Attitudes toward seeking couples counseling among Egyptian couples: towards a deeper understanding of common marital conflicts and marital satisfaction

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Attitudes toward Seeking Couples Counseling Among Egyptian Couples:
Towards a Deeper Understanding of Common Marital Conflicts and Marital Satisfaction

A Thesis Submitted to
Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology and Egyptology

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology

By Eman Onsy

Under the supervision of Dr. Mona Amer

May 2013
DEDICATION

To the first romantic person I encountered in my life, to the first one who advised me what to do and what not to do with my future husband, to the one who would have been the happiest ever to read this dedication, to my DAD (Allah's mercy be upon him), I dedicate this thesis.

To the man who without him, I wouldn’t be where I am today. To the man who believed that I could do it, to the man who means the world to me, to my best friend ever, to my husband, Omar El-Shenety, I dedicate this thesis.
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore factors associated with marital satisfaction and attitudes toward seeking couples counseling among affluent Egyptian couples. A total of 411 married participants answered an online survey. This study demonstrated that the most common conflicts among participants were time spent together and lack of communication. Moreover, the study results showed that higher agreement among couples was related to higher marital quality. As a result of knowing that Egypt is considered a religious culture, this study examined the relationship between religious marriage and marital satisfaction, which was found to be a positive relationship. With regards to factors that would predict higher marital quality level, none of the socio-demographic and marital factors were significant. This study also explored factors associated with more positive attitudes toward seeking couples counseling among affluent Egyptian couples. Females were found to be three points higher on the attitudes towards seeking couples counseling scale than males. Also, participants with Master’s degrees showed significant positive attitudes toward seeking couples counseling. For the barriers, “not knowing a good mental health practitioner” was found to be the most frequently selected barrier among participants. Findings of this study may help in designing better couples counseling services for Egyptian couples.
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Attitudes toward Seeking Couples Counseling Among Egyptian Couples: Towards a Deeper Understanding of Common Marital Conflicts and Marital Satisfaction

Why do married couples get separated, burned out, or divorced? To answer this question, an understanding of the marriage institution between a couple, level of marital satisfaction, and the problems behind their distress need to be sought (definitions for the term “marital satisfaction” and other important terms can be found in a glossary in Appendix A). Indeed, it is striking to note that the common quotes of marriage and love from both Arabic or Western movies and songs, such as “made for each other” “love at first sight” or “together forever”, indicate that couples usually stay together forever, while the real marital situation globally does not show this level of togetherness. When two people fall in love, they want to continue being together in love forever (Pines, 1996). Because marriage is not only considered the closest kind of living together, but also the most intimate relationship between two human beings (Dreikurs, 1964), many couples do seek marriage after sometime. However, instead of marriage becoming a major source for an individual’s psychological well-being, sometimes it becomes a source of distress. For that reason and others, the belief that it is important to understand healthy marriage has significantly increased (Gurman, 2008).

Couples in intimate relationships, such as marriage as mentioned above, expect to enjoy romantic love in their marriage. Moreover, the romantic love expectations as stated by Pines (1996) are part of the couple’s belief system. According to Pines, these expectations could be shared culturally or based on personal views, articulated or unarticulated, and conscious or unconscious. However, marriage is not only thinking of romantic love; individuals seek marriage and are ready to change their lives because they are expecting benefits. Obviously, it is not only about getting married, but marriage stability (Gurman, 2008).
Marriage and Expectations

For further understanding of marriage stability, it is essential to understand what individuals expect from marriage. Many family researchers have investigated what people expect from marriage. For instance, Douglass and Douglass (1995) stated that most couples engage in the marriage process with various expectations that might have been determined during their early childhood through observations of elder’s marriages. As a result of the change in people’s way of thinking over different time periods sometimes, expectations may change from generation to generation. According to Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick, and Larsen, (2001), surveys in the 1950’s and early 1960’s of college students in the United States showed that marriage was valued because it was expected to provide a stable and economically secure lifestyle and a home.

Conversely, more recent surveys indicate that college students in the United States value marriage as a result of expecting it to provide a source of emotional fulfillment and love (Buss et al., 2001). Recently, many people expect marriage to be the major source for their support, companionship, and intimacy (Gurman, 2008). Additionally, Amato and Hohmann-Marriott (2007) reported that marriage is expected to serve as a source of personal growth and self-actualization. On the more proximal level, the ultimate goal of marriage for couples is enjoying mutual patterns of positive reinforcement (Douglass & Douglass, 1995).

As a result of entering marriage with expectations to have the maximum benefits of the relationship and the minimum costs or efforts, when the cost becomes higher than the benefit and the benefits become lower than expected, conflict may occur (Douglass & Douglass, 1995). Accordingly, a spouse with modest expectations may be happier than a spouse with high expectations (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). Marriages may be seen as failures if they do
not meet these personal needs and romantic dreams, though there may be other benefits that these marriages provide. In fact, marriage expectations have consistently increased over generations, which have led to a higher percentage of partners who are dissatisfied with their marriage (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007).

Undoubtedly, couples are trying to maximize individual rewards and maintain minimal costs (Douglass & Douglass, 1995; Glasser & Glasser, 1970). The spouses’ satisfaction of their share of the rewards and costs determine good marriages, according to Clarke-Stewart and Brentano (2006). Since the critical factor in marital stability is not the absolute rewards level in the relationship, but rather the way that these rewards are compared to each individual’s expectations (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007), the reward term that are used by marital researchers need to be understood.

**Marriage rewards.** In the last few decades, researchers have used expressions of rewards and barriers to describe the strength of the marital relationship (Previti & Amato, 2003). Rewards are defined as the encouraging factors that maintain the relationship such as high marital satisfaction level or sexual satisfaction (Previti & Amato, 2003). The rewards behind marriage, according to Glasser and Glasser (1970), are the affection between spouses, the degree to which both partners share similar characteristics, their financial income, and their social position. Moreover, Clarke-Stewart and Brentano (2006) stated that marriage rewards include emotional security, sexual relations, companionship, and connections.

Furthermore, the rewarding relationship between husband and wife is a mutual and reciprocal process. It has been found that both partners tend to rate similar levels of marital satisfaction (Glasser & Glasser, 1970). On the other hand, barriers are defined as the restraining factors that prevent people from ending the relationship such as having children or being
religious (Previti & Amato, 2003). Some other factors could be considered like cultural norms against divorce.

The Effect of the Socio-Cultural Environment

In addition to the spouses’ expectations about the marital relationship, the factors that may limit their desire to end the marital relationship should be noted. The effect of culture on the married couple is one such factor. When two people marry, they do not live in a vacuum, and each one’s environment defines to a large extent how the relationship would go (Pines, 1996). Moreover, in the last 50 years, it was found that significant socio-cultural changes have had an impact on marriage and the experiences of those who marry (Gurman, 2008). For example, Ambert (2009) stated, “families fulfill more functions now than was the case 50 years ago (p. 22).”

Several cultures over the past century have increased stress on marriages by generating radical changes to the traditional marriage institution (Pines, 1996). These include the breakup of the extended family and the replacement of main family functions by formal agencies or institutions such as child-care and homes for the elderly. Sometimes the wife feels pressured between the demands for time, attention, and nurturing of her husband and those of her children (Pines, 1996).

According to Pines (1996), it is assumed that the socio-cultural environment surrounding the married couple is unbiased without affecting their relationship; however, and unfortunately for some individuals, the environment around them regulates to a large extent how much distress the couple may face. Some examples of these socio-cultural environment variables are being overloaded by too many tasks inside and outside the familial relationship, or family commitments even if it was taken voluntarily (e.g. inviting friends at home). Accordingly, the
strength of the marital relationship may depend on the way that couples cope with the subjective environment around them. Depending on the individuals’ coping skills, the environment could be seen as stressful by one person and as challenging and exciting by another. It should not be neglected that the media nowadays, which is considered a component of the environment that affects marriage, has an essential role of setting the marriage expectations (Pines, 1996).

**The Arab culture and marriage.** It is of importance to mention that in Arab societies, more weight is added to the marriage. For practicing sexuality or parenting in Arab societies, marriage is the only religiously and socially approved medium (El-Saadani, 2006). This conclusion was also made by Alshugairi (2010), who mentioned that the marriage rate of American Muslims is higher than the marriage rate of the general US population. One explanation for this high rate was because in Islam sexual relationships are allowed only in marriage. Furthermore, the only way to institute the family unit according to Islamic teachings is marriage (Alshugairi, 2010).

Accordingly, a lot of focus is placed on marriage in Arab societies (El-Saadani, 2006). Moreover, a marriage agreement is considered an agreement between the couple’s families and not only an agreement between the couple (El-Saadani, 2006). As a result of this emphasis on marriage, formal procedures, family regulations, and parents or in-laws try to help most of the time to save the marriage from divorce. Sadly, with respect to these considerations, divorces still occur (El-Saadani, 2006); however, divorce is considered an expected consequence of continuous marital distress. Moreover, knowing the risk factors that usually cause the marital disruption could predict divorce (El-Saadani, 2006). Thus, what should be of concern is not the level of marital distress; rather, it is the reasons leading to marital distress, which will be discussed in the coming section.
Issues that Contribute to Marital Distress

Many factors that contribute to marital distress have been studied by family scholars, in order to help couples understand how to avoid conflicts and enjoy a better marital life. Most of the literature that was found about marital life and marital distress factors was from Western sources. The literature found that focused on Arab culture and Arab countries was minimal. However, the factors that contribute to marital distress whether from a Western or an Arab culture perspective, based on what was found, will be discussed. These include gender differences, lack of communication between couples, level of education, financial issues, career issues, marrying at a young age, religious issues, extramarital affairs, and parental divorce.

**Gender differences.** Though both the husband and the wife share the same marriage, they don’t live the marriage experience similarly (Amato & Rogers, 1997). Accordingly, they report their marital happiness experiences or marital problems differently. As stated by Amato and Rogers, husbands reporting fewer problems in their marriages than do wives. Additionally, the research study results showed that husbands prefer not to report problems that had happened because of the wives’ contributions to the problem. On the other hand, it is easier for wives to report, talk, and complain about the husbands’ contribution to the problem, which results in having both partners being aware of the husband’s contribution to the problem (Amato & Rogers, 1997).

As a result of having husbands usually report fewer complaints than wives (Amato & Rogers, 1997), the rate of wives’ complaints may indicate how the marital relationship looks? This goes along with Bringle and Byers (1997) results, which stated that husbands consider wives to have more control over the marital relationship. However, Holtzworth-Munroe and
Jacobson (1985) indicated that husbands invest a lot of time thinking about their relationship and its outcomes when their marital relationship is distressed.

Another gender difference recognized by Botwin, Buss, and Shackelford, (1997) is having husbands who are conscientiousness and score high on intellect-openness is usually associated with higher marital satisfaction based on the wives’ reports. Additional gender differences were reported by Glasser and Glasser (1970), indicating that there is a difference in the kind of marital complaints reported based on gender. Husbands usually complain of sexual dissatisfaction, while wives complain of physical or verbal abuse, lack of love, or neglect.

Additionally, gender differences between husbands and wives appear in how they address and discuss problems. Commonly, wives are usually the initiator of marital conflict discussions (Carrere & Gottman, 1999). Yet, it was noted by Gottman and Gottman (2006) in one of popular media self-help books that the wife’s presentation of the problem is usually in the form of criticism not complaining, and criticism usually implies a defect in the husband’s character that has resulted in the problem. On the other hand, a complaint is more specific than criticism and it doesn’t indicate that there is a problem with the husband’s character.

Accordingly, the wife’s way of stating the problem will predict the husband’s initial reaction. If the wife states the problem as a criticism and the husband takes it personally, the husband becomes defensive. This issue was found in marriages that are seeking divorce. On the other hand, if the husband’s initial reaction to the wife’s words is not taking her words’ negatively, the couple’s relationship might be considered stable (Gottman & Gottman, 2006).

Similarly, the husband’s acceptance or rejection of the way of stating the problem, and the wife’s “softened” or “harsh” discussion opening could predict somehow the conflict interactions of the couple from the non-conflict interactions (Carrere & Gottman, 1999). It is also
expected that a harsh startup of the wife’s discussion predicts a disinterested and a nonresponsive husband; while a softened startup may predict an interested and affectionate husband (Carrere & Gottman, 1999). Since gender differences between husband and wife appeared a little bit in their way of discussing problems, both of them should take care of their communication skills to avoid further problems.

**Lack of communication between couples.** The main complaint of many couples is lack of communication (Glasser & Glasser, 1970). Sometimes they consider silence a better option than communication. Silence, in which the couple tries to avoid talking together, would lead the relationship to become a distressed relationship. Even though the expected result of poor communication between couples is a distressed marital relationship, husbands still believe, according to Bringle and Byers (1997), that the advantages of communication skills are not important to determine the marital relationship outcome.

Furthermore, it was found that expressiveness is usually associated with marital satisfaction level (Miller, Caughlin, & Huston, 2003). When the expressiveness level of the spouse increases the affectionate behaviors of the other spouse also increases (Miller et al., 2003). Consequently, affectionate behaviors result in higher marital satisfaction levels. In other words, the cognitive and behavioral approaches of expressiveness are linked to marital satisfaction (Miller et al., 2003). This would imply that the natural consequence of poor communication is marital distress and increase in couple’s conflict level between couples. It is important to note that communication between couples could be enhanced by the degree of their similarities in age and level of education (Glasser & Glasser, 1970).

**Level of education.** Since the beginning of the last century family researchers have studied the effects of the level of education on the marital relationship. It was stated by Glasser
and Glasser (1970) that the husband’s years of education are correlated in a positive way to his work status, which may keep his wife attracted to him, and his masculinity feeling, which would make him feel better. It was found that the level of the husband’s education is higher in stable marriages than in dissolved relationships.

Moreover, recent articles indicated that not only does the level of husband’s education affect the marital relationship, but also the education level of husbands and wives. The rate of divorce is highly correlated with a couples’ level of education; the higher the level of education, the lower the rate of divorce (El-Saadani, 2009; Martin & Bumpass, 1989). This is also the case in almost all the Arab countries, according to El-Saadani (2009). However, it was also found in El-Saadani’s study about several Arab countries (e.g. Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia, Algeria, and Sudan) that women with graduate degrees have higher rates of divorce. As might be expected, level of education is linked to the financial status of the couple and to their career.

**Financial issues.** The level of education may have an indirect drawback that started to arise recently. According to Amato and Hohmann-Marriott (2007), college students in the U.S. may be taking high salaries, which results in high prosperity levels for both husband and wives. If those husbands and wives are having unhappily or moderately happily marriage, this could make them prefer divorce than continuing in an unhappily or even moderately happily marriage (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). In other words, high income could result in making married people find singlehood a more attractive alternative than the marriage, because they may not exert effort to fix their marital disruption; instead, they could prefer to enjoy the richness of their salaries as a source of enjoyment as a substitute of marriage.

In contrast, Ambert (2009) and Glasser and Glasser (1970) noted that financial burdens usually affect the marital relationship negatively. More than 50 years ago, Glasser and Glasser
(1970) mentioned in their book that divorce rates were negatively related to the husband’s income. More recently, financial problems don’t relate only to the husband’s income, but rather to the wife’s income as well. Nock (2001) reported that the recent shift of married women into the paid labor force has resulted in making spouses less financially dependent on one another, which has made it easier for wives to leave unhappy marriages.

**Career issues.** The education level of the couple is also strongly related to the couple’s career plans. A lot of couples are more polite and attentive to their colleagues at their jobs more than to their family members at home, even though family life was consistently described as more important than work by many people in several national surveys of the U.S. (Pines, 1996). By the time they come home, they don’t have the energy or the patience to be more polite or attentive to their partners.

However, sometimes neither family life stressors nor work stressors can be avoided in normal daily life. According to Pines (1996), people who are stressed at work, but have good support by their mates, are able to cope with their work stressors. What is more interesting is that a lot of married people used to blame their spouses for their problems at work and quit their marital relationships, while in fact their real problems lay elsewhere (Pines, 1996).

**Marriage at a young age.** Stated by El-Saadani (2006), individuals who are of a younger age at the beginning of their marriage might be less mature and they may have also spent less time in choosing a spouse. According to Ambert (2009), low level of maturity and coping skills of the newly married demotivates them to adapt to the new marriage experience, which may lead to marital distress. Because divorce is an expected consequence to the marital distress, this may explain the reason behind the high divorce rate in the young married people. El-Saadani mentioned that in the Arab countries that were included in her study, which were
Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, and Sudan, the rate of divorce among those who married at 17 years or younger was almost twice the divorce rate of those who married at 20 or above.

For Douglass and Douglass (1995), young marriage results in marital distress; accordingly, it is considered a divorce risk especially when combined with other marital problems. Furthermore, Ambert (2009) reported that the highest divorce rate in Canada happens among young married couples. In Egypt, early divorces, even before the fifth anniversary, have been common occurrences since the 1930’s, as stated by Hopkins (2003). Marriage and divorce research shows that divorce in Egypt is highly correlated with younger age of marriage (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006; El-Saadani, 2006; Hopkins, 2003).

**Extramarital affairs.** As a result of increased social interactions between men and women in the workplace, extramarital relationships may be formed (South & Lloyd, 1995). Furthermore, the increase in the number of working hours that results in long contact between men and women may contribute to more establishments of extramarital relationships and marriage distress. On the proximal level, when one spouse has available an alternative other than his/her spouse, marital distress may increase and he/she may think that the alternative is more attractive (South & Lloyd, 1995).

Moreover, it was found that when there are large numbers of unmarried women around the husband in the labor force, the percentage of divorce increases because of the high probability of occurrence of extramarital affairs (South & Lloyd, 1995). This may be affected by the increase in the women’s marriage age as a result of finishing their school and college years, which would increase the ratio of unmarried women who work with the married husband. Accordingly, the alternatives become more available (South & Lloyd, 1995).
Unfortunately, the most common divorce predictor is extramarital sex (Amato & Rogers, 1997). More specifically, South and Lloyd (1995) found that a large majority of divorced individuals were having another romantic relationship with someone other than their spouses. Another finding about extramarital relationships is related to the age of the married people. Amato and Rogers (1997) found that young couples are more susceptible to reporting extramarital problems and jealousy. This was explained by Amato and Rogers that it is easier for young partners to be drawn into infidelity relationships. Extramarital affairs may also happen due to experiencing sexual dissatisfaction.

**Sexual dissatisfaction.** The current definition used by the World Health Organization for sexual health is “A state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being related to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity” (Fourcroy, 2006, p. 954). Sexual problems between couples may cause marital distress (Inhorn, 2002). According to Ahmed and Bhugra (2004), sexual dysfunction in married couples is affected positively by poor quality of marital relationship, male control, and inequality in decision-making. Accordingly, sexual dysfunction and marital distress is like a vicious circle. Another study was found linking financial problems to impaired sexual desire and low sexual satisfaction by Dobkin, Leiblum, Menza, & Marin, (2006).

Cultural traditions may play a role in the couple’s sexual dissatisfaction. According to Yasan and Gurgen (2009), culture may affect sexuality in a negative way. Minimal literature was found on Arab countries, but one published study was found on Turkey. As a result of having Turkey as a Muslim country that shares many cultural similarities with the Arab world, studies on Turkish will be considered in this paper. For example, 33 per cent of Turkish couples that were diagnosed with sexual dysfunction were forced to show bloodstained sheet after their first
wedding night (Yasan & Gurgen, 2009). This tradition causes anxiety for both sexes (Yasan & Gurgen). In some rural areas in Egypt, such traditions are common. Moreover, sexual dissatisfaction may be related to some traditions that happened during early childhood like female genital circumcision (Ahmed & Bhugra 2004). Such tradition exists in some parts of Egypt, according to Ahmed and Bhugra, and it may result in expressing difficulties during sexual intercourse like vaginal dryness, lack of sexual desire, less sexual initiation, orgasm problems, and overall less satisfaction. As a result of the lack of sexual education in many countries and where talking about sex is considered taboo, several sexual disorders exist (Yasan & Gurgen, 2009).

Additionally, one or both spouses may experience sexual dissatisfaction. In Arab countries, sexual dissatisfaction is usually experienced by women (Yasan & Gurgen, 2009). According to Yasan and Gurgen, it was found in Turkey that men’s sexual satisfaction was twice as higher as women’s sexual satisfaction. Sexual dissatisfaction could be related to sexual dysfunction that was not treated. Many sources show higher rates of females’ sexual dysfunction in non-Western cultures over Western cultures. For example, in Turkey, 73% of women seeking sexual therapy had vaginismus (i.e. difficulty in penis penetration which might result in fear or pain) versus 15.5% in London suffering this problem (Yasan & Gurgen, 2009). Moreover, culture influences women’s ideas about the meaning of penis penetration (Man-Lung, 2000).

According to Elmerstig, Mijma, & Bertero, (2008), sometimes the woman experiences pain during sexual intercourse, which decreases her sexual desire and arousal. However, she continues to accept having sexual intercourse in order to be the “ideal woman” for her partner. The wife thinks that she should be an “ideal woman” by being willing to have sexual intercourse, satisfy her husband’s desires, and sense his sexual needs. She sometimes sacrifices her pleasure
because she is afraid of being replaced by another woman if she was unable to have sexual intercourse. Her partner’s sexual pleasure, for her, is more important than her own (Elmerstig, et al. 2008). In some cultures, such as Turkey, refusing sex by wives upon her husband’s demand is considered a personal crime (Yasan & Gurgen, 2009).

On the husbands’ side, the major cause for sexual dissatisfaction is often the presence of sexual dysfunction, such as premature ejaculation, or impotence (Inhorn, 2002). In Egypt, males may be at greater risk for sexual dysfunction as a result of common bad habits, such as heavy smoking (Inhorn, 2002). Moreover, a major cause of infertility, which is considered a critical issue for Egyptian couples in some areas, is male sexual dysfunction (Inhorn, 2002). Additionally, sometimes Egyptian males do not accept that their wives seek sex therapy or talk about sexual problems to professionals (Ahmed & Bhugra, 2007).

Some couples report sexual satisfaction at the beginning of their marriage, which decreases over years in the same marriage. A study that measured several sexual differences in 52 countries conducted by Schmitt (2003) may explain this point. It was found in this study that in the Middle East the percentage of men and women who want to have more than one sexual partner after their first sexual experience is 42% for men and 20% for women. This percentage in which the one partner desires another sexual partner was measured for the next 30 years after the first sexual experience. Furthermore, it was found that men who compose the mentioned 42% require having sex with six sexual partners over the next 30 years after the first sexual experience, while the women require having sex with only two sexual partners over the same time period (Schmitt, 2003).

**Religious issues.** It should not be neglected that spiritual beliefs and religious principles play a critical role in couple conflicts (Weld & Eriksen, 2006). Furthermore, due to the decline
in the extent to which individuals pray or read religious materials, the influence of religious has been reduced, which seems to result in undermining partners’ beliefs about the marriage blessings and its importance as a religious commitment (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). Additionally, when spouses are not at the same level of agreement on religious principles and practices, Lambert and Dollahite (2006) indicated that this could be considered an important source of marital conflict. On the other hand, religious beliefs and practices are considered an important factor in preventing, resolving, or overcoming conflicts among couples (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006).

The rate of divorce reduces with regular attendance at church (Amato & Rogers, 1997). This was explained by the authors that those who attend religious lessons are usually getting support through the religious community around them and learning from religious teachings, which leads them to behave better with their spouses (Amato & Rogers, 1997). However, in their study Lambert and Dollahite (2006) underestimated the protective role of the religious view when both partners were on the same religious level.

**Parental divorce.** Parental divorce is considered a risk factor for marital conflicts to some family research. According to Amato and DeBoer (2001), experiencing divorce in family of origin is one factor that increases the risk of seeing one’s own marriage ending in divorce. The authors Amato and DeBoer offered one explanation that for children, the first initiative mentors of interpersonal, behavioral and relationship skills are their own parents. Accordingly, it is not surprising to know that maritally distressed parents have a negative effect on their children’s future marriages. Those children might not learn the needed coping skills to keep a satisfying intimate long-term relationship (Amato & DeBoer, 2001).
How Couples Cope with Marital Distress

Couples' distress occurs when people maintain their idealistic views about love without modifying it and then face the reality of everyday living (Pines, 1996) and thus risk factors for conflicts that were discussed above might begin to have an impact in their relationship. According to Pines, the couple that loves each other and is satisfied in a relationship does not perceive such life stressors as threat (Pines, 1996). Loving couples may have a good understanding of healthy marital relationships and how the relationship is determined by couples’ expectations (Pines). However, as a result of the risk factor of current life stressors, compounded by a lack of good communication and problem solving skills between the partners, conflicts may gradually increase over time and complicate future conflicts (Douglass & Douglass, 1995).

Over time, and as some conflicts may accumulate, spouses start to report an unsatisfactory relationship, and marital adjustment deteriorates (Douglass & Douglass, 1995). When a combination of fluctuations of life and unrealistic expectations occur, couple burnout is the result (Pines, 1996). This onset of burnout of love is a gradual progress and rarely happens in a sudden way (Pines, 1996). Couple burnout is a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion that is caused by the inconsistency between reality and expectations (Pines, 1996). In other words, it is a painful state in which people have expectations of the romantic love that will give meaning to their lives, and then they realize that regardless of their efforts, the couple’s relationship doesn’t and will not do that for them (Pines, 1996). For further understanding of the couple burnout, please refer to Pines’ (1996) model, as shown in Figure 1.
Figure 1: The love and burnout model (Pines, 1996)
A high level of marital distress has many consequences on the whole family. Sometimes the couple finds that ending their relationship by divorce is the best solution for them. Other couples prefer to continue living together, even though the marital relationship could be considered a failed relationship. Those who prefer to stay together could have barriers for divorce in their lives. However, some couples choose to seek couples counseling to improve the level of marital distress in their lives.

**Divorce.** It is usually assumed that the decision to divorce is preceded by deterioration in the relationship. According to this scenario, which undoubtedly describes many marriages that end by divorce, couples fight more frequently, disagree on several issues, marital happiness declines, and partners become less emotionally engaged (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). Later, one or both of the spouses decides that the marital relationship cannot continue and divorce is an inevitable result (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007).

Even though two people should make the decision about whether or not it is an unsalvageable relationship (Pines, 1996), Bringle and Byers (1997) indicated that husbands thought that wives had more control over the marital outcomes than they did. This goes along with what Glasser and Glasser (1970) mentioned in their book *Families in Crisis*, which is that in marriage, the two partners’ feelings and views about their relationship might not be the same. At the time that one spouse may consider separation; the other may still be fully bound to the relationship.

**Divorce risks.** Several family scholars have researched issues that predict divorce. However, it was not clear if there were specific marital problems that predicted divorce or not, and if the answer is yes, what were those problems (Amato & Rogers, 1997). However, some of the divorce risks that have been acknowledged through several studies were absence of religious
affiliations; absence of children; low marital happiness; parental divorce; low socio-economic status, and young age at marriage (Douglass & Douglass, 1995). Additionally, remarriage comes with a higher divorce rate than first marriages. This higher rate may be due to the fact that one or both spouses were already able to take the divorce decision before, so it is not too hard for them to take it again (Ambert, 2009).

Previous research clarified that people who seek divorce could be classified into two groups (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). The first group of couples who seek divorce experiences marital unhappiness prior to divorce and suffer serious problems in their marriage. They may be fighting a great deal, living many troubles in their relationships, having disagreements that end in violence, and are unhappy with their marriages. These unsatisfying relationships usually break up as a result of the absence of marital attractions (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007).

According to Amato and Hohmann-Marriott (2007), the second group represents the spouses who may feel moderately happy rather than unhappy, engage in some positive interactions with their partners, fight occasionally, and have few marriage problems. Consequently, when these partners seek divorce, it is not because of the low marriage quality, but because of having low commitment levels to a lifelong relationship such as marriage, recognizing few barriers to leaving their marriages, holding high expectations for marriage, and thinking of other alternatives to their current spouses. Unfortunately, only few studies have studied this divorce type and the frequency of it (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007).

**Divorce barriers.** Sometimes the community disapproval of the idea of divorce is considered a barrier against divorce especially in rural areas (Glasser & Glasser, 1970). This explains why divorce rates in urban communities are higher than divorce rates in rural
communities. It was not surprising to know that when both partners are known within their neighborhood and their behavior is somehow observed, there are greater restraints against some actions that may not be noticed in urban areas such as extramarital affairs (Glasser & Glasser, 1970). Some couples don’t seek divorce for the sake of children, which is considered a divorce barrier. Others might not consider divorce because of financial constraints, whether dependency or expense of getting a divorce. Additionally, religious affiliation sometimes is in itself a barrier for divorce, such as being Coptic.

**Living together with maritual distress.** When there are one or more barriers towards divorce, the couple may need to live together even when facing marital distress. In the absence of positive feelings between the two partners, they sometimes just maintain superficial signs of marital togetherness (Glasser & Glasser, 1970), with no real marital relationship between them. This situation is coined “the empty shell marriage” by Glasser and Glasser (1970, p. 108). The empty shell describes the marriage atmosphere when communication is kept to a minimum, the issue of divorce is being avoided for the sake of children or a religious view, and arguments focus on the small issues and not the major ones.

As with divorce, marital conflict and distress is associated with a wide variety of psychological problems and the most stressful conditions that spouses and children face (Gurman, 2008). For instance, partners who suffer recurrent marital conflict are susceptible to anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and suicidality (Gurman, 2008). Furthermore, children of distressed marriages are more likely to suffer depression, conduct problems, anxiety, and impaired physical health. As a result of all these marital stressors, some couples may seek couples counseling.
**Seeking couples counseling.** The term “marital therapy” has been replaced recently in several sources by the term “couples therapy.” Gurman (2008) explained this replacement by stating that the term “couples therapy” places an emphasis on the bond between two people, without the judgmental tone of social value that is associated with the traditional term “marital therapy”. However, although the term “couples counseling” indicates that the couples’ counselor will deal with the two partners, sometimes the couples’ counselor has to deal with one spouse only (Gurman, 2008). This may happen when one spouse wants to seek counseling and the other spouse refuses to come to counseling. It may create a dilemma for the couples’ counselor when the counselor faces an issue like the infidelity problem, in which one spouse would consider it a personal private issue, while it could be considered an important issue to be known for the psychological well-being of the other spouse (Bass & Quimby, 2006).

In fact, whether couples are seriously distressed or partially distressed, couples therapy is considered the optimum choice for many couples to seek when they suffer distress in their relationship (DeMaria, 2005). In general, the most common reasons for couples to seek therapy involve relational matters, such as commitment, power struggles, jealousy, problem-solving and communication difficulties, extramarital involvements, emotional disengagement, sexual dissatisfaction, abuse and violence, and value and role conflicts (Whisman, Dixon, & Johnson, 1997).

Couples sometimes don’t agree about the seriousness of the same problem that will encourage them to seek couples counseling. However, it was stated by Bringle and Byers (1997) that some issues such as in-laws, having children, dividing housework tasks between couples, and adjusting the family budget were reported by both husbands and wives to be issues that don’t require seeking counseling. On the other hand, jealousy, sexual dissatisfaction, permanent
disability, terminal illness, and child rearing were perceived by wives to be essential issues to seek counseling for, although the wives were still hesitant about the efficiency of the counseling process to solve these problems (Bringle & Byers, 1997). Any of the previously discussed problems or the previously discussed risk factors for marital distress can contribute to significant marital conflict. The expected reaction to deal with the marital conflict is seeking couples counseling, but sometimes couples reduce the seriousness of their marital problem and underestimate the efficacy of the couples counseling. As a result, this may delay the whole marriage counseling process and escalate marital distress (Bringle & Byers, 1997).

What is striking to note is that some married people who ended up divorced reported problems 9-12 years before getting divorce (Amato & Rogers, 1997). This indicates that married individuals could be aware of the problems that may eventually end their marriages for a long period of time (Amato & Rogers, 1997), but they may not take action by seeking professional counseling help. Indeed, the willingness of the couple to seek psychological help may be influenced by several factors. Attitudes toward seeking counseling will be discussed in details in the coming section.

**Attitudes toward Seeking Couples Counseling**

Bringle and Byers (1997) examined several marital problems among participants in their study and they found that even though husbands and wives identified more than 12 marital problems, they considered only two marital problems that would push them to seek counseling. Those problems were abuse and thinking about divorce. This finding indicates that it is not easy for couples to seek counseling, even though they might have positive attitudes toward counseling in general (Bringle & Byers, 1997).
However, it was found that individuals with previous experience of couples counseling were found to seek couples counseling if they faced further problems in the future (Bringle & Byers, 1997). The same study showed that 83% of individuals who experienced counseling before believe that counseling is useful and effective. Those participants reported that when they suffer a marital problem, they would like to seek counseling again. On the other hand, only 72% of the individuals who didn’t experience counseling before had positive attitudes toward couples counseling.

Another study that demonstrated the positive attitudes towards couples counseling was made by Alshugairi (2010) among American Muslims. The author found that divorced participants believed in the importance of pre-marital counseling before any new marriage more than the non-married participants. This may imply that those participants believed if they had received premarital counseling prior to their divorce, it might have helped them to keep their marriages or not to regret the divorce decision that they took.

**Factors that influence seeking counseling.** Some factors are associated with the individuals or couples attitudes toward seeking counseling such as gender, age, level of education, religion, and stigma. Some family scholars have studied the effect of some of these factors on the attitudes toward seeking couples counseling. However, the majority of the researchers have studied these factors in regards to individual counseling or counseling in general, and not customized to attitudes toward couples counseling. Each factor will be discussed hereunder either from the couples counseling perspective or individual counseling perspective, based on the available literature.
**Gender.** Husbands and wives are different in the way they view their marital problems. Husbands reported that they were unsure about the efficacy of couple counseling regarding marital problems such as depression, lack of communication, extramarital affairs, conflict, and stress, whereas wives indicated that such problems were considered major risk factors to their marriages that required help (Bringle & Byers, 1997). However, husbands didn’t completely refuse the idea of counseling. Overall, according to Bringle and Byers, husbands are less likely to say they are going to seek couples counseling compared to the wives.

Although Bringle and Byers (1997) studied the attitudes of couples toward marriage counseling, there is very limited literature, in general, about attitudes towards couples counseling. However, the husbands and wives attitudes’ could be related to gender differences in attitudes towards individual counseling, a topic in which a lot of research has been conducted. Individuals’ willingness to seek psychological help and to continue in psychotherapy is affected by their gender (Johnson, 1987). In several studies that examined the effect of gender on the willingness to seek psychological help, women were found to have more positive attitudes toward psychological help-seeking than men (Berger, Levant, McMillan, Kelleher, & Sellers, 2005; Bringle & Byers, 1997; Good, Dell, & Mintz, 1989; Johnson, 1987; Khan, 2006; Good, & Sherrod, 2000; Mackenzie, Gekoski, & Knox, 2007; Pederson & Vogel, 2007). Koydemir-Ozden (2010) stated that women in her study scored higher than men in the attitudes towards psychological help seeking positive scale, which means that women had better attitudes than men.

Therefore, many theorists have tried to explain the unwillingness of men to seek psychological help. The suggestion that men avoid counseling because they are psychologically healthier than women was contradicted by the evidence that suggests that men usually suffer
internal conflict about their gender role, which may lessen their psychological well-being (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991). For further understanding of how gender informs differences in individuals’ attitudes toward seeking counseling, what is happening in the counseling process should be understood firstly.

In the counseling process, the client is usually asked to explore his/her life openly with another person; but men prefer to appear in control of their lives (Robertson & Fitzgerald, 1992). They may think that any self-exploration should be done on their own and not with anyone else. Indeed, men usually believe that the process of expressing their feelings is unnecessary and a waste of time; consequently, their limited emotionality leads to negative attitude toward seeking help (Robertson & Fitzgerald). More specifically, men value power the most, followed by competition, success, control, and self-reliance; thus, seeking help is negatively related to these characteristics (Blazina & Watkins, 1996; Good et al., 1989; Johnson, 1987; Robertson & Fitzgerald, 1992). Seeking help may be considered as a weakness and an admission of failure based on their point of view (Good et al., 1989).

Additionally, men usually avoid admitting failure and prefer to talk about success instead. Thus, they avoid the feeling of vulnerability by talking about power instead (O’Neil, 1981; Robertson & Fitzgerald, 1992). The restrictive emotionality of men indicates the low results of the past experiences of seeking psychological help and predicts less positive attitudes towards seeking psychological help (Good et al., 1989). Furthermore, Johnson (1987) indicated that men are less tolerant to the stigma that may be associated with the help seeking process. Men may also avoid psychological help seeking because they prefer to avoid the fear of intimacy or emotional closeness that may happen with the therapist (Good et al., 1989).
On the women’s side, according to Johnson (1987), it was found that the higher the female’s degree of femininity, the more willingness to seek psychological help. Moreover, the high level of femininity results in more confidence in the abilities of professionals to help with their problems. Females were found to be more willing to talk about personal problems, and more tolerant to the stigma that may be associated with seeking psychological help.

**Age.** Some studies have shown that younger people have more negative attitudes toward seeking psychological help than older people (Berger et al., 2005; Mackenzie et al., 2007). It was found by Koydemir-Ozden (2010) that students between ages 24 and 28 scored significantly more positive on help-seeking attitude scale than students aged between 17 and 19. One explanation of this result is due to the maturity level that varies between both age groups. The older students may be better able to understand the importance of seeking help for psychological distress instead of denying it.

Another study about attitudes toward mental health services among young South Asians in the United Kingdom by Randhawa and Stein (2007) showed that young people seek psychological help initially from family, friends, general practitioner, and the school. Furthermore, the young students of the study reported that they were scared to talk about their personal problems to strangers and they were concerned about confidentiality. According to the authors, only one in every five respondents who was suffering emotional or behavioral difficulties knew of a place where they could seek psychological help.

**Level of education.** The literature about the effect of the level of education and its relation to attitudes toward seeking counseling was not specified in regards to couples counseling but rather focused on individual counseling or counseling in general. It was found that more educated participants in Chaudhury’s (2011) study had positive attitudes toward seeking
psychological help than the less educated participants. Furthermore, the most educated participants accepted to be diagnosed as depressed people more than the less educated. However, Finkelstein and Lapshin (2007) found that misconceptions about seeking psychological help were very widespread, even with the samples that included highly-educated people.

In addition to the level of individuals’ education, the parents’ level of education affects their children’s attitudes as well. It was reported that higher education of the parents has been linked to the children’s higher levels of positive attitudes toward seeking counseling (Koydemir-Ozden, 2010). Students whose mothers obtained higher education degrees showed less negative attitudes towards psychological seeking help than students whose mothers had elementary education. Moreover, the same study showed that students whose fathers had high post university degrees had less negative attitudes towards seeking psychological help than students who had fathers with elementary education.

Religion. A high level of Islamic beliefs is negatively associated with the confidence level in the psychological help providers (Leach, Jana-Masri, & Priester, 2009). For example, it was found that Emirati citizens preferred to seek psychological help, when needed, from a religious person, Holy Qu’ran, friends, or family (Al-Darmaki, 2003).

Stigma toward seeking counseling. Individuals or couples may be demotivated to seek counseling as a result of being afraid from stigmatization by the social network around them (Bringle & Byers, 1997). Stigma is defined and measured, according to Coker (2005), by social distance. In fact, many married individuals who had less positive attitudes towards counseling or those with no previous counseling experience were afraid from stigmatization (Bringle & Byers, 1997). They considered what their spouse, family, colleagues, or friends may say when those people knew about their intentions to seek help. Moreover, it was reported by Bowen and
Richman (1991) that those spouses who were afraid from stigmatization were those who don’t even ask for help from their families when they had problems. This may explain why seeking help is often delayed at several instances till the couples’ problem become complicated (Bringle & Byers, 1997).

Since the literature about the effect of the stigma on the couples’ attitudes toward seeking couples counseling is minimal, general literature about stigma and its impact on the attitudes toward seeking psychological help will be discussed here for different cultural groups. It was found that Middle Eastern Americans preferred not to seek psychological help in order to protect their family image (Soheilian & Inman, 2009). Furthermore, the unwillingness to see a counselor for Asians was considered as a type of emotional self-control and keeping their traditions (Kim & Omizo, 2003). They preferred holding their suffering and anger to expressing them.

The perception of stigma is considered higher in Arab countries. In the Arab culture, seeking psychological help may indicate insanity or weakness (Al-Darmaki, 2003). Individuals of the Arab culture prefer to get help from a general medical practitioner rather than getting help from a psychological care service provider (Al-Darmaki, 2003). Though most of the Arab countries’ cultures are close to each other in the attitudes toward seeking counseling, there are some differences within the countries. In Egypt, psychology started to flourish as a science in the 1930’s, which made it integrated to the Egyptian culture more than some Arab countries such as Jordan (Leach et al., 2009). Accordingly, psychologists or psychiatrists who work in Egypt may get some confidence from dealing with Egyptian patients or clients (Leach et al., 2009).

It is reported in several research studies that the stigma perceptions associated with seeking counseling are considered a barrier for seeking any psychological services (Komiya et al., 2000; Vogel, Wade, & Hackler, 2007). According to Vogel et al., (2007), public stigma,
which is negative views in the culture about seeking counseling, will lead to self-stigma. The self-stigma would affect the individual’s attitudes toward counseling positively or negatively depending on how the social network around the individual view counseling. As a result of the individual’s attitude, his/her willingness or unwillingness to seek counseling will be the result. An illustrative figure (Figure 2) about the link between the stigma and the willingness to seek counseling was documented by Vogel et al. (2007).

Figure 2: The relationship between stigma and willingness to seek counseling

After discussing marital expectations, reasons that contribute to marital distress, how couples cope with marital distress whether by divorce or living together and individual’s attitudes toward counseling, the marital situation in Egypt should be investigated on a more proximal level.

**Marriage Situation in Egypt**

A report by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) that was published in the newspaper *Al-Ahram Weekly* stated that there were 141,478 divorces in Egypt in 2009 with a higher percentage in urban areas than in rural areas (Leila, 2011). The number of new marriages in 2009 was 759,000 marriages with 37.8 per cent of the total number in urban areas and 62.2 per cent in rural areas (Leila, 2011). CAPMAS reported in 2010 that 40 percent of all divorces occurred within the age group of 18-29 (Salah, 2010). Furthermore, the CAPMAS statistics that were reported in the *Al-Ahram Weekly* article revealed that the highest
divorce rate among women was between the ages 20-25, while the lowest divorce rate among women was around age 65 years. The head of CAPMAS was quoted in the article as saying that the rate of divorce in females with middle educational level was 30 per cent, while the rate of divorce in males with middle educational level was 33.3 per cent (Leila, 2011).

According to Leila’s (2011) report, there is one divorce in Egypt every 3 minutes, which mean 16 divorce cases every hour, while there are 87 marriages every hour. These marriage and divorce statistics might not be considered surprising information when some Egyptian sociologists’ opinions are taken into consideration. Many experts, according to Leila (2011), indicated that even though the divorce rate has risen in the past years, it still didn’t reach a critical level. Mahmoud Ouda, a sociologist, and Seif El-Etrenbi, a judge in the family court, clarified in the newspaper article that the number of divorces increased as a result of the population growth. This conclusion goes along with some literature that reported that divorce rate reached 50 percent in the early 1930’s (Hopkins, 2003; Kholoussy, 2010). By the end of the twentieth century, the divorce rate dropped to less than 20 percent as mentioned by Hopkins (2003) and Sonneveld (2012).

**Legal situation of marriage in Egypt.** Historically, when the divorce rate reached 50 percent in 1920’s and 1930’s, two laws under the personal status law were adopted. This aimed to reduce the easy access to divorce (Bernard-Maugiron & Dupert, 2008; Kholoussy, 2010; Sonneveld, 2012). Recently, in 2004, Family Courts were established for the sake of managing all divorces cases in one place and to speed up the process (Bernard-Maugiron & Dupert, 2008), after finding that delaying it may cause more harm to the family. Moreover, the Family Court created a new system in 2004 in order to solve family issues (Sonneveld, 2012). A social worker and a psychologist were assigned to each court to work through the mediation process.
(Sonneveld, 2012). Though these legal changes offered a solution for unhappy marriages, it did not help in improving the marital relationships (Bernard-Maugiron & Dupert, 2008).

**Aims of the Present Study**

As a result of understanding the importance of the family unit to the society and the value of the couple’s relationship that would keep the family together, several family researchers and counselors have studied the level of marital satisfaction, factors that decrease or increase it, divorce predictors, and counseling attitudes worldwide. However, very limited literature was found on Egypt. Even though the divorce rate in Egypt has decreased in the last years compared to 1930s, having one divorce in Egypt every three minutes (Leila, 2011) indicates high level of marital distress among Egyptian couples. This implies that more literature and studies should be done on Egyptian couples.

This study aimed to provide more information about the factors that contribute to marital distress among Egyptian couples, and to analyze what are their most common sources of conflict. Furthermore, it was of importance to explore the factors that relate to marital satisfaction. Based on the previous literature, these factors included socio-demographics, religion, and the couple’s level of marital satisfaction. Because Egypt is considered a religious country, it was surprising to find no literature about the effects of religion on the marital relationship. Creating a more accurate picture of how religious levels affect the marital relationship whether negatively or positively was one of the aims of this study. Furthermore, sometimes couples want to improve their relationships, but several barriers may stand against their desire. This study aimed to provide information about the facilitators and barriers towards seeking couples counseling among Egyptian couples.
The couples counseling field is not yet common in Egypt; or, to be more accurate, trusted couples counselors or couples counseling centers that are based on academic research are not much available. Accordingly, this study hoped to build a valid cornerstone for the future of this field. It was expected that the study would highlight for counselors, psychologists, or psychiatrists who work with couples some useful information about the marital relationships among the studied sample of Egyptian couples. The long-term goal of this study was to help Egyptian families have better family relationships, which usually start by having good couples’ relationship.

In order to achieve the aims of the study, four research questions were addressed:

1. What are the most common sources of conflict among Egyptian couples? How are these conflicts connected to the couple’s level of marital quality?
2. What is the relationship between level of religiosity in marriage and level of marital satisfaction?
3. What are the socio-demographic factors that are associated with higher level of marital quality, such as gender, age, level of education, income, number of children, and length of marriage?
4. What is the relationship between socio-demographic factors and the participants’ attitudes toward seeking couples counseling? What are the barriers that may prevent Egyptian couples from seeking couples counseling?

Regarding marital quality, it was expected that higher reporting of marital conflict among couples would be associated with lower levels of marital quality. Analyzing what are the effects of marital religiosity on marriage was done through looking at the relationship between marital satisfaction and religious marital level. It was also expected that higher levels of religious
marriage would be associated with lower level of conflicts and higher level of marital satisfaction.

Based on the literature discussed above, the socio-demographic factors that were expected to be associated with lower level of marital quality were younger age, lower family incomes, lower level of education, and fewer years of marriage. Attitudes toward seeking couples counseling was expected to be affected by socio-demographic factors, based on what was found in the literature. For example, wives, couples who were younger, or those with higher level of education were expected be more likely to seek couples counseling than males, older couples, or those with lower levels of education.

**Methods**

**Participants**

The study had 411 participants. All the participants were Egyptians living currently in Egypt. Of the participants, 62% (n= 255) were females, and 38% (n= 156) were males. The participants’ ages ranged from 21 to 81. The mean for participants’ age was 32.45 (SD= 7.81). The percentage of Muslim participants was 98.5%, Christian-Coptics was 1%, while Christian-Protestants was 0.5%.

A total of 7.8% had a doctoral degree, 26.3% had a master’s degree, 56.4% had a bachelor’s degree, 1% had a diploma (e.g. nursing), 7.8% had some college, 0.5% had adult literacy (i.e. mahw el omeya), and 0.2% had no education. The average monthly family income of 1% of the participants was below 1000 L.E. Among the participants, 26.8% had an average monthly family income between 1000 and 5000 L.E., 26.0% had average income between 5000 and 10,000 L.E., and 45.5% had average income above 10,000 L.E.
Measures

In order to explore the four proposed questions, a questionnaire package, which can be found in Appendix B (in English) and Appendix C (in Arabic), was formulated. The Marital Concordance Questionnaire was created for this study to analyze the most common conflicts that may happen among couples. Secondly, the Quality Marriage Index (Norton, 1983) was used to measure the level of marital satisfaction. Thirdly, four questions from the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Busby, Christensen, Crane, and Larson, 1995) was used to measure the marital satisfaction. Fourthly, a factor from the Religious Marital Factor Measure-26 (Colbert, 2007) was used in order to explore the level of religiosity in marriage. To explore the participants’ attitudes toward seeking couples counseling, the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help- Shortened scale (Fischer & Farina, 1995) was modified to focus on the attitudes toward couples counseling. Finally, the socio-demographic questions were in the final part of the questionnaire package. This part included the basic socio-demographic questions as well as the participants’ marital status, income, number of married years, and number of children. The finals questions following the socio-demographic questions assessed the facilitators and barriers toward seeking couples counseling.

The Marital Concordance Questionnaire. The Marital Concordance Questionnaire (MCQ) is a questionnaire that was created for this study to look at the most common conflicts among Egyptian couples. Though the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (discussed below) has examined some conflicts in its first six questions, there were still some marital issues that may bring conflicts to the couple’s life that were not discussed in RDAS. For example, according to Busby, et al (1995), communication, marital finances, and many other important marital issues were not discussed by RDAS. Accordingly, many items were added to create the MCQ.
The MCQ consist of 20 items that was composed by integrating items from the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), RDAS, and some other additional items. The first seven items were taken from the DAS by Spanier (1976), and the last six items were taken from the RDAS that was created by Busby et al. (1995). The middle six items were created for this study. Four of these additional items were added to consider what was found important in the literature and was not covered by either of the two scales, such as resolving marital conflicts, trust, support for one another, and parenting style. Another two items were created for this study to consider some cultural sensitive conflicts that could be specific to Egypt. These include disagreements related to family financial standards and political differences. Political opinions were added because of the political instability in Egypt since the revolution in January 2011 and differences among family members in political awareness and opinions. An Egyptian couples’ counselor reviewed these items before they were added to the questionnaire.

All the 20 questions of MCQ are scored on a Likert-type scale that ranges from 5 to 0. Score 5 in the scale refers to (Always Agree), 4 refers to (Almost Always Agree), 3 refers to (Occasionally Disagree), 2 refers to (Frequently Disagree), 1 refers to (Almost Always Disagree), and 0 refers to (Always Disagree). The MCQ introductory sentence asks the participant to indicate the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between each participant and his/her spouse. The content of the items determines the conflicts that might exist among couples, based on the proposed literature. The level of marital conflict will be analyzed by calculating the total score of participants. The scores of the survey will range between (Zero-100). Higher scores indicate higher levels of concordance (i.e. agreement) among couples. Cronbach’s alpha for the present study was .93.
The Quality of Marriage Index. The Quality of Marriage Index (QMI, Norton, 1983) was used to measure marital satisfaction. This scale was created to avoid some problems that may exist in the other traditional scales such as Dyadic Adjustment Scale in which there were inconsistencies in answering the scale items and the items were weighted improperly (Norton, 1983). Also, in the DAS every few items describe a new marital dimension; for instance; some items measure cohesion, while other items measure marital satisfaction. On the other hand, the QMI evaluates the quality of marital relationship as a whole (Norton, 1983). This includes the variables that contribute to developing marriage quality such as adjustment, integration, adequate communication, and satisfaction.

Additionally, the QMI has several advantages over many other scales to measure marital satisfaction. According to Fincham, Paleari, and Regalia (2002), the scale items could be considered global items that are worded broadly (e.g. “We have a good marriage”). As a result of the general items’ meanings, it was translated to Italian language in Fincham’s and colleagues’ (2002) study. This suggests that translating the QMI to Arabic would easily keep the content meaning of the scale items. The scale items were also expected to be culturally accepted by Egyptian participants, as it does not include any culturally specific items. Moreover, the QMI was selected over some other scales (e.g. DAS), because it has fewer numbers of items. This would make the whole survey shorter and more practical to be used in this study.

The QMI is composed of six items (Norton, 1983). The first five items in the scale are answered on a scale ranging from 1 to 7. Selecting number 1 refers to (Strongly Disagree), 2 refers to (Disagree), 3 refers to (Somewhat Disagree), 4 refers to (Neutral), 5 refers to (Somewhat Agree), 6 refers to (Agree), 7 refers to (Strongly Agree). The content of the first five items ask the participant to describe the marital relationship in general (e.g. “Our marriage is
The sixth item, which measures the degree of happiness and things that happen in the marriage, is scored on a scale ranging from 1 to 10. A selection of 1 refers to (extremely low), while 10 refers to (extremely high). The scores on all the questions are summed and range from six to 45. The higher scores indicate higher level of marital quality (Bradbury, & Karney, 2004).

Each item of the QMI could be used alone as a single-item predictor, but summing the six items together gives more reliable measure than single items (Norton, 1983). The internal consistency reliability achieved good results when the scale was used in previous studies. For example, in Fincham’s et al., (2002) study, the Alpha Coefficient was 0.96 for both husbands and wives. Additionally, it had a high reliability in Noller and Feeney’s (1994) study upon testing it over three times in the same study. The Alpha Coefficient in the first time was .75, in the second time was .90, and in the third time was .88 (Noller & Feeney, 1994). Cronbach’s alpha for the present study was .95.

The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale. The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) by Busby et al. (1995) was developed from the Dyadic Adjustment scale (DAS), which was created by Spanier & Cole in 1976 to measure marital adjustment. The RDAS was created to measure dimensions of marital adjustment, which were defined by Spanier (1976) as: (a) “consensus on matters of importance to marital functioning” (p. 128), (b) satisfaction, (c) cohesion, and (d) affectional expression. Nevertheless, it was found that two of the four items of the affectional expression subscale had small loadings, which made it problematical to keep in the RDAS. Accordingly, RDAS became a shorter version of DAS with a 14-item scale that consists of three subscales, which are dyadic consensus, the dyadic satisfaction, and the dyadic cohesion (Busby et al., 1995; Poll, 2006).
Historically, after the DAS was created, it became one of the most widely used indexes in the marital field (Busby et al., 1995; Poll, 2006; Sabatelli, 1988). However, the samples that were used in determining the validity of DAS were usually divorced or separated couples rather than distressed or non-distressed couples (Busby et al., 1995). On the other hand, the RDAS was used with distressed and non-distressed couples (Busby et al., 1995). Both scales distinguish between distressed and non-distressed couples with exactly the same percentage (81% of the participants), but it should be noted that DAS is 32 items, while RDAS is 14 items, which means that it gave the same outcome, but with 18 items less (Busby et al., 1995).

In addition to the fewer number of items of RDAS than DAS, the level of construct validity of DAS is less than those of RDAS, as studied by many confirmatory factor analyses with more than one sample (Busby et al., 1995). Moreover, RDAS is considered an excellent measure for the same domains that DAS measures, but with fewer items number (Busby et al., 1995). Not only this, but also the RDAS is considered a more reliable and valid instrument than the DAS (Busby et al., 1995). According to Busby et al., the goal of revising the DAS was improving the reliability and validity of the measured items of the DAS.

The Consensus subscale in the original RDAS is covered by the first six questions in the scale, which is scored on a Likert-type scale that ranges from 5 to 0 (Poll, 2006). Score 5 refers to (Always Agree), 4 refers to (Almost Always Agree), 3 refers to (Occasionally Agree), 2 refers to (Frequently Disagree), 1 refers to (Almost Always Disagree), and 0 refers to (Always Disagree). The Satisfaction subscale is covered by the subsequent four questions, which are scored on a Likert-type scale that ranges from 5 to 0. A choice of 5 in the scale refers to (Never), 4 refers to (Rarely), 3 refers to (Occasionally), 2 refers to (More Often than One), 1 refers to (Most of the time), and 0 refers to (All the time). Finally, the Cohesion subscale is covered by
the last four questions, which is scored on a Likert-type scale that ranges from 4 to 0. Score 4 refers to (Everyday), 3 refers to (Almost Every day), 2 refers to (Occasionally), 1 refers to (Rarely), and 0 refers to (Never). The total scores of RDAS range from (0) to (69) (Crane, Middleton, & Bean, 2000).

Originally, the RDAS was planned to be used as a measure of marital adjustment dimensions for the present study. Then, an error happened in the online survey, which would have affected the scoring of the first six questions, if it was scored. The error happened in the first six questions; instead of adding (Occasionally Agree), it was added (Occasionally Disagree), which may change the participant responses. As a result, a decision was made to use the four questions from the RDAS that measure marital satisfaction. The total score of four satisfaction dimension questions ranged from (0) to (20). Higher scores indicate higher marital satisfaction. Cronbach’s alpha of the four questions that was used in the present study was .81.

Religious Marital Factor Measure. The Religious Marital Factor Measure-26 (RMFM-26; Colbert, 2007) was used to indicate the relationship between marital satisfaction and marital religious level. The RMFM-26 was developed to study the factors that are usually associated with religious marriages (Colbert, 2007). In general, RMFM-26 established a valuable first step in the field of researching religious marriages (Colbert, 2007). Even though the RMFM-26 had not been used in a published article, it was chosen to be used in this study because it was the only measure that was found measuring the religion in marriage. The items of RMFM-26 are related to sharing religious practices or beliefs with the spouse (e.g. I attend religious services with my spouse; I rarely discuss spiritual issues with my spouse).

The original first stage of the scale development was 59 items, which was based on the limited research on the factors that are present in the religious marriages. A research team with
some expertise in religious marriages revised the 59 items, and then it was completed online by the participants. During examining the results, the number of the items was reduced to 26 items.

The RMFM-26 was not found to be cited by any other reference. As a result, the reliability and validity of RMFM-26 were not tested in other studies, except its original research. The measure had good construct validity and a very good internal consistency with its original sample (Colbert, 2007). The Cronbach’s alpha of the RMFM-26 was 0.94 (Colbert, 2007).

After conducting a pilot of the whole online survey to take feedback, mostly all participants in the pilot commented on length, repetition, and confusion of some of RMFM questions. Accordingly, it was decided to remove any repetitive or questions that may be confusing to Egyptian participants. The RMFM was founded to be divided based on factor analysis into three factors that measure intimacy with spouse, intimacy with God, and intimacy with church. The first factor was taken, which was intimacy with spouse. This factor has 12 questions. Two questions were found to be repeated with same exact words. Thus, one was removed and remaining number of questions became 11. Cronbach’s alpha for 11 questions from RMFM used in the present study was .79.

**Attitudes toward Seeking Couples Counseling (ATSCC).** Modified items from the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Shortened Scale (ATSPPH-S) by Fischer and Farina (1995) were used to measure attitudes toward couples counseling. In fact, no scale was found to measure attitudes toward seeking couples counseling. As a result, it was decided to modify the ATSPPH-S, because it is perhaps the most widely-used measure of attitudes towards professional mental health services (Constantine, 2002; Leach et al., 2009). Moreover, the original scale that the ATSPPH-S driven from, which is ATSPPH Scale of Fischer and Turner (1970), was used with Arab samples before, such as Leach and colleagues’ (2009)
study with Egyptian participants. Additionally, it was used with Arab Muslims in the U.S. as well (Aloud & Rathur, 2009), which indicates its cultural sensitivity.

ATSPPH-S is based on the ATSPPH scale of Fischer and Turner (1970), which includes 29 questions (Constantine, 2002; Fischer & Turner, 1970). The ATSPPH-S is a shortened scale, which consists of 10 items and is used to assess attitudes of people toward seeking psychological help for their psychological problems (Constantine, 2002; Fischer & Farina, 1995; Vogel & Wester, 2003). Each item in the ATSPPH-S is rated on a Likert-type scale from zero to three. Zero refers to (Disagree), 1 refers to (Partly Disagree), 2 refer to (Partly Agree), and 3 refer to (Agree). Mistakenly, the ratings for participants were added as follow for the present study: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. The scores of the ATSPPH-S are obtained by summing the items together, which will give a range of scores between zero to 30 (Constantine, 2002). Higher scores indicate more positive attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help (Vogel & Wester, 2003).

For this study, some words of the scale items were modified in order to measure the participants’ attitudes toward couples counseling specifically and not toward seeking psychological help in general. For example, “psychological counseling” was changed to “couples counseling”, and “a person with emotional problem” was changed to “a married person with marital problem” and so on for all the items.

Originally, the ATSPPH-S was developed for a college student sample (Constantine, 2002). The internal consistency coefficient of this scale was 0.84. Moreover, the scale was found to obtain good test-retest reliability over a four-week interval (Komiya et al., 2000). Of greater importance, in regards to validity, the scale was found to differentiate between individuals who
sought psychological help before, and those who didn’t whether for men, women, or overall (Fischer & Farina, 1995). Cronbach’s alpha for the present study was .82.

**Barriers and facilitators toward seeking couples counseling.** Additional questions were added to ask the participants about whether they had sought counseling before, what are the factors that may construct a barrier for them to visit couples counselors, and if they have another source of support instead of counseling. These questions were added at the end of the questionnaire after the socio-demographic questions.

**Socio-demographics and marital characteristics.** Questions about demographics and marital characteristics were added to the fifth part of the questionnaire package. Demographic questions included questions about gender, age, level of education, and religious affiliation. Marital characteristics questions included marital status, whether they were married before or not and how many times if yes, length of their current marriage, whether they had extramarital affair before or not, age when they got married, number of children from the current marriage and from any previous marriage, number of people currently living at home, and family income.

**Procedures**

The Smart Survey web site was used to publish the questionnaire on the Internet. The questionnaire was completed online in order to offer more anonymity, so people would be more willing to answer sensitive marriage issues. The anonymity was considered an important factor to ensure especially with the Egyptian culture, in which discussing sensitive marital issues is not common. All participants were Egyptians, according to what was stated clearly in the consent to answer the survey. Furthermore, the questionnaire targeted the upper middle classes who are more familiar with using the Internet. Moreover, this social class was expected to be the people
who would be more willing to seek and pay for counseling services more than the lower middle class or lower class, who are struggling to provide the basic needs for their families.

To reach more participants, the survey was published in both Arabic and in English. E-mails and Facebook message invitations to the study were sent through Facebook. Invitation posts were also posted on several public pages and forums such as schools and nurseries pages. Additionally, it was arranged with several Facebook public pages’ administrators to post the invitation on their pages. On the other hand, to ensure the anonymity of the participants, the IP addresses of participants were not recorded, and the demographic questions were generic and did not include any information that might reveal participants’ identity.

The study had 427 respondents. From these, 7 participants were engaged, 7 participants were divorced, and 2 were widowed; these respondents were removed from the study. The remaining participants’ number was 411 married participants. In a couple of cases, outliers to answers were removed. One participant answered the question about the number of years he/she had been married with 88 years, so this answer was made system missing. Another participant answered the question about number of people who currently live at your home with 23 people, which was also made system missing.

The first page of the questionnaire carried the consent form. The consent form briefed the participants on the purpose of the survey, risks and benefits. It was made clear that following to subsequent pages would mean an implied consent to participate in the research. After the consent form, participants were asked to fill out the first part of the questionnaire that included the questions that measured marital quality. The second part was divided into two portions. Firstly, it included a list of items for the common issues that may cause marital distress among couples by
the Marital Concordance Questionnaire. Then, it was followed directly in the same table by the RDAS that included four questions that measured marital satisfaction.

The third part of the questionnaire was the sub-RMFM-26 that included 11 questions to measure the factors associated with the religious marriages. The fourth part was the ATSPPH-S scale that was modified to measure attitudes toward seeking couples counseling. This was followed by the demographic part. The socio-demographic questions were not added in the beginning of the survey in order to avoid raising concern among participants that the survey is not anonymous by asking many questions about themselves. Finally, the barriers and facilitators toward seeking couples counseling were asked.

After answering the questionnaire, a thank-you page was displayed to participants. In the thank-you page, participants were asked to contact the researcher’s email eman_onsy@aucegypt.edu if they were interested to know more information about the purpose of the study, and/or to receive a copy of its results. Around 30 requests were received asking for results via email and Facebook messages.

Data Analysis

To address the first part of the first research question, which was listing the most common conflicts among Egyptian couples, descriptive statistical analyses were used. The average sample scores for the conflict areas listed in the Marital Concordance Questionnaire were ordered from highest to lowest. Next, for the second part of the first question, correlation statistical analyses was done between the overall score on the Marital Concordance Questionnaire (MCQ) and marital quality as measured by the QMI scale. In order to examine the second question, which was finding the relation between the religious marriage and the marital
satisfaction, a statistical correlation was conducted between the sub factor of the RMFM-26 and the overall score of four questions that measured marital satisfaction from the RDAS.

Next, to address the third question, which was exploring the socio-demographic factors that were associated with the higher level of marital quality, multiple regression statistical analyses was done between the QMI score and the several socio-demographic factors, such as age, gender, income, number of married years, and number of children. Multiple regression statistical analyses was conducted again to explore the first part of the fourth question, which was looking at the relationship between the participants’ attitudes toward couples counseling and their socio-demographic factors. Finally, descriptive statistical analyses were used in order to examine the barriers and the facilitators toward seeking couples counseling.

Results

Marital Characteristics of Participants

A total of 2.7% of the participants in this study were in the formal marriage phase (i.e. katb-kitab), 95.6% were married, and 1.7% were separated. The age at which participants’ first married ranged from 17 to 54, and the mean was 25.2 (SD=3.97). The participants’ spouses marriage age ranged from 18 to 57 and the mean was 26.28 (SD=4.31). The length of marriage among participants ranged from just married to 46 years. The mean for length of marriage (i.e. number of married years) was 7.44 (SD= 7.00).

In the answer of the question “Were you married before?” 13 participants answered yes, 383 participants answered no, and 3.6% didn’t answer this question. From the 13 participants who checked that they were married before, 12 indicate that they were married once before, and one participant checked that he/she was married three times before. Among the participants who were married before, the previous marriage ended by divorce (n=10), spouse passing away
or annulment ($n=1$). In the answer of the question about having an affair while married, 0.7% of the participants did not answer this question, 5.6% answered yes, and 93.4% answered no.

Regarding the number of children that participant has, 18.0% had no children, 21.9% had one child, 42.3% had two children, 13.4% had three children, 3.9% had four children, and one participant had six children. The mean for the number of children was 1.64 ($SD=1.07$). For the number of children from previous marriage, three participants answered that they had one child from previous marriage, two participants answered that they had two children, two participants answered that they had three children, and one participant answered that they had four children from previous marriage.

Regarding the number of children who are under the age of 18 and currently live in the participant’s home, 9.2% had no children, 20.7% had one child, 37.7 had two children, 11.2% had three children, 2.7% had four children, one participant had six children, and 18.2% didn’t answer this question. The mean of the number of children who were under the age of 18 and currently live in the participant’s home was 1.74 ($SD=0.98$). The total number of people currently living in the participant’s home ranged from 0 to 6. The mean was 1.74 ($SD=0.98$).

**Most Common Conflicts among Couples**

The first part of the first research question in this study was exploring the most common conflicts among Egyptian couples. To evaluate this, descriptive analyses were conducted and results showed that the areas that have the least concordance level (i.e., more conflict) among participants were time spent together ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.31$) followed by communication between couples ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.08$). However, the highest concordance level among couples was
shown in trust between couples \((M = 4.22, SD = 1.24)\) and the financial standard between the participant and his/her spouse’s family financial standard \((M = 4.05, SD = 1.03)\).

In general, the escalating order for topics that were listed to the participants to rate between (Strongly Agree) to (Strongly Disagree) was: time spent together, communication between couples, recreation, resolving conflicts together, demonstration of affection, parenting, philosophy of life, political opinions, household responsibilities, friends, finances, making major decisions, sexual interactions, parents or in-laws, career decisions, conventionality, support for one another, religious matters, financial standard of participant’s family and participant’s spouse’s family, and the least issue that may cause conflict among participants was found to be trust, as shown in Table 1.

**Marital Quality Level**

To examine the second part of the first question, which was examining the relationship between the couples’ concordance level and their level of marital quality, A Pearson’s correlation was conducted between the sum of the MCQ and the sum of the QMI. Results of Pearson’s correlation showed that there is correlation between participants’ concordance level and their level of marital quality \((r = .77, p < 0.001)\).

**Marital Religious Level**

The second question was intended to explore the relationship between the level of religiosity in marriage and the level of marital satisfaction. To detect this relationship, Pearson’s correlation was conducted between the sum of RMFM and sum of four satisfaction questions of RDAS. Results of Pearson’s correlation indicated that there is correlation between participants’ level of religious marriage and their satisfaction level \((r = .53, p < 0.001)\). An additional correlation was done between the sum of RMFM and the sum of QMI. The results indicated a significant
Table 1: List of Conflicts Rated by Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics in the Marital Concordance Questionnaire</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial standard of participant’s family and participant’s spouse’s family</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious matters</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for one another</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventionality</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career decisions</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents or in-laws</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual interactions</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making major decisions</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household responsibilities</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political opinions</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy of life</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration of affection</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolving conflicts together</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication between couples</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time spent together</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
correlation also between the Religious marriage and the quality of marriage \((r=.56, p<0.001)\). A third correlation between the sum of RMFM and the sum of MCQ was conducted. The results showed a significant correlation between the religious marriage and the concordance level \((r=0.59, p<0.001)\). This indicates that couples with higher religious marital level have higher concordance (i.e. less conflict) level.

**Socio-Demographics and Quality of Marriage**

In order to analyze the third exploratory question, which was identifying the socio-demographic factors that are associated with higher level of marital satisfaction, a linear multiple regression analysis was conducted. In total, sequential linear multiple regression analyses were done in four steps to evaluate what would predict higher marital satisfaction. The dependent variable was the sum of the QMI scale, while the predictor variables were divided into 4 distinct sets. A decision was made to separate the socio-demographic variables into 2 sets. The first set included the individual characteristics, which were age, gender, and highest education, while the second set included the family characteristics, which are number of marriage years, number of children, and family income.

In the first model of linear multiple regression between the sum of QMI and the individual characteristics set, some changes were done firstly to the highest education variable. The ten choices that were represented to the participants in the survey were minimized into four choices, which were high school or some college, bachelor degree, master’s degree, and doctoral degree. Accordingly, three dummy variables represented information about highest education, as indicated in Table 2. The three dummy variables were bachelor versus some college, master’s versus anything else, and doctoral versus anything else. The analysis of this step (Model 1) showed insignificant results.
Table 2: Summary of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Marital Quality Level (QMI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE (B)</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>-2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>-2.7</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>-3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FI (5000-10000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FI (&lt;10000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of Children</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>-0</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage Years</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum_MCQ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum_RMFM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$ for change in $R^2$</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p <0.05$

In the second step (Model 2), the family set variables were entered. Two dummy variables represented information about family income, which were five to ten thousand Egyptian pounds monthly versus anything else, and more than ten thousands monthly income versus anything else, as indicated in Table 2. This model (Model 2) showed also insignificant results. As a result of having insignificant results with both individual and family sets, more
predictive variables were added to the regression. In the third step (Model 3), the sum of MCQ 
was added. The results of Model 3 showed significant results, as shown in Table 2 \[ F(10, 384)= 
60.42, p< .001 \]. The independent variables in this model explained around 61.1% of the 
variance in marital quality (i.e. sum of QMI). The MCQ variable was significant (\( \beta = .78, t= 
23.99, p< .001 \)).

In the fourth and final step (Model 4), the sum of RMFM was added and the results 
showed significance, as indicated in Table 2 \[ F(11, 383)= 58.62, p< .001 \]. In Model 4, the 
independent variables predict around 62.6% of the change of the dependent variable. The sum of 
RMFM that measures religious marriage level was significant (\( \beta = .15, t= 3.85, p< .001 \)).

**Attitudes toward Seeking Couples Counseling**

Multiple regression analysis was used again to test the first part of the fourth exploratory 
question, which was determining the socio-demographic factors that are associated with the 
higher positive attitude toward seeking couples counseling. Four sequential regression analyses 
were conducted for the dependent variable sum of ATSCC. Socio-demographic variables were 
entered into two steps. The first step (Model 1) included the individual variables (i.e. gender, 
age, and three dummy variables representing the highest education: bachelor, Masters, and 
doctoral). The overall model was found to be statistically significant \[ (F(5, 394)= 14.26, p< 
.001 \]. The variables in the first model accounted for 14.2% of the variance (ATSCC sum), as 
illustrated in Table 3. Two variables specifically out of the six individual variables were 
significant, which were gender (\( \beta = .35, t= 7.36, p< .001 \)) and master’s degree (\( \beta = .25, t= 3.14, 
p< .001 \)).

Upon adding the family set variables in the second step (Model 2 in Table 3) of the linear 
regression, the results showed another significant model \[ F(9, 385)= 8.19, p< .001 \]. However,
none of the family variables set showed any significance. Only gender and Masters variables are the significant variables, but reduced in the magnitude. The gender was \( \beta = .36, t = 6.86, p < .001 \) and the masters became \( \beta = .22, t = 2.63, p < .001 \). The variables in the second model predicted 14.1% in the sum of ATSCC.

Table 3: Summary of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Attitudes Toward Seeking Couples Counseling (ATSCC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE (B)</td>
<td>( \beta )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FI (5000-10000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FI (&lt;10000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage Years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum_QMI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2 )</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( F ) for change in ( R^2 )</td>
<td>14.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\* \( p < 0.05 \)

A third regression was done to evaluate the effect of sum of QMI with the rest of other variables on the ATSCC dependent variable. The whole model (Model 3) showed significant results \( F(10, 384) = 10.01, p < .001 \), and the independent variables showed accountability for
20.7% of the sum of ATSCC. The sum of QMI showed significance, as indicated in Table 3. The gender remained significant ($\beta = .34, t=6.62, p<.001$), the Masters remained significant ($\beta = .18, t=2.27, p<.001$), and the QMI was also significant ($\beta = -.22, t=-4.72, p<.001$).

Two more correlation analyses were conducted. The first was between the sum of ATSCC and the sum of QMI, and it showed weak negative correlation ($r=-0.26, p<0.001$). This correlation indicated that couples with high positive attitudes toward seeking couples counseling had lower marital quality level. The second correlation was between the sum of ATSCC and the sum of MCQ, which indicated negative correlation ($r=-0.23, p<0.001$). The second correlation means that couple with high positive attitude toward seeking couples counseling have low score on marital concordance level (i.e. more conflict).

**Barriers toward Seeking Couples Counseling**

Regarding the barriers that may contribute to the couples’ attitudes toward seeking couples counseling, it was noted 15.6% of the participants had received couples counseling before, while 84.4% had not received counseling before. Results showed that the barriers that had the highest rating among participants were “not knowing mental health professional” followed by “no time”. However, the barriers that had the least rating among participants were the inconvenience of the clinic’s place. The second part of the barriers question asked the participants if they don’t seek counseling because they have someone whom they talk to instead of counselor. Parents took the highest frequency, followed by friends, while talking to Uncle or Aunt took the least frequency. The studied barriers are arranged in order in Table 4 and Table 5.
Table 4: List of Barriers to Seeking Couples Counseling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason behind not seeking couples counseling</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not knowing a good mental health practitioner</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough time to go</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious beliefs about keeping marital issues private</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistrusting confidentiality of the mental health practitioner</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial limitations</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of stigma</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconvenience of the place of the clinic</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: List of Alternative Sources of Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Already have other source of support</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister or brother</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family member</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious leader</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional from another field</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle or Aunt</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

As a result of finding very limited literature about marital life on Egypt, the goal of the present study was to shed light on several marital issues among Egyptian couples, more specifically among upper middle class of Egyptian couples. It should also be noted that the results of this study are more relevant to Muslim Egyptian couples, because the percentage of Christian participants was very low. This study attempted to provide more information about most common sources of conflict, and factors that are linked to marital quality level and marital religious level among more affluent Egyptian couples. Moreover, this study intended to provide information about the attitudes and barriers toward seeking couples counseling. The current research provided several implications for couples counselors in Egypt.

Since many factors may contribute to marital distress, the first exploratory question in the study was designed to investigate the most common conflicts among well-off Egyptian couples. Two topics were found to have the highest disagreement level among participants, which were the time that the couples spend together and the communication between couples. Having “time spent together” as the least factor that participants agreed on with their spouses indicates that couples don’t agree with each other about time spent together. However, it should not be neglected that the meaning of time spent together would be perceived differently from one spouse to another (Gager and Sanchez, 2003). For example, one spouse may want more time than the other, or they are spending too much time together and one spouse wants more freedom.

Contradicting views about time spent together was found among some literature. For instance, Gager and Sanchez (2003) said the increase in time spent together among couples may act as buffer against divorce. When the wife perceives more time spent together, it is usually associated with fewer odds for divorce. However, the authors reported that shared time for
husbands perhaps would increase divorce probability. It was found that the more time husbands perceive to spend with their wives, the higher the likelihood of divorce.

Lack of communication was rated by participants as the second topic of disagreement among the listed topics. According to Douglass and Douglass (1995), poor communication between couples may lead to increase in conflicts. Furthermore, marital distress usually arises from poor communication between couples (Miller et al., 2003). As a result, it is expected that couples who rated communication as one of major disagreements in their marriage to have high marital distress. Further studies are needed in the future to explore more about relationship between lack of communication and marital distress.

The highest agreement level among participants was found to be trust. Many participants rated trust as most topic that they strongly agree on. As a result of finding high positive correlation between marital concordance level and marital quality level, which will be discussed in the next paragraph, it would make sense to expect that couples with high trust levels have high marital quality levels. According to Rempel, Ross, and Holmes (2001), couples high in trust have positive attributional statements regarding their relationships. They have positive behavioral outcomes in their relationships.

Regarding the second part of the first exploratory question, which was examining the relationship between the couple’s concordance level and the level of their marital quality; a remarkably significant positive relationship was found between both variables among participants. More specifically, the higher the couples’ agreement level among the topics that were listed to participants is (i.e. less conflict level), the higher the quality of their marriage level. What Pines (1996) stated provides evidence of support to this finding. Pines said that
couples who are satisfied with their marital relationship understand that such marital conflicts could be considered as challenges that perhaps would result in a healthier marital relationship.

The second exploratory question in this study was based on a previous literature that views the role of religion in couple conflicts as a critical role (Weld & Eriksen, 2006). Thus, the second question was designed to identify the relationship between a religious marriage and satisfaction of marriage among couples. A significant correlation was found between the level of religiosity in marriage and the marital satisfaction level. In other words, the higher the religious level of the marriage is, the higher the satisfaction level of couples.

Additional correlations were found; one correlation was found between the level of religiosity of marriage and the marital quality level. Another significant correlation was found between the level of religiosity in marriage and the concordance level between couples. These findings were not surprising when considering the mentioned literature about the effect of religion in marriage. Amato and Rogers (1997) reported that the rate of divorce reduces with regular church attendance. Moreover, one important factor in overcoming couples conflicts is religious beliefs and practices (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006; Weld & Eriksen, 2006).

According to this finding, it is expected that shared religious beliefs among upper class Egyptian couples may contribute positively to their marital life. The more religious practices and activities the couples share together, the more agreement among several marital topics they will have. This could be related to the spiritual effect that they feel together when they pray or attend religious lesson together. However, as mentioned, this finding may be applicable to Muslim Egyptians, because the number of Christian participants was less than 10.

Another explanation may be related to Egyptian culture specifically. It is noticed that Egypt is considered a religious country. For example, during adhan time (i.e. call for Muslim
prayer), it is easy to hear it from several mosques; you can also see more than one mosque or church in the same area. As a result, shared religious agreement among well-off Muslim Egyptian couples would probably affect their marital quality in a positive way. Couples that share religious activities together, such as attending religious lessons together, may have a religious community around them that can be a source of support. When both partners are known within the community around them, there are greater restraints against some actions that may cause marital distress (Glasser & Glasser, 1970).

Additionally, considering why high religious marital level was positively correlated with high concordance and agreement level among participants is consistent with Lambert & Dollahite (2006)’s study which reported that religious beliefs and practices could prevent and overcome marital conflicts. In short, religion is a very controversial issue, so sharing it together and agreeing upon it would resolve a lot of marital conflicts.

For the third exploratory question, socio-demographic and marital factors were examined in order to know what factors affect marriage quality. Some of the results that were expected to be found were not found. Based on previous literature, it was expected that young couples would have less marital quality than older couples. It was also expected that husbands would report higher marital quality than wives. One more expectation was related to education, which was that higher education level would result a higher quality of marital life. None of these characteristics were found to be related to marital quality level.

In addition to the previous characteristics, some other demographic and marital characteristics were also expected to affect the marital quality level. It was thought that higher family income would have negative impact on marital quality. It was also thought that couples with longer duration of marriage would have better marital life in terms of quality. Both
characteristics were also found to have no impact on the marriage quality. Regarding the number of children, it was aimed to explore whether it will result in higher marital quality or lower marital quality level, and it was also found to have insignificant results.

Because of the previous literature that documented the relationship of these factors with quality marriage, it was surprising to find all factors were non-significant. However, it should be mentioned that expectations were based mainly on Western literature. The situation with well-off Egyptian couples resulted in a different outcome. Regarding gender, it was found that there was no difference between husbands and wives in reporting their marital quality level. Undoubtedly, more research and studies are needed to explore more about this result.

As for non-significant result of age, it could be a result of the restricted age range of participants because around 91% of participants were between 21-40 years old. Similarly, regarding education, one explanation for finding it non-significant is having 90% of participants’ highest education between bachelor, masters, and doctorate degrees. It is assumed that these are all close levels of education compared to people who are illiterate or having high school as the highest educational level.

For the family demographic characteristics, it was also surprising to have all as non-significant factors to quality of marriage. However, only 18% of participants had more than 2 children. Having zero, one, or two children might not cause marital distress like having 3 or more children. Number of marital length was not significant because the mean of marriage length among participants was 7 years. A wider range of marital length might be required to measure it specifically. Finally, family income didn’t show much variability, which might explain non-significant result as well. Therefore, a major explanation for having non-significant results with socio-demographic factors is that the study sample was a homogenous sample. On
the other hand, it could be that these factors do not relate to marriage quality in this cultural context. Indeed, more research is needed to confirm which explanation is correct.

Having observed the high correlation between the level of marital concordance and the level of marital quality, it was not surprising that after adding the Marital Concordance Questionnaire (MCQ) to the non-significant regression model (which contained the socio-demographic predictors), the model turned out to be significant in predicting quality of marriage (QMI). Indeed, the model was able to predict 61% of the variance in QMI. The relationship between MCQ and QMI is assumed to be bi-directional. This means that when marital agreement level between couples is high, the quality level of their marriage is also high. At the same time, when couples experience their marriage as a high-quality marriage, this means that they will perceive a high level of agreement among several marital topics.

One more variable was added to be tested in the regression model for QMI, which is marital religious level. The model resulted in another significant model that explained around 62.6% of the variance in quality marriage level. More specifically, demographic questions, marital concordance level, and religious marriage level were analyzed to investigate at a proximal level what factors affect the level of marriage quality and the final model was found to be significant.

The first part of the fourth exploratory question in the present study was to pinpoint the factors that would be associated with couples’ attitudes toward seeking couples counseling. Some interesting insights were found upon examining the demographic questions in the survey along with the attitudes toward seeking couples counseling. The first three demographic factors (i.e. age, gender, and education) accounted for 15.3% of the variance in attitudes toward seeking
couples counseling. Age didn’t show any significance, while gender and Master’s degree as highest educational level showed significant results.

It was not surprising to find that females were found in the regression results to be three points higher on the attitudes towards counseling (ATSCC) scale than males, showing more positive attitudes toward seeking couples counseling. This finding was supported by what was stated in the literature. According to Bringle and Byers (1997), wives have more willingness to say they are going to seek couples counseling compared to husbands. Moreover, this finding goes along with a lot of literature that reported that females had more positive attitudes toward seeking counseling than males (Berger et al., 2005; Bringle & Byers, 1997; Good et al., 1989; Johnson, 1987; Khan, 2006; Komiya et al., 2000; Mackenzie et al., 2007; Pederson & Vogel, 2007).

Unexpectedly, age didn’t have any impact on the attitude toward seeking couples’ counseling, though the participants’ ages ranged from 21 to 81. However, the cumulative percent of participants showed restricted range as 90% of the participants’ ages ranged between 21 to 40 years old. This may give one explanation of why the age didn’t show any effect on ATSCC. Regarding the level of education, the results showed that participants with Master’s degrees showed significant positive attitudes toward seeking couples counseling. This result perhaps could be related to that Master’s students are more open minded than school and bachelor degrees. Regarding doctorate degree, it might not an additional significant predictor as it is not much more different than Masters. Certainly more research in the future needs to be done to explore more about this finding.

Upon examining the attitudes toward seeking couples counseling after adding the family set of variables (i.e. family income, length of marriage, and number of children) to the first
regression model, in which the individual set of variables (i.e. age, gender, and education) was initially added, the model showed significance as well. However, none of the family set variables showed any statistical significance in predicting the ATSCC variable. The whole model that included the individual and family variables explained 16.1% of the variance in ATSCC. Age and Master’s degree, which showed significance in the first model, maintained their significance. However, their coefficients reduced in magnitude.

As mentioned before, this question was added to explore attitudes of affluent Egyptian couples toward seeking couples counseling. It was not unexpected, but still surprising to know that number of children and length of marriage variables didn’t show any significance in the ATSCC model. Regarding family income, the overall income of participants was considered high, which could not give accurate relationship between family income and couples attitudes toward seeking couples counseling.

After analyzing the effect of individual set variables and effect of family set variables on ATSCC, quality marriage level was added to the previous model to be examined. The results showed another significant model, and the quality marriage level variable (i.e. QMI) was significant in predicting attitudes toward seeking couples counseling. Couples who perceived their marriage as higher in quality had less positive attitudes toward seeking couple counseling. It is not a surprising finding, when considering what was mentioned in the literature that the best choice for some couples is seeking couples therapy when they have relationship problems (DeMaria, 2005). Thus, when they have high marital quality, seeking couples counseling will not be their target.

Having observed the significant two regression models of QMI and ATSCC, it was decided to illustrate the factors that affect the two variables together in one path diagram (Figure
3). Simply, the concordance or harmony level between couples and the religious marriage level have a direct effect on the quality of marriage. Besides, marital quality along with the individual set variables (i.e. gender and Master’s education level) has an impact on the attitudes of couples to seek couples counseling.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 3: Factors associated with marital quality level and attitudes toward seeking couples counseling

The previous model has answered the first part of the fourth exploratory question, which was identifying the factors that would impact attitudes toward seeking couples counseling. In the second part of fourth exploratory question, the barriers that would result in a less positive attitude toward couples counseling were investigated. It was noted that 16% of participants have received
couples counseling before and around 84% of participants did not receive any couples counseling before.

It was not known what reasons are behind not having the rest of participants selecting any of the listed barriers. It could have been because they didn’t want to respond or because they truly didn’t agree with anything. Some participants who didn’t answer this question commented at the end of this question. Around 44 participants mentioned in their comments that they have good marital life and they didn’t check any of the counseling barriers because they didn’t need to go before. For example, one participant wrote: “Excellent communication between me and my wife. We were able to solve it (marital conflicts) on our own” and another one mentioned “never felt we needed to visit one’. On the other hand, few participants (almost 6 participants) clarified that they didn’t check any barrier because they don’t have hope in their marital relationships; for example, one of those participants said: “no hope to solve our problems” and a fourth one stated: “I know my marital problem cannot be solved; therefore, I haven't tried seeking couple therapy. My best solution is divorce”. A few participants commented that they were not convinced of the idea of counseling and marriage counseling would be last option. Lastly, a few others mentioned that they have other helping sources instead of counseling, such as reading books, attending workshops, searching for a solution for their problem through Internet, and finally writing their problem on an Internet forum and getting forum users opinions.

Among those who answered this question on barriers to counseling; surprisingly, “not knowing a good mental health practitioner” was found to be the most frequently selected barrier. The “inconvenience of place of the clinic” was the barrier that would be least likely to stand against participants’ motivations to seek counseling. This would indicate that among participants
who answered this question, if they want to seek couples counseling, the place of the clinic is not considered as a barrier and they will be willing to go regardless the location.

Before conducting the study, it was expected to find “fear of stigma” placed on top of the list of barriers by participants. It was selected by only 8 participants as a barrier of seeking couples counseling. This finding is not consistent with what was mentioned in literature about stigmatization. Bringle and Byers (1997) stated that fear of stigma will result in demotivating couples to seek counseling. However, this result indicates that perhaps some of the more affluent Egyptian couples don’t consider stigma as a barrier.

Sometimes couples have less positive attitudes toward seeking couples counseling as a result of having good social support. Accordingly, it was asked at the second part of the barrier question if the reason behind not seeking couples counseling was having someone whom they talk to. The first person that was rated by participants that they talk to as a use of social support were parents. Fully 100% of participants who made selections to the barriers question checked “parent”. Some other sources of social support was expected to be rated high by participants who answered this question and were not found. For example, after finding high positive correlation between marital quality and religious marital level, it was expected to have “religious leader” rated by many participants as a social support, but 21 participants only checked it. This may show that a spouse might have a good religious life, but don’t prefer to share his/her marital problems with religious leader. The findings of the barriers will be discussed in detail in the Implications section below.

**Implications for Research and Counseling**

This study raised several questions that could be tackled in future studies. For example, further investigation is needed about the relationship between demographic factors such as
gender, age, educational level, family income, and other factors on quality marital level. It would also be important if future couples counseling researchers study divorced couples to predict what factors that led them to be divorced. More research could be done on Christian couples, lower-income category couples, couples who have lower educational levels, couples with higher number of children, couples with longer marriage duration, and couples who might have extra-marital affairs experiences. Moreover, more research is needed to be done on those who already received couples counseling in the past to explore more about their experiences and what was effective in counseling.

The findings from the present study support several implications that could enhance the couples counseling field in Egypt. First, the high participants’ rate in the first few days of placing the survey online and the several emails received that requested survey results may indicate the high interest of many couples in the topic of marital issues. In fact, it was planned to collect a sample of 150 participants in a two week period, surprisingly, the number of participants reached 427 in less than one week.

Second, having “not knowing a mental health professional” as the highest rated barrier towards seeking couples counseling shows how much participants don’t know professional couples’ counselors and perhaps there is a limited availability of couples counselors. In this context, the present study recommends that existing couples counselors in Egypt need to have better marketing plans to advertise their services. It is advised that couples counselors target couples through raising awareness campaigns in family gathering places, such as sporting clubs.

Third, as a result of expected limited availability of couples counselors, this finding highlights the need to offer more programs of studying couples counseling. Academic training
programs to train and certify people to become certified couples counselors is required in order to meet the growing demand of the couples’ counselors.

Fourth, it is important to create supportive couples’ counseling centers that tackle a lot of barriers that were rated by participants, such as financial limitations and no time to go. A center with several counselors can possibly offer flexibility whether in time or budget for couples. Moreover, the centers should offer psycho-educational workshops. According to Gottman and Levenson (1992), momentous improvements in the marital satisfaction level of distressed couples could be produced by a psycho-educational approach. One of the psycho-educational approaches is workshops. Interestingly, the least barrier among participants was “the inconvenience of the clinic’s place”, which means that participants don’t mind the place of counselor’s clinic, as long as they will get professional help.

It is also important to consider that the first visit for couples might shape their whole experience about this field in Egypt. As mentioned in the literature, according to Bringle and Byers (1997), 83% of individuals who experienced counseling before believed that counseling was effective. Thus, it is suggested that couples’ counselors working in Egypt should provide effective service that is based on scientific research in order to build this new field on a correct basis. Moreover, peoples’ fear of self-disclosure should be addressed through counseling outreach programs that would educate people about counseling goals and expectations (Al-Darmaki, 2003).

The less positive attitude of husbands to seek counseling should be considered as well. Robertson & Fitzgerald (1992) suggested using terms other than counseling term, such as workshops and classes, in order to encourage men to seek counseling services. As per the findings of Bringle and Byers (1997), husbands believe that they had less marital control over
marital outcomes than did wives. Accordingly, the authors suggested designing approaches that target husbands to change this belief and psycho-educate them about their valuable input in their marriage.

**Study Limitations**

Although the present study holds promise to the couples counseling field in Egypt, it had a few limitations. Firstly, convenience sampling was used for survey participants. This is likely to impact the degree to which the survey sample provides results that can be generalized to Egyptian society as a whole. In addition, the number of female participants was almost 60% and the number of male participants was 40%. A sample including more male participants would be needed to be more representative of the entire community.

Lack of religious diversity was another source of limitation. More Christian participants would be required to have a representative sample for various Egyptian religious affiliations. Additionally, the absence of scale measuring social desirability is considered another limitation. The study results could be more positive as a consequence of impression management or other response styles.

**Conclusion**

This study is considered the first academic study on Egyptian couples’ attitudes toward seeking couples counseling. Moreover, the study covers a lot of marriage related issues in Egypt such as couples’ marital satisfaction level, marital religiosity level, and demographic factors that are associated with higher positive attitude toward seeking couples counseling. Surprisingly, the covered issues were not examined before in published literature.

This study addressed some important messages for those who are going to work as couples counselors with upper middle class Egyptian couples. Literature about couples
counseling or marital issues from Western references should be applied carefully on Egyptian culture. Some findings in the Western literature were found in this study, such as the effect of religious marriage on marital quality. However, some other expected results from Western sources were found to be not significant in this study. For example, couples counselor should not expect that age, gender, education, family income, number of children, or marriage length would affect the quality of marriage of couples who are going to visit them if they were from a similar socio-demographic profile as the participants in this study. Couples counselors shall expect that stigma might not be high among this high SES group, but lack of awareness of couples’ counselors is a problem. Therefore, it is suggested that couples counselors work with community psychologists to make awareness campaigns about couples counseling. It could be prophylactic against divorce to start visiting couples counselors with the early levels of marital distress. Moreover, couples counselors need to plan ahead how the motivational techniques for husbands would be different than those for wives. The positive attitudes towards counseling that were found among many participants in this study gives hope that couples counseling would be a potential field in Egypt.
References


Appendix A – Glossary of Terms

Arab Countries
Countries that consist of predominantly Arab-speaking populations, which are almost located in North Africa and Western Asia (e.g. Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Iraq, Yemen, Tunisia, Somalia, Jordan, Libya, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Kuwait, Palestine, United Arab Emirates).

Consensus
A state that describe being in agreement in general.

Copt
An Orthodox Christian affiliation that represents the majority of Christians in Egypt.

Couple Burnout
A state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion that is caused by the inconsistency between reality and expectations.

Couples Communication
It is verbal or non-verbal process of sharing information between partners in such a way that the both partners understand each other.

Couples Expressiveness
It is one of communication ways between couples. It means expressing thoughts and emotions to each other.

Marital Adjustment
The accommodation of husband and wife to each other to the point where there is companionship and agreement of basic values.

Marital Concordance
A state or condition of marital agreement or marital harmony.

**Marital Concordance Level**

Level of marital agreement of opinions (i.e. the opposite of level of marital conflicts or disagreement).

**Marital Distress**

Experiencing marital difficulties, which may cause disappointment and upset for partners about their marriage.

**Marital Satisfaction**

The degree to which partners in marriages assess their perceived needs, expectations, benefits and costs of their marital relationships. The more costs a partner feel, the less satisfied he/she will be with the marriage and vice versa.

**Middle East Countries:**

The lands around the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, extending from Morocco to the Arabian Peninsula and Iran and sometimes beyond. This region includes countries such as Syria, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Kuwait, and Oman.

**Socio-Economic Status**

Often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation. It is commonly conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual or group.

**Upper Class**

People who reside at the highest end of the society in terms of income and quality of life and according to CAPMAS, the monthly income for the household in this class is above 10,000 EGP.

**Upper Middle Class**
People occupy good positions in the social hierarchy of Egypt whether socially, economically, or educationally, and according to CAPMAS, the average monthly income for the household in this class is between 5,000 to 10,000 EGP.
THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO

Project Title: Attitudes toward Seeking Couples Counseling Among Egyptian Couples: Towards a Deeper Understanding of Common Marital Conflicts and Marital Distress

Principal Investigator: Eman Onsy (eman_onsy@aucegypt.edu)

You are being asked to participate in a research study if you are a married Egyptian living in Egypt (“Katb Kitab”, living together, or separated). The purpose of the research is to explore the common topics of conflicts among Egyptian couples and their attitudes toward seeking couples counseling. Findings may be shared with mental health professionals in Egypt to help them design better services for Egyptian couples. The findings may also be published in academic or non-academic journals and presented at conferences. The study has been approved by the ethics board at the American University in Cairo, Egypt.

The expected duration of your participation is about 15 minutes. The procedures of the research will be as follows: You will kindly be asked to fill out a questionnaire in which you select the options that best represent your marriage experience and views. You will also be asked to fill out a demographic section at the end of the questionnaire. There are no known risks connected to participating in this study, except that it may take up some of your time, and some people may feel discomfort when evaluating the areas of conflict in their marriages. If you feel any discomfort, you can leave the study, skip those questions, or contact me via email (eman_onsy@aucegypt.edu).
Although there are no direct rewards to you for completing the study, I hope that filling the questionnaire provides you with some more awareness about your marital life. Also, your participation would be valuable in establishing a good understanding for couple’s conflicts in Egypt and the couples counseling field. Recommendations that will be generated from the study will also be shared with you, if you want, once the study is concluded, which I hope you will find to be beneficial.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without negative consequences by exiting the web site. You have the right to receive the results of the study by contacting me via e-mail.

Results are anonymous and your IP address will not be traceable. I will not be able to identify which survey you completed. The survey is hosted on a secure (SSL) Web site.

If you would like to know more about the study, your rights, research-related concerns, or have any other questions, you are welcome to contact me at eman_onsy@aucegypt.edu.

By clicking “Next Page” and completing this study, you are agreeing to the following statements:

- I understand the requirements of this project, and my role as a participant.
- I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw at any time.
- I acknowledge that I am 18 years old or above and Egyptian living in Egypt.
- Currently, I am formally married “Katb-Kitab”, married, or separated.
**Egyptian Couples’ Marital Attitudes and Behaviors Questionnaire**

This questionnaire asks about your marital relationship, as well as your views about couples counseling. Please answer ALL questions as honestly as possible. Answer all questions with your partner in mind, but please answer it on your own without your partner’s help.

**Part ONE:**

Please express the extent to which you **AGREE** or **DISAGREE** with each of the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. We have a good marriage</td>
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<td>2. My relationship with my partner is very stable</td>
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<td>3. Our marriage is strong</td>
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<td>4. My relationship with my partner makes me happy</td>
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<td>5. I really feel like a part of a team with my partner</td>
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</table>
6. On the scale below, indicate the point which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, in your marriage.

Please rate the degree of your marital happiness between "Very UNHAPPY" (1) to "PERFECTLY HAPPY" (10).

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</table>

**Part TWO:**

Most couples have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of **AGREEMENT** or **DISAGREEMENT** between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always Agree</th>
<th>Almost Always Agree</th>
<th>Frequently Disagree</th>
<th>Occasionally Disagree</th>
<th>Almost Always Disagree</th>
<th>Always Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Communication between one another</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>2.</strong> Aims, goals, and things believed important (i.e. philosophy of life)</td>
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<td><strong>3.</strong> Matters of recreation (i.e.</td>
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<td>leisure time, interests, and activities)</td>
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<td>4. Friends</td>
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<td>5. Parents or in-laws</td>
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<td>6. Family finances/ home budget</td>
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<td>7. Household responsibilities (e.g. cooking, cleaning…)</td>
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<td>8. Parenting styles</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Resolving marital conflicts</td>
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<td>10. Trust</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Support for one another</td>
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<td>12. Amount of time spent together</td>
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<td>13. The financial standard of your family and your spouse’s family</td>
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<td>14. Political opinions</td>
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<td>15. Religious matters</td>
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<td>16. Demonstrations of affection (i.e. emotions, passion,…)</td>
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<td>17. Making major decisions</td>
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<td>18. Sexual interactions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>More often than not</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)</td>
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<td>20. Career decisions (occupational or academic progress)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Please indicate the FREQUENCY of experiencing the following:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>21. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation,</td>
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<td>or terminating your relationship?</td>
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<td>22. How often do you and your partner quarrel?</td>
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<td>23. Do you ever regret that you married?</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. How often do you and your mate “get on each other’s nerves”?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate the FREQUENCY
| 25. Do you and your mate engage | Never | Rarely | Occasionally | Almost everyday | Everyday |
| in outside interests together? |       |        |              |                |          |

**How often would you say the following events occur between you and your partner?**

| 26. How often do you have a | Never | Less than once a month | Once or twice a month | Once or twice a week | Once a day | More often |
| stimulating exchange of ideas |       |                        |                        |                      |            |           |

| 27. How often do you work | Never | Less than once a month | Once or twice a month | Once or twice a week | Once a day | More often |
| together on a project     |       |                        |                        |                      |            |           |

| 28. How often do you calmly | Never | Less than once a month | Once or twice a month | Once or twice a week | Once a day | More often |
| discuss something          |       |                        |                        |                      |            |           |

**Part THREE:**

Please express the extent to which you **AGREE** or **DISAGREE** with each of the following statements:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I wish we were spiritually closer</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I feel spiritually close to my partner</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. My religious beliefs greatly differ from my partner's</td>
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<td>4. I do not engage in spiritual practices with my partner</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I feel my partner and I are equally connected to God</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. I attend religious services with my partner</td>
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<td>7. My partner and I never pray together</td>
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<td>8. My partner and I affiliate with the same religious group</td>
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<td>9. When I speak to my spouse about God, I feel understood</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I rarely discuss spiritual issues with my partner</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. If my partner was closer to God, we would be happier</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Part FOUR:
Please express the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. If I believed I was having a severe marital problem, my first inclination would be to get professional attention</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The idea of talking about marital problems with a counselor strikes me as a poor way to get rid of marital conflicts</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. If I were experiencing a serious marital crisis at this point in my life, I would be confident that I could find relief in counseling</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. There is something admirable in the attitude of a married person who is willing to cope with his or her marital conflicts and fears without resorting to couples counseling</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I would want to get couples counseling help if I were worried or upset about my marriage for a long period of time</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. I might want to have couples counseling in the future</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
7. A person with a marital problem is not likely to solve it alone; he or she is likely to solve it with couples’ counselor help

8. Considering the time and expense involved in couples counseling, it would have doubtful value for a married person like me

9. A married person should work out his or her own marital problems; getting couples counseling would be at last resort.

10. Marital and emotional troubles, like many things, tend to work out by themselves

Part FIVE:

Please answer the following questions as accurately as possible:

1. Gender:
   - Male
   - Female

2. Age: ________

3. What is your highest level of education? (Please Circle One)
   - No education
   - Adult literacy (“mahw al-ommeya”)
   - Primary school
   - Middle school
4. What is your religious affiliation
   - Muslim
   - Christian: Coptic-Orthodox
   - Christian: Catholic
   - Christian: Protestant
   - Other, please specify:____________

5. What is your level of religiosity in general? Please rate it on the following scale ranging from 0= Minimum religiosity to 10= Maximum religiosity

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<th>1</th>
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<th>7</th>
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<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. Current marital status:
   - Engaged
   - Katb-Kitab (i.e. formally married, but not living together)
   - Married
   - Separated (i.e. formally married, but living apart)
o Divorced  
o Widowed  
o Other, please specify: ____________

7. Were you married BEFORE?
   o Yes  
o No

If Yes, How many times?
   - One  
   - Two  
   - Three  
   - Other (please specify)_______________________

8. If the answer of number 7 is (yes), how did your previous marriage/s end? (check all that apply)
   o Divorce  
   o My partner passed away  
   o Annulment  
o Other, please specify___________

9. For your current marriage, how long have you and your partner been married? (Please make your answer in years. For example: If you are married for 6 months, the answer is: 0.5 year)

__________________

10. Have you ever had a romantic relationship with someone while you are married (i.e. have an affair)?
Comments: __________________________________________

11. At what age did you and your partner marry?
   You: _____________        Your Partner:____________

12. How many children do you and your partner have together:
   o  Zero
   o  1
   o  2
   o  3
   o  4
   o  Other, please specify: ________________

13. Do you have any children from previous marriage(s), how many?
    __________

14. How many children under the age of 18 are currently living in your home?
    __________

15. What is the total number of people currently living in your home including yourself?
    __________

16. What is your family’s average monthly income?
   o  Below 1000 L.E.
   o  Between 1000 - 5000 L.E.
   o  Between 5000 - 10,000 L.E
   o  Above 10,000 L.E.
17. Have you ever received counseling services? (e.g. sought help from a counselor, psychologist, social worker, psychiatrist, or sex therapist)
   - Yes
   - No

18. If the answer of Q.17 is NO, what is/are the reason? (Please check all that apply)
   - Fear of stigma
   - Mistrusting confidentiality of the mental health practitioner
   - Financial limitations
   - Religious beliefs about keeping marital issues private
   - Not knowing a good mental health practitioner
   - Inconvenience of place of the clinic
   - Not enough time to go

Already have other sources of support
   - Friend
   - Sister or brother
   - Parent
   - Other family member
   - Uncle or Aunt
   - Religious leader
   - Professional from another field (e.g., doctor, …etc)

Other, please specify ___________________
19. Please write any final comments about this survey or about the topics covered in this survey.

____________________________________________________________________
عطرن البحث: (نحو فهم أعمق للخلافات الزوجية وسلوك الأزواج المصريين تجاه البحث عن استشارات زوجية)

الباحث الرئيسي: (إيمان أنسى)

البريد الإلكتروني: eman_onsy@aucegypt.edu

انت مدعو للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية إذا كنت مصري متزوج وتعيش في مصر (سواء كنت في مرحلة كتب الكتاب، تعيش مع زوجتك/زوجك، أو منفصلين).

الغرض من البحث هو اكتشاف مواضيع الخلاف الشائعة بين الأزواج المصريين وإتجاههم إلى البحث عن استشارات زوجية من أخصائي نفسي. قد أشارك النتائج مع متخصصين في مجال الصحة النفسية في مصر لمساعدتهم في تقديم أفضل الخدمات للأزواج المصريين. وقد تنشر النتائج أيضاً في مجلة متخصصة أو أشارك بها في مؤتمرات علمية.

تمت الموافقة على الدراسة من قبل مجلس أمناء الجامعة الأمريكية في القاهرة بجمهورية مصر العربية.

تقدر المدة المتوقعة للمشاركة في الدراسة بخمسة عشرة دقيقة.

إجراءات البحث ستكون على النحو التالي:

سيطلب منك اختيار الجملة الأقرب لوجهة نظرك في تجربة زواجك. كما سيطلب منك أن تملأ الجزء الديموغرافى في نهاية الاستبيان. لا يوجد أي مخاطر معروفة مرتبطة بمشاركةكم في هذه الدراسة، إلا أنها قد تستغرق بعض من وقتكم، أيضا، قد يشعر البعض بعدم الارتياح عند تقييم مناطق الخلاف في زواجهم، فإذا شعرت بذلك، فيمكنك ترك الدراسة أو تخطي الأسئلة، أو الاتصال بي مباشرة عبر البريد.

(eman_onsy@aucegypt.edu)
على الرغم من أنه لا يوجد أي مكافآت مباشرة لإتمام الدراسة إلا أننا نأمل أن ملء الاستبيان يوفر لك مزيد من الوعي عن حياتك الزوجية. إلا أنني أمل أن ملء الاستبيان سيوفر لك مزيد من الوعي عن حياتك الزوجية أيضاً سيكون لمشاركتك قيمة في تأسيس فهم جيد للخلافات الزوجية في مصر ومجال الاستشارات الزوجية. سيتم أيضاً مشاركتكم في التوصيات التي سيتم استخلاصها من الدراسة لارتدائه منها إذا أردت، والتي نأمل أن تكون مفيدة.

المشاركة في هذه الدراسة هو عمل تطوعي ولديك الحق في الانسحاب من الدراسة وقتما تشاء ولك الحق الكامل في الإطلاع على نتائج الدراسة من خلال الاتصال بي عبر البريد الإلكتروني.

نرجو العلم أن النتائج ستكون مجهولة وعنوان الIP الخاص بك لن يتم تتبعه من قبل أي جهة. ولن يمكننا تحديد الاستطلاع الخاص بك كما سيوضع الاستطلاع على موقع آمن.

إذا كنت ترغب في معرفة المزيد عن هذه الدراسة، عن حقوقك، عن الأبحاث ذات الصلة بها، أو لديك أسئلة أخرى، يمكنك الاتصال بي مباشرة على البريد الإلكتروني:

eman_onsy@aucegypt.edu

بالضغط على "الصفحة التالية" فذلك يعني موافقتك على الآتي:

- أتفهم هذا المشروع ودوري فيه هو مشارك
- أتفهم أن مشاركتي في الدراسة هو عمل تطوعي وان لدي الحق في الانسحاب وقتما أشاء.
- أقر أن عمري 18 سنة أو أكثر وانتي مصري مقيم في مصر.
- الحالة الاجتماعية الحالية هوأني متزوج أو في مرحلة كتب الكتاب أو منفصل (بشكل غير رسمي)
استبيان حول السلوكيات والمواصفات الزوجية

يقوم هذا الاستبيان بالاستفسار عن بعض المواقف والسلوكيات الزوجية تجاه الاستشارات الزوجية

يرجى التذكر في حياتك مع شريك حياتك عند الإجابة على الأسئلة، كما ينبغي الإجابة عن هذه الأسئلة بدون مساعدة شريكك

الجزء الأول:

قم بالتعبير عن مدى موافقتك أو اعتراضك لكل من العبارات التالية:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>موافق بشدة</th>
<th>موافق</th>
<th>موافق بعض الشئ</th>
<th>محاذ</th>
<th>ليس في جميع الاحوال</th>
<th>اعتراض ولكن</th>
<th>اعتراض بشدة</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. بشكل عام يعتبر زواجنا جيداً</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. علاقتي مستقرة مع شريك حياتي</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. رابط زواجنا قوي</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. علاقتي بشريك حياتي سعيداً</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. أشعر وكأنني جزء من فريق مع شريكي</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. في المقياس التالي، قم بتحديد الدرجة التي تعبر عن مدى سعادتك في كل ما يتعلق بحياتك الزوجية. يرجى الأخذ في الاعتبار أن النقطة الأولى (1) "غير سعيد" والنقطة (10) "سعيد جداً".
الجزء الثاني:
يعاني معظم الأشخاص من بعض الخلافات في الرأي في علاقاتهم ببعض، في الجدول التالي قم بالإشارة إلى المدى التقريبي للتوافق أو الاعتراض بينك وبين شريك حياتك في كل نقطة من النقاط التالية:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>الوافق دائماً</th>
<th>أوافق في معظم الأحيان</th>
<th>اعتراض في أحياناً</th>
<th>اعتراض في كثيراً</th>
<th>دائمًا اعتراض</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. طريقة الحوار وتبادل الآراء بيننا</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. الأهداف والأمور الهامة في الحياة (معنى فلسفة الحياة)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. وسائل الاستجمام (طرق الترفيه، أوقات الفراغ، الأنشطة)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. الأصدقاء</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. التعامل مع والدي أو والدي شريك حياتي</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. ميزانية الأسرة</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. مسؤوليات المنزل (مثل النظافة، الطبخ...)</td>
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<tr>
<td>رقم</td>
<td>الفئة</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>نمط تربية الأطفال</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>حل الخلافات الزوجية</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>الثقة</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>دعم ومساعدة كل الآخر</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>كمية الوقت الذي نمضي معا</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>المستوى المادي لعائلتي وعائلة شريكي</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>الآراء السياسية</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>المسائل الدينية</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>ابداء المشاعر والعاطفة (معنى الحب والعاطفة… الخ)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>اتخاذ القرارات الهامة</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>العلاقات الجنسية</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>السلوك المهذب أو الصحيح</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>اتخاذ قرارات المستقبل (مهني أو أكاديمي)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
الرجاء في الأسئلة التالية الإشارة إلى مدى تجربتك/ ممارستك كالآتي:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>كل الأوقات</th>
<th>معظم الأوقات</th>
<th>في كثير من الأحيان</th>
<th>نادراً</th>
<th>أبداً</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

21. ما هي عدد المرات التي تناقش فيها أو أخذت في الاعتبار مسألة الطلاق أو الانفصال أو إنهاء علاقات الزوجية؟

22. ما هي عدد المرات التي تتشاجر فيها مع شريكك؟

23. هل شعرت يوماً بالندم على الزواج؟

24. ما هي عدد المرات التي تقوم فيها أنت وشريكك باستفزاز أحدكما الآخر؟

من فضلك أشر إلى مدى تجربتك في السؤال التالي:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>يومياً</th>
<th>تقريباً يومياً</th>
<th>من الحين للآخر</th>
<th>نادراً</th>
<th>أبداً</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

25. هل نشترك أن وشريكك في انشطة خارجية معاً.

في الأسئلة التالية أجب عن معدل حدوث الأمور التالية بينك وبين شريك حياتك كالآتي:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>المشتركة</th>
<th>مرة أو مرتين شهرًا</th>
<th>مرة أو مرتين أسبوعيًا</th>
<th>مرة أو مرتين شهريًا</th>
<th>أقل من مرة شهريًا</th>
<th>أبداً</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

الجزء الثالث:

يرجى الإشارة إلى مدى موافقتك أو معارضتك لكل من العبارات التالية:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>العدد</th>
<th>الوصف</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>أتمنى لو كنا أكثر قربًا من الناحية الوجانية</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>أشعر أن روحانيتي قريبة من شريك حياتي</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>معتقداتي الدينية تختلف كثيرًا عن شريك حياتي</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>أنا لا أشارك في أنشطة دينية روحية مع شريك حياتي</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>أشعر بأنني و شريك حياتي متساويين في قربنا لربنا</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>أحضر ندوات دينية مع شريك حياتي</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>أنا و شريك حياتي لا نصل إلى أبدا معاً</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>ننتمي أنا و شريك حياتي لنفس الاتجاه الديني</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

الثنائي: 

تبادل الأفكار بحماس

العمل معاً على مشروع

معدل مناقشة الأمور بهدوء
9. عندما أتحدث إلى شريك حياتي عن "الله" أشعر بأنه يفهمني.

10. نادراً ما نتناقش أنا و شريك حياتي في أمور روحية / دينية.

11. لو كان شريك حياتي أكثر قربا لله لكانا أكثر سعادة.

الجزء الرابع:

قم باختيار الإجابة المناسبة لمدى موافقتك أو معارضتك لكل من العبارات التالية:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>أعارض بشدة</td>
<td>أعارض بشدة</td>
<td>أعارض بشدة</td>
<td>أعارض بشدة</td>
<td>أعارض بشدة</td>
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<tr>
<td>أوافق بشدة</td>
<td>أوافق بشدة</td>
<td>أوافق بشدة</td>
<td>أوافق بشدة</td>
<td>أوافق بشدة</td>
<td>أوافق بشدة</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. إذا اعتقدت أنني أواجه مشكلة خطيرة في حيائي الزوجية فإن اختياري الأول سيكون الاستعانة بشخص مختص.

2. إن فكرة الحديث عن مشاكلي الزوجية إلى مستشار في الزواج تصدمني لكونها أسلوب ضعيف للتخلص من تلك الخلافات.

3. إذا شعرت أنني أواجه مشكلة حقيقية في هذه المرحلة من حياتي فإني على ثقة في إيجاد الراحة في الاستشارة الزوجية.

4. من الراجح أن يستطيع شخص متزوج أن يتغلب على خلافاته الزوجية ومخاوفه بنفسه بدلاً من اللجوء إلى إستشاري الزواج.

5. إذا واجهت مشاكل في حياتي الزوجية لفترة طويلة سأود أن أحصل على مساعدة مستشاري الزوج.

6. قد أرغب في الحصول على مساعدة مستشاري الزوج في المستقبل.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>أعارض بشدة</td>
<td>أعارض بشدة</td>
<td>أعارض بشدة</td>
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<td>أوافق بشدة</td>
<td>أوافق بشدة</td>
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<td>أوافق بشدة</td>
<td>أوافق بشدة</td>
<td>أوافق بشدة</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. غالباً ما يكون الشخص ذو المشكلة الزوجية غير قادر على حلها بمفرده ودائماً عليه الاستعانة بمساعدة مستشاري الزواج.

8. إن قيمة الاستشارات الزوجية تصبح مشكوك فيها إذا أخذنا في الاعتبار الوقت والتكلفة لهذه الاستشارات.

9. لابد للشخص المتزوج أن يقوم بحل مشاكله الزوجية بمفرده وجعل الاستشارات الزوجية آخر ملجأ/حل.

10. إن الخلافات الزوجية والعاطفية مثلها مثل غيرها يمكن أن تحل وحدها.

الجزء الخامس:

يرجى الإجابة عن الأسئلة التالية بأكبر قدر من الدقة:

1. الجنس:

   ○ ذكر

   ○ أنثى

2. السن: ________

3. ما هو أعلى مؤهل دراسي حصلت عليه (قم بوضع علامة على دائرة واحدة فقط):

   ○ غير متعلم

   ○ محو أمية

   ○ تعليم ابتدائي

   ○ تعليم متوسط

   ○ تعليم ثانوي

   ○ مؤهل جامعي
٤. ما هو الإتجاه الديني

- مسلم
- مسيحي: أرثوذكس
- مسيحي: كاثوليك
- مسيحي: بروتستانت
- أخری (من فضلك حدد): ______________________

٥. ما هي درجة تدينك؟ يرجى الإجابة في الاعتبار أن الحد الأدنی هو (٠) و الحد الأقصی

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

٦. الحالة الاجتماعية:

- خاطلب
- كتب كتاب (بمعنى متزوج رسميا ولكن لم تعيشوا معا بعد)
- متزوج
- منفصل (و لكن غير مطلقين)
- مطلق
- أرمل
- غيره (من فضلك حدد): _______________________
هل كنت متزوج من قبل؟

- نعم
- لا

إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم فكم عدد المرات التي سبق لك الزواج؟

- مرة
- مرتين
- ثلاث مرات
- آخر (من فضلك حدد): ____________

إذا كانت إجابة السؤال رقم 7 ب (نعم)، كيف انتهي الزواج السابق؟ (من فضلك اختار كل الإجابات التي تصلح)

- طلاق
- وفاة شريك حياتك
- بطلان
- آخر (من فضلك حدد): ____________

 بالنسبة لزواجك الحالي، فكم عدد سنوات الزواج؟ (من فضلك إجعل الإجابة بالسنوات (فمثلاً لو متزوج منذ 6 أشهر، تكون 0.5 سنة)

- ____________

هي سبق أن كنت على علاقة بشخص آخر وأنتم متزوج (بمعنى علاقة غير شرعية)

- نعم
- لا

كم كان عمرك عندما تزوجت؟

- عمرك: ____________
- عمر شريك حياتك: ____________
12. كم عدد الأطفال لديك أنت و شريك حياتك؟
- صفر
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- __________ :) أخر(ي) من فضلك حدّد.

13. إذا كان لديك أطفال من زواج سابق، فكم عددهم؟
________________

14. ما هو عدد الأطفال الأقل من 18 سنة الذين يعيشون معك في المنزل الآن؟
________________

15. ما هو عدد الأشخاص الذي يعيشون معك في منزلك الآن (بما فيهم أنت)؟
________________

16. ما هو معدل دخل الأسرة الشهري؟
- أقل من 1000 جنيه شهريا
- ما بين 1000 و 5000 جنيه شهريا
- ما بين 5000 و 10000 جنيه شهريا
- أكثر من 10000 جنيه شهريا
- أخر(ي) من فضلك حدّد.

17. هل حصلت يوماً على استشارات زوجية (استشاري زواج، طبيب نفسي، مصلح اجتماعي، أخصائي نفسي، أو أستشاري علاقات جنسية)؟
- نعم
- لا

18. إذا كانت الإجابة للسؤال رقم 17 بـ لا فما هي الأسباب؟
الخوف من ما سيقوله من حولك إذا علموا

- عدم الثقة في أن الاستشاري سيحفظ سرية حالتي
- قيود مادية
- ارتفاعات دينية بوجود الخصوصية في الشوون الزوجية
- عدم معرفة استشاري اسرة أو طبيب نفسي جيد
- عدم ملائمة مكان العيادة
- عدم توافر الوقت

وجود وسائل أخرى للدعم مثل:
- صديق
- اخ أو أخت
- الوالد أو الوالدة
- عم، عمة، خال، أو خالة
- قريب للعائلة
- قائد ديني
- شخص مهني محترف اخر (مثل طبيب)
- أخري (من فضلك حدد): __________________________

من فضلك أكتب تعليق أخير عن هذا الاستبيان أو عن المواضيع التي ناقشها الاستبيان