Resilience in Marriages: Traditional and Religious Versus Modern Marriages

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Abstract

This article advocates for the promotion and celebration of traditional and religious marriages because it deems them to be more durable and sturdy as compared to modern types that take place. It does so by aiming to achieve two things, firstly, to argue that the origin of the concept of marriage can be traced way back to Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis in chapter 1. Secondly, it intends to inform, advise and educate where possible, about marriage relationships. It will do so, despite different Holy books also teaching about how and why God created marriage. Precisely because, even with the availability of these voluminous sources of information, countless married couples still experience turmoil and distress instead of peace, joy, harmony and happiness in their relationships. Therefore, the unceasing tumultuous relationships experienced by married couples are a cause for concern. Hence, the evolution of the institution of marriage over the years can be seen as a means to adapt to new demands. Unfortunately, the demands of ever-changing cultural circumstances, and situations due to modern influences of technology, political contestations, economical rivalries and social challenges have only brought untold stresses and strains on many marriages. Regrettably, this has led to the emergence of new types of marriage regimes ranging from traditional and religious types to the modern brands. For data collection purposes, this article used secondary research which is also known as desk research, and, it relied heavily on collecting data from different literary sources. In addition, content analysis, interpretation and synthesis techniques together with the hermeneutics method were also used as based on the qualitative approach. The ultimate aim of this work is to empower all concerned with holding marriage relationships in high esteem and in striving to keep them special and resilient.

Keywords: traditional/religious, marriages, resilient, civil marriages.

Introduction and background information

This article's task amongst other concerns was to trace the origin of the concept marriage which in turn has led to the establishment of the different institutions of marriage. The next important issue was to determine which factors are responsible for the promotion of longevity in marriage

relationships. Additionally, it was also to find out those factors that were responsible for the dissolution of marriages, other than death. Hence, by using tables to classify issues that were deemed to be responsible for either promoting the longevity of marriage relationships or hampered their durability was seen as one of the best ways in which this article could adequately deal with the various factors influencing either positively or negatively the marital issues and also relationships.

For example, the tables used such terms as advantages and disadvantages to classify specific issues deemed to affect all the types of marriages that came under the spotlight. Using tables was seen as an effective way of seeking solutions to the above stated objectives. This was precisely because an article should have as its main aim the search for answers to vexing questions. In other words, an article should strive at offering solutions to troublesome problems, or it should strive at helping to discover effects to the displeasing causes. Alternatively, it should to strive at empowering people to make correct or rational decisions about annoying challenges. Or it should simply strive at enabling married couples to make pertinent suggestions to the kinds of actions that need to be taken in order to bring an end to irritating thoughts regarding their relationships. In the final analysis, an article should strive at proposing means that could lead to the achievement of peaceful and harmonious marriage relationships as an end in itself.

That said, to try and venture answers at this early stages of the discourse to the above propositions, one could only do so in the form of speculation. Precisely because, life is not cast in the form of a straight line where things can be hundred percent predicted. Marriages as well, are unpredictable, and so too, would be the likely situation regarding the outcomes of this very article. Seen in totality, therefore, the research activity can be described as an endless activity undertaken constantly as one of the scientifically trusted means of discovering new knowledge and skills. In research, speculation in the form of hypotheses plays a very important role. For instance, a good guesswork about the origin of the concept marriage can only be given in the form of a saying that marriage as a concept begun to manifest itself in the life of the first human beings on earth. These as we know (they) were Adam who was the first man to be created, and later, Eve, who was also the first woman to be created from the rib taken out of the sleeping Adam. In this way, the first medical operation that led to the clowning of Eve from the rib of Adam took place. Of late, this has become so fashionable in the medical circles that practically everything can nowadays be easily cloned.

However, such a speculation regarding when did the concept marriage come into being can be easily sustained by the evidence that says 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created, male and female he created them' (Genesis 1:28). As a follow up, Genesis1:28 further states that 'And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth." Of major interest is also the fact that the book of Genesis is as well, the first book in all the available Holy Books that one can think about. Therefore, the instruction by God that says "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" begs the question: Is it correct for one to read in this injunction the meaning that God was actually implying, in one way or the other, that to be fruitful, to multiply and to fill the world also tacitly meant to bring life into the world through marriage as a relationship in which a man becomes a husband and a woman a wife?

The above question is based on the premise that; all things that exist on earth have been created by God, and so are the human beings as well. Therefore, whatever human beings know and whatever they can do is accordingly happening in terms of God's plan. No question, this train of thinking leads to the logical conclusion that marriage is a creation of God, and this is confirmed by Malachi 2: 15 -16 when He revealed that:

> Has not (the Lord) made them one? In flesh and spirit, they are his. And
> why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in

your spirit, and do not break faith with wife of your youth. 'I hate divorce'
says the Lord of Israel, and 'I hate a man's covering himself with violence
as well as with his garment' says the Lord Almighty. So guard yourself in
spirit, and not break faith.

Without attempting to monopolise the Holy Bible by using it at the expense of other authoritative sources like the Koran, the Talmud and others it is, however, tempting to think that Malachi has said a mouthful. Nonetheless, to remove all doubts, the book of Mathew 19:4-6 clearly states that:

Haven't you read, 'Jesus replied 'that at the beginning the Creator made
them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father
and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?
So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined
together, let no one separate.

While more is still to be said about the concept marriage from different literary sources in the subsequent sections and subheadings. It is nevertheless, felt prudent at this very juncture to also cite Romans 7:2 where God gave further instructions with regard to married women when declaring that:

Thus 'a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but
if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly,
she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her
husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if
she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

Without prejudice, for the purposes of emphasis, when one looks into the accounts of the various Holy Books one discovers that God the Creator of all things has not only created the institution of marriage, but, has ordained and also blessed it. No wonder then that in Genesis 2:24 one reads that God said "for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh". Therefore, there could be no question that by empowering married couples with the capacity to become fruitful and multiply in order to fill the earth, God's plan for mankind also included the consummation of marriage. By implication, therefore, marriage is for all intents and purposes a sacred union to be cherished, and no one in their rightful senses should try to ruin or destroy it.

Man who has been created in the image of God has as a result become a co-creator. Thus, in marriage relationships couples are often blessed with children who in many cases resemble them physically in terms of appearance. However, despite a marriage being such a wonderful thing, it remains baffling that when reviewing a variety of literary sources in order to pen down this article that one discovers that throughout the centuries countless married couples tried to trash the institution of marriage for frivolous reasons. like for example lust, adultery etc. Fortunately, their actions failed to obliterate marriage because like 'each part of a society, it contributes to its survival.' Schaefer and Lam (1992:18). In the same breath Genesis 2:18-24 teaches that 'it is not good for man to be alone-no, nor woman either'. In support, Gallagher (2000:2-3) lists his top ten reasons why marriage is good for you and they are: 1. It is safer, 2. It can save your life, 3. It can safe your kid's life. 4. you will earn more money, 5. You will get much richer, 6. You 'll tame his cheating heart, 7. You won't be bonkers, 8. It will make you happy, 9. Your kids will love you more, and 10. You will have better sex more often.

While one cannot agree with everything Gallagher says, the truth is that 'every cloud has a silver lining'. That said, Gray (2000:3) on the other hand, argues that "in the west, we have more divorce, more debt, and more obesity than ever before," however, he agrees that even at present

marriages still exist despite they being beset with and by many challenges. Truly, marriage can be described as a transformative process that changes couples in more ways than one. Precisely because, the institution of marriage has from its inception played a vital role in preserving relationships within the family setup, and within societies, and by extension within nations as well. The occurrence of intermarriages across national borders is a well-documented issue. In other words, marriages have contributed immensely to the survival of the human species thus far, and nothing appear capable of replacing it at the present stage.

To put matters into perspective, Schaefer and Lam (1992:18) used an example of prostitution to emphasize the reasons why certain things have continued to exist despite they being generally abhorred almost everywhere on earth. The following are their observations and these are captured below as follows:

> Why is it that a practice so widely condemned continues to display such persistence and vitality? Functionalists suggest that prostitution satisfies needs of patrons that may not be readily met through more socially acceptable forms such as courtship or marriage. The 'buyer' receives sex without any responsibility for procreation or sentimental attachment; at the same time, the 'seller' gains a livelihood through the exchange.

In the light of the above submissions, contestations, sentiments and arguments, this article should be seen as an endeavor to evaluate which of the marriage regimes are more resilient than the others. Here we are talking about a comparison between traditional and religious marriages on the one hand and the modern types on the other hand. Therefore, this article should be perceived as a tool and or an instrument that is used in trying to understand why the traditional and religious marriages have been able to hold their own when modern types are beset with endless problems. In this respect, the words of Otto (1976:12) ring true which says:

> There is widespread recognition by specialists from diverse disciplines that the institutions of marriage and the nuclear family are beset by grave problems and difficulties. A number of authorities, for example, believe that in the very near future more than three out of five marriages will end in divorce. Some latter-day prophets encouraged by the rising divorce rates have already proclaimed the death of the family.

Hopefully, readers would at least come to appreciate why the title of the present article is premised on the idea that traditional and religious marriages appear to be more resilient than the modern brands of marriages. The contention is that, the world over, marriages appear to be under tremendous difficulties or attacks with the prospect of increasing divorce levels which are more than those ever experienced in past. To enlarge on the above argument, John Bui (2022) in his book titled: Divorce Rates Around The World: Divorce and Family Law, points out that 'if you look it up online, the divorce rates around the world is 4.08 per 1, 000 married persons as of May 2022. Divorce is becoming more widespread in today's society'. In attempting to put the issue of marriage versus that of divorce in context, Bui (2022) further points out that:

> According to World in figures, the analysis places Russia at the top of divorce rates around the world. There are 4.7 divorces per 1, 000 of the country's total population. Quam takes second place with 4.2 and Moldova with 3.7. with o.4 divorces per 1, 000 population, Guatemala is tied with Qatar as countries with the lowest divorce rates around the world.

That said, at present the true state of affairs is that the Maldives have the highest rate of divorce at 10.97 per 1, 000 according to the United Nations in *https//www.guinessworldrecords.com>...*

accessed on the (09/02/2023). In the following subheadings and sections, the different marriage regimes are extensively discussed and so are the reasons for divorce. What comes next is an elaboration based on literature sources underpinning institutions of marriage as grounded on values that were sourced from a variety literary sources.

Literary sources underpinning the values, principles, theories, and codes of marriage institutions

To begin with, one very important matter that has long been overlooked in life and in the scholarship of research is the existence of what is termed polarity. In fact, little if not nothing has been written on the term polarity in the extant literary sources. Putting that aside, the concept polarity means 'the condition of a body or system in which it has opposing physical properties, esp. magnetic poles or electric charge… or the state of having or expressing two directly opposite tendencies, opinions, etc.' (Collins Concise Dictionary, 2001:1158). Surprisingly, even God uses the force of polarity to move his creation about as He deems fit. For example, He gives life and also takes it. This is illustrated below by means of appropriate examples.

In actual life, polarity is characterized by the existence of opposite poles in the form of, for example, the forces of: 1. right and wrong, 2. good and bad, 3. desirable and undesirable, 4. loyal and disloyal, 5. love and hatred and so on. To cut the long story short, literature review is regard as one of the critical ways of collecting data in form of information about a topic of research. In this article the focus is on the relationships of married couples within the context of the type of a marriage regime the couple has opted to utilize. In this respect, the concept of polarity plays a very important role when one wants to understand the couples' relationship towards each other as to whether their relationship is based on respect or disrespect. To this end, the discovery by Griffin and Schwartz (2023) who have had a grand total of 50 years of studying the reasons why married couples opt for divorce is informative. Their discovery points to four factors that they say are at the center of destroying many marriages, namely:

- ➢ Contempt: and they say it occurs when one of the couples shows no respect to the other by ridiculing the other and calling him or her names and also making funny eye-rolling gestures.
- ➢ Criticism: which they say it means a situation/s in which one partner attacks the character of the other.
- ➢ Defensiveness: and they say it means to use excuses or to even shift blame in order to protect oneself from the other partner.
- ➢ Stonewalling: which they say it means to withdraw communication with another partner by ignoring or zoning out or even acting busy as ways of shutting him or her out.

Returning to the issue of the literature review, one can simply argue that the cardinal role and function of literature review in the field of research is to provide researchers and scholars with a rich variety of views, tenets, opinions and ideas as data to be utilized in a variety of ways. Literature is itself a product of scholars who spent hours canvassing ideas and arguments in critiquing a particular issue. These are invariably outstanding experts and intellectuals who have the urge and motivation to do research on a diversity of challenging topics like the issue, in this instance, of the institutions of marriage, or matters like the types of relationships exhibited by married couples.

Conversely, a literature review in the domain of research plays a very significant function, in the sense that, it can give support to the researchers' views on controversial matters. For example, like how to classify a whole range of marriage regimes in accordance with their origins, structures

and chances of survival. Furthermore, literature reviews can be used as a tool to defend novel ideas that researchers' wish to put forward as their own position on sensitive affairs regarding, for example, marital issues. Alternatively, the review of different literary sources could become of paramount importance when researchers feel the need to protect themselves against any possible attacks when advancing their views and ideas on sensitive matters involving marriages. In a more pointed manner, Mathipa in Mathipa and Gumbo (2015:76) is of opinion that "In scientific research, literature is a very important source of guidance, motivation, support, comparison, protection and assistance, and can act as a reliable companion in the long and lonely journey of research".

In other words, the process of a literature review is essential because it allows researchers to compare and also contrast various research outcomes that may happen to be relevant on the subject of their research study. For instance, like it is with the present case which is about the institutions of marriage. To be specific, the literature review gives researchers an opportunity to make informed choices after weighing alternative options and arguments as canvassed by different scholars whose literary sources are deemed pertinent and relevant to what is being discussed. In other words, reviewing literary sources can be likened to an act of renewal and rejuvenation because like fresh air, literature can breathe life into researchers' mind.

To be blunt, literature review should be seen as process that allows researchers to be in position to shuttle between the extremes of the known and the unknown, the simple and the complex and the concrete and the abstract. This in the end, would lead to greater understanding of the true meaning of a phenomenon like marriage.

Having contextualized the role and function of literature review in as far as it relates to the institutions of marriage, it is now time to look into what literature tells us about what are the roles and functions of cultural values with regard to the institutions of marriage and by extension the behaviour of the married couples. In answer to this very proposition, Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnelly (1991:74) explicitly point out that "Values are linked to attitudes in that a value serves as a way of organizing attitudes. Values are defined as the constellation of likes, dislikes, viewpoints, inner inclinations, rational and irrational judgments, prejudices, and association patterns that determine a person's view of his or her world".

Consequently, it would make sense, i.e. when taking the above submissions into consideration and also the fact that married couples are living in ever-changing technological, economic, religious and socio-political conditions, circumstances and situations. Therefore, they need to base their marriage relationships on some solid cultural values, values that have stood the test of time is important. Here we mean, sound and balanced cultural values that would not only guide their behaviors towards each other, but, would also develop and improve their living style for the better. Below is table A with a brief summary of important cultural values as elaborated upon by the authors of this article, which were sourced from the Code of Professional Ethics of the South African Council of Educators Handbook (2002:17) and they are captured as follows:

Table A. On a Code of Ethics and Meaning

Core cultural values	Their opposites
Freedom (means the ability to be yourself without being restrained by anyone for unbeneficial reasons to you).	Oppression (means to be under the unkindest treatment by anyone showing no respect or love to you).
Fairness (means the exercise of justice in dealing with others).	Unfairness (means to be unjust in your treatment of others.)

Honesty (means to be trustworthy and dependable).	Dishonesty (means to be untrustworthy in what you are involved with).
Responsibility (means to be accountable for whatever you are doing).	Irresponsibility (means do things without caring if they are good or bad, admissible or inadmissible).
Compassion (means to show empathy and sympathy).	Cruelty (means to be heartless and malicious towards others).
Respect (means to accept the other's feelings and ideas without malice).	Disrespect (means to damage the self-image of the others with caring a damn).
Justice (simply means fairness)	Injustice (to hurt others by treating them insensitively).
Beneficence - (doing good) means being good to the others.	Maleficence – causing harm) means to see others as objects to be impaired or treated unfairly).
Dignity (means to value others as human beings like yourself).	Indignity (means to belittle others or to look down upon others).

The above table presents core cultural values that are universal in nature and application. However, when seen from a parochial perspective, their adoption by married couples may positively influence their relationships and render them durable, stable and long lasting. Broadly interpreted, such core cultural values have potential to nurture relationships like those based on love, patience, tolerance, loyalty, understanding, and open communication especially between married couples. In assisting us to better understand the significant role played by cultural values in the lives of married couples, Peikoff (1993:208) aptly defines "Value as that which one acts to gain and/or keep. Value denotes the object of an action: it is that which some entity's action is directed to acquiring or preserving."

No question, any relationship to endure it must be based first and foremost on love between the parties. The same is expected between married couples before and after marriage. Interestingly, Harley (2005:21) in his book title: Defending Traditional Marriage has a thought provoking chapter with a title couched in a question format that goes like this: WHAT'S MARRIAGE WITHOUT LOVE? This is a very interesting title when viewed against the backdrop of Corinthians 13: 1-7 which it reads thus:

> If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful, it does not rejoice at wrong doing, but rejoices in truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

This is a long quote and it is deliberately presented in order to demonstrate in dramatic fashion how love is important in marriage relationships. To further stress the point, literature about married couples who may being experiencing problems reveals that freedom and liberty whose basis is love relationships is critically crucial when it comes to the survival of marriages because "Human freedom is associated with rights, privileges, duties, protection, security, responsibility, law, order, equality, and authority. Liberty is never absolute or unrestricted. The very conditions that create and sustain it also define and limit it. Law without liberty is tyranny. Liberty without law is anarchy. Liberty is always elastic" (Owen, 1953:20).

What is said here 'makes a mouthful' to those married couples who have 'ears to hear'. To hear how important is it to allow freedom of thought, speech, movement, association and belief to reign

in their relationships and that of the family at large. Freedom and its importance is clearly captured in the lamentation of Jean Jacques Rousseau as cited by Jacobs, Vakalisa and Gawe (2016:6) who argued that "…although man is born free, he was effectively in chains everywhere." To put it more forcefully, married couples should understand that while freedom can be a human accomplishment, but, in reality it is a gift of God who gave us the mind to enjoy the freedom of thinking about anything. God who gave us the legs to walk freely to wherever we want to, and, who gave us the tongue to enjoy the freedom of speech on any topic. Without discrimination, a man (husband) and a woman (wife) were gifted equally because before God, all human beings are equal regardless of their race, sexual orientation, colour, status and religion. In fact, a man is created differently to a woman, and woman differently from a man so that they can complement each other and not compete with each other.

Take note that, in this article both old and new literary sources of information were utilized in order to make sure that scholars, researchers and readers understand that marriage problems should not be considered as though they are without the cultural and historico-religious roots. Thus, despite this article being used to dramatise current issues that are problematic within marriage relationships. It nevertheless makes a huge contribution in the field of human relationships that also involves marriages. To this end, Middlebrooks (1984:380) attest by citing a report with a message that goes like this:

> One study compared the communication patterns of twenty-four couples who had sought marriage counseling with those of twenty-four other couples who were presumably happily married. Those who were happily married talked more to each other, had a wider range of topics open to them, did better at keeping the communication channels open, and were more sensitive to each other's feelings.

From the above exposition, one learns that the happily married couples succeeded in creating a culture of mutual understanding, mutual respect and mutual trust. They did this by observing the abovementioned values in their entirety as instruments to use when aiming to achieve and or preserve a marriage. Other cultural values of importance in a marriage relationship are as already pointed out of love instead of hatred, of honesty and not dishonesty, and above all; of loyalty because loyalty thrives on open communication and sensitivity towards the feelings of the other partner in a marriage.

No question about it, cultural values are essential whenever married couples commit themselves to loving each other and also when they deliberately aim at building a companionship that accords with the achievement of a sound, solid and a reliable relationship in a marriage. Having defined, described and or explained what is meant by the concept value within the framework of the institution of marriage and also that of marriage relationships. Perhaps, it is an opportune time to now look into the concept of ethics as a 'code of conduct'. A code of ethics that can as well be attributable to how married couples ought to treat each other in order to maintain a healthy relationship. Ethics are about codes of conduct and their function is to regulate human behaviour in the light of what is right and not right, what is acceptable and not acceptable, what is desirable and not desirable. A married couple should and must know what will be acceptable to their partner and also what will not be acceptable so as to avoid unnecessary frictions and conflicts. Granted that no man is perfect, but, couples can learn what are the things that one's partner detests and what are those they like and try to channel one's behaviour accordingly.

From reviewed literature one observes that a fine line exists among ethics, law and morality, in the sense that, ethics derives their authority from an individual's conscience, while law derives its authority from the state, whereas morality derives its authority from public opinion. Argued further, codes of ethics on the other hand, have emanated from the society and are shaped and promoted

by it to become the cherished cultural legacies individuals, families, communities and the nation are observing in their daily practices. Without argument, married couples are as it were individuals who are born out of and within families, in turn families are part and parcel of their own communities and inherit whatever codes of ethics are being practiced precisely because "Everybody comes into this world as a member of a specific cultural group. In turn you should try to make your own contribution to it. You should be proud of your cultural heritage. If someone cannot fit into a particular cultural environment, he feels excluded" (Truter. 1988161).

Marriage relationships whether based on mutual understanding or not have a tendency to create their own cultural environments where respect or disrespect can become the order of the day between husband and wife or simply amongst the members of the married couples' family. It is therefore imperative for married couples to strive after the cultivation of family values that would be shared by all members in the family. It is worth noting that every child inherits the codes of ethics of his or her parents. Parents deliberately pass the family values onto their children in an endless chain of succession from one generation to the next because "Culture is social heredity, that which we inherit from society and history. It is our 'invisible environment' of customs, attitudes, beliefs, codes of conduct, morals, points of view, ambitions, and traditions by and for which man lives" (Own, 1953:38).

The family culture is inevitably and invariably passed onto married couples almost automatically as well. Unfortunately, a family that is characterized by disagreement, fights and misunderstanding is also passed onto the future generations as well until a conscious decision is taken to break-away from such an unhappy past. Logically, it is only appropriate to think that in almost the majority of cultural settings, married couples are, with slight exceptions, faced with the same marriage problems that their parents, grandparents, and to some extent their relatives have had over the years. In other words, married couples find it almost impossible to break-away from their family and or society's cultural influences precisely because they have been raised and also educated in such cultural setups. What comes next is an extensive and intensive discussion on the conceptual and theoretical platforms that are deemed to be the best to can underscore the institution of marriage in this article. The first framework to be discussed here is the conceptual one.

The Conceptual Framework Underscoring the Institution of Marriage

To begin with, a concept refers to some reality or phenomenon, making it to be a derivative of what it is meant to define. As such a concept cannot be about nothing. In support, Binswanger and Peikoff (1990:10) aver that:

> A concept is a mental integration of two or more units which are isolated according to a specific character(s) and united by a specific definition. The units involved may be any aspect of reality: entities, attributes, actions, qualities, relationships, etc.; they may be perceptual concretes or other, earlier-formed concepts.

Interestingly, Peikoff (1993:73) in this regard has this to say; "human knowledge and human action are conceptual phenomena…to understand man-and any human concern-one must understand concepts". In this article, the concern is about finding out what makes traditional and religious marriages more resilient than modern brands of marriages. To Mouton and Marais (1990:126) concepts are the primary tools through which reality is organized, and they reason as follow:

> Concepts may be defined as the most elementary symbolic constructions by means of which people classify or organize reality. Concepts are the 'pigeon holes' into which we sort our unstructured empirical experiences, concepts are, therefore, the primary instruments by means of which humans come to grips with reality.

That said, concepts can have different meanings for different people, but, for all practical purposes, it is however, through language that human thoughts are effectively expressed and communicated because "Language is the exclusive domain and tool of concepts. Every word we use (with the exception of proper names) is a symbol that denotes a concept, i.e., that stands for an unlimited number of concretes of a certain kind" (Binswanger & Peikoff, 1990:10). However, in the domain of research it is demanded that the researchers or scholars use a language that would be accepted in and by their own study discipline. In other words, the crux of the matter is that an academic language plays a critical and pivotal role in research circles. On a simpler note, Cingo in Duminy (1967:141) gives a slightly different view when stressing the point that one's language (mother tongue) is a very important matter in the sense that "This language is part and parcel of his whole being and personality. His entire experience, his confidence in himself, his intellect, and emotions are all clothed, enshrined and crystallized in this one language-the mother tongue."

A question may be asked as to what exactly has language got to do with marital issues? A simple answer may be that; marriage relationships start with the spoken language, and, unfortunately also end with it. However, a language is still of paramount importance in matters of relationships, especially those between married couples. In this context, for example, the concept married couples can find expression in many marriages some of which are durable while other or not. Without laboring the matter any further, Meehan (1988:55) introduces the next topic of interest in this article which is about conceptual frameworks, and he argues that "A conceptual framework focuses attention on some aspects of the world and screens out others. Which elements are included or blocked depends on the concepts employed, they in turn depend on the nature of the activity around which the conceptual framework develops."

That said, the focus of this article is captured in its title, in its research question and in its purpose. Apart from conceptual frameworks there are theoretical platforms as well, and, this article uses both because the issues involved warrant such an approach. In this regard, the point is made that theoretical or conceptual frameworks are not something researchers find ready-made in books on the library shelves that deals with research matters. In other words, researchers do not enjoy the luxury of pulling a book on research and simply selecting this or that framework for adoption and for use in their studies.

On the contrary, a theoretical or conceptual platform is something researchers have to designed so that it can serve the purpose for which it was created for effectively and efficiently. Implying that, researchers have to consciously and deliberately go about constructing a framework that is relevant to their project. It would be of no use to adopt a framework that is not relevant in respect of the purpose for which it is to be used. In this regard, Ngulube, Mathipa and Gumbo cite Maxwell (2012) in Mathipa and Gumbo (2015:44) who warns that "Developing and using theoretical and conceptual frameworks is not a straightforward, since they are not found 'readymade in the literature' waiting for researchers to utilize them."

Having said that, it behooves researchers not to think of a conceptual framework as a clear-cut matter, for indeed it is not. For that reason, Meehan (1988:55) instructively argues that "Conceptual frameworks can be regarded as very complex spectacles for viewing the environment, spectacles that are 'multifocal' because they incorporate a number of different lenses or concepts". In this article the conceptual framework that was used was created from the concepts that were extracted from the views, arguments, opinions and ideas that were gleaned

from those contributions that were made by various scholars through such diverse media platforms as articles, books, newspapers, and electronic media that largely dealt with marriage issues. Furthermore, the views of colleagues regarding important matters in the field of marriage relationships were used to source more concepts. However, to be precise, only those carefully selected concepts were operationalized for purposes of constructing an appropriate conceptual framework. To construct a conceptual platform, so to speak, that would become the spectacles for use facilitating the processes of explaining, describing and defining how values, principles, beliefs, attitudes, codes and assumptions underscore the institutions of marriage and render them efficient and effective in promoting marriage relationships. This regard, before one could discuss the role of codes of ethics in marital affairs, it makes sense to cite Meehan (1988:54) who wants researchers to note that "Without conceptual frameworks to sought and identify the incoming flood of perceptions, the central nervous system would literally be swamped." With this in mind, we decided to design table B containing codes of ethics that were adopted form the Code of Professional Ethics of the South African Council of Educators Handbook (2002:27) and the codes are captured in table B below as:

Table B: On the Role of Codes of Ethics

Islam	Christianity	Judaism	Hinduism	Buddhism
No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself (The Sunan).This ode if applied and practiced can surely bring peace between married couples.	Do for others what you want them to do for you. This is the meaning of the Law of Moses and teachings of the prophets (The Bible). A good code for treating each other with respect.	What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man (The Talmud). With this code in place it will be difficult for married couples to become involved in acts of violence against each other.	This is the sum of duty: do nothing to others that would cause you pain if it was done to you (The Mahabarata). This code is similar to the one in Talmud and abhors acts that causes pain to each other.	Do not hurt others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful (The Udanavarga). Like the other two codes this one too, is totally against married couples harming each other.

The above listed codes of ethics can be used to design a conceptual framework that can be utilized for purposes of determining whether married couples are living in mutual respect to each other. Again, for ascertaining whether married couples are able to refrain from harming, or hurting each other. Granted, that no human being is perfect, but, marriage problems and problems in general can always be resolved through discussions rather than violence. The next subheading deals with a theoretical framework that was selected or preferred for this article. A theoretical framework that seemed appropriate and also relevant to this article was one by Hofstede and it deals with his onion model of cultural values. To discuss the model, a diagrammatic representation of the model is presented first as Diagram A below.

Diagram A

11
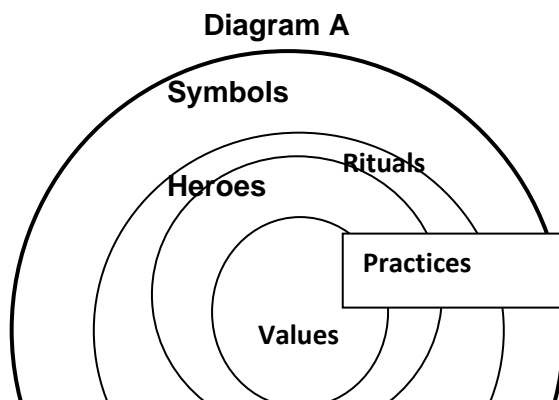
Adopted from Hofstede's Onion Model on cultural values from diagram of 1991.

In this article the four cultural aspects are used as test tools to gauge and or determine their influence on marriage relationships. They are actually used to test whether a marriage is functioning accordingly or not. That is with regard to couples being able to respect, love and openly communicate with each other on anything that bothers them. For easy of reference, the importance and significance of the four cultural aspects are briefly discussed below in terms of their potential to influence marriage relationships and by extension even the institutions of marriage. The first aspect to come under discussion is that of the cultural values.

Values: their importance and significance with respect to their ability to preserve marriages

The core of Diagram A is composed of the cultural values. The cultural values are actually the glue that holds together the wellbeing of a community, a family and the individual in terms of the role and functions each is expected to play within the various authoritative structures. Hofstede (1991:8) describes values in the following manner:

> Values are broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others.
> Values are feelings with an arrow to it: they have a plus and a minus side.
> They deal with: evil vs. good, dirty vs. clean, ugly vs. beautiful, unnatural
> vs. natural, abnormal vs. normal, paradoxical vs. logical, and irrational vs.
> rational.

In a sense, values are actually the standards by which behaviour is regulated and also evaluated for its correctness or otherwise. On the whole, cultural values differ from one culture to the next, from community to community, from family to family, and from an individual to an individual. Interestingly, "developmental psychologists believe that by the age of 10, most children have their basic value system firmly in place and after that age, changes are difficult to make" (Hofstede, 1991:8). Implying that, values have strong and deep roots which are not easily eradicated or undermined. Hence, they have been able to withstand the test of time, and no doubt their longevity too, is an irrefutable testimony to their steadfastness. In addition, Hofstede (1991:8) is of the view that "Values are among the first things children learn-not consciously, but implicitly. Development psychologists believe that by age that by the age of 10, most children have their basic value system firmly in place, and after that age, changes are difficult to make".

Putting the above aside, Tyler, Lind and Huo (2000), and also Nickerson (2022), are of the view that Hofstede (1991) had initially focused mainly on four items as being the core elements that

constitute any form of a cultural value system. These elements are: 1. power distance, 2. individualism, 3. uncertainty avoidance, and 4. Masculinity. In this article, the four elements would not be discussed in detail but their impact on marriage relationships would be flagged.

Let us briefly determine what does power distance means in a marriage situation. Below is an attempt to situate the concept of power distance in respect of marriage relationship within the broader concept of the institutions of marriage.

> ➤ **Power distance**

By the concept power distance is meant the power relationships that exist between married couples, and to a large extent it also determines their statuses within their family structure. There might be situations in which the wife instead of the husband wields more power than is usually the case. The problem is that the one who wields power is always the one who gives instructions as to what needs to be done and how it ought to be done and by whom in particular. Accordingly, Hudson (1980:7) notes, neither approvingly or disapprovingly that:

> Power is sweet; is a drug, the desire for which increases with habit. Those who have seized power, even for noblest of motives, soon persuade themselves that there are good reasons for not relinquishing it. This is particularly likely to happen if they believe themselves to represent some immensely important cause.

Where power becomes the problem, married couples experience insurmountable challenges which might result in the marriage being destabilized and ending in divorce. To crown it all, Moynihan (1969:10) has instructively and succinctly differentiated power and authority to mean that:

> By authority, I do not mean power. Power, I conceive as something external and based upon force. Authority, on the other hand, is rooted in the statuses, functions, and allegiances which are the components of any association. Authority is indeed indistinguishable from organization, and perhaps the chief means by which organization, and a sense of organization, becomes part of human personality. Authority, like power, is a form of constraint, but unlike power, it is based ultimately upon the consent of those under it, that is, it is conditional.

In this article the argument is simply that, one can't have power without authority, or authority without power because the two might be different, but, in reality they are the opposite sides of a coin. To clarify matters, the Bible in Ephesians 5:2 clearly points out that "For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, His body, and is Himself its saviour". To add, Timothy 2:11-15 states: "Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over man; rather she is to remain quiet." That said, Timothy 3:1-16 addresses man as follows: "If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money".

With the modern democratic dispensations in place, the desire to achieve gender equality has become a rallying slogan for the majority of politicians. This has sharply intensified the issue of competition between husbands and their wives, especially in those communities where patriarchy is still being practiced. In some unfortunate cases this has led to endless misunderstandings and or mistrust between married couples. Again, this has led to many marriages experiencing endless fights and clashes with the result that such marriages remain in a state of turmoil or possible

dissolution. Now, let us see how the cultural value of individualism could be a factor in marriage relationships.

> **Individualism**

The concept of individualism has its roots in European countries where democracy was introduced based on the principles of equality and participation as its hallmarks. What does all this mean in a marriage relationship? It simply means that no partner/party in a marriage relationship should become the dominant power and dictate to the other. On the contrary, both partners must enjoy equality and in addition must equally participate in everything that involves both of them. Merkel (1972:46) cites the Lockean version of the social contract which states that "We held these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these, are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Nicolaides (2015: 2) states: From the outset of Christianity the Mystery of Marriage assumed a very important status in the community. The married couple began to live in such a way as to modify their attitudes towards all around them. As children, the couple lived in a close family circle in which each person had a distinct role. As adolescents they gained the right to be themselves. As a married couple, they had to live an adult life together, united as one, no longer solitary beings. They had to face the family environment and the circle of their friends together and live in harmony."

This boils down to the need to be happy in a marriage relationship as a partner who has inalienable rights to enjoy life as based on the principle of liberty as opposed to oppression and exploitation. Accordingly, the South African Constitution of 1996 which is based on a democratic system of governance has a Bill of Rights that states that "The Bill of Rights is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and fulfill the rights in the Bill of Rights."

A lot of meaning of what the concept a Bill of right is actually about is contained in the words "the cornerstone of democracy in South Africa". Accordingly, Merkel (1972:44) argues that "The new individualism means basically a striving for personal autonomy, independence from the prevailing religious order-the Catholic Church- freedom from the prevailing economic constraints, emancipation from the bonds of the prevailing social and political order."

All these freedoms should ideally apply equally to married couples. Democratically speaking, ideally no one married partner should dominate the other on any issue, consensus has to become the key to all that they wish to accomplish as married couples. Seen in the light of the present discourse, individualism may look like a strategy devised to undermine traditional and religious marriages which gave husbands predominance over their wives with regard to power and authority. From the reviewed literature, it has become very clear that with the advent of individualism, divorce rates, especially that of the modern types of marriages, has exponentially increased. Let us see how individualism has encouraged and also promoted the feeling of uncertainty and avoidance.

> **Uncertainty and avoidance**

Hofstede's cultural aspects of uncertainty and avoidance was aptly described by Stohl (1993:37) to mean that "Uncertainty and avoidance refers to the extent to which people are made nervous by situations they consider to be unstructured, unclear, or unpredictable, and the extent to which they try to avoid such situations by adopting strict codes of behaviour and beliefs in absolute truths." Looking at marital issues from the above perspective, it is reasonable to conclude that only when marriage couples are sure that their love for each other is rock solid will they become confident and certain of a bright future. Certainty breeds loyalty, devotion, trustworthiness and

faithfulness. Not surprisingly, Merkin (2006) advances the argument that "Examples of uncertainty–avoiding rituals that embody the rules are the writing and filing of memos and accounting. Other such rituals include family celebrations and academic, religious, and state ceremonies."

Luckily, on the part of traditional and religious marriages, unlike the modern ones, there are strict rituals to be followed, and it is these rituals that make it difficult for married couples to get a divorce. The next aspect to be put under the microscope is that of masculinity.

> **Masculinity**

What role can masculinity play in the promotion of healthy relationships in marriages or their retardation is the question to be answered in this subsection of the cultural values. According to the New English Dictionary and Thesaurus (2000:785) the word 'masculinity' is a social construction which is encapsulates such terms like 'bold, hardy, manful, manlike, manly, mannish, virile, potent, powerful, robust, strong, vigorous, coarse, forward.' Reading into all the above-mentioned adjectives, it is clear that masculinity refers to individuals with strong physical attributes which are mainly found in male persons. As a social construct, the term masculinity, generally speaking has influenced society to believe that the role men should be of providing and protecting their family because of their physical strength. This line of thinking is also supported by the Biblical saying that: "Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man: rather, she is to remain quiet." (Thessalonians 2:11-12). However, the oldest denomination, i.e. the Orthodox Church asserts: "Both human history and the Holy Bible begin with and end with weddings. Adam and Eve come together in marriage or marital union in Paradise, before the Fall, thus revealing to us marriage as a part of the Creator's eternal purpose for mankind in the midst of creation (Genesis 2:22-25). Our history ends with the marriage of the Bride of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9). Earthly marriage is fulfilled in heavenly marriage. This demonstrates to us the eternal nature of the Sacrament of Marriage…and its equality of status" (Nicolaides, 2015: 6-7).

Not surprising therefore that, in the long run, such an ideologically based belief has throughout the world evolved and took on a new status commonly described as patriarchy. Against this assertion, Facio (2013:4) cites Solis who argues that "Patriarchy is made up of structures or institutions that exclude women from participation in, or contact with, spaces of higher power, or what are believed to be the spaces of greatest power economically, politically, culturally and religiously."

To be noted here, is the fact that the question of gender equality is by no means fully settled because nowadays we experience wave after wave of feminism which are geared at emancipating women from male dominance. In this regard, Higgs and Smith (2002:50) have gone to the root of the problem by stating in a very clear language that "Radical feminists regard the fundamental problem for women as being male power over women. They often see men and women as belonging to two different classes, with women as the oppressed class who are forced to work for men."

This is a perception that is held by the feminists has in course of time gained traction because of the argument that says "Women's equality is constrained by all the encumbrances that result from persisting inequalities in gender roles, sexual politics and practices, and the perpetuation of these within universities.' (Mama, 2006:62). Universities represent the highest pinnacle the human thought processes and it becomes problematic when they are perceived by women as places where they are discriminated against on the basis of their gender and nothing more. To add salt to the wound, Vambe (2007:224) crudely views the whole issue of feminism in which women are now fighting endlessly for equal right this way "The man feels challenged and his pride in 'owning'

a wife is undermined when the same wife's action of moving out of the 'house' seeks to redefine the true nature of their love relationship."

Hopefully, the matter of gender equally would have an end because what has a beginning also has an end. That said, when moving to the other end of the equation, one finds that the term feminine is described as meaning "affectionate, delicate, gentle, graceful, modest, soft, female, ladylike, maidenly, womanish, womanly, effeminateness, effeminacy, softness, unmanliness, weakness, womanliness" (The New English Dictionary and Thesaurus (2000:730). People with such characteristics need special treatment as compared to the physically strong ones in the form of male folks. To round-off, in a normal marriage relationship a man becomes the husband and the woman the wife and for them to live harmonious together they must understand what is it that makes them different and then treat each other accordingly. Cooper cited by Gilman (2005:10) points out that "…treat equals equally and unequals unequally."

To strengthen the point, Boyce (1969) cites Marx who argues that "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need." In terms of marriage relationships, both submissions try to have married couples avoiding unnecessary conflicts. They prove that couples can live in harmony provided that each gives the other space to fulfill their potential unhindered for the good of their relationship. Next comes a brief discussion on the cultural aspect dealing with heroes.

Heroes= their importance and significance with respect to their ability to preserve marriages

In the words of Hofstede (1991:8) "…heroes are persons, alive or dead, real or imaginary, who possess characteristics which are highly prized in a culture, and who thus serve as models for behaviour." As regards marriage relationships there seems to very few outstanding examples or models to be mimicked in this world. It actually seems that in all marriages there are horrible 'skeletons in the closet' and these cannot be imitated if we are to realise harmony and peace in marriage relationships. Granted that in religious circles, Jesus Christ is a highly prized figure and he is regarded as a perfect role to be emulated, but, unfortunately he left us no image of how a married man must behave towards his wife, except by saying we should love all people all the time which says it all.

On the other hand, we read about Mahomed giving us a good account of himself because it is said that he married 12 wives and having a population of 12 wives and their children is not child's play. However, what is missing is how he treated them, so that we can follow in his footsteps. Having said that, we read that Siddhartha Gautama also popularly known as Buddha, was born into a noble family and he used to live a life of a wondering ascetic and religious teacher in South Asia where he was born. He is rumoured to have been married to his cousin and both were 16 years old at the time. By marrying and also remaining in marriage he gave a good example of himself even though we are not told about how he treated her.

Here in South Africa, Nelson Mandela was a highly prized person and he is adored by many the world over for his political stance and sense of humanity. However, when it comes to marriage relationships he was a complete failure and not a good example simply because he divorced twice and married three times in his life. It is better to let 'sleeping dogs to lie' and not pursue the matter any further. The next topic for discussion is the rituals.

Rituals= their importance and significance with respect to their ability to preserve marriages

According to Perkins (2010:42) "rituals are activities we repeatedly do before acting out. When something excites us, we do it over and over again. We ritualise it." In fact, rituals are in essence just practices communities adopt as solemn formalities to be carried out during the consummation of things like marriage ceremonies, burial services, circumcision rites and so on. In this regard, Hofstede has argued that rituals are cooperative activities, technically redundant in reaching desired ends, but which, within a culture, are measured to be socially essential: they are therefore carried out for their own sake. On the other hand, there are occasions when ritual takes on the structure, nature and function of the law as can be seen in the example of a customary marriage in which The Constitutional Court in MM V MN 2013 4 SA 415 (CC) "introduced an additional requirement that the first wife in a customary marriage must consent to a further marriage before an additional polygynous customary marriage may be concluded."

Simply put, without the consent of the first wife there will be no valid marriage to talk about. This symbolizes a strong ritual with a strong meaning and application. Perhaps, this type of ritual will further strengthen traditional marriages and make them even more resilient than what used to be situation in the past. To recap, rituals are as it were like actions which can be likened to ways of greeting and paying respect to others, social and religious ceremonies are examples. In addition, Lewis (1976:131) also makes the point that "So universally (though with striking variations of emphasis) we find birth and naming rituals, rituals marking the attainment of adulthood, weddings, and funerals. Here, put at its simplest, we can see that ritual oils the wheels of life as the individual moves through the human life-circle from cradle to the grave."

As of now the above exposition would suffice because more is to be said under the subheading traditional marriages. For now, what would be discussed in the next topic is the cultural aspect dealing with symbols.

Symbols= their importance and significance with respect to their ability to preserve marriages

According to Hofstede (1991: 7) "…symbols are words, gestures, pictures or objects that carry a particular meaning which is only recognized by those who share the culture. The words in a language or jargon to this category, as do dress, hairstyles, Coca-Cola, flags, and status symbols. New symbols are easily developed and old ones disappear: symbols from one cultural group are regularly copied by others." Symbols are not that important as compared to the other three aspects of culture. However, in the marriage situation they mean a lot, for instance, a married person has on his or her fourth finger an object in the form of a ring to deter others from making advances. However, if the ring is on any of the other fingers, then, it has no significance other than of beautification.

Some cultural groupings actually force married people to dress in a specific manner and this applies especially to the female folks, for example, in South Africa the Ndebele people come to mind. They make their married women to put on a shawl or scarf as what is popularly called a don't touch. Again, if a male partner is deceased the remaining one, that is the wife, is made to dress in a way that she would be recognized by the public and this last for a prescribed. Usually, they are made to wear black for a prescribed period. A researcher like Motsepe (2016) deals at length with such matters in her M Ed studies titled: Seyantlo mo dikwalong tsa Setswana. To stretch the point even further, young men and women coming out of circumcision schools put on specific attire and smear themselves with some strange powder. In the field of education too, symbols in the form of certificates, diplomas and degrees are awarded to successful candidates. What comes next is a discussion on the research methodology used by this article.

Methodology of accountability

In any research undertaking the aspect of methodology plays a very cardinal role of collecting data that is to be used to solve the research question/problem around which the whole research study actually revolves. As already mentioned in the abstract that this article is a conceptual project which is not based on empirical evidence in which the researcher is expected to go out to physically collect data. An empirical study is also known as a primary research undertaking, while a conceptual project is referred to, at times, as a secondary research activity or a desk research undertaking. This kind of research relies mainly on relevant and pertinent literary sources as the key resources to be consulted when collecting data. Data that is in the form of different concepts that are expressions of views, arguments, opinions, ideas and thoughts of seasoned and experienced scholars in the field of one's study or project of research. In support, Searle (1977:36) avers that "Concepts are constructed on past experience. It is even possible to use second-hand experience as when one learns through other's experience." The second-hand experience used in this article was in the form of articles, books, monographs, newspapers, dictionaries, Bibles and book chapters authored by other scholars. Furthermore, researchers can also use what Campbell (2001) and Kirkevold (1997) refer to as narratives because they point out that "A narrative review summerises different primary studies from which conclusions may be drawn into a holistic interpretation contributed by the reviewers; own experience, existing theories and models."

In making sure that the correct data was collected the researchers used the ethical theories as discussed hereunder. These ethical theories were also used to drive the research project as is the case with the use of the research question and its sub-questions. In this regard, Mampuru and Mukhari in Mathipa, Netshitangani and Matlabe (2017:36) make the point that "…ethical theories are about justifying moral actions by giving convincing reasons why particular decisions should be taken, as opposed to others." In the following section the different ethical theories are identified, distinguished and discussed under different subheadings.

The ethical theories for underpinning sound and balanced marriage relationships

In this section the article begins the debates on ethics codes by quoting Gilman (2005:3) who argues that "Ethics codes are as old as antiquity. Religious and civic cultures have codes as their foundations." In fact, codes of ethics articulate acceptable behaviour and decry bad and unexemplary behaviour. It is under this heading, that the article interrogates marriage relationships with the aim of polishing their image so that their moral standing within society can be beyond question. It behooves this article, to see married couples who are, in fact, regarded as parents' par excellence behaving in an exemplary manner. Meaning that their conduct must be both morally and ethically beyond reproach. Indeed, they are expected by society to become respected and appreciated as role models whose behaviour is worthy to be cherished and also emulated.

To put matters into context, this section of the article has an abundance of codes of ethics plus ethical theories that are the ones to be discussed at this point. That being the case, a selection of only the relevant and appropriate ones had to be done as a way of maintaining focus. As a consequence, only four ethical theories were selected for discussion, because in any case, Gilman (2005:47) instructive and persuasive submits that "A code can cover a variety of behaviours." Nicolaides (2014:17) informs us that as in business, "To a large extent behaviour is based on moral precepts notwithstanding our disinclination to define our behavior in moral terms. So in a nutshell, business [marriage] ethics generally includes the practices and behaviours that are considered by society to be good or bad, or ethical or unethical." In the light of what is said,

the attention is now shifting to the discussion of the first ethical theory. The idea is to critique its impact or influence on marriage relationships in order as to ascertain its effectiveness in educating or enlightening married couples on how they should conduct themselves so as to realise peace and harmony in their lives as husband and wife. That said, the first ethics theory to be critiqued is the consequence based ethical theory.

The consequence based ethical theory and how it underpins the marriage regimes

It is important to note that the consequence based theory is grounded specifically on the view that as people, and in this case including especially married couple, "we should look at the possible consequences or practical implications of our intended actions in order to determine whether an action is right or wrong" (Rossouw, 1994:3). This can only be done before we take action against anything that matters to us. Married couples have a lot to deal with in their relationships. Further argued, it means that a good action always creates happiness and not pain. In this respect, Mathipa, Mampuru and Mukhari in Mathipa, Netshitangani and Matlabe (2017:36) are of the opinion that "this theory wants us to think about the results before we act, and if we think that the result is beneficial, then we should act, and if it is harmful, we should abandon it." In the final analysis, a marriage that is based on an atmosphere of mutual respect would surely experience happiness and pleasure instead of distress, anxiety and pain. The next theory to be handled is that of the principle based ethical theory.

The principle based ethical theory and how it underpins the marriage regimes

In this respect, it would interest the reader to note the marvelous words of Gilman (2005:9) when stating that "Codes of ethics provide at the most a strong prima facie reason to act in a certain way." In line with what is said, Rossouw (1994:4) also cites Kant's splendid words when saying that "Always act in such a way that you are willing to make the principle of your action into a universal law." What has become universal has application everywhere without limit and discrimination. Therefore, by attaining a universal status, any principle becomes binding on all humanity including married couples. At times, the principle based theory is referred to as the deontological theory because it stresses the fact that moral actions should be based on some code of conduct as opposed to no code at all. Briefly, this means that married couples must each base his or her actions on universally honoured and respected principles that would embrace and value the rights and interests of a man as a husband and woman as a wife as belonging to the human race. To recap, the argument advanced here is that, should married couples base their action on the principle based theory, they are likely to experience a relationship the exudes love, respect and peace in their life. The results of such a relationship is peaceful coexistence coupled prosperity and longevity. Another theory that reinforces the two that have already been discussed above is the virtue based theory.

The virtue based ethical theory and how it underpins the marriage regimes

According to Rossouw (1994:5) the virtue based theory enjoins "…us not to base our moral decisions on the pain or pleasure those actions might cause us. Instead we should take rational control over the emotions and natural inclinations we experience when confronted with situations demanding moral action from us." Married couples are people who are in most cases mature enough to be parents and as such are expected to be good role models. To elaborate, the virtue based theory emphasizes the point that humanity should without discrimination, respect the rights of all without exception. In other words, the virtue based theory wants us to use principles that we are willing to live according to them. Seen from this perspective, the virtue based theory can

become a good bedrock for successful marriage relationships. The last ethics theory to come under the spotlight is the narrative based theory.

The narrative based ethical theory and how it underpins the marriage regimes

Without question, the narrative based theory can be likened to the religious theories, and the problem is that religious theories do not fit comfortably into the three already discussed ethics theories. In the opinion of Rossouw (1994:6) "Typical of such moral theories is that they do not take their starting point in either the moral-action or the character of the moral agent, but in a certain understanding of reality." Some of the realities worth mentioning are those of marriage relationships, or those that entreat married couples to respect of each other's rights and interests. The narrative based theory argues that, despite the fact that the world has many religious belief systems, all of them do tell a story of how to live a good life as people, and included are married couples as well. All actions, therefore, will only be judged to be morally correct if they are in harmony with accepted narratives. Having discussed the different ethical theories, the article now presents the advantages and disadvantages of the different types of marriages as mentioned in the title of this article. This is done in order to determine their resilience or lack thereof. The first to come under the spotlight is the form known as traditional or customary marriage. The various types of marriages are presented in the form of tables. The first form of marriage to be discussed is the traditional/customary marriage.

The virtues and vices of traditional/customary marriages

This section kick-starts its argument concerning customary marriage by citing Heaton who is an authority on South African Family Law when he points out at lengthen that:

> A customary marriage is a marriage which is concluded, not in terms of the common law and the Marriage Act 25 of 1961 or a system of religious law, but in terms of customary law and the Recognition of Customary Act 120 of 1998." Customary law" refers to "the customs and usages traditionally observed among the indigenous African peoples of South Africa and which form part of the culture of those peoples" (Heaton, 2007:206).

In fact, customary marriages in South Africa are also commonly referred to as traditional marriages and such marriages are almost invariably utilized by the black population of South Africa. On the other hand, the religious marriages happen to be practiced by all church denominations that are found in the Republic of South Africa. From this perspective, this article, has created tables with columns for use in capturing the advantages and the disadvantages of each and every kind of marriage that is being brought under the spotlight. To reiterate, the first marriage type to be captured and discussed is the traditional/customary kind of marriage which is described by Bekker as follow:

> A customary marriage is a relationship which concerns not only the husband and wife, but also the family groups to which they belong before marriage. The consummation of the customary marriage brings into being reciprocal rights and obligations between the spouses for which their respective family groups are collectively responsible.

Here the *lobolo*, even if it is just forming an aspect of the marriage processes, is the main element in the negotiations that leads to the actual marriage ceremonial ritual taking place. In other words, lobolo plays a significant role in bringing together the representatives of the two families, namely, of both the prospective marriage partners into serious discussions. Whenever serious misunderstandings between the married couples takes place, it is these representatives'

responsibility to again meet and muster all efforts in order to untangle the problem and bring about a solution to the dispute. Their's is to be impartial and to open-mindedly strive at finding an amicable solution. Marriages may be easy to identity from other events, but, each marriage is surprisingly very unique and it happens to develop and it then matures according to the care and attention it receives from the married couples who have brought it into being. This marks the end of this section. Thus, without trying to exhaust the list of the advantages and disadvantages, hereunder, is presented as table C.

Table C on traditional/customary marriage

The advantages of customary marriages	The disadvantages of customary marriages
1. Customary marriages do not just happen between a man and woman but involve parties from both sides and these parties stand as guarantors of the marriage.	Customary marriages involve long processes that are financially taxing and time consuming. They are demanding in terms of spouses having to buy lots of presents as well as paying the agreed dowry.
2. In a customary marriage the husband can't just decide to marry a second wife without the approval of the first wife. In other words, polygamy is allowed if done properly within the law.	Divorce in customary marriages is not something very easy to get. Divorce for a woman is even tougher to get than it is for men, yet women are on the receiving end. The final disadvantage is that polyandry is not allowed.
3. In case the husband decides to leave (divorce) his wife he is obliged to vacate the household and go and build his new household where he likes.	In case the wife decides to leave the household, then, the dowry can be demanded back. This is a big problem in case the dowry has in the meantime been used.
4. When the wife dies or she is barren, the husband is simply offered a younger sister to the wife or someone fit to replace her.	In case the husband dies, the wife is given to the younger brother of the husband even when she does not like the idea. Otherwise, a fight is likely to develop.
5. Customary marriages are respected even by the government, and whenever they are run according to the custom the courts do not interfere in their jurisdiction.	The disadvantage is that customary marriages are run by people who may not understand the meaning of the Bill of Rights that need to be respected at all times whenever they are discharging their responsibilities.
6. Most of the times customary marriages are endogamous, and this allows the spouses' families to intimately know each other.	This has the likelihood of promoting intermarriages that could easily lead to incest taking place. Incest incidences have huge disadvantages healthwise.
7. Customary marriages do not allow marriage between a man and man, or a woman and a woman.	Perhaps, the disadvantage is that love knows no gender, race, colour or creed.
8. Customary marriages are always done under the community of property regime and as such do not disadvantage anyone in case of a divorce.	The only problem is that by marrying under the community of property system, even the one who came with absolutely nothing, gains during a divorce.

Harley the author of a book titled: *Defending Traditional Marriage* has the following to say which is phrased as follow:

➢ Traditional marriages are under attack, and those still in existence are ridiculed for reasons that are sometimes baseless;
➢ Even with all its problems, traditional marriages still offer many advantages over other relationships. Two of the most advantages for married couples are stability and safety;

> ➢ Traditional marriage drawn from common wedding vows provides a pretty clear picture of marital expectations;
> ➢ Our prisons are bulging at the seams with men and women who have not been raised in traditional families; and
> ➢ That traditional marriage is a permanent (as long as you both shall live) and sexually exclusive (forsaking all others) relationship of extraordinary care (love. Comfort, honour, and keep, etc.) between a man (to be your husband) and a woman (to be your wife).

What follows is a discussion around the advantages and disadvantages of marrying under the authority of the different religious regimes of marriage that are allowed in the Republic of South Africa. What is important to note, is the fact that "A religious marriage is not recognized as a legal marriage under South African law, but the spouses in a religious marriage are protected by law in instances. (Frank, 2021:1).

Without going into legal jargon, for any marriage to be valid according to the South African law, that both parties in marriage must be of consenting age give their unforced permission before an authority. In addition, at least two witnesses are needed for the ceremony to take place, and both husband and wife must affirm the relationship connection before legal officers. Finally, only the Department of Home Affairs has the authority to issue marriage certificates. Without trying to exhaust the list, what comes next is a discussion of table D.

Table D on Religious Marriages

The advantages of religious marriages	The disadvantages of religious marriages
Religious marriages base their understanding of marriage on the belief that "…marriage is a covenant among a man, a woman, and almighty God for a lifetime, no wonder God said He hates divorce (Malachi 2:16)". This belief makes religious marriages more stable, and more peaceful unlike modern ones.	The disadvantage is that religious marriages are discriminatory in nature as they rarely allow a religious and non-religious individual to marry each other. The fear is that they would not be compatible in their outlook to life as a whole. This way divorce is avoided. In fact, the actual disadvantage is that they make divorce hard to achieve.
Religious people believe that if marriages are destroyed then, families, societies and lastly nations would also be destroyed. Accordingly, this would be against God's instruction which says: multiply and fill the world (Genesis 1:28). This argument makes religious marriages unwavering and more secure than the other types of modern marriages.	With this belief in place, divorce is something farfetched in the case of religious marriages. Precisely because, in religious marriage roles are clearly defined in that "the man's responsibility is to provide for and to protect, and the woman's responsibility is to care for the home and nurture children" (Rainey, 2002:47). A disadvantage is that there is no gender equality which is important nowadays.
Religious people believe in the reasoning that "a healthy marriage lies at the heart of a healthy family" (Ketterman, 2001:6). In addition, Olivier (2014:13) remarks that "family is God's plan on earth". This is a contributing factor to the stability of religious marriages as opposed to the more liberal modern ones.	The disadvantage here is that religious people are putting forward a one-sided story which seems to say that life without marriage should be avoided because it may unfortunately be reasoned that without marriage life itself could come to an end. Fortunately, those not married, like Jesus Christ, did not cause life to come to an end.
Interestingly, Rainey (2002:91) is instructive when pointing out that "marriage exists to magnify the truth and worth and beauty and greatness of God." Religious people are aware that without God's involvement in the marriage it won't last. This belief makes marriage to become one of the means and ways through which married couples glorify God for His blessings (Nicolaides, 2014; 2015).	In this instance, the disadvantage comes to the surface as a wrong assertion is paddled, because it is not only through marriage that God's worth, beautify and greatness can be magnified. The disadvantage is that religious marriages have introduced marriage-centered programmes that try to manage divorce while the modern ones are not involved in this way and they seem to be dragging their feet in this regard,

After discussions on religious marriages have taken place, the attention now shifts to the modern types of marriages which are deemed, in this article, to be less resilient than the two already discussed above. Again, while religious marriages are described as creating "…a covenant among a man, a woman, and almighty God for a lifetime, no wonder God said He hates divorce (Malachi 2:16)." On the other hand, Heaton (2007:15) argues that: "…a civil marriage is a voluntary union based on consensus (that is, agreement), it is frequently called a contract."

Modern types of marriages are made up of different kinds, namely: civil marriages, civil unions and life partnerships. In the opinion of Heaton (2007:3) "…civil marriages and civil unions have a great deal in common…civil unions have been recognized only since 03 November 2006, when Civil Union Act 17 of 2006 came into operation." On the other hand, it is common knowledge that people of opposite sexes have from time immemorial been living together as partners without entering into a legally recognized marriage. Such a situation in which a man and a woman live together is described as a constituting a life partnership. Regarding such a situation, Heaton (2007:3) instructively points out that "As a general rule, a life partnership does not confer the consequences of a legally recognized marriage on the life partners. However, some acts confer specific spousal benefits on life partners, and court decisions have extended additional spousal benefits to same-sex life partners".

Comparatively speaking, traditional and customary marriages and alsothe religious ones, have always been based on the system of community of property. While on the other hand, the modern types marriage had been provided with a large spread of regimes from which to choose the one a couple is happy with. This situation, has the potential to lead to a variety factors that could affect the stability of these marriages as well. In other words, the modern types marriages have easily allowed couples wishing to marry to choose from the following marriage regimes, namely, 1. A community of property contract, 2. Out of community of property contract, 3. An antenuptial contract, and or 4. An accrual system.

Having said that, modern marriages are based on the tenet that "…none of us are wired for a single, lifelong relationship" (Harley, 2005:9). Flowing from this premise, a new marriage law is still presently being flagged and it is envisaged that it might come into life in 2023. Interestingly, democratic governments the world over are busy introducing new marriage laws, however "…instead of passing laws to encourage couples to care for each other and restore their marriage, laws were passed making divorce easier than it had ever been" (Harley, 2005:17).

Rip (1976), Whittingham (1991) and Heaton (2007) have listed a number of conditions and reasons a person in a marriage situation need used when wishing to have a divorce. The reasons listed hereunder, have the potential to secure a divorce for a person who experiences them severally or individually while the marriage is still in existence. They are: 1. physical and mental cruelty, 2. habitual drunkenness, 3. excessive use of addictive drugs, 4. separation of more than 2years, 5. irreconcilable differences, 6. irreconcilable breakdown of the marriage, 7. having venereal diseases, 8. convicted of felony or other infamous crime, 9. desertion, 10. impotent, 11. bigamy, and 12. adultery.

The following types of marriages are classified together as modern types of marriages, namely; 1. Civil marriages, 2. Union marriages, and 3. Life partnership marriages and they can take the form of: 1. Cohabitation, 2. Vat-en-sit, 3. Lesbianship/gayship marriages. These marriages have been legalised in many democratically governed countries. In this respect, Hill (2011:161) describes such marriages as the above in the following words "First, let me correct that old saying that all marriages are made in heaven. I know of some which were made on my side of the fence. Minds which do not harmonise should never be forced to remain together in marriage or any other

relationship". Below is table E which discusses the advantages and disadvantages of the above modern types of marriages.

Table E on modern types of marriages

Advantages of modern types of marriages	Disadvantages of modern types of marriages
1. The advantage is that civil marriages are legalised. They have many options to take in case of troubles like consulting a marriage counsellor or filing for divorce	1.The disadvantage is embedded in the saying that: easy come easy go. There are so many types of modern type of marriages that some of them lack reliable guarantees to ensure their longevity and stability.
2. The advantage is that union marriages are also legalised and their problem can be solved by either consulting a marriage counsellor or filing for divorce.	2. The union marriages like civil marriages are also legalised, and this is an advantage. However, their disadvantage is that they are easily dissolved as they lack a strong basis. Basically, they are easy to get and easy end.
3. The advantage is that life partnerships are alsolegalised and their misunderstandings can be resolved by consulting a marriage counsellor or filing for divorce.	3. Their weakness is that they are accessible by any couple be they lesbians or gays. Nothing binds the couples for a long relationship. They easily accept cohabitation or what is call vat-en-set. They breed no commitment.
4. The advantage is that civil marriages have a legally formalised manner with which to solemnize and or celebrate their consummation.	4. They even allow couples to stay together without following any strict formalities. Every couple, in other words, is allowed to do as it likes in some instances
5. The advantage is that life partnerships are similarly expected to follow a legally recognized and formalised structure during their consummation.	5. The existing formalities are not strictly enforceable; couples are left to decide what is good for them. This is a sources of weakness as it breeds uncertainty in as far as the future of the marriage is concerned.
6. The advantage is that union marriages like civil marriages are similarly expected to follow a legally recognized and formalised structure during their consummation.	6. Again, the existing formalities are not strictly enforceable; couples are left to decide what is good for them. This is a sources of weakness as it breeds uncertainty in as far as future of the marriage is concerned .
7 The advantage is that civil marriages are not only accommodating diversity but are also flexible and adaptable.	7. The acceptance of diversity and flexibility has been a source of confusion to the illiterate majority who want to be involved in a marriage that guarantees them certainty.
8 The advantage is that union marriages are similarly accommodating diversity and are also flexible and adaptable.	8. The acceptance of diversity and flexibility has been a source of confusion to the illiterate majority who want to be involved in a marriage that guarantees them certainty
9. The advantage is that life partnerships are also accommodating diversity and at the same time are also flexible and adaptable.	9. The acceptance of diversity and flexibility has been a source of confusion to the illiterate majority who want to be involved in a marriage that guarantees them certainty.

Discussions, conclusions and recommendations

Under the subheading discussions, it is important to kick start discussions by trying to finding out if a subject called Sexuality Education exists and if it does what are its goals and objectives. From a Google search a document titled: Sexuality Education Policy Brief No.1 of UNFPA of World Health Organisation with Regional Offices in Europe (2023) was discovered and it contained the following statement "Sexuality Education aims to develop and strengthen the ability of children

and young people to make conscious, satisfying, healthy and respectful choices regarding relationships, sexuality and emotional and physical health."

The stated outcomes of Sexuality Education are indeed plausible and also worthy of achievement. However, the problem came in when one tried a Google search to find out whether there was a subject called Marriage Education in existence and to our surprise it does exist, and so was one called Marriage Counselling. Returning to the subject Marriage Education, Holetzky (2023) in an article titled: What is Marriage Education? outlines its goals and objectives as follows:

> Marriage education is a course, or a series of courses, intended to help couples learn more about themselves, each other, and relationships before deciding to get married. In some cases, marriage education also includes continuing education for already married couple as well as those struggling in or hoping to improve their relationships.

This article wishes to align itself with the sentiments of Holetzky above and also wishes that a subject as important as Marriage Education could be adopted by the education systems right from the secondary education upwards in South Africa. The idea is that adolescents should be educated about the advantages and disadvantages of marriage early in their lives before they plunge headlong into marriage troubles unprepared. Otto (1976:11) strengthens this view by stating that "…all persons and all relationships are functioning at a fraction of their potential and that, in every couple or family, there is the potential for growth in the relationship as well as the possibility of personal growth, leading to a more fulfilling togetherness".

To those who have been in a long marriage relationships of whatever type, Otto (1976:11) has good advice for them by arguing that:

> We feel that, after a period of time, every relationship is in need of some enrichment and rejuvenation, for relationships sooner or later become bogged down in routines, habits, and daily pressures. The need to step aside and take a look at the relationship together then becomes a valuable and strengthening experience that usually leads to better communication, better understanding, and greater love, respect, and appreciation of the other.

It is thus concluded that every type of marriage, regardless of whether it is resilient or not, it needs to be given constant renewal through programmes designed specifically for that purpose and delivered by professionally qualified persons. This is in order that the programme be delivered effectively and successfully. In the United States (USA), Ramsey as far back as 1942, spoke about the critical importance of having marriage education classes at schools. It was argued then that teachers should be well trained to deal with such issues so as to prevent dysfunctional families from manifesting. A study conducted in the USA by Halpern-Meekin (2014), entitled *High School Relationship and Marriage Education: A Comparison of Mandated and Self-Selected Treatment*, presented results demonstrating that suitable course exposure can result in a significant, positive change in students' relationship skills.

Consequently, in the United States of America, healthy marriage and relationship education (HMRE) programmes for the youth, and high school do exist and provide valuable learning about relationships (Alamillo & Goesling, 2021). While many high schools often provide instruction on avoiding teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections in subjects like South Africa's Life Orientation, there are none that in South Africa that provide any information on the social and emotional features of romantic relationships. Consequently, we recommend that structured,

classroom-based curricula be created that can alter participants' expectations and beliefs about relationships.

It is thus recommended that in a South African context, a subject entitled Marriage Education should be introduced from Secondary Education onwards because of its importance in cementing marriage relationships and thereby ensuring the survival of the family, and by extension that of societies and nations. It is critical that teachers be well trained and fully understand pupil attitudes and behaviours. By understanding the symptoms and problems of they can be better prepared for marriage. Given that the attitudes and behaviour of children should be regarded as a means of adjustment to most of life situations, they should be studied. In addition, Churches should also strive to offer youth special study groups and provide effective Sunday sermons and ongoing youth programmes on marriage issues. The churches, irrespective of their denomination can also make an effort to render a needed service to stabilize marriages that are breaking up, by working with parents. Furthermore, it is recommended that married couples must not become reactionary in the interactions with each other, but, should always be proactive by trying to nip untoward behaviour in the proverbial bud before it explodes in the open, taking many casualties along the way.

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