Evaluating a Marriage Enrichment Programme for Newly Married Couples in Sultanate of Oman

By

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

April 2012
Suggested Layout of Declaration/Statements page

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This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Dedication

To the memory of my father

This dissertation is dedicated to very special people in my life. To my husband Salim Almughairy. His encouragement is one reason I pursued this achievement and one of the means by which it was realized. He is my dearest friend and my greatest champion.

I also dedicate this to my children: Al-Muhannad, Fatema, Maryam, Mohammed and Omar, who have constantly offered love and support. They've always been supportive and patient with me for being away from them for a long time; and to all who have taken an interest in this research, I dedicated this work.

I also thank my Mother, sisters and brothers, my whole family and friends who have prayed for me throughout this “ordeal” and encouraged me to stay the course – thank you so very much.
Acknowledgement

Completion of this work has been a part of my commitment to reach my goal.

First and before anything else, gratitude goes to God for supporting and providing me with strength to complete this research.

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I am thankful for everyone who has helped me pursue my dreams.
Abstract

Evaluating a Marriage Enrichment Programme for Newly Married Couples in Oman
(January 2012) UWIC University

In Oman and Arab Gulf countries, rising rates of divorce and family breakdown have increased public concern about the severity of marital and family problems. According to the ministry of justice (2002-2009), the rates of divorce increased from 1661 in 2002 to 2698 in 2009. The ministry of social development reported that the number of divorce cases provided by the Ministry according to 2003 was 7822 while in 2009 the number increased to 8199 cases, the money spent on these cases reached 4461,414 Omani Rials (Ministry of Social Development, 2003-2009). Some researchers from Gulf countries reported that the average length of some gulf countries marriage is only five to seven years (Al qashan, 2007).

The main purpose of the present study was to develop, deliver and evaluate an Arabic version of the marriage enrichment programme in Omani context. In order to determine whether this programme could effectively improve the marital relationship and marital satisfaction of Omani couples. In addition, the majority of previous studies which focused on marriage enrichment, have been conducted in predominantly white, Western population (Yelsma, 1988). The current study will contribute insight into the ways couples from other cultural backgrounds interact with each other in achieving marital satisfaction, specially couples from Muslim countries.

In this study, 83 newly married couples participated; 46 couples completed the six-week Marriage Enhancement Programme (MEP), completing assessments directly before, on completion and at six-months follow-up. There were 37 couples as a comparison group for measuring the impact of the programme on the experimental group. The results show that couples who completed the
programme reported higher levels of satisfaction, in the form of a broad and significant improvement in their relationship on the six dimensions, than those of comparison group, all increases remained significant at six-month follow-up. These positive findings suggest the potential effectiveness of the MEP and the importance of future longitudinal outcome studies to validate its enhancement utility. It seems to warrant other culturally tailored studies to test the worth of this programme with different samples.
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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

There is no doubt that marriage is the cornerstone on which families and societies are built. Despite the vast cultural variations among human societies, the very essential role of marriage in building up sustainable communities is undeniable.

However, despite consensus about the significance of marriage, the marriage concept is viewed from different perspectives. On one hand, there is the traditional perspective within the community at large where marriage is viewed as a means for the propagation of the human race and its sustainability. On the other hand, there are the discipline based perspectives where marriage is viewed as a more complicated mode of human relations conjoined with many psychological, religious, sociological, and even economic factors (Al-Musalimi, 2002). For this reason, the study of marital issues cannot avoid reference to these factors.

In the light of this perception, the different ways in which various social groups and communities treat this relationship needs to be acknowledged. In other words, cultural traditions, social norms, as well as religious beliefs and conceptions should constitute integral elements of the theoretical framework of studies about marital issues.

As far as the Islamic community in general and the Arabic community in particular are concerned, scholars have referred to marriage and family infrastructure as having self-sustaining factors. They postulate that these potential elements contributed to make marital relationship in such communities more resistant to the social variations and changes caused by globalization (Abd al-Ati, 1997; Abbas, 2001; Nosseir, 2003) in (Al-Barwani & Al-Beely, 2007). In the meantime, calls are made to intensify efforts in order to enhance these strengths and protect the values system of the Islamic and Arab family.
1.2 Social changes in the Gulf States

The Gulf Region has gone through two different stages. The first, the so-called "pre-oil" era extended until the late 50s when Gulf societies were largely primitive and depended heavily on a simple economy. This era is considered to be historically very unsophisticated (Al-Barwani & Al-Beely, 2007).

The second stage started with the discovery of oil. In the late 1950s, the Gulf region started a new era of life that brought about dramatic changes into the life of the people in this region. The vast economic growth was conjoined with drastic social changes and challenges. The conservative tribal communities in this region found themselves face to face with new styles of life as their countries were open to interaction with the whole world (Al-Musalimi, 2002).

The discovery of oil led to deep integration of Gulf society in the international capitalist market. That integration exposed Gulf society to the advent of ethnic, financial, technological, intellectual and ideological influences which led to radical changes in the social and economic life of their society. The changes transformed most Gulf societies into urban societies, with the urbanization in most Gulf countries reaching its peak, 90% in Kuwait, 85% in Qatar, 80% in Bahrain, and 70% in United Arab Emirates (Al-Haddad, 2003:20).

Many studies dealing with the family structure in the Gulf region confirm that economic and political transformation experienced by this region since the discovery of oil has resulted in numerous changes in the form and content of the extended family, and have contributed to the rise of the nuclear family (Baqader, 2002; Al-Lamki, 2006). The family’s living standard has risen, and technological household machines and tools have become widely available. Economic development enabled the Gulf family to increase consumption, reflected in housing patterns, costs of marriage, types of cars and other lifestyle aspects. Economic and social changes have also produced numerous individualistic values at the expense of collective values, thereby resulting in widening the social distance between couples and their children in particular (Al-Musalimi, 2002).
In turn, that has given rise to problems, such as separation and juvenile delinquency. These problems are serious and affect the family’s role and solidarity. They also disrupt the economic and human capacity and capabilities of the family. More serious is their effect on the family’s cultural identity. Al-Tahat, (2002:17) argues that although the Gulf family has benefited tremendously from economic transformations, the future challenge facing Gulf society is how to support families engaged in the process of transition.

1.3 Oman: traditions and modernity

Oman lies at the eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula. Historically, Omanis were seafarers and traders who dominated regional commodity trading in the Indian Ocean, East Africa and the Arabian Gulf. There was thus a large scale migration which saw the growth of settlements along some parts of the East African coast. Prior to the discovery of oil in 1964, the country was dependent on agriculture and fishing activities (Moi, 2009).

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the son of Sultan Said, took over power in 1970. Since that time, His Majesty has strived to modernize his country and the oil revenues have given him the opportunity to develop a modern infrastructure of roads, ports and airports, as well as first-class telecommunications and broadcasting systems. A large number of schools, colleges, health centers, hospitals have been opened throughout the country and also educational programmes for all ages (Moi, 2009). These rapid enormous developments over the last forty years have brought drastic changes in all spheres of the Omani society. A quick review of these achievements - within the frame of global development as well - would reveal the significant social changes that took place in Oman. It goes without saying that these changes had an impact on the Omani family demographics and on the role of woman in society. This will be explained in more detail in the following section.
1.4 Social development and the status of Omani woman

More than forty years ago, the Omani society, similar to all Gulf communities, had a typical tribal and conservative status. The social implication of this status to marital and family ties was that of male dominance. Within that social context, women were extremely suppressed and their voice rarely heard. That was typically the case for marriage where a female had no say regarding the male who was chosen to be her husband, usually a cousin or from the same tribe at least. When it comes to married life, the wife’s role did not exceed more than simply attending to children and domestic affairs. In fact, that was the prevailing condition of family life in the Gulf States before the discovery of oil (Baqader, 2002).

The recent human resource report published by the Ministry of National Economy in Oman indicated that females currently constitute 49.5% of Oman’s 1.8 million population (Ministry of National Economy, 2006). 40% of females are under 15 years of age, and 30% being school students. Gender differentials in education levels and literacy rates are rapidly disappearing and access to education at all levels has nearly achieved gender parity. Over the last few decades, Oman has witnessed rapid progress in the area of female education with the percentage of female students in all education levels being 50%. It is also worth pointing out that Oman boasts one of the lowest female illiteracy rates in the Gulf region at 23.8% as of 2005 compared to 33% in 2000. Female illiteracy is more prevalent than male, even though there is just a small difference between the total number of educated female and educated male. Compared to other countries in the Gulf region, where women are still lagging behind in public life and the work force (Ministry of Information, 2005), Oman is doing well in terms of the percentage of women in employment and in education.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has repeatedly called upon the female population to lend their full support to the continuing development of their country. An example of this is His Majesty’s speech on the occasion of the opening of the Second term of the Consultation Council (Majlis a’Shura) in December 1994:
We call upon Omani women everywhere, in the village and city, in both urban and Bedouin communities, in the valley and mountains, to roll up their sleeves and contribute to the process of economic and social development.

There are also a number of government-approved women's associations, some of which are self-funded, others that receive government financial or in-kind assistance, while still others operate with membership fees, donations, and product sales. By the end of 2003, 40 non-governmental women's associations were in operation; their goals are reportedly "to develop women's perceptions and raise their awareness in various spheres, organize charity fairs and markets, hold seminars, lectures and workshops, and set up productive projects (Ministry of Social Development, 2008).

Nowadays, Omani women are active participants in community life and social development policies. Women have increasingly been appointed to upper-level positions in the ministries that have an impact on the country's development policies such as the Ministry of Social Affairs, labor and vocational training; the Ministry of Education, which addresses Oman's school system; and the Ministry of Higher Education, which guides the administration of Oman's colleges and universities (Ministry of Information, 2009).

1.5 Marriage in Oman

Historically, marriages took place solely as family arranged events where parents looked for wives for their young males within the circle of immediate relatives, distant relatives, or the same tribe. All marriage arrangements and ceremonies are carried out by the two parties without actual involvement of the two partners, whose only chance to meet is the wedding night (Al-Mazrou'I, 1990). The negative consequence of such tradition that does not involve the partners who are actually the main players is self-evident. Lack of attention to the emotional and
personal compatibility between the two partners has often resulted in unsuccessful marriages that are reflected in a considerably high rate of divorce.

In addition, marriage in Oman - as in the whole Gulf region-- represents a fundamental social activity that receives a paramount attention at all levels. This has been a deep-rooted social tradition, though there have been signals for change from 1970s onward. Being a conservative Muslim community. Al-Mazroui (1990) mentioned that the Omanis take marriage to be a channel for enhancing social ties between relatives and members of the same tribe. This may explain the prevalence of marriage between relatives, mostly immediate relatives such as cousins from father or mother's side. In fact, marriage in Oman as well as the rest of Gulf communities -- serves as a tool for realizing tribal membership.

Unfortunately, this represents only one aspect of successful marriage; despite the significant part of the social aspect of marriage, the personal compatibility continues to be a key issue in it. Otherwise, the impact of all other factors deteriorates if this key issue is not satisfied.

In analysis of the changes through which the Arab family passed during the last fifty years, Badran (2003) states that the impact of globalization has reached the whole Arab east countries. These impacts extended to all aspects of people's life and family. They have made real challenges for the sociologists, politicians, educators, and social reformers. Nosseir (2003) mentions some of these main challenges as follows: delay of marriage age, decrease in the number of children, threatening parental authority, increase in divorce cases, and excessive material consumption behavior, at the expense of family economy. This has created some kind of potential imbalance within the family, particularly after the provision of education opportunities for women and the increase of public confidence in their potential capacities However, and following Al-Musalimi (1995), and despite the noticeable change in this regard, the status of woman in the Arab world in general and the Gulf states in particular is still inferior to the man.
It is important to emphasize these changes in Omani family structure and functions were not solely caused by the forces and processes of globalization. However, these forces and processes have increased and intensified these pressures to a great extent. Some of these pressures are: entry of Gulf women into the labour market; women’s participation in many activities and areas that were not permissible in the past; the changing husband wife relationship; change in the relationship of parents with their children; the way youth relate to society; the increasing economic, educational and social burden of raising children; the weakening of traditional methods and means of socialization (Al-Najjar, 2003).

When it comes to marriage, several studies (Baqader, 1993) reveal a transformation from totally arranged marriage to marriage based on prior acquaintance between the bride and the groom who later receive the approval and the blessings of the family based on delay in age at the time of first marriage and on the rise of marriage across religious sects, social classes and ethnic groups. Also observable is the rise of marriage based on romantic love; women leaving the house to work and mixing with men; improvement in women’s education; women playing a greater role in public life; and the new phenomenon of breaking the engagement and divorce (Al-Musalimi, 2002).

1.6 The problem of divorce in Oman

One major motivation for carrying out this research is the noticeably increasing rate of divorce in Oman. Divorce in all contemporary societies represents a social problem that merits its study and analysis in order to identify its extent and rates of increase as well as to specify its causes so as to help find out the best methods and means to deal with it seriously and transparently (Ministry of Social Development, 2010). The findings of the majority of sociological and psychological studies carried out the world over, including many Islamic and Arab countries conclude that divorce heads the list of social problems that lead to the
break up and fragmentation of the family and undermine society due to absence of its coherence and social security (Al-Harthy, 2003; Al-Mazroui, 1990).

Undoubtedly, there are many global influences which contribute both directly and indirectly to the weakening of the family, increasing the pressures on it and undermining its role as the essential component of the society's structure. Examples of such influences include globalization in its negative aspects, economic transformations affecting the instability of the means of living, uncontrolled openness to the influences of other cultures and civilizations which contradict or negatively affect the values of the family in our society (Al-Barwani and Al-Beely, 2007; Baqader, 2002). Nonetheless, divorce occupies the utmost importance in the list of social problems due to the family's subsequent collapse, repercussions and other problems which go beyond the individual and the family spheres to extend into the basic social structure of society as a whole in such a way that it threatens its aspirations, development, belonging, advancement and social security (Al-Beely, 2003). Accordingly, it is imperative to emphasize and confirm that divorce, and its accelerating rates, is a problem to the Omani society and it should be seriously addressed.

Unfortunately, lack of sufficient educational programmes (both pre-marital and intervention) stands as a core reason for this problematic issue. It also constitutes a good reason for carrying out this study. However, it should not be taken to mean that the government or other concerned bodies have done nothing in this regard. Instead, it refers to the lack of those systematic programmes that are based on solid academic and statistical results of research in this field. Most efforts so far have taken the shape of information campaigns and instructive publications and media programmes. The aim of such attempts is simply to increase people's awareness of the importance of married life and to enhance positive family ties. The researcher believes that the issue calls for more well-organized effort on behalf of professional bodies and institutions in order to develop strategic long-term plans of prevention and intervention.
Below, is illustrated some of the available information, data and statistical analysis of the problem of divorce in the Sultanate of Oman.

**Firstly:** Statistics of the Divorce Certificates issued by the Ministry of Justice in the Provinces and Regions of the Sultanate of Oman, 2002-2008.

**Table 1.1 Numbers of divorce cases in Omani provinces 2002-2008**

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<th>AlDakhiliyah</th>
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<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>2210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3671</td>
<td>3521</td>
<td>3232</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>1429</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>14383</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistics presented in Table 1.1, issued by the Ministry of Justice, indicates the increase in divorce in the majority of the Sultanate’s provinces, particularly in the governate of Muscat, where the number of divorces is greater than it is in the rest of the Sultanate’s regions. This confirms the extent of the problem and the necessity to understand it and to solve it through an exploratory study that could
provide a rough guide for the whole of Oman. It is imperative to note here that a citizen would not apply for a divorce certificate unless they wanted to finalize it. The significance of undertaking a comprehensive and in-depth study of the problem is to deduce the best methods and procedures to limit its acceleration.


Table 1.2 Numbers of marital break-downs and cost in social security in Oman from 2003-2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Divorce</th>
<th></th>
<th>Abandoned</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>Cost in O.R.</td>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>Cost in O.R.</td>
<td>Cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>7570</td>
<td>23251</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>12672</td>
<td>7822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>7787</td>
<td>23840</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>12018</td>
<td>8031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>7904</td>
<td>26726</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>15256</td>
<td>8154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>7774</td>
<td>3647599</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>22588</td>
<td>197842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>7568</td>
<td>3428259</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>190491</td>
<td>7806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>7861</td>
<td>4120554</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>229557</td>
<td>8107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>7969</td>
<td>4245946</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>215468</td>
<td>8199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Ministry of Social Development applies various types of care and attention to divorced and abandoned women. The Social Security Statute guarantees the right of the divorced woman to a regular monthly salary in order to safeguard her dignity and protect her against poverty and humiliation, in accordance with the principles and provisions defined by the Statute. The number of cases provided by the Ministry according to 2003 was 7822 while in 2009 the number increased
to 8199 cases, as illustrated in Table 1.2. The money spent on these cases reached 4461,414 Omani Rials (Ministry of Social Development, 2003-2009). Based on the table it can be observed that:

1. The number of social security cases for this group is rising consistently.
2. About 8,000 divorced women receive security care. These numbers do not represent the number of unregistered divorces.
3. All published materials (Ministry of Justice Annual Reports) which also include the number of divorce certificates issued by the Ministry of Justice, and the persistent increase in the numbers of divorced women who demand social security salary, confirm the importance of dealing with the divorce problem in Oman. It is clear that Omani men lack the culture of responsibility towards their divorced women, who in many cases are left with children. It is in these cases that the government has to step in, as indicated in the table, to provide social security for the divorcees.

1.7 Divorce content in Oman

The prevailing law in Oman is sharia law. Woman who marry are expected to obey their husbands, a husband is allowed to divorce his wife with reason, e.g, if she neglects her duties, if she is argumentive, if she has trouble with her husband’s family. He can also divorce her with no reason.

The husband has only to say: "I divorce you" three times over the course of three months. This effects divorce. Once divorced, the husband pays the sum of the dowry, or anything agreed before the marriage. A woman can divorce a man under certain circumstances: Infectious diseases e.g. skin disease, abuse of her or her children, failure to provide financial support to the family.

In Oman children normally go to the father, but legally they can remain with their mother if very young. The extended families provide counselling when something goes wrong. Both families those of the husbands and wife come together, to
discuss this issues with the hope of providing a solution to the problem. If marriage breaks down, both families will help to look after the children, their location will depend upon the condition of either parent. Additionally, the father pays alimony to the wife and children. If the couple do not heed their families they go to court, to be subjected to sharia law.

1.8 Rational of the study

In the absence of proven scientific method of dealing with this new phenomenon in a changing society, the present quantitative survey should harmonize with the changes witnessed by the people of Oman. Individualism and demands for personal freedom are increasingly taking root. Good education, ease of communication, transportation, social mobility and the empowerment of women are desired goals in today’s Omani society.

The study is an attempt to evaluate the efficacy of Marriage Enhancement Programmes, (MEPs) in addressing the problems arising in relationships between spouses. Good preparation before marriage and during its early stages can have a prophylactic effect, preventing serious difficulties later. Although both marriages and divorces are still family affairs in Oman, it is irresponsible to believe that the family as an institution is well equipped to deal with the ever increasing divorce problems in Oman. The family as an institution that has answers to all problems is increasingly under threat. Globalization has had it is effect on family and commercial life. Tribal loyalty, family loyalty and village loyalty become more vulnerable amid the pressures of developing economy. The aim of the present study is to develop, deliver and evaluate an Arabic version of the marriage enrichment programme in an Omani context.
Summary

- Marriage has been the cornerstone of many societies, and scholars have argued that it is essential for Islamic societies.
- Social changes in the Gulf states in the last fifty years since the arrival of an oil based economy have seen a rapid move towards industrialization; none more so than in Oman.
- The status of Omani woman has evolved during this time and they are now active participants in a booming economy.
- Traditional mores under threat from globalization.
- Materialism and related influences altering mindset of society.
- The number of divorce cases in Oman is rising consistently.
- No scientific method of dealing with this new phenomenon in a changing society.
- The present study is an attempt to evaluate the efficacy of MEPs in addressing the problems arising in relationships between spouses.
Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

Many marriages today end in divorce. In spite of the couple’s attitude toward religion or with a secular basis for their relationship, despite the efforts of professionals, divorce rates have continued to rise in Gulf countries (Al-Qasha’an, 2007; Al Musalimi, 2002). This trend of high divorce rates is apparent in countries around the world (e.g., Gonzalez & Viitanen, 2009; Amato et al., 2003; Wilcox, 2009). Most marital relationship research indicates that the long term result of conflict and divorce has a deleterious effect on spouses’ healthy life and on children’s well-being (Stanley et al., 2005).

A few longitudinal studies also show evidence that in a society in which divorce is prevalent, children face more serious problems with daily life issues. Trends show an increase in the number of couples seeking assistance prior to marriage (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). Furthermore, counselling professionals, in growing numbers, suggest that there are benefits to be had in learning more about marriage and oneself through marital counselling. Marriage enrichment programmes documented in professional literature concur with this view (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Markman & Hahlweg, 1993; Blanchard, 2008). For example, Two meta-analyses explored the ability of enrichment and education programmes to improve marital relationships and satisfaction outcomes. Firstly Silliman and Schumm, (2000) conducted a review of Marriage Enrichment Programmes and found that couples showed improvement in the areas of marital satisfaction and stability. Similarly it was found by Halford et al., (2003) when they conducted a review of twelve controlled-trial studies on marital relationship education programmes that the general effectiveness of marital education programmes was confirmed.
Marriage is the basic unit of Omani society. It is within marriage that families are produced and reared, cultural and religious values are instilled, and the next generation enhanced to enter society in order to contribute to its development and maintenance (Al-Musalimi, 2002). The psychological and physical health of each generation, and thus of society, is heavily dependent upon the state of marriages. Research shows that a close relationship, e.g., marriage (for the purpose of this study), can enhance both health and happiness in people (Rector & Pardue, 2003; Buehler, 2007). Marital relationships are so important that the breakdown of a marriage can be psychologically and physically devastating for all concerned (Hemstrom, 1996; Institute for American Values, 2005).

The present researcher has found that very few Arab outcome studies assessing the efficacy of the marriage enrichment programmes have been completed. In modern societies there is a strong need for intervention programmes to address the difficulties of marriage in a rapidly changing world (Baqaader, 2006; Al-Qasha'an, 2007; Al Tamimi & Jaiswal, 2008). Thus, if Omani society is to be healthy, then marriages need to be happy and healthy, satisfying both husbands and wives.

2.2 Definition of Terms

It is important to understand what marriage enrichment programmes mean today. With its origin in the counsel offered by university and religious marriage educators, MEPs have evolved over the years into an assortment of resources led by mental health experts, teachers, and specially trained lay couples. MEPs have been presented in diverse forms such as a series of psycho-educational sessions, purpose-designed classes, and community support groups (Silliman & Schumm, 2000; Halford et al., 2004; Doherty & Anderson, 2004). While the educators may provide the MEP, it is distinct from couple therapy because the
primary focus of the former is the prevention of marital distress, whereas the latter provide the therapy directed at specific personal problems (Hawkins et al., 2008).

The focus of MEPs is also different from the more general marriage psycho-education, designed to address problems or issues more frequently seen in later stages of marriage. Researchers have suggested that MEP should primarily address the unique interests and concerns of married couples such as communication, conflict resolution, and marital adjustment issues (Silliman & Schumm, 1999; Brotherson & Moen, 2011). There are several terms which are interchangeably employed in the literature, describing marriage education programmes: marital enhancement, marital enrichment, marital counselling, and marital prevention programmes (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002; Dyer & Dyer, 1999; Hunt et al., 1998; Popenoe & Whitehead, 2007; Rector & Pardue, 2003; Stanley, 2001; Stanley et al., 1995; Waite & Gallagher, 2000). All terms were described as "systematic efforts to improve the functioning of marital couples through educational and preventative means" (Zimpfer, 1988, p. 44).

According to Ohams' (2005) definition, marriage enrichment is "provision of information designed to help individuals and couples achieve long-lasting, happy and successful marriages. It aims to impart knowledge, attitudes and to teach the skills and behaviors needed to have a successful intimate relationship" (p.2). This means that the MEP is aimed at improving the marital relationship through the honing of skills, prior to marriage, before problems begin at all (Kirby, 2005).

However, the genesis of the term "Marriage Enrichment" is obscure. Other terms, such as Marital Growth, Marital Health and Communication, frequently appear within the literature to describe "skill-based" marriage enrichment programmes (Carlson & Dinkmeyer, 1999; Berger & Hannah, 1998). As stated by Hunt et al., (1998)

"Enrichment means that something that originally had worth and value is improved further in some way much in the same way
Therefore, to enrich a marital relationship means to improve or strengthen a couple so that they can function with each other in ways that are more meaningful, constructive, and healthy.

Under the banner of marriage enrichment programme (MEP), there are many different theoretical perspectives, programmes, and formats. The common elements of MEP include an emphasis on increasing the quality of couples' marital interactions, satisfaction, and adaptive functioning (Hunt et al., 1998; Stanley, 2001; Stanley et al., 1995). Typically, Marriage Enrichment Programmes (MEP) require direct involvement of both spouses in settings with other couples who provide healthy marriage models in which skills can be taught and practised, and spouses renew their commitment to continue working on their own marriages (Dyer & Dyer, 1999; Kirby, 2005; Stanley et al., 1995; Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Glenn, et al., 2002).

It is reasonable to assume that couples entering a marriage want the best for their future. They get married believing that marriage will last forever because they love each other. It is right that couples should begin with this positive attitude. In the case of Omani society, marriage is regarded as a sacred state in which the couples make their vows before God, and have every intention of remaining faithful to each other. Human life is never perfect but at least if the spouses begin with as much awareness as possible of what married life will mean, then they have a good chance of staying the course.

For the purpose of the current study MEP is defined as: a means by which to offer newly married couples knowledge and skills training to help them sustain and improve their marital relationship. MEP resources commonly address problems that may occur in the future and offer training that may help to prevent potential problems (Carroll& Doherty, 2003; Fawcett, 2006).
The theoretical framework of MEP is based on the principles of prevention science. This field draws from developmental research and intervention-based clinical research and “focuses on risk and protective factors by increasing understanding of these factors and developing and evaluating intervention strategies to address them” (Carroll & Doherty, 2003, p. 106). Fundamental in prevention science is the provision of a knowledge base that will prevent personal or interpersonal dysfunction (Cole et al., 1993).

In Oman marital problems discussed here are dealt with by members of the extended family. But given differences of generation, education, social status, among many others, most elders are not equipped to solve problems which are becoming inherent among the young couples in Oman. Thus, this approach will show the importance of developing a marriage enrichment programme which has the ability to be effective in Oman.

### 2.3 Marriage enrichment programmes

There is a variety of marriage enrichment programmes offered, the format, content, goals and length of these programmes vary from one to another (Carroll & Doherty, 2003).

#### 2.3.1 Formats

Marriage enrichment programmes are offered for either individual married couples or class groups (Stahmann, 2000). These formats have advantages and disadvantages dependent upon their use. For example, the researchers who promote the individual couples’ approach considered it to be the best way to assess the marital relationship interaction processes, and to address the specific issues of individual married couples. In addition, the couples have a chance to work with the therapist directly. Also the individual couples learn skills which
match their specific needs without forcing them to deal with group classes which may prove inhibitive (Buckner & Salts, 1985).

One of the disadvantages to these approaches is that they prevent the individual couples from participating in group discussion which might provide them with the opportunity to receive and respond to the feedback from others, and discussing issues of mutual interest, related to the marital relationship (Stahmann, 2000; Duncan. et al., 2010 however, suggest that working with groups of couples has many advantages. One of the best advantages is that people are social beings and they like to share issues and interactions with others. Therefore learning skills and reinforcing them by sharing them with others will make the practice more effective. Working in classrooms is viewed as low risk because realizing that others have similar problems reduces the embarrassment factor. Other advantages include: groups can give each other more help than a single therapist would have time for; this is balanced by less time being needed for assessment of group progress after the sessions. A disadvantage of this format is that when the married couples have specific needs which require special processes and time to address their interests, it is virtually impossible to accommodate them during a group session (Silliman & Schumm, 1999; Halford et al., 2003 usually the educator would screen couples for entrance into the groups. Groups would be structured depending on their interests, one group to each classroom. The groups are led by experts in specific topical areas. These sessions include a presentation, in-session exercises and homework assignments. The participants register for these sessions depending on their specific goals. These goals may include assessing their immediate relationship; improving their relationship by attending classes on communication, problem solving, commitment, etc (Stahmann & Salts, 1993; Halford et al., 2003).
2.3.2 Content
The reality of marriage enrichment programmes is that the content is structured by the educators according to what the clients’ need, not just what the facilitators identified as important (Kirby, 2005). The majority of studies found that while the couples were interested in specific issues such as communication, finances, problem solving skills, etc, they may not be interested in assessing their marital relationship, sexuality, parenting, etc. This alerted the providers to the possibility that this may be an indication of lack of awareness of the daily issues of married life. Therefore it is important to tailor the session to the couples’ potential requirements by introducing real life issues into its content to ensure efficacy as far as possible (Silliman & Schumm, 1989; Duncan. et al., 2010).

The content of MEPs will vary according to different theories, resources and providers. The variables that influence the couples’ practice, will also differ according to need. For example, programmes based in religion focus on spiritual and religious content; therapists and family counsellors focus on the “families-of-origin” history and marital relationship problems. Medical providers focus on healthy relationship, and marriage enrichment programmes focus on improving the marital relationship by involving satisfied married couples in a set of sessions dealing with their interest (Risch et al., 2003). In general, Marriage Enrichment Programmes are similar on providing topic areas.

For the purposes of this study, the focus was on the marriage enrichment approach which allows participants, using an expert and facilitator, to deliver the enhancement programme through providing helpful information and skills related to this field.

2.3.3 Length of sessions
As mentioned in (Fawcett, 2006) Marital Enrichment Programmes are offered to individual couples or groups, and introduced in a diversity of formats, varying from
single-day workshops to units of 5-6 weekly meetings, or weekend presentations. The quantity and duration of sessions differ over styles of across programmes. Amazingly, there is a little research concerning the effects of different styles of presentations on the efficacy of Marital Enrichment. One available study is that of Hahlweg et al., (1998). This three-year, longitudinal study ($N = 128$), showed the impact of different formats by introducing a weekend or six weekly sessions, each of which consisted of approximately two and a half hours. The weekend format was found to be as effective as was the six-week programme in improving marital relationships. There is no present research which assesses the effect of length of individual sessions on programme success.

On the other hand, William et al., (1999) and Hawkins et al., (2006) found that eight to nine sessions was the ideal balance between the number of sessions couples are willing to attend and the number necessary for programme efficacy. Therefore, programmes may benefit by being no more than two months in duration. In addition, results and consumer preference studies show that participants prefer to be given practical exercises in addition to the instructive presentations, from at least two facilitators, in order to get a more balanced perception (Sayers et al., 1998; Silliman & Schumm, 1999; Williams et al., 1999).

2.3.4 Targets
The majorities of MEPs target generally healthy couples, promote marital well-being, and are primarily preventative in nature (e.g., Hendrix, 1988; Mace & Mace, 1975; Markman et al., 1993; Blanchard et al., 2009).

Before continuing further, it is important to take note that there are three types of enrichment and enhancement programmes: prevention focuses on pre-marital couples and newly married couples who have less entrenched problems, secondary prevention focuses on couples at risk who may face marital and relationship problems, and tertiary prevention serves those who are already at
risk and who suffer from marital distress (Heller & Monahan, 1977; Halford et al., 2004; Carroll & Doherty, 2003).

The perfect approach is prevention (Gardner & Howlett, 2000; Tiesel & Olsen, 1992) because couples with no distress react more readily to these kinds of programmes than do those already in trouble (Van Widenfelt et al., 1997; Halford et al., 2003; Halford et al., 2006). Halford et al., (2004) and Markman et al, (2004) noted a need for remedial prevention programmes to help those who are at risk of facing marital disintegration and divorce.

Some studies have found that the couples most vulnerable to future problems are under researched in MEP (Halford et al., 2006); Although, some such couples do participate in MEPS (De Maria, 2005). Furthermore, some of these evaluations in MEP seem to be directed toward marital relationship enhancement, either targeted prevention (i.e., for those at risk of marital relationship difficulties) or indicated prevention (i.e., for those with nonclinical marital problems). Thus, much of the field work in this area now focusing more on at-risk couples (Dion & Hawkins, 2007; Hawkins et al., 2008).

Silliman and Schumm (2004) found that young people consulted both parents and personal experience as sources of information on marriage. Many studies indicated a low level of interest, among adolescents, in PRE programmes or counseling. They express less need for such information than university students (Silliman & Schumm, 2004). The latter expressed interest in formal MEP only when their meet their preferences (Silliman & Schumm, 2004). These findings acknowledge that not many adolescents or younger adults actually participate in prevention MEP, for educational purposes. It might be useful to advocate the inclusion of such programmes in the Social development syllabuses for high schools. After all, the social development component of education in schools is supposed to prepare youngsters for later life.
2.3.5 Goals
The main aim of marriage enrichment programmes is to improve spouses’ relationship in order to foster lasting, successful, and happy marriages. Another goal is to offer the skills required and to nurture attitudes essential to satisfying intimate relationships (Ohams, 2005; Blanchard et al., 2009). However, in order to enhance couples' ability to maintain their marital relationship, additional goals, found to be predictive on marital quality and stability, were included, e.g., enhancing communication skills, commitment, conflict resolution, family of origin, intimacy, finance and decision making abilities, all of which are needed (Schramm, et al., 2003; Markman & Hahlweg, 1993).

In summary, programmes typically included didactic method, experiential exercises to learn specific skills, role playing, in session exercises and practice homework assignment. Programmes vary in length, from two hours at weekends, to weekly sessions for up to 12 weeks. In essence, marriage enrichment is educational and alleviates marital challenges in advance of problematic development, this contrasts with couples counselling which is provided to couples who are already distressed.

2.4 Pre-marital and marital education programmes
There are numerous pre-marital and marriage enrichment programmes running in North America, European countries, Canada and Australia today, by a number of different service providers. A variety of approaches have been used; the main types are detailed below.

2.4.1 Pre-marital education programmes
A pre-MEP is “any process designed to enhance or enrich pre-marital relationships leading to more satisfactory and stable marriages with the intended consequence being to prevent divorce” (Stahmann, 2000, P. 104).
Pre-marital education is the best way of forestalling trouble because many behavioral patterns are established before people marry (Tiesel & Olsen, 1992). For instance, studies predict that good pre-marital communication is one of the surest ways of facilitating the future. (Markman et al., 1988; Markman & Hahlweg, 1993).

Pre-marital education programmes are widely used for high relationship satisfaction amongst couples by introducing information, skills, or resources targeted to prevent future relationship worsening (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). Therefore, there are a variety of pre-marital education programmes offered. For example, Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Programme (Markman et al., 2001; Stanley et al., 2001), Relationship Education (Nordling et al., 1998), The Marriage Encounter (Elin, 1999), Relationship Enhancement programmes for all ages (Moi, 2009).

Programme (Guerney, 1987), Couple Communication (Butler & Wampler, 1999), Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills (DeMaria & Hannah, 2002), and Strategic Hope-Focused Enrichment (Ripley & Worthington, 2002).

In these interventions, each partner completes a self-report assessment to assess couple functioning dimensions, and the couples are provided with feedback about the results. In Oman there are no public institutes that prepare couples for marriage in spite of the fact that marriage is still a functioning institution in the affairs of the people of this country. Marriage is viewed as a religious, respected, private, and family institution in which the state has no official stake.

It is only in the last six months (2011) that Oman has begun to promote the Marriage Fund which intends to help young men meet the high cost of the dowries and the Celebrations that accompany Marriages. (Oman Daily Observer, 2011). It is not a secret in Oman that many young men find the financial burden associated with marriage is more than they can bear. Huge loans running into thousands of Omani Rials, the amount of money usually spent on the
celebrations, haunt the young men for more than ten years of their marriage. This is a serious problem. And nobody, nor the religious leaders, nor the family elders and nor the government officials have the political will to get into the root of this nightmare which has no religious authority at all; in fact, it is a serious hindrance towards the tenets of the Islamic religion.

Most people are taught to read by teachers. We cook using recipes and take swimming lessons. In the case of intimate relationship we assume that it comes naturally. The truth is that most people do not take lessons in marital relationship. Most of us just find out piecemeal, gathering tips from family and friends. There is much discussion in public media, on this subject. Some of these sources are not universally reliable. Nothing is more important than loving relationships for stable living, so we need dependable help. For example, Carroll & Doherty, 2003 and Markman & Hahlweg, 1993 mentioned that many mistakes made in intimate relationships correlated with lack of knowledge about the necessary principles related to healthy relationships. Hence, they devised programmes aimed at the importance of spouses’ skills required to sustain successful and enduring relationships.

In addition to improving marital relationships, marriage enrichment can help couples who have other angles of view:

- Good marriage benefits both adults and children. The bonuses including: longevity, fiscal stability, improved physical and mental health (Oxford, 2003).
- MEP better understanding of factors associated with healthy relationships, e.g., commitment, sacrifice, acceptance and forgiveness (Carroll & Doherty, 2003).
- They offer a route-MAP of marital challenges like differing view on parenthood, the arrival of first baby, and careers and family responsibilities (Stahmann, 2000). However, in order to achieve these goals, couples need to improve their ability to maintain these skills together as couples.
2.4.2 Example of pre-marital programmes
PREMEP: Most widely used example

Following Mac (2008:14), pre-marriage education is not a new concept (Bader et al., 1980; Duncan et al., 1996). According to him, the first pre-marital education formal programme was developed at Marris-Palmer Institute (Arcus, 1995; Carroll & Doherty, 2003). The original design of such a programme was largely psycho-educational in nature, providing information and education about marriage and married life to pre-marital couples. Sometimes, these programmes are therapeutic in nature, aiming at reconciling interpersonal issues and difficulties before and after marriage.

During the 1950s and 1960s of the preceding century, there were two major issues with marital educational programmes. First, they assume all couples targeted by such programmes need to be homogenous groups. This requirement has been carefully monitored in this research. Second, professional clinicians did not tend to deal with such couples on the assumption that marital difficulties are often caused by one partner only. Mac (ibid) adds that “despite the early beginning of marital education programmes, their existence was sparse until the 1970s and their focus was often quite narrow.” There were three types of marital preparation and education programmes that evolved during that period, namely: general marital education, pre-marital education programmes for groups of couples, and educative counselling with individual couples.

Studies on versions of PREMEP have been conducted by various researchers in a number of countries with varying results. Depending on the view taken, one can take the results to date as either greatly encouraging of prevention efforts or as examples of the ways in which the potential for selection effects can cloud interpretation of effects in outcome studies (Stanley & Markman, 1998). Despite
the difficulties, outcome studies based on random trials provide excellent opportunities for testing the theories that underlie interventions (Coie et al., 1993).

In one of the most extensive, long-term studies on PREMPEP, couples who took the programme (the version existing at that time) before marriage had less negative interaction, more positive interaction, lower rates of relationship aggression, lower combined rates of breakup or divorce, and higher levels of relationship satisfaction up to five years following the training (e.g., Markman et al., 1988; Markman et al., 1993).

### 2.5 Types of marriage enrichment programmes

#### 2.5.1 Relationship Enhancement

The first programme to be discussed is the Relationship Enhancement Programme (RE) developed by Guerney et al., (1987). This focuses on enhancing and strengthening nine factors in marital relationship (caring, honesty, giving, openness, trust, understanding, compassion, sharing, and harmony), by teaching participants the associated skills in order to translate them into a better ability to cope with difficulties and prevent distress in their marital relationship. In fact, research has shown significant improvement in communication, marital relationship quality, positive attitudinal and behavioral change in the experimental group by comparison with the control group (Silliman & Schumm, 1999).

#### 2.5.2 Prevention and Relationship Enhancement

The second programme is the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Marital Programme (PREMP). This was developed by Markman et al., (2001). The programme is delivered in a group format, focused on teaching the couples how to deal with conflict resolution, stress issues, and enhancing their relationship in various areas such as sex, beliefs and friendship. Any PREMP is designed to
help couples to express their concerns openly, in order to penetrate the heart of difficulties, and strengthen their relationship (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Markman & Hahlweg, 1993). Although, this programme focused on the negative aspects of the marital relationship that lead to conflict, in this course, couples are taught how to make a successful interaction by using effective communication skills. In the three and five year follow-up studies, research has shown that the PREMP worked effectively to protect married couples from break-up and divorce; also this programme helped the participant to promote a higher level of marital satisfaction than the control couples (Stanley, 2001)

2.5.3 Prepare Enrich programme
The third programme to be discussed is the Prepare Enrich programme, authored by Olsen (2002) and colleagues. This programme was designed to help couples to explore their strengths, financial problems, personal and family goals, and also to train in problem solving and communication. In this programme spouses were assessed at baseline before the programme began. The couples’ score was then sent to the provider, who discussed the results with the participants in the first three sessions. The provider gave the couples a presentation and in-session exercises focused on sharing areas of strength and growth by identifying factors affecting their relationship; then they introduced active skills and assertiveness, exploring the effect of family of origin practice on conflict and financial management. All these goals were achieved by encouraging couples to translate their skills into reality.

2.5.4 Saving your marriage before it starts
The last programme to be discussed is Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts (SYMBIS), authored by Parrott and Parrott (1999). This programme provides marriage mentoring. It is a psycho-educational approach which teaches couples
relevant skills with important information about contemporary marriage. This programme is designed to correct the faulty information that couples may have, and provide new information which will help them to understand themselves and what they bring to their marital relationship.

There is a plethora of programmes that have developed over the past 30 years, they vary in their components and structure as well as theoretical foundation. The majority of these programmes aim toward psycho-educational training and skills building. These programmes are found, in the literature, to be effective in increasing marital satisfaction and reducing marital distress (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Accordino & Guerney, 2001; Fawcett, 2006; Silliman et al., 2002). Thus these programmes have worked well to help couples improve their relationship before difficulties have time to develop.

The development of programmes to serve the specific needs of couples is a complex mission. Many programmes reviewed here are multifaceted and aimed at marital and pre-marital requirements. This study provides insight into a programme directed at a particular type of user: MEP is for the newly married Omani couples and caters for the socio-cultural and religious facets particular to marriage in Oman. Below, is the descriptive example of some marital and pre-marital programme characteristics.
### 1 Descriptive Example of Some Programme Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Country of Publication</th>
<th>Major Ingredients</th>
<th>Theoretical Bases</th>
<th>Format And Degree of Structure</th>
<th>Facilitation Model</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marriage Encounter</td>
<td>United Kingdom, Barcelona, Spain</td>
<td>Religious- Reflective- sacramental Canada</td>
<td>Modeling giving information communication skills - spiritual reflection</td>
<td>Weekend retreat (Low)</td>
<td>Didactic, experiential</td>
<td>Clergy and encountered couples</td>
<td>Married couples risk couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Enhancement Cavedo, Guernay, 1950</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Religious or learning interpersonal</td>
<td>Communication - conflict- resolution skills and negotiation, modeling positive reinforcement-behavioral contracts - practice sessions</td>
<td>Marathon (1 to 2) days or mini-marathon (4) hours (Medium)</td>
<td>Didactic, experiential</td>
<td>Para-professionals with training</td>
<td>Married couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured Enrichment &amp; Distance Writing for couples L’Abate, 1990</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Eclectic- systems, cognitive-behavioral, social learning</td>
<td>Communication skills - problem-solving - conflict resolution - behavioral tasks and contracts-paradoxes</td>
<td>Six weeks one-hour sessions (High)</td>
<td>Didactic, written assignments</td>
<td>Master’s Level students trained in Structured Enrichment</td>
<td>Functional couples, carefully screened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple Communication Miller &amp; Sherrad, 1978</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Communication- systems theory</td>
<td>Communication skills - behavioral practice and modeling- behavioral contracts - raising self-awareness</td>
<td>Conjunct or group (varies) (Medium)</td>
<td>Experiential, small group, didactic, manuals</td>
<td>Professionals, structured training certification</td>
<td>Premarital and married couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME Carlson &amp; Dinkmeyer, 1962</td>
<td>Barcelona, Spain</td>
<td>Adlerian theory</td>
<td>Communication - conflict-resolution and choice – positive reinforcement - making skills behavioral contracts - role-playing</td>
<td>10 sessions group or various other (High)</td>
<td>Didactic experiential, audi-tapes, text</td>
<td>Professionals preferred but not required</td>
<td>Functional Married couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREPAER/ ENRICH Olson &amp; Olson, 1997</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Eclectic empirically based</td>
<td>Self and couple assessment- Communication - conflict-resolution and goal – setting skills</td>
<td>Two hours with feedback or four hours sessions (High)</td>
<td>Didactic-experiential, work-videos – books- Written questionnaires</td>
<td>Clergy, Professionals, and Lay couples with one-day training</td>
<td>Premarital and married couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAIRS Gordon &amp; Durana, 1967</td>
<td>United States, Canada</td>
<td>Eclectic-humanistic systems object relations - Social learning</td>
<td>Communication skills, clarifying expectations- understanding family of origin, negotiation skills- role-playing behavioral contracts</td>
<td>Intensive 120 - hour skills- training Program (Medium)</td>
<td>Experiential, group, exercises, written assignments</td>
<td>Professionals with training</td>
<td>All couples</td>
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Table 2.1 shows the Authors with types of programmes, dates, country of application, theoretical bases, format and degree of structure, facilitation Model, facilitator and population. The majority of programmes were implemented in the United States (e.g., Relationship Enhancement, Structured Enrichment & Distance Writing for couples, Couple Communication, PREPARE/ENRICH, SYMBIS, PAIRS and PREP), UK (e.g. Marriage Encounter), Canada and Spain (PARIS and Marriage Encounter), and other countries (e.g. Marriage Enrichment, Marriage Enhancement programme). Some were based on marriage enrichment skills training, pre-marital education, communication skills, expectation and information. PREPARE/ENRICH, PARIS and SYMBIS were the most helpful in designing the current programme because it encompasses communication, conflict resolution, financial management, sexual and intimate relationship and family of origin. All programmes were intended for group sessions; they would not work with individuals.

The best effect-sizes occurred with pre-marital and functional couples. At-risk couples fared less well and effect-sizes were much smaller. Pre-marital and marital programme were prophylactically based whereas the at-risk programmes were therapeutically based. Not all approaches employ the same degree of structure. Marriage Encounter is loosely structured whereas Enhancement, Structured Enrichment & Distance Writing for couples is highly structured.

The formats of programmes vary between intensive, run as one- or two-day workshops and weekly programmes lasting from 6 to 10 sessions. Most preventive programmes offer 10-20 hours, including workshops; others are short e.g. Couple Communication. A longer example would be the 120 hours practical application of intimate relationship skills, communication skills, clarifying expectations, understanding family of origin, negotiation skills, role-playing and behavioural contracts (PAIRS).

This difference is very significant, especially if similar preventive effects occur from both long and short-term programmes. Most MEPs are aimed at engaged
and Functional couples. Little has been done to assist those who have become parents and nothing has been done for couples over 50. This area would benefit from research; parenting is a long and demanding part of marriage and some couples may benefit from assistance.

The development of programmes to serve the specific needs of couples is a complex mission. Many programmes reviewed here are multifaceted and aimed at marital and pre-marital requirements. This study provides insight into a programme directed at a particular type of user; the MEP used in this study is for the newly married Omani couples and caters for the socio-cultural and religious facets particular to marriage in Oman.

2.6 Theoretical framework

In the development of the recent proposed programme, a number of theories underlying MEPs were considered. A major theory is the one developed by Stahmann (2000) and Carroll & Doherty (2003). One assumption inherent in this theory is that marriage preparation programmes are initially implemented on non-distressed couples who may, presumably, face different levels of risk for future distress.

Hence they need to be helped to maintain their assumed high level of marital functioning. In this regard, efforts are made to anticipate and address issues or risk factors related to marital distress. In addition, the theory assumes increasing strengths and competencies associated with successful adjustment before difficulties emerge in the relationship (Markman et al., 1988; Valiente et al., 2002). This is exactly what the current study aims to achieve. It also concurs with Russell & Lyster's (1992) view that marriage enhancement and marriage education programmes offer couples a means to gain this awareness, information, resources and the skills to address it.
One of the theories to which the researcher had recourse was Family Development Theory and the Transition to Marriage. Anderson and Sabatelli (1999). They noted that the transition to marriage entails the necessity for each couple to establish an identity, define boundaries, manage the household, their relationship, and also develop a variety of ways in which to accomplish this task successfully.

Although the beginning of a new marital relationship presents a challenge, sustaining a good, sound transitional adjustment into marriage can help to ensure the stability and satisfaction that will maintain the relationship in the long term (Brotherson & Moen, 2011). From the developmental perspective, couples need to learn to use the strategies required to cope with the basic duties and activities of the new status. Ruvolo (1998) observed that the early years are crucially important for married couples because their relationship is still developing, and both sound and unsound behavioural patterns may become not only established but also fixed and would therefore continue into the future. Thus, the beginning of marriage becomes a template for the long term management of emotional dynamics, domestic maintenance and approaches to conflict resolution and problem solving (Huston et al., 2001).

Another important concern is to reduce if not obviate the risk of marital instability or divorce. United States' research on these issues suggests that most divorces occur between spouses who have been married for less than a decade (Gottman & Levenson, 2000; Kreider & Fields, 2001)

Schramm et al., (2006) suggest that defining roles might be difficult at the beginning of a marriage. Effective communication, openness to compromise and exercising patience during discussions will ease the transition. Once more, the great importance of communication skills is evident.

Husbands and wives arrive with their own ideas about the division of domestic labour, for example, who should cook the dinner or wash the dishes. Both spouses need to negotiate their shares of domestic tasks. Pivotal issues include
not just the establishment of a home but also the organization of financial support plans, for example, in dual income families: who pays the mortgage or the utility bills? In addition, a network of external friendships which provide emotional support will be invaluable in satisfying emotional needs as well as in developing the appropriate commitment to the married state (Brotherson & Moen, 2011).

According to Bloom, Asher & White (1978): "while satisfying marriages cushion spouses from psychological distress and negative life events, marital distress and instability have negative consequences for the physical and emotional wellbeing of spouses and their children" (Karney & Bradbury, 1995. p.3).

Given that the current study examines aspects of marital relationship, including the influence of family of origin, the study of the family as a system is a necessary preparation. Marriage development and change, knowing how this occurs can aid prevention and treatment of marital dissatisfaction (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990).

Several theories have influenced marital research in recent years, and it was hoped, would illuminate the six dimensions over which this current study was conducted (see appendix). A good theory should encompass the full range of possible predictors of marital outcome, and provide links between different levels of analysis (Forman, 1984; Kellerman, 1986; Newcoms & Bentler, 1981). Research has examined macro-level variables, e.g., culture norms, as well as micro-level ones such as the number of negative statement made during spouses' interaction.

Influential theories recognize a full range of influences on marriages, suggesting how micro- and macro-variables might affect each other. The aim of the current study being prevention of a problem rather than a cure, recognition of troublesome tendencies and the prediction of their likely effects was essential to success. The theory should specify mechanisms of change within marriage. A defining feature of a close relationship is that of its development over time.
Theoretical explanations account for the variability in marital outcomes between couples and over time. How different couples reach different outcomes at different times should be explained. Examining theory can help to develop a suitable model of marital education or marital enhancement programmes.

**Social exchange theory**

This is the most cited theory in research on marriage and close relationships. Social exchange theory draws from Thibaut and Kellys (1959) Theory of interdependence and states: "relationships grow, develop, deteriorate and dissolve as a consequence of an unfolding social exchange process, which may be conceived as a bartering of rewards and costs between the partners and between members of the partnership and others" (Huston & Burgess. 1979 p.4).

Levinson (1965, 1976) argued that success or failure in marriage depends upon a person's weighing the attractions of a relationship, i.e., What might be rewarding in it, e.g., emotional security, sexual fulfillment, social status; assessing the barriers to leaving it, e.g., social and religious constraints and financial expenses. There may also be attractive alternatives outside the relationship, e.g., preferable partners, escape from the current relationship. Viewed thus, marriages founder when the attractions are few and barriers weak, with tempting alternatives in the mix. A favourable feature of exchange theory is that many types of variable can be included in the framework. For example, micro-variable like perception of companionship and social demographic ones, such as occupational status. Barriers may include macro-variable like community norms against divorce as well as more specific intra-spouse feelings of obligation. In most cases, social exchange suggests how variables might combine to influence marital outcomes (Clevinger, 1970).

Lewis & Spanier (1979, 1989) revealed a significant disadvantage of social exchange theory: it does not consider the ways in which changes in marriage might come about. For instance, It does not explain how an initially stable marriage may become unstable over time; neither does it explain how perceptions
of attractions or barriers originate and develop, (i.e., attractions to alternatives/ barriers to leaving and unsatisfactory marriage). Rather, this view maintains that those who are dissatisfied with their relationship are apt to view it as inequitable; and when they are satisfied, they are likely to see it as equitable and equal (Huston & Burgess, 1979). Hence, variable serving as attractions or barriers for a given couple may alter as a couple's evaluation of their relationship alters. In order to understand how such changes take place, one must look beyond social exchange theory. This thesis had to take account of factors outside the immediate milieu of the spouses and also examine the gender-specific behaviours governed by cultural and religious mores.

**Behaviour Theory**

Despite having common roots with social exchange theory, (Thibut & Kelly, 1959), behavioural theories of marriage diverge from intrapersonal (e.g., each spouses evaluation of attractions and alternatives, seen as “aspects of perception, not action to interpersonal” (Gottman, 1982 P.953, Newcomb & Bentler, 1981) so they focus on exchanges between spouses. Given that problem solving is one of the dimensions of the present research, behavioural theory has some aspects of interest which might prove useful in formulating a custom-made theory for this thesis.

According to behavioural theory, the guiding principle for problem-solving is that: rewarding, positive behaviour enhance the marital relationship. Whereas, negative ones harm marital relationships (Markham, 1981; Stuart, 1969; Wills, Neissnlike and Patterson, 1974) unlike social exchange theory which focuses on spouses' receptions of partners' motives for their behaviours (Baucom, 1978, Bradbury & Fincham, 1990). As direct determinants of marital outcome, behavioural theory suggests that cognitive responses affect marriage by influencing subsequent interaction behaviours over time; the growth of experiences, during and after interactions, are thought gradually to influence spouses evaluations of marital quality (Bradbury & Fincham, 1991; Gottman,
1990, 1993). Satisfying interactions enhance relationship satisfaction and so reinforce positive behaviour. Marital distress is viewed as largely due to spouses’ inability to deal successfully with conflict.

A weakness of behavioural theory is that broader concepts are left untouched, necessarily, narrowing the theoretical focus and thus missing important information. Micro-variable and interactions make more sense when seen in the circumstantial contexts within which they take place, for the purposes of the resent study, macro-variable such as financial status, educational level and culturally-driven customs, had to be included.

**Crisis theory**

Crisis theory derives from Hill's (1949) attempt to explain how families react to stressful events. According to Hill's ABCX model, stressful events:

A. Require adjustment by a family. Families have varying levels of concrete resources;

B. And may define events differently;

C. Thus modifying the impact of events. In a given situation, the adequacy of the resources available to meet the event as defined by the family, defines the nature of the crisis;

X. and whether the family will recover-well.

Successful adaptation “preserves family unity and enhances the family system and member growth and development” (M'Cubbin & Patterson, 1982., p 45). M'Cubbin & Patterson added a temporal perspective to Crisis Theory. They recognized that responses to an event can develop over time and those responses have an influence on future events. This theory does expand thought about marital relationships, considering variables outside the relationship. It was the first theory to consider direct effects of effects of external events on intra-spousal processes, (their interpretation /definition of events) and between them (adaptation). Thus, in Crisis theory, married couples are placed in an on-going interaction with their
external environment. This is the only theory to predict when deteriorations in marital satisfaction and stability are likely to occur. It postulates that failure to adapt effectively to stressful events will affect the marital and familiar problems. Without such stresses, even vulnerable marriages may remain stable.

The main weakness of Crisis theory is failure to specify agents of changes. It has really examined specific coping mechanisms leading to adaption/ maladaptation. In addition, the development over time of factors influencing coping strategies, receives little attention. The constructs of Crisis theory are not linked to specific process in marriage. The importance of external influences is recognized but not explained for the purpose of this present research, it was necessary to investigate the cultural and gender-specific influences on the behaviour of husbands and wives. These effects are strong, and are dominant influence on the way in which Omani marriages are conducted. Understanding such variables is crucial to the construction of successful marriage education programmes. For this reason, Crisis theory, although helpful to a degree, remains incomplete.

Marriage is the basic unit of Omani society. It is within marriage that families are produced and reared, cultural and religious values are instilled, and the next generation prepared to enter society in order to contribute to its development and maintenance. The psychological and physical heath of each generation, and thus of society, is heavily dependent upon the state of marriages. Researcher shows that close relationship, i.e., marriage (for the purpose of this study), can enhance both health and happiness in spouses (Keicolt et al, 1987). Close relationships are so important that the breakdown of a marriage can be psychologically and physically devastating for all concerned (Hemstrom, 1995; Stroebe & Stroebe, 1986). If Omani society is to be healthy, then marriages need to be happy and healthy, satisfying both husbands and wives

Within marriage, spouses have some needs and desires in common but there are also needs and preferences which seem to be, to some extent at least, gender-specific in the main. Men seem to pay more attention to good looks than do
women; women are more interested in status, ambition and financial success in a potential spouse (Feingold, 1990, 1992). It has been postulated by evolutionary psychologists that because male investment in parenting is relatively small, and their main interest is in having a large number of healthy children, they are driven to seek young attractive spouses, this is because women are the more fertile and physical beauty is argued to be an indicator of good health. Conversely, women's investment in parenting is much greater and so their tendency is to be more selective than men. They seek to maximize reproductive success by choosing men who are willing and able to commit resources to them and their children. Hence, the female emphasis tends to be on social status and wealth rather than looks.

There is another angle to this: in some cultures women control few resources and so prefer men with large resources which promise security (Schwartz, 1987). This is the case in Oman. In the recent study there is also another consideration that of marriage, in which it is the families of the spouses who do the choosing for them and may have other criteria for selection, as well as or instead of those already mentioned.

In arranged marriages the spouses may start off hardly knowing each other, if not as complete strangers. In such situations, the matter of frequent, positive interaction in the early stages of a relationship is crucial. Some studies have shown that frequent interpersonal interaction leads to liking, even in those thrown together by chance (Festinger, Schatcher & Back, 1950). For the purpose of the recent study, frequent, positive interaction is crucial. Couples live together, having conversation, enjoying shared interests and providing mutual support in times of stress, all help to strengthen relationship and build a bond of trust and affection. Couples in arranged marriages especially, are starting from scratch. They are “thrown together” and need to begin in much the same way as new neighbours or new room-mates (Segal, 1974).
Interaction helps people to feel connected and interacting with a spouse who treats them with warmth, acceptance and respect confirms the sense of belonging (Adams & Bryant, 1987; Reis & Patrick, 1996). Married couples, whether their marriages were arranged or not, ideally progress in their relationships from affection to love, involving interdependence: Each becoming part of the other. Each spouse rewards the other to show tenderness and care, leading to a strong emotional attachment. Self-disclosure is part and parcel of the marital relationship built on love and mutual trust.

During such exchanges the spouses learn a great deal about each other, and something important happens: self-disclosure and frequent contact gives each spouse access to the inner life of the other. Spouses in a strong marriage know the reasons for each other's preferences and can anticipate each other's needs. Each one shapes his or her behaviour in order to accommodate the wishes of the other. There is an oneness of mind and heart which some psychologists call "cognitive interdependence" (Smith & Mackie, 2000). It is usually when communication is inadequate or defective those things go wrong in a marriage. The purpose of the present study, marriage enrichment education programme, is to enhance couples for marriage life by helping them to develop the skills necessary in order to form strong, close and mutually satisfying bonds with their spouses and to deal effectively with external factors which might have a deleterious effect, e.g., unwarranted interference from families of origin or unhelpful friendships.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the marital relationship is psychological intimacy. As the sense of trust and closeness grows, the spouses' sense of commitment intensifies. Intimacy has been defined as "positive emotional bond which includes understanding and support" (Hatfield, 1988, Reis & Patrick 1996). An element of this is desire to make one's spouse happy: to place their interests before one's own.
2.7 Evaluating Marriage enrichment programmes

A major issue of concern regarding marriage enrichment programmes is their effectiveness. This can be assessed by comparing level of satisfaction before and after the marriage enrichment programmes. There are two main techniques in frequent use: Self-report and Observational measures. Unsurprisingly, the results of many studies discussed below were implemented in America and some European countries, in support of such programmes (Halford, 2004; Halford et al., 2006). This suggests that enrichment programmes might be more beneficial than dealing with problems in married couples. Bradbury and Fincham (1990:397) concluded that preventive programmes "have a slight tendency to improve relationships compared to no treatment, and prevention programmes have not yet been shown to produce lasting changes in relationships". Other studies concluded more optimistically that: "there is no doubt that, on the whole, enrichment programmes work and the field is an entirely legitimate one" (Guerney & Maxson, 1990:133; Fagan et al., 2002; Stanley et al., 2005; Hahlweg et al., 1998).

Two meta-analyses explored the capacity of preventive programmes to enhance relationships behaviours and satisfaction outcomes. Firstly Silliman and Schumm, (2000) conducted a review of MEPs and found that the couples showed improvement in the areas of marital satisfaction, interactive components, and marital stability. Similar findings were found by Halford et al., (2003) when he conducted a review of twelve controlled-trial studies on relationship education programmes that targeted couples who were engaged, dating, recently married, or in committed relationships. Each of the studies had follow-up assessments of at least six months. Their review reaffirmed the general effectiveness of marital education programmes.
Only one study was implemented in Arab countries, in Kuwait, by Al-Qasha’an (2007) who carried out an empirical study to measure marriage satisfaction of a sample of 32 Kuwaiti couples, 16 couples for the experimental group and 16 others for the control group. The researcher used Spanair’s scale of marriage compatibility in order to select his research sample. The scale comprises 32 terms measuring 4 basic aspects of marriage life, namely: marriage satisfaction, and degree of integrity, mutual understanding, and emotional expression. The results showed statistically meaningful correlations between incomes, level of education, and length of marriage life on one hand and marriage satisfaction on the other. Such a correlation did not exist between age and having children as two separate variables and the degree of marriage satisfaction. In the post test, the degree of marriage satisfaction of the experimental group rose significantly compared to the pre-test.

The marriage assessment prevention programme (MAPP) developed by Mc George and Carlson, (2006) was found effective in improving participant’s knowledge about marital relationships and healthy interactions. The same study also compared marriage preventive programmes delivered to couples conjointly versus group setting, and found that contrary to prevailing ideas, the outcome for couples in group deliveries were slightly better, though not significantly than those on conjoint delivery. Gender differences were also examined and it was found that preventive programmes were equally effective for men and women. The current study was designed as a group delivery programme, encouraged by these findings.

Busby et al., (2007) compared three models of pre-marital education: a therapist-directed programme, a self-directed programme, and an assessment-based relationship enhancement programme. All models showed some measure of efficacy; however, at the six-month follow-up a significant difference emerged in the success level of each programme. The study reported a greater success-level for the assessment-based programme than for the therapist-directed or self-directed programmes in problem areas of the relationship, and greater impact
than the therapist-directed or self-directed programmes, in problematic areas
of the relationships. There was also greater influence in the assessment based
approach than in the therapist-directed one in improving areas of communication
and relationship satisfaction. The study also illustrated the value of conducting
relationship assessments in order to address the specific requirements of
spouses.

An evaluation by Halford et al., (2004) demonstrated the efficacy of a self-directed
programme in enhancing satisfaction and relationship stability. An important
objective of this study was to assess the viability of using flexible format
intervention. The researchers increased participation in relationship education.
The inherent convenience and privacy inherent of such formats might enhance
the accessibility of marriage prevention programmes, especially for people who
are resistant to a face-to-face educational method.

Assessing the effectiveness of programmes which might have different formats,
content and methods was arguably a difficult process, as Carroll and Doherty,
(2003) observed. Their meta-analysis of the outcome research on pre-marital
programmes showed strong evidence that the programmes are generally
efficacious in enhancing relationship stability and communication skills for most
couples rated the afore mentioned skills as the more helpful, with most benefits
continuing for as long as three years (Jakubowski, 2004; Schilling et al, 2003).
Positive outcomes might well last longer than stated but there are insufficient
longitudinal studies existing to verify this. The opposite findings in a study
evaluating PREMP indicate that some types of this programme may not work for
couples in a long-term relationship (Van Widenfelt et al, 1997).

The efficacy of MEPs has been the subject of much debate. Several reviews of
the available programmes agree to varying extents that skills-based marriage
enrichment programmes produce positive though modest improvement in
relationship quality and marital communication (e.g. Carroll & Doherty, 2003;
Hawkins et al., 2008) and thus offer a foundation for marriage enrichment efforts (Ragan, 2009).

Effect size are larger on observational measures (effect size=.84) of communication than self-reported communication (effect size= .17) and the preliminary evidence from five experimental studies, demonstrate that these gains in communication are maintained beyond six months (effect size= .58) (Blanchard et al., 2009). Questions have been raised regarding the extent to which the master of skills may account for positive outcomes (Schilling et al., 2003; Stanly et al., 2007). Theoretical developments over the past decade suggest the need for a broader range of dimensions of a healthy marriage, in order to augment effectiveness (Fincham et al., 2007). This concern notwithstanding Stanley et al., (2006), found that a random small number of couples who had received premarital education demonstrated greater marital satisfaction and reduced risk of divorce.

2.7.1 Communication

Good communication is essential in a successful relationship. The ways in which people communicate have a major impact on their ability to solve problems and maintain a healthy relationship.

In support of this emphasis, Geiss and O’Leary (1981) reported that problems in communication and problem solving are the most common complaints by couples entering marital therapy. Furthermore, in a survey of the literature regarding cross-sectional assessment of couple functioning, Schaap (1984) reported that distressed couples are consistently characterized by more negative effect, greater exchange of negative communication, more negative problem solving, and longer lasting conflict. Similarly, Schaap noted that non-distressed couples are consistently characterized by more positive affect, greater exchange of positive communication, and more facilitative and responsive problem solving.
Communication skills may be helped by engaging in supervised role-play. This is designed to help couples distinguish between constructive communication behaviours (listening, speaking, and reconciliation, making compliments, and so on) and destructive communication behaviours (criticism, belligerence, contempt, withdrawal, defensiveness and so on). Each partner was asked to assess problematic communication styles in his or her behaviour by means of a short questionnaire. More constructive ways of discussing differences were explored through supervised role-play exercises (Markmann et al., 2001).

Markmann et al., (2001) found a number of factors that influence the effectiveness communication programmes such as, developing speaking skills will aid the couples' understanding of each other's feeling and ideas. The aim of this is to help each spouse to hear and accept the message of the other without feeling threatened and consequently withdrawing and rejecting the message.

Listening, taking turns to speak, avoiding insults and shouting, are all important skills which promoted a happy and successful marriage. Learning to discuss your situation, feelings and experiences helped couples to develop empathy and understanding.

Listening skills such as summarizing, attending, reflecting, and affirming are essential. It is also important that couples grow to understand the value of each other's point of view. Taking turns, communicating, understanding before responding, refraining from criticism, judging, or attending to one's own reaction, are all listening skills that were taught in communication session.

As one might expect, communication was the top of the list. Hawkins et al., (2008) conducted an extensive meta-analytical review of marriage and relationship education studies. They evaluated 117 studies producing over .500 effect size. Two significant outcomes of this review were relationship quality and communication skills. Overall effect sizes for relationship quality were moderated and ranged from .30 to .36. The outcomes in communication skills had effect sizes ranging from .43 to .45.
Effect size for the quasi-experimental programmes were smaller than the experimental studies ones and moderate intensity programmes which yielded a greater effect size than low intensity programmes. Intensity level were considered low for programmes of one to eight hours, moderate- dosage programmes of nine to twenty hours and high- intensity for programmes of twenty-one hours and above. The authors concluded that, marriage and relationship enrichment produces modest but reliable benefits, in the improvement on communication and conflict resolution skills. It is hardly news, indeed it is common sense to assume that good communication skills help to prevent misunderstanding and that they are at the root of successful problem-solving. Thus, there were often strong focus on the acquisition of specific skills related to communication and conflict resolution (Ragan et al., 2009).

This was supported by the study of Schilling et al., (2003) they examined the same data used by Burnett (1993) and Schilling (1999), which demonstrated the efficacy of PREP-WK in increasing positive communication between spouses from Pre to Post intervention and preventing marital distress, compared to controls, three years after intervention. Significant patterns of change in male communication were found during PREP-WK. Consistent with the social exchange/ communication model of marital distress upon which PREP is found. Schilling et al, found support for the expectation that decreasing negative communication from males led to diminished risk of marital distress among males. This supports Halford et al., (2001) finding that PREP may be especially helpful to couples at high risk of marital distress. This pattern reached marginal significance (P= <.10) for reducing the risk of marital distress among males.

For example, Gottman et al., (2005) found that couples who take a part in an intervention that targeted enhancing their friendship by training using communication) showed more improvement in conflict resolution than those who had an intervention that aimed at enhancing their conflict management skills. However, couples showed the optimum change in their conflict resolution after completing both conflict management and friendship skills. Both conflict resolution
techniques, and positive relationship communication may make great contributions to couples’ relationships.

Shilling (2003) found unexpected patterns of results when studying the changes in female communication during PREP-WK, no support was found for the expectation that decreasing negative communication in females leads to a diminished of marital distress among males and females. Findings actually tend to suggest the opposite. This is not consistent with the social exchange/communication model under pinning PREP.

It appears that husband and wives view their marriages differently. Men’s communication gain tended to be smaller than those of women. However, programmes with a primary content of communication skills has moderate effects on that dimensions maintained these gains at Post-test (effect size= .56, p=<.001) and participants maintained these gains at follow-up (effect size= .50, p= <.05) (Fawcett’s meta-analyses,2006).

One aspect of communication is the extent to which people are critical of each other. Gosling et al., (2003) consider that criticism markedly damages the quality of relationship. This seems to be especially the case when the man is relatively inhibited and the woman less so. They describe verbally uninhibited people as “translating their every thought and feeling into words quickly and without hesitation” (p.1096). The variable inhabited is described as “relatively slow and reluctant to say what is on their minds” (p.1096). A very interesting finding was that men were inclined to exhibit strong rejection of uninhibited and critical wives whereas women were more accepting of their husbands’ traits. This would be the case in Omani society, where women are culturally conditioned to subservience and are less inclined to defend themselves verbally.
2.7.2 Problem solving

Problem solving and conflict resolution skills are often a sign of marital success and are fundamental requirements for a happy marriage (Gottman, 1994). It has been shown that marital satisfaction is positive if linked to the frequency with which spouses employ constructive conflict resolution strategies (Kurdek, 1995).

Given that problem solving and conflict resolution are central to the maintenance of healthy marriages, forgiveness is an essential element of these dimensions (Fincham et al., 2004). Fincham describes forgiveness as the avoidance of retaliation, behaving with benevolence. In their study, husbands’ avoidance of stressful issues contributed poorer conflict resolution but wives benevolence supported husbands’ perception of increased conflict resolution. Conflict resolution strategies vary from couple to couple but Fincham et al., (2004) showed that forgiveness is an important prerequisite for healthy conflict resolution.

While forgiveness was independent, in Fincham’s study from marital satisfaction, it was important to conflict –resolution and according to Kurdek, conflict resolution is directly related to marital satisfaction. Kurdek (1995) found that low marital satisfaction often coincided with wives’ use of conflict-engagement (Fighting/ loss of temper), and husbands withdrawal. Conversely, husbands’ marital satisfaction increased when wives employed withdrawal and husbands were more compliant. Overall, wives conflict strategies had a greater impact on marital satisfaction than those of husbands. Either way, it is clear that these strategies influence marital satisfaction.

In contrast to conflict resolution which is aimed at defusing disagreements safely, problem solving often involves a series of steps through which a decision is reached regarding a problem or task. Both sets of skills were taught in the second MEP model of the current study.

Oxford, (2003) promoting a long term view of marriage, says that couples need to insure that gratification of immediate wishes do not endanger the ability of both
spouses to find solutions conducive to long term satisfaction. MEP also taught that although each partner may lack incentives to compromise, the problem or requests for change are occurring within the content of a deeply – caring relationship. They believe that if couples can maintain that perspective, and then each spouse will care for the other enough to stretch in order to meet the needs of both in the long-term.

Acceptance of unresolvable problems which can occur in long-term relationship was promoted by Gottman and Gottman (1999). They noted that 69% of marriages will have some sort of irreconcilable difference or insoluble problem that can take a severe toll on the happiness of both spouses if not handled well.

Doss and Christensen (2006) concluded that marital satisfaction can be predicted by acceptance of the spouse’s behavior, even when controlling for frequency of the behavior being accepted. This makes sense, given Gottman’s (1999) findings that only 31% of arguments are about resolvable differences. In other words, 69% of issues are irreconcilable. Skills training and education were shown to increase marital and sexual satisfaction and decrease problem difficulty for newly married couples who participated in the MEP (PREP; Markman et al., 1988). However, results from a study by Baucom et al., (2006) indicate that significant change in communication style is more predictive of marital distress than small to no changes in communication patterns, regardless of whether the change was positive or negative.

Cramer, (2003) examined satisfaction in romantic relationships as related to conflict, seeking approval, self-worth and the three facilitative elements of unconditional congruence, positive regard, and empathy. Cramer found that satisfaction was most closely related to the degree of empathy and regard. Conflict had indirect effect on marital relationship stability. These results indicate that being appreciative of one’s partner has a more significant impact than having less conflict.
Although, some of the best PMEP and prevention programmes include PREMEP and PREPARE /ENRICH programme. Gardner et al, (2004) shows that pre-marital distress prevention programmes increased knowledge of marital relationship ideas, reduced future conflicts, such as aggression in marriage; this having a positive effect on attitudes related to the future success of marriage. Other researchers suggest that MEP with the solution-based approach helped couples build satisfying and stable marriages that simultaneously yielded a better quality of life (Murray & Murray, 2004).

Researchers have suggested a positive relationship between marital satisfaction and the ability of the spouses to be adaptive and have flexible sex roles (Olson et al., 2004; Wishman & Jacobson, 2007). Further, a positive association between Family relationship satisfaction (e.g., high levels of support, warmth and cohesion) and the ability of individuals within the family to be adaptive and flexible in dealing with each other has been found (Black & Lobo, 2008).

When one partner communicates negatively, the other may attempt to repair the situation by saying something conciliatory or expressing affection. Women are more likely than men, to make the first move in that direction. Collaborative behaviour is more conducive to peaceful resolution, while competition – favored by men- tends to have the opposite effect (Bisson, 2009).

Problem solving and conflict resolution skills are closely bound up with communication skills; in the present study it will be noted that the dimension; “communication” and “problem solving” are respectively the first two to be dealt with. Nothing much would go well in a marriage unless these vital skills were maximized first. Couples who participated in a group called TIME scored significantly higher than those in two other treatment programmes, in conflict resolution skills (Hawley & Olson, 1995). Conflict can sometimes be constructive insofar as it can aid understanding and intimacy but it can have the opposite effect if one spouse feels dominated. This can easily happen in Omani marriages.
in which the wife is subservient and the husband has most of the power most of the time.

2.7.3 Commitment
Commitment is a vital ingredient in a healthy and secure marriage; the main purpose of marriage is to provide a secure, healthy and happy unit in which the next generation may be nurtured and educated. Commitment indicators include: a sense of responsibility, love for one's spouse, love for one's children, a sense of bonding between spouses. (e.g. “communication” self as only complete with other).

Within commitment are embedded roles and role-balance. The perception of these by each spouse will influence his or her relationship satisfaction and can affect their sense of commitment. In 2001, Marks and Dollahite, chose a sample of traditional Western couples in order to explore role-balance and its impact on marital satisfaction. In a nutshell, Marks definition of role-balance was the tendency to engage in any role as required and to approach ones duties and one spouse, “with an attitude of attentiveness and care”. The finding was that, as predicted, women felt less role- balance when working weekends, whereas husbands' role-balance correlated positively with wives working weekends. This means women's role-balance satisfaction was greater when their husbands spent time with them, with their children, or with both. Husbands felt roles were more balanced when women contributed to the family budget. As with findings on the “communication” dimension, men's satisfaction tends to be bound up with practical concerns, whereas women's is more closely related to emotional/affective comfort. Role-satisfaction will affect sense of commitment: no one feeling either unnecessary or unappreciated is likely to maintain a sense of commitment to an unsatisfying relationship.

The role-balance desired by Western couples would not translate unaltered into Omani society which is the location of the present study. In Oman the role of
husband and wife are clearly defined by the culture and religion (Islam). However, greater access to the media, travel and other cultures, are beginning to have an effect. Al-Barwani (2007) held detailed interviews with fifteen young Omani wives, chosen from three areas in Oman in order to reflect a variety of social, educational, and economic levels. All the interviewees enjoyed stable family life.

The women indicated that they bore most of the responsibility for rearing their children: nurturing them, overseeing their education and general welfare. Discipline was generally the fathers’ province. Although husbands are still mainly responsible for matters outside home and wives. For those within, there are some who become “financial partners” by contributing to the family income and participating in family decisions. However husbands still make final decisions and bear responsibility for the results.

In this present study, emphasis was placed on the need for good communication and the mutual bonding it fosters. This in turn enhances the spouses’ mutual appreciation and this is one of the strongest elements in ensuring lasting commitment. Marriage and family life require cooperation, and sharing the responsibilities brings spouses closer.

Lack of commitment is a significant threat to the longevity of a marriage. A survey by Stanley et al., (2002) found that 80% of respondents cited “lack of commitment” as a major reason for their own divorce. Other researchers also accept that commitment is directly related to marital satisfaction and stability (Stanley et al., 2007). To measure this concept, MEP participants were asked to rate their levels of commitment on a 7-point scale from: “not at all committed” to “absolutely committed” with sample of military couples increased substantially from pre-test to Post-test.

In 2010, Kotral, Dyer & Steltzer evaluated a MEP for Hispanic couples. On the question regarding the participants’ level of commitment, couples scores rose from pre-test to Post-test, An improvement which is statistically significant. There is also a moderate effect size: .50, with the shift workshop length had a strong
effect on long-term marital satisfaction. Scores were higher for those who attended longer workshops.

Commitment may be, to some extent, culturally conditioned, unless spouses really come to know and understand each other, to acquire motivation to work together and accommodate each other. The commitment will erode over time. Marital satisfaction and commitment have circular and symbiotic relationship: commitment increases satisfaction which enhances commitment (Kotral, et al., 2010).

2.7.4 Family and friends

Family-of-origin is sure to wield influence over the lives of newly-married couples. Spouses expectations of what a marriage should be like will be coloured by observations made of their parents’ marriage as well as by the values and expectations inculcated by the families-of-origin. In the case of the parent’s study, influences come not only from spouses’ parents but also from other senior members of the extended family (Wampler et al., 2003; Oxford, 2003).

Newly-married couples need time to grow close to each other and to make the transition from confiding in parents to confiding in each other. The crucial issue for newlyweds is to develop their own relationship and learn to manage their own responsibilities as an independent family, while at the same time maintaining harmonious relationships with their respective original families.

Newly-married couples bring their own expectations to marriage and these expectations are frequently influenced by those of the families-of-origin. It is important for both spouses to have realistic expectations which involve mutual accommodation.

Negative expectations in family-of-origin will affect the expectations harboured by the newly-married. Dysfunctional original families are likely to produce young people who will have trouble relating to their own spouses. Trust may be a problem, or expressing affection or sharing feelings may be difficult. Research
has shown that those with healthy family-of-origin experience and relationships are more likely to report higher marital satisfaction than those from dysfunctional families (Martinson et al., 2010).

The MEP module "Family of origin and friends" in the present study seeks to help couples to identify expectations, share them with each other and choose which customs, behaviours and expectations they wish to retain, and decide which are no longer helpful to their new situation (Oxford, 2003).

Several marital enrichment programmes have shown positive effects in increasing realistic and shared expectations for marriage. Assessments of a programme called "STMBIS" indicated that many couples showed significant improvement in realistic beliefs and attitudes about marriage pre-to-post intervention (Parrott & Parrott, 1999).

Beaton et al., (2003) found four elements which the newly married have to control: balancing nuclear with extended family time; balancing rules and roles; balancing the satisfaction of parents and spouses; concern about future obligations.

Failure to discuss these issues with families of origin can lead to unresolved problems. Mutually shared knowledge develops an appreciation for one's spouse's perspective based on their family-of-origin experiences. Knowing where your spouse are "coming from" involves just that. Balanced relationships are founded on such mutual understanding as well defined boundaries for all concerned. Harmonious atmospheres will also foster psychological health in the children, when they arrive.

The spousal relationship is unique and the nature of pre-existing friendship, including longstanding ones, will change when someone marries. Most spouses turn to their husbands or wives to share important joyful events and also to seek consolation and support during times of stress. Both sexes in Antonuccis study
reported deriving incomparable support from the intimate relationship that is a good marriage (Antonucci et al., 2001).

Newly-married couples need to forge their new relationship which contains a strong element of intimate friendship. In order to accomplish this, they need emotional space. On this account, they may withdraw, somewhat, from the close friendships, they might have enjoyed before marriage. However, it is also true that during time of stress, friends can play an important role in provision of support when the spouses are unavailable. Some research even shows that friendship may contribute more to wellbeing but this is truer of older married couples (Lee, 1980).

Close friends and spouses can be sources of love and affection and also of conflict and stress. Friendships which were helpful when spouses were still unmarried may be less appropriate after marriage. This can have the effect of diminishing the wives sense of intimacy with their husbands. However, the boot could just as easily be on the other foot: sometimes men may complain that their wives would rather talk to their mothers or sisters than to their husbands.

Positive friendship, which are inclusive of both spouses and give the couple a sense of being valued, can enhance wellbeing, whereas negative relationships which cause either spouses or both to feel beholden, dependent or indebted can have the opposite effect (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Krause, 1987).

Everyone requires personal space and setting aside time for wives to have contact with their female friends, and for husbands to meet their male friends, is a healthy practice. Trying to maintain friendships that disrupt a couple’s home life by making excessive demands or unwarranted intrusions can be a problem. Disruptive friendships can cause interpersonal conflict and intrapersonal stress, both of which reduce marital satisfaction (Ingessoll et al., 1997).

In Omani society, the family-of-origin retains considerable influence with newlyweds who are attempting to appraise their new roles and build a family of
their own. Family-of-origin can provide invaluable support in the form of good advice and emotional or practical support in times of hardship or crisis. It is also possible that families-of-origin can be a source of tension or even distress, for instance, if boundaries and altered roles are not respected. (Al-Musalimi, 2002).

Friends, like family, needs to know where the boundaries are. Young newlyweds need to discuss how they will manage friendships within the context of their marriage which should be maintained and which should be allowed to lapse. As with everything else, communication is pivotal. In the present study, couples will be encouraged to address the issue directly and in detail, in order to arrive at mutual agreement on how to establish and maintain a good balance between their commitments to each other and toward healthy, necessary friendship.

2.7.5 Financial management

Ideally, financial management should be considered when couples are preparing for marriage. It is one of the basic, practical elements of a shared life. This is especially important in the case of a couple with two incomes. Disagreements over financial matters are among the most oft-quoted reasons for divorce (Larsen & Olson, 2007). Financial problems evoke cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses that effect marital relationship. Hostility can arise and so, marital satisfaction decreased in proportion to the stress-level perceived by spouses (Kerkmanet al., 2000). The personal, individual suffering may diffuse into the marriage. Men may become irritable and withdrawn. To Omani men, financial embarrassment is just that: embarrassing and shameful. It may be accompanied by a sense of failure, of “letting the side down”.

“Money-management constitutes a major source of marital conflict, and financial disagreements consistently rank amongst the most common areas of distress for American couples” (Aniol & Snyder, 1997, p. 347).
Blumenstein and Schwartz (1983) indicated that the real source of conflict is the way in which the family finances are managed, rather than the presence or absence of funds, per se. This was supported by the study of Godwin (1994) who discovered that the successful use of financial management was influenced by couples’ conviction of autonomy, those who had this sense of autonomy were happier with their financial status. One sign that subjects in Godwin’s study may feel more in command is that they all claimed to manage the household finances. Being the financial manager may have provider impetus to use the recommended techniques and thus enhanced their perceived financial status. Also, she indicated that a positive approach toward planning was the best predictor of successful cash management for newlyweds. The researcher indicated that newly married financial managers with a better understanding of money management engaged in record keeping more frequently than those with less understanding.

Similarly, Godwin and Carroll (1986) found that couples who had undergone a course in consumer education made more use of recommended financial methods than couples without the same knowledge. For instance, Parrotta and Johnson (1988) studied the influence of attitudes toward and knowledge of financial management and financial status in a sample of 194 newlywed couples. They found that the employment of recommend financial methods and higher income were linked to greater satisfaction fiscal status.

There is some evidence that sex differences play a part in conflict engendered by financial stress. “One spouse typically tends to save more while the other tends to want to enjoy life a little more” (Opiela, 2002: 56). Amato and Rogers (1997), reported that women frequently blame poor financial management for precipitating divorce whereas men are more likely to cite such events bereavement, work as trouble with in-laws and commitments.

These differences might indicate variations in money management methods. Also husbands tend to cite grounds for divorce which do not undermine their position
as principle breadwinners. Marital satisfaction may be influenced by wives’ earning power. (Rogers, 2004; Rogers & Deboer, 2001).

This may be less of a risk in traditional Omani marriage, in which women accept their husbands precedence more readily than Western, non-Muslim women. Financial problems, or what are perceived as problems, will of course be greater or lesser, in proportion to the expectations and demands of the spouses concerned. Poverty is relative.

It is reasonable to suppose that very low income is a source of marital stress because it is usually connected with inability to meet basic economic obligations, engendering feelings of frustration and impotence. Severe fiscal problems are more frequently connected with low income than with poor fiscal management strategies (Kerkmann, 2002). Those accustomed to low incomes are usually frugal and resourceful. However, a sudden, protracted reduction of resources, e.g., due to loss of employment, can cause severe stress. By contrast, conserving financial resources and investment has been positively linked to marital satisfaction (Schaniger & Buss, 1986).

Women’s perception of marriage quality increased in line with husbands’ warm, supportive behaviour. Husbands ability to behave this way was found to be adversely affected by financial worries, according to Conger et al., (1990) supporting dialogue may help to alleviate the strain of economic pressures and reduce the likelihood of aggressive exchanges.

Couples with aggressive communication-styles which escalate into rows simply add to their woes. Conger et al., (1999) found that the stress of severe economic hardship diffused from the inter-spousal relationship into the relationship with offspring, notably adolescents. Stress engendered depression in parents, who then spent less time nurturing their children, having become withdrawn. The withdrawal of parents’ attention and their engagement in conflict with each other had a profoundly deleterious effect on the development of the adolescent offspring.
Division of labour and marital satisfaction of dual earners was studied by Stevens et al., in 2001. They defined domestic labour broadly, to include taking care of the emotional needs of the relationship; status-enhancement, i.e., activities undertaken by one spouse to enhance the career of the other, such as social events (dinner parties). Satisfaction related to the division of labour in these fields was an accurate predictor of marital satisfaction. The wives contribution to status-enhancement correlated strongly with marital satisfaction for women. Both sexes benefited from sharing emotional work and housework but women were less happy if husbands did not share these traditionally feminine roles.

In Oman culture, the family income is basically that of the husband, and domestic duties are women's work. However, many families now have housemaids for the latter. Now, the wife is treated as a junior partner who is expected to obey and serve her husband. Recent empowering of Omani women is, however, beginning to pose a challenge to the traditional Omani way. Given the changes taking place in Omani societies, studies of the effects are urgently required. Traditional values are undergoing a sea-change and adjustments will have to be made for the new generation (Al-Harthy, 2003; Al-Musalimi, 1995).

The economics and changing marital roles strongly influence marital satisfaction and must be addressed when evaluating variables affecting the quality of marriages. The factors examined in the study by Stevens et al., (2001) should also be researched in Oman, where dowries are higher for working women, for university-educated women than they are for non-employed or less well educated women (Al-Harthy, 2003). The economy dimension has assumed disproportionate significance and is now a crucial factor that initiates and sustains marriages. Lack of money can be very humiliating for a young man and may damage his marriage prospects.
2.7.6 Intimacy

Within the general paradigm, a given MEP may emphasize a variety of factors that promote intimacy and nurturance: communication skills, conflict resolution, family-of-origin influences (Kelley, 1994; Kotral et al., 2007; Markman et al., 1993).

If the general idea is to enrich marriage, then MEP leaders and the resources they use need to address the combination of factors in a way which will enhance marital satisfaction. Thus, MEPs are value-driven, with an important set of positive values and images which constitute marital satisfaction and well-being. According to Hill, (1991) and Hunt et al., (1998) intimacy and self-esteem are enhanced when couple agree on goals and marital roles, having become skilled in communication.

Essential components of the marital relationship (Burleson, 2003) can predict alterations in marital relationship satisfaction as accurately as conflict management (Pasch & Bradbury, 1998). Many interaction behaviours are linked to emotional support, including any interaction that: "provides an uplift, conveys affection, enhances a sense of inclusion or promotes coping" (Burleson, 2003, p.552). Such communications may consist of compassionating with spouses to relieve their distress by listening, empathizing and attending to their feeling with compassion. Gottman and Silver (1999) suggest that taking turns to listen to each other, displaying real interest, conveying understanding, support and expression of affection are all-important in the reduction of the spouses' distress. A couple will consider their interaction to be intimate and satisfying when their experiences are collaborative, empathetic, accepting intense and validating of the relationship as well as the self (Rampage, 1994).

Intimacy is enhanced when couples have an opportunity to talk about their own concerns, thereby increasing their mutual awareness and learning ways to improve their marital interactions. According to Mackey et al., (2000, p.206); and this seems to be the consensus. Despite this, a review by Reis (1988) had led
him to conclude that clear gender-differences exist in some areas at least: self-disclosure, nonverbal communication, giving and receiving social support, loneliness and friendship-style. Reis concludes that men generally interact less intimately than women. Other literature also suggests that women may value intimacy more than men do (Prager, 1995), and therefore men are less motivated toward intimate interactions than women (Mc Adams et al., 1988).

Despite the fact that, based on research, men seem to socialize less intimately than women, both sexes define intimacy and closeness in the same way (Reis, 1996). Greeff and Malherbe (2001) conducted a study to ascertain a relationship between marital satisfaction and intimacy for husbands and wives. Intimacy was measured on five dimensions: emotional, social, sexual, intellectual and recreational. They found no appreciable differences between husbands and wives, regarding required intimacy but husbands reported significant less sexual intimacy than wives and also less satisfaction with the recreational aspect of their marriage. Wives demonstrated a larger gap between their sexual experiences and the level of intimacy they desired, (p.256).

MCCabe (1999) focused her study on the relationship between intimacy, relationship-functioning and sexuality. Using the five categories of intimacy previously mentioned, the study sought gender differences on these constructs. The only difference found was that women reported higher levels of sexual intimacy. However, it was also found that the five dimensions were higher valued by both sexes.

Cordova et al., (2005) found that the facility for identifying and expressing emotion and to empathize with others is fundamental to a healthy marriage. They also found that emotional adeptness mediates intimacy and that the couple's intimacy is very important to marital satisfaction, because it engenders vulnerability. Cordova et al., designate the term "intimate safely" to describe the feeling of being comfortable with vulnerability. The increase of intimate safety enhances marital satisfaction.
Gable et al., (2006) discovered that “positive event disclosure” contributes to the greater well-being of the marital relationship. The other side of this coin is that a lack of positive events-sharing is linked to the disintegration of relationship. Gable et al., concluded that the reactions to positive event-sharing are equally significant in determining the health of a marriage.

Social support and positive reactions to these exchanges are closely connected to greater relationship satisfaction. Research by Yelsma and Marrow (2003) found that unfulfilled emotional- expressive needs affected husbands and wives differently. The difficulty husbands had in describing and personalizing their emotions negatively influenced their own marital satisfaction and that of their wives.

The study by Riehal-Emde et al., (2003) of over two hundred married couples demonstrated that love was the main theme related to the stability and quality of marriage. The relationship inventory comprised nineteen items including: mutual exchange, religion and spirituality, family of origin, role- assignment, loyalty and support, sexual relationship, mutual conversing, love, compatibility, finance and children. Some descriptions of love included: a deep emotional bond, mutual caring, and trust. It was concluded that compared with other variables, love was the most predictive of marital wellbeing.

There is growing evidence for the benefits of MEPs, to strengthen marriages and reduce the risk of divorce. Although this present study concentrates on exploring the efficacy of MEPs for newly married Omani couples in Muscat region, the evidence for the efficacy of these programmes contributes to an understanding of the value of the MEP and the importance of standards of quality in educational offerings.
2.8 Factors affecting marital enrichment programmes

The majority of marital enrichment programmes are aimed at lowering the risk of marital relationship distress or divorce by constructing strong marriages by designing educational and enrichment programmes which assist couples in improving and acquiring skills such communication, conflict resolution, and commitment (Halford et al., 2003). Researchers highlighted some components considered to elevate the hazard of marital instability and divorce, including inadequate education, low wages, marrying when very young, menial occupations; disturbed family history, differing religious convictions, previous marital failure, high marital stress-levels; destructive, marital conflict plus communication troubles, (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Halford et al., 2001). Not all of these are remediable but skills-based MEP could help to reduce some negative elements, subject-matter in PREMS sometimes has predictive marital damage causes tabulated and they offer instruction in communication, conflict management, expressing affection; realistic desires. (Halford et al., 2003). The range of topics may also include marital roles, commitment, fiscal management, sexuality, and partners’ families of origin (Stahmann & Salts, 1993).

Stahmann and Hiebert (1997) sought vectors of marital well-being. A varied sample of 238 clerics involved in pre-marital intervention were asked for approximate percentage of pre-marriage candidate with difficulties or grievances in twenty-nine possible areas. For first marriages, the five most common problems involved: communicating (63%), exaggerated expectations by spouses (62%), fiscal problems (60%), problem solving / making decision (55%), control battles (51%). Second marriages had a variant: communication (57%), children (57%), fall-out from previous marriage (49%), control battles (48%), and fiscal problems (47%).

Larson and Holmann's (1994) reviewed half a century cross-sectional and longitudinal research on factors predicting the probability of marital quality and
stability in advance "stability" was defined as status, i.e., divorced or separated; "quality" was defined as the subjective assessment of the spousal relationship.

Using an eco-systemic perspective, they decided that pre-marital predictor factors could be organized into three categories: first, contextual factors, e.g., the influence of family-of-origin; socio-cultural vectors, e.g., age at marriage, level of education, and current influence like attitudes of family and friends to the relationship; second, personal characteristics, e.g., level of self-worth, interpersonal skills and emotional stability; third, spousal interaction, centering on interpersonal similarity. Larson and Holman's findings suggested that personal characteristics and behaviors plus mutual interaction constituted the most accurate predictors of marital stability and quality.

Larson and Holman's (1995) reviewed five pre-marital questionnaires used by pre-marital counselors and educators. Theoretical and psychometric criteria were employed, to assess the usefulness of 5 (PAQs) in educational and counseling context. With Larson and Holman's (1995) extensive literature review as a based, they assessed each PAQ for the inclusion of PRE-marital components found to predict successful marriages. PREPARE evaluated 85% of the pre-marital vectors defined by their study as accurate forecasters of marital stability and satisfaction. Based on the assessment by Larson and Holman's of evaluative questionnaires, PREPARE was found to be "most psychometrically sound" and they gave it the rating, "best instrument for pre-marital counseling".

2.9 Conclusion
The literature review presented here has clearly shown Oman is lagging behind in development and implementation of marriage enrichment programmes. Marriage enrichment in whatever form does not exist in the towns and villages of Oman. In the traditional milieu, where informal marriage enrichment is available, it is clearly out of step with the realities on the ground. It is time for the authorities to deal with
this essential social and religious issue. Just as the country is embarking on importing new technology, establishing a state-of-the-art education system, constantly updating the media; the country should also equip its young men and women with the essential, responsible, social skills that can help them to understand and meet the challenges of the modern age. The current research calls for cultural empirically-based intervention which can be more extensive and related to the field of marriage enrichment and the outcome of marital satisfaction. It is to be hoped that this study contributes to meeting the need for evaluation of MEPs, although there is still much more work to be done.

The finding of this literature review suggests that there are cultural differences between what makes strong marriages for the sample group of American, European, and Latino couples versus Arab Muslim couples. The present researcher found that, because of the different culture, it is likely that there is also a need for relationship and marriage enrichment that specifically meets the needs of the Omani newly married couples population. These cultural characteristics, which include religion and spirituality, need a different learning style, in order to encourage a favorable response to the genuine need for marriage enrichment programmes.

Summary

- The divorce rates have continued to rise in Gulf countries.
- Marital relationship research indicates that the long term result of conflict and divorce is a deleterious effect on spouses' healthy life and on children's well-being.
- Evidence shows the ability of enrichment and education programmes to improve marital relationships and marital satisfaction.
- There is a variety of marriage enrichment programmes offered, the format, content, goals and length of these programmes vary from one to another.
Marriage enrichment programme, which was developed in the present study, aimed to educate the Omani newly married couples in six dimensions (communication, problem solving, commitment, family and friends, financial management, Intimacy).

The theoretical framework of the present programme, assumes increasing strengths and competencies associated with successful adjustment before difficulties emerge in the relationship.
Chapter Three: Development and Structure of Intervention

3.1. Introduction

In the light of the literature review carried out in the previous Chapter, it is concluded that Marital Enrichment Programmes (MEP), despite some criticism, have been an influential tool for marriage life improvement. Empirical evidence can be elicited from the majority of studies reviewed in the previous chapter. For example, Halford et al., (2003) conducted a review of twelve controlled-trial studies on relationship education programmes that targeted couples who were engaged, dating, recently married, or in committed relationships. Each of the studies had follow-up assessments of at least six months. Their review reaffirmed the general effectiveness of marital education programmes. Similar findings were found by Silliman and Schumm, (2000) who conducted a review of MEPs and found that the couples showed improvement in the areas of marital satisfaction, interactive components, and marital stability.

However, these efforts have been largely exclusive to Western specialists, where this orientation represented an integral part of the marriage preparation process as whole. The literature review also revealed serious absence of such well-organized programmes in the Arab world in general and Oman in particular, with the exception of some humble attempts to go the same path. Marriage in the Arab world is still a ritual activity governed by social norms and customs, and builds on religious grounds. This acute paucity of marital education and marital relationship enhancement programmes necessitated this kind of study.

Beside the variety of classification schemes of marital education programmes, the review of related literature concluded that there are some requirements for success which are common to all types of programmes. Motivation on behalf of
prospective participants comes in addition to these requirements. For those who have not yet married, motivation refers to their genuine desire for leading a successful marital life. For those who are already married, motivation refers to the couple’s feeling that their relationship is at risk and effective intervention has to be made to save their relationship. Another key requirement for such programmes is the rigorous identification of the target population, i.e. to whom the programme is addressed. As it is entirely unacceptable to prescribe the same medicine for all types, it is quite unreasonable to claim a specific programme fits all. This requirement can best be met by conducting a needs analysis of the target population before taking any actual step towards the programme development.

The results of such an analysis have to inform every stage of the programme development, implementation and feedback later on. This is the only way the programme developer can ensure that the programme would meet the target population’s expectations and serve their needs. At this stage of work, the present researcher has to seek answers for two key questions: What is the current condition of the target population? What do they expect from the programme; what are their current perceptions, beliefs and expectations? Answers to these two crucial questions will influence not only the content of the programme but also all other aspects such as, length, mode of delivery, tools of delivery, assessment, and impact measurement.

As far as the present study is concerned, a decision was made to target newly married Omani couples with the intended MEP. One major reason underpinning this decision is culturally oriented, i.e. Omani couples who are not yet formally and publically declared married cannot appear together, especially for such length of time as the programme requires. The second reason is a logistic one: the programme was meant to be a preparatory tool for successful marriage rather than being a treatment tool for at-risk marriage relationships. Therefore, and taking the first reason into account, the researcher had no other choice, but to choose a category of couples to serve as the sample of the study. Soon after the target population was selected, an analysis of the current population was
undertaken by local counselling experts working in social service field (e.g. Ministry of Social Development, Omani Women Society, etc). Relevant records and publications of the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Justice were also consulted; site visits to some Omani Woman Society branches (in Muscat Region only) were made and many officials were interviewed as well as representatives from social institutions. In addition, some newly married couples were consulted. All these steps were taken to find answers for the key questions identified. In the light of the results of such exploration, the initial version of the programme took shape.

It is worth mentioning here that the process of identifying the needs of the target population and their expectations was heavily informed by relevant international literature and outstanding theoretical postulations.

3.2. Development

The needs-analysis and proactive exploration of the setting in which the proposed MEP was going to be implemented was a basic requirement for any preventive or interventive programmes to succeed, namely localization, and contextualization.

3.2.1. Preliminary version of Marriage Enrichment Programme (MEP)

This programme has been developed by using evidence-based and empirical content from previous marital enhancement programmes. Many elements of these programmes were founded on the pluralistic approach suggested by Silliman, et al (2000) Nordling, et al (1998) Elin,(1999) and Guerney, (1987). However, the theoretical framework had to be aligned toward the Omani setting at all levels, taking into consideration the specific norms, customs, traditions etc. of the society.

It was evident from the literature that any marriage enrichment programme needed to recognise the different dimensions of the marital relationship. Therefore, by referring to similar programmes implemented in other settings, an inventory of some key dimensions common to the majority of those programmes
was devised. As a result, the preliminary version of the MEP comprised six major dimensions that were found mutual to other previous programmes surveyed and that were appropriate to the Omani population. These dimensions are: communication, problem-solving, commitment, family and friends, financial management and intimacy.

When drawing upon the marital enrichment programmes surveyed in the literature review, it became evident that a MEP targeting the Omani society has to account for the specific cultural and social values of this society. If this requirement were not satisfied, the MEP was likely to clash with such norms and values. Therefore, the initial plan for the MEP was sensitive to this demand. As an Oriental community with deep-rooted tribal and religious (Islamic) traditions, the Omani family exhibits evidence of the controlling authority of the husband, particularly in key family affairs. Thus, the MEP was primarily aligned to this feature throughout the six dimensions of the programme. This was also reflected in the logistic preparation for the sessions of the MEP as well the MEP's content as outlined below.

The initial version of the MEP includes all six dimensions dealing with six major aspects of marital relationship. From the beginning, it was planned to run the MEP into six training sessions. However, and because it was an initial step, this version was meant as a pilot scheme on which to base the final format. It should be stated that there was no manual prepared at this stage; the researcher had to wait till MEP would take its final shape to prepare the manual.

3.2.2. Translating the MEP

It is worth saying here that all versions of the MEP, including the initial one were first written in English before translating them into Arabic. That was a logistic necessity for the operation of the programme. Thus, the content of the programme was translated before carrying out the pilot application. A translation and language expert of English and Arabic translation was asked to translate all the documents and dimensions of the programme. The translation was then
double-checked by two professional educationalists to make sure that the same content was maintained in the Arabic version. The points they were asked to check were the clarity of phrases, possibly of ambiguity, repetition and misconceptions.

3.2.3. Initial piloting
In order to verify the researcher’s speculations regarding the scope of the MEP, piloting the initial copy was a crucial requirement. That procedure was taken as a tool to inform the MEP content in terms of material inclusion and exclusion. At this stage, the MEP was piloted to an ad hoc selected sample from the target population in order to make sure that it meets the basic needs of the intended population. Similarly, the mechanisms for delivering the MEP were also checked at this stage in order to verify the effectiveness of the technical aspects of the programme. Professional referees who were faculty members at the Department of Psychology in the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University were consulted all through this stage in order to verify the results. Their remarks were taken into consideration after the pilot application of the programme. Adding that, the process of the pilot delivery of the MEP was intended to test the validity of the programme itself.

In the initial developmental stage, copies of the first version of the programme were sent to three Omani Woman Society branches in Muscat Region and they were asked to circulate them to eight newly married Omani couples. They were instructed to choose those couples who were newly married since two weeks up to six months. Couples who were married for more than that period were not to be selected. The couples were asked to give opinion about various aspects of the programme content and format. Their responses were elicited by a special evaluation form prepared for that specific purpose. Then the responses of those couples were analysed for purpose of the programme improvement.

In addition, and before incorporating any changes, the same version of the programme was sent to seven experts from Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) who
were requested to provide their feedback about the same aspects of the programme previously addressed to the eight couples. The experts were requested to give written feedback and comments on that version of the MEP in terms of layout as well as content. Specifically, they were requested to judge the viability of the MEP format, language, classification of content groups, number of subjects in each dimension, the sessions plan, the proposed organization of each session, sequence of the sessions, proposed methodology of delivery, feasibility of suggested home assignments, as well the overall organization of the whole programme structure. As the experts were instructed to provide their feedback on individual basis, they did not confer for that task (see appendix ii). Their feedback was collected individually and duplicate comments were sorted out.

In the light of both groups' responses, the final version of the programme was ready to go for application. The crucial elements of the programme were identified from these responses and then the marital enrichment programme was constructed. In fact, the same pool of experts was taken as referees for the programme validity before the pilot study operation, and to ensure that the programme addresses the actual and perceived needs of the couples and matches the participants' cultural background to maximize their satisfaction and participation (Coie et al., 1993). This programme was also developed in order to work through some of the most common elements derived from longitudinal studies of marital success such Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Programme PREP (Markman et al., 1988).

3.2.4 Validity
As a result, a number of the programme's features were amended in the light of the pilot study results, as deemed necessary, as well as the most crucial aspects of the sample's life that needed to be highlighted within the programme were known. The couples, for example, were asked to consider the aspects of communication and problem solving, by adding more practical exercises on these two dimensions. Refereed scholars, on the other hand, referred to the need for time allocations for each part of the programme. They suggested that sessions
should not last for more than two hours and a half "so as to maintain the participant's active participation in the sessions". Also they noticed that the programme should be adjusted to the local culture of the sample in order to avoid any possible cultural clashes or value conflicts such as husband dominance compared to wife's role in running the family affairs. Some of them emphasized the need for more practical exercises during sessions, as these exercises play a vital role in developing the desired skills, besides their role in making sessions more enjoyable and interesting. As a result of all feedback received, a final improved version of the programme was prepared and piloted.

Based on the final feedback, the content structure of the MEP was written and re-considered so as to account for their comments and constructive remarks.

3.3 MEP Structure and Content

This MEP aimed to help newly married couples enhance and enrich their marital relationship in terms of six dimensions, namely communication, problem-solving, commitment, family and friends, financial management, and intimacy.

Overall, the above six dimensions of the MEP were planned to be covered into six training sessions of two hours and a half for each. Arrangements were made to make the three groups commence the training sessions in the same week (Saturday, Monday and Wednesday). One week was set as an interval between sessions. Each of the six sessions was developed to focus on one the six dimensions of the MEP. Each of those sessions (exception of first one, which was preceded by a general induction activity to introduce the participants formally to the MEP) was planned to start by a discussion of the assignment of the preceding session. Furthermore, all sessions were guided by a presenter and four facilitators. The role of the facilitators was to help the couples with in-session exercises and direct their discussions. They also provided feedback on home assignments such as, non-contentious communication exercise.
As for the strategies adopted in the session's delivery, the presenters were instructed to use role-play and semi-guided discussion as methods of delivery, where applicable. In particular, the role-play method was chosen to be the delivery method of two dimensions, namely: communication and problem-solving. This was because these two dimensions intrinsically yield themselves to such methods. The delivery of the rest of dimensions relied heavily on semi-guided discussion and real life examples.

A set of homework assignments was prepared and linked to each dimension. The rationale behind such arrangement was two-fold. On one side it was meant to link the training session to the couples' home life, which was a core objective of the whole project. On the other side, it would serve as an enhancement tool of the sessions' content, especially when the participants have an opportunity to discuss their own issues with the others inside the training hall.

Together with that version of the MEP, a comprehensive manual was also prepared that was to be circulated to all participants (see Appendix. ii). The manual was designed in such a way that it would serve as a practical guide introducing the participants to the MEP. As such, it included information on the context of the programmes, aims, sessions- organization, questions for further discussion, and home assignments.

A brief description of each session of the MEP and its aims are given below.

**Session 1: Communication**

**Aims**

- To improve marital communication skills
- To improve speaking and listening skills
- To learn how to detect inadequate communication behaviour and to overcome inadequacies
- To aid the development of constructive emotional and verbal communication
The focus of this session was learning how to distinguish constructive communication behaviours (e.g. listening, reconciliation, paying compliments) from destructive behaviours (e.g. criticism, belligerence, withdrawal). The principle underlying this session was that learning how to discuss situations, feelings and experiences in a positive manner will help couples to develop empathy and understanding. This session incorporated self-assessment exercises, a formal presentation and a series of supervised role-play scenarios, culminating in instructions for home assignment exercises.

**Session 2: Problem solving**

**Aims**

- To strengthening the couple’s mutual problem-solving skills;
- To encourage working together to address problems;
- To help couples handle disagreements in a non-harmful way;
- To focus on long-term outcomes rather than just immediate wishes.

The session was designed to help couples consider immediate problems in the context of the long-term outcome for their relationship. This session began with coaching and feedback from the previous home assignment; after this there was presentation, followed by a question and answer session, then exercises based on problem inventories using a ten step process for resolving conflict. After this, couples were given coaching and feedback on those exercises and the session ended with a briefing for the home assignment.

**Session 3: Commitment**

**Aims**

- To develop and share goals as a couple to promote closeness and bonding;
- To improve couples’ awareness of each partner’s needs to achieve their shared goals.
The focus of this session was to enhance two fundamental aspects that underpin commitment. The first was to develop and maintain a long-term view for marital success to enable the couple to face inevitable ups and downs of their marital relationship. The second was to pass the message that commitment means readiness of partners to give up some choices for the sake of their marriage.

The session started by providing couples with coaching and feedback from the previous home assignment; inviting them to raise any questions they might have as a brainstorming for the session. Then the couples were asked to use their communication skills to responses for the following questions: What kind of commitments are they aware of? How powerful are these commitments? What kind of a commitment seems most powerful? What are options they would likely take to achieve their stated goals? The couples were encouraged to reflect on the personal conviction and experiences.

**Session 4: Family and Friends**

**Aims**

- To help couples acquire skills of establishing constructive relations with well-selected individuals from their local community and the community at large;
- To build up couple’s ability to recognise friendship rights and commitments so as to maintain successful relations with others as means to improve their general social attitude as positive social members;
- To improve couple’s realistic beliefs and attitudes about marriage and about each other.

The focus of this session centred on a family setting, as in the Oman this is a key institution that plays a very significant role in ensuring the overall well-being of each of its members. The message to be conveyed in this session was that each family member has an emotional bond and strong sense of belonging and has expectations from other members. The moral as well as the spiritual role of family
setting was highlighted as being of a very special issue in the Arabic situation in general and in the Omani situation in particular.

Second to the family dimension, the friendship dimension was also involved. However, and because this dimension is potentially of less weight than family dimension – particularly with the context of this study – this session gave it only its due attention. In this sense, couples were introduced to this dimension only as much as it relates to the improvement of their social attitude towards each other and towards other people.

**Session 5: Financial management**

**Aims**

- To improve of household's financial management;
- To help couples develop their own family financial management pattern;
- To introduce couples to commonly used mechanisms in family financial affairs management;
- To introduce couples to a variety of good practices in managing financial family affairs;
- To help couples recognise variables related to the use of recommended financial management practices, and variables related to satisfaction with financial status.

The focus of this session was on introducing couples to financial knowledge that can take them towards managing financial affairs. This was made on the conviction that successful management of a family's financial affairs enhances overall couples' satisfaction. This was supported by the fact that a high percentage of marital breakdown is attributed to financial crisis. Therefore, couples were encouraged to discuss their personal views and preferences regarding various financial aspects of their families. Ideas and experience exchange were also encouraged and conclusive remarks were drawn as well.
**Session 6: Physical and Emotional Intimacy**

**Aims**

- To help couples recognise the value of mutual satisfaction of their physical and emotional needs;
- To improve couples' awareness of the importance of a fair and mutual exchange within the context of dyadic coping.
- To enhancing the couple's ability to detect any inequality and dependence in the relationship, both physically and emotionally;
- Improving sensitivity toward one's own needs and the needs of the partner.

Bearing in mind the sensitivity as well as the significance of this dimension in the context of this study, this session had to be delivered in such a way that was compatible with the socio-cultural norms and tradition of the couples. Therefore, the session focused on the importance of open communication relating to sexual and emotional aspects of the couple’s life. The session reviewed the differences between sex, intimacy, and sensuality, as well as the importance of non-sexual touch. The session exercises had spouses work to discover what their partner's needs are, explore gender differences in sexual preferences, appropriate sexual and non-sexual intimacy techniques within the cultural domain of the couples. Husbands and wives were segregated for this session in order to facilitate free discussion.

It should be stated that all sessions, with exception of the first session started by discussing the couple's performance on the home assignment of the previous session. This was also a chance to give them further feedback to enhance the content of the previous session and reinforce the couples' learning and achievement. As the sixth session was the concluding one, there was no follow up discussion afterwards.
3.4. Summary

- The target population of the MEP was specifically identified and contacted.
- A need analysis was conducted to identify the target population's needs and expectations from the MEP.
- The extensive literature review revealed key findings which were used to formulate an inventory of the most frequent marital relationship dimensions common to other programmes.
- The first draft of the programme was developed, comprising six broad dimensions of marital relationship found relevant and applicable to the target population.
- The initial version of the MEP was prepared, translated, professionally reviewed, revised, validated, and then piloted.
- A practical manual was prepared to serve as a guide for the couples, facilitators, and the researcher as well.
Chapter Four: Method

4.1 Introduction

One form of applied research is to evaluate the usefulness of an intervention (Gay & Airasian, 2003). This is achieved by testing the intervention in a representative sample of cases to validate its effectiveness (Patton, 1982). In this sense, the present study is classified as applied quasi-experimental quantitative research. It is designed to measure the effectiveness of a suggested programme on a selected sample of subjects by using survey methods for collecting data. This approach was evidence-based on the various experimental studies applied to pre-marital and marital educational programmes (e.g. Oxford, 2003; Giblin et al, 1985; Halford, Sanders and Behrens, 2001; Bodenmann, 2000). Also it is the most appropriate method for the population in Oman, it is impossible to use the other scales (e.g., observation assessments) because the couples would not be comfortable discussing their own issues in public; hence, the use of the self-report scales. This is why it was chosen for the present study.

4.2 Sponsorship

Sponsorship was sought for this project from the following companies; Al AMRI and Sons Treading Company, Al Nawras Company and Oman GAS Company. Al AMRI Company provided mobile telephones and money; Al Nawras provided sim-cards; Oman Gas Company provided financial support. The mobile telephones and the sim-cards were gifts for the participants (Experimental and Comparison) groups. This course of action was necessary in order to help recruit participants and engage their interest in the project and to sustain it throughout until the follow-up stage. Both groups were offered this incentive in order to encourage them to participate in the study. The financial donations were used to purchase the materials necessary, e.g. book-binding services to produce the Manual. Some of the donated money was used to provide remuneration for the presenters and facilitators.
4.3 Ethical Considerations

Approval was given from the University of Wales Institute Cardiff (UWIC) School of Health Sciences. All volunteers were given an information sheet that mentioned the university name, the name of the research the work undertaken; as well it contained a full explanation of the methods, possible risks and the purpose of the research. However, open discussion between experienced interviewer and the interviewee overcame this issue by assuring them that all data collected would be secure, ensuring the anonymity of the respondents. Confidential information was only used for the purposes of this research. All questionnaires were administered to men and women in separate rooms which was designed to reduce anxiety and inhibition. Informed consent was obtained from all volunteers before the first session. All participants were free to withdraw at any time during the study without explaining the reason. In addition, they have the right to refuse to answer any questions or to be interviewed at all.

A friendly atmosphere was maintained between the researcher and the participants. A good working relationship was also established with all related local bodies such the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Justice, and Omani Woman Society, who all expressed a positive attitude towards the research project.

4.4 Design

The evaluation of the MEP was undertaken using a quantitative experimental method with two groups: the Experimental and a Comparison group using three measures over a six month period: Baseline, Post (directly after the intervention) and Follow-up (six months after the end of the intervention).

4.5 Sample

The study targeted newly married Omani couples in Muscat region. The term 'newly married' here means those couples whose weddings took place between
two weeks and six months before the implementation of the programme. This geographical limitation has been made on the basis that the population in Muscat represents a socially heterogeneous community that serves the purpose of this study. As well it is logistically difficult to carry out the intended programme in different regions of the country and beyond the facilities available to the researcher. Distinctive social, regional variations among the participants were controlled to facilitate interpretation of the finding.

4.5.1 Recruitment of sample
The programme was advertised in Omani Arabic local newspapers to seek volunteers. The advertisement statement was carefully worded to be appealing and informative. Brief details about the programme and its objectives were offered and the contact address for further information was provided as well. Copies of the same advertisement were also circulated to the Notary Public offices in Muscat as these are places where marriage certificates are issued and attested. Also, copies of this advertisement were circulated to Omani Woman Society branches where the MEP was to be conducted (see appendix ii) a full idea about the advertisement. A total of 178 couples responded to the advertisement. Participants for both groups were selected from those applicants according to a checklist based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

4.5.2 Inclusion/exclusion criteria
Groups usually function best when the couples have similar levels of relationship satisfaction and goals they are trying to achieve (Oxford, 2003).

Screening for inclusion

Screening couples was achieved through a brief telephone interview which was conducted with all 178 couples, who expressed an interest in registering for the programme. Two criteria for inclusion were adopted, namely to choose couples who had been married no less than two weeks and no more than six months, and those who were marrying for the first time. of the 178, 85 met the inclusion criteria.
for participation in the programme. Of those who did not, 64 couples had been married more than one year, 29 couples had one divorce in their history.

**Screening for Exclusion**

Contact was made with each of these 85 couples (see appendix ii), to ask if they were willing to be enrolled in the programme. In order to avoid offering the programme to couples who were dysfunctional or who were suffering from serious problems, a set of “risk-assessment” measures was used (see appendix ii). Face-to-face interviews using this risk assessment measure allowed for screening couples one week before from the first session began in order to choose only those who would serve the purpose of the study. Thus, couples who identified continuing problems with their relationship were excluded from consideration for the study at this stage. Two couples had conflict problems on communication, family of origin and had some financial problems which affected their relationship (See Appendix i table 4.1). In accordance with the ethical constraints of the project, an arrangement was made to decline those couples who did not to meet the criteria. They were informed of the exact purpose of the programme and the requirements for enrolment. All possible effort was implemented to ensure that those couples did not feel bad about being excluded. They were given further information and were directed to a suitable service which would provide counselling and support.

**4.5.3 Allocation to groups**

The remaining 83 newly married couples selected for the empirical part of the study were divided into two groups: Experimental and Comparison; Ideally, random allocation would have been used to determine these groups but logistically this was impossible. The requirements for attendance combined with the need to provide the workshop sessions to groups of participants meant that it was necessary instead to assign the first 46 couples who attended the Experimental Group; couples who met the criteria but came after the first session
started were allocated as a Comparison group (n = 37). This comparison group did not take part in the Marital Enrichment programme.

The Experimental group divided into three groups according to the location where the project was to be implemented, 15 couples were allocated to enroll on the programme in Alseeb, 15 in Alqurum Omani Woman Society, while 16 couples were allocated to enrol on the programme in Al Rashid Psychological Centre.

4.6 Measures

For the purpose of this research, two measuring tools were used: the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale (Olson et al. 1987) and a Multidimensional Marital State Scale developed for this study.

4.6.1 ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMS)
This brief scale was developed in order to assess couple’s satisfaction with their marital relationship. The scale comprises fifteen items each of which emphasizes a core aspect of marital satisfaction. Five sequential options are provided for each question where respondents are asked to select from a five point scale ranging from “very dissatisfied” to “very satisfied”. A high score indicates marital dissatisfaction. This measure can be completed in approximately 3-5 minutes. Each item refers to one of the following dimensions in the marriage: communication, conflict resolution, roles, family and friends, financial concern, time together, and intimacy. These authors select these dimensions based on the empirical and theoretical issues that are common problem areas in marriage (Olson & Olson, 2000). The full scale can be found in Appendix ii.

In order to evaluate the internal consistency of the EMS scale, Blaine et al. (1993) implemented the scale to (N=7,261) couples, results show that it has reliability coefficient of .86. Test-retest reliability was also assessed over a period of four weeks, the reliability coefficient was .86 (Blaine et al. 1993). The validity of EMS scale was supported by Fowers & Olson, (1989), they show that the EMS
correlates highly with other measurements that assess marital conventionalization and have reliability coefficient of .92 and a four weeks test-retest reliability of .92 (Olson et al., 1987). Huston et al., (1986) compared the EMS Scale with a single-item scale of satisfaction; the scale had a correlation of .77 for women and .71 for men with the single-item satisfaction Scale (Huston et al., 1986).

Locke & Wallace, (1959) also examined the concurrent validity of the Enrich Marital Satisfaction scale in a national study of 1,200 married couples, the EMS scale had a correlation of .73 with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT : Locke & Wallace, 1959) had .81 with couple scores (Olson et al., 1989). A moderate relationship between the EMS Scale and thoughts of divorce would also present confirmation of the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale's construct validity. The single-item divorce items correlated with the EMS Scale at .56 for women and .48 for men (Booth Johnson, & Edwards, 1983; Order & Bradbury, 1968; Weiss & Cerreto, 1980).

A previous study was done by Olson at al., (1989) indicating that the EMS scale had correlations of .66 of individual scores and .71 of couples scores with the Family Satisfaction measure (Olson at al., 1989). This concurs with the expectation of a strong relationship between the Family Satisfaction measure and the EMS Scale.

4.6.2 Translating the EMS
The English version of the enrich marital satisfaction scale was translated into Arabic by an expert translator who is an associate professor of Translation at the Department of English in the College of Arts in Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). The accuracy of translation was checked. Copies of the original scale and its translated versions were submitted to the expert of scale design at the College of Education in SQU. The aim was to obtain the degree of alignment between the original form and its translation. Also the Arabic version was checked by an expert
in Arabic. It is worth stating that the Arabic version of the scale was used, as the participants are native speakers of Arabic.

4.6.3 Multidimensional Marital State Scale (MMS)

For the purpose of this study a measurement was required to evaluate components found in the literature review for effectiveness in this type of prevention programme (see for example; Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 2001; Stanley et al., 2001 and DeMaria & Hannah, 2002).

The MMS was particularly designed and developed for this study; it takes the form of six-dimensions. Each dimension comprises ten or eleven items in statement form (see Appendix ii). These statements reflect couples' attitudes, evaluation, reaction, decision-making, etc. in six dimensions of marital life and relation. These dimensions are: communication; problem-solving; commitment; family and friends; financial affairs management; and emotional feelings and intimacy. These six components directly reflect the component of the programme used in the intervention.

4.6.4 Development of MMS Scale

The statements of the six dimensions were identified by consulting relevant literature and by discussing the project with a mixture of newly married couples and professionals in the related counselling field. Following the preparation of the initial draft of the MES a questionnaire including all items of the six dimensions was made and was circulated to a small sample of newly married couples.

The couples were instructed to give their feedback on the statement of each training unit. Meanwhile, the same draft was given to a group of experts who are faculty members at the Department of Psychology in the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University for the same purpose. As a result of couples' and professionals' consultations, some statements of the dimensions were either modified or replaced by new ones for different reasons. For example, statements related to the couple's sexual relationship in the Intimacy dimension were replaced by other ones to avoid their potential undesirable culture connotations.
Similar changes took place in the statements of Communication dimension so as to be in harmony with the social norms and traditions of communication practiced by the Omani society. (For more examples of these changes, see tables 4.1 -4.3 below.) The items included in the questionnaire were designed to measure the effect of the session activities, both on site and at home. The questionnaire contained 64 items. Each dimension has 10 or 11 items, using a rating scale of five options ranging from I strongly agree (5) to I strongly disagree (1).

4.6.5 Translating the MMS
The MMS translation process was the same as EMS.

4.6.6 Validity
The face validity of the Multidimensional Marital State Scale was gained by circulating it to fifteen experts at the Department of Psychology and / College of Education and Department of Social Service/ College of Arts at SQU. The referees were asked to pass judgment on whether they believed – based on their expertise – that the items of the scale were constructed in such a way that it measured what they are supposed to measure: the newly married Omani couples' awareness of these six dimensions of married life (see Appendix ii).

In order to test the content validity of the scale, a convenience sample of fifteen Omani newly married couples was selected and asked to respond to the items of the scale as a pilot validity testing. Their responses were analyzed and interpreted and changes were made to the scale accordingly.

Based on the final feedback, the items of the scales were re-written in the light of the referees' and the newly married couple's feedback. A summary of this review is shown in the following tables. The table 4.1 below shows the items that the experts advised modifying, for the purpose of this research.
Table 4.1: Modified Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original items</th>
<th>Items after validation</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. When we discuss different issues I always like to listen carefully.</td>
<td>I always like to listen carefully when we discuss different issues.</td>
<td>Not clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I find it easy to express my feelings toward my spouse.</td>
<td>2. I find it difficult to express my feelings toward my spouse.</td>
<td>Leading question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am prepared to listen to my spouse's worries and problems.</td>
<td>3. I feel it difficult to listen to my spouse's worries and problems.</td>
<td>This modified item is more specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. It is better to calm down before discussing problems.</td>
<td>15-My spouse and I need to improve the way that we deal with our conflicts</td>
<td>This modified item is more specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I think we should split up.</td>
<td>20. Sometimes, I feel that we will split up.</td>
<td>Not applicable to newly married couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. My spouse and I enjoy sharing some work together.</td>
<td>24. I enjoy sharing some activities with my spouse.</td>
<td>Not clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. I find it hard to make decisions on my own.</td>
<td>28. I find it hard to make suitable decisions in suitable time.</td>
<td>Not clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. I stopped contact with some friends who may affect our relationship</td>
<td>35. I'm thinking about stopping contact with some friends who may affect our relationship</td>
<td>Some participants are still thinking about this issue. They have not already made their decision in this regard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 below shows new items that the expert proposed for addition to the MMS Scale. The reasons for the suggestion were that they are closely related to the experience of newly married couples, and also they facilitate measurement of progressive change.
Table 4.2: New items added

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New items added</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18. Always our conflicts end by hurt feelings and crying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. When we have conflicts my spouse brings back all my previous mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. I get irritated easily when listening to my spouse talking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. My spouse always disagrees with our obligation budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. Recently I feel our relationship much better than previously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. I feel embarrassed to discuss our sexual relationship with my spouse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 shows those items that experts advised to delete. The reason for rejecting these was that they constituted leading questions which would prove unquantifiable.

Table 4.3: Deleted Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I believe that kind words are the best way for successful conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I respect my spouse’s opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I follow my parents’ way of solving problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that money is a means not an end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have enough sexual knowledge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6.7 Reliability

Cronbach’s Alpha was used to test reliability of the measurement. The value of overall Alpha for the Multidimensional Marital State Scale was .92. The results of the Cronbach’s Alpha for the sub-scales are shown in table 4.5. While the value of Correlation coefficient between responses of the pilot sample was .86 which means that the measurement scale for this research is reliable, suggesting that .70 is acceptable reliability; in most social science research situations the items have relatively high internal consistency (Nunnaly, 1978). (see appendix i for statistical data output).

Table 4.5: Cronbach’s Alpha calculation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Scale measure</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and Friends</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Management</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.7 Procedure

The study was conducted over a period of nine months from September 2008-May 2009.

4.7.1 Baseline Measures

Participants were given Baseline-assessment packages of (Multidimensional Marital State and Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale) during the screening interview. Couples were instructed to fill the packages independently in two special rooms (husbands and wives rooms). Both measures took between 20 and
30 minutes to complete and were conducted at the same time. Each centre made its own arrangement for Baseline measurements within the allotted one week prior to the start of the programme.

4.7.2 Delivery of the Marriage Enrichment Programme (MEP)

The Marriage Enrichment Programme employed four central strategies: direct instruction, in-session exercises, group discussion and home assignments. The MEP was implemented in six training sessions with one week interval between each session. Therefore in the Experimental group, couples met for two and half hours once a week for six consecutive weeks. Then, the new ideas and skills were introduced in a didactic format, which was completed by between-couple discussion of the topic. Couples then worked through within-session exercises while the facilitators gave the participants coaching and corrective feedback on their progress. Some exercises required the couples to work privately on an issue while others were conducted as a group. Take-home assignments were assigned each week to help couples put into practice the skills they learned within the programme.

There were three parallel programmes running simultaneously; one at each of the three centres with one week period as an interval between each session. The same four facilitators guided each programme; this was possible because the sessions took place on different days of the week in each of the centres. The first session of the programme was administered to the Experimental group one week after the Baseline was taken. Each training session lasted for two and half hours.

Facilitators ran the group during the implementation of the programme. All facilitators were qualified as either social workers or psychotherapists and had at least some experience treating families and couples. Each group were co-facilitated by a male and female. The benefit of this arrangement was that both husbands and wives had someone with whom they could identify. Moreover having male and female co-facilitators provided the sessions with a range of
perspectives. Role-plays and modelling of different skills also ran more smoothly and were more realistic due to the co-facilitators being opposite sexes.

After each session, a programme evaluation assessment was used to assess the usefulness and the helpfulness of each session area of the programme, particularly the programme's effectiveness in achieving the stated goal.

There was a home assignment following each session and these assignments were checked by the facilitator at the beginning of the following session.

**4.8 Post and Follow up**

Immediately after the completion of the programme and six months later, participants were invited to the final celebration at the two Omani Women Societies. On attendance, they were asked to fill the Follow-up assessment as part of the extensive questionnaire packages. These packages included instructions that partners should complete the questionnaire independently of each other, to indicate their improvement with the MEP. At the end all the groups received their gifts of mobile phones.

The Follow-up assessment was also applied to the Comparison group one week after the completion of the programme and six months after the MEP application. They were invited for a dinner at the Oman Woman Society in Al-Seeb and Qurum areas. They were asked to fill in the measurement forms and they were given their gifts there. Only four couples did not attend the event. They were contacted by phone and met during the same week.

**4.9 Evaluation of the MEP**

All couples completed a programme evaluation questionnaire following completion of the MEP. This questionnaire assessed both the individual modules that participants found helpful as well as the group methods (i.e. presentation, homework and in-session exercises).
The Experimental group were asked to rate the helpfulness of the programme in several domains using a 5-point rating scale from ‘not helpful’ to ‘very helpful’ and the importance of the sessions in enhancing the marital relationship skills, the importance of the programme to the participant’s own relationship, to the group and the importance of using them in the future from “important” to “very important”.

4.10 Quality assurance measures

Beside all the measures taken to ensure the quality of environment of the programme, the researcher was keen to ensure the quality of its implementation and content. To this end, the following measures were taken.

First, informal meetings were held with the programme presenters and facilitators of all three groups prior to the programme implementation. The aim was to ensure a unified understanding of the rationale, content, expectations, value, and method of implementation of the programme. In these orientation meetings, opportunity was given to the facilitators to raise any inquiries in relation to all aspects of the programme. Furthermore, they were urged to follow the same methods of instruction, as written in the present programme manual throughout the session, abide by time limitation, comply with the content of each session, and exchange feedback and views as they went on offering the programme.

Second, and in order to enhance the first measurement, a training guide was prepared and circulated to the facilitators as well as the participants of the programme. The manual included the material to be presented in each session and the time allocated for each. For example, sessions started with home assignments discussion for twenty minutes, followed by a lecture for thirty minutes, along with a general discussion for 10 minutes. The guide also included guidelines in how to do the in session exercise and the home assignments by showing them sample of these assignments.
Third, and to support the quality of human resources of the programme, arrangements were made to use the type of teaching aids for all sessions in order to ensure they were exposed to similar learning experiences. In addition all sessions and all groups were monitored by the present researcher and delivered at the same time, i.e. 4:30 pm -7:00 pm.

4.11 Method of Analysis

In order to determine the effect of the MEP Programme, multivariate analyses were conducted in order to examine differences between the Experimental group who completed the programme and the Comparison group who did not.

The ANOVA, MANOVA, repeated measure MANOVAs and repeated measure ANOVAs were used to identify the MEP's effectiveness. The use of parametric statistics with such assessments has precedents; univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA), was used in several studies with the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale, for example see Blaine et al, 1993; Lavee and Olson, 1993.

4.12 Summary

- Method of the practical part of the study was developed in the light of consulting relevant literature and professional consultation.
- Financial as well as logistic support for the project was sought from relevant stakeholders including e.g., some private sector companies, social institutions, and government departments.
- Ethical issues were considered in the selection (i.e. inclusion and exclusion criteria) of the project sample.
- Evaluation materials comprised an existing scale (EMS) and one developed for this study (MMS)
Two groups of newly married couples, completed the assessments at three time points, before, directly after and six months after the delivery of the programme.

All possible efforts were made to ensure the best possible delivery of the programme.

The ANOVA, MANOVA, repeated measure ANOVAs and repeated measure MANOVAs were selected as methods to analyse the participants' performance throughout the three stages of the programme.
CHAPTER Five: Results

5.1 Introduction

This Chapter reports the results. Both Experimental and Comparison groups were subject to assessments at Baseline, before the Marriage Enrichment Programme, and Post, immediately after completion of the MEP and Follow-up, six months after completion of the MEP. Analyses of the data were implemented to determine whether there were differences between the two groups which would indicate the effectiveness of the Marriage Enrichment Programme.

The Chapter displays the results of the study, starting with:

- Demographic details and attendance rates.
- The Baseline before the MEP implementation, where the homogeneity of the two groups was tested.
- The changes over the three time points; the results related to the effect of the MEP are displayed for each measure at the three time assessments.
- The overall effect of the programme at Post and Follow-up stage assessed by exploring the differences between the experimental and the Comparison groups.
5.2 Demographic Characteristics

The sample was chosen from three locations in Muscat region, (Al-Seeb Women Society, Al- Qurum Women Society, and Al Rashid Psychology Centre). Tables 5.1 and 5.2 present the demographic characteristics of the sample. All participants attended a pre-group screening interview and completed baseline assessment data. In the experimental group there were 46 couples who attended all the sessions of the programme, completing the entire programme, the Post and Follow-up assessments. The Comparison group had 37 couples who did not receive the programme but filled the assessments at three comparable time points.

The age of the participants ranged between 18 and 41 years, representing a useful variation of age among the group. The majority of the subjects were highly educated (78% with a university degree). The variation of incomes suggests the sample is representative of the population on this factor, bearing in mind that between 500 O.R (Omani Rials, currency of Oman) and 700 OR means a moderate standard of financial status in Oman (see table 5.1).
Table 5.1: Demographic details of individual by group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors Group</th>
<th>Experimental</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
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<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-18 to 25</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 26 to 33</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-34 -41</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- primary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- secondary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- high school</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- university</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income per month:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- not employed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- less than 150</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 150-300</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 300-500</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 500-700</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 700-1000</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1000 RO and above</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of the couples had been married for 4 to 6 months, this means that all participants satisfied the criterion of being ‘newly married’ as required by the study protocol. The percentage of arranged and non-arranged couples represents a good balance with the group in terms of this crucial factor. Table 5.2 displays the frequencies and the percentage of the data on marriages and shows that the two groups were reasonably comparable in these factors.

**Table 5.2 Duration: Type and length of marriage by group.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Experimental</th>
<th></th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage period before the programme started:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-two weeks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1 to 3 months</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6months</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-arranged</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- non arranged</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2.1 Activation

Forty-six couples in the Experimental group and thirty-seven couples in the Comparison group were successfully followed at Post and at six month Follow-up.

5.3 Baseline Assessment Results

5.3.1 Multidimensional Marital State Scale

Scores of both groups performance on the MMS Scales were analyzed to determine whether the Experimental and Comparison groups were similar at Baseline. Table 5.3 presents the descriptive statistics for the six dimensions of the scale for both groups and the types of marriage. For each of the six dimensions it is evident that the scores for the Experimental group are similar to those of the Comparison group and this is also true for both the arranged and non-arranged marriages.
Table 5.3: Baseline Data of Multidimensional Marital State Scale by Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Type of marriage</th>
<th>Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Experimental M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Arranged n=50</td>
<td>3.51 (.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non arranged n=42</td>
<td>3.53 (.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>Arranged n=50</td>
<td>3.49 (.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non arranged n=42</td>
<td>3.59 (.69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Arranged n=50</td>
<td>3.77 (.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non arranged n=42</td>
<td>3.97 (.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and friends</td>
<td>Arranged n=50</td>
<td>3.91 (.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non arranged n=42</td>
<td>3.86 (.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial management</td>
<td>Arranged n=50</td>
<td>3.59 (.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non arranged n=42</td>
<td>3.92 (.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>Arranged n=50</td>
<td>4.06 (.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non arranged n=42</td>
<td>4.00 (.67)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Baseline analysis (see appendix table 5.4) indicated that there was no effect of group ($F_{6,157} = 0.19$ $p>.05$) indicating that the Experimental group had similar scores on the six dimensions to the Comparison group. There was also no effect of marriage type ($F_{6,157} = 1.290$ $p>.05$); nor was there an interaction between groups and type of marriage ($F_{6,157} = 1.507$ $p>.05$); this indicated that the pattern of the scores of the MMS Scale for the Experimental group and Comparison group was similar. (For further details of ANOVA see appendix i table 5.4).

ANOVA was used here in order to simplify the result and present it in the clearest possible manner. Scores of both groups' performance on these Scales were also analyzed to determine whether there were differences between husbands and wives at Baseline. Table 5.5 presents the descriptive statistics for the six dimensions of the scale for both groups and sex. For each of the six dimensions it is evident that the scores for husbands and wives are similar.
Table 5.5: Baseline Data of Multidimensional Marital State Scale by Group and sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Experimental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Husbands n=83</td>
<td>3.54 (.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wives n=83</td>
<td>3.50 (.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>Husbands n=83</td>
<td>3.63 (.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wives n=83</td>
<td>3.45 (.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Husbands n=83</td>
<td>3.85 (.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wives n=83</td>
<td>3.88 (.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and friends</td>
<td>Husbands n=83</td>
<td>3.91 (.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wives n=83</td>
<td>3.86 (.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial management</td>
<td>Husbands n=83</td>
<td>3.74 (.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wives n=83</td>
<td>3.75 (.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>Husbands n=83</td>
<td>3.98 (.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wives n=83</td>
<td>4.09 (.63)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Baseline analysis (see appendix I table 5.6) indicated that there was no effect of sex ($F_{1,1642} = .024$ p > .05); showing that the Husbands and Wives had about similar scores on the six dimensions at the Baseline; nor was there an interaction
between groups and sex ($F_{1.162} = .009$ $p > .05$); this indicated that the pattern of the scores of the MMS Scale for the Husbands and Wives in the Experimental and Comparison groups had similar scores. (For further details of ANOVA see appendix i table 5.6).

### 5.3.2 Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale

Scores of both groups performance on the EMS Scale were analyzed to determine whether the Experimental and Comparison groups were similar at Baseline. Table 5.7 presents the descriptive statistics for the EMS scale for both groups and the types of marriage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital satisfaction</th>
<th>Experimental</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arranged=88</td>
<td>3.703 (.379)</td>
<td>3.835 (.379)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-arrange=78</td>
<td>3.844 (.465)</td>
<td>3.726 (.409)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that the Experimental group had similar scores to those at the Comparison group. Furthermore, the same results were found with the type of marriage (arranged and non-arranged marriages). The Baseline analysis (see appendix table 5.8) showed that there was no effect of group ($F_{1.162}= .012$ $p > .05$) and no effect of marriage type ($F_{1.162}= .065$ $p > .05$). nor was there an interaction between group x type of marriage ($F_{1.162}=3.84p > .05$), but this indicated that the pattern of the difference on the mean scores of the EMS Scale for the
Experimental group and Comparison group was similar at the two types of marriage.

5.4 Effects of the MEP over time

5.4.1 Analysis of the MMS Scale Results
To manipulate the Baseline, Post and Follow-up data, repeated measures MANOVA was used to identify the differences among the three time points and patterns of the differences between Experimental and Comparison groups and type of marriage across these three times on the Scale of MMS. A 2x2x3 analysis of repeated measures MANOVA was performed on the three time points. The overall results showed effect of time for the benefit of Post and Follow-up performance over Baseline ($F_{12,638} = 50.6$ p<.001). Follow-up results showed that ratings of MMS Scale significantly increased from Baseline to Post to Follow-up, with an effect size of .488. The results also indicated an interaction between time x group ($F_{12,638} = 46.4$ p<.001) and between time x type of marriage($F_{12,638} = 2.14$ p< .05), but no interaction between time x group x type of marriage($F_{12,638} = 1.71$ p>.05). This mean that there was a significant difference between the Experimental and the Comparison group at the three time points, as well there was a significant improvement for both types of marriage over the whole time span. Whereas, there was no significant difference between type of marriage in both groups. (see Table 5.10 below). Means and standard deviation for the MMS Scale scores at the three-time point are presented in appendix (i) see table 5.9.

5.4.2 Analysis of the Dimension sub-scale for the MMS Scale Results

i. Communication
The figure below shows that ratings on the communication sub-scale significantly increased among the Experimental group from Baseline to Post and then Post to Follow-up (see appendix i table 5.11). This is in sharp contrast to the project,
Comparison group whose scores remained level over the same time points. This interaction can be seen below in fig 5.1.

Figures 5.1: MMS Dimensions: Communication over time by group and by type of marriage

MANOVA results show time to be significant as there was an effect of time $(F_{2,324} = 255.9 \ p < .001)$, with an effect size of .612. There was also interaction effect for time x group $(F_{2,324} = 206.4 \ p < .001)$, however, no interaction between the time x type of marriage $(F_{2,324} = .225 \ p > .05)$, nor or between time x group x type of marriage $(F_{2,324} = 1.31 \ p > .05)$. Therefore in the Experimental group communication scores rose significantly through the duration of the study, irrespective of the type of marriage. No significant effect was found in the comparison group.

ii. Problem solving
The figure below shows the rise in the problem solving scores at the three time points. This indicated the increasing positive changes of the Experimental group
over the Comparison group on this dimension at the three time points. The difference can be seen in fig. 5.2.

![Graph showing MMS Dimensions: Problem Solving over time by group and by type of marriage.](image)

The results showed an effect for time ($F_{2,324} = 209.5 \ p < .001$), and there was an interaction effect for time x group ($F_{2,324} = 176.0 \ p < .001$), with an effect size of .564, but there were no interaction between time x type of marriage ($F_{2,324} = 1.03 \ p > .05$), and between time x group x type of marriage ($F_{2,324} = .922 \ p > .05$). The most striking feature of this dimension is the continued marked improvement in problem solving skills over times, especially between Post and Follow-up time points. This dimension is another endorsement of how effective the MEP is.

iii. Commitment

Figure 5.3 shows that the Experimental group and the arranged married couples at the Comparison group improved their commitment over the non arranged
married couples in Comparison group at the three time points, (see appendix i table 5.11). The effect can be seen in fig. 5.3.

![Figure 5.3: MMS Dimensions: Commitment over time by group and by type of marriage](image)

There was a significant effect for time ($F_{2,324} = 124.1 \ p< .001$), and a significant interaction effect between time x group ($F_{2,324} = 136.8 \ p< .001$). and only achieved a significant interaction between time x type of marriage ($F_{2,324} = 3.396 \ p< .05$) but no interaction was found between time x group x type of marriage ($F_{2,324} = 5.220 \ p>.05$). The Experimental group displayed a significant strengthening of commitment, in both types of marriage at all time points. The arranged couples in the Experimental group scored lower than the non-arranged couples at the Baseline but they scored higher than the non-arranged couples at Post point, equalizing at follow-up with the non-arranged couples.

IV. Family-of-origin and friends
The family of origin and friends sub-scale was measured at three time points. This indicates that an improvement occurred in family of origin and friends’ skills for Experimental group at the three time points; see appendix (i) table 5.11 and fig. 5.4 below.
There was an effect found for time ($F_{2,324} = 189.6 \ p< .001$), and an interaction effect between time x group ($F_{2,324} = 111.978 \ p<.001$). No interaction between time x type of marriage or between time x group x type of marriage was found ($F_{2,324} = .568 \ p>.05$), ($F_{2,324} = .229 \ p>.05$). As with other dimensions, the Experimental group tended to score significantly higher than for non-arranged married couples but by the time both types reached Follow-up, their scores were level.

V. Financial management
This figure shows clear changes happened for the Experimental group and arranged couples in Comparison group at the three time points in the financial management dimension (see appendix I table 5.11 and fig. 5.5).
For all items of the financial management dimension, there was an effect for time \( (F_{2,324} = 127.8 \ p < .001) \) and interaction effect between time x group \( (F_{2,324} = 77.04 \ p < .001) \) but no interaction was found between time x type of marriage \( (F_{2,324} = 5.46 \ p = .005) \). There was a significant interaction between time x group x type of marriage \( (F_{2,324} = 3.64 \ p < .05) \). It is interesting to note that the Experimental arranged couples scored significantly lower at Baseline than the non-arranged couples counterparts. However, over time the former approached and eventually matched the scores of the latter.

VI. Intimacy
The interaction effect of Intimacy is displayed in Fig 5.6, showing that the Experimental group subjects' scores on the Intimacy dimension were significantly higher than the Comparison group over the same time span. (see appendix table 5.11).
For the Intimacy dimension there was a main effect for time ($F_{2,324} = 187.5 \ p< .001$) and an interaction between time x group ($F_{2,324} = 87.6 \ p<.001$). No interaction was found between time x type of marriage ($F_{2,324} = .256 \ p>.05$), or between time x group x type of marriage ($F_{2,324} = .404 \ p>.05$) (see fig. 5.6 below). As before, there is a significant rise in scores of both types of marriage between Baseline and Post; by the time they arrive at Follow-up, the scores were equal. Unlike previous patterns, there is a slight upswing in the score patterns for the Comparison group between Post and Follow-up point, this occurs irrespective of marriage type.

As indicated on the above figures and Table 5.11, the interaction between time and type of marriage was not significant on four dimensions: communication, problem solving, family and friends, and intimacy. This interaction was significant on the two dimensions: commitment and financial management. The sole trend for an interaction that occurred at the two dimensions will be noted in the post and follow-up results.
5.5 Analysis of the EMS Scale over the three times

The results showed statistically meaningful differences on the three times for the benefit of Post and Follow-up performance over Baseline.

See appendix i table 5.12 and Fig 5.7 below, showing that the Experimental group subjects’ scores on the EMS Scale significantly higher than the Comparison group.

![Graph showing EMS over time by group and by type of marriage](image)

**Figure 5.7:EMS over time by group and by type of marriage**

The repeated measures analysis showed that there was an effect for time ($F_{2,324} = 410.7\ p<.001$), There was also an interaction effect for time x group ($F_{2,324} = 466.1\ p<.001$). However, there were no interaction between time x type of marriage ($F_{2,324} = 1.047\ p>.05$), but there was an interaction between time x group x type of marriage ($F_{2,324} = 4.072\ p<.05$). Therefore, there was a significant change in the Experimental group in Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scores then the Comparison group. The Experimental group rose significantly higher at the three time points.
The Comparison group scores were stable from Baseline to Post and slightly decreased at the follow-up time.

5.6 Post hoc

Analyses of repeated-measures MANOVA were used to identify the differences in sex by examining whether husbands and wives vary across the MMS Scale dimensions, in the Experimental group, at the follow-up stage.

The results show that there were no significant differences regarding the variable of ‘sex’ on the five dimensions across Post time \( (F_{9,365} = 85.000, p > 0.05) \) and Follow-up \( (F_{1,365} = 85.000, p > 0.05) \). However, on the communication dimension there were significant differences in two items (see appendix (i) table 5.13), at the follow-up time for the wives. Therefore, the wives scores for these items rose significantly at the Post and follow-up point \( (F_{9,547} = 89.000, p < 0.001) \) \( (F_{3,395} = 89.000, p < 0.005) \), while the husband’s scores at the same items significantly dropped from Post to follow-up time.

The figure below shows that the ratings of Item 1 at the communication dimension significantly increased among the wives’ in the Experimental group, from Baseline to Post and then from Post to follow-up point. Simultaneously, the husband’s scores on the same items were increased from Baseline to Post and then significantly dropped from Post to follow-up time.
Figures 5.8: MMS Dimensions: “I always like to listen carefully when we discuss different issues” by sex

Figure 5.9 shows that wives’ scores were higher than the husbands’ scores on the Item 14 at the follow-up point on the same dimension. Thus, the wives’ scores significantly increased from Baseline to Post and then from Post to follow-up point. At the same time, the husbands’ scores on the same items increased from Baseline to Post and then significantly decreased from Post to follow-up time.

Figures 5.9: MMS Dimensions: “My spouse and I like to share in making key decisions” by sex
5.7 Participants Evaluation of MEP

5.7.1 The helpfulness of the programme modules

All couples completed a programme evaluation questionnaire at the completion of the MEP. This questionnaire assessed both the individual modules that participants found helpful as well as the group methods (i.e. presentation, homework and in-session exercises) that participants found helpful.

The Experimental group were asked to rate the helpfulness of the programme in several domains from one (not helpful) to five (very helpful). See appendix (i) table 5.13 includes the average ratings on this evaluation and Figure 5.10 shows graphically the ratings of the Experimental couples reported for the different modules.

![Figure 5.10: Groups’ evaluation of MEP modules](image-url)
5.7.2 The helpfulness of the session skills

The couples referred to the overall helpfulness of the three materials; presentation, within-session exercises and take-home exercises to be between "helpful" and "very helpful." See appendix I table 5.14 and figure 5.11 shows that process focused on the helpfulness of the programme at the six sessions.

![Figure 5.11: Groups' Evaluation of session's skills](image)

5.7.3 Participants perceptions as to the importance of the programme

When couples were asked how important they felt the programme was, the couples ranked it between "important" to "very important." Also, they reported that the programme was very important to their marital relationship improvement; in addition, they reported that the group was "important" in enhancing the relationship skills. However, when they were asked whether they anticipated
using them in the future, they agreed on the importance of using them in the future. However, Figure 5.12 shows that the process focused on session’s evaluation to view the importance of the programme to the participant’s own relationship, to the group and the importance of using them at the future. See appendix i tables 5.15 present these results.

Figure 5.12: Groups’ Evaluation of the importance of the MEP skills

5.8 Summary of the Results

In summary, the results of the MANOVA and the Follow-up repeated-measures MANOVAs indicated that in contrast to the intrapersonal measures which revealed significant differences as a function of time; interpersonal measures, including the MMS Scale, and the EMS Scale produced significant differences as a result of time. Many of these changes occurred during the course of the programme (i.e. from Baseline to Post) while a few others occurred Post MEP (i.e. from Post to Follow-up). Because the goal of the study was not only to
increase immediate satisfaction with the marriage but also to improve long-term functioning, it is an important indicator of the MEP programme’s efficacy that almost all changes in relationship functioning were significant from Baseline to Post and remained significant at the six months follow-up as indicated by Baseline to Follow-up result. These effects also relate to the MEP programme’s efficacy in increasing long term relationship change.

Table 5.17 Summary of findings from MMS and EMS measures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scales</th>
<th>Effect of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>time &lt;.001 time*type of married -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>time &lt;.001 time*group -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>time &lt;.001 time<em>group</em>type married &lt;.001 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and friends</td>
<td>time &lt;.001 time<em>group</em>type married &lt;.001 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial management</td>
<td>time &lt;.001 time<em>group</em>type married &lt;.05 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>time &lt;.001 time<em>group</em>type married &lt;.001 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>time &lt;.001 time<em>group</em>type married &lt;.05 -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.1 Discussion

This study sought to introduce and evaluate a Marriage Enrichment Programme (MEP) in Oman. The programme was executed in six successive sessions and aimed to improve the couples’ marital relationship, preventing relationship distress and divorce and exploring difficulties, obstacles, and challenges that newly married couples may face (e.g. learning to consider each other when making decisions - a culture-shock for any young person accustomed only to being free and single).

It is important to remember that different cultures have different mind-sets and expectations. MEPs that might work very well in America\European cultures cannot be expected to work in Asian or Arab societies where life has a very different modus operandi. The latter cultures are characteristically strong on spirituality, value family life and have very strong ties between the generations. Researchers into far Western cultures such as the native Americans have also proposed similar traits in that culture (Sue & Sue, 2003).

Localization and contextualization were crucial requirements for the current me to succeed. In fact, such adaptation was a prerequisite for the success of this venture in our changing Omani society. In order for the community targeted by such an effort to accept and absorb desirable changes, great attention has been given to the existing social, economic, religious, cultural, and even conceptual values of that community. This was considered fully when designing the MEP for the current study.
When the scores of the forty-six newly married Omani couples who completed the 6-week MEP were compared with those of the thirty seven couples in the comparison group the efficacy of the MEP was evident. The experimental group had higher levels of satisfaction, in the form of a broad and significant improvement in their relationship, than the comparison group, and this difference was not limited to immediately after the programme but was also apparent six months later. These positive findings suggest the potential effectiveness of the MEP.

The success of the research depended heavily upon a full attendance by the subjects. In order to ensure this the researcher offered four incentives: a. The sessions were at a convenient time for the couple: 4:30.p.m, when everyone would be free to attend. b. The venue for the sessions was conveniently located, close to the home of the experimental group members. c. The course was free of charge. d. Two gifts were offered as rewards for perseverance; one, after filling post-assessments and another after the follow-up at the end of the six-month period.

It would have been ideal for this study to allocate couples randomly to experimental and control conditions but this was not possible because only 46 couples attended the first session of the programme. Accordingly, the 37 couples who met the selection criteria but did not attend the first session were allocated as the comparison group and did not take part in the MEP, while the 46 couples who attended the first session were allocated as the experimental group and continued with the programme to its end. It is to be noted here that the groups-comparison approach is mostly preferred over the single group case-study approach because it avails the possibility of comparing and objectively evaluating the effects of the programme (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). Without such an objective comparison, it would be more difficult to assess the origin of changes occurring in the course of the study. Eldridge et al., (1999) concurred with this when they pointed out that with only one group, pre-and post-assessment changes could not be categorically attributed to the intervention; and that would in turn weaken the appreciable
validity of the study. It is to be noted however, that in the groups-comparison approach potentially the groups may not have been comparable for they could have differed on any of several critical variables. Hence, the baseline comparison in the present study was critical to the interpretation of the study's findings.

6.2 Group demographic characteristics at Baseline

Results of the baseline analysis indicated that the experimental and the comparison groups were similar on gender, and on the six dimensions at the baseline time.

In Oman both arranged and non-arranged marriages are the norm. This variable did not have a statistically significant impact within each group or between both groups' performance. Although it was expected that this variable would affect the Experimental group’s interaction with the MEP, the results indicated that it does not have such weight in practice: both arranged and non-arranged married couples scored similarly at the baseline, One reason for this might have been that in Omani culture arranged marriages are not only normal but considered desirable because having arranged the union, the family will provide maximum support to ensure its success. This supports results mentioned in the study by Al- Barwani, (2007) and Al-Musalimi, (2002). There were no previous data concerning this comparison because it has never been attempted before, at least not in any published study.

Most couples in the current study were in the middle-income bracket and there were no significant differences in their scores at the three time points. Available research yielded no evidence of any link between income and potential to benefit from MEPs (Stanley et al, 2004). With regard to age and education: the majority of subjects in this study were aged 26 to 33 years, with university education. All were newly married. The age-range and recent marriage seemed like optimum conditions for undergoing MEP because the couples and their marriages were
young enough to be receptive to formation; no entrenched views or habits had time to develop. Once again, no significant differences were found relating to either age or education. In such a homogenous group, they were scarcely to be expected. Casten found the same results in 2004, and so did Sullivan and Bradbury (1997), who stated “The majority of the couples who are satisfied with their marriages were relatively higher educated, with higher income, in their late 30s”.

This lack of difference between the spouses on the Multidimensional Marital State Scale is attributed to a way of obviating the danger of unwelcome and unhelpful differences through screening the couples before the MEP and not to include those who did not meet the criteria (e.g. couples had been married more than one year, couples had one divorce in their history), and whose backgrounds were markedly dissimilar to that of the main body of respondents. The couples chosen were also homogenous in respect of their marital relationships, as the data demonstrated. Attention was paid to those couples sharing a common baseline value of marital relationship status.

6.3 Effects of the MEP over time

Concern has been expressed by a variety of voices including those of marriage researchers, scholars and social scientists as well as government officials that now more than ever, there is an urgent need for specifically-tailored MEPs (Garfinkle et al., 2007; Schoen & Standish, 2001; Raley & Bumpass, 2003; Popeno & Whitehead, 1999; Waite & Gallagher, 2000). Most MEP target generally satisfactory marriages and are predominantly prophylactic in nature (Halford, 2004; Halford et al., 2006). Hence, this study investigated the literature on marriage enrichment and marital quality, to develop an MEP which can meet the needs of newly married Omani couples. MEP topics educate couples in different facets of the marital relationship (e.g., communication, problem solving, commitment, family and friends, financial management and intimacy). A
presentation, in-session exercise, home assignment, and informative manual were designed to address the particular needs of those couples.

In the present programme, couples learned various ways in which to sustain their marriages. Participants were trained to use different methods of communication, and the best strategies for dealing with difficulties and financial management, ways in which to express emotional affection and support, as these are vital to the strengthening of the marital bond and they fortify the sense of mutual commitment.

The results show that the programme developed for and implemented in this study, appeared to be effective in developing and improving participants' marital relationships. The overall MEP effect size, was .48 and in EMS was .71 which compares very favourably with Giblin et al.'s (1985) meta-analysis of 60 MEPs which yielded moderate effect sizes of 0.42 at post-treatment. Only 34 of those MEPs included in the analysis had follow-up monitoring, with an effect-size of .34. Within the results of the SUCCES programme in (Oxford, 2003) the effect sizes ranged from 0.22 to 0.63 and effect sizes for significant criterion measures ranged from 0.16 to 0.57. The present study reflected the experience of Giblin et al because the current results indicated moderate to great effect size was found over MEP. The comparison favours the present study which showed an increased and sustained improvement up to and including the six month follow-up.

One of the reasons for the sustained success of the programme was that it was specifically tailored to the religious and cultural needs of the participants. The religious elements are strongly influential: In this cultural context it is believed that the will of God demands that marriages be held in high regard and, viewed as a sacred trust. This strongly motivates couples to work hard at making a successful marriage. The couples who took part were genuinely interested in learning new skills which would help them to build strong marriages; and they came of their own volition. Unlike the Oxford study, (2003) the present study had no distressed couples, which would be an advantage yielding higher scores. Oxford's study
contained some distressed couples which could be a reason why the study's effect sizes were considerably smaller than those of the present study.

The stability in the comparison group performance, all through the period of the study, is in itself interesting and worthy of consideration. The period allocated for running the whole programme is a fairly short time in which to predict any significant changes that might appear in the couples' behaviour when there is no programmed intervention. It should be borne in mind that all couples involved in this study were very newly-married. In Omani culture this means that they were virtual strangers until their wedding-day and so, after only six months of marriage they would still be making each other's acquaintance and learning about each other's attitudes and habits. There is another incentive for young Omani couples to make use of every available opportunity to strengthen their marriage: this is the fact that their families-of-origin watch how they deal with each other; having invested much effort in arranging the union, they will want it to succeed. Young couples have a responsibility to their own and each other's families and to their tribe. On this account they will welcome anything that might help them to please not only each other but also their families and tribes (Al-Musalimi, 2002).

The results of several studies accord with those of the present one. For instance, Bradbury and Fincham (1990) decided that preventive programmes were mildly efficacious when compared with the absence of any intervention. Yet, some studies (Guerney & Maxson, 1990; Fagan, Patterson, & Rector, 2002; Stanley et al., 2005; Hahlweg et al., 1998) have found marriage enrichment programmes to be effective in improving marital relationship skills. In fact, the finding of the present study corroborates those findings (see fig 5.1 to 5.6 in chapter five).

Furthermore, the finding of the present study is consistent with other findings which indicated that improving marital relationship promote marital satisfaction (Russell & Lyster, 1992). In the current study the experimental group who show improvement on their marital relationship at post and follow-up time on MMS scale, also show significant increasing on marital satisfaction on their marriage life.
at post and follow-up point. This effect also related to the MEP programme efficacy in increasing marital satisfaction.

The impact on the marital relationship has been well-documented in other studies, where, on the whole, it seems that couples who have engaged in MEPs experienced higher levels of marital satisfaction. The majority of participants also indicated that what they learned in MEPs improved their perception of and manner of interacting with their spouses (Russell & Lyster, 1992). Overall, outcome studies support the efficacy of MEPs as an efficient method of enhancing the quality of marriages and increasing future marital satisfaction and forestalling marital distress (Carroll and Doherty, 2003; Bader et al., 1980; Schumm et al., 1998; Schumm et al., 2000; Williams et al., 1999).

Participants in the previous studies also expressed a new appreciation of the importance of marriage in their lives, and that it is an on-going work. This was shown to be one of the main benefits of MEPs, realization of the importance of marriage in the lives of the spouses (Stanley, 2001). These findings were mirrored in the present study, in which the participants evaluated the MEP after completing it they expressed the view that the six chosen dimensions were helpful/very helpful to their marriages. They expressed the same appreciation of skills offered during the programme. They also indicated that they considered the programme important to both the group and to the couple's own future as husband and wife. The meta-analysis by Carroll and Doherty, (2003) indicated that participation in preventive program programmes gained increments in marital stability and satisfaction. Halford et al., (2003) had a similar experience and in both studies the increments were sustained throughout a 6 month follow-up period.

Working in a similar cultural environment to that of Oman, Al-Qasha'an, (2007), conducted an empirical study to measure marital satisfaction in a sample of 32 Kuwaiti couples who completed the marital enrichment programme. Their results exhibited a significant rise in post-test marriage satisfaction, compared with their
pre-test scores; this was evidenced by the differences in the post scores for the experimental group from that of the control group. This study differed from the present one in two important respects: Al-Qasha’an study included couples who had been married for longer than a year; and that the study did not include any follow-up. For this reason no useful comparison can be made between the present study and that of Al-Qasha’an. The negative findings in a study by Van Widenfelt et al., (1997) suggest that some versions of Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Marital Programme may not help spouses who have long-established relationship difficulties. In addition, some studies in the marital relationship literature were likely to work for different types of samples in contrast to the sample and style of the MEP in the present study. For example, SUCCES was designed for distressed couples and the results of this targeted study were reportedly small to moderate.

Similar to many previous marital enrichment programmes run in other parts of the world, the MEP designed in this research has proved to be effective. This effectiveness is realized by the noticeable changes in the subjects’ attitude towards their marriage relationship following the MEP enrolment. This is applicable to their results scored immediately after the MEP and even in the follow-up assessment.

**Communication**
The Experimental group on this dimension improved significantly over those in the comparison group, from Baseline to Post and then from Post to Follow-up point. This means that the experimental group improved over time, whereas the comparison group remained static. Communication was the most important dimension in the present study, upon which the success of all else depended, and indeed the MEP clearly had a positive impact on this dimension. As mentioned in the literature review communication is the key to successful living in any social environment. Without the ability to communicate, there would be no relationship. Equally, unhealthy or destructive communication can destroy a relationship or, at the very least, severely impair the quality of life for both spouses. The decision to
place communication in the foreground of this MEP, as dimension one, was not taken on a whim but for the very good reason that it does drive everything else and can make or break a marriage. (Canary & Cupach, 1988; Le & Agnew, 2001).

The effect size for communication which may be considered critical to this study, was .61 which compares very favourably with the meta-analysis on communication of Hawkins et al., (2008), which yielded a moderate sized effect on this dimension: .43-.45. The large effect size in the present study may be explained by the fact that in order to deal with any other dimension, communication was necessary. Therefore the participants had more practice with communication than with any other segment because the necessity to communicate pervaded all dimensions.

Blanchard et al. (2009) argue that it is better to use observation to examine communication strategies as the effect size may be greater; they cite .84 in comparison with .17 through self-report measures. In the current research it was impossible to use the observation measures because the couples would not be comfortable discussing their own issues in public hence the use of the self-report scales. Moreover the effect size achieved through this method was comparable with that they found using observation.

Participants expressed particular appreciation for this segment of the programme because the skills learned could be taken home and used in their daily lives. This attitude is reflected in the literature which acknowledges the importance of including communication in MEPs; indeed one of the recommended goals for such programmes is the teaching of communication skills (Risch et al., 2003; Stahmann, 2000).

It is believed that the significant improvement registered in the experimental group was an effect of the presentations, both the in–session exercises and those given to be completed at home. The effect of home exercises was to hone the couple's skills in communication without violating the religious and cultural mores of the participants. They learned to respect and heed each others' messages and to
modify their behaviour. This reduced the risk of conflict and promoted mutual sympathy. These skills were rendered stable by the use of the home-exercises which were practised for the whole week until the following sessions. The new skills and habits formed here are similar to those in the study by Markman et al., (2001), where listening and avoiding judgment were pivotal to conducting constructive exchanges and making beneficial differences to the relationship.

Past research has indicated that communication gains for husbands may be less than those of their wives (Fawcett, 2006). However, contrary to expectation, when studying the female communication during Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Marital Programme Schilling et al., (2003) found that decreasing negative communication from women did not necessarily lead to a reduction of stress for both genders. In the present study there were no significant differences in gains on the communication subscale between husbands and wives immediately after the intervention. In the six month follow-up interestingly, some differences were evident with wives scoring higher on some items. This appears to be because husbands’ scores had dropped at this point, and appeared to be reverting to type. This suggests that whilst both sexes are amenable to learning communication skills, for husbands these effects may be shorter-lived than for wives. Thus, some research has shown that men accrue smaller benefits in communication at follow-up. (Miller et al., 2006), although most studies in Fawcett, (2006) Meta-Analysis shows that men’s scores were moderate at post-test on communication, and they fell to smaller yields at follow-up. They indicated that men might be willing to use new skills in order to satisfy programme providers or their wives at post-test. Yet, in daily life, they tend to abandon formalized communication methods as burdensome (In Fawcett, 2006 Meta-Analysis). The present researcher observed from the couples’ discussions that the husbands had, and fully expected to retain, the power to make final decisions. When wives were asked about this, they said that their husbands were the bread-winners, financing the family. They also spent more time outside the home and so were perceived as having more experience. This would appear to be underpinned by
the belief that the husband is the head of the family whom the wife should obey. However, the husbands’ scores did not return to baseline level, which shows that they did still retain most of the increments acquired during MEP. This could be that the communication had stabilised at a lower level or it could be that the men were going to continue to show a decline on this dimension over the following months. For this reason a further follow-up assessment is recommended, perhaps after two years, to ascertain any further changes in increment levels for both spouses.

**Problem Solving**

The majority of couples will encounter some problems during their marriage. The amount of dissension is less important than is the manner in which that discussion is managed. Spouses are upset when their attempts to defuse conflict fail to do so (Clement, Stanley, & Markmann, 2004; Gottman et al., 1998). The successes of an MEP in training spouses to manage problems in ways that will not harm their relationship bear witness to its effectiveness.

The importance of problem-solving is not surprising when one considers that this is an area that generates great interest among newly-weds. (Risch et al., 2003; Stahmann, 2000). Research findings have shown that the honing of problem solving skills in marriage enhancement programmes seem to afford the greatest benefit with the interaction between spouses and deal with real relationship problems (Fournier & Olson, 1986; Giblin, 1996; Halford et al., 2001; Sayers et al., 1998)

Through the current MEP, couples learned to build and sustain a common vision and a harmonious relationship in the presence of problems which they learn to solve together. The mindset of each spouse needs help to adjust to considering and understanding the other’s feeling. Communication skills need to be learned, as does the attitudinal shift from egocentricity to mutual consideration, the ability to imagine oneself in another’s position, is an important part of learning to compromise and to respect the other. This was the focus of the session in the
current MEP and the skills and habits formed are similar to those in the study by Burleson, (2003); Burnett, C.(1993) Fincham,(2004).

The skills and knowledge absorbed during this session led to the improvement in couple’s scores on this dimension from baseline to post-intervention. This indicated the increasingly positive changes of the experimental group over the comparison group.

The current findings support those found by previous research (e.g., Schneewind & Gehard, 2002; Roberts, 2000; Bader et al., 1980; Schumm et al., 2000). Conflict resolution strategies vary from couple to couple but Fincham et al., (2004) showed that forgiveness is an important requisite of healthy conflict resolution. In the current study it was also found that forgiveness was an indispensable element in a healthy relationship. Nursing grievances will damage the quality of closeness in a marriage, leading to diminished quality of communication and, in extreme cases, to a complete breakdown of communication. Oxford (2003) also found that the teaching of these skills promoted a significant improvement in the couples’ score from pre-to-post –intervention. Oxford also took a long-term view of marriage, as did the present study. Couples need to consider the consequences of their demands on each other, and the rightful place of self-discipline and mutual consideration. Immediate gratification of demands should not be sought if the long-term result would be to impose damaging strains on the relationship.

Markmann (1999) found that impacting these skills increased marital and sexual satisfaction and decreased problems for newly-married couples participating in the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Marital Programme (PREMP). This concurs with the findings of the current study. Gardner et al., 2004, show that enhancement programmes increased knowledge of marital relationship ideas, reduced future conflict, such as aggression, in marriage, thus having a positive effect on attitudes related to the future success of the marriage. As with the present study, this programme demonstrates the importance of the skills in sustaining a strong marriage, illustrated by the improvement sustained between
pre-to-post-intervention. Bradbury & Fincham, (1990); Christensen & Heavey, (1999); Guerney & Maxson, 1990; Carroll & Doherty, (2003); Sayers, Kohn, & Heavey, (1998); van Widenfelt et al., (1997) also corroborate the findings of the present study, which suggest that a link exists between marital satisfaction and the frequency with which dissension occurs, as well as the success of its resolution.

The inability to resolve conflict is a threat to marital stability and so maintenance of a healthy marriage necessarily includes the skills described earlier, taught in the present MEP. Mutual consideration, the ability to imagine the feelings of the other to accommodate and to compromise, are fruits of good communication, which in turn facilitate efficient problem-solving. Without good skills in these areas, the sustaining of a healthy and happy marriage is not to be expected. In the current study, the scores continued to rise, from post-to-six month follow-up, demonstrating the couple’s ability to resolve conflict in a more effective way following training.

A number of factors contributed to this success. One important feature of the present study was training the couples to meet each other half-way when solving problems, instead of leaving all the decision making to the husbands, which would be expected in Oman culture. The husbands learned, through the MEP, how to listen to their wives’ concerns and viewpoints, taking them into consideration. The couples learned to work as a team instead of working against each other, or having one spouse merely comply with the other’s decision, without consultation. This was managed in such a way as to retain respect for the religious and cultural sensibility of the couples. The sessions were designed not to incite rebellion but to teach couples how to work together when dealing with problems of any kind. These findings concur with the findings of Markmann et al., (2004) who suggested that couples who undergo MEPs will maintain their enhancement level of function for as long as two years at follow-up.
Bader et al., (1980) found that couples who experienced MEPs were more likely to face their differences, engage in constructive rather than destructive exchanges and do so earlier than a comparison group. In the current study results show that problem-solving had an effect size of .56 at six month follow-up. This surpassed that of Fawcett, 2006 which show an effect size of .48 at the same evaluation stage. Further, the current study results concurs with two earlier meta-analysis of MEPs (Giblin et al., 1985)

Some studies (e.g Olson, Spenkle & Russell, 2004; Whisman & Jacobson, 2007) have found a gender difference in the link between marital satisfaction and spouses' facility for adaptation and flexibility in the way that they deal with conflict. Although women's satisfaction showed no link with their ability to be flexible, husbands' satisfaction was positively linked with their own ability to be flexible during mutual exchanges with wives. Bisson, (2009) also found a gender difference in the realm of conflict resolution: women are more likely than men to make conciliatory moves. However, in the current study no gender differences were found on this dimension.

**Commitment**

Previous researchers (e.g. Amato and Rogers, 1999; Stanley, Whitton & Markmann, 2004) have shown that commitment is a vital dimension, addressed directly in MEPs because it is a central ingredient of strong, stable marriages. However, Fowers (2000) strongly asserted that the strength of a marriage is contingent on the existence of such virtues as justice, generosity, loyalty, and courage. Fowers further suggested that MEPs should not assume that such virtues are already present in the marriage relationship.

The present study addresses commitment, as well as the fair division of labour and forgiveness. Most MEPs may not describe these qualities in terms of moral conduct. Thus, commitment is worth attention. In the present study, the crucial dimension of commitment encompasses the teaching of the importance of
emotional health, the ability and the intent to express emotional support, and the ability to have recourse to one’s spouse in times of crisis.

In order to promote emotional health, couples in the present study have been taught many important points to enhance their commitment to each other. For example, it is important to begin marriage without family issues and concerns impacting on the newly married couples. Any dissonance between a spouse and his/her family should be resolved beforehand, or at least, as soon as possible.

The results on this dimension in the present study show that the experimental group improved their commitment scores over the comparison group at the three time points. These findings reflect those found by previous studies in the same field. For example, a survey of couples who had completed the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement programme found that 70% of respondents considered the commitment dimension helpful to their relationships (Stanley, Blumberg & Markmann, 1999). Another example is that of Kotral et al., (2010) who evaluated an MEP for Hispanic couples. The couple’s scores on the commitment scale were significantly higher for those who attended the workshop over a longer period, as demonstrated by the comparison of their pre-test to post-test scores.

Within this commitment dimension lies the task of role-balancing. Each spouse’s perception of these roles and how they should be distributed, will affect their perception of marital satisfaction. In 2001, Marks and Dollahite found that Western couples usually wanted to balance roles by discussing how labour within and without the home should be distributed. This would not be the case in traditional Omani marriages in which there are very clearly defined roles for each spouse. These roles are determined by culture and religion; they are not usually up for discussion. Wives take the bulk of responsibility for rearing and nurturing the children, doing the cooking and cleaning. The husbands are in charge of discipline and are the breadwinners, who work outside the home and provide the income.
The husbands in the present study learned that their commitment to marital fidelity and being good providers needed to be broadened to include perceptible demonstrations of commitment in the emotional as well as material sphere: spending time with their wives and children was as important as bringing home a good salary. Clearly, the new skills were taught in a manner sensitive to the cultural and religious mores of the couples, which might account for the sustained incremental improvement up to 6-month follow-up.

Family and Friends
A considerable number of researchers have found links between problematic experiences in the family of origin and troubled relationships in later life (Halford & Moore, 2002; Shapiro & Levendosky, 1999; Halford et al., 2001; Larson et al., 1998). The problems usually manifest themselves in a variety of ways: communication difficulties, emotional dependency, depression, anxiety and dysfunctional approaches to, and distrust of marriage. Although negative family of origin experiences cannot be altered, the meanings ascribed to them and the effects they produce in later life and relationships can be diminished by intervention. For the participants in the present study, the potential impact of the family of origin negative experiences and unwarranted interferences in their marital relationships have been thoroughly discussed. The best ways to avoid such negative effects were considered, as well as ways to reinterpret and reintegrate them into positive approaches to the present.

The dimension, Family and Friends, in the present study was measured at three time points, and the results indicate that an improvement had occurred in family of origin skills for the Experimental group at all three points. As with other dimensions, the Experimental group, in this dimension, tended to score significantly higher than the comparison group. This result is congruent with the findings of SYBIS programme which demonstrated that couples displayed significant progress towards realistic beliefs and positive attitudes to marriage, from pre-to post intervention (Parrott & Parrott, 1999). The results also corroborate Oxford (2003), who found that the participants in “SUCCES"
programme showed more realistic expectations from pre- to post-intervention and at six month follow-up.

In the current study, couples were taught to identify and share with each other their own expectations and to select those customs, behaviours and expectations they wished to retain. They were also encouraged to decide which ones were no longer suited to their new situation. Five elements have to be controlled by newly-weds: a. balancing nuclear with extended family time; b. balancing roles and rules; c. balancing the satisfaction of parents and spouses; e. concert about future obligations (Beaton et al., 2003). In the present study, the penultimate element, i.e., balancing roles and rules, would be less prominent because these are already strongly defined by cultural and religious norms.

This session taught the couples how to make mutually satisfactory arrangements concerning the amount of time to be spent with in-laws, and also how to solve problems or have discussions privately, without involving the extended family unless truly necessary. Scores rose steadily, giving testimony to the increasing confidence of newly-weds in their autonomy. They came to realise that they are now family units in their own right and are entitled to take responsibility for their lives together.

Financial management

Financial problems and dissatisfaction with one’s financial status can cause marital conflict and lead to marital breakdown (Poduska & Allred, 1990). One of the main objectives of the present study was to offer some education in good financial management to newly married couples. In this dimension couples were introduced to a computer-programme called Budget Planning in Excel, which would help them to organise their income and expenditure. The income was to be entered, with the regular outgoings, (e.g. Household expenses, etc) in order to predict and perhaps forestall any possible difficulties that might arise in the near or distant future. Those who did not wish to use a computer-programme were offered other strategies, for example, placing money for different purposes in a
series of envelopes. Where couples were both wage earners, the pooling of resources was discussed, and the importance of prioritizing was explained.

Results from the current study indicated that couples showed significant improvement from pre-to post-intervention and at the six-month follow-up. This finding is mirrored by that of many others in financial management literature (e.g., Mugenda et al., 1990; Kim et al., 2003). Joo and Grable, (2004), found that after fiscal management practices, the most dominant precursor of financial satisfaction was a person's financial stress level. Financial mismanagement was found to be the most influential predictor of fiscal difficulties. Lower levels of financial hardship (low stress) and greater satisfaction are linked with more competent fiscal management. Many previous studies (e.g., Joo & Grable, 2004; Kim et al., 2003); as well as the present one, have found sound financial management to be vital for strong and healthy marriages.

The present research, however, did not find gender differences on this dimension thereby contrasting strongly with other research. For example, Opiela, (2002) found that sex differences emerged in conflicts arising from financial distress. Amato and Rogers, (1997) suggested that women frequently blame poor fiscal management for precipitating divorce, whereas men are more likely to cite events such as bereavement or troubles with in-laws, or stress at work. One plausible explanation for the finding of no gender differences in the dimension of financial management of the present study is that it might be attributable to the fact that all the couples in the present study were newly married, and did not go through courses of financial hardships and crises that might influence their perceptions and views.

**Intimacy**

Intimacy and marital satisfaction are very important because there is a considerable difference between what people perceive as an ideal marriage and the reality of the experience (Crooks & Baur, 1996). Understanding of how to make a successful and satisfying marriage is scarce, given the popularity of the
institutions. Not enough is known about ways to maintain marital satisfaction and so ensure the durability and stability of the union (Arcus, 1992).

For this session, the couples were divided into the two groups: husbands and wives. In Omani culture, such a delicate subject as sexual intimacy would not be discussed publicly. Discussing in single-gender groups enabled the participants to speak more freely and with less embarrassment.

In order to form and maintain a truly intimate relationship, one needs certain abilities: the capacity for seeking and accepting care; to trust to the extent that one shares one’s innermost self. These abilities were fostered during the current MEP and necessarily included discussion of gender-specific differences in the area of sexual needs, e.g., women were more likely than men to require emotional support and expressions of affection.

The ability to seek care is what moves one person to reach out to the other at time of sadness, vulnerability and distress; whenever comfort is required. In order for intimacy to become a reality, this ability to trust and to reveal oneself has to be present and active (Pankepp, 2005; Gotmann, 2007; Cassiddy, 2001). This session focused on teaching couples how to engage these elements in their natures and use them in order to nurture and strengthen their marital intimacy, both emotionally and sexually.

The skills acquired during this session led to the increased scores of the experimental couples, on this dimension, from baseline to post. These findings corroborate those of previous studies, (e.g., Durana, 1996; Gotman, 1997). These studies found that providing sessions on intimacy resulted in improvement on this dimension from baseline to post intervention. This mirrors the experience of Dyer & Dyer, (1999); Cavedo & Guerney, (1999); Ridley et al., (1998); Oxford, (2003). Those studies found that participants in MEPs registered enhanced intimacy skills, compared with controls. The present study also reported increased satisfaction with intimacy. Participants in the current MEPs with an intimacy dimension, had more knowledge of sensual and sexual skills and were more likely
to express satisfaction and an awareness of continual development in the relationship, compared with the comparison group.

The participants in PREP (Markman et al., 1988) expressed appreciation for these sessions and stated that what they had learned contributed to an enhanced quality of intimacy in their marital relationship. This experience was repeated in the present study in which couples were asked to evaluate the session; they indicated that they considered it to be very helpful to them and also important for the future of their marital relationship.

Other studies have shown that the participants in emotional and sexual sessions maintained their improvement to six and eight month follow-up (Durana, 1996; Greeff and Malherbe, 2001), the current study also exhibited an encouraging trend in same direction. Couples not only continued to improve during the course of the MEP but also sustained their increments and continued to build on them: scores rose all the way through to the six month follow-up.

One of the important aspects of marriage is to achieve a mutually satisfying marital relationship. In Omani culture, continence before and outside of marriage is obligatory and so newly-weds come to their marital duties in innocence. Therefore, they need and appreciate good advice on how to develop and maintain a healthy and satisfying sexual relationship. This may well be a reason why the improvement was sustained and incrementally increased throughout the study, up to and including six month follow-up.

The present study explores the influence of intimacy on improvement of the marital relationship during couples’ first years of married life. These findings were that those who participated in recent MEP reported greater measures of intimacy than the comparison group. An improvement in MEP would be the provision of a session on intimacy for newly-married couples. Issues such as sexual needs, communication, gender-specific differences and ways to cope with difficulties, were covered in this session. An advantageous strategy of the present study proved to be the separation of men from women so that both genders could
speak freely about this delicate subject. It provided the opportunity for individuals to discuss their own particular needs.

Research has found that sexual satisfaction was an indication of changes in both the quality and the stability of marriages (Yeh et al., 2006). Those who were happy with their sexual relationship were more likely to be happy with their marriages. The current study also demonstrated evidence that couples who attended this MEP increased their experience of marital satisfaction.

This dimension, in previous studies, showed some interesting gender-specific differences. For instance, Oxford, 2003, found that on an emotional stability scale, wives rated themselves less emotionally stable than husbands rated themselves, and husbands rated wives as less emotionally stable than the wives rated their husbands, at Post-and follow-up time. Emotional expressiveness is shown to be different for men and for women (Ross & Van Willigen, 1997). Women were found to be more ready than men to express sadness, anger, love, and happiness. Men were shown to have more difficulty than women, with the identification and expression of emotion (Carpenter & Adiss, 2000). Women regarded their husbands’ expressions of emotion as more important to their marital satisfaction than did men, who valued their wives expression of emotion rather less in this regard. Men were more likely to use sexual congress to enhance emotional intimacy whereas women required emotional intimacy as a catalyst for sexual congress (Cordova et al., 2005). However, the present study found no gender-specific differences on this dimensions. However, it is to be noted here that further research in the area of intimacy with couples of long-term marriages in Oman might produce different or contrasting results.

The overall effect was steady improvement on all six dimensions. There was no effect for gender-specific differences or for type of marriage. Despite the success of this MEP, there are some limitations of this study, which will be discussed below.
6.4 Limitations

The most significant limitation was the absence of random sampling for both the experimental and control groups. Given the unavailability of a control group, a comparison group was formed instead. Although the groups might have differed on any of a number of variables, the baseline measurement showed no such differences. Since couples' participation in the Marriage Enrichment Programme was voluntary, the present researcher had to accept the limitations and maintain control by incorporating the limitation right into the research design. Therefore, the remaining selected couples for the empirical part of the study were divided into two groups: Experimental and Comparison; Ideally, random allocation would have been used to determine these groups but logistically this was impossible. The requirements for attendance combined with the need to provide the workshop sessions to groups of participants meant that it was necessary instead to assign the first couple who attended to the Experimental Group; couples who met the criteria but came after the first session started, were allocated as a Comparison group. This comparison group did not take part in the MEP.

Another limitation of the present study was the short-term follow-up of only six months. A longitudinal study monitoring the same couples over a period of one to five years would strengthen the validity of the results and enhance the evidence of MEPs' efficiency. However, given the time limits placed on the present research and the financial and logistic constraints represented by the terms of her scholarship contract, a long-term follow-up could not be accomplished. Nevertheless, a future longitudinal study could be built on the ground that the present study has provided encouraging evidence of the positive effect of MEP on promoting marital satisfaction.

A further limitation was that the target-group was composed exclusively of newly married Omani couples who were satisfied with their marriages. It might be more helpful to use a broader and larger sample, including people from different backgrounds (e.g., Low-income bracket, and with more diverse longer marital
experience). There is room in this field to address the important issue of marriage-maintenance after several years of marriage. Couples might benefit from marriage-maintenance programmes that help them refresh their appreciation of each other, and inspire them to strengthen their communication within marriage.

In the present study, the participants were exclusively Muslims. In order to replicate this study in other communities, a more varied demographic sample would be required. The exploration of cultural differences in perception of marital satisfaction for newly-weds would be useful. Understanding of what it means to be newly-weds and the expectations of satisfaction may vary considerably from one culture to another.

A fourth limitation was that all the study targets were from Muscat region. The decision to limit the study sample to Muscat was necessitated by many factors. First, it is logistically difficult to carry out the intended programme in different regions of the country, and it would be more difficult to meet the participants throughout the time of the programme and follow them up, because it is beyond the logistic facilities of the present researcher. Second, compared to the population in Muscat region, people in remote and distant regions and villages are more conservative, yet while they might be less inclined than urban dwellers to try something new in a pioneering capacity, especially in such a delicate realm as marriage, they might decide to try it after hearing good reports from those who have already taken the plunge.

The present researcher was further encouraged by the fact that the population in Muscat represents a socially heterogeneous community that would serve the purpose of this study. Nevertheless, it is to be noted that the results cannot be generalized to the general population beyond Muscat, and it is to be hoped that future studies may incorporate a larger geographic areas or across the nation. This limitation has been made on the basis that Couples' motives for scoring well might have been mixed which could have had an effect on the follow-up scores.
An important motive would be the desire to make successful marriage; it is almost unthinkable that anyone would want to make an unsuccessful marriage. Spouses want security for themselves and their children. They would be seriously dysfunctional if they did not. Another might be the knowledge that they were being studied and that would motivate couples to exert extra effort. It is natural for people to “play to the gallery” when they know that they are being watched. Everyone wants to make a good impression. There is also the consideration that the experimental group members were motivated by competition, to surpass the scores of the comparison group. This is an aspect of human nature: “it is us against them”; such a taste for competition is inculcated on the sports field and in the classroom. While the same feelings might have been felt by members of the comparison group, the fact that they did not attend the programme has definitely worked against their good intentions.

The last limitation to be presented here relates to the outcome assessment, including the scales used and the period of post and follow-up assessments. Most marital enrichment studies assert the need to choose scales that have the ability to measure the specific changes that couples will attempt to make after completing the programme. Some forms of self-monitoring would be advisable. In a similar manner, it is to be highlighted that the scope and focus of the present study did not allow for a deeper assessment of the inner feelings of the couples and the emotional changes that they might have gone through during the intervention. Naturally, had such assessment been possible, it would have provided a possibility of greater claims regarding the capabilities of the MEP.

Further, as noted by Blanchard et al. (2009) and Giblin et al. (1985), observational scales are more effective to assess some dimensions such as communication or problem solving skills than self-report scales. In the current research, however, it was impossible to use the observation scales because the couples would not be comfortable discussing their own issues in public; hence, the use of the self-report scales.
6.5 Considerations for future research

After observing the limitations and significant findings of the present study, a number of future research implications emerged. In future studies, randomly-assigned controls and longer follow-up monitoring would be desirable.

Assessing the long-term benefits of MEPs is important. A survey such as that of Williams et al., (1999) who contacted couples several years after they had completed MEPs, would be desirable. He sought to discover whether couples still used or valued knowledge or skills gained during their MEPs.

Large longitudinal studies of the protracted benefits of MEPs are needed, given the recent challenges to the importance of active communication (Gottmann et al., 1998; Hafen & Crane, 2003). The potential benefits of active communication or problem-solving skills deserve attention. Both long-term and short-term follow-up studies are required in order to gain a clear picture.

Individual components of MEPs need further study, both singly and in conjunction with others on given MEPs, to assess their efficacy. Studies analyzing individual components would offer a method of assessing each component’s contribution to the whole. There is a caveat here, and that is that some components in a given MEP may depend upon the ability to use skills taught in a previous session. There is also the consideration of the synergy resulting from the presence of all the components together which would render analysis of isolated components pointless (Snyder, 1999).

There needs to be a broadening of the research base so that different types of groups with various needs can be offered effective programmes driven by social status, religion, culture, income and risk factors (e.g., low income as a risk factor). The requirements of any given group may be assessed by preliminary testing via questionnaire responses, developmental stage of marriages, measures of general marital quality, length of marriages, consumer preferences. Some researcher
have already tried such techniques and found interesting results (Stanley et al., 2001). One example was Van Widenfelt et al., (1996) whose study concentrated on couples in danger of divorce because of a family-of-origin history of divorce behind either or both spouses.

The results sharply contrasted with those of other Premarital Enhancement Programmes, demonstrating the value of ascertaining which components might be required by specialized groups. Halford et al., (2001) studied groups in which the risk emanated from the wife having divorced parents and the husband having a father who abused his own wife. Their results contrasted with those of Van Widenfelt et al., (1996) and gave support to the PREPs use with this high-risk group. Research with MEP should ideally study intervention components together as well as separately, so that facilitators may custom-make the MEPs to meet the needs of specific group, for optimum success. In future it might prove instructive to conduct some comparative studies in order to assess the relative value of the components. For instance, run a triangular study with three different programmes: A, B, C, simultaneously. Let A have presentations, workshops and homework; let B have workshops and homework; let C have presentations and workshops. The results achieved by the three separated sets of couples could then be compared and contrasted with a view to identifying which course has the greatest overall effect and why.

Finally, MEP providers and researchers need to share information from their respective disciplines. The emphasis of the research varied considerably from one programme to the next. Community MEP providers would benefit from information that researchers could provide regarding the empirically supported mediations already on offer, as well as their technical skills to design fresh programmes. It is only in this manner that new ideas for the profitable combination of technical knowledge and practical application in the field of marriage enrichment can lead to the production of efficacious, and potent and attractive programmes which will appeal to funding agencies, couples, and facilitators alike.
6.6 Recommendations

The findings from the current study are thought-provoking and prompt the following recommendations.

1. The programme validity and effectiveness for individual couples calls for further research and experimentation. Understanding the situational factors that add to the complexity of marital relationship is an essential factor that has to be considered when working at the individual level. It is these factors which explain why some marriages maintain high marital satisfaction while it declines for others.

2. Further research can be carried out to cover similar populations in other parts of the Sultanates of Oman.

3. This study identified six basic dimensions that were found influential by enhancement and enrichment programmes in order to assist couples develop more satisfying relationships obviously, further work should be done with a larger sample in order to cross-validate these findings. The government bodies in the Sultanate of Oman are advised to encourage formal marital programmes for all categories; young, newly married or older married couples.

4. Further research can be carried out to follow up the same sample some more years following the programme enrolment.

5. Similar diagnostic research can be carried out targeting more restricted social categories suffering from marital relationship difficulties.

6. The MEP developed and experimented in this research can be embedded in the information and social campaigns carried out by the Omani Woman Associations.

7. This programme can work successfully with other newly married couples in other parts of the world, if and only if, the cultural and sociological variables are taken into account in its core design, the present programme has been
worked out in such a way that it embraces universal categories of marital relation to ensure its applicability elsewhere. Yet, the content of these ‘universal’ categories has to be linked to the socio-cultural norms of the community in which it is operated.

8. The MEP may make a vital contribution to repairing the new marriages and preventing more serious problems in established marriages even, in the UK, and especially the arranged marriages which are common practice among some social minorities. This conclusion has to be interpreted in the light of the immediately preceding conclusion. i.e. the possibility of applying this MEP elsewhere.

9. This programme might be adopted for non Muslim newly married couples. Given the high divorce rate, it could help keep couples out of the divorce court in future and save more marriages. Once again, this conclusion touches upon the applicability of the present MEP in other communities of different religions and races. The MEP – in its core design – makes no claim of being applicable to a particular community.

6.7 Conclusion

This study provides several conclusions which are summarised briefly below:

Firstly, the results of efficacy studies show that MEPs are valuable tools for assisting newly-married couples with their special needs and challenges, therefore such programmes have the potential to promote healthy marriages. The efforts made to improve MEPs yield even greater potential benefits for those who participate. This research has demonstrated an effective way to examine the dimensions of MEP at close quarters, illustrating their essential contributions to the enhancement of marriage.

Secondly, this study was the first comparative Marriage Enhancement Programme study to be conducted in Oman and despite being a quantitative,
descriptive evaluation it includes some explicit acknowledgment of current advantages of MEPs, as well as ideas for their improvement. The application of suitable criteria and standards of quality, as demonstrated in this study ensure the effectiveness of MEPs.

Thirdly, the importance of communication as MEP component is clearly demonstrated. Success in all other dimensions depends upon the standard of communication acquired by the couples. Communication should be recognized as essential and should be given more attention in future MEP designs.

Fourthly, the results of this study show that couples benefit from skills-based programmes. Couples clearly benefit from being trained in communication and problem solving as well as how to enhance commitment. All of this enhances their marital satisfaction.

Fifthly, consideration of the results and the manner in which the MEP was received leads to the conclusion that it is worthy of replication in other regions of Oman.

In conclusion, the MEP has been worth the heavy investment of time and effort which went into the preparation, organization, training, counselling and modelling which were required. In order to bring this project to fruition, it is to be hoped that this programme and adaptations of it, designed for diverse cultures and requirements, will be widely used in this field in the future.
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Appendix i: Tables

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Table 5.8 ANOVA on the Enrichment Marital Satisfaction Scale scores at Baseline

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<td>Family and friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>4.02 ,47</td>
<td>4.43 ,28</td>
<td>4.09 ,42</td>
<td>4.71 ,15</td>
<td>4.10 ,39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non arranged n=42</td>
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<td>3.83 ,47</td>
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<td>4.72 ,22</td>
<td>3.95 ,41</td>
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<td>3.03 ,43</td>
<td>4.40 ,33</td>
<td>4.02 ,42</td>
<td>4.72 ,16</td>
<td>4.71 ,18</td>
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<td>4.64 ,21</td>
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### Table 5.10 MANOVA on the Multidimensional Marital State Scale scores at Baseline, Post, and Follow-up

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<th>Effect</th>
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<th>Df</th>
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<td>12.000</td>
<td>638.000</td>
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<td>12.000</td>
<td>638.000</td>
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Table 5.11 ANOVA on the Multidimensional Marital state Scale scores at Baseline, Post, and Follow-up (MEP effect on the subjects)

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<td>.063</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>23.732</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
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<td>.011</td>
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### Financial Management

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<th>Times *Type of marriage</th>
<th>Times* Group* Type of marriage</th>
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### Intimacy

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<th>Times* Group* Type of marriage</th>
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<td>.022</td>
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<td>.002</td>
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<td>.054</td>
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Table 5.12 ANOVA on the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale scores at Baseline, Post, and Follow-up (tests of between subjects effects)

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<td>.028</td>
<td>1.047</td>
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Table 5.13 Means of Post session evaluation of MEP dimensions

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<th>Type of marriage</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Problem solving</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>Family &amp; Friends</th>
<th>Financial Management</th>
<th>Intimacy</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arranged-marriage</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>4.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Arranged-marriage</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4.88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>4.84</td>
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Table. 5.14 Means of Post session evaluation of MEP materials

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<th>Type of marriage</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
<th>In session exercise</th>
<th>Homework's</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Arranged-marriage</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Arranged-marriage</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>4.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4.88</td>
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Table. 5.15 Means of Post session evaluation of the importance of MEP

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<th>Type of marriage</th>
<th>Programme Importance</th>
<th>importance to your relationship</th>
<th>importance to the group</th>
<th>Using the skills in the future</th>
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<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.96</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4.88</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>4.98</td>
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</table>
Table 5.16: Means of Items 1 and 14 by sex at Follow-up time

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<th>Wives</th>
<th>P</th>
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<tr>
<td>Follow-up</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always like to listen carefully when we discuss different issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>.038</td>
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<tr>
<td>My spouse and I like to share in making key decisions</td>
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</table>
Appendix ii

Omani Women's Society, Muscat

Hand in Hand for a Happy and Stable Family

For the first time in Oman: Free Educational Programme!

In collaboration with Al-Rashid Center for family Development and the Happy Family Centre for Family Consultations, the OWS, Muscat organizes a series of workshops on how to a happy family life.

Participants will receive training on the most effective styles to improve and enhance family and marital relations. Would like to find out how to protect your marital life from potential crises? Come and take part in this programme so as to learn:

1. Best methods of communication between spouses;
2. Best method to solve marital relation problems;
3. How to maintain interaction with relatives and friends without affecting marital relation;
4. How to maintain a passionate relation between spouses within a happy and stable family atmosphere;
5. Designing and managing family budget and financial affairs;
6. Handling well-tuned social, family, and personal commitments.

The Programme will be implemented by highly qualified professionals who have long expertise in this field.

The Programme commences on 17/10/2009 up to 27/11/2009 for one day per week (5:00 -7:00 pm).

Venue: Omani Women's Society, Muscat

For further information, please call: 24693504/24602800/24487050/96724885

Participants will be awarded Valuable Gifts!!
Couple Risk Assessment interviews

For participating in marriage education programme

Section 1: Telephone Interviews:

HELLO, I am calling from (Omani Woman Society). I am a doctoral student in UWIC University. My name is (--). I want to gathering some information about you. This project is conducted to participate you in a marriage enrichment programme. Your telephone number has been chosen from the couples, who register their names to participant in this programme, and I would like to ask you some questions about you and you're married. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to, and you can end the interview at any time. Any information you give me will be confidential. If you have any questions, I will provide a telephone number for you to call to get more information.

Marital Status
My first question is
- Are you...?
  - Married
  - Divorced
  - Widowed
  - Separated
  - Never married
  - Refused
- How long have you been married? ------------------------------
- How many children live in your household?
Number of children

- None
- Refused

Divorce history or other separate experiences

The second question are about divorce history or other separate experiences, now thinking about your divorce history, which includes separate experiences, are you suffering from any of these problems?

- Yes
- No
- If yes what?
- Refused

Section 2: Face to face interviews:

Couple Risk Factors

I’d like to ask you some questions about Couple Risk Factors such as Social Status, Therapy History, Aggression, Affair History Separation, and Alcohol History. This information will allow us to better understand your problems. This is a sensitive topic. Some people may feel uncomfortable with these questions. Remember that your answers are strictly confidential. Please keep in mind that you can ask me to skip any question that you do not want to answer.

Social Status

- Would you say that in general your Social Status is—
  - Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- If Poor Why? .........................................................
- Refused

Therapy History and aggression:

Now thinking about your physical health, which includes physical illness and injury, are your physical health good?

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- If Poor Why? .........................................................
- Refused

Mental Health

Now think about mental health, which includes stress, depression, and problems with emotions, are you suffering from any of these problems?

- Yes
- No
- If yes what? .............................................................
- Refused
- During the past years, for about how many days did poor physical or mental health keep you from doing your usual activities, such as self-care, work, or recreation?
  - __ Number of days
  - None
  - Don’t know / Not sure
  - Refused

**Emotional Support**

The next two questions are about emotional support and your satisfaction with life.

-In general, how satisfied are you with your married?
  - Very satisfied
  - Satisfied
  - Dissatisfied
  - Very dissatisfied

Why? ________________________________________________________________
  - Don’t know / Not sure
  - Refused

-Are you limited in any way in any activities because of physical, mental, or emotional problems?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Don’t know / Not Sure
  - Refused
Aggression Problems

The following questions are about aggression problems you may have.

Now thinking about your aggression problems, which includes violence, are you suffering from any of these problems?

- Yes
- No
- None
- If yes what?  
- Don’t know / Not sure
- Refused

Affair and alcohol history:

Now thinking about your affair and alcohol history, are you suffering from any of these problems?

- Yes
- No
- If yes what?  
- Don’t know / Not sure
- Refused

Please add any other difficulties:
Participate Consent Form

We would like to offer you our best wishes on your upcoming (newly) wedding. Second, we would like to invite you to participate in a new and exciting programme for (newly married) couples in Oman. This new programme is called “Marriage education Programme”. The programme aims to compare two different groups. One of the groups serves as the experimental group – which is enrolled in the programme – whereas the other serves as a comparison group – which does not enroll in the programme. Marital attitudes of both groups are measured before the programme, immediately following the programme, and six months follow up. This evaluation intends to measure any positive, negative, or null changes in the experimental group marital attitudes. The MEP will be introduced once a week on Saturday or Monday or Wednesday, from 4:30 pm to 7:00 pm, and we'll have one brief meeting (about an hour in length) before starting the programme (date still to be arranged). We will let you know the date of our brief initial meeting, and look forward to seeing you then and on October.

Having read the above information, I agree to take part in this programme trial which involves allocated be on one of the two groups.

I understand that if I agree to take part in the experimental group, I will need to provide information that allows the assessment of the effectiveness of the programme. All information will be treated in the strictest confidence. I understand that I can withdraw my consent to participate in the programme at any time without affecting the programme I may receive.

Participant name ........................    Signature  ......................

Date  ........................

Researchers name  ......................    Signature  ......................

Date  ........................
Measuring a Marital Enrich Programme (MEP) Efficiency for Omani Newly Married Couples

After compliments,

Sub. Referee’s Assessment

Dear Dr/ Professor

In fulfillment of a Doctoral Degree at the College of Health Sciences, Department of Psychology/ UWIC University, the researcher Asila Al-Mughairy is conducting a study entitled: The Impact of MEP on Improving Marital Relationship of Omani Newly Married Couples. One requirement of the study aimed to develop a measurement scale in order to evaluate the efficiency of the programme following its implementation. The measurement scale is meant for pre and post programme implementation. It comprises (69) items distributed onto six dimensions, namely: Communication, Problem Solving, Commitment, Family and Friends, Financial Management, and Intimacy.

In view of your extensive expertise and your specific specialization in Counseling, social field, Psychology, and Educational Measurement, you are kindly requested to pass your judgment on this scale in terms of:

- Clarity of Statement
- Statement fitness for purpose
- Statement relevance to the dimension it is allocated for
- Any other observations and proposition you find appropriate such as omission, addition, or amendment.

Your effort is very much appreciated.

Lots Regards

Referee’s Name: ........................................
Place of Work: ....... Position: ...........................
Position: ............... Specialisation: ..................
Multidimensional Marital state Scale

Introducing the task:

Dear participant couples,

Marriage is the source of continuity for human life, and the resulting family from the marriage bond is the fundamental building block for any human community. Based on this universal convention, sociologists, social reformers, governments, as well as civil societies have all been exerting continuous efforts to help people lead successful marriages, and build up cohesive and supportive families.

The present study comes as a humble contribution to these efforts, within the limits of its coverage and inclusion.

The present researcher, who has been working for the Ministry of Social Development for the last 14 years, has become fully aware of the increasing amount of troubles that faces Omani married couples – the newly married in particular. The noticeable high rate of divorce could only be taken as supportive evidence for this claim.

For the above, and other relevant reasons, this 'intervention programme' is designed as an empirical part of a Doctoral Degree research project targeting newly married in Oman, with the objective of providing assessment and support.

The questionnaire that you have now is an integral part of the project, designed specifically to measure the Programme’s effectiveness.

We would like to assure you that your responses, and all the information that you will kindly provide will be RESRICTIELY and EXCLUSIVELY used for academic purposes. Personal information (if any) will be treated with maximum confidentiality.

Your assistance; by accurately and honestly responding to the various items of this questionnaire will be highly appreciated. It would also be a token for your willingness to contribute to family and social protection.

Thank you for your time and efforts.
Response Instructions:

1. To ensure objective responses, please make sure that each spouse responds INDEPENDENTLY without any mutual discussion during the task.
2. Each spouse is provided with a separate sealed envelope. Please return the sheets to the same envelope and make sure that you close it well.
3. You may need 20-30 minutes to finish the task. We prefer you do it in ONE session.
4. The questionnaire comprises two parts:

   First: One page for biographical data

   Second: Sixty five (65) numbered positive statements with five (5) sequential options opposite to each:

   (Strongly Agree) (Agree)

   (neither agree) (Disagree) (Strongly Disagree)

5. Fill in the biographical data first, then move to respond to the questionnaire items.

5. Tick (√) the option that you think most appropriately reflects your response to each statement. (Tick ONLY ONE option for each statement)
6. As these statements relate to your marriage views, experience attitudes and behavior, we expect that you will not leave out any of the questionnaire's items.
One: Biographical Data

Please tick (√) one.

Sex:  Male ( )  Female ( )

Age:
18-25 yrs. ( )  26-33 yrs. ( )  34-41 yrs. ( )  42 yrs. + ( )

Education level:
Primary School ( )  Secondary School ( )
University ( )  Higher ( )

Have you known your spouse before marriage?  Yes ( )  No ( )

If 'Yes', for how long?  ( ) Days  ( ) Month(s)  ( ) Year(s)

Date of marriage:  Day / Month / Year

Type of marriage:
Arranged marriage ( )  Non-arranged marriage ( )

Monthly income:  ........................................
Less than RO 150 ( )  Between RO 150 and 300 ( )
Between RO 300 and 500 ( )  Between RO 500 and 700 ( )
Between RO 700 and 1000 ( )  More than RO 1000 ( )
## TWO: Questionnaire Items:

### Multidimensional Marital State Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I always like to listen carefully when we discuss different issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I can control my anger while having a row with my spouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I know that some problems take time to be solved.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. While talking to my spouse I feel I can tell him/her anything</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My spouse and I agree about the role and responsibility of each other in our relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I give my spouse extra support when he/she asks for it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I think it is okay to criticize my spouse in any situations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I keep putting things off that need to be done</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Sometimes I feel that our friends can support us more than our families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My family sometimes annoys my spouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I forgive quickly after having argument with my spouse</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I find it difficult to express my feelings toward my spouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I agree about how we will make financial decisions between us</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. My spouse and I like to share in making key decisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I feel satisfied with my spouse way of solving problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I'm thinking about stopping contact some friends who may affect our relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Always our conflicts ends by hurting feelings and crying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. My spouse and I have the same ideas about spending and saving money</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Sometimes I feel that we will split up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. My spouse and I share financial responsibilities evenly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. When we have conflicts my spouse brings back all my previous mistakes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I do everything to make my spouse happy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I enjoy sharing activities with my spouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I am very happy to help my spouse to achieve his/her goals in life</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Being in control of the conversation makes me feel safe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. I like to spend my holidays with my spouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. My spouse has seemed to dislike touching or holding me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. I feel I am right about everything</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I discourage my spouse from socialising with friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. My spouse ignores my views &amp; opinions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. I like to tell my friends or family secrets about my marriage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. I get irritated when my spouse compares between our families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. We should invest for our children's future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. I feel difficult to listen to my spouse's worries and problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. I try to be sensitive to my spouse's feelings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. My family support makes my relationship strong.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. I can't trust my spouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. I feel embarrassed to discuss with my spouse about our sexual relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. I lash out at my spouse when we have conflicts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. My family problems affect our relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. I like to provide my spouse with a gift as a surprise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. I find it hard to make suitable decisions in suitable time</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>I can understand my spouse's financial obligations and goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>My spouse always disagrees with our obligation budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>I make promises to change my behavior but I don't keep them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>I feel uncomfortable with my spouse's family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>My spouse and I need to improve the way that we deal with our conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>I can't cope with financial emergency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>I like to express my affection by hugging and kissing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>I have poor financial management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>Always I'm trying to solve our problems inside the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>I keep telling my spouse that I love him/her frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>I support my spouse by giving him/her positive opinion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>Our financial situations does not affect my life style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>I am happy that my spouse is good-looking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>My spouse and I have had disagreements about money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>Sex is an important part of our marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>My family does not interfere with our relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>Recently I feel our relationship much better than previously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>I feel happy when I spend romantic time with my spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. I feel inhibited when my spouse interrupts me during important conversations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. I don't feel attracted to my spouse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. My spouse pretend that I am totally focused on myself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. It's difficult to keep my spouse satisfied</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale**

Please answer the following questions as carefully as possible. You may choose not to answer specific questions, but you are encouraged to answer as many as possible. Please indicate your current level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction for each of the items listed below.

**Questionnaire Items:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very dissatisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dissatisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>somewhat dissatisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. My partner and I understand each other perfectly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I am not pleased with the personality characteristics and personal habits of my Partner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am very happy with how we handle role responsibilities in our marriage.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My partner completely understands and sympathizes with my every mood.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I am not happy about our communication and feel my partner does not understand me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Our relationship is a perfect success.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I am very happy about how we make decisions and resolve conflicts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I am unhappy about our financial position and the way we make financial decisions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I have some needs that are not being met by our relationship.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I am very happy with how we manage our leisure activities and the time we spend together.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I am very pleased about how we express</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I am not satisfied with the way we each handle our responsibilities as couples.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I have never regretted my relationship with my partner, not even for a moment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I am dissatisfied about our relationship with my spouse, in-laws, and/or friends.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I feel very good about how we each Practice our beliefs and values.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Marriage Enrichment Programme Evaluation

Tick (✓) the option that you think most appropriately reflects your response to each statement. (Tick ONLY ONE option for each statement)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How helpful were the following sessions?</td>
<td>Not Helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication CO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving PS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment COM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and friends FF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial management FM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy IN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How helpful were the following materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How helpful were the presentations?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not helpful  Some what  undecided  helpful  very helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helpful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How helpful were the exercises?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not helpful  Some what  undecided  helpful  very helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helpful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How helpful were the homework's?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not helpful  Some what  undecided  helpful  very helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helpful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How importance was the programme?

1  2  3  4  5
Not Importance  Somewhat  undecided  Importance  very
Importance  Importance

How important was the programme to your relationship?

1  2  3  4  5
Not Importance  somewhat  undecided  Importance  very
Importance  Importance

How important was the programme to the group?

1  2  3  4  5
Not Importance  somewhat  undecided  Importance  very
Importance  Importance

How important for using the skills in the future?

1  2  3  4  5
Not Importance  somewhat  undecided  Importance  very
Importance  Importance
Mode of operation

Marriage Enrichment Training Manual

For Newly Married Couples
CONTENTS

PREFACE

This manual adapted and developed from

- Mary C.(2003)

OVERVIEW

Theoretical and Research Basis for Newly Married Treatment

Context

STRUCTURE OF SESSIONS

Marital Enrichment Programmeme Sessions

Session 1: Communication
Session 2: Problem solving
Session 3: Commitment
Session 4: Family and friends
Session 5: Finances management
Session 6: Intimacy
Context

The decision to marry is one of the most important life decisions. However, many people invest little time or effort in preparing for this life changing event. Most couples spend more time preparing for the wedding ceremony do on preparing to cope with marriage life.

This manual introduces the marriage enrichment programme for newly married couples. The purpose of developing the manual was to structure the treatment offered to enhance the experience of newly married couples and to make comparisons to explore the differences existing between the experimental and comparison group.

The current training programme attempts to help couples enhance and enrich their communication, problem-solving, commitment, family and friends, finances skills, intimacy. Further, it will apply techniques that have been shown to improve the relationship of the participants interested in improving their relational skills within the context of a programme designed to enhance an ongoing, committed relationship.

This training will introduce three disparate intervention strategies or methods of learning on various aspects of marital relationship functioning. The interventions what will be employed include: 1. Didactic instruction and presentation with in-session exercises 2. Home assignment. And 3. couples will fill assessment before and after completing the intervention, and six month Follow-up assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme. Other questionnaires will be used to determine: 1. the helpfulness of each content area of the programme, particularly the programme’s effectiveness in achieving stated goals. 2. The usefulness of the three intervention learning strategies employed by the programme. 3. The participants satisfaction with the programme and 4. The changes in their marital relationship dynamics.
Couples will be meeting for two hours and half once a week for six consecutive weeks. Couples will be given a gift in order to participate in the group. Each session will start with a group discussion of the last module’s weekly take-home assignment. Then, introducing the new ideas and skills in a didactic format which will be completed by between-couple discussion of the topic. Couples then will work through within-intervention exercises while the facilitators give the participants coaching and corrective feedback on their progress. Some exercises will require the couples to work privately on an issue while other will be conducted as a group. Take-home assignment will be assigned each week to help couples put into practice the skills they learned within the programme.

At the end of the entire research programme and again one six month later, participants will be contacted by telephone or email and the Packets will be delivered or sent by post to them depending on their preferences. They will be asked to follow-up the assessment as part of the extensive questionnaire packets. These packets include instructions that partners should complete the questionnaires independently of each other, to indicate their satisfaction with the intervention.

Aims

- To help couples enhance and enrich their relationship with the aim of improving the quality of their life, by exploring the strengths and growth area in their early relationship.
- To improve couple’s communication skills.
- To strengthen the couple’s mutual problems-solving skills.
- To develop financial plans.
- To develop personal, couple, and family of origin commitment skills.
- To improve sensitivity toward one’s own needs and the needs of the partner.
Session 1: Communication

Aims

➢ To improve marital communication skills
➢ To improve speaking and listening skills
➢ To learn how to detect inadequate communication behaviour and learn to overcome inadequacies
➢ To aid the development of constructive emotional and verbal communication

The focus of this session was learning how to distinguish constructive communication behaviours (e.g. listening, reconciliation, paying compliments) from destructive behaviours (e.g. criticism, belligerence, withdrawal). The principle underlying this session was that learning how to discuss situations, feelings and experiences in a positive manner will help couples to develop empathy and understanding. This session incorporated self-assessment exercises, a formal presentation and a series of supervised role-play scenarios, culminating in instructions for home assignment exercises.

- The session will begin with (30) minutes presentation focussed on speaking, Listening, and processing skills. Developing speaking skills which will aid the couples’ understanding of each other’s feeling and ideas. The aim of this is to help each spouse to hear and accept the message of the other without feeling threatened and consequently withdrawing and rejecting the message. Listening taking turns to speak, avoiding insults and shouting, are all important skills which will promote a happy and successful marriage. Learning to discuss
your situation, feelings and experiences will help couples to develop empathy and understanding.

Processing; such as summarizing, attending, reflecting, and affirming are essential. It is also important that couples grow to understand the value of each other point of view. Taking turns, communicating, understanding before responding, refraining from criticism, judging, or attending to one’s own reaction, are all listening skills that will be taught in the first session.

- The couples will be invited to ask any questions they may have in (10) minutes.
- 10 minutes break (Tea & Coffee).
- 20 minutes in session exercises, the couples will be introduced to more effective ways of discussing differences, through the widely used speaker, Listener, and processor technique. Communication skills may be helped by engaging in supervised role-play. This is designed to help couples distinguish between constructive communication behaviours (listening, speaking, and reconciliation, making compliments, and so on) and destructive communication behaviours (criticism, belligerence, contempt, withdrawal, defensiveness and so on). Each partner will be asked to assess problematic communication styles in his or her behaviour by mean of a short exercises. More constructive ways of discussing differences will be explored through supervised in session exercises. Please follow the instructions wrote below carefully it is important to hone your skills now, so that when you have to make a good communication, the ability will be already be enough to begin with.

- The co-facilitators will give the couples the coaching and the feedback about the in session exercises in (20) minutes.
Describe the home assignment to the participants in (10) minutes (see appendix).
Session 2: Problem solving

Aims

➢ To strengthening the couple’s mutual problem-solving skills;
➢ To encourage working together to address problems;
➢ To help couples handles disagreements in a non-harmful way;
➢ To focus on long-term outcomes rather than just immediate wishes.

The session was designed to help couples consider immediate problems in the context of the long-term outcome for their relationship. This session began with coaching and feedback from the previous home assignment; after this there was presentation, followed by a question and answer session, then exercises based on problem inventories using a ten step process for resolving conflict. After this, couples were given coaching and feedback on those exercises and the session ended with a briefing for the home assignment.

- In this session (30) minutes presentation will be focussed on problem solving skills. Which will help couples handle disagreements in non-harmful ways, and often involves a series of steps through which to reach some decision regarding a problem or task. Both sets of skills will be taught in the second treatment session by promoting a long-term view of marriage.

This view will help both spouses make sure that their immediate wishes and needs do not supersede their desire to find solutions that makes both partners satisfied over the course of their relationship. The treatment will also
teach that although each partner may have little motivation to compromise, problems or requests for change are occurring in the context of a deeply caring relationship. It is believed that if couples can keep that perspective, the caring feelings will often allow partners to stretch to meet the needs of the other in order to decrease their partner’s distress or increase their partner’s satisfaction.

In addition, the treatment will teach couples to work together to fight problems instead of each other. Acceptance of unresolvable problems which often occur in long term relationships is also promoted as Gottman and Gottman (1999) noted that around 69% of marriages will have some type of perpetual problem or irreconcilable difference that can take an enormous toll on the marital satisfaction of both spouses if handled the wrong way.

- The couples will be invited to ask any questions they may have in (10) minutes.

- 10 minutes break (Tea&Coffee).

- 20 minutes in session exercises, the couples will be asked to review their problems inventories together, and make a list of the problems that they rated as less serious. They will be asked to try to concentrate on specific problems and seek specific solutions from using the more effective ways of problem solving, through the ten steps for resolving conflict wrote below. The exercise will build up their skills and increase their confidence in that method.
Ten steps for resolving couple conflict

1. Set a time and place for discussion.
2. Define the problem or issue of disagreement.
3. How does each of you contribute to the problem?
4. List past attempts to resolve the issue that were not successful.
5. Brainstorm – list all possible solutions.
6. Discuss and evaluate these possible solutions.
7. Agree on one solution to try.
8. Agree on how each individual will work toward this solution.
9. Setup another meeting.
10. Reward each other as you each contribute toward solution.

- The co-facilitators will give the couples the coaching and the feedback about the in session exercises in (20) minutes.

- Describe the home assignment to the participants in (10) minutes (see appendix).
Session 3: Commitment

Aims

- To develop and share goals as a couple to promote closeness and bonding;
- To improve couples’ awareness of each partner’s needs to achieve their shared goals.

The focused of this session was to enhance two fundamental aspects that underpin commitment. The first was to develop and maintain a long-term view for marital success to enable the couple to face inevitable ups and downs of their marital relation. The second was to pass the message that commitment means readiness of partners to give up some choices for the sake of their marital relation.

The session started by providing couples coaching and feedback from the previous home assignment; inviting the couples to raise any questions they might have as a brainstorming for the session. Then the couples were asked to use their communication skills to responses for the following questions: What kind of commitments are they aware of? How powerful are these commitments? What kind of a commitment seems most powerful? What are options they would likely take to achieve their stated goals? The couples were encouraged to reflect on the personal conviction and experiences.
• The co-facilitators will give the couples the coaching and the feedback about the home assignment from the previous session in (20) minutes.

• In this session (30) minutes presentation will be focussed on commitment. The two fundamentals which underpin the essence of commitment. First, developing and maintaining a long-term view is crucial for marital success. Fundamentally, what commitment brings to a marriage is a long-term perspective that allows partners to weather the inevitable ups and downs in marital satisfaction. Second, commitment means making a choice to give up some choices. Of course, at times, this presents a serious problem for individuals because one cannot have certain things in life by hanging onto everything in life. We end up with much less in life when we try to hang on to everything rather than being more devoted and dedicated to a particular path or partner. In addition, presentation will explore the various ways in which different people experience commitment. Making immediate, short-term, and long-term choices that preserve the marital relationship; an explicit focus on the need to be intentional and protective of the relationship in everyday moments was emphasized. The need for continual commitment, growth, and prioritization of the marital relationship will also be discussed. In addition, setting relationship goals, making plans to work towards these goals, and developing shared dreams were other aims of this session.

• The couples will be invited to ask any questions they may have in (10) minutes.
• 10 minutes break (Tea & Coffee).
• 20 minutes in session exercises, the couples will be asked to use their communication skills to responses for the questions. What kind of commitments are their aware of? How powerful are these commitments? What
kind of a commitment seems most powerful? How they can use the six steps plan wrote below for setting and achieving goals?

A six steps plan for setting goals

1. Commit yourself to a specific goal.
2. Habits....break old and start new ones.
3. Action ...take one step at a time.
4. Never give up...lapses might occur.
5. Goal- oriented ...focus on the positive.
6. Evaluate and reward yourself.

- The co-facilitators will give the couples the coaching and the feedback about the in session exercises in (20) minutes.

- Describe the home assignment to the participants in (10) minutes (see appendix).
Session 4: Family-of-origin and friends

Aims

➢ To help couples acquire skills of establishing constructive relations with well-selected individuals from their local community and the community at large;
➢ To build up couple’s ability to recognise friendship rights and commitments so as to maintain successful relations with others as means to improve their general social attitude as positive social members;
➢ To improve couple’s realistic beliefs and attitudes about marriage and about each other.

The focus of this session was on a family setting as being a key institution that plays a very significant role in ensuring the overall well-being of each of its members. The message to be conveyed in this session was that each family member has an emotional bond and strong sense of belonging and has expectations from other members. The moral as well as the spiritual role of family setting was highlighted as being of a very special issue in the Omani situation in particular and Arabic situation in general.

Second to the family dimension, the friendship dimension was also involved. However, and because of this dimension is potentially of less weight than family dimension – particularly with the context of this study – this session gave it only its due attention. In this sense, couples were introduced to this dimension only as much as it relates to the improvement of their social attitude towards each other and towards other people.
• The co-facilitators will give the couples the coaching and the feedback about the home assignment from the previous session in (20) minutes.

• In this session (30) minutes presentation will be focussed on a family as it is a sacred institution that plays a role model in ensuring a general well being of each of her members. Each family member has an emotional bond and strong sense of belonging and has expectations of each other. Every family is a social institution whose major function, among others, is to give her each member their spiritual and moral upbringing, pass over their traditions, customs, social values, and acceptable behaviour. A family does not only develop a common outlook to life but try to protect their values and each other and ensure their survival and prepare family members to acquire and learn some skills and abilities which can help them to cope with demands of life. From this sacred institution members learn their roles when new families develop after marriages, use the family as a point of reference, go back to the family in case of need and crises and depend on the family for emotional, social, and financial support.

• selecting desirable contacts, improvement of realistic beliefs about and attitudes toward marriage and each other. The fourth session will try to help couples identify spoken and unspoken contracts, share them with each other, and choose which ones they would like to keep and which ones are remnants from their respective families-of-origin or other past relationships that are no longer helpful to the current one. Patterns of engagement versus disengagement distance versus closeness and ways to express love and anger were all topics that were included in this exploration of expectations and one’s family-of-origin.

Cognitive restructuring involves learning skills to recognize and change a dysfunctional thinking pattern that contributes to seeing one’s self, one’s partner, and one’s relationship in an unrealistic light. These skills, explore the negative
attributions individuals make about their spouse’s behaviour. However, unrealistic expectations for marriage contracts were also explored as these phenomena are conceptually closer to family-of-origin issues.

- The couples will be invited to ask any questions they may have in (10) minutes.
- 10 minutes break (Tea & Coffee).
- 20 minutes in session exercises, the couples will be introduced to more effective ways of managing personal history and arriving at a realistic and healthy view of marriage and one another. For example, couples will be helped to identify spoken and unspoken contracts, share them with each other, and choose which ones they would like to keep and which ones are remnants from their respective families-of-origin or other past relationships that are no longer helpful to the current one.

The following two exercises help you to explore the social and spiritual values and practices which will have a powerful influence in your marriage. Use the communication technique to deal with some difficult issues.

**Social support**

1. Do you have people in or out of your family network upon whom you can rely for support, encouragement, and perhaps occasionally for admonition?
2. Do you consider that support you receive to be adequate. If the answer to that one is no then what do you think you could do as a couple to increase your support network?
Honouring your values

Which values are central to both of your lives? Spend time to consider this question independently. Then share your thoughts with each other.

- The co-facilitators will give the couples the coaching and the feedback about the in session exercises in (20) minutes.

- Describe the home assignment to the participants in (10) minutes (see appendix).
Session 5: Finances management

Aims

➢ To improve of household's financial management;
➢ To help couples develop their own family financial management pattern;
➢ To introduce couples with commonly used mechanisms in family financial affairs management;
➢ To introduce couples to a variety of good practices in managing financial family affairs;
➢ To help couples recognise variables related to the use of recommended financial management practices, and variables related to satisfaction with financial status.

As it can be predicted from the above list, the focus of this session was on introducing couples to financial knowledge that can take them towards managing financial affairs. That was made on the conviction that successful management of a family's financial affairs enhances overall couples’ satisfaction. This was supported by the fact that a high percentage of marital breakdown attributed to financial crisis. Therefore, couples were encouraged to discuss their personal views and preferences regarding various financial aspects of their families. Ideas and experience exchange were also encouraged and conclusive remarks were drawn as well.

• The co-facilitators will give the couples the coaching and the feedback about the home assignment from the previous session in (30) minutes.
- In this session (40) minutes presentation will be focussed on households financial management, helping newly married couples to develop their family financial management patterns. Identifying variables related to use of recommended financial management practices, and variables related to satisfaction with financial status. This session its essential for couple to develop affective financial management practices, so that they can help to secure their financial satisfaction in the present and the future.

In this session the focus will be on how a person manages his/her personal finance. This has been shown to be a major factor contributing to satisfaction or the want of it with one's financial status. Research show that people who use more of the financial management practices recommended by experts generally report being more satisfied with their financial status than people who employ fewer of the recommended strategies. Factors that are related to financial management practices are therefore important areas for the married couples, especially the recently married couples. The purpose of this session is to focus on variables related to the use of recommended financial management practices, and the subsequent effect of these variables on financial satisfaction of recently married individuals.

This session will investigate the direct and combined effects of financial knowledge and attitudes on the pertinent management practices, and their subsequent effect on financial satisfaction.

- The couples will be invited to ask any questions they may have in (10) minutes.

- 10 minutes break (Tea&Coffee).
• 20 minutes in session exercises, the couples will be asked to complete the Budget Worksheet and they each make a list of their short and long term financial goals. The co-facilitators may help facilitate a realistic and workable budget and help them set short and long term financial goals.

• The co-facilitators will give the couples the coaching and the feedback about the in session exercises in (30) minutes.

• Describe the home assignment to the participants in (10) minutes (see appendix).
Session 6: Physical and Emotional Intimacy

Aims

- To help couples recognise the value of mutual satisfaction of their physical and emotional needs;
- To improve couples' awareness of the importance of a fair and mutual exchange within the context of dyadic coping.
- To enhancing the couple's ability to detect any inequality and dependence in the relationship, both physically and emotionally;
- Improving sensitivity toward one's own needs and the needs of the partner

Bearing in mind the sensitivity as well as the significance of this dimension in the context of this study, this session had to be delivered in such a way compatible with the socio-cultural norms and tradition of the couples. Therefore, the session focused the importance of open communication relating to sexual and emotional aspects of the couple's life. The session reviewed the differences among sex, intimacy, and sensuality, as well as the importance of non-sexual touch. The session exercises had spouses work to discover what their partner's needs are, explore gender differences in sexual preferences, appropriate sexual and non-sexual intimacy techniques within the cultural domain of the couples. Husbands and wives were segregated for this session in order to facilitate free discussion.

It should be stated that all sessions, with exception of the first session started by discussing the couple's performance on the home assignment of the previous session. This was also a chance to give them further feedback to enhance the content of the previous session and reinforce the couples' learning and achievement. As the sixth session was the concluding one, there was no follow up discussion afterwards.
The co-facilitators will give the couples the coaching and the feedback about the home assignment from the previous session in (30) minutes.

In this session (40) minutes presentation will be focussed on improve a couple's awareness of the importance of a fair and mutual exchange within the context of dyadic coping, and to enhance the ability to detect inequality and dependence in the relationship. In addition, it will seek to improve sensitivity toward one's own needs and the needs of the partner.

Physical and emotional intimacy, included skills-training and exploration of couples’ wants, wishes, beliefs, and needs for physical and emotional intimacy. The importance of open communication relating to sexual topics was also emphasized. This session reviewed the differences among sex, intimacy, and sensuality, as well as the importance of non-sexual touch. The session exercises had partners work to discover what their partner’s needs are, explore gender differences in sexual preferences, explore new sexual and non-sexual intimacy techniques, and identify common and personal sexual myths and pitfalls.

Furthermore, the treatment sought to teach couples a method for fully understanding the issues surrounding relationship hurts and how to make changes that decrease the likelihood of future hurts. A three-step model for moving past relationship hurts will be taught and beliefs about forgiveness will be explored. This method of promoting reconciliation was intended to prevent retaliation and withdrawal and instead promote understanding, acceptance, and forgiveness. Support for the promotion of forgiveness or skills to move past relationship hurts was not specifically found in the literature. However, many of these skills are often incorporated into emotional expressiveness skills and conflict resolution skills and are therefore likely to have some validation in the prevention and marital therapy literature.

The couples will be invited to ask any questions they may have in (10) minutes.
- 10 minutes break (Tea&Coffee).

- 20 minutes in session exercises, each partners will be asked to make a wish list of three things they would like their partner to do more often and they take turns sharing these wishes. Sharing their wishes with each other encourages each partner to be assertive with each other. As the couples share their wishes with each other, the co-facilitators provide them with feedback related to their assertiveness and active listening skills.

- The co-facilitators will give the couples the coaching and the feedback about the in session exercises in (30) minutes.

- Describe the home assignment to the participants in (10) minutes (see appendix).
Home Exercises

1- (Communication)

Practice this technique several times a week for fifteen minutes. It is important to practice regularly if you are to benefit from this powerful technique. During the first week practice with only non-confrontational topics. Discuss anything of interest to either of you: your favorite holiday, news, sports, your dreams for the future etc. Your aim here is not to solve some problems but to practice new skills. When you practice with this topic the important thing is that you stick to the technique.

Moving on to confrontational topics

1. After three practice sessions with neutral topics, choose areas of minor conflict. Couples do not always realize which subjects will cause a row. If the topic you have chosen causes too much tension, drop it.

2. Practice several topics in which you both share thoughts and feeling. Do not attempt to solve problems; you just have a good talk. Your aim in this is to understand each other's point of view as clearly as possible. Some times you will solve a problem because all that was needed was for you both to understand each other's position.
2- (problem solving)

The following is a measure of common problem areas in relationships. This exercise will help you to practice the problem solving Skills. Use separate pieces of paper so that you can fill in your form independently. Study the list of issues faced by all couples. Please rate the extent to which this is present in your relationship. Score (0) for no problem up to (10), a severe problem, beside each topic. For example, if money is a big problem you might give it a rating of (7or 8) whereas if money is not a problem you might give it (0) rating .Make sure to rate all topics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Inventory</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
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<tr>
<td>Careers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-lows, or relatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
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Practice problem solving

1. Please follow the instruction carefully. It is important to hone your skills now, so that when you have to solve real problems, the ability will be already be enough to begin with.

2. Review your problem inventories together. Make a list of the problem you rated as less serious. Try to concentrate on specific problems and seek specific solutions. The exercise will build up your skills and increase your confidence in that method.

3. We recommend that your practice problem solving exercises several times over two weeks.

4. Keep this presentation and the manual to hand when practicing and refer to it as you progress.
3- Commitment

Jot down your response to these statements on a separate piece of paper, assigning a point value between 1 and 5 to indicate how true the statement seems to you. Use the following scale for your answers: 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree 3 = uncertain, and 4=agree, 5=strongly agree.

1. The steps I would need to take to end this relationship would require a great deal of time and effort.
2. A marriage is a sacred bond between two people and should not be broken.
3. I would have trouble finding a suitable partner if this relationship ended.
4. My friends or family really want this relationship to work.
5. I would lose valuable possession if I left my partner.
6. I stay in this relationship partly because my partner would be emotionally devastated if I left.
7. I couldn't make it financially if we broke up or divorced.
8. My lifestyle would be worse in many ways if I left my partner.
9. I felt trapped in this relationship.
10. It is important to finish what you have started, no matter what.

Your answers to these few questions can tell you a lot. We a not give you an average score on these items because we don't use it in quite that way in our research. But it is obvious that the high the score, the greater the level of your commitment to your relationship. In any case, we want you to use your responses for reflection. What kind of commitments are you aware of? How powerful are these commitments? What kind of a commitment seems most powerful?
Most important, do you feel trapped or stuck? Just about everyone does from time to time, which is normal. Having a good deal of constraint but not feeling trapped is normal in a healthy couple relationship. The best relationships are those in which both partners are dedicated to each other and feel comfortable with the stability implied by constraint.
4- Family-of-origin and friends

The following exercise helps you to explore the social and spiritual values and practices which will have a powerful influence in your marriage.

Finding spiritual intimacy

The question in this exercise will help you to consider a wide range of issues arising from your faith and core values. Answer each question as it applies to yourself. This will help you to think more clearly about these issues and will also aid your later discussion with your spouse.

Question for reflection

1. What is the meaning of life in your core belief system?
2. What were your beliefs growing up? How were these beliefs practiced in your family of origin?
3. Do you make distinction between spiritual and religious? What is your view on this matters?
4. What is the meaning of marriage in your belief system?
5. What is your belief about divorce? How does this fit in with your belief system?
6. How do you practice your core belief in your relationship?
7. What do you think the day-to-day impact of your belief system should be on your relationship?
8. Do you see potential areas of conflict regarding to your belief system? What are they?
9. What do you belief about forgiveness in general? How dose forgiveness apply in a relationship such as the one with your spouse?
10. In your belief system, what is your responsibility to your family?
11. In your belief system, what is the basis for respecting others?

After finishing the entire exercise, spend time together discussing this core beliefs and values. Use the communication technique to deal with some difficult issues.
5- Finances management

Make a list of your all income and list of your outgoing payment. Try to use the financial management that you practiced in the presentation and plan a realistic and workable budget and then manage your finance that make you more satisfied with your financial status in the present and the future.
6- Physical and emotional intimacy

Friendship exercises

It is important to develop the friendship aspect of your relationship. This exercise is designed to help with that just relax and have fun with this one.

Friendship talks

Plan a quiet time when you can talk as friends, without interruption.

Possible topics

1. Some aspect of you respective families that you have been thinking of. For example, a pleasant childhood memory or experience of kindness.
2. Personal goals, dreams or aspirations.
3. A recent book or film you have both read and seen.
4. Current events, sport, or any other shared interest.

Interviews

Take it in turn to be your favorite television interview. Interview your spouse about his or her life history. This can be great fun and is very much in the spirit of listening and sharing as friends. The best interviewers are good listeners who draw their guests out. Try to do this in your sharing together and learn new things about each other.

Making time for friendship

Discuss together ways in which you could make time for friendship as part of your weekly routine. Consider how you would demonstrate your belief in the importance of friendship.