

## Reading about Marital Stress Reduction: Botswana as a Case Study

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**Abstract:** This study investigated married persons' culture of reading on reduction of marital stress. The sample comprised 71 male and 129 female married persons in Botswana. Their mean age was 37.71 years ( $SD \pm 7.15$ .) Data were collected with semi- structured interview and focus group techniques. The research design was a descriptive survey that used quantitative and qualitative analyses. Four findings emerged from the descriptive statistical analysis of data. Firstly, only few participants of the study (88) had read materials that could empower them to reduce marital stress. Secondly, there was no significant influence of gender on participants' use of reading to deduce information on reduction of marital stress. Thirdly, there was no significant influence of gender on perceived effectiveness of Bibliotherapy in reducing marital stress. Finally, participants made nine major suggestions on how to promote reading on reduction of marital stress; with shared reading emerging as the modal suggestion. These findings were discussed and recommendations emphasized the need to restructure the current reading patterns of married persons in Botswana.

**Key words:** Marital stress, reduction, botswana, influence

### INTRODUCTION

Research from the fields of Sociology, Economics, and Psychology has found an association between marriage and a host of benefits for men, women and children<sup>[1]</sup>. In fact, substantial literature review has shown that mere status of being married has been associated with positive health<sup>[2]</sup>. Comparing singles and divorced with married persons, Perspectives on Health Care and Biomedical Research reported a variety of positive health outcomes for married men and women and their children. The review observed that as a group, married men and women have lower mortality rate, less risky behaviors, more monitoring of health, more compliance with medical regimens and greater satisfaction with sexual lives.

Apart from positive health, marriage has also been associated with longevity for over a century<sup>[3]</sup>. Illustrating this stand with the provision of social support by a spouse to their recuperating partner<sup>[3]</sup> argue that spousal social support is a major factor for spousal longevity. They explained that this might be due to the expectation that marriage should provide social support; which buffers the effects of stress.

Perspectives on health care and biomedical research<sup>[2]</sup> Further concluded from literature review that rather than the mere state of being married, the quality of marital relationship matters. The review reported that healthy relationships make for healthy bodies and a healthy relationship is a statistically significant predictor of mortality for men and women with congestive heart failure.

To substantiate the review reported that as a group, married people who have strong relationships with their spouses have better heart and blood pressure responses to stress a slower progression of disability such as arthritis and improved immune function.

In confirmation of the association between marital quality and marital health, stress has been linked with ill-health<sup>[4,5]</sup>. Edmundson identified accompanying physical symptoms of marital stress to include heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, liver cirrhosis and psychophysical symptoms like asthma, ulcers and migraine; raised blood pressure<sup>[6]</sup> and when severe, tripling of a woman's risk of having a recurrent coronary event<sup>[7]</sup>.

In his study, Edmundson compared the intensity of debilitation of marital stress with that of stress and asserted that while stress is a major risk factor for many health problems; marital stress is a bigger health hazard than other types of stress. He elucidated that marital stress is personal yet inescapable the way one can, other stressors. It wears its victim away without their seeing a way out of a miserable situation. Social Anxiety and Stress (n, d). also maintains that almost all stressed out people state relationship difficulties as a primary cause of stress and marital relationship has been identified as one of the three major relationship categories that causes stress in most stressed people. This assertion gives the impression that marital stress may be a common phenomenon.

A physiological explanation of the process whereby marital stress culminates into ill-health maintains that marital stress thickens the heart wall just like smoking.

(No Marriage.com (n. d.). Thus, marital stress stimulates the production of stress hormones (cortisol epinephrine and norepinephrine) and evokes cardiovascular responses like increased heart rate and blood pressure. From a psycho-social perspective, the process through which marital stress culminates in ill-health is that when marital stress persists without adequate stress-coping skills a point of acute imbalance between pressure and support occurs and this is referred to as a crisis<sup>[8]</sup>.

Duration has been recognized as an important factor in the stimulation of the effects of marital stress. Therefore, marital stress is referred to as chronic stress because it wears people out as they are stuck in a miserable situation (Edmundson) Hence, improved marital quality overtime has been associated with decreased physical illness while marital stress significantly increases the risk of ill health. A recent study<sup>[4]</sup> confirmed this assertion with the observation that people with supportive marital relationships had lowest blood pressure while reverse was true about stressful marital relationships. Furthermore,<sup>[8]</sup> found that prolonged marital stress significantly increases the likelihood of earlier hypertension in long time married men and women. They maintained that if the imbalance between stress and coping is so severe, the family structure often collapses, becomes immobilized for a time and sometimes the family can no longer function. Stress-related emotional illnesses like adjustment disorder may also result from inadequate or inappropriate responses to marital stress<sup>[9]</sup>.

It is necessary to prevent marital stress from reaching a point of crisis<sup>[10]</sup> by using stress coping strategies<sup>[11]</sup>. Illustrating how coping skills facilitate stress coping with the concept of a bridge, Boss stated that stress results from putting weight on the bridge and usually stress can be managed since the supports under the bridge are designed to withstand pressure (or stress) from traffic on the bridge. In addition, it is generally assumed that supports are in place, are numerous and strong enough to withstand stress on the structure, even over time. However if the supports are not strong enough to withstand the pressure, the structure collapses. He concluded that it is therefore not only the nature and severity of the stress experience that matter, coping resources are pertinent.

**Statement of the problem:** Divorce is increasing in Botswana to the extent that some courts devote a whole day to hearing divorce cases and they tag the day 'the day of divorce'<sup>[12]</sup>. Expatriating, Baaitse asserted that sometimes a judge could grant 10 out of 13 cases and sometimes in a single day; a judge may have thirty cases to attend to<sup>[12]</sup>. Passion killings are also becoming prevalent to the extent that the Office of the President in Botswana has decided to appoint a Task Force to investigate the causes<sup>[13]</sup>. In Botswana, passion killing is

a phenomenon in which an aggrieved lover brutally kills the spouse and then commits suicide. Often it is an end product of a strained relationship. The aggrieved spouse often request for a truce and during the couple's meeting, the aggrieved pounces at the victim.

Both divorce and passion killing share some common themes: The fact that they result from unresolved issues and that they traumatize members of the community. For example in a divorce, members of the community like the children and their significant others are often traumatized. In passion killings, the society is not spared either. For example, the Botswana Police officers who have helped out<sup>[14]</sup>. This is to the extent that the Botswana Police are planning special counseling services to help officers to cope.

In an earlier study,<sup>[15]</sup> it was reported that cohabitation was a common phenomenon in Botswana and this was a departure from the Setswana (Botswana) culture in which the family is founded upon marriage and to be married, the bridegroom has to fulfill some formalities including transfer of livestock to the bride's family (bogadi). Ketshogile asserted that however nowadays, especially among the Bakgatla and Balete tribes generally, people cohabit before bogadi is transferred and prior to completion of the marriage rites.

Yet co-habitation has been associated with marital instability both for re-marriage and first marriages<sup>[16]</sup>. Dush *et al.* concluded from literature reviews that, cohabitation prior to marriage is associated with less marital interaction, more marital disagreements, individualistic attitudes and behaviors that are incompatible with interdependent marital roles; greater divorce and proneness to divorce. Contextualizing the increased divorce and passion killings in Botswana from the stress analogy of Boss, Dush *et al.*'s analysis of the effects of co-habitation and from the observation of<sup>[17]</sup> which states that couples may not escape marital stress the way they do other forms of stress; it is apparent that married persons in Botswana are experiencing marital stress. Therefore, they should be empowered with marital stress coping skills.

Problem solving has been identified as a major dimension in stress coping<sup>[18]</sup>. Problem-solving amounts to diffusing feelings of loss of control and replacing it with the feeling that one is independent. This experience could be a great relief from stress. Some studies<sup>[19,20]</sup> have confirmed the effectiveness of Bibliotherapy (a technique in which the counselor passes therapeutic information to a client by giving the client reading materials) as a problem-solving technique. It reduced marital stress among couples in America by providing them with useful self help marital stress reduction techniques<sup>[20]</sup>. This was to the extent of reducing the number of clients dependent on medication thereby reducing the work load of helpers that were over burdened with clients suffering from stress,

depression and anxiety. A study conducted in Glasgow<sup>[19]</sup> has similarly confirmed the effectiveness of Bibliotherapy in reducing marital stress. It observed that couples who had daily stress were the most likely to benefit from the bibliotherapy sessions that held after couples' workshop. This proven effectiveness tends to present bibliotherapy as a plausible technique for reducing marital stress in Botswana.

At this juncture, it is expedient to explore its current use and perceived effectiveness among married persons in Botswana. More so, community based stress coping resources are being overstretched and sometimes unavailable due to urbanization and its consequences<sup>[21]</sup>. The marriage institution in Botswana is evolving into the westernized, monogamous form; with atrophying indigenous marriage counseling structure. Sometimes, a distressed couple may perceive this counseling structure as invasion of their privacy. The indigenous counseling support is being replaced by professional counseling, yet professional counseling is relatively new in Botswana and lacks adequate personnel<sup>[22]</sup>. In the absence of adequate professional counseling service, to use non-conventional counseling, self-help stress coping technique like Bibliotherapy seems expedient. Bibliotherapy has effectively reduced marital stress among married persons in Glasgow<sup>[19]</sup>; it may be worth the while to explore its use for reduction of this same problem among married persons in Botswana.

Recent studies<sup>[21,23]</sup> on stress in Botswana have shown that women in Botswana believe they should pivot stress management in their respective families even if it amounts to doing this without psychosocial support from their spouses. Therefore, it is expected that the women at least should be reading materials that could empower them to reduce marital stress. Thus, it is expedient to investigate issues about the use of Bibliotherapy and its perceived efficacy among married persons in Botswana.

**Purpose of study:** The main purpose of this study was to investigate if the participants have read materials that may empower them to reduce marital stress. In addition, the study was designed to further investigate if gender significantly influenced the use of reading for marital stress reduction. Finally, the study sought the views of the participants on promotion of a culture of reading for reducing marital stress; among married persons.

**Rationale of study:** Divorce and passion killings are on the increase in Botswana. These phenomena may be signs of marital stress. Marital stress may culminate into

various negative outcomes including ill-health<sup>[2]</sup>. And family disintegration. The family is the basic unit of the Botswana society and families are set up by married couples<sup>[15]</sup>. Therefore, there is need to reduce marital stress thereby build the family and the nation.

**Significance of study:** It is hoped that the findings of the study would benefit married persons, their children and the entire nation. Counselors in particular could benefit from the study because results may validate the viability of this technique among the Botswana population. If findings are positive like the case of Scotland in which helper's had less workload because the technique was efficacious in their locale<sup>[19]</sup> the technique could be employed in marital counseling to help more couples in Botswana. Bibliotherapy involves the use of self- help skills to deduce information from reading. Thus clients are active learners in a constructivist mode. Therefore findings of this study may serve as advocacy for the use of Bibliotherapy thereby lead to thrifty implementation of counseling services in Botswana.

Reduction of marital stress should strengthen marital relationships. The strengthened relationships should in turn produce more integrated families in Botswana. It is hopeful that the aggregate of these families would improve nation building since the family is the basic unit of any nation.

**Research questions:** Four research questions were investigated in the study as follows:

- Have the participants of study been reading in order to reduce stress in their respective marriages.
- Does gender significantly influence participants' use of reading as a technique for reducing marital stress?
- Does gender influence participants' perceived effectiveness of reading as a technique for reducing marital stress?
- What do participants suggest for promoting reading on how to reduce marital stress r?

**Study model:** The model adopted for this study was the constructivist approach. This approach is a proven problem- solving approach. Accordingly, the participants of study were asked to state:

- If they had read materials that may enhance reduction of marital stress
- Their perceived effectiveness of reading as a technique for reducing marital stress

Table 1: 2x2 Chi-square table on use of reading for marital stress reduction

Responses	Observed N	Expected N	Chi-square	df	Sig
no	132	100.0	20.48	1	Sig
yes	68	100.0			
Total	200				

- Their suggestions about how to promote reading about marital stress reduction among married persons.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

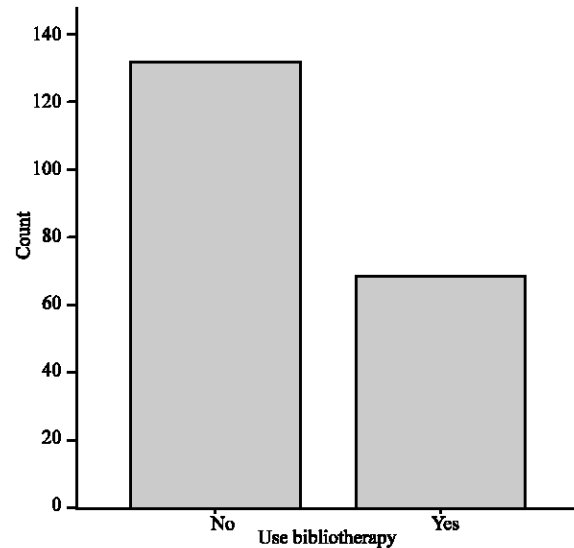
**Study Sample:** The sample of the study comprised two hundred and two (71 male and 129 female) married persons in Botswana. Their mean age was 37.71 years $\pm$ 7.5.). Participants were selected from all walks of life with their educational background ranging from Standard 7 to Ph. D degree. Using Open ended questions, data were collected with semi structured interview and focus group techniques. The research design was a descriptive survey which used quantitative and qualitative data analyses methods. Two hundred persons were interviewed including five focus group participants. The focus groups comprised three groups of primary and secondary school certificate holders, a group of secondary school teachers and a group of Nurses.

**Triangulation:** The within triangulation methods approach was used. Accordingly, the researcher established the validity and reliability of the research<sup>[24]</sup> by using focus group discussions and semi-structured interview. Each interviewee was similarly asked three semi-structured questions as follows:

- Do you read books on how to reduce stress in the family?
- Can reading reduce stress in marriages?
- Recommend methods that may encourage married persons to read about how to reduce stress in marriages.

**Data analysis:** Responses of participants were recorded verbatim as much as possible. In sequence, the researcher and another person who had been trained in qualitative research analysis at Masters Degree level then identified the themes that emerged from data. These analyses were then harnessed to ensure that there was agreement in the identified themes. The common themes were then subjected to chi-square analyses in order to provide answers to the research questions.

**Findings of study:** The findings of the study were as follows:



Bar Chart 1: Bar chart on use of reading as a marital stress-reduction technique

**Research question 1:** Chi-square analysis of data showed that there was a significant difference between those who had read materials that could help to reduce stress in their marriages and those who had not (Chi-square = 20.48 < .05 Sig.). That is, few participants had read materials that may reduce stress in their marriages and these few were significantly different from those who had not. Chi square observed frequency analysis showed that only sixty-eight (68) participants had read materials that are related to how to reduce stress in marriage and these are fewer than the one-hundred and thirty-two who had not. Therefore it was concluded that there is dire need for majority of the participants of the study to read materials on 'how to reduce marital stress'. These results are presented in Table 1 and Bar Chart 1 below:

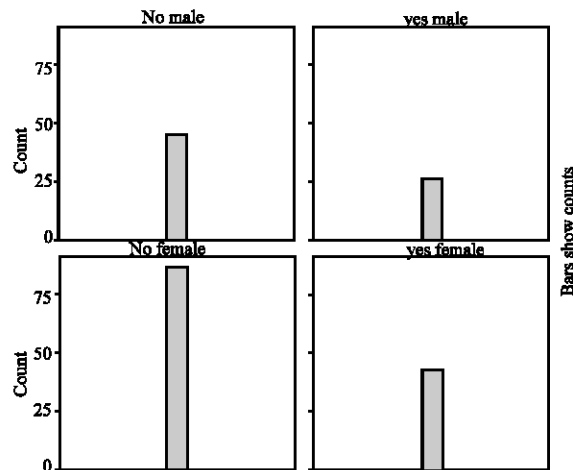
**Research question 2:** Chi-square analysis of data showed that there was no significant influence of gender on participants' use of reading to reduce marital stress (Chi-square = .640 > .05 NS). That is males and females similarly seldom used reading to deduce information on how to reduce marital stress. Relating the findings in research question one (i.e. most persons do not read about how to reduce marital stress) to the current finding in research question 2 (there is no significant gender influence on reading about marital stress reduction) led to the conclusion that there is need to motivate both

Table 2: 2x2 Chi-square table on gender vs use of reading for marital stress reduction

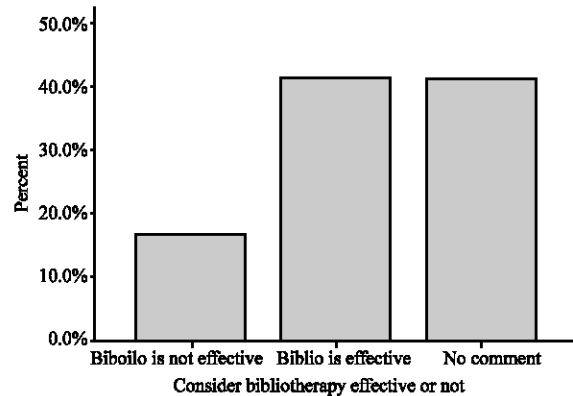
		Use bibliotherapy		Total	Chi-square value	df	Sig
		no	yes				
Sex of participant	Male	45	26	71	.640	1	NS
	Female	87	42	129			
Total		132	68	200			

Table 3: 2x 2 Chi-square analysis of the influence of gender on perceived effectiveness of bibliotherapy for marital stress reduction

	Observed N	Expected N	df	Chi-square	Sig
biblio is not effective	34	66.7	2	24.01	NS
biblio is effective	83	66.7			
no comment	83	66.7			
Total	200				



Interactive graph on gender vs use of bibliotherapy



Bar Chart 3: Bar chart on gender vs perceived efficacy of bibliotherapy

males and females to read about how to reduce marital stress. This result is shown in Table 2 and the Interactive Graph below:

**Research question 3:** Chi-square analysis of data showed that there was no significant influence of gender on participants' perceived effectiveness of reading as a technique for reducing marital stress

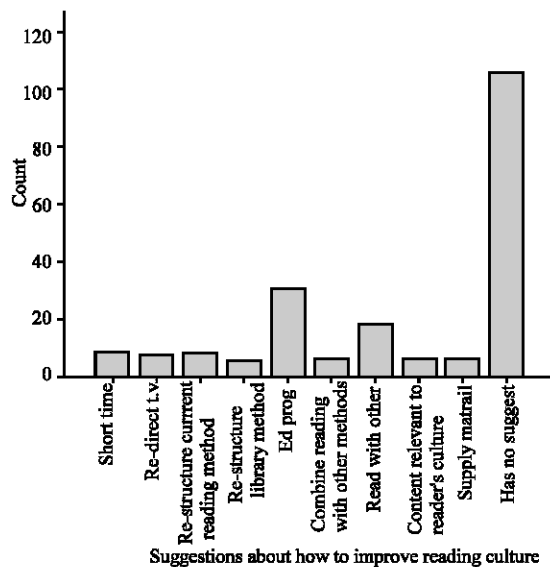
(Chi-square = 24.01 > .05 NS). That is, males and females similarly perceived reading as effective for reducing marital stress. Chi square observed frequency analysis showed that 83 participants perceived the technique as effective, 34 perceived it as ineffective while the remaining 83 were not sure. These results are shown in Table 3 and Bar Chart 3 below:

**Research question 4:** Chi-square analysis of data showed a significant difference between participants who had suggestions and participants who had no suggestion (Chi-square = 438.5 < .05 Sig). The analysis showed that there were ten categories of participants and those who had no suggestion were significantly greater (106 participants out of 200) than the aggregate of those who had a suggestion.

Observed frequency analysis showed that there were ten categories. One of these categories (the largest in proportion) had one hundred and six participants, had no suggestion. The remaining ninety-four participants had suggestions. This second category comprised nine subcategories of suggestions. The modal suggestion was made by 30 participants and this suggestion was that the public should be educated on the issue. Next in magnitude were 18 participants who suggested that people should 'read with others', followed by 8 participants who suggested that reading culture in schools should be restructured. Similar to this subcategory was another set of 8 participants with the suggestion that reading materials should be structured to consume very short reading time. Following these were 7 persons who suggested that there was need to re-structure the current use of the Television and another 5 that suggested restructuring of libraries. Three sets of Six (6) persons each, suggested that, reading should be combined with other methods (e.g. counseling, seminar, workshop and lecture on marital stress reduction), the reading content should be culturally relevant and the reading materials should be supplied. These suggestions are displayed in Table 4 and Bar Chart 4 below:

Table 4: 2x10 Chi-square table on suggestions about how to promote reading culture on marital stress reduction

	Observed N	Expected N	Chi- Square	df	Sig
Short time	8	20.0	438.	9	Sig
Re-direct T V	7	20.0			
Re-structure current reading method	8	20.0			
Re-structure library method	5	20.0			
Ed program	30	20.0			
Combine reading with other methods	6	20.0			
Read with others	18	20.0			
Content relevant to reader's culture	6	20.0			
Supply marital	6	20.0			
Has no suggestion	106	20.0			
Total	200				



Bar Chart 4: Bar chart of suggestions on how to promote reading culture

## DISCUSSION

Five major themes emerged from the findings of this study.

**Theme 1: public education on bibliotherapy:** The first theme was inferred from the findings of the study about research questions 1 through 3. The theme was that there was need to educate the study participants about the nature and efficacy of Bibliotherapy in reducing marital stress. This theme confirms the assertion of the<sup>[1]</sup> that there is need to develop the skills and knowledge to sustain healthy marriages. was inferred from the findings in research question one. The chi-square analysis in answer to this research question showed that majority of participants have not read materials related to how to reduce marital stress; hence this category of persons differed significantly from the few that had read related material. ((Chi-square = 20.48 <.05 Sig.). In research question two, Chi-square analysis showed that gender did

not significantly influence the use of bibliography. (Chi-square = .640 >.05 NS). That is, both males and females applied reading to reduce marital stress similarly. In question three, Chi-square analysis showed that gender did not significantly influence perceived effectiveness of Bibliotherapy (Chi-square = 24.01 >.05 NS). Observed frequency showed that 83 participants perceived the technique as effective, 34 perceived it as ineffective while the remaining 83 were not sure.

The first three research findings seemed to confirm the current status of Guidance and Counseling in Botswana; as a relatively new professional service with inadequate staffing and inadequate advocacy<sup>[22]</sup>. If Guidance and Counseling services were well developed, one would expect Guidance Counselors to motivate their clients to apply this problem-solving technique and with its proven efficacy, one expects it to be more popularly used than at reported by participants.

That gender does not significantly influence the use of Bibliotherapy seems to affirm<sup>[21,23]</sup> that female married persons in their studies lacked formal stress management training therefore require such training .Beyond these research findings , other studies like<sup>[25]</sup> have argued that though poor marital quality adversely affects trajectories of physical health overtime in both men and women, generally lower levels of marital quality may translate into a sustained disadvantage for the health of married women over the life course; therefore, women in particular need training in stress management.

Again, juxtaposing the finding that there was no significant difference between males and females on the use of Bibliotherapy with the finding of no significant influence of gender on perceived efficacy of bibliotherapy shows incongruence between perception and action; thereby confirming the need to advocate for action. This viewpoint has been confirmed by the current study participants' suggestion that conventional didactic methods like talk shows, talking posters, workshops, seminars, radio and television advertisements and non conventional methods like Kgotla (indigenous courts)

meetings should be used to promote reading on marital stress reduction.

Since the suggestions made by the participants were self -construed and success has been recorded about the use of Bibliotherapy in other parts of the world like Glasgow<sup>[19]</sup> it is possible that this technique will be viable among married persons in Botswana. In seeming confirmation of the above assumption, the participants of the current study emphasized that “through reading, one will realize that he or she is not the only one exposed to marital stress and will discover how other people manage stress”.

In addition, some participants indicate the need for sharing reading. Sharing shares the same philosophy as the Peer Approach to Counseling by Teens (PACT), a program which trains individuals to counsel their peers<sup>[22]</sup>. This program has been successfully introduced into Botswana secondary schools and at present; the University of Botswana. According to a participant, people should share information that is benefited from reading ... and testimonies about how particular reading texts have helped the reader.

A participant asserted that Bibliotherapy is effective, hence gave hope that when patronized, many more people might find it useful as well and overtime, it will be popular. Details of the participants' statements are as follows:

“I used to have bursting tempers or anger or tantrums but I no longer have them. If I feel like, I keep on referring to books and read... if we (the husband and herself) want to share our budget with in-laws, we go back and see what experts say, ... read their experiences and adjust ours to theirs... “Our role model is a couple that sell books, we admire their marriage ... there is need to hang around people who have the same interests”.

This same participant, her spouse and couples of their like may serve as peer reading motivators. This assumption was particularly deduced from her statement below:

“Since we were dating, we were eager in reading, we used to buy each other magazines and books as gifts. Like when it is Valentines' I buy him a book or magazine to read.” This idea was further confirmed by the focus group members' explanation that “women are reading, may be it is not effective because they do not share their reading with their husbands” and another comment by a participant that: “It cannot work if only one person is doing the reading”.

**Theme 2: restructuring current reading culture:** This theme was inferred from the results obtained on the four research questions in the study. Items needful of restructuring in order to improve reading culture among participants include the following:

**Reading attitude:** It is necessary to restructure attitudinal disposition of participants towards reading. A participant noted that ‘it is a matter of attitude; people need to develop the culture of initiating Botswana into being a reading nation’. Another interviewee retorted ‘people read for exam (when they were students) ... they do not have time (nowadays that they are no longer in school)’. In confirmation, a focus group that comprised primary –secondary school certificate holders explained that people are not keen to read, they have been out of school a long time.

There is need to change this negative attitude by establishing in Botswana, motivational reading initiatives that promote ‘sharing ‘of reading materials. In support of this assertion, a participant explained her experience as follows:

‘...instead of buying an expensive gift , we prefer buying books , books are not expensive, I'll go for a magazine of eight (8) Pula instead of a perfume of three hundred (300) Pula. It is a question of educating couples that sharing quality experiences can make the foundation of understanding between couples .... We have a 15 month (old) daughter; we buy toys with rhymes and stories, for example toys that she uses in the bath are books rapped in plastic. They are cheaper at Ackermans. We can also get them at Heineman ... no time, the time they spend to watch T.V more than one hour, we can divide it between watching a soapy and reading ... it doesn't mean you have to spend two hours.’

This statement is encouraging because it shares the philosophy of<sup>[26]</sup> in the United States, which gives books and magazines as gifts and uses television and radio to encourage reading. In addition, the statement is encouraging because it gives some hope about the viability of such reading initiatives.

The attitudinal change should be nation wide – based. At present, the Botswana government compels a 25-minute reading time, on any day to be chosen in every secondary school. This is encouraging compared with nations which have not made efforts in this direction. Yet, the observation that majority of the study participants seldom read indicates the inadequacy of this reading time. To promote reading culture, there is need to encourage proactive reading and reading early in life. These notions were captured by the statement that ‘When stressed up you can't even read’ and the other that, there is need to ‘catch them (children in Botswana) young’. Botswana may take a cue from the Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) United Kingdom initiative<sup>[27]</sup> that helps young people of age 0-19years to realize their reading.

**Method of reading:** Participants emphasized the need to encourage ‘sharing reading’. Sharing reading tallies with

the practice in critical conversation<sup>[28]</sup> and the activities of<sup>[26]</sup> initiative in the United States and it may be viable in Botswana. This is because the Setswana (Botswana) culture appreciates community-based lifestyle. This initiative includes teaching someone to read, reading books, magazines and reading a book aloud to each other, book discussion, inviting local authors as well as known personalities to speak about how reading influenced their lives and using the media to encourage reading. Affirming The Centre for Book initiative, the current research participants suggested that:

‘Teachers who work among illiterate communities should teach the illiterates who are interested in reading; how to read’. One said, ‘I prefer reading with friends and to have fun with them when I am stressed or talk about issues not related to the stress; shopping, baby showers and so on’. Yet another stated: ‘Reading alone sometimes is not good because you may not understand; it is better to read with others so that you discuss the world together ... You may meet with neighbors to discuss in a meeting in the evening’. This latter statement indicates that semiformal structures like organizing a reading club may be useful. Picture books can also be used to engage especially illiterates. Picture books can stimulate discussions and can prove to be a forum for asking questions.

There is need to encourage the establishment of reading clubs in Botswana. Apart from government initiatives, people especially persons whose professions may help people use reading to an advantage; should be encouraged to take initiative. This practice is not far fetched in America<sup>[29]</sup>.

**Technology-based reading:** Some participants indicated interest in sharing reading through internet resources. The Botswana government has equipped schools with computers; including in the villages<sup>[30]</sup>. Thus, provision of internet facilities should not be cumbersome considering its inherent advantages. In addition, provision of such facilities is in line with reading club practice in some advanced countries in which readers can post the reading documents by e-mail and internet facilities anonymously or in-anonymously.

**Use of television as a reading method:** The need for strict monitoring of T.V use was also indicated. This was expressed precisely by the statement from a participant that ‘Increased reading has to come with reduction of something i. e T.V should be used to direct people back to reading ... T.V should be used as an advocacy tool ... students should be weaned from accessing T.V by organizing national reading camps ... this should be a period when they should make adventures into the world

of books devoid of pressure from the outside world’. This notion of restructuring the use of T.V aligns with the situation in Zimbabwe. As explained by an interviewee, ‘On Saturday after news, people watch plays ... T.V drama series are used to present textbooks to the public. After the drama, the books are then advertised.’

**Theme 3 : lack of access:** A focus group whose members had educational background ranging from primary school to form five, emphasized that reading materials should be supplied: ‘There is need to provide reading materials to people who are willing to read’. Some other individuals also ascribed lack of reading to in-availability of reading material. To address this situation, the use of mobile libraries for supplying reading materials to the public was therefore suggested. Carrying out this request will make Botswana take its pride of place among countries that have mobile library initiatives. An example is the United Kingdom with Reading is Fundamental, UK library initiative

National Literacy Trust<sup>[27]</sup>. This initiative RIF provides motivational activities and opportunities for family and community involvement and free books to choose and keep. Specifically, it motivates people to give book gifts, has reading projects in schools, libraries, football clubs, bookshop centers, after school and study support centers and prisons and it provides reading kits and libraries for women refugees.

To cater for the population that can only use oral culture, it is expedient to use strategies other than those in print to promote reading methods. These may include drawing and painting, poetry and folklore. For example, in a workshop setting, participants may be asked to use drawing or painting to describe ‘how to’ and ‘how not to’ resolve marital stress. In addition, poems may be composed and chanted to the hearing of the audience on marital stress reduction. Folktales, legends and myths that may teach marital stress coping skills may also be staged.

**Theme 4: reading content:** Participants requested for less time-consuming reading content. As such, they prefer pamphlets, newspaper articles and cartoons, reading games, reading tapes and flyers. Reading content should also be written by ‘an expert who has been doing related work, ‘someone who has been organizing (counseling) sessions’. Some want the book content that can be dramatized by the authors, on T, V and radio, at Kgotlas and public places like shopping complexes.

A focus group argued for a change in the current reading sessions in Botswana schools to allow for larger amount of reading content to be read ... They explained that the current compulsorily 25 minute-any day of the week-reading time, for all staff and students in Botswana



secondary schools; should be scheduled department by department. In addition, it should be structured to enable readers to share readings that they have benefited from with other people.

Participants stated that book content should demonstrate authors' awareness of the culture of its reading audience. The language should be simple, clear and should touch grass roots'. The text should be colorful and the topic should address burning issues ... it should have pictures... and give examples of how people solved their problems' ... school libraries should be equipped with materials that address issues other than school knowledge (academic skill)'.

Authorship was also an issue of concern. A major issue was that readers may not be interested in reading books written by persons with whom they do not share the same philosophy of life and those who do not understand their culture. An interviewee summarized these issues as follows: 'The author is important, soap opera puts me off; the title is important, the principles must be in line, even the culture must be in line with the word of God'.

Meeting up with these demands require that self-help books on reduction of marital stress should be written by professionals whose books would meet these demands

**Implications of findings for nation building:** Marital stress may culminate into family breakdown<sup>[11]</sup>. Yet, family breakdown is costly for the persons involved, their children and the entire society

Generally, children born by married parents fare better than children who grow up in other family structures<sup>[31]</sup>. However, in the incidence of marriage breakdown, the children are traumatized and destroyed<sup>[31]</sup> as they get caught in the middle between two people that they love dearly. They may engage in social crime and later in life, may also suffer separation and divorce<sup>[31]</sup>. Rogusky noted further that non-functional marriages also traumatizes and devastates the adults involved, lowers their life expectancy, physical, mental and emotional health and may cause social problems. Examples include domestic violence, prevention of economic growth). Furthermore, such marriages may lead to behavioral poverty (a state of breakdown in values and conduct that leads to financial poverty<sup>[32]</sup>.

In appreciation of the role of marriage in nation building, the President of America President George Bush opined that is needed to declare marriage as not merely a domestic affair but as a sacred and public institution<sup>[33]</sup> which deserves protection<sup>[34]</sup>. In line with this perspective, the President of America has declared October 12 through

October 18 beginning from 2003 as Marriage Protection Week. In addition, the President advocates that the teaching of healthy marriage for enhancing and sustaining skills and initiatives<sup>[31,1]</sup>. Hence initiatives like Temporary Assistance to needy Families Funds. This initiative reduces out of wedlock childbearing and promotes marriage as a central component of all welfare policies. Since Bibliotherapy has been successfully used in some countries for reduction of marital stress, it could be used in addition to other marriage strengthening initiatives in order to strengthen the nation of Botswana.

With respect to reading, some countries have made efforts to implement reading improving initiatives. Examples are Reading Is Fundamental, U.K.<sup>[27]</sup>.

A major finding of this current study is that both male and female participants similarly concur that reading is an effective technique for reducing marital stress (Chi-square = 24.01 >.05 NS). In addition, various authors in the study opined that marriage should be perceived beyond a domestic affair, it has implications for the entire nation; therefore it should be strengthened with various programs. By inference, it is expedient that Botswana should come up with marriage enhancing and sustaining reading programs.

Botswana may take a cue from the case of President Nyerere who asserted that socialism is the closest form of government to the traditional life style of Tanzanians; therefore it is the best for them. In addition, Nyerere wrote a book on nation building in Tanzania which mostly used African authors and reflected on Swahili proverbs and values. Applying this to the findings of the current study, it is expedient to encourage authors that are conversant with the African culture to use reading as a medium to counsel married persons.

**Recommendations of study:** Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- There is need to motivate married persons in Botswana to read about how to reduce marital stress
- There is need to improve the reading culture of the study participants
- It is necessary to re-structure the current compulsory reading schedule in Botswana secondary schools.
- African authors that are simultaneously stress management experts and professional counselors should be encouraged to write self-help books that may reduce marital stress.
- Various reading initiatives should be used to make books that could reduce marital stress accessible to the divergent reading tastes of couples in Botswana.

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