2011 & Lartey 2003).

Naomi/Laban pastoral movement should mobilise and utilise resources within the community to provide care. They should be able to revive the spirit of usefulness for the people who are getting married so that they can assume their roles and identity after marriage. Men should also be engaged to form part of the pastoral counselling group because they also have the potential to guide newly married couples to build strong marriages. Graph 1 below gender of the participants.

### Table 1: Gender of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>89.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey 2016 - 2017
Men and newly married couples should also be engaged in this group not only for the sake of continuity but also for the sake of bringing in new and balanced insights during Naomi/Laban bridal showers events. Most of the participants are elderly women, above the age of 41-50. Youthful participants reflect only 3% compared to 16.7+% of the elderly participants. Graph 2 shows age of participants:

Table 2: Age of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 20-25</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 26-30</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 31-35</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 36-40</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 41-45</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 46-50</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 50+</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey 2016 - 2017

The group needs to engage youthful and male members for the sake of facilitating sustainable marriages, families and relationships. The support system that is there already should be recognized and appreciated. What skills and gifts can members of the Church community offer? The support system within a congregation should further be made up of other stakeholders such as social workers, nurses and lawyers. If they are not there, it would be better to engage professional carers who are funded by government bodies to clear out some issues pertaining marriages, family and relationships (Clinebell 2011: 347 and Patton 2005). Gichinga (2007) rightly argues that the approach used for African marriages should be integrative; it shall bring on board resources from psychology, religion and culture.

Even though the approach of pastoral ministry proposed in this paper is on the sharing of experience, pastoral counsellors are facilitators of healing. They are expected to be empathetic and to be able to understand the meaning-making world of marrying couples. People are their best judge of what their needs are. Therefore, it is essential to listen and learn from them (Clinebell 2011:75, Lartey 2003:69 & Patton, 2005: 3). Collaborative or interactive approach appreciates individual freedom, choice and it attempts to empower self-agency. It also brings together both collectivist and individualist approaches and the Christian faith is practiced in both personal and communal levels (Lyu, 2009).

Based on our discussions, a communal contextual approach could help people to draw coping mechanism in preservation and transformation in contextually meaningful ways (Lyu, 2009). Cultural reconstruction and transformation are essential when people integrate their teachings of the past, rules and principles with the experience of the present time. Therefore, communal contextual approach is used as a tool of reconstructing traditional principles of marriage, family and relationship. According to data collected during Naomi/Laban bridal
showers, 82% of the participants generally agree that Naomi-Laban showers demonstrate Botho:

Table 3: Naomi-Laban showers demonstrate Botho

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey 2016 - 2017

The following is the verbatim of the participants on Ubuntu/Botho and showers:

“Botho drives one to have a loving heart, willingness to support one another, spirit of ones and being there for one another. Therefore showering one another is on its own a practice of Botho.”

“It brings people of various backgrounds together and it encourages people to socialize. It also builds and empowers people spiritually.”

Naomi/Laban family, marriage and relationships counselling are rooted in the Setswana concept of Ubuntu/Botho. This concept is rooted in the community hence the movement has embraced it together with Christian theology to form a new model of family counselling. Ubuntu/Botho is used as a worldview that evaluates the experiences of the people.

**Botho Pastoral Theological Approach**

In Setswana setup, care is communal, interrelational and even extends to everyone regardless of culture, age, sex, cultural background, and so on. According to Mmualefhe (2004:1), the interrelatedness and interconnectedness of human beings is not only limited to family and tribe, but it also extends to the country, the continent and the rest of the world. From this perspective, one’s pain is everybody’s pain. This means that pastoral care should reach out to all even outside the walls of the church and religion.

Botho is a Sotho–Tswana equivalent of the English word “person”. It is an answer to the question: what is authentic humanity? Alternatively, “what characterizes personhood?” The principle provides answers to what it means to belong as a human being. A person at a moral level in the Tswana context is well-mannered, courteous and disciplined, and who realizes his or her full potential both as an individual and as a part of the community to which he or she belongs. This means that his or her character traits should mirror those of the community he or she is from (Manasoe 2016: 17 & Gaie 2007:21).

Moreover, in a context of Botho, there are shared values of mutual respect, responsibility and accountability that members of the community have towards each other.
Botho ethics defines a process for earning respect by first giving respect to others. This principle is in line with Matthew 7:12 “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the law of the Prophets.” At a young age, children are taught to treat others well as it compels them to be nice to us in return. If one is not able to care for another, he or she should not expect anyone to care for them when they need care. Caring, therefore, is mutual; everyone is expected to care for the other regardless of age, cultural background and gender (Metz and Gaie 2010, Metz 2007 & Chisale, S.S., 2018).

This principle of care is like the Christian concept of love. Mark 12:30-31 says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with your entire mind and with all your strength.’ ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ For Jesus, to love your neighbour as you love yourself was to practice justice towards your fellow human beings. It is a command that compels one to do what they think is just. It has to do with justice in all aspects of human existence even at a personal level (Chisale 2018, Metz. & J Gaie 2010).

The principle of love transcends the limitations of culture and personal principles. This is because love can identify structures that obstruct the way to liberation and growth. Love is where genuine compassion is; compassion that comes from the heart; compassion that connects a being with other beings. This compassion triggers action; and action that had been triggered by pain. People connect with the suffering of the other, they suffer from the other and thus take up the pain of the other; hold the other, journey with them towards liberation and transformation (Metz 2011 & Metz and Gaie 2010).

Compassion in Setswana is, mautlwelobotlhoko meaning “feeling the other’s pain.” This is an action word that compels the other to do something to make that pain go away. In Setswana, it is said motho o na le seriti meaning, a person has dignity. Dignity is understood to be of a kind of force that manifests itself in human life and in relations between persons (Nicholson 2008:8). Restoring human dignity is an act of “Godness.” According to Mmualefhe (2007:15), the “Godness” in humanity only radiates in connectedness. Another characteristic in the African community is their belief in the God of love and mutual love. Shorter (1978:53) cites Leopold Sédar Senghor, “The African is a believer in God, and for him, a Godless society is a loveless society.” Love lies at the centre of African life and is the essential energy that drives action.

The pastoral movement is challenged to know the people they are dealing with as well as their context. A similar concept is found in the Bible. It starts with a question, 'Who is my neighbor?' (Luke 10:9). Knowing your neighbor and what your neighbor is experiencing is the starting point of transformation or liberation. In John 10:3, Jesus says that a good shepherd “calls his flock by name.” This entails that a Church should know its people, their inner pains, their worldview and their social struggle in order to address their issues authentically (Patton 1993: 5, Lartey 2000:128-34).

The pastoral team is therefore advised to respect and acknowledge the integrity and knowledge that their counselees with them. Therefore, their models of counselling should take regard of their existential and explorative beings. Espedal maintains that the clients are expert of their problems. Therefore, while working with them, pastoral caregivers should bear in mind that the reason they ask for help is that they understand their problems but do not know how to solve these problems. Pastoral caregivers are thus advised to empower and help them find their strength (Espedal 2016:35, Clinebell 1984:29, 75).

Cross – Cultural Hermeneutics Pastoral Approach

Cross cultural hermeneutics is the main approach that was used during Naomi/Laban bridal showers. Hermeneutics as an approach have to do with the interpretation of scripture in a context Louw. People in a specific context should know what God is communicating to them (2000:102-103). In the Setswana cultural context, it is important that the people have the same understanding of a text in order to promote transformation. According to this approach, pastoral care within the African context should emphasize on relational spirituality and practise within the context of certain traditions. In order to gain a fuller understanding of human persons within the global community, it is necessary to explore how culture, individual uniqueness and human characteristics work together to influence persons (Lartey: 1997: 79).

However, it is unfortunate that a trinitarian aspect of cross-cultural hermeneutics was ignored during Naomi/Laban events, the approach promotes respect for the universal, cultural and unique aspects of all persons, hence Lartey’s famous maxim, ‘Every human person is in some respects (a) like all others (b) like some others (c) like no other (Lartey 1998: 49).’ This is to recognize the potentiality and uniqueness of people. Pastoral counseling should be shaped by intrapersonal and interpersonal entities. The former and the latter are best known to the counselee.

It is a hermeneutic that challenges the pastoral counselor to an ongoing evaluation of how and to what extent his or her approach to pastoral counseling may be guided by culture versus the gospel. The main focus of this approach is on how culture could respond positively to the situation of the people. Tapping into this, this study examined how the Tswana concept of community, belongingness and care (Botho) can respond to the situation of marriage, family and relationship in Botswana. This paper maintains that it is crucial to understand how individual identities have been formed and how culture models their understanding of what it means to be married.

However, the main role of the Naomi/Laban movement is on “education, community building and assisting each other” (interview, 02/22/2017). The used the Bible to “write and instruct the mother in law relationship to her daughter in law” (interview, 09/08/2016). In this approach, pastoral counsellors were advising people what to do. They were mainly using the Word of God as the source of authority. One of the counsellors said the following words during counselling sessions, “Marriage is a union of two who become one flesh. The children must be released for the union to occur” (interview, 09/08/2016). From a theo-ethical approach, procreation and or continuity is the prerequisite of marriage. This is an essential arrangement on the basis of culture and Christian values (Amanze, 2010:5).

The above idea of marriage is exclusivistic in nature; there are probably some, among the participants and the audience who have been trying for years to have children but could not because of various reasons such as health. The idea could also put so much unnecessary pressure on those who got married as bearing children is “God ordained.” It could therefore be maintained that Naomi/Laban pastoral movement should be trained on effective counselling models such as those that encourage interaction. They should also be mindful and sensitive to other people’s feelings and emotions during those events.

Moreover, it could be further maintained that Naomi/Laban pastoral group should value different cultures and faiths and to further the dialogue between theology and practice. In Lartey’s understanding of Pastoral Care, the space in which Pastoral Care can function is
pluralistic religious context, pluralistic and complex culture (1997:103). There are minority groups such as the Khoisan who should also be reached out with this type of marital pastoral approach.

**Holistic Approach to Pastoral Care**

It is important to understand that a human being is shaped by many things that should be explored and acknowledged during pastoral counseling. Pastoral counsellors should thoroughly assess the social, spiritual, psychological, physical, economic and even political background of the marrying couple (Lartey, 2000:128-34; Patton, 1993: 5) The findings of this study show that pastoral counselling to the marrying couple mainly focuses on congregational ministry in general, tending mostly to avoid dealing with the political, and social challenges in the context of pastoral care and counselling. Premarital counselling should address the well-being of the whole person and family. According to Irene and Herbert Goldenberg (2000: 3),

> A family is far more than a collection of individuals sharing a specific, physical and psychological space. The relationship between the members, of this micro-culture is deep and multi-layered, and is based largely on a shared history, internalised perceptions and assumptions about the world, and a shared sense of purpose.

Therefore, there is need to listen to the narratives of individuals getting in marriage in order to address their needs holistically. Couples should be provided with the opportunity to discuss problems and equip themselves to look forward positively to marriage. Underlying factors, including the in-depth knowledge of the individual should be attended to. Transformation in this context should be dual; it should have an individual therapeutic effect and socio-political transformation (Clinebell 1984:29, 75).

**Conclusion and recommendations**

Naomi/ Laban pastoral counseling group is very useful and resourceful group of women with vast of experience and skills that can be used by other pastoral marital counselors. This paper argues that approaches using bridal shower sessions could be made more relevant if they are beefed up with a participatory approach. Pastoral Care should holistic, culture-sensitive, care seeker based and address a multidimensional being. The pastoral approach that is emphasised in this paper is concerned about reaching out to the wellbeing of individual persons. This is because pastoral caregivers generally assume that the challenges and needs of individuals are the same. It misses the fact that people’s needs differ. This paper suggests that the pastoral movement should thoroughly investigate the challenges and needs of the people during premarital counselling so that their services would be more appropriate. Connecting with other service providers such as social workers, health departments could be considered as indispensable strategies during pre-marital counselling. Men and young people should also participate during premarital sessions. Naomi/Laban movement should be trained in the approaches of premarital counselling so that they may be able to practice in full realization.

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