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An exploratory study into the perceptions of young Muslim South African adults regarding marriage

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A research report submitted to the Discipline of Psychology, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

Marriage is an important phenomenon that occurs in most societies across the world. Within the Islamic belief system, marriage is regarded as a sacred union and is obligatory on all Muslim people. This qualitative study explored the perceptions that eight young Muslim South African adults have regarding marriage, using semi-structured interviews. The data was analysed by following a thematic content analysis framework which highlighted aspects such as the extent to which participants ascribed to their religious beliefs regarding marriage, any societal influences that may have shaped their views on marriage as well as the factors they believed lead to the success as well as the breakdown of marriages. From the results, it was evident that young Muslim South African adults had positive views on marriage, and expected to get married at some point in their lives. This was primarily due to their religious Islamic backgrounds and family upbringings. Moreover, the results indicated that young Muslim adults are more flexible with regard to engaging in pre-marital romantic relationships, yet continued to hold marriage in high regard. Participants outlined factors such as teamwork from spouses, trust, commitment, understanding, honesty as well as communication between spouses as integral in achieving and maintaining a successful marriage. These perceptions are discussed in relation to findings from other studies. The need for pre-marital programmes for young Muslim adults is highlighted.

Key words: Young South African Muslims, Marriage, Marital perceptions, Pre-marital programmes

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, **Rayhanah Moosa Hassim** hereby declare that this is a research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of M.Ed (Educational Psychology) in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. This research project is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

Rayhanah Moosa Hassim

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Submitted ____ July 2013

Table of Contents

Abstract..... i

Acknowledgements..... ii

Declaration of Originality..... iii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION..... 1

1.1 Aims..... 1

1.2. Rationale..... 1

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW..... 4

2.1. Marriage and the Family..... 4

2.2. Marriage: A Secular Perspective..... 7

2.3. Marriage: A Psychological Perspective..... 8

2.4. Marriage: An Indian Cultural Perspective..... 14

2.5 Marriage: An Islamic Perspective..... 15

2.6. Research on the construct of marriage..... 20

2.7. What makes a healthy/ successful marriage?..... 23

2.8. Notions of Divorce..... 26

2.9. Islamic construction of Divorce..... 28

2.10. Conclusion..... 30

CHAPTER 3: METHODS..... 31

3.1. Research Design..... 31

3.2. Sample and Sampling..... 31

3.3. Instruments..... 34

3.4. Procedure..... 34

3.5. Quality Criteria..... 35

3.6. Data Analysis..... 37

3.7. Reflexivity..... 37

3.8. Ethical Considerations..... 39

3.9. Research Questions..... 40

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS 41

4.1. Introduction 41

4.2. Theme One: The Islamic self 42

4.3. Theme Two: Constructions of marriage 43

4.3.1. Defining marriage 43

4.3.2. Influencing factors 44

4.3.3. Embedded attitudes 49

4.3.3.1. *General views* 49

4.3.3.2. *My friends and family* 51

4.3.3.3. *Feeling pressured: age matters* 52

4.3.3.4. *My parents' marriage* 57

4.3.3.5. *Wishes and expectations* 59

4.3.4. The role of spouses 60

4.4. Theme Three: Religiosity 63

4.4.1. Pre-marital romantic relationships 63

4.4.2. Influences on marriage 67

4.5. Theme Four: A healthy and successful marriage 68

4.5.1. What is a successful marriage? 69

4.5.2. Finding the right person 69

4.5.3. Achieving a fruitful marriage 71

4.6. Theme Five: Factors that lead to marital breakdown 72

4.6.1. Negative implicating factors 72

4.7. Theme Six: Muslim marriage and the community 73

4.7.1. From sacred to futile: views on Muslim marriage and divorce 74

4.8. Conclusion 78

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION 79

5.1. Discussion of Results 79

5.2. Implications of Results 87

5.3. Limitations of Research Study 88

5.4. Recommendations for Further Research 89

5.5. Conclusion 90

REFERENCE LIST 91

APPENDICES 97

Appendix A: Demographic Questionnaire and Interview Schedule..... 97

Appendix B: Request for Permission from the Registrar 100

Appendix C: Request for assistance from MSA & Consent form 102

Appendix D: Request for assistance from SRC & Consent form..... 104

Appendix E: Participant Information Letter 106

Appendix F & G: Consent Forms 108

Appendix H: Participant Invitation Sheet..... 110

Appendix I: Ethics Clearance Certificate 111

Supervisor Contract 112

Table 1: Biographical Analysis 33

Table 2: Themes and Subthemes 41

Chapter 1- Introduction

Marriage is a social union or legal contract between two people which is marked by a symbolic event such as the wedding (Manning, Longmore & Giordano, 2004). It is an important phenomenon that occurs in most societies, all of which have their own religious beliefs and cultural meaning attached to it, therefore making it a socially constructed experience. As such, this study has chosen to deconstruct one particular society's beliefs on marriage by focusing on the Islamic perspective of this social union.

1.1. Research Aim

This research study aimed to investigate the perceptions that young Muslim South African adults have regarding marriage. In reaching this aim, various related issues were explored such as the extent to which participants ascribed to their religious beliefs, any societal influences that may have shaped their views on marriage as well as the factors they believed lead to the success as well as the breakdown of marriages. Information obtained could assist in further understanding the dynamics that occur within relationships in Muslim communities, as it has implications on the stability of Muslim marriages and families as well as on the mental health of Muslim children.

1.2. Rationale

With regard to the Islamic belief system, marriage is regarded as obligatory as it is a sacred institution with two important functions. The first of which is the function of legalising the intimacy between a man and a woman, as Islam strongly criticizes the courting or cohabiting of couples before marriage. Secondly it plays a fundamental role in increasing the Muslim society. In light of these important functions, this research study attempted to explore the meaning of marriage for young Muslim adults living in a modern and diverse South African society. Hence, it endeavored to uncover their views on marriage. This included the perceptions that young Muslim adults have about religion and their role as Muslims, their view on heterosexual relationships and their future marital expectations. Furthermore, this study determined if these or other aspects have influenced their overall perceptions of marriage.

Islam has strict teachings on marriage and strongly denounces the separation of married couples. With the occurrence of a large global as well as South African divorce rate (Amato, 2000; Cherlin, 2004; Statistics South Africa, 2010) it raises the question

of the influence divorce has on young Muslim South African adults' willingness to marry. However, this was not an explicit factor investigated in this research study. Rather, an understanding of why there is an increasing prevalence of divorce among Muslim couples in South Africa was warranted, particularly since it has implications on the stability and well-being of future families, including the mental health of children. Therefore this research study attempted to explore what young Muslim adults perceive the implicating factors in the breakdown of a marriage as being.

Nevertheless, it also appeared necessary to understand what some of the reasons are for young Muslim adults wanting to marry, and to uncover if an absence of these factors could contribute to the increasing prevalence of divorce among Muslim couples in South Africa. Hence, this research study further explored what young Muslim adults' expectations of a marriage partner were as well as factors they perceived lead to the success of marriages.

In the interest of educational psychology, professionals in the field are concerned with the mental health implications of stable marriages and family relationships. Hence, by exploring the perceptions that young Muslim South African adults have regarding marriage, it may contribute toward further understanding relationship dynamics, thought patterns as well as factors that influence the marriage relationship.

Research has revealed that divorce does have negative implications on the family structure, on adults and on children (Amato, 2000). Previous studies as discussed by Amato (2004) consistently claim that children who are raised by happy married parents ensure the best chance of developing into successful, competent adults. This is not to deny that children raised by other different types of family structures do not develop into well adjusting adults; however data consistently indicates that children with two happily and securely married parents have an advantage over children raised in other family groups (Amato, 2004).

Moreover, it can be argued that the relationship between spouses affects a child's development. Therefore, the children of happy married couples are more likely to be influenced by their parents' relationship and behaviour. This could further sustain healthy relationships and mental health. In a study conducted by Musick & Bumpass (2012), an important research finding was that married couples fared better in health as opposed to cohabiting couples. Therefore, the understanding of the dynamics that occur within

relationships could add to the existing research in mental health, as it includes working toward the promotion of healthy, stable relationships and marriages. This directly influences the development and wellbeing of children and families.

Furthermore, uncovering young Muslim adults' perceptions regarding factors they believe lead to the success as well as the breakdown of marriages could be helpful in assisting educational psychologists to distinguish the dynamics that occur in Muslim families. It is also important to view relationships in the light of the high divorce rate, as this will aid in identifying any new emerging trends related to young Muslim adults' attitudes, beliefs and behaviours when considering relationships and marriage. Moreover, the findings would have implications for the development of preventative interventions such as pre-marital counselling programmes as well as programmes that foster healthy relationships.

To date there does not appear to be much documented research on the topic of this research study internationally or within the South African context. Therefore, this pioneering study which investigated the perceptions of young Muslim South African adults regarding marriage could make a contribution in this regard, as well as in relation to the South African Muslim context.

Chapter 2- Literature Review

This literature review draws upon the notion of collective consciousness to develop its theoretical framework, in relation to the meaning of marriage as well as the role of families in society. The association between marriage and families are explored, followed by a discussion regarding notions of the construction of marriage, particularly since marriage is constructed and understood differently when viewed from various perspectives. The perspectives include the secular perspective followed by a psychological theoretical perspective, an Indian cultural perspective and lastly a traditional Islamic perspective. This discussion also includes an exploration of some of the complexities regarding marriage as well as research on the construct of marriage. Moreover, a discussion on the dissolution of marriage from both a secular and an Islamic perspective is presented. This is in light of findings from the collected data which suggested that there are different reasons for why marriages do not work. The predominant implicating factors in the dissolution of marriage include a lack of communication, dishonesty as well as lack of trust.

2.1. Marriage and the Family

Marriage by definition refers to “the act, ceremony or process by which the legal relationship of husband and wife is constituted. The legality of the union may be established by civil, religious or other means as recognized by the laws of each country” (United Nations, 1991 as cited in Statistics South Africa, 2001).

Marriage unites a man and a woman sexually and economically, and it allows them to give birth to, adopt or rear children (Strong, de Vault & Cohen, 2005). This union of marriage is assumed to be permanent, even though it can be dissolved in reality by separation or divorce. The choice of marriage partner as well as the age of getting married varies greatly in different cultures and societies. For instance, in some societies, children as young as six years old may marry other children, and only live together when older; furthermore in some cultures, marriages are arranged by their family members who choose a suitable partner for their child according to the family’s preference (Meer, 1969; Strong et al., 2005). In religious societies, marriage is often regarded as a divine institution, traditionally being arranged between families and only validated if performed by a priest. However, in secular states, marriage is regulated by the government and legalised through government-issued marriage licences (Strong et al., 2005).

The meaning of marriage within different societies has been subjected to diverse interpretations and significance depending on the historical and cultural underpinnings at the time. Hence, marriage is argued as being socially constructed. It is not defined or understood based on its unique characteristics, but its meaning has evolved and changed through various social times, by different people and cultures. Traditionally, marriage was seen as beneficial as it provided a source of intimacy and companionship and was revered as the only socially acceptable way to have sexual relationships necessary to give birth to or adopt children in order to start a family which was highly valued for its many benefits (Cargan, 1991; Strong et al., 2005). Hence, the most important function of marriage was the raising of the family.

Central to the family was its ability to fulfill critical functions in society. These functions included providing social and emotional support, protection from loneliness and isolation, affection and sustaining healthy relationships as well as the socialisation of children with regard to learning the norms, values and language of a culture. Furthermore, the family was responsible for the stipulation of social status, economic co-operation by means of dividing its labour by gender, defining standards of sexual behaviour and importantly reproduction which contributes to the survival of society (Huyssteen & Hagemeier, 2008; Strong et al., 2005).

Hence, a strong collective consciousness was formed around the meaning of marriage as well as the functions of the family which could only be achieved through legal matrimonial bonds between heterosexual couples. The notion of collective consciousness derived from Emile Durkheim's social theory, refers to shared beliefs and attitudes which serve as a unifying force within any given society, as well as how individuals view themselves in relation to society (Ritzer, 2000). The following definition sums up the meaning of collective consciousness:

"The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society forms a determinate system which has its own life; one may call it the collective or common conscience. . . It is, thus, an entirely different thing from particular consciences, although it can only be realised through them"

(Durkheim, 1893/1964:79-80 as cited in Ritzer, 2000).

The notion of collective consciousness aids in understanding why individuals behave in a similar manner as well as share comparable attitudes and beliefs regarding many social phenomena, particularly marriage. The traditional collective consciousness regarding marriage and family evolved over time into newer understandings. With regard to marriage, it has often been viewed as a social institution necessary for the promulgation of families and society, and it served the interests of the collective. The contemporary era has seen a shift in this consciousness whereby marriage is no longer the sole acceptable means of having families, and it tends to serve the interests of the individual, which elucidates the shift from collectivism to individualism (Cherlin, 2004; Coleman & Ganong, 2004). This notion will be expanded on in the succeeding section entitled Marriage: A Secular Perspective.

With regard to the family, before the rise of the Industrial revolution, it was considered as largely self-sufficient, providing for the emotional and physical needs of its members. Religious practices were woven into the daily family life and each member co-operated to ensure completion of tasks. However, with the rise of modernisation, the notion of 'family' underwent a significant shift in meaning and construction within complex societies as it became more specialised, providing fewer functions than in preliterate societies. The adults and older relatives within a family were no longer teaching children the necessary skills for development, rather schools and teachers became responsible for formal education; religion was taught by the church and clergy, and the police and the government were responsible for social control (Popenoe et al., 1998).

Moreover, the collective consciousness concerning the structure and functions of the family has also been widely challenged and its boundaries blurred in contemporary families and society. Since the primary functions are being achieved outside the union of marriage. This includes an increasing number of people who opt for alternative forms of relationships such as cohabitation, single parent and gay couple relationships which do not involve the recognition of a legalised union. Hence, the once valued institution of marriage has also witnessed a shift in meaning that has given rise to a new collective consciousness (Strong et al., 2005).

As evidenced from the discussion thus far, the meaning and function of marriage is continually transforming, creating a new perspective on the notion of collective consciousness. Societies and cultures may have similar or different perspectives concerning the notions of the construction of marriage, with neither one privileging the other. What follows are three perspectives that offer their unique understanding on the construct of marriage.

2.2. Marriage: A Secular Perspective

Within the contemporary era, the phenomenon of marriage has undergone a change in meaning and has in a sense been deinstitutionalised. Marriage is no longer regarded as a necessity for those seeking intimacy, companionship and children. Rather it has become a personal choice as more appealing and acceptable alternatives to a lifelong commitment present itself (Cherlin, 2004). This argument is evidenced by the increasing prevalence of cohabitation in the West, as a substitute for marriage (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Lee & Payne, 2010, Manning & Smock, 2002).

Musick & Bumpass (2012) interestingly argue that the traditional functions once confined to marriage, such as sexual intimacy, cohabitation and child bearing, are now occurring outside this long recognised fundamental social institution which “has blurred the boundaries of marriage, leading one to ask what difference marriage makes in comparison to alternative modes of organizing its traditional functions” (p.1). It can be seen that there is a growing collective consciousness in the secular society regarding cohabitation and this offers a different view of relationships which is opposite to the traditional meaning of marriage (Manning et al, 2004).

Accompanied with the rise of this new consciousness, are novel norms, behaviours and attitudes about the family as well as personal life, which have taken on different meanings as opposed to what it did before. Therefore it can be argued that there has not just been a shift in social norms but rather a complete breakdown in the way people view the bond of marriage particularly in the secular societies. Cherlin (2004) makes mention of postmodern theorists such as Giddens (1991, 1992) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995, 2002); whose writings reflect a growing individualization of personal life. In his work, Cherlin (2004) argues that these above mentioned postmodern theorists note the mounting role of personal choice, due to the deteriorating power of social norms and laws

as regulating tools for family life. These theorists' writings hold true as the meaning of marriage has been slowly changing as people have become more individualistic and preoccupied with the pursuit of personal happiness and self-development in the construction of their daily as well as their marital lives (Amato, 2004; Cherlin, 2004).

Cherlin's (2004) views represent an expansion of thoughts first presented by Ernest Burgess during the middle of the 20th century, wherein he argued "that marriage was in a state of transition from social institution to a private arrangement based on companionship" (Amato, 2004, p. 961). The institution Burgess referred to was "the fundamental unit of social organization, a formal status regulated by social norms, public opinion, law and religion"; and he added that the evolving form of marriage was founded on the emotional bonds that existed between two people (Amato, 2004, p. 961).

Giddens (1991, 1992) as cited in Cherlin (2004), theorised a "pure relationship" which is not tied to marriage or raising children, but rather is "free-floating" in that it is independent of social institutions or economic life and it exists mainly in the domains of emotion and self-identity. It is further argued that marriage has already become just one lifestyle among a range of others (Giddens, 1992); and that society is already witnessing a variety of different ways of living together or apart, which exists side by side (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Again, it is evident that there is a rise of a new collective consciousness being formed around the meaning of marriage which exists not just in the secular societies but beginning to build in other societies as well. In order to further understand the meaning of marriage, a psychological theoretical perspective is presented below.

2.3. Marriage: A Psychological Perspective

Over the years, research on marriage has focused on how marriages develop, succeed and or fail. In so doing, the literature has uncovered the way the quality and stability of marriages has changed over time (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). This is integral to the present discussion, since the stability and quality of the marital relationship has implications on the well-being of individuals and children. It may further influence individuals' perceptions of forming relationships as well as their intent and view on marriage. Hence, in order to understand the marital relationship from a psychological

perspective, different theoretical approaches are discussed, namely Social exchange theory, Behavioural theory, Attachment theory and lastly Crises theory.

Social exchange theory is referred to as the "most cited theoretical perspective in research on marriage and close relationships" (Karney & Bradbury, 1995, p. 4). It has its roots in the theory of interdependence from Thibaut and Kelly (1959), wherein they assert that "relationships grow, develop, deteriorate, and dissolve as a consequence of an unfolding social exchange process, which may be conceived as a bartering of rewards and costs both between partners and between members of the partnership and others (Huston & Burgess, 1979, p. 4). Karney & Bradbury (1995) assert that the concepts of the social exchange theory were first applied to marriage by Levinger (1965, 1976) who argued that the success or failure of a marriage is primarily intrapersonal. Levinger (1965, 1976) explained that it is dependent on

> an individual's weighing of *the attractions of the relationship*, or all aspects of the relationship that may be rewarding(e.g. emotional security, sexual fulfilment and social status), *the barriers to leaving the relationship* (e.g. social and religious constraints and financial expenses), and the presence of attractive alternatives outside the relationship (e.g. preferable partners and escape from the current relationship)
>
> (Karney & Bradbury, 1995, p. 4).

Therefore, according to this perspective, a marriage ends when there are few attractions left in the relationship, when the barriers to leaving the relationship are weak and the individual is enticed by alternatives to the relationship.

These ideas of the social exchange theory are further utilised by Lewis and Spanier (1979, 1982) to form an exchange typology of marital relationships wherein "marital satisfaction and marital stability are conceived as orthogonal dimensions of marital outcome" (Karney & Bradbury, 1995, p. 5). This means that a marriage can be "satisfied and stable, satisfied but unstable, unsatisfied but stable, or unsatisfied and unstable" (Karney & Bradbury, 1995, p. 5). In outlining their theory, Lewis and Spanier (1979, p. 286) stated that "the quality and stability of the relationship may vary over the life cycle". Therefore, understanding marital satisfaction is seen to be the result of individuals weighing up of attractions and alternatives, and using that to determine the satisfaction and happiness in the relationship which influences their decision to remain married or not.

With each evaluation of a theory, possible strengths and weaknesses are outlined by Karney and Bradbury (1995). A strength of the social exchange theory relates to its flexibility with regard to the ability to incorporate different variables into its framework (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). This is seen in the broad conception of attractive factors as well as barriers to leaving the relationship for different individuals. It is also viewed from both a micro as well as a macro-level, which may suggest how combining these variables may influence marital outcomes. Another strength is that it can potentially account for a range of marital outcomes.

The weaknesses of this theory include its inability to address how change in marriage occurs, since "social exchange describes marriages that should be stable or unstable, but it does not speculate about how an initially stable marriage might become unstable over time" (Karney & Bradbury, 1995, p.5). It further lacks the ability to explain where the perceptions linking attractions and alternatives to marriage satisfaction originate from, or how they develop. It also does not explain how couples decide to dissolve their marriage, nor does it address how over time, individuals who were once satisfied with the attractions in their relationships, become more or less satisfied (Karney & Bradbury, 1995).

In an attempt to offer another approach to counter the above mentioned weaknesses, Thibaut and Kelly (1959) went on to conceptualise the *Behavioural theory* of marriage. Instead of understanding the marital relationship from an intrapersonal perspective, the behavioural approach focuses on interpersonal exchange, still bearing in mind that rewards and costs remain basic elements in conceptualising marriage (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Research in this approach has focused on the "behaviours exchanged during problem- solving discussions and has been guided by the premise that rewarding or positive behaviours enhance global evaluations of the marriage while punishing or negative behaviours do harm" (Karney & Bradbury, 1995, p. 5). This notion has been expanded to include the attributions that spouses make for their partners' behaviour (Karney & Bradbury, 1995).

The Behavioural approach argues that an individual's cognitive responses will affect one's marriage through his or her influence on subsequent interaction behaviours (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Hence, this approach accounts for why and how change occurs in marriage which is not addressed by the social exchange theory thus, making it a strength for the behavioural approach. This is noted as "spouses learn on the basis of their

interaction and appraisals that follow from them whether or not they are in a rewarding relationship" (Bradbury & Fincham, 1991, p. 134).

For couples who are satisfied in their marriage, each happy, satisfying interaction they have further justifies continued satisfaction, making it more likely to occur (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). However, for those couples who have difficulty resolving conflicts and arguments, it may result in marital distress, as unresolved negative feelings begin to build up and fuel destructive patterns of marital interaction, negatively affecting the positive aspects of the relationship, leading to a lack of arousal and satisfaction in the marriage (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Markman, 1991).

The behavioural approach emphasises the marital interaction from a micro-level, at the expense of taking into consideration the circumstances wherein the interaction takes place, and for this reason is considered to be a weakness of this theory (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Karney and Bradbury (1995) explain that marital interaction requires an examination within a broader context of spouses' lives. Furthermore, this psychological approach only explains a limited range of marital outcomes, and does not address how a couple's communication patterns may deteriorate over time, or how these couples can improve their relationship; it also fails to address how marital dissatisfaction and distress leads to divorce (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Hence, it fails to account for variation in marital duration.

A third theory known as *Attachment theory* is discussed in an attempt to comprehend how individuals form relationships and find suitable spouses as adults. The attachment theory of marriage is developed from the work of Bowlby (1969), who asserted that the "nature of the first close relationship determines a child's internal working model of what close relationships are like, so it should determine the nature of an individual's close relationships throughout the life course" (Karney & Bradbury, 1995, p. 6). There are three main early attachment styles which take precedence (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978). Senior (2002) outlines each attachment style, the first of which is referred to as a *secure attachment style*, which is most commonly observed between infants and their caregivers. It is regarded as the ideal style as parents are readily available for their children, and the child can easily explore novel stimuli and in so doing does not become distressed by the separation from their caregiver. *Anxious/ ambivalent attachment* is the second style and is formed when caregivers are inconsistently responsive to their infants.

This results in infants who both crave for the closeness of their caregiver whilst simultaneously resenting them. The third style is known as the *anxious/ avoidant attachment* which describes a caregiver who has not been responsive to one's infant's needs, thus causing the infant to avoid contact with his caregiver and do not become distressed by separations.

These different attachment styles have been directly applied by Hazan and Shaver (1987, 1994) to the formation of adult relationships, as they argued that close adult relationships are a reflection of the attachment developed in the early years of an individual's life, and play a big role in shaping the nature and development of subsequent adult relationships (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Therefore, being satisfied in one's relationship is largely dependent on the fulfilment of basic needs such as comfort, care and sexual gratification (Hazan & Shaver, 1994); and the success of a given marital relationship rests "on whether each spouse trusts that the partner can fulfil those needs" (Karney & Bradbury, 1995, p. 6). Hence, attachment theory views marital success or failure as being influenced by each partner's relationship history, family of origin and attachment style (Karney & Bradbury, 1995).

Moreover, this approach is valued for its ability to suggest "links between childhood experience and adult relationships" (Karney & Bradbury, 1995, p.7); however, it is critiqued for being unable to provide a developmental view of marriage, as it overlooks the sources of change and variability within a marriage, as well as fails to explain "how individual differences in personal history affect the development of marriage from beginning to end" (Karney & Bradbury, 1995, p.6). Attachment theory also fails to address sources of variation between couples, since it asserts that individuals with a secure attachment style can have long lasting satisfying relationships, yet it also maintains that under certain circumstances individuals with either an anxious/ ambivalent or an anxious/ avoidant attachment style, can also have lasting relationships. However, the variables that affect the success or failures in a marriage are not specified, and it also fails to explain the time during the course of a marriage when unmet attachment needs lead to divorce (Karney & Bradbury, 1995).

The *Crisis theory* reflects the ideas of Hill (1949) in explaining how families react to stressful events. Hill proposed the ABCX model to try and understand why some families overcome stressful situations whereas others deteriorate when faced with adverse events. He explains that stressful events (A) require some adaptation from a family. Different families have various levels of concrete resources, which (B) allows them to define and perceive events differently, which (C) aids in modifying the impact of the event. Therefore, "the extent to which available resources are sufficient to meet the requirements implied by a family's definition of an event, determines the nature of the crisis (X) and whether a family will recover successfully" (Karney & Bradbury, 1995, p.7). Additionally, a successful recovery requires adaptation that "preserves family unity and enhances the family system and member growth and development" (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982, p. 45).

Even though crisis theory was originally formulated to explain how families function, this theory has also been utilised by marital researchers to explain and predict marital outcomes (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Subsequently, it assumes that "declines in marital satisfaction and the occurrence of separation or divorce reflect failures to recover from crisis" (Karney & Bradbury, 1995, p.7). Hence, couples who experience stressful events should be more vulnerable to experiencing negative marital outcomes, and this effect ought to be moderated by the levels of resources at the couple's disposal as well as their definitions of events (Karney & Bradbury, 1995).

A strength of this theory is that it expands the scope of thinking of marriage in important ways, as it is the first theory to focus on "the direct effects of external events on processes within spouses (definitions of events) and between spouses (adaptation)", hence it places married couples in an ongoing interaction with their external world (Karney & Bradbury, 1995, p.7). It further addresses aspects of marital outcome. It also acknowledges that some marriages are more likely to sustain themselves, and is able to predict when declines in marital satisfaction or stability are likely to occur, as it attributes it to the couples' failure to adapt to stressful events, but it lacks to provide an explanation as to how or when these stressful events occur (Karney & Bradbury, 1995).

As evidenced from the above discussion, there are different theoretical perspectives aiming to understand the marital relationship further, and what factors lead to marital success or failure. However, it does not appear clear cut in that even though each proposed theory offers an understanding of marriage, weaknesses do exist. Nevertheless,

these theories provide further understanding regarding the concept of marriage, and are relevant to this research study as they provide a basis for understanding the perceptions of young Muslim adults regarding marriage through gaging what their views are on marital success and dissolution, their choice of future spouses as well as their willingness to marry.

2.4. Marriage: An Indian Cultural Perspective

Within the South African Muslim society, there exists both Malay Muslims and Indian Muslims. For the purpose of this paper, a discussion on marriages within the Indian culture is presented as Meer (1969) offers an insightful discussion in the way Indian, Muslim marriages are conducted as well as the manner in which it occurs. Her discussion is rich in Indian cultural meaning and significance; which this part of the literature review draws upon. It should be noted that the Indian Muslim marriage customs are often infused with religious laws and duties which are explained below.

Marriage is the single most important event in the life of an individual within the Indian society. Meer (1969) adds that Indian mothers look forward to their children getting married and have aspirations for their children in this regard, from a young age. Moreover, “parents feel their life’s tasks incomplete until all their children have married, for among Indians it is not the individual who marries, but the family which settles members in marriage” (Meer, 1969, p. 75). This, she adds as a partial account for why Indian couples marry at a relatively early age, since they are not expected to bear all the responsibilities of husband and wife immediately.

According to traditional Indian society, males and females are not allowed to meet or to date each other before marriage. A female’s reputation is considered very important; since if she is to have a pre-marital romantic partner, it would bring shame not only to her, but to her family as well. This is integral, since a large proportion of Indian marriages are often arranged by the couples’ parents and families. Hence, background reviews would occur by interested families, to ascertain the reputation of the potential male and female partners’ as well as of their families. This includes the families’ wealth and even their nature.

As part of the traditional Indian societal viewpoint, the male's family begin the marriage negotiations by first looking for a suitable female partner. Upon finding her, the male's mother will contact the female's mother to make a formal proposal. In so doing the families arrange to set a date to go to the potential female partner's home where the interested male and female get introduced in the presence of their families. Both are allowed to speak to each other and ask questions to ascertain their compatibilities. However, they cannot do so alone, as there need to be someone from the female's family present, since religiously speaking a man and woman who have no familial ties cannot be in a secluded place together.

After the initial meeting, the male partner's parents will commonly wait a few days before contacting the female partner's mother again to find out what the daughter's answer is, and then revealing whether the male partner and his family are also happy with the union. The union is then arranged between members of the two families, of which a date is set for when the marriage ceremony will take place. Within the Indian society, the marriage ceremony takes place fairly quickly once the couple have decided to wed. The joyousness of the occasion is marked by '*sweetening the mouths*' of the couple and their families with sweet meats, chocolates or anything similar. This traditional Indian custom marks the beginning of the marital union.

The above discussion has focused on the traditional Indian Muslim customs which occur at times of marriage. It should be noted however, that there are a range of persons in other Muslim groupings as well, such as Malay Muslims, with each group tending to have their own cultural customs regarding marriage. The different cultural approaches are often infused with religious laws and expectations of marriage, and over the years it has gradually been adapted as individuals began choosing their own spouses, and marrying into families of their own choice. In today's times, very few Indian Muslims continue to allow their families to find and choose a suitable spouse for them, and arranged marriages are losing the significance they once had. Some of the above mentioned marriage customs continue to remain prominent, whilst others have been adapted or completely done away with. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the Indian cultural influence has played an important role in shaping the way marriage is perceived.

2.5. Marriage: An Islamic Perspective

The word Islam signifies submission and peace, and any person who follows the religion of Islam is known as a Muslim. Islam is the youngest monotheistic religion in the world. It is argued that one-sixth of the world's population is Muslim (approximately one billion people), and adhere to the Islamic law (http://themodernreligion.com). Moreover, there are almost 500 000 Muslims in South Africa, 300 000 of whom are of Indian descent, living mainly in Kwa-Zulu Natal and Gauteng (Naidoo, 2001).

The doctrine of Islam lies in the belief that there is only one God (Allah) and that the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), who is regarded as the ideal Muslim, who followed and practiced all which is embodied in the Holy *Qur'an*. Muslims follow the *Qur'an* which is the Holy Book, with the belief that it was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H), 1 421 years ago. The *Holy Qur'an* is regarded to be the word of God, and its contents form the foundation for all Islamic Law (*Shariah*), which regulates all aspects of a Muslim's social as well as personal life. Furthermore, Muslims follow the actions (*sunnah*), as well sayings and teachings of the Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H), which are compiled in *hadiths*. A third of the legal injunctions in the Qur'an relate to marriage and the family (Nasir, 1990).

Marriage is a central aspect in the lives of all Muslim men and women, as every Muslim is expected to marry. Muslim marriages are governed by a complex set of legal rules and principles which are outlined in the Holy Qur'an and hadiths (Sherif-trask, 2004). Marriage is regarded as one of the most sacred bonds between couples and the term *nikah* represents the Arabic translation for marriage, which means "contract", as it is considered a legal Islamic contract joining a man and a woman in matrimony (Sherif-trask, 2004). Moreover, Waines (1995, p. 94) argues that the "*nikah* is in practice not a union of two individuals so much, as it is a contract between two families", since family participation is encouraged in a marriage. This is seen for example, when family intervention is sought in cases where a divorce is being considered (Naidoo, 2001).

A woman can decide whether she wants to enter into *nikah* or not, however traditionally the woman's guardian (*wali*) who is often the father, grandfather or brother of the bride, negotiates her marriage contract on her behalf. The *wali* also gives the woman into marriage with her consent in the presence of two witnesses (Engineer, 1992). The *nikah*

ceremony takes place in the mosque, although it is not entirely necessary to do so. The signing of the marriage contract can however take place anywhere (Naidoo, 2001). As part of the contract, the bride receives a dowry (*Mahr*) from her husband. It is regarded as a "token of love, truthfulness and sincerity, rather than bride wealth" (Naidoo, 2001, p. 3). It is an essential part of the marriage, since without it the *nikah* cannot be concluded. The bride's husband, father or any other person has no legal right to the *mahr* (Waines, 1995).

With regard to the roles in a Muslim marriage, the husband is regarded as having the sole responsibility for providing support and maintenance for his wife and family. This includes shelter, food and clothing, and should be in accordance to what he can afford. The wife is not obligated to contribute to the family income, even if she has the means to do so. Although, the wife should play a shared role with the husband in taking care of the household affairs and the wife should assure the well-being of her spouse and children (Haneef, 1985). Nevertheless, both the husband and wife are responsible for ensuring that their marital and family responsibilities as well as other aspects of their life follow the *Shariah* laws of Islam. Moreover Islam emphasizes that the relationship between husband and wife should be reciprocal in the manner of relating to and appreciating each other.

It is stated in the Qur'an, Surah Al Baqarah, Chapter 2, Verse 187, that Allah (God) compares the husband and wife to garments for one another: "*They (your wives) are a clothing (covering) for you and you too are a clothing (covering) for them*" (2:187). The interpretation of this quote is that clothing is regarded as having many uses, such as beautifying a person, or even covering up one's defects that may appear on the body so nobody else would notice that defect. Likewise, the husband and wife are to play the same role in relation to each other in that if the wife has a defect or lacks something in her character, then her husband should conceal it and not expose her shortcomings; similarly the wife too is required to protect her husband's flaws and weaknesses.

Moreover, Islam recognises that every human being has sexual desires which are natural and requires them to be fulfilled. It also acknowledges that these sexual desires are necessary for the continuation of the human race; however, "beyond its legal components, marriage also has a religious dimension and is invested with many ethical injunctions" (Sherif-trask, 2004, p. 398). The rulings of Islam stringently state that sexual contact outside of marriage is regarded as adultery and should be punished, hence, courting and fornication between unmarried couples is prohibited. Therefore marriage allows for one's

sexual desires as well as the need of life to be satisfied in a legitimate manner. This fulfils the primary purposes of marriage in Islam; that of the continuation of the human race and providing a spiritual and legal foundation for a family (Sherif-Trask, 2004).

The family forms the basis of the Islamic society, and it is regarded as a social necessity. Marriage preserves and continues the human race and it also plays a vital role in strengthening the support networks within and between families and communities which provide support for each other (Sherif-Trask, 2004). Through the union of marriage, it allows for the maintenance of a proper lineage which is essential, since it permits for each new born to be identified by both a father and a mother and this allows for there to be order in society (Sherif-Trask, 2004).

Hence, marriage is regarded as a requirement for all Muslim people who are able to fulfill its obligations and responsibilities. It is further considered a religious duty, seen as a form of worship to God and his word. Most importantly it is an act of piety. The Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H) has said: "*When the servant of Allah (God) marries, he has fulfilled half the responsibilities laid on him by the faith; so let him be God conscious with respect of the other half*" (Mishkaat, p.268). Therefore, Islam strongly condemns and discourages celibacy.

Marriage is also considered as being a *sunnah*, that is, the way of life that is considered normative for Muslims on the basis of the teachings and practices of the Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H); as he declared *"Of my tradition is to marry. So whoever does not practice on my tradition is not from me (my nation)*" (ibn Majah, p.133). He also made mention that "*You will not witness love between two lovers as you would in marriage*" (Mishkaat, p.268). The union of marriage is laden with meaning as it provides companionship which produces and sustains love, kindness, compassion and solace between married couples.

Furthermore, under the Islamic law, a marriageable person should not remain single, even if the person intends to be free to concentrate on religious adherence. Certain factors are taken into account, the first of which is the age of the individual, as men and women are urged to marry at an early age, and should not be discouraged by financial factors. It is mentioned in the Qur'an that God will provide for them from His unbounded favours. Only if a person is searching for a suitable spouse, then will the delay of marriage be accepted.

Therefore, marriage is obligatory for a man who is mature and healthy, has the means to pay for a dowry, can maintain a wife and children and fears that if he does not marry he may commit fornication. For a woman, marriage becomes obligatory when she has reached puberty and is capable of maintaining a household.

A second important factor taken into account is religiosity. It is permissible for a Muslim male to marry a Christian or a Jew (people of the Book) but not an unbeliever, while a Muslim female is only allowed to marry a Muslim male or a male who reverts to Islam. Since, it is understood that in most Muslim societies as well as other cultures, a wife follows the status and nationality of her husband. Hence, the Islamic faith of a Muslim woman may then be compromised by marrying a non-Muslim man.

Moreover, it is established that children born from a marriage will carry their father's name, nationality and religion; therefore the children of a Muslim woman who for instance marries a non-Muslim Christian man, would not be considered Muslims. This is significant as a purpose of Islam is to increase the Muslim *ummah* (society). Whereas for a Muslim man, his children are assured to carry his name, thus he is allowed to marry any woman who is a believer of the Book and she may not be forced to convert to Islam since Islam does not compel one to convert. However, if any individual, male or female, accepts the Islamic faith and becomes a Muslim, then it is permissible for that person to marry any Muslim man or woman.

As is evidenced from the above discussion, Islam is a religion that emphasises the need for marriage, and there are many benefits received from this sanctified union. The Islamic perspective has a strong family focus, supporting social satisfaction and not personal gain or self-development. It strictly prohibits any sexual or courting relationships, as well as child bearing out of wedlock. There are also certain conditions to getting married such as age and religion. Hence, the Islamic collective consciousness is still very traditional in its construction and meaning of marriage. This said, it is interesting then to gather an understanding from young Muslim South African adults concerning their perceptions of marriage to uncover whether a strong Islamic thought continues to prevail whilst living in a diverse society.

2.6. Research on the construct of marriage

Most of the research conducted on marriage internationally, used a quantitative data collection approach. There appears to be very limited South African research in this area and documented studies from Muslim countries nationally and internationally could not be sourced. One of the reasons for the dearth of research conducted on marriage in South Africa, "arises from the difficulties associated with collecting and interpreting appropriate data" (Budlender, Chobokoane & Simelane, 2005). Moreover, South Africa has a wide diversity in marriage forms, cultures and religions which may influence the meaning and understanding of marriage and marital status.

In a research brief regarding young adults' attitudes about relationships and marriage, data was analysed by Wave III of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, which is a nationally representative survey of students from the United States who were in 7th through 12th grade between 1994-1995. Wave III was the third broad scale survey that followed up on participants in 2001-2002 and included information on specific areas of young adults' lives, namely histories, relationships and marital attitudes by gender, race/ethnicity and relationship status. The study sample included 11 988 young adults between the ages of 20 and 24 (Scott, Schelar, Manlove & Cui, 2009). The results from this analysis indicated that most young adults have high expectations to marry someday, but not currently, and these expectations existed across gender and racial and ethnic groups. With regard to their relationships, young adults have high expectations for love, commitment, and fidelity. Furthermore, young adults had positive attitudes about cohabitation which represented an alternative to marriage during young adulthood (Scott et al., 2009).

A quantitative study conducted in the United States on a sample of 1,293 African-American and Hispanic adolescents and their parents explored the changing institution of marriage (Manning et al, 2004). Using questionnaires, this study examined factors associated with adolescents' expectations to cohabit and to marry. The sample was drawn from the Toledo Adolescent Relationship Study (TARS) which encompassed records obtained from 62 schools across seven districts. An ordinary least squares regression was used to estimate models predicting expectations to cohabit as well as to marry. In addition, a multinomial logistic regression was used to estimate the adolescent's joint union formation expectations.

Findings discussed by Manning et al. (2004) showed that adolescents did not reject marriage, as they expected to get married despite the increase of divorce, delays in timing of marriage as well as the potential deinstitutionalisation of marriage. However, it was identified that certain subgroups of adolescents had weaker expectations of marriage. These include teenagers who had never dated, those who ascribed to less traditional beliefs, teenagers who had poorer educational performance and goals, those whose mothers were less educated and teenagers from single and cohabiting families.

Furthermore, results showed that some teenagers were ambivalent toward cohabitation. The overall conclusion of the Manning et al. (2004) study was that traditional values were negatively associated with expectations to cohabit and positively associated with marriage expectations. The data showed that adolescents in favour of cohabitation were those who were influenced by their interactions with the opposite sex, dating and sexual activity, adolescents who were not raised by both biological parent families as well as the parents' cohabitation status. These findings are significant as they point out the importance of the role of parents with regard to the socialisation of their child as they model certain behaviours and communicate values, norms or attitudes. These factors impact on people's union formation behaviour and views of marriage.

There are three drawbacks to this study, which needs to be considered when extrapolating from these results. Manning et al., (2004) mention the first drawback referring to the context of this study which took place in one local area and should be replicated with a larger sample in a national context. Secondly, the measurements of expectation of cohabitation and marriage are based on participants' responses to two separate questions. Hence, Manning et al., (2004) outline that future research could inquire about how respondents feel about cohabiting and then getting married. Lastly, the expectations have been measured at one point in time, even though expectations to form unions may be active responding to changes in relationships with the opposite sex or other changes in early adulthood (Manning et al., 2004).

A further quantitative study explored family dynamics and attitudes toward marriage in a sample of 40 unmarried, American college students (Muench & Landrum, 1994). This study tested the hypothesis that expressiveness and closeness among family members may have a positive outcome on children's attitudes toward marriage, with an expectation that a high degree of family conflict and expressiveness would produce

negative attitudes toward marriage (Muench & Landrum, 1994). The results from this study did not support the researcher's first hypothesis but strongly supported the latter expectation. Based on their findings, the researchers emphasized the necessity for further analyses of family dynamics from multiple perspectives. A limitation outlined by the authors of this study is that the phrasing of one of their research questions was not clear. Another limitation mentioned is that weights are less necessary in multivariate analysis and could bias estimates obtained with non-linear models (Muench & Landrum, 1994).

A further quantitative study conducted in the United States examined the perceptions of the importance of marriage for men and women (Kaufman & Goldscheider, 2007). Data was sourced from the National Survey of Families and Households which was conducted on a nationally representative sample of the United States population consisting of 10 008 adults aged 23 years and older. The results of this study indicated that both men and women felt that men needed to be married more than women do. Additionally it was found that women were more likely than men to think that both sexes can lead satisfying lives without getting married but more so that only women can have satisfying lives without marriage. It was also found that younger, more educated people were less likely to emphasize marriage. Alternatively, it was found that religious people and those who were married with children held the view that the only way for both men and women to have satisfying lives is through marriage.

In a quantitative study conducted on a random sample of 133 final year undergraduate students, the attitudes of White South African and British University students toward love, courtship and marriage were explored and compared against each other, using the Munro-Adams Love Attitude Scale (Stones, 1991) The results of this study revealed that female students from both universities were more inclined than the male students to hold romantic attitudes, whereas conjugal love was regarded as more valuable by the South African male students.

In South Africa, Swisa (2010) conducted a study that investigated the relationship between parental divorce, and the perceptions of marriage of eight young Jewish South African students. The findings of this qualitative study revealed that the historical and current relationships the participants had with their parents as well as the relationship model with which they had close contact, influenced their views on their own romantic relationships. Furthermore, regardless of their relationship histories and preferences, the

participants constructed marriage as an integral and desired part of their futures as it was believed as being a union of companionship, trust, honesty as well as equal roles for both partners (Swisa, 2010). The findings of this study also suggested that in actuality their parents' divorce did not affect their notions on marriage, although it did serve to influence their general functioning and relational styles (Swisa, 2010).

In another South African study, Naidoo (2001) investigated the attitudes and perceptions of marriage and divorce among eight Indian Muslim students. She further explored the question of religion and ethnicity as a source of family diversity, to determine the type of family ideology that these students embraced. Family related issues were addressed such as marriage, gender roles, the division of labour, extended families, divorce as well as polygamy. The findings of this qualitative study revealed that the students largely adopted the "traditional Muslim family ideology". Moreover, religion and ethnicity were found to play an important role in the students' perceptions of marriage and family life, and a strong preference for married life was shown (Naidoo, 2001).

According to Naidoo (2001) in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the nature of the Muslim family in South Africa, research needs to be conducted on Muslims from different ages, educational, race and class backgrounds, as this study focused on a very specific subset of the Muslim youth. Moreover, cross-cultural comparisons would also provide more insight of the changes, if any that are taking place regarding Muslim adults' perceptions of marriage and family life.

2.7. What makes a healthy/ successful marriage?

Research concerning marriage in recent years has focused largely on aspects affecting marital happiness and stability (Staton & Ooms, 2011). In a research brief focusing on marriage and relationship factors in health, the definitions for a good enough marriage as well as a healthy marriage are defined. A good enough marriage is viewed as:

> *a relationship in which spouses (parents) are able to cooperate and raise their children in an atmosphere of mutual respect, tolerance and support. Even if spouses do not feel deeply, personally fulfilled in these marriages, they benefit from cooperative teamwork. These marriages can improve over time and become mutually satisfying and fulfilling*
>
> (Staton & Ooms, 2011, p.3).

A healthy marriage on the other hand is defined by (Staton & Ooms, 2011, p.3) as “a committed, mutually fulfilling romantic relationship characterised by the creation of shared meaning and the absence of violence or controlling behaviour. These marriages are not perfect, they have ups and downs but are sustained through commitment and love”.

Staton and Ooms (2011) outline numerous health benefits and outcomes of marriages. It is stated that “married adults are physically and emotionally healthier and live longer than adults who are never married, separated, divorced or widowed, and their children are healthier and live longer as well” (Staton & Ooms, 2011, p. 3). It is however mentioned that it is often the quality of the marital relationship rather than the mere status of being married that affects health. Hence, a healthy and successful marriage leads to an improved well-being for spouses as well for the children of these joint unions; and unhealthy, unhappy, high conflict marriages have negative effects on the physical and mental well-being of spouses (Staton, 2009; Waite & Gallagher, 2000).

The benefits for children raised by two reasonably happy biological parents are said to have better health outcomes during childhood as well as in their adult years, as opposed to children growing up in other family arrangements (Staton & Ooms, 2011). Additionally, children raised in a happy marital home, are less likely to engage in risky behaviours which are detrimental to their health, such as substance abuse and premature sexual activity (Staton & Ooms, 2011). It is also documented that parents in high quality relationships on average, are more inclined to have better adjusted children who have more positive attitudes toward marriage as well as more likely to have quality relationships and marriages (Amato & Booth, 2001; Cunningham & Thorton, 2006; Moore, Kinghorn & Bandy, 2011).

Hence, it is evident that the benefits of a healthy and successful marriage are numerous, for both adults and children. Yet even though there is considerable research outlining the positive effects of marriage, there are still numerous marital relationships which end in frustration, despair and even divorce (Asoodeh, Khalili, Daneshpour & Lavasani, 2010; Kalmijn, 2007; Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Therefore in light of these findings, it is important to assess what young Muslim adults perceive the factors leading to a successful marriage as being, as well as the factors that lead to a breakdown in marriages, and to assess if these factors influence their overall perception of marriage.

Moreover, in discussing the positive outcomes of marriage, it raises the question as to what the necessary factors involved in creating a happy and successful marriage are. In a study conducted by Asoodeh et al. (2010), aspects which lead to a successful marriage are provided through their definition of marriage, involving different aspects. These aspects include two individuals who are committed to each other, fully respect each other's principles and values, have mutual interests, have decided to be together regardless of their circumstances and co-operate with each other. Ten factors predicting strong marriages are ranked in order by Olson & Olson (2000) as cited in Asoodeh et al., (2010), beginning with communication, flexibility, closeness, personality issues, conflict resolution, sexual relationship, leisure activities, family and friends, financial management and spiritual beliefs.

Another author using data from in depth semi structured interviews, states that successful marriages are self-described, as married couples outlined factors they considered important such as treating each other as equals, liking each other, being grown-ups, remaining friends, being lucky, using humour, having strong self-concepts, being committed and communicating with each other (Mackenzie, 2003). Additionally, it is argued that research into marital success is judged by one or more of the following characteristics: stability, duration, satisfaction, adjustment and commitment" (Asoodeh et al., 2010). In light of these characteristics, it is of interest then to assess what young Muslim adults regard as important factors for sustaining a healthy and successful marriage.

Likewise, knowing what young Muslim adults perceive marriage as being, and considering their willingness to marry, certainly has implications for the mental health and well-being of future families. Moreover, understanding the relationship between marriage and health and the implications it has on the well-being for adults and children, forms a particular interest for educational psychologists, hence is relevant to this study. In order to understand this dynamic further, various theoretical approaches are proposed by scholars in the field of marriage, which are briefly outlined as follows (Carr & Springer, 2010). The first proposed theory is known as the "economic effect" which stipulates that on average, married people "create and/ or have access to increased economic resources associated with better health" (Staton & Ooms, 2011, p. 5). Hence, these couples and their children are more likely to have access to medical aid, access to healthcare services, and other

sources of social and emotional support, sustaining their health and happiness (Staton & Ooms, 2011).

The second theory refers to the "protection effect" of social support (Staton & Ooms, 2011). This theory argues that in "good enough marriages, spouses and partners look out for each other's health in various ways" (Staton & Ooms, 2011, p. 5); as they influence their partner's choice of food, activities, encourage responsible behaviour and help to create healthy, safe environments. The "intimacy effect" is the third theoretical approach, which argues that "a committed, intimate couple relationship is the major source of social support, companionship, sexual health and caregiving for adults, especially as people age" (Staton & Ooms, 2011, p. 5). Hence, the three aforementioned theories further explain how being married can positively affect the health and well-being of adults and families. When positive factors cease in a marriage, or the marriage becomes stressful and negatively affects the spouses' or family's lives, the marriage contract may be terminated leading couples to divorce.

2.8. Notions of Divorce

Divorce is legally and commonly recognised as:

"*A final dissolution in marriage that is, the separation of husband and wife which confers on the parties the right to remarriage under civil, religious and/or other provisions, according to the laws of each country*"

(United Nations, 1991, p.7, as cited in Statistics South Africa, 2001).

The act of divorce is increasingly common throughout the world as more and more couples opt to forego their marital status and contravene their vows. There is a noticeable shift again in the collective consciousness perspective of divorce. The old collective consciousness regarded divorce as unusual and highly stigmatised; whereas a new collective consciousness has a normalised view of divorce, and to a certain extent even promotes it to dissolve unhappy unions. It should be noted however, that in certain cases divorce is a better alternative for many individuals who are trapped in abusive and destructive relationships with no hope of gaining or sustaining healthy unions.

Nevertheless divorce is widely prevalent across the globe. In South Africa, statistics reveal that 170 826 civil marriages were registered in the year 2010, 30.9% of which were solemnised by religious rites; and during that same year, it was revealed that 22 936 cases of divorce were published, 48.23% of those cases were couples who were solemnised by religious customs (Statistics South Africa, 2010). Furthermore it is reported that "one in three marriages end in divorce in South Africa" (Naran, 2006). This information is evidence for the significant extent of the rate of divorce in this country.

It should be mentioned however, that the prevalence of divorce as published by Statistics South Africa revealed that the divorce rate in 2010 decreased from the recorded number of cases in 2001, where the divorce rate was at a staggering 34 045, with the number of registered civil marriages recorded at 134 581 (Statistics South Africa, 2010). This means that in 2001, the divorce rate as per the registered number of civil marriages was 25.29%, whereas the divorce rate in 2010 as per the registered number of civil marriages was 13.42%, hence illustrating a decline in the rate of divorce by 11.87%. Furthermore, statistics reveal that the number of cases of divorce in 2010 was the lowest recorded rate in 10 years in South Africa.

Reasons are not given for this decline in the rate of divorce, or for the increase in the rate of marriage throughout the years, however one plausible hypothesis could be that there is an increase in religious practices and views by South Africans who favour the union of marriage. Furthermore, prior research revealed that women's educational and employment prospects are implicating factors linked to divorce (Cherlin, 2004), particularly with the rise of women being financially independent. This shift in gendered role prescriptions is considered as a possible cause of conflict in marriages which eventually leads to divorce. With regard to the South African context however, it could be argued that men and women are more comfortable in their role responsibilities and have grown to be more open and accepting of a woman's place in society, particularly the employment sphere, thus allowing for more sustainable, healthier and longer marriages.

Nevertheless, the rate of recorded divorces is still large. Furthermore, a closer analysis of the statistics reveal that within the Indian/Asian population group in South Africa, there has been an increase in the rate of divorce; in 2001 the rate was 4.9%, whereas in 2010 that number had risen to 5.6% (Statistics South Africa, 2010). This is significant as the large number of Muslim people in this country are categorised as Indian/Asian, suggesting that

there is an increase in the divorce rate in the Indian, possibly also Muslim community. Feasible hypotheses for this increase will be offered in the following sub-section on the Islamic construction of divorce.

This observation regarding the increase of divorce among Muslim couples has also been established by an Education Management Consultant and Contractor who specialises in the field of marriage and divorce in the Muslim community; who mentioned that 30% - 40% of marriages in the Muslim community end in divorce, which is an estimated 3 out of 10 marriage cases (Khamisa, Personal Communication, February 9, 2012). This information warrants further understanding as to what young Muslim adults' perceptions are regarding the dissolution of marriages as this research study is interested in exploring young Muslim adults views on the implicating factors which lead to a breakdown of marriages, particularly in the Muslim community. This is because divorce may have implications on family dynamics, healthy relationships, and on society. Moreover, this study seeks to explore if this factor influences the attitudes of young Muslim adults about getting married.

2.9. Islamic construction of divorce

"The Islamic marriage contract may be dissolved by the death of one of the spouses or by the act of divorce" (Naidoo, 2001, p. 4). Divorce in Islam is known as *talaaq* and is regarded as an act that should be avoided at all costs. It was often a word that many Muslim couples and families avoided using as it was seen as having a stigma attached to it. It is an act that Allah (God) hates the most.

It is mentioned that the Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H) narrated to have said "*Allah has not created on the face of this Earth anything more beloved by Him than freeing a slave, and He has not created anything on the face of this Earth more despised than divorce*" (Hudda, undated, p.11).

It is reasoned that the couple should seek the advice of older, more learned and trustworthy scholars in Islam to act as mediators and help the couple reconcile any differences they are experiencing and only if every option has been considered and attempted and the couple still cannot reconcile, then only will divorce be accepted. The Islamic understanding of divorce incorporates more than just the ending of the marriage when both parties agree to do so, but rather includes certain conditions. Divorce is only

considered final between a couple when the husband utters or expresses the word *talaaq* in any manner three times to his wife. Thereafter, the woman is no longer regarded as the man's wife and cannot return to that status unless she sits in a period of confinement for approximately three months. The precise details surrounding the issue of divorce and its attached conditions are quite extensive and will not be discussed as these are beyond the scope of this research report.

Relevant to this discussion however, are the implicating factors in the breakdown of marriages as well as its related consequences on all parties affected by it. It is understood that with the changes in meaning of marriage as well as the shift in social norms, is the notion of instant gratification which is linked to the increasing individualisation facing many people in our contemporary society. It is argued that people today do not know what their role- responsibilities are and are constantly seeking self- satisfaction, losing all concern for the needs of spouses, family members and even fellow community members; thus making it difficult to communicate in solving disputes between marital partners which may then lead to the dissolution of marriage (Khamisa, Personal Communication, February 9, 2012).

Other reasons for the increasing prevalence of divorce could be attributed to lack of compatibility between spouses, as mentioned by Khamisa (Personal Communication, February 9, 2012); "often they are unaware of their incompatibilities and are not emotionally mature to take on the role responsibilities of husband and wife, particularly when in the Islamic religion; it still remains the husbands' responsibility to take care of his wife financially but in accordance to his means. Likewise, it is preferable that the wife takes care of the children and family even though she is not strictly confined to the home sphere". There are numerous other reasons that lead to divorce, which this study will attempt to explore first hand through interviewing young Muslim adults to concretely gage what they view the reasons as being, hence the actual reality instead of relying too heavily on assumptions and observations, and in so doing try to find evidence to either support or disagree with the aforementioned possibilities leading to divorce.

Furthermore, divorce can be a very traumatic experience with its consequences affecting all those concerned, leaving spouses, children and family members hurt, upset, confused, and even embarrassed. Children and family members are often caught in the middle between choosing whose side to take and can feel very overwhelmed with the loss of a

once stable family environment. This impinges on the health of the relationships as well as mental health status of those affected. These and further implications concerning what young Muslim adults think the implications of divorce are on all parties involved, are explored in more detail in Chapters five and six.

2.10. Conclusion

The view of marriage presented from the different perspectives in this literature review outline what marriage represents in different socio-cultural contexts, its importance as well as the underlying reasons for marriage. It has been discussed that marriage has undergone a shift in meaning over time. This can be attributed to the rise in a new collective consciousness present in contemporary times which forgoes the traditional underpinnings of this social institution and the traditional notion of marriage, for alternative forms of relationship behaviour. With the gap in research on this topic of enquiry, the current research study attempts to investigate the implications of this new collective consciousness regarding marriage, as well as the marital perspective which shape young Muslim South African adults' perceptions of marriage.

Chapter 3- Methods

This chapter is divided into a number of subsections outlining the specifics of the methodology utilized in this research study. The subsections comprise of the research design, sample and sampling, instruments used, the procedure adopted and data analysis. The remaining subsections include the ethical considerations and reflexivity.

3.1. Research Design

This qualitative study is descriptive in nature in that it attempted to explore the perceptions of young Muslim adults regarding marriage. This paradigm allowed for rich, contextual perspectives to emerge about the participants' perceptions, as well as intricate details such as feelings, emotions and thought processes that are difficult to extract through more conventional methods such as standardized questionnaires or other quantitative methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A qualitative study also allowed for further understanding of issues by following an interpretive paradigm which views reality as subjective and socially constructed (Burr, 1995).

3.2. Sample & Sampling

The sample comprised of four Muslim male and four Muslim female students respectively, between the ages of 20 and 22 who are currently unmarried from the University of the Witwatersrand. The reason for selecting both male and female participants was to explore the perceptions of marriage held by both genders and to explore if these perceptions are similar or different in their construction. Furthermore, the rationale for selecting this age group is linked to Erikson's psychosocial development theory (Erikson, 1963) wherein he argues that during this stage of intimacy vs. isolation, young adults who have formed an identity are in search of companionship and romantic relationships with a prospective significant other, either through marriage or friendship. Hence, the age group for the participants was appropriate to this study as it aimed to gather information regarding marriage which included the topic of love, relationships and identity.

This study employed two sampling strategies. The first was a non-probability convenience sampling technique, which implies that the sample was not gathered randomly. The second technique adopted was purposive sampling that allowed for a handpicked selection of particular participants to be included in this study (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002).

The young Muslim South African adults in this research study consisted of half male and half female participants. All participants belonged to two parent families. Three of the male participants are studying in the field of Engineering, with one male participant studying a Bachelor of Commerce degree. Three of the female participants are studying Psychology with one female participant studying towards completing a degree in International Relations. Seven participants received some sort of Islamic education growing up. Moreover seven participants considered themselves as somewhat religious with the remaining participant regarding herself as very religious. This decision regarding participants' religiosity was made depending on their ability to follow their religious teachings and expectations on a daily basis.

The biographical analysis of the participants provides an understanding of their social background and what influenced their respective perceptions of marriage. Participants have been assigned pseudonyms to respect their privacy. The biographical analysis of each participant is tabulated below (Table 1).

Table 1: Biographical Profile

Reference No.	***Pseudonym***	***Age (Years)***	***Gender***	***Relationship Status***	***Parents' Relationship status***	***School attended***	***Islamic education***	***Choice of Degree***	***Level of religious adherence***
01	Riaz	22	Male	Single	Married	Public Co-Ed School	Yes	Civil Engineering	Somewhat religious
02	Zaheer	22	Male	Single	Married	Co-Ed Public School & Government Model C School	Yes	Civil Engineering	Somewhat religious
03	Imran	22	Male	Single	Married	Public Co-Ed School	Yes	Mechanical Engineering	Somewhat religious
04	Nabil	22	Male	Single	Married	Public Islamic School	Yes	Bachelor of Commerce	Somewhat religious
05	Fatima	21	Female	Courting	Married	Public All-girls School	No	Bachelor of Arts-International Relations	Somewhat religious
06	Alia	22	Female	Courting	Married	Private Islamic School	Yes	Bachelor of Arts-Psychology	Somewhat religious
07	Zahra	22	Female	Single looking at getting married	Married	Private Muslim School & Public Co-Ed school	Yes	Bachelor of Arts-Psychology	Somewhat religious
08	Sadia	20	Female	Single	Married	Public Model C school	Yes	Bachelor of Science-Psychology	Very religious

3.3. Instruments

The instrument used in this research study to gather data was a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix A), that included a brief self-developed biographical questionnaire attached to it. This method of data collection was chosen for this research study as it is open-ended, thus allowing for further questions to be added during the interview for purposes of clarification and elaboration as needed (Fossey, 2002). Semi-structured interviews also allowed for detailed responses regarding perceptions to be substantially explored.

A **biographical questionnaire** was specifically designed to obtain relevant demographic information, such as the participants' age, gender, type of school attended, level of Islamic education, current degree registration, relationship status, parents' marital status as well as participants' level of religious adherence. Each construct was specifically chosen to provide background data in relation to the participants and it had the potential to contribute to, or influence the participants' perceptions about marriage. The **interview schedule** explored the participants' identity perception, their views on love, relationships, marriage and divorce.

The research instruments were piloted on the first two participants interviewed for this research study. In the pilot, the two students were required to complete the interview schedule and the researcher then asked them for their input on their understanding of questions, in order to clarify the questions, and add any further questions they think should be asked. Based on the participants' feedback, the interview schedule was adapted where necessary.

3.4. Procedure

Once ethics clearance was granted by the Discipline of Psychology in the School of Human and Community Development, permission was requested from the Registrar of the University of the Witwatersrand (see Appendix B) to recruit students on campus to participate in the research study. Thereafter, the Muslim Students Association (MSA) at the University as well as the Students Representative Council (SRC) were approached to assist the researcher to recruit participants (see Appendix C and Appendix D). They were asked for permission and assistance in placing invitation letters (see Appendix H) to young Muslim adults at the MSA Musallah (prayer room) as well as on notice boards on campus, providing a description of the study as well as contact details of the researcher, whom they

could get in touch with if they were interested in participating. Furthermore, the MSA were asked to hand out letters on behalf of the researcher, inviting students to participate in this research project. The president of the MSA as well as the SRC was required to sign a consent form agreeing to assist the researcher.

The first four male and female students that were willing to participate in the research study were included in the study, and were contacted by the researcher to set up a mutually suitable date, time and venue to conduct the interview. The interviews took place in a private and comfortable location with minimal disruption. Before the commencement of the interviews, an information sheet (see Appendix E) and consent forms (see Appendix F and Appendix G) were issued for the potential participants. Participants were given the opportunity to read, ask any questions, and then sign the consent forms, acknowledging their willingness to participate in the study as well as to be audio recorded. The time allocation per interview was approximately one hour. Upon completion of all interviews, transcription and analysis of the collected data took place in order to record all relevant information that is compiled in this research report.

3.5. Quality Criteria

This qualitative research study required the researcher to act as an interviewer in order to collect the required data. However, the interviewer within a qualitative research paradigm is not regarded as “an invisible, neutral entity; rather the interviewer is part of the interactions they seek to study and influences those interactions” (Myers & Newman, 2007, p.5). Moreover, the researcher is responsible for presenting descriptive data in a manner that will allow the reader to understand the phenomenon being studied as well as the meaning of the experience (de Vos, 2002). However, despite efforts on behalf of the researcher to collect, analyse and report the data as objectively as possible, the researcher’s influence could have still filtered through.

Therefore, in order to ascertain that the data produced in this report was plausible, a systematic check was put in place, based on Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) criteria for assessing good qualitative research. The criteria includes four factors namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

3.5.1. Credibility

Credibility refers to the truthful and accurate manner with which the research findings are reported. In order to ensure credibility of the interview process, the researcher repeated the responses that she felt was not clearly understood back to some of the participants, in order to confirm the accuracy of the response as well as its meaning. Moreover, each participant's response was coded and analysed separately before comparisons were made to other replies. This was to ascertain that each participant's views were portrayed as accurately as possible.

3.5.2. Transferability

Transferability is the notion which refers to the accuracy of the research findings and its ability to be applied to different population groups and contexts. Due to the limited scope of the present research topic, the findings of this study may not represent the wider Muslim community. Nevertheless, the researcher has surveyed literature relevant to the present topic to determine similarities and differences in the findings, with the intention of providing a rich understanding of young Muslim South African adults' perceptions of marriage.

3.5.3. Dependability

Dependability represents the stability of the data over time, if the research study were to be replicated. The researcher compared the findings of the current study with similar studies conducted nationally and internationally, in an attempt to determine the dependability of results. However, it should be noted that an individual's perceptions and attitudes do not remain constant over time which affects the dependability of this study.

3.5.4. Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the objectivity in the way the research findings are presented. In order to establish confirmability in the present study, the researcher's personal interests, biases and motivations which could have influenced the presentation of the data, were managed through practical measures, which is explained in the reflexivity section of this chapter.

In order to control for neutrality within this study and the presentation of the report, the researcher strived to ascertain that the above mentioned checks were in place.

3.6. Data Analysis

The collected data was interpreted for the purpose of drawing conclusions that reflect on interests, ideas and theories that initiated the inquiry. For the purpose of this qualitative study, the analysis process followed a thematic content analysis framework whereby underlying themes that emerged were used in order to record data in a structured manner by identifying themes or "patterned responses" from the data that related to the research questions. This technique is not tied to any specific theoretical framework and "provides a flexible research tool which can provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78).

The analysis followed a six phase process, firstly by the researcher familiarising herself with the data. This included transcribing the data and reading it over again in order to be "familiar with the breadth and depth of the content" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87). The second phase included generating initial codes, by coding interesting features of the data in a systematic manner and then collating the data relevant to each code. The third phase involved collating the codes into potential themes. The fourth phase then required that these themes be reviewed in order to generate a thematic "map" of the analysis. The fifth phase involved defining and naming the themes and the last phase involved selecting suitable quotes from the data, analysing it further by relating it back to the literature and research questions and then writing up the report. The researcher anticipated that following Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of analyses was best suited to develop an in-depth description of young Muslim adults' perceptions of marriage.

3.7. Reflexivity

For qualitative research, "we arrive at the closest we can get to an objective account of a phenomenon in question through an exploration of the ways in which the subjectivity of the researcher has structured the way it is defined in the first place" (Parker, 1994, p.13). Therefore, the researcher's role in this qualitative study is very important in defining what is to be studied as well as in the manner one interacts with the participants and the material to produce possible answers to the proposed questions under investigation (Parker, 1994). In this study, the researcher herself is a young, adult Muslim student who is also faced with the pressures of society which add to the many influences that shape her own perceptions of marriage, a religious

responsibility of being a Muslim woman as well as the decision of whom and when to marry. For these reasons, the researcher was able to identify with the participants on a number of aspects which allowed her to gain an in depth and accurate understanding of the participants' perceptions about marriage.

The commonality further assisted in setting up a rapport with the participants during the interview. Due to the nature of some of the questions asked in this research study, it made it easier for the participants to open up about certain issues to someone who they can relate with and share their experiences and thoughts as honestly as possible. Furthermore, the researcher has experience in the topic under investigation and was more likely to understand the view points of the participants, therefore allowing the researcher to be in a position of knowing what questions were important to ask during the interview, as well as adding necessary probing questions which were able to get the participants to disclose as much information during the interviews.

However, the researcher's interest in the perception of marriage, relationships and love from an Islamic as well as from a secular perspective, could have caused her to exaggerate or even overlook certain perceptions that participants may have had. The researcher was aware of her own disagreement with particular views shared by participants during the interview, though these concerns did not present a bias for the researcher when writing up the report.

The researcher implemented practical measures, such as seeking supervision and keeping an audit trail by means of a self-reflexive journal in order to address the possible impact of the researcher's subjectivity during the interviews as well as in the interpretation of views presented by the participants. It also allowed for charting of the development of skills and noting of the possible impact of this on the quality of data collected and the data interpretation. Hence, the researcher remained aware that her subjectivities may have lent a bias to this research study, but managed this through practical measures. Furthermore, it needs to be understood that "subjectivity is a resource, not a problem, for a theoretically and pragmatically sufficient explanation" (Parker, 1994, p.13); as it contributes to the profundity and worth of the data as well as the conclusions that are formed as a consequence.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

Ethics clearance was obtained from the Discipline of Psychology Internal Ethics process, allowing for the commencement of this research study to take place. In gaining voluntary participation, consent was required for participation as well as audio-recording of the interview. This was obtained from issuing the consent forms to participants to sign before the commencement of the interview.

The following ethical considerations regarding participation are outlined, namely that participation in the research study was voluntary and the participant had the right to withdraw from the study at any point if they did not feel comfortable disclosing any information, without facing any penalty. Anonymity was impossible to ensure due to the nature of the interaction between the researcher and participant during the interview process. However, anonymity was ensured with regards to the write up of the final report. Participants were informed that any information provided by them would remain confidential at all times and that there would be no identifying information documented in the write-up of the report. In addition it was noted that there were no anticipated risks or benefits associated with participation.

Furthermore, the researcher took full responsibility in ensuring that no harm, emotional or otherwise, was brought upon the participants as a result of participating in this study. The participants' welfare and dignity was considered throughout the duration of the study. The contact details of the researcher and supervisor of the study was provided in the information letters, together with the numbers of Islamic Careline, Counselling and Careers Development Unit (CCDU), Emthonjeni Clinic and Family Life Centre as a precaution, for participants to contact if they experienced distress at any time during or after the interview.

The original transcripts and audio recordings are only accessible by the researcher and her supervisor. All data is kept safely and will be destroyed after two years if the research is published and after six years if no publication emerges. Upon completion of the report, a summary of the research findings was placed on the Wits University Psychology Discipline notice board which was accessible to the participants. It was also placed on the Muslim Students Association (MSA) notice board in the Musallah (prayer room). Alternatively, participants could contact the researcher directly for a summary of the results.

3.9. Research Questions

The overall aim of this research study was to explore the perceptions of young Muslim adults regarding marriage. Specific research questions in relation to this aim were:

3.9.1. What views do young Muslim South African adults hold about marriage?

3.9.2. What factors influence young Muslim South African adults' construction of marriage?

3.9.3. To what extent do young Muslim South African adults ascribe to the religious teachings on pre- marital romantic relationships?

3.9.4. To what extent do young Muslim South African adults ascribe to the religious teachings on marriage?

3.9.5. What factors do young Muslim South African adults' think would promote a healthy and successful marriage?

3.9.6. What factors do young Muslim South African adults' think would lead to a breakdown in a marriage?

3.9.7. What are the views on marriage as moderated by gender?

Chapter 4- Results

4.1. Introduction

The analysis of the data is broadly organised under each research question, respectively. There were six main themes related to young Muslim South African adults' perceptions of marriage. These included "The Islamic self", "Constructions of marriage", "Religiosity", "A successful marriage", "Factors that lead to marital breakdown", and lastly, "Muslim marriage and the community". Within each of these themes there were emerging subthemes. A tabulated representation of the themes and subthemes is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Themes and Subthemes

EMERGING THEMES	SUBTHEMES
4.2. THEME 1 The Islamic self	
4.3. THEME 2 Constructions of marriage	4.3.1. Defining marriage. 4.3.2. Influencing factors. 4.3.3. Embedded attitudes. 4.3.3.1. *General views.* 4.3.3.2. *My friends and family.* 4.3.3.3. *Feeling pressured: age matters.* 4.3.3.4. *My parents' marriage.* 4.3.3.5. *Wishes and expectations.* 4.3.4. The role of spouses.
4.4. THEME 3 Religiosity	4.4.1. Pre-marital romantic relationships. 4.4.2. Influences on marriage.
4.5. THEME 4 A healthy and successful marriage	4.5.1. What is a successful marriage? 4.5.2. Finding the right person. 4.5.3. Achieving a fruitful marriage.
4.6. THEME 5 Factors that lead to marital breakdown	4.6.1. Negative implicating factors.
4.7. THEME 6 Muslim marriage and the community	4.7.1. From sacred to futile: views on Muslim marriage and divorce.

4.2. Theme One: The Islamic self

Before analysing what the participants' perceptions of marriage were, an understanding is provided regarding the Islamic background of the participants. This could shed some light on the extent to which their Islamic identity influenced their perceptions of marriage.

Out of the eight participants in this study, seven of them stated that they regarded themselves as somewhat religious. These participants explained that they try to follow most laws and rules of Islam, such as performing their prayers and fulfilling their religious duties. However, they fail to comply with certain religious expectations, such as dressing in the correct Islamic manner and avoiding inter-mingling with the opposite sex. This was elucidated by Fatima who stated "*I don't know if I'm religious in the level of God, I pray five times a day, read Quran and tasbeeh (prayers), but because of my relationship status, if I was really really religious, I wouldn't be dating or even speaking to anyone- so I would say somewhat religious*". Sadia, on the other hand is aware that her dressing is not in accordance of Islamic law, but still regards herself as very religious, she stated that "*well if I could say I'm staunch I am, with regard to performing my salaah (prayer) and all that, only my dressing I'm not staunch*".

It was apparent that all of the participants shared strong sentiments regarding the value of religion to them, adding that it is an integral part of their daily lives. All of the participants expressed being raised in two Muslim parent Islamic homes, where religion was taught to them from a very early age, being instilled by their family as well as by the Islamic education they received. Seven of the eight participants mentioned receiving formal Islamic education. A few of the participants reported attending a Muslim School where the Islamic curriculum was taught in conjunction with the prescribed government curriculum. Other participants reported attending a separate Islamic Madressah (religious classes) in the afternoon after school hours. Two participants mentioned attending both an Islamic school as well as afternoon Madressah classes.

Three of the participants who attended a Muslim school, stated that they received an Islamic education until they were in Grade 12, whereas a further four participants reported that they received an Islamic education until they were in Grade 10. Fatima, who is not originally from South Africa, reported that she relocated to different countries growing up which made it difficult to attend any Madressah. Fatima further reported that her family had been primarily responsible for her Islamic upbringing and taught her about her religion. However, she added that she currently attends Madressah classes at least once a month. It is clear from the above discussion that all of the participants regarded themselves as adhering to Islamic religious beliefs in some manner or the other, which they felt have been shaped by their Islamic education and in some way by their family upbringing.

4.3. Theme Two: Constructions of marriage

What emerged from this theme were the factors that made up the participants constructions of marriage. It incorporates aspects such as describing what marriage means for the participants, what factors influence their construction of the notion of marriage, what they feel the roles of a spouse should be, their attitudes toward marriage as well as their views on establishing a marital relationship.

4.3.1. Defining marriage.

The participants offered varied views on marriage. However, the main sentiments reported were that marriage is a "good thing" and is seen as an important act since Islam places emphases on getting married, and in so doing prevents one from committing sin. With regard to the diverse views, Alia stressed the role religion has in her view of marriage, implying that it has the ability to strongly influence an individual's decision to marry out of fear, as she stated: "*Well if it wasn't for religion then I don't think people would get married. If religion didn't exist then there wouldn't be a need to get married, so I think people get married out of fear of being punished by a higher being. That's my perception of marriage*".

Zaheer is of the view that marriage is about "*finding someone to spend the rest of your life with so you won't be lonely*". This view of finding someone is shared by Sadia who stated that "…*I agree with the concept of marriage, and it is just something that everyone, well I wouldn't say it's like goal for me, but marriage is important, I mean everybody needs someone*". Both Sadia and Zahra mentioned

being optimistic about getting married, and do not feel trapped or pressured into it. Riaz on the other hand described what he thinks marriage is, by outlining key characteristics by saying: "… *I perceive marriage as being equal between partners, there must be communication and understanding*".

Fatima outlined important qualities in her description of marriage, such as love and mutual understanding, "*My perception of marriage is I think two people first of all should love each other then get married… and I perceive marriage where two people have to both work together and come to a mutual understanding*". Hence the participants offered diverse views in expressing what marriage means for them. A further understanding of their view of marriage is discussed under the next subtheme.

4.3.2. Influencing factors.

The aspects of religion, culture and lastly upbringing were explored to understand the respondents' construction of marriage. With regard to religion, only five of the eight participants stressed the importance Islam places on the institution of marriage, with one participant discussing his understanding by outlining the roles spouses play in marriage. The remaining two participants did not offer a religious explanation for marriage, but rather defined it as a relationship where two people come together, as Zahra stated marriage is "*two people who love each other coming together and deciding they want to spend the rest of their lives with each other*", and Imran stated "*Well I suppose it's a relationship and it gives trust*".

The participants who offered a religious understanding were in agreement that marriage in Islam is very important. Different reasons and conditions regarding the importance of marriage were provided by each participant. Some of the explanations included marriage being a *sunnah (action of the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H),* it completes one's faith, it allows a couple to live together, as pre-marital romantic relationships and cohabitation is prohibited in Islam, and it allows a couple to have children which will increase the Muslim society.

Fatima explained the importance of marriage for her when she mentioned: "*well marriage is first of all a must in my religion as a Muslim. So I think everyone should get married to bring up good Muslim kids in today's world …and I think marriage brings and creates a family and unity and it keeps a generation going*".

Zaheer expressed, "*Married as in nikaah- there is a large emphasis placed on it because it is the Sunnah, so in terms of definition of marriage in Islam, it is quite important... and it is constructed by, strictly Islamically speaking- there is no premarital relationships and all of that stuff - the girl's family and the boy's family meet each other and if the families are happy with it then the boy and girl can get married*".

Alia simply said that "*you have to get married in order to have children to spread Islam. That's what religion teaches us, so you can have more Muslims and more people following the faith*". Sadia also emphasised the importance of marriage by stating "*It's pretty important, it's not like if you don't get married it's wrong or anything but it is something that we, well with regards to religion, we say it is like performing half of your Imaan, which means it's like performing half of your religion, so it is pretty important* ".

Therefore, the majority of participants were aware that Islam places great importance on getting married. With regard to culture, seven of the participants were South African Indian Muslims sharing an "Indian culture", with one participant being a Turkish Muslim, hence adopting a "Turkish culture". When questioned about the influence of culture in the definition or construction of marriage, there appeared to be no collective view from the participants as a whole. However, half of the participants, namely Riaz, Zaheer, Alia and Imran, were of the view that the cultural construction of marriage is the same as the way they see the religious construct. Three of the respondents concurred that the Indian culture places a lot of emphasis on getting married particularly at a young age for girls. Nabil explained that "*culture is important … because like for girls especially, when they like reach a certain age they expect them to get married because they Indian, so yeah, but for guys it's a bit different- it's not like so much pressure*".

Two female participants reported that even though there is an Indian cultural expectation for a young female to get married, it is also dependent on her family; as they explained that their families are more flexible and have not pressurised them into getting married. Sadia summarised this by saying "*culture meaning Indian, it's really important. It's like, well some people since they leave school it's like marriage, with me obviously not. But with regards to culture, it depends on your upbringing and*

on your parents. Like my parents are Indian, but they never pressurised us into getting married or anything". Zahra further explained "… *in the Indian culture, marriage is seen as something that has to be done by a certain age, especially for girls, so once you hit 21, 22 it's like when are you getting married? So in the Indian culture there is pressure, but obviously it depends on each family*".

Fatima explained how marriage is constructed in her Turkish culture, by saying that there are certain rules and expectations surrounding the marriage partner, but concurred with Sadia and Zahra's view, that the construction of marriage is dependent on their families' view on it. She mentioned "*In my culture, my family prefer that I get married to a Turkish guy who has a high status and who comes from a good family, who is wealthy, who is religious, but it's just in my family's case because of the background they come from and the families where they have been brought up. So that's how they think, plus they also got married arranged by their families so it's a whole new thing if I come up and say ok I want to marry someone who is not from my culture and I have chosen him, so it's going to be like a shock for them because they not used to it".*

Fatima also accurately summed up the view that all participants held regarding their upbringing and how that has influenced their understanding of marriage, by saying "*but it's not always the case in every family, it differs, people think differently*". It is important to note that each participant had a different upbringing; hence even though participants said their upbringing was the same as either their religious or cultural constructions or even both, it still remains unique to each other.

By exploring how participants' view marriage as being defined and constructed by their religion, culture and upbringing, it was important to gather an understanding regarding which of any of these influences do the participants relate most to and why. Three participants namely, Riaz, Imran and Sadia, reported that they relate to all three influences. Riaz and Imran further expressed that they view religion, culture and upbringing as all alike; however Sadia expressed that they were different but none the less will still relate to all. This is evident in her response in which she explained: "*I think they are all interlinked to an extent because culture and religion are not exactly the same thing but they do go hand in hand so like I'm Indian, but I'm Muslim Indian, and there are some things that we do as Indians, and there are some*

things that we do as Muslims, but sometimes they interlink, and upbringing it depends on your culture".

Half of the participants held strong religious inclinations with regard to marriage, with Fatima initially reporting that religion, culture nor upbringing influences her construction of marriage, but then changed her view to stating that she would relate to religion. Zahra was the only participant who mentioned that she relates to her family and her upbringing in her construction of marriage.

Zaheer stated "*I think religion- to quite a large extent, because obviously religion is the most important thing. So in terms of getting married and completing the sunnah it's quite important*". Alia's reason for relating more to her religion was based on fear as well as commitment, as she mentioned "*I relate more to my religious one, because I think it is mostly out of fear but because it also makes sense to me, because marriage gives you that certainty instead of living with someone then they can just break up with you then you just like have no certainty, commitment. Like break up and it's over*".

Apart from the above mentioned influencing aspects, the researcher was interested in exploring if any other factors shape the way participants view the notion of marriage. What emerged from the responses was that society played an important role for four of the participants in influencing their understanding of marriage. For Zahra, her society is equivalent to her culture in some way, as she lives in an Indian community. She explained "*Modern times- society- it does, I guess you are expected to behave in a certain way, so when you for example, finish matric then it starts, ok so what you doing next year? Studying? Getting married? You know, always that question so after you basically finish matric it starts, but you hear the hints here and there, and then as you get older, it gets worse, so especially the older generation- they expect you to start looking for a guy and getting married so it's socially constructed. I live in a predominantly Indian community so that's my immediate society*".

Imran also added family as being linked to culture and society in what shapes his understanding of marriage by stating "*Yes, society, culture. Well people want to act in a specific way, basically following society's trends. For example, I know girls do this, they watch a lot of TV and wishing for the right guy to come along, or expect*

their life to be that way, expect it to be like that, and culture- I suppose by the way your parents' marriage has worked, the way they relay a subject to you. I suppose everybody has that talk with their parents about getting married and a point in time where they give you advice and their perspective and how your culture would like it to be". Sadia summed up her thoughts by saying "*Society, I mean we do have our religions but there is society, there is the media, and you can't help by being influenced by certain things. I mean I'm Muslim, I'm Indian but I think I would get married in a White dress, and that's Western culture and that's society*". Hence it is evident that societal aspects influence young Muslim adults' views on marriage.

Fatima continued to express her family's influence as she explained that they are very religious and culturally orientated and that her upbringing would certainly play a role in shaping her marital life, "*Well, I think the way your family brought you up is very important because then … you bring those techniques and plans of using that way of living in your house and teaching your kids how your parents taught you, and sometimes you try and fix what your parents have done and try to do the things that you didn't like your parents have done to you, and try and be perfect*".

A quarter of the respondents brought up the current divorce rate when explaining societal influences, but also mentioned that it does not affect their view of marriage nor their willingness to marry. The respondents stated that wanting to spend your life with someone was more important than the threat of divorce, and added that they would take precaution to avoid getting divorced. This is evident in Alia's response whereby she stated "*Society doesn't play a role, because people get married young and then they get divorced - that's society- that's my society, but I believe in getting married when you are like done studying and you got like stability of self, and you a stable person, so if you do get divorced, you can always land back on your feet*".

Zaheer explained "*Yeah, well if you look at the high divorce rates you might sort of become pessimistic towards marriage and think that so many people are getting divorced- what's the point of getting married in the first place. But I think it depends what reason you are getting married for and if you are like really happy with the person … the divorce rate doesn't influence my view of getting married, I mean it is still a sunnah to get married because I suppose human beings want to spend their lives with somebody and you don't want to be lonely*".

4.3.3. Embedded attitudes.

This emerging subtheme incorporates various dynamics which all relate in some way or the other to the participants perceptions of marriage. These include, the participants' willingness to marry, their friends and families attitudes to marriage, whether a specific gender is pressurised into getting married, if their parents' marriage shaped their feelings as well as their overall expectations from marriage.

4.3.3.1. *General views.*

All participants expressed having positive feelings toward marriage and communicated their wish to get married. Half of the participants stated that they are ready to do so presently for different reasons, though attributing it to wanting to start a new phase of their life as they feel they are the right age, fulfilling an Islamic duty as well as if they find or have already found the right person to get married to.

Some of the responses of those participants willing to get married now include Riaz's explanation as he stated "*well personally I wouldn't mind getting married right now, it's just a matter of finding the right person or something like that. But I wouldn't mind getting married right now, and that's just influenced by Islam. Like I think, I'm at the age where I am ready to get married*". Fatima shared her feelings by saying "*I don't mind getting married right now, because my studies are almost done, I'm done with my honours, and I found the Mr. Perfect for me, and I think I'm at the right age to get married now*".

Alia expressed her eagerness at getting married, yet continued to be open minded by saying "*I would like to get married soon and start a family and be like the good housewife, but also be an independent one, like not dependent on your husband and you know- have a sense of autonomy but also be in a partnership with your husband, that's like when I would like to get married and how I would want my marriage to be*". Zahra who has recently gotten engaged mentioned being ready for the commitment, "*I'm excited actually, I feel I don't want to be stuck in the same phase of my life for too long. So I've been studying for 4 years and you know it's time to move on. I want to live also, so I'm very open to it. I'm excited for it, when the time comes in the near future hopefully*".

The remaining half of the participants expressed wanting to wait before getting married. Two of these participants were male, and their reasons for waiting included wanting to complete their tertiary studies and to seek employment in order to become financially stable first. The female participant also described wanting to complete her studies in order to first gain independence before getting married.

Hence, these participants have mentioned the importance of marriage in Islam, and their reasons for waiting is not to find the right partner but rather for the male participants to be stable enough to support a family, which is a pre-requisite in Islam and a role that a Muslim husband is supposed to fulfill. However, for the female participant, she appears to have a more open view of marriage, which has been shaped by her family upbringing, in that she has not been pressured by her family to get married at an early age, but rather to study and gain independence first before settling down.

The above sentiments are seen in Zaheer's response, "*right now no, because I mean I'm still at University and still have like half a year to graduate, and after I graduate I want to work for at least a few months so you know you have some financial security and some job security. Because I feel you can't just get married and not have a job and not have money because you need to at the end of the day support your family*". Nabil shared the same thought which is evident in his response, "*my feelings are I first need to educate myself and then see after that. I want to educate myself and then start working and then maybe. I am open to the option of getting married, but need to be financially stable- no other reason*". Sadia expressed that "*well for me, I think I'd like to study first, that's my first priority, so I think once that is done like I do want a child, and if that happens then it will. But like I think once I'm completed with my studies. I am open to it*".

From this analysis, it appears that there is not much difference in the way marriage is viewed by both male and female participants. Two of the male participants and three of the female participants expressed their willingness to get married currently, whilst the remaining two male participants and one female participant expressed wanting to wait until they have completed their tertiary studies and are financially stable before getting married.

4.3.3.2. *My friends and family.*

The second aspect which has some bearing in shaping the participants attitudes is the way the participants view their friends and families attitudes to marriage. This was an important factor to investigate as individuals may often take on the social constructions adopted in one's social group. Hence, an analysis of the data revealed that most of the participants relate in some way or the other with their friend's views on marriage. This is explicitly portrayed by Alia who stated that for her friends, "*they also want to get married after they study, and they hold marriage in high esteem, it's important to them and it also makes it important to me because you are like the friends you keep*".

Zahra is eager to get married and her positive attitude toward marriage is shared by her friends, as she explained "*Actually a lot of my friends are already married, so I'm actually the only one of two people that are not married from our friend circle. So the attitude is pro marriage, they are already married and working not studying, and some of them already have one child. Most of my friends got married at a younger age, so I've been exposed to that*". Nabil's attitude to prolonging getting married is also shared by his friends, as he stated "*well, they all don't want to get married at a young age, they want to get married later in life, that's for all of my friends*".

What also came across in the responses is the influence society and modernity plays in shaping the attitudes of young Muslim adults. This is evident in Riaz's response when he shared his thoughts saying that "*I think few of them share the same point of view, and few of them is a bit modern in the sense that they will accommodate for Islam but at the same time they will accommodate to modernism, like they wouldn't want their wives to wear scarf or they wouldn't want their wife to wear parda* (veil for the face), *things like that*". Hence, it is apparent that these young Muslim adults share a similar attitude with their friends with regard to their views on marriage.

With regard to the attitude of the participants' families in influencing their outlook on marriage, it appears that most of the participants share the same attitude their families do on marriage, which can be traced to the upbringing they have had as children. For some of the participants' families there is a strong religious emphasis on getting married early on, whereas for other participants' families, they appear to be more open and flexible to the timing of marriage, the choice of partner or level of

education that their child has. Sadia explains this by saying "*They believe, well for them studying is important, but if I were to say I wanted to get married and if I bring him home or whatever then I think they'd agree*".

Only two participants described having opposing attitudes on marriage to that of their families. This is with regard to when and who should they get married to. Fatima expressed that "*my family wants me to marry a Turkish guy, not a guy of my choice. Well they think marriage is an important choice you have to make in your life because it guarantees your entire life, if you choose the wrong person then you most probably going to be unhappy and get divorced. So for them it has to be the best of the best but I don't think you can even find the best of the best because every marriage has its own problems even if it seems perfect, you'll have problems*".

Zaheer explained that his family's attitude is one where "*you should get married soon because I think that's more of an Indian culture where you should get married like really early and you shouldn't be more focused on your career, you know like excelling in your career or anything, you should get married and start a family*". It is evident that Zaheer's family is very traditional both religiously and culturally when it comes to the topic of marriage, yet Zaheer's attitude is moving away from the Indian cultural reasons for marriage, for one where he decides when he is ready to get married.

4.3.3.3. *Feeling pressured: age matters.*

The general consensus from all of the participants, both male and female, was that they were all in agreement with regard to perceiving young women as being pressured into marriage. Seven of the participants were brought up within an Indian culture, hence can directly relate to this notion based on their experiences and learned social constructions. It appears that Fatima was the only participant who felt that young women are not really pressured into when they should get married, since in her Turkish culture the priority is for the young women to become educated before consenting to marriage. However, she expressed that there is pressure with regard to who a woman is allowed to marry, as she is not allowed to cross the cultural divide by marrying a man who is not Turkish.

The male participants in the study suggested the reasons why they think women are more pressured is due to the influence of society and the Indian culture who believe that a woman should marry at young age. It was further mentioned that since a woman is not obligated to earn a livelihood as it is the husband's duty to support and provide for his wife, she is urged to marry early and let her husband support her, in so doing can start having children at a young age.

This is evident in Riaz's response when he stated that "*maybe in today's time, if you are brought up in the Indian culture there is more pressure for a woman to get married at a young age because they say they can have children at a young age, like once they reach a certain age they can't have children after that, so maybe there is slight pressure for a woman to get married, but for a man the thing is in today's time, they want them to get a stable job and be able to provide for a family before they get married, so maybe women are pressured into getting married earlier and men are pressured to wait until they have a stable job then get married*". Riaz went on to add that the pressure stems from society, "*I think it is from society, and not from Islam, because Islamically you are not required to have money to get married, but according to society in today's times for a man to get married, he needs to have a stable job, he needs to provide a house, stuff like that, and even for a woman, Islamically she doesn't need money to get married or she doesn't have to wait till a certain age to get married or anything*".

Nabil thought that "*girls are pressured into marriage because of their age, and because of culture probably, like the Indian culture. I don't know what it says about it but they more pressured to get married at an early age, because it is usually the guy's duty to look after the wife and not the other way around so, guys need more time to educate themselves and girls don't really have a problem with that because the guy looks after the girl. The pressure comes from the parents basically and also your religion, because I mean when you seeing a guy and you not planning on marrying him, it's not advised in our religion- it's haram* (forbidden)".

Zaheer's response further supported the above views, as he stated "*Yes, I think there is much more pressure than for a guy to get married and that will most probably be from a cultural perspective; because in Indian culture, women are not really expected to go out and have top careers and excel in the workplace, whatever,*

so from an Indian culture, and Indian family, especially from the older generation they want the lady to get married young so she can be supported by the husband and she can sit at home and have kids and get used to that lifestyle. Pressure is from the family".

Alia expressed her dismay in her response by stating "*yes, there is definitely. From everybody, from society, mostly Indian communities, Indian Muslim communities, they force us because we are young to get married, and it's like whenever you see someone they always ask you like when are you going to get married? … Nobody ever asks when are you going to finish your studies, or when are you going to get a job? It's always marriage marriage marriage marriage! I think they still so traditional and old school that they still think that young girls should get married to like save their chastity and to save their modesty and all that*".

Imran opted for a more neutral view as he stated "*I would say it tends more to yes but in some situations no. I suppose well basically the Indian culture sees that women need to be supported by their husband, therefore by getting married- and they are pressured and it is stressed upon in some cases to avoid conflict. But I suppose the supportive part is - women want to be independent and basically in society nowadays women want to have their equal rights*".

However, the majority of participants were of the view that Muslim men are not pressured into getting married. Society was implicated as "shielding" the men from getting married for various reasons. Only two male participants expressed that they felt Muslim men can be pressured from their families to get married. Zahra expressed that men are not pressured "*because it is always an excuse for the men, it's always oh no wait he is not financially stable, he is still working, he is not mature enough, his... There's a lot of excuse that validate or help the guy wait till he messes around first so it's quite different*".

Zaheer offered an explanation from a male perspective wherein he stated that for a man "*yes there is a lot of pressure. It depends I think how old the person is, I mean if you just come out of high school there's going to be no pressure, but if you go into university, once you graduate then the pressure will build because the family will think you are at the right age to get married so there is pressure. Pressure comes from the family, there is also pressure from friends, but friends is not as much as*

family because friends or guys talk a lot more nonsense, and family is more serious- like no you should get married now, find a girl for you, that kind of stuff". Nabil shared his reason for why he feels men are not pressured as he stated "*there's no pressure for a Muslim man to get married because for a guy there is more freedom than the girl, well studies also, you want to get educated first before you get married, you want to stand on your own two feet before you get married, support your wife and stuff and that takes longer*".

Therefore, both genders of participants tended to agree that even though they may not personally feel pressured into getting married because of their upbringing, there still exists a lot of pressure for other young Muslim women in the Indian society to get married which stems mainly from the "older generation" and from the Indian culture. Whereas a Muslim man has more "freedom" to wait to get married, as he is required to educate himself first and gain financial independence before settling down. This appears to be due to the Indian cultural as well Islamic expectations for a man to be the breadwinner for his wife and children.

The researcher further investigated what participants felt were the appropriate ages for Muslim men and women to get married, as it was felt that this inherently shapes participants' current personal attitudes as well as their future opinions on marriage. Moreover, it can directly affect the way participants bring up their children one day and the values and cultural customs they continue to instill in their children. Hence it allows for a tentative view of the current mind set and thought patterns that exist for young Muslim adults and an understanding of what will prevail in the years to come.

Overall, the data revealed that both male and female participants agreed that there should not be a specific age for either a man or a woman to get married; rather it should be a personal choice and should be dependent on when the person is ready to get married. The female participants together with some male participants further outlined that marriage should be considered when the person is emotionally ready and mature to handle the responsibility of marriage, and expressed that this can occur at any age. Moreover, it was thought that it would be "ideal" for the man to be older in age than the woman, since participants agreed that men mature later than women do. Fatima offered her view by stating "*Well I think whenever the person is ready. Age doesn't matter; it's the maturity that counts… I think between the ages of*

27 and 30 is ideal for a man to get married because a man mature later than woman". Zaheer concurs by stating "*they usually say guys' mature later than girls, so it would be better for a guy to get married when he is slightly older and more mature and a girl at a young age*".

Riaz expressed that "*I think that is down to a personal choice, dependent on the person… Well for a man, the latest I think they should get married is maybe 27 years, and the earliest maybe about 21, that's just because of maturity, like some people below that age, they don't tend to think or know what the actual concept of marriage is until they really see it, maybe they need to experience a few more things in life before they can get that intellectual level to get married*". Alia added that for her it is important for a man or a woman to get married "*when they are emotionally ready I think, you can be like 20 but you can be so mature like emotionally and intellectually and you could really make a marriage work, but you could be like 30 and this immature person and screw up your marriage*".

On closer analysis, it appeared that all of the male participants outlined certain other factors that they felt were necessary conditions before getting married, such as being financially secure, having a stable job and being independent. Nabil stated that a man should get married "*when he is standing on his two feet, and he can support his wife and that can be at any age, because I mean it is just custom; it's what it's supposed to be like*". His response further reiterates the socially constructed roles a man and a woman should undertake, which is discussed fully in 4.3.4. The role of spouses. Hence it appears that young Muslim adults do not consider that there is an age limit for when a person should get married. Their views are more open in the sense that they regard marriage as important and a person should wait until one is mature and personally ready to make the commitment with a suitable spouse and should not be pressured into getting married.

In order to explore the congruency in the participants' responses, the researcher asked them about their experience of knowing any friends who had gotten married, at what age and how they felt about it. Most of the participants expressed happiness for their friends who had gotten married regardless of the age at which they had done so. Riaz explained why he was happy when two of his friends had gotten married, "*one was 23 and the other was 25. I was happy for them. The way I viewed*

them, I think they were ready to get married and they both qualified with their degrees and both have stable jobs". Nabil explained that many of his friends had gotten married, "*some were 18, some were 20, some were 25. I was happy for them. If they were happy, I was happy, it doesn't really matter about the age*".

However, a few participants had raised the concern that they have felt some of their friends were maybe too young or even immature to get married. Zaheer described that when his friend got married at the age of 18 years old, he was happy for him, but added that "*there was obviously you could see the person was quite young so there was a level of immaturity and the marriage didn't work out and ended up in divorce*". Zahra reported that she was not prepared on hearing her best friend wanted to get married when she was 16 years old, and she stated "*well I will be honest, I did comment that they a bit too young to get married, that they haven't lived, they haven't experienced much, so I did comment on that but it was their choice and they happy*".

Sadia also expressed her reaction to a friend's marriage at the age of 20 years old, "*It's a bit shocking to be honest, I don't see myself being married at that age. Like I said, I don't disagree with it exactly but personally I wouldn't go into a relationship that early- like marriage. So it's a bit of a shock because I'm at that age, and I don't think I'm ready for something like that, so it makes you wonder about the next person, but it is their decision at the end of the day*". Hence, based on these responses, it seems that regardless of owning the view that a person should get married when he or she feels ready to do so, some participants were biased when it came to people they knew and were close with and who had gotten married.

4.3.3.4. *My parents' marriage.*

To further explore the participants' attitudes toward marriage and how it contributes to their overall perceptions, the researcher explored if and how the participants' parents' relationship or marriage influenced their view, understanding or willingness to marry.

The overall consensus by participants was the view that their parents' marriages are "happy" and "good", and even though they do experience their ups and downs, they work through their problems and continue to love, care and understand each other. For three of the female participants who expressed this view, they each proclaimed that their parents' marriage has influenced the way they perceive marriage as being as well as affects their willingness to marry. This is illustrated by Fatima's response wherein she stated that it does influence her "*because I see marriage is about being understanding and the mother working for the kids and the dad working to educate and bring up the kids, so it's a whole process of helping each other and bringing up good generations; and it makes me want to get married because I want to have my own routine and discipline in my own house and have that relationship with my husband*".

Alia shared the same feeling as she disclosed "*Yes, it influences it because my parents, they have been through a lot, a lot of hard stuff and the way they have come through it just makes me want to have a marriage like that and look forward to something that's like lasting, something that can really go through the hardships, … and you know still being there for that person, that's what a marriage should be. I think that's what my parents have been through, that's what I look forward to, having that person to hold your hand through those times*". For Nabil, the influence differed to the female participants views in that he feels "*my parents knew each other before they got married, and I would also like to get to know my wife before I get married to her, so that kind of influences my perception*".

Even though, the rest of the male participants described their parents' marriage as good and happy, their view was opposite to the female participants, in that they felt they are not easily influenced by their parents relationship but rather they view marriage as being more individualistic and dependent on them rather than their parents. Hence they opted for a more individualistic attitude toward marriage. Riaz responded by saying "*No, and why I say no, is because every marriage is individual to its people that make it up. Like maybe what they do, would make me say Ok if I had that situation, I would handle it differently or I would do something else, but that doesn't chase me away from the fact that I want to get married or it won't change my perception of marriage*". Imran expressed that his perceptions are not shaped solely by his parents' marriage, "*No. since a lot of family members do have direct contact*

with me, I wouldn't base my perception of getting married only on my parent's marriage; because basically I have a lot of relevant information of married life which I could refer to and let influence my choices".

Zahra was the only female participant who described her parent's relationship as "a little bit rocky at the moment", she added that they used to be different and in love, but now it has changed. She also expressed that previously her parents' marriage influenced her thoughts, but now it has no weighting on her perceptions as she continues to embrace a positive attitude toward marriage and getting married. This is evidenced by her response whereby she explained "*that's the good thing not at all. It used to, I used to say I want to be with my husband like my mum is with my father... The only thing I take from their marriage is they used to be very open with each other and in constant contact, discussing and talking about things all the time, used to be. So at that time when I was younger, it shaped my perceptions on marriage, but now as I have gotten older, I have my own perceptions. And their marriage is a bit rocky but that is not changing mine because I am not the same person my father is*".

Therefore, from this analysis it appears that there is a divide among those participants who feel that their parents' marriage has played a role in shaping their attitudes toward marriage and for those who disagree, regardless of how they described their parents' marriage as being. Nevertheless, all the participants are in accord with regard to expressing a positive attitude toward marriage and are willing to get married, even if it occurs later in life.

4.3.3.5. *Wishes and expectations.*

Based on what has been discussed thus far under this subtheme, it is evident that many factors shape and influence the way marriage is perceived and understood by the young Muslim adult participants. This raises the question then of what do these young Muslim adults expect from marriage, particularly if they continue to embrace religious beliefs yet also express more open and liberal viewpoints shaped by their society, family upbringing as well as other influences as analysed above. Hence the focus lies on why marriage is important for these young Muslim adults, what shapes their views and when they would like to get married.

A collective analysis of the data illustrated that there appeared to be a sense that participants are aware that they will experience problems and go through difficult times in their marriage. Nevertheless they expect to work together to overcome the issues and to try and build a happy marriage, based on understanding, love and commitment. The respondents also expect to have a companion, to build a life with and raise a family as well as to uphold an appreciation for each other.

Riaz explained that he "*expects to have some conflict of course… at the end of the day, you going to have issues in your marriage, but how you sort it out will make the difference*". Alia strongly felt that she expects marriage to be a learning process in order to overcome any problems and create a happy marriage. She stated '*my expectations of marriage- I think-I don't know, that's a hard question, … I guess to be able to grow up together is the one expectation from marriage that I would have and to learn how to be a parent together, not like opposing each other, … to make mistakes together. To learn each-others weaknesses together, so I think my expectation of marriage is about learning about yourself and about the other person about being together when the time needs to be together and being your own person when you need to be your own person*".

4.3.4. The role of spouses.

Most of the participants in this study held a traditional Islamic view of the roles a Muslim wife and husband should undertake, acknowledging that there are prescribed roles for each spouse. The consensus regarding the husband's role was unanimous outlining that a husband has the responsibility to be the breadwinner for his family and to financially support his wife and family, providing for their needs and protecting them. However, a third of the participants mentioned that over and above these roles, a husband should also play a role in assisting with the household chores and in the raising of the children as this will strengthen family bonds and appreciation for each other. Riaz outlined that it is important for the husband to "*be the bread winner and provide a safe and secure environment for those dependant on him*", but also emphasised the importance of sharing domestic activities, as he added "*utmost importance should be given to such activities that encourage both parties to do work. A child needs both a mother and a father in order to have a stable upbringing and sharing of chores allows for family bonds to be strengthened*".

Zaheer stated that a husband should "*provide financially for his wife but to also assist with household chores especially if his wife is working*", and he added that "*it depends on whether the wife is working or not. In a marriage where the husband and wife are both working then sharing of chores and child rearing is essential. However if the wife is a stay at home wife then the bulk of domestic chores should be her responsibility however the husband should still play a part*". For Zahra it was essential that a husband adopts the role of breadwinner and also take responsibility within the home sphere, as she stated a husband should "*fend for and take care of his family, to instill morals, values, Islamic education and upbringing etc. the husband and wife should be a team and strive to do this equally*". Moreover, she added that she "*is all for sharing domestic activities*" as she feels "*it promotes responsible behaviour and more family time*".

Alia shared these sentiments about a husband's role outlining that "*he should know his responsibility to his family and wife. His aim should be to protect and support them and be there for them as a father should*". With regard to sharing domestic activities, she strongly stated "*I agree with it. I think responsibility should be shared and dads should play a part in a child's life as well as doing chores so that he can better appreciate what his wife does for him and he won't take her for granted*".

When it came to discussing their view on a wife's role in marriage, two female participants expressed a more liberal opinion of how they perceive a wife's role as being. This is seen in Alia's response as she asserted that a wife should "*also live out her dreams with her husband and to have children if she wants to; also to have a sense of independence and accomplishment*". Zahra remained liberal in her thinking, stating that it is important for a wife "*to be who she is- run her household as she sees fit. I will not suggest a stereotypical role that the Muslim society would expect of her. Every woman forgets her value and that she is the most important person before anyone else".* She justified her response by saying that "*if the wife is miserable, that has lasting and damaging impacts on her husband and children*".

Fatima also expressed an open view, stating that if the husband's financial situation is not so good, then the wife should also work. One reason outlined was due to the society and times that we live in today, which often requires both spouses to earn an income in order to afford the cost of living and to maintain a family.

The male participants on the other hand had differing views to what they perceive a wife's role as being and whether they would want her to seek employment after marriage. Riaz remained congruent in his responses as he explained that "*the greatest reward for a Muslim woman is to fulfill the needs of the household and bring up the children in the correct environment. Their make-up is such that they are more suited for this role than men. However they should not be discouraged from gaining knowledge and participating in social avenues, after all women are more capable of multi-tasking than men*". Riaz's view matched that of his response to not wanting his wife to work, as he declared "*I feel that women are the leaders of the youth and thus their role is to teach and educate their children. Women have more loving characteristics than men and thus they are more suited to upbringing children in the correct manner*".

Imran and Zaheer held a traditional view of the roles they consider a wife should undertake, yet were more egalitarian in the option of having their future wives work one day. Imran mentioned that a wife's role is to "*look after and provide for her family as best as she can*", and felt that "*If my spouse finds happiness in working then I don't see a reason for me to stop her*". Zaheer discussed that "*Her role would be to provide for her husband in terms of emotional support, cooking etc. However if she wishes to pursue a career and her husband does not have a problem with it and it does not affect her marriage then it's fine*".

When probed further regarding having the option of his wife working, Zaheer replied: "*I do not mind if she works or stays at home. For instance if she has studied and wants to use her degree it is fine with me. However the nature of the job is also important, if she is required to travel for business and has to spend nights away from home I would not allow it. Basically she can have an 8-5 job and needs to be home every night. Once children are involved I would prefer for her to be at home looking after them so that they grow up with their mother and not some stranger from a crèche. Once the children are attending school and are thus not at home during the day if she wishes to resume work it's fine*".

4.4. Theme Three: Religiosity

It has been established from the literature that Islam is a religion that strongly prohibits intermingling between sexes as well as having any romantic relationships outside of marriage. Hence, it forbids the courting or cohabiting of Muslim couples and any form of physical intimacy before marriage. It was interesting to explore to what extent do young Muslim adults ascribe to this important religious ruling as well as the influence it has on their views of marriage, especially since it was established in theme one, that all of the participants consider their religion to be important to them and described themselves as being religious to a certain extent. The following two subthemes offer an analysis of the participants' views.

4.4.1. Pre-marital romantic relationships.

This subtheme incorporated various aspects which emerged from the data regarding how young Muslim adults view pre-marital romantic relationships. Factors reflected include the relationship status of each participant, their thoughts on having a relationship with the opposite sex, be it of the same or different religion and culture as well as includes their views on physical intimacy in a relationship before marriage.

Three female participants reported currently being in a romantic relationship, with the intention of getting married to that person. While the remaining female participant and all the male participants reported being single. One male participant expressed his relationship of 6 months having recently broken off. Based on these results alone, it is apparent that half of the participants are already inclined to having a pre-marital romantic relationship with a partner of the opposite sex.

Furthermore, participants were asked about their views on having a pre-marital romantic relationship. Even though all participants acknowledged that engaging in any pre-marital relationship is prohibited in Islam, seven out of the eight participants openly expressed that they would pursue a pre-marital romantic relationship and conveyed that regardless of the Islamic perspective, they would still have pre-marital romantic relationships. It appeared that the primary reason why most of the participants felt this way was due to their flexible upbringing shaped by their parents' open-minded thinking, since most of the participants stated that their parents or families would not mind if they were involved in a pre-marital romantic relationship.

The female participants however had expressed that their parents would allow them to have a relationship on condition that their parents meet their partners first, and is aware of their whereabouts when they are with their partners. Whereas, for the male participants, no reasons or explanations were expressed, such as the boy's parents or families wanting to meet the girl first before approving of their union. The male participants simply stated that their parents or families would be fine with their relationships.

Zahra described that her parents "*would be very open to it but obviously they don't allow us to- umm we not totally free with the guy. So I'm not allowed to just go out wherever I want to with him, there is also some boundaries there. They know where we are at all times, I have a curfew, I'm not allowed to stay out too late when I do go out, neither is my sister who is also dating somebody. They want to obviously meet the guy first, know where we going, the time we going to come back, the time we reach I have to let them know when I leave I have to let them know, so it's constant communication*".

Sadia stated that "*I don't think they would have a problem with it, if they met the person and if they know that he is Muslim number 1 and if he is responsible, and they have to obviously meet him, they won't exactly have a problem with it. Well my parents, I'm not sure about my extended family*". This indicates that within the Indian community there is still some contention regarding letting a young Muslim woman have pre-marital relationships, but for Sadia it depended on her parents' attitudes which in this case would allow for her to do so.

The male participants expressed a more relaxed view, as seen by Imran's response "*They not very demanding on me. They allow me to make my own choices but do guide me to what is right or wrong. Yes they would be ok with me being in a relationship with someone*". Nabil expressed that his parents "*wouldn't encourage it but I don't think they would mind or anything, so they would be ok with it*".

One participant offered a contrary view, whereby she explained that because her parents are so strict and are not allowing her to get married to her romantic partner, it forces her to engage in a pre-marital romantic relationship while knowing that what she is doing is not correct. Fatima explained that "*well if you have a reason to have a romantic relationship with that person, like in my case, my family, isn't allowing me to*

get engaged or anything, like even have a proposal ring or engagement ring or anything as such. They totally against the love marriage, so I think children of today tend to break the boundaries and the rules of their religion and culture and they have romanic relationship before they get married until their parent accept the guy. So in my case I would have a romantic relationship because my parents are not allowing me to get engaged".

An added finding was that when participants were asked if they would have a relationship with someone of a different religion or culture as theirs, most of the participants expressed that they would not compromise on the religious aspect but would not have a problem in having a romantic relationship with someone of a different culture. Only one participant expressed that he would not mind if the religion or culture differed to his own.

Riaz expressed his view by stating that "*although diversity is an important part of life people with different cultures tend to have different perspectives on life. Different backgrounds brings about numerous challenges and communication across these barriers can be difficult. For the above mentioned I would not have a relationship with someone who has a completely different culture and view of life*".

Fatima's view was that the aspects she will compromise on are: "*Religion no. Culture yes. It's easier to work things to your benefit when you have different cultures because some people don't practice their tradition and tend to make their own rules. Religion is inflexible you got to follow the rules*". Zaheer shared the same sentiment by saying "*Religion, no. Culture, yes. My religion is the most important thing in my life and it is essential for my partner to have the same religious values as myself. With regards to culture, provided it does not conflict with my religious views I do not have a problem with it*".

Alia expressed that she is more flexible with religion stating "*I'm not against it, as long as they are willing to convert. Religion is an important part in my life and I would want my marriage to be filled with a stable religious foundations as well as having my kids grow up exposed to my religion*". Zahra shared her view by stating that "*Well, in my case I'm getting engaged to a revert. So, I wouldn't marry a non-Muslim man if that's what you are referring to and neither will have any relationship with him. As far as culture goes, I don't mind. I don't need to be with an Indian guy per se. I'm open*

minded and don't see things through race, culture etc.".

Another central finding stemming from the analysis was the view participants held regarding physical intimacy in a relationship and before marriage takes place, and how they would relate to being physically intimate with someone. It appeared that some participants immediately attached physical intimacy to having sexual relations. With this in mind, it appeared that five of the participants expressed being against having physical intimacy with their romantic partners until they are married. The female participants who are currently engaged in romantic relationships expressed that being physically attracted to someone is important, but there are boundaries that exist and which they will not cross, thus referring to the boundary of sexual relations.

Zaheer mentioned that "*I think it is wrong, once again Islamically to have any form of contact before marriage, getting intimate and physical is extremely wrong*". Alia was more liberal in her thinking, as she explained that "*I think sex should like wait for marriage because then it's like - if you do it before marriage, it's just like it doesn't give marriage the sacredness - it just loses its value if you do it before marriage, but I think like just holding hands and maybe kissing is ok, but like nothing majorly before that you know*". Zahra expressed the view that "*well I'm a very open minded person, and in today's time, look it's important, because if you not attracted to the person, it's not going to work. You have to be attracted to them, to some extent… I wouldn't go that far (Sex), again there are boundaries, so although I'm open, there is still boundaries that I don't cross*".

Hence, even though almost all participants expressed being somewhat religious and being aware of what their religion expects of them, it appears that the rules are adapted to a personal preference which are more acceptable within the present society, and are outside that of religion. This is noticeable in Zaheer's response wherein he stated that he would engage in pre-marital romantic relationships regardless of the Islamic perspective, "*Yes most probably. I suppose it's a society thing, and also as a guy I mean, all guys want stuff, I mean, sexual intimacy before marriage, I suppose, and I suppose if there is no religious boundaries - I mean you can see it happens to non- religious people, they do it all the time, so I suppose we would end up doing the same thing*".

4.4.2. Influences on marriage.

The above findings appear to have implications for the manner in which these young Muslim adults ascribe to their religious teachings regarding marriage. Since almost all participants have a somewhat religious influence and background, it was queried as to what extent would participants relate to their religious teachings regarding getting married. Five participants responded by stating that they would relate to most of the guidelines stipulated to be carried out for getting married. Zahra's explanation included that she would relate to a certain extent "*well obviously regarding the type of guy I choose, he has to be Islamic, he has to be Deeni inclined. He has to have strong morals, strong values, I mean that's according to religious teachings and he has to obviously treat me the way a Muslim man would and is supposed to conduct himself, but I'm open minded so even if his not, he doesn't have to be strictly religious, if he is like me, somewhat, you know if he has a balance. I mean look I don't wear scarf, I'm not holy, but it doesn't mean I don't read my namaaz, fast or give Zakaah, I do all of that. So I'm in line with my religious teachings but I don't dress the part, because I wasn't brought up that way, and I'm not so strict in some aspects of the religions*".

Moreover, participants were asked if they would want to have a relationship with a person before getting married to that person. From the responses it was evident that seven out of the eight participants agreed that they would have a relationship with someone before getting married to that person. Furthermore, these seven participants expressed the importance of having a relationship as it will allow them to get to know the person better. Zaheer stated that "*I suppose if I met the right person, yes. I think that most probably have to do with Western perception and pressure in that it is normal to have a girl-friend and it's good to have a girl-friend. It's more because of society, definitely society's influence, but I suppose also just personal stuff. You want to go out and experiment and try new things and find new people so it is society and your own personal agenda*". With regard to whether a relationship before marriage is important, Zaheer explained that "*It is important, but I mean it depends on the extent of the relationship. If it's like a really intimate sexual relationship then it is totally wrong Islamically. I mean you should have a basic relationship to know what the person's ideas on life are … what their basic goals are, where they are headed to in life*".

Zahra's response was that "*to an extent it is important, but also keeping in mind the Islamic code of conduct where it is difficult to balance it because of Zinna. Zinna means committing sin, because obviously we are not allowed to have a boyfriend, so it falls in that category but it's really important to know somebody before you spend the rest of your life with them, to avoid the divorce process, although that is not what is happening nowadays but it is important. You have to know the guy, you have to know whether you are compatible. I mean you won't know everything until you live with him but we not allowed to live with them before marriage so you have got to date them for a while at least but obviously not too long where you start to commit zinna. So it's very important to get to know the person before settling down*".

Alia was not convinced of the importance of having a pre-marital romantic relationship, however she expressed that she would engage in a relationship before marriage, as seen by her response "*I don't know, I think it's like a 50/50 kind of thing. It doesn't matter if you don't have a relationship and it doesn't matter if you do have a relationship, because you are going to get married to that person and it is going to be like completely different, something different. You know, you thought you knew the person but when you actually living with them, then you married to them- people change, you start seeing different sides of them*".

Only Riaz expressed that he would not have a relationship before getting married, nor does he regard having one as important, as he mentioned he would "*definitely not have a relationship with someone before marriage… I don't think it's necessary, you just need to know what their interests is and what your interests are, what they expect from the marriage, what you expect from the marriage and obviously there needs to be a physical attraction*".

4.5. Theme Four: A healthy and successful marriage

An important aspect of this research study was to investigate what factors young Muslim adults think would promote a healthy and successful marriage. In order to gather an in depth response, this theme incorporated aspects that described the understanding participants have of a successful marriage, what qualities they aspire to attain in a future spouse and what factors they consider important in maintaining a healthy and successful marriage.

4.5.1. What is a successful marriage?

Various definitions of how participants understand the notion of a successful marriage is presented, as it appears that each participant defined it differently, depending on what they expected from a marriage as well as on the factors that influenced their attitude toward marriage. A few participants offered simple responses, whilst others offered longer explanations. Fatima for instance offered a short definition as she mentioned that a successful marriage is when "*the family's treat you nicely, and they accept you as a daughter or a son*". For Imran, trust represented a successful marriage, as he described that trust was the foundation for any relationship. Nabil opted to define a successful marriage as having "*good communication, being on the same wave length and basically love".*

Zahra defined a successful marriage simply by stating "*in a nut shell, happiness. Someone who makes you happy, you make him happy - total open communication at all times, being genuine with each other, no matter how much one hurts the other person, and trust is very important*". Zaheer stated that "*a successful marriage would be firstly when the husband and wife are faithful to each other, that's most probably the number one criteria but then there is also … success from making each other better. For instance, say if a girl and a guy get married, and the girl reads all her salaah and the guy doesn't, and then through her he starts becoming more religiously inclined, then it's a good thing, especially to bring up a better person*".

These responses demonstrated that there is no one conclusive definition for outlining what a successful marriage is. Rather it is a subjective construct depending on what is important for a particular person and is shaped by one's expectations and surrounding influences.

4.5.2. Finding the right person.

Another angle of exploring what participants think makes a successful marriage, is in the choice of partner they endeavour to find and to spend the rest of their lives with. It appeared that each participant reported wanting different qualities in a spouse. However, an important factor raised for most of the participants was that they wanted their partners to be religiously inclined and not just Muslim by name, since these participants valued their religion and had strong religious upbringings and teachings.

Apart from religion as an important factor, there did not appear to be a collective agreement as to what other factors or qualities were significant to have when choosing a spouse. For the male participants, there was mention of wanting a spouse who will have qualities such as being a good wife and mother, someone who is good looking, trustworthy, intelligent, honest and friendly. Riaz stated that "*Firstly- I wouldn't want my wife to work, secondly, I would want her to be at home full time and if there is children, well obviously I would have a role to play in the children's lives, but she should be responsible for their upbringing mainly… her qualities and personality: honesty, I think she should be friendly, she needs to be religious, most important and have patience*".

Zaheer expressed for him "*firstly is religion, I mean I want a Muslim girl, that's definite, and she mustn't just be Muslim by name, she needs to read her salaah, read her Qur'an, other stuff, she mustn't … have had like many relationships. If she has a career, I don't mind, but as long as she is the type of a girl I suppose by society's definition a "good girl", and by your personal definition, where you know someday she is going to be a good mother, she is going to look after your kids, if she can cook that will be great*". Important factors for Nabil are "*obviously looks, intelligence, funny, religious affiliation- yeah I mean she must be religiously inclined as well*".

For the female participants, factors such as the wealth of the spouse was important, in that he needs to be able to provide all the necessities required by them, as well as offer protection and support. Other qualities that emerged were the attitude of the spouse and how he dealt with arising problems. This was linked to his maturity level as well as his intellectual capacity, since being able to have a serious conversation with one's spouse was also important. A further quality noted was the capacity to communicate with one's spouse. Some of the female responses are as follows:

Fatima described that "*first of all is religion, then it's the age difference, the wealth of the boy, the appearance of the boy, and the attitude is highly highly very important, and how does this boy look after you and care for you, when you have problems, how does he deal with problems*". Alia explained that for her "*Maturity, that's like number one. He has to be mature and ok financial stability to a certain extent, like just enough to look after me,…he will have to provide … like monetary stuff for our necessities and he has to be there for my safety and my security and protect me from whatever is out in the world, because that is what a husband is supposed to be, he is supposed to protect their wives and children*".

Qualities Sadia felt were important are "*obviously religion, because I think that really does play a big role. It causes a lot of conflict if it's not like, if you guys don't agree on certain things. Then there is the usual trust, well love, communication, and ambition - I think that that's important as well*"**.**

4.5.3. Achieving a fruitful marriage.

This subtheme includes the results of how participants consider achieving a healthy and successful marriage, and what factors they feel will create a healthy, happy and successful marital life. Upon analysing the data it appeared that the factors participants considered important to achieve a successful marriage was related to the factors they aspired to have in a spouse as well as what they defined as a successful marriage.

Almost all participants were in agreement that there are a few integral factors that form the basis for achieving a fruitful marriage. These factors include communication, trust, honesty and importantly being on the same or similar level as your spouse, in that you both expect or want similar things from a marriage and having similar backgrounds which was further explained as making the transition into marriage easier. Other important factors outlined were that both spouses try and be the best in their marriage, sharing a deeper connection with and loving one's spouse as well as keeping an open mind when issues may arise.

A response to elucidate these overall findings includes an example from Zaheer who stated that "*communication is number one. To be open minded and you can't have arguments over petty issues, and you shouldn't always try and find faults in the other person, you need to hide their flaws. I mean because if you pointing out their flaws, there is also your flaws that you oblivious to but they can see. If you start pointing out their flaws, they start pointing out your flaws, then it will just lead to unnecessary arguments and petty issues*". Zaheer's example and way of thinking relates to the Qur'anic quote which when translated explains that a husband and wife should be like garments for each other, hiding and protecting each other's flaws and not revealing it for other's to be seen.

Zahra expressed that there are numerous factors at play in order to achieve a healthy and successful marriage, as she stated "*trust and openness, you got to love him, it's the emotional connection, the intellectual connection, the physical connection, so it's multi – dimensional. You have got to have a bit of everything*". Sadia mentioned that "*I think*

honesty and trust is like really important and sometimes I won't say being similar but like being on the same page, like having similar- I don't know, not ambitions but looking for similar things in a marriage. Looking for the same things in life, I just think it makes things a lot easier". Riaz also shared the same sentiments that having similar backgrounds and ways of doing things assist in creating an easier adjustment into marital life which arguably translates into a happier marriage.

4.6. Theme Five: Factors that lead to marital breakdown

One of the research questions posed in this study set out to investigate what factors young Muslim adults perceive would lead to a breakdown in a marriage. From the data obtained, it appeared that the participants offered various explanations, all of which are explained below.

4.6.1. Negative implicating factors.

There have been different reasons provided for why marriages do not work, with each participant offering a corresponding example to explain their viewpoint. From a combined analysis of the responses, it appears that the three predominant implicating factors as stated by order of importance are firstly a lack of communication between spouses. Secondly, dishonesty between spouses was seen as an integral factor in causing unnecessary problems in a marriage, with trust being assessed as a third important implicating factor in the breakdown of marriages.

Other factors were also revealed such as not making the time for one's spouse that ultimately lead to distancing in a marriage which extends back to a lack of communication. Also interference from external parties in the couple's marital affairs, spouses being unwilling to compromise with each other, the changing times of society, as well as spouses going in different directions away from each other were all implicated as possible reasons why participants thought marriages will not last.

Some of the verbatim responses from the participants are as follows: Fatima explained that "*I think if the guy is being not honest with his wife and leaving the wife most of the time at home, and going out with his friends, prioritising his work, his friends, his social activities and physical activities first, and also speaking to girls, … I think that's a huge thing. I think the husband should try and understand the point of view of the wife and explain that he will not do whatever makes her unhappy and try*

and work things out, even with the wife, if he has to go to work, then let him go to work, do his work and come back home, because at the end of the day … how are you going to get your needs if you don't allow your husband to work, so you have to understand these things".

Zahra expressed that "*breakdown in trust, in communication, without trust there is nothing, no matter how much you love that person, if you don't trust them you are going to constantly look over your shoulder, so that's a major factor, and then also distance. If you start to lose that communication and trust you start to distance yourself from each other and when that happens obviously you become miserable which leads to unhappiness and then a breakdown in a marriage*".

Riaz mentioned that for him, a "*lack of communication and small misunderstandings that don't get resolved quickly. I think those are the most important, and also dishonesty, like you should trust your spouse because if you see her with someone else, you should know her well enough to know that she is not going to do anything with them*". From this discussion, it is evident that there are numerous implicating factors which lead to a breakdown in marriages. Moreover, it seems that these implicating factors are the same aspects that participants described as important in achieving a successful and healthy marriage in Theme four. Hence, these factors seem to be the core of what participants' expect their marriages to be built on, without which they feel may lead to experiencing problems which could mean the end of their marriage.

4.7. Theme Six: Muslim marriage and the community

When given the opportunity to provide any information they thought relevant to add regarding marriages in the Muslim community, participants had some thought-provoking comments. It appears that even though these young Muslim adults remain positive about getting married and have expressed their honest views regarding their perceptions of marriage, most are in agreement that marriage has lost the value and meaning it once had, with the divorce rate on the increase within the Muslim community.

4.7.1. From sacred to futile: views on Muslim marriage and divorce.

There seems to be an observation that young Muslim adults are diverting away from their strict religious teachings regarding pre-marital romantic relationships, physical intimacy before marriage as well as the union of marriage itself, since Muslim marriages appear to be ending in divorce as quickly as they initially took place. Participants felt strongly that divorce is a common occurrence within Muslim communities, and attribute it to numerous factors such as for-going one's religious duties, not marrying for the right reasons rather marrying to fulfill one's lustful desires and not being mature enough to handle the responsibilities that come with marriage. Moreover, other reasons include the view that today's youth are attuned to being instantly gratified with materialistic wants and gains, and when one's spouse fails to provide something that was once expected and necessary, it creates problems which couples may not know how to successfully resolve.

Additionally, participants blame the changing times of modern society, with women becoming more independent and both genders becoming so career driven which may lead them to ignore their responsibilities to their spouses, families and their marriage. Furthermore, it appears that the general collective consciousness surrounding the act of divorce is no longer something that is frowned upon by families or the new young Muslim generation, due to its common occurrence. Rather it is felt that families also seem to play a role in the high divorce rate, as it is argued that some parents and families do not encourage the marital couple to work out their differences, instead they are keen to open their doors for their son or daughter to come home. Hence it appears the strong Islamic consciousness as well as the meaning of marriage is slowly losing the impact it once had and this is translating in the way these young Muslim adults go about their everyday, as well as personal lives with regard to having pre-marital romantic relationships.

Another important aspect that three of the participants relayed was that they felt marriage should not be forced on someone or on a couple. It should be a personal choice whether or not one decides to get married to a person. Also related to this view, is that families should be more open and accepting to love marriages. It seems that the participants who expressed these views based their thoughts on their personal experiences. Nonetheless, this could also be seen as an implicating factor

that leads to breakdown in marriages, as it is arguable that a couple may get married based on their families choice and happiness, only to realise after they are married that they are not compatible for each other. As discussed in theme three, most participants expressed wanting to have a romantic relationship before getting married to that person so that they could get to know the person better and understand them, hence to explore if they are compatible for each other and will be able to spend the rest of their lives together. Some of the responses which further elucidate the above discussion are as follows:

Riaz offered the view that "*I think in today's time, we have diverted from our religious teachings a lot and that's why we have so many breakdowns in our marriages. Like a lot of our Muslim people today are dating before marriage, that's why when they get married, they tend to expect too much from the opposite spouse, and I think that is one of the main factors why I think most marriages are breaking up. Another thing is that, people don't realise what marriage actually is and they think it's all just going to be nice and rosy like how it is before marriage. You know, before you get married. obviously you dress up to go and see someone, being in your best state all the time but after marriage you see the person like in their true colours, you will be living with them, you see their bad side too, so I think by us dating before getting married, we expecting that everything is going to be nice and easy going and when we get married, we see the other side of it and we can't handle it because we weren't prepared for it*".

Alia expressed that "*nowadays marriage is losing its impact on society. People no more take marriage seriously, people get married and 2 weeks, 2 months, 2 years later they divorced. It's like marriage no longer instills that fear in people and I'm talking of marriage from a religious aspect because there is so much divorce going around, and it makes people like me, an unmarried person think that what's the use of marriage if in a marriage a man will still cheat or a woman will still cheat, they don't regard it with that high status anymore like in the old days, like it used to be completely crazy to even mention the word divorce but nowadays every second person is getting divorced - it's like it no more has that sacredness and I don't think people are scared anymore, like ok if you think about it- marriage shouldn't instill fear but it does because from a religious perspective it does. You can't close your eyes and be like I'm getting married because I want to. If religion wasn't in the picture, you*

wouldn't really get married. Marriage wouldn't be compulsory. It wouldn't even be a thing. It's a structure, it's a societal institution that you enter into because society says so, and because religion says so and because culture says so. But individually I think people need to be able to make their own decisions, without being judged because when you start judging, like when you start feeling judged you start feeling forced and if you enter a marriage by being forced it's not going to really work out".

Alia further added in response to whether there has been a change in the notion of marriage and divorce "*people have become more open minded and nowadays marriage is no longer as important as it was 20 years ago. Nowadays women have careers and are following their dreams and men also have careers and focus on that for years and wait longer to get married. Also I think people are no longer afraid to go against their religion. Religions seem to have lost their 'fear factor' when it comes to premarital relations and people are becoming more demoralised and marriage is now an option and not a must. People sometimes just get married to make their parents happy and they end up divorcing 6 months later, which is pointless. Yes marriage should be a two sided agreement, but it should also be valued and its sanctity should be restored*".

Zaheer stated "*there has been an increase in divorce rates in recent times and I think it's because of the increase in pre-marital relationships as they provide a person with a distorted image of one's partner. Furthermore the ease with which extra-marital relationships can be carried out due to the prevalence of social networking allows people to meet people quite easily. Therefore in a world where people are becoming more and more focused on their careers they may ignore their responsibilities towards their spouse therefore resulting in their spouse seeking someone else outside their marriage to satisfy their needs*".

Imran explained that "*it is common to hear that people these days get married for completely the wrong reasons. It can also be said that marriage happens at a very young age, this can contribute to the high divorce rate as many people might not be mature enough to maintain the marriage relationship*". Zahra, a 22 year old female who has been brought up in the same liberal manner as Alia did, had a lot to share about what she feels is happening to marriages in the Muslim community. Zahra had worked at an Islamic counselling centre and mentioned that based on her experience

from working there, she is well aware of the way divorce is viewed as she also makes mention of its common occurrence. She had a lot to add, and felt passionate about discussing her experiences.

Some of her views include: "*Well, youngsters today, I mean the divorce rate is ridiculous… and maybe I'm being judgmental here, but they getting married for the wrong reasons … Because in the old days, it would be like you only come back, after you get married, you only come back as a janaazah (Muslim funeral). In our time, it's not that way, now it's like if you have one fight, and my guy friend told me … most of the girls, what they want is material satisfaction and he can't buy her the shoes she wants, and buy her the handbags, and the expensive stuff that she wants, that her father gave her, so sometimes it's that - where the girl is brought up in a certain way and she expects her husband to be that way so you know as a result marriages are breaking. Also, parents are now if you have a little argument, "oh come home my child, it's fine, leave him". Or if they fighting or something, they don't encourage them to stick it out, work through it, make sure that the last resort is divorce. Nowadays they getting married 2 or 3 months… and in about 6 months to 8 months later-divorced. But also, it's the guy's fault, but he should be very perceptive when he is dating the girl, because since in today's time, we can date someone, ok not we can, but we do, we date, so like even when he is dating the girl, he should be able to like perceive and pick up on things, whether she seems very high maintenance, so obviously look she comes from this kind of family, obviously he is going to see the family, so have the discussion: "do you expect me treat you in the same way, do you expect me to buy you the same things, do you expect me to be at your beck and call?" Again there is a lack of communication there. It doesn't work out, well it's not always the case, I'm just describing the trends and the new thing is, we finding is the guys are gay … So we finding that trend, and we read it in the papers all the time, the guys are now gay, but they forcing them to get married so that nobody gets suspicious and think something is up. So nowadays when you are finding a marriage partner, it is scary, it's difficult, it's hard because what you hear is now men are very sexually active, they don't really worry about what happens after marriage… and influence from their friends, you know as we get socialised into the outside world-like campus, I mean guys go crazy on campus because there is like this burst of freedom so it's insane. I mean they change and they more free, and when you have*

more freedom, you obviously want to experiment, you want to try. It definitely translates to the girls as well… The influences come from the media, TV, they meeting on facebook, they meeting on these social networking sites, then they want to meet and get married and they don't know each other, so there is lots and lots of factors especially from the Muslim perspective. I know what I know because I used to work at the Islamic helpline … and the majority of the cases that we had was a young couple wanting to get divorced. They phone in wanting to know the procedures for talaaq, 4 calls per day minimum"

It was also mentioned by Zahra that the meaning of marriage has changed and she explains that "*as generations have modernised, women are not bound by societies' rules anymore. The older generation allowed their kids, especially young girls much less freedom and restricted them by tradition etc. Maybe that was a good thing because nowadays, both men and women are at liberty to make their own decisions at much sooner stages of their lives and that's where things have gone wrong. They are too young to get married- mistake love for lust, too immature and spoilt to actually stick through the rough times and don't place much value on the important things in life like family, prayer, helping people out etc. instead they all chase money and material things*".

4.8. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it appears that all the participants had positive views on marriage, and continued to hold marriage in high regard. This was primarily due to their religious Islamic backgrounds and upbringings. The results further indicated that these young Muslim adults adopted a socially acceptable view to engage in premarital romantic relationships regardless of its prohibition by Islamic rulings. Furthermore, participants felt that marriage should not be entered into lightly, nor should one be forced into getting married. Marriage is felt to be a good union that requires numerous factors to successfully maintain the sacred relationship and not allow it to be dissolved in divorce. These factors include teamwork from spouses, trust, commitment, understanding, honesty as well as communication. Overall, the results indicated that young Muslim South African adults cherish the union of marriage and are willing to get married at some point in their lives. The findings of this study and its implications are elaborated on further in the next chapter.

Chapter 5- Discussion

5.1. Discussion of Results

This research study investigated the perceptions that young Muslim South African adults have regarding marriage. In order to answer this research question, various related issues were explored such as the extent to which participants ascribe to their religious beliefs, any societal influences that may have shaped their views on marriage as well as the factors they believe lead to the success as well as the breakdown of marriages, and whether these views differed for Muslim men and women respectively. In order to gain an understanding of the overall perceptions of young Muslim South African adults, the data was analysed using a thematic content analysis framework of which six main themes emerged. These include 'The Islamic self', 'Constructions of marriage', 'Religiosity', 'A successful marriage', 'Factors leading to marital breakdown, and lastly, 'Muslim marriage and the community'. Through categorising the results in themes, it provided an in depth and meaningful response to the research questions under investigation.

Overall, the results of the data revealed that participants had different perceptions of marriage but still saw marriage in a positive light and expected to marry at some point in their lives. This was regardless of their chosen academic paths or their awareness of an increasing divorce rate within the Muslim community. This outcome is consistent with the findings of Manning et al. (2004) who documented that three-quarters of teenagers interviewed in the United States had definite or probable expectations to marry in the future. Moreover, these results are consistent with the findings of Hall (2006) and Whitehead and Popenoe, (2001) who stated that despite the declines of the marriage rate in the United States, young adults still expect to marry. It also substantiates Cherlin's (2004) claim that young adults are willing to marry despite increases in divorce, delays in the timing of marriage, and the potential deinstitutionalization of marriage.

The findings of the current study further revealed that religion, culture, upbringing, friends as well as society, all played an influential role in shaping participants' perceptions and expectations of marriage as well as their willingness to marry. Religion was regarded as having an integral role in shaping young Muslim adults construction and meaning of marriage. Moreover, the majority of participants

stressed the importance Islam places on the institution of marriage. However, it appears that in some instances religion was infused with culture which added an extra dynamic to have to consider. Since, for most participants, this included the influence of the Indian cultural belief system and behavioural expectations from the Indian society. Nevertheless, the results revealed that both religion and culture stressed the importance of getting married, with Indian culture favouring females to get married at a younger age. This is further elaborated by Meer (1969) who explained that the Indian culture and Indian society favours Indian couples, particularly the Indian females to marry at a relatively early age, since they are not expected to bear all the responsibilities of husband and wife immediately.

Other aspects which influence young Muslim adults' construction of marriage are the attitudes participants' friends and families hold regarding marriage. An analysis of the data revealed that most of the participants relate in some way or the other with their friends' views on marriage. Hence, participants shared similar views with their friends regarding the appropriate age be to get married, what they would expect from their spouses after marriage as well as their respective roles in the marital relationship. With regard to the attitude of the participants' families in influencing their outlook on marriage, it appeared that most of the participants shared similar views as their families do on marriage. For some of the participants' families, there is a strong religious emphasis on getting married at an early age. For other participants' families, they appear to be more open and flexible to the timing of marriage, the choice of partner or level of education that their child has. The results indicated a consistency with Axinn and Thornton's (1993) argument, which stresses the importance of family and intergenerational relations on young adult marital behaviour.

The results of the current study further revealed that most of the participants expressed that their families want their sons or daughters to get married when they themselves feel they are ready to do so, be it if they want to study first, wait to find the right person or even to seek employment. This open mindedness and flexible way of approaching marriage has seemed to influence the participants' attitudes to marriage, by remaining open to marriage and not feeling pressurised to get married. Hence, there appears to be a gradual shift away from the once predominant Indian cultural collective consciousness regarding marriage.

A further factor which influenced the participants' construct of marriage included their parents' relationship. All participants reported that their parents were married. The participants reported that they viewed their parents' marriage as being "happy" and "good", and even though their parents may have experienced certain marital challenges, they have worked through their problems and continued to love, care for and understand each other. A third of the female participants, who expressed this view reported that their parents' marriage has influenced their perceptions of marriage as well as increased their willingness to marry. This is consistent with the findings from Manning et al. (2004) who also concluded from their study that parental views and circumstances influence adolescent union formation expectations. This view however differed for the male participants in this study, who felt their parents' relationship has no bearing in shaping their perceptions of marriage. Rather, they viewed marriage as being more individualistic and dependent on their own circumstances, choices and decisions.

Nonetheless, the findings of the current study further suggest that marriage still holds value for these young Muslim adults. Most of the female participants felt that they are currently ready to get married. The male participants however, felt that they would rather wait to get married. They expressed wanting to complete their tertiary studies first, seek employment and only once they are financially stable to be able to support a wife and children, will they consider getting married.

Furthermore, a majority of the participants indicated that they did not personally feel pressured to get married at present. However, there was a general consensus from all the participants, that they felt young Muslim women were most susceptible to being pressured into marriage by the Indian society and culture as well as from the traditions of the "older Indian generations". The male participants further suggested that the pressure from the Indian society stems from their belief that a woman should marry at young age. Moreover, the results indicated that since a woman is not obligated to earn a livelihood, as it is the husband's duty to support and provide for his wife, she should marry early and let her husband support her, and in so doing can begin to raise a family. The female participants expressed that there has always been an expectation from the Indian society for young women to marry early as opposed to getting educated and seeking out careers.

Very few participants expressed that Muslim men can be pressured from their families to get married. All, except one of the participants were brought up within an Indian culture. Only one participant, who belongs to a Turkish culture, felt that young women are not really pressured into when they should get married, since in her culture the priority is for the young women to be educated before getting married. However, she expressed that there is pressure with regard to who a woman is allowed to marry, as she is not allowed to cross the cultural divide by marrying a man who is not Turkish.

With regard to the participants' views on a suitable age to get married, the data revealed that both male and female participants agreed that there should not be a specific age for either a man or a woman to get married; rather it should be a personal choice and should be dependent on when the person is ready to get married. The female participants together with some male participants further outlined that marriage should be considered when the person is emotionally ready and mature to handle the responsibility of marriage and that can occur at any age. Moreover, it was thought that it would be "ideal" for the man to be older in age than the woman, since men are said to mature later then women do.

With regard to the roles spouses are supposed to play in a Muslim marriage, Islam clearly stipulates that it is the husband's duty to be the breadwinner in the home. This means that he is responsible for supporting and providing maintenance for his wife and family. The wife is responsible for the raising of the children, and taking care of her family's well-being; however both spouses should play a shared role in taking care of the household affairs (Haneef, 1985; Naidoo, 2001).

The results of this study regarding the roles spouses should play were consistent with the findings of Naidoo (2001), who argued that young Muslims are in search of a modern version of a Muslim marriage, which incorporates the principle of equality, which when interpreted referred to respect and appreciation between spouses. Hence, even though most participants held a traditional Islamic view of the roles a Muslim wife and husband should undertake, they felt strongly that a husband and wife should subscribe to a dynamic of "teamwork", outlining flexibility in the roles, with both spouses undertaking a shared role in matters pertaining to raising of the children as well as domestic chores. The intent behind this view is that it will

strengthen family relationships and create responsibility and appreciation between spouses.

Hall (2004) reported that to explore the underlying meaning of marriage, people's marital expectations have been studied. Moreover, Hall (2004) mentions that individual's may vary with regard to their specific expectations for marriage, but "the literature as a whole indicates that there is a fairly common core of marital facets and issues about which people have certain perceptions" (p. 1441). The present study also explored the expectations that young Muslim adults have regarding marriage in order to uncover why marriage is important for them, what shapes their views and when they would like to get married. A collective analysis of the data illustrated that there appeared to be the sense that participants are aware that they will experience challenges in their marriage. Nevertheless they expect to work together to overcome any issues that may arise and try and build a happy marriage, based on understanding, love and commitment. They also expect to have a companion, to build a life with and raise a family as well as to uphold an appreciation for each other.

With regard to having pre-marital relationships, it is strictly prohibited in Islam before one gets married, as there is a strong religious belief that God determines one's spouse, "*And Allah has made for you Mates (and Companions) of your own nature* ..." (An Nahl 16: 72); and in light of this, one is expected to be patient and wait until the time is ready to meet one's spouse. Moreover, Islam is a religion that states that love before marriage is not love, as true love can only be inculcated in the spouses' hearts after marriage. As evidenced by this Qur'anic verse, "*and among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in peace and tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): Verily in that are signs for those who reflect*" (A-Rum 30: 21).

In terms of the extent to which participants ascribe to their religious teachings on pre-marital romantic relationships and on marriage, the data revealed that even though all participants acknowledged that engaging in any pre-marital relationship is prohibited in Islam, the majority of participants openly expressed that they would pursue a pre-marital romantic relationship regardless of the Islamic perspective. Participants expressed that they felt it was very important to engage in pre-marital

romantic relationships, in order to make sure they are making the right decision for whom to marry. They further added that it provides an understanding of the person they are marrying. Therefore, it appears that even though participants acknowledged that it is wrong to engage in pre-marital romantic relationships, they still felt strongly that it came down to a personal choice for them and they did not want to make any wrong decisions regarding who to spend their lives with.

Hence, it is evident that these young Muslim adults tend to overlook the Islamic teachings on courting and are in favour of engaging in pre-marital romantic relationships; however draw the line with regard to physical intimacy, particularly sexual activity before marriage. An implication of these attitudes is consistent with what Manning et al. (2004) deduced, in that it may contribute to a delay in individuals getting married. It appears that even though participants are willing to go against their religious rulings on courting; their religious background influenced a majority of the participants who reported that they would still relate to most of the guidelines stipulated by Islam for getting married. These include choosing a spouse who is religiously inclined as well as going about the different aspects which assures that a nikah (Islamic marriage contract) has taken place.

Participants were in agreement about the factors they considered important in achieving a successful and healthy marriage as well as the factors they aspired to have in a spouse. Almost all participants felt that there are a few integral factors that form the basis for achieving a fruitful marriage. These factors include communication, trust, honesty and importantly being on the same or similar level as your spouse, in that you both expect or want similar things from a marriage and having similar backgrounds which was further explained as making the transition into marriage easier. Other important factors outlined were that both spouses try and be the best in their marriage, sharing a deeper connection with, and loving one's spouse as well as keeping an open mind when issues may arise. These findings are similar to those expressed by Asoodeh et al. (2010) and Olson and Olson (2000) who have both included factors such as flexibility, communication, honesty, commitment, conflict resolution and trust as necessary factors for a successful marriage.

An individual's views, values and expectations would determine the type of partner one chooses to have. According to the results of this study, it appears that the male participants favoured a spouse who has the qualities of being an obedient wife who will care for them and their future children's well-being. Whereas, the female participants expressed that they are looking for a spouse who will be a provider, who will support and protect them and who they will want to establish a deeper emotional connection with. Hence, the qualities anticipated in a spouse seem to follow the socially constructed and somewhat stereotypical roles expected for men and women. This expectation of the qualities a spouse should have, can be linked to the upbringing of a particular individual. This view is in accordance with attachment theory which argues that an individual's attachment style and one's close adult relationships are a reflection of the attachment developed in the early years of an individual's life, and play a big role in shaping the nature and development of subsequent adult relationships (Karney & Bradbury, 1995).

There were different reasons provided by the participants of this study for why marriages do not work. From an analysis of the responses, it appears that the three predominant implicating factors as stated by order of importance are firstly a lack of communication between spouses. Secondly, dishonesty between spouses was seen as an integral factor in causing unnecessary problems in a marriage, with trust being noted as a third important implicating factor in breakdown of marriages. These factors may lessen the attraction between a married couple, and according to the social exchange theory, a marriage ends when there are few attractions left in a relationship, when the barriers to leaving the relationship are weak and when the individual is enticed by alternatives to the relationship (Karney & Bradbury, 1995).

Other factors were also revealed such as not making the time for one's spouse, which ultimately leads to distancing in a marriage which extends back to a lack of communication. Also interference from external parties in the affairs of a couple's marriage, spouses being unwilling to compromise with each other, the changing times of society, as well as spouses going in different directions away from each other, were all implicated as possible reasons why respondents thought marriages do not last. These reasons correspond to the behavioural approach which argues that marital distress can be caused by couples who have difficulty resolving arguments and conflicts. This is because unresolved negative feelings begin to build up and fuel

destructive patterns of marital interaction, negatively affecting the positive aspects of the relationship. This ultimately leads to a lack of arousal and satisfaction in the marriage (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Markman, 1991).

It appears that the male and female participants interviewed for this research study share similar views with regard to most aspects of marriage. The points of consensus have been in their positive attitude toward marriage, the specific role functions of each spouse with males being the breadwinners and women responsible for taking care of their husbands, homes and families as well as the view that young Muslim women are more pressured into marriage than young Muslim men. Additionally, all participants are in agreement that the age at which one marries and the choice of partner should be a personal choice and not based on society or the Indian culture.

Moreover, certain factors necessary for a successful marriage as well as factors which lead to the breakdown of marriage have been shared by all participants. Both genders have illustrated their agreement with having pre-marital romantic relationships as a necessary and important part of the process of finding the ideal soul-mate. Therefore, male and female participants share no apparent differences with regard to their views on marriage.

Based on the findings of this study, it is argued that the collective consciousness of the Muslim youth in general are shifting toward a new outlook on acceptable behaviours, on religion, marriage and even on divorce. This is an important finding since it has implications on the well-being and mental health of young Muslim adults who are entering into marriages because their parents may expect them to or even due to choices that have not been thoroughly reasoned through; on their families who are directly influenced by their relationship if they experience challenges, and most importantly on the well-being of the future generation of children. This is particularly true if the divorce rates within the Muslim community continue to increase. Hence, this information is useful in developing and implementing pre-marital relationship sessions for the Muslim youth to attend in order to psycho-educate them about the reality of the marital situation and the implications of their actions, in order to guide them to develop more meaningful and lasting relationships.

5.2. Implications of Results

The data obtained from this study may be relevant to counsellors and educational psychologists in developing interventions directed at Muslim youth and adults regarding marriage, relationships and family well-being. Hence, interventions such as pre-marital counselling and programmes which foster healthy relationships can be developed and implemented to target the Muslim youth and adults. This is important as it can assist educational psychologists in their role in promoting mental health programmes in the community. Moreover programmes such as these could assist in lessening marital discord, instability and perhaps even the breakdown of marital relationships, all of which has further implications on children. This argument is supported by Moore et al. (2011), who emphasize that the quality of parents' relationships is consistently and positively associated with a range of child and family outcomes. These include child social competence, child behaviour problems, school issues, childhood depression, a lack of parent-child communication, as well as parental feelings of aggravation (Moore, et al., 2011).

Pre-marital programmes may assist in strengthening couple relationships and aid in preparing couples for future challenges that may arise as well as ways to resolve them. The pre-marital sessions could address numerous aspects to enhance relationships. One important aspect could include imparting knowledge regarding the importance of communication in relationships as well as techniques on how to foster good communication between partners in a relationship. This is important as the results of this study revealed that communication was a key factor in establishing and maintaining a healthy and successful marriage, as well as to avoid marital problems.

Moreover, literature exploring the stability and quality of marriages, as well as conditions for a successful marriage further outline communication as an integral sustaining factor within relationships (Olson & Olson, 2000; McKenzie, 2003). Other aspects which the sessions can cover may include problem solving strategies, conflict management skills, a discussion on spouses' roles and responsibilities, how to address financial issues, couples compatibility and expectations as well as long term relationship goals. These aspects can be considered useful to young couples as well as to adult relationships.

5.3. Limitations of the Research Study

This qualitative research study relied on the personal accounts of young Muslim South African adults. It needs to be taken into account that talking about their perceptions of marriage involved having to think about and answer a few personal questions and then reveal their views to the researcher who is also a young Muslim female adult. Hence, the participants may not have been as open or expressive in their responses.

Although participants varied slightly in their religious status, they are all Muslim adults, raised in a two-parent Muslim home and have a strong Islamic and cultural background. Interviewing Muslim adults who regard themselves as staunch in every aspect of religion or interviewing Muslim adults who do not consider themselves religious at all, could have yielded different results. However, this study was open to all Muslim students at Wits University and it happened to attract the participants that were interviewed. Hence, the generalization of the results is limited.

The sample size was small, however due to the qualitative nature of this study, a sample size of eight participants was sufficient to gain in depth data on the topic under investigation. Moreover, the use of a non-probability sampling strategy could also influence the research findings, as it does not rule out any extraneous variables.

A self-developed open-ended interview schedule was utilised to probe into specific aspects of the participants' perceptions. There are certain aspects of the interview method which affect the reliability and validity of the data, such as respondents being dishonest in their responses, their distrust or dislike of the interviewer, or they may want to sabotage the research or even be too embarrassed to tell the truth (Breakwall, 1995). Hence, the interview schedule does not always allow for standardised results to be obtained. In order to overcome some of these difficulties, the researcher constructed a systematic set of questions which allowed for internal consistency checks through the pattern of questions posed. However, in order to further establish validity of the interview data, the researcher could complement the instrument with other types of data such as observation, diary techniques or experimental procedures in addition to the interview (Breakwall, 1995). In this way, it allows for a more in-depth exploration as well as reliability of findings regarding the perceptions that young Muslim South African adults have about marriage.

A further limitation regarding the interview process is the interviewer effects, particularly interviewer bias. Breakwall (1995) explains that interviewer effects do not occur because the respondent reacts to some attribute of the interviewer; rather it is possible that it occurs because the interviewer reacts to some characteristic of the respondent which the interviewer may be oblivious to. This could then affect the way questions are asked or how responses are recorded (Breakwall, 1995). In an attempt to reduce interviewer bias, the researcher audio-recorded all participants interviews and transcribed the data before analysing it. A further personal bias is presented by the researcher's ethnicity and religious affiliation, even though it may allow for a deeper understanding of what the young Muslim South African adults perceptions of marriage are. The researcher did however keep a reflective diary to document important as well sensitive aspects of each interview, thus allowing for the researcher to remain objective in the write up of this research report.

5.4 Recommendations for further research

While the aim of this research was to investigate the perceptions of marriage of the eight participants interviewed, it may have been useful to contextualise their perceptions and attitudes in relation to young Muslim adults who come from families where their parents had divorced. Hence, future research could explore this avenue, as it would shed light on whether these positive perceptions of marriage and liberal thinking regarding the importance of having pre-marital romantic relationships, continues to hold true within the Muslim community. It would also allow for a comparison between the groups with regard to viewing if similarities or differences exist in the factors mentioned that lead to the breakdown as well as the success of Muslim marriages. Moreover, the researcher considers that if young Muslim adults of varying ages had volunteered to participate, then their perceptions may have differed.

Future research can develop and utilise more standardised data collection tools in order to gain more accurate and in-depth accounts into respondents' perceptions. Moreover, future research could incorporate a larger sample size from a broader geographical location as well as from different contexts, other than interviewing young Muslim university students.

It is further recommended that some pre-marital programmes could be piloted as well as more research conducted to assess their efficacy within the South African context. Moreover, longitudinal research can be conducted using case studies to assess the efficacy of such programmes.

5.5. Conclusion

Marriage is an important phenomenon that occurs in most societies across the world. In South Africa there are a number of cultures and religions which all attach different views and meanings to marriage. Within the Islamic belief system, marriage is regarded as a sacred union and is obligatory on all Muslim people. Marriage in Islam is important for two reasons. Firstly it legalizes the intimacy between a man and a woman and secondly, it allows for the procreation of the Muslim society. Hence, Islam emphasizes the necessity of marriage. The young Muslim adults in this study favoured a positive, yet cautiously optimistic perception of marriage. They held the view that marriage is a lifelong commitment which requires commitment and teamwork from both spouses. This viewpoint is captured in the following quote by an influential teacher in the field of relationships and personal growth: "*The real act of marriage takes place in the heart, not in the ballroom or church or synagogue. It's a choice you make, not just on your wedding day, but over and over again, and that choice is reflected in the way you treat your husband or wife*" (Barbara De Angelis).

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APPENDIX A- DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE & INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Reference no._____

Interview Schedule

Name of interviewer: _____
Name of participant: _____
Date of interview: _____
Time of interview: _____

A-Demographic Information

A1 .Age _____years

A2. Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐

A3. Relationship Status of Participant:

Courting	Single	Divorced	Separated	Married
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

A4.Parents relationship Status:

Married	Single	Divorced (If so, how long?)	Separated (If so, how long?)
☐	☐	☐	☐

A4. Suburb of Residence: _____

A6.School attended: _____

Private School	Public School	Islamic School	Co-Ed School	All Boys/ Girls School
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

A7. Islamic Education:
Yes ☐ No ☐
If Yes; name of institution: _____

A8. Choice of Degree: _____

A9. Level of religious adherence: To what extent do you ascribe to your religious teachings?

1: not religious at all_____ 2: somewhat religious _____ 3: very religious_____

B - Interview Schedule: Open ended questions to be used in this study

Marriage

1. What is your perception of marriage?

2. How is marriage defined and constructed in:
-your religion
-culture
-upbringing?

3. Which of the above, if any, do you relate to?
- Why? How?
- To what extent do you relate to your religious teachings regarding marriage?

4. Are there any other aspects that influence your construction of marriage?

5. What is the general attitude amongst your friends about marriage?

6. What is the general attitude amongst your family about marriage?

7. Do you think there is any pressure for a young Muslim man to get married?
- Why?
- From whom?

8. Do you think there is any pressure for a young Muslim woman to get married?
- Why?
- From whom?

9. When do you think it is appropriate for a man & a woman to get married?
- At what age?
- Why do you feel this way?

10. What are your feelings about getting married?

11. How do you feel about arranged marriages?

12. How necessary/ important do you think it is to have a relationship with someone before getting married to that person?

13. To what extent do you ascribe to your religious teachings on pre-marital romantic relationships?

14. Would you have a relationship with someone before getting married?
-Yes/No
- Why / Why not?

15. How would your parents/ family view you being in a relationship with someone before you got married?

16. What are your views of physical intimacy in a relationship?

17. How would you relate to physical intimacy before marriage?

18. Have you been in a situation when any of your friends had gotten married?
- How old were they?
-How did you feel about him/ her getting married?

19. What are your parents' relationship/ marriage like?

20. Does your parents' relationship (marriage/divorce) influence your perceptions of marriage/ willingness to marry?
-If yes, how?
-If no, why not?

21. What are some of the factors that you consider to be important when choosing a marriage partner?

22. How would you define a successful marriage?

23. What are some of the factors you believe are important for a successful and healthy marriage?

24. What are some of the factors you believe that could lead to a breakdown in marriages?

25. What are your expectations of marriage?

26. Is there anything else that you would like to add on the issue of marriage as related to the Muslim community?

Appendix B: Request for permission from the Registrar

Dear Registrar
REQUEST TO RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS FROM WITS UNIVERSITY

Good Day. My name is Rayhanah Hassim. I am a psychology student at the University of Witwatersrand under the supervision of Dr. Zaytoon Amod. I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters Degree in Educational psychology. The area of focus is that of the perceptions of young Muslim South African adults regarding marriage. The significance of the study is that it aims to foster a deeper understanding regarding the meaning of marriage for young Muslim adults living in a modern and diverse society.

This research study is qualitative in nature and therefore requires a sample size of eight Muslim participants only, and the researcher hereby requests your permission to recruit these students from the University of the Witwatersrand to interview them for the study. The researcher intends to do this by contacting the Wits Muslim Students Association (MSA) as well as the Wits Students Representative Council (SRC), to ask them for assistance in helping her to invite students to participate in this study via letters to be placed in the Musallah (prayer room) as well as on notice boards on campus. This letter will provide a description of the study as well as the researcher's contact details for volunteers to contact her if interested. Additionally, the MSA will be asked to hand out letters on the researcher's behalf, inviting students to participate. The instrument the researcher will be using to collect the data will be a semi-structured interview that will take about one hour.

The purpose of this study will be explained to the candidates. Their participation in this study is voluntary and they will have a right to withdraw from the study at any point. It will be made clear to participants that there will be no foreseeable risks or benefits for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. Participants will be required to sign a consent form before participating in a one hour tape-recorded interview based on questions regarding their perceptions of marriage.

Furthermore, the researcher will take full responsibility in ensuring that no harm, emotional or otherwise, will be brought upon the participants as a result of participating in this study. In the unlikely event that participants experience distress at any time during or after the interview, contact details of Islamic Careline, Counselling and Careers Development Unit (CCDU), Emthonjeni Clinic and Family Life Centre will be provided to the participants.

All of the participants' information will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be included in the write up of the report. Furthermore, only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the original transcripts and all data will be kept safely and will be destroyed after 2 years if the research is published and after 6 years if no publication emerges.

Once the research has been finalised, a summary of the research findings will be placed at the Wits University Psychology department as well as on the Muslim Students Association (MSA) notice board in the Musallah (prayer room) on East campus. Alternatively, participants may contact the researcher directly for a summary of the results.

Your assistance in providing consent for this research study will be highly appreciated. This study will be a platform for pioneering research in this area as related to the South African Muslim context. If you have any further queries on the research please feel free to contact me or my supervisor who will answer any questions. Please let the researcher know at your earliest convenience if permission is granted.

Yours sincerely

Researcher
Rayhanah Hassim
Cell: 072 525 7503
Email: rayhanah_h@hotmail.com

Supervisor
Dr. Zaytoon Amod
Tel no.: (011) 717 8326
Email: Zaytoonisha.Amod@wits.ac.za

Appendix C: Request for assistance from Muslim Students Association (MSA)

Dear MSA Chairperson

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IN RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS FOR STUDY

Assalamuailaykum. My name is Rayhanah Hassim. I am a psychology student at the University of Witwatersrand under the supervision of Dr. Zaytoon Amod. I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters Degree in Educational psychology. The area of focus is that of the perceptions of young Muslim South African adults regarding marriage. The significance of the study is that it aims to foster a deeper understanding regarding the meaning of marriage for young Muslim adults living in a modern and diverse society.

In order to conduct this research study, the researcher requires a sample of Wits Muslim students to participate in a one hour interview with her. Since this is a qualitative study, the researcher needs only eight volunteers and thus appeals to you for your assistance in recruiting participants, which will entail placing invitation letters in the Wits Musulla as well as handing out letters on her behalf. The letters will include a description of the study as well as the researcher's contact details which volunteers can use to directly contact her if they are interested. The researcher will ensure that the participants' identities remain undisclosed both during the research process and in the final write up of the report.

Once the research has been finalised, a summary of the research findings will be placed at the Wits University Psychology department as well as on the Muslim Students Association (MSA) notice board in the Musallah (prayer room) on East campus. Alternatively, participants may contact the researcher directly for a summary of the results. Your assistance in recruiting participants for this research study will be highly appreciated. This study will be a platform for pioneering research in this area as related to the South African Muslim context.

If you have any further queries on the research please feel free to contact the researcher or her supervisor who will answer any questions. Please let the researcher know as soon as possible if this proposition is a viable one.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher
Rayhanah Hassim
Cell: 072 525 7503
Email: rayhanah_h@hotmail.com

Supervisor
Dr. Zaytoon Amod
Tel no.: (011) 717 8326
Email:Zaytoonisha.Amod@wits.ac.za

Consent Form

Name/s & Surname: _____

Position Held: _____

Contact no.: _____

Email address: _____

I _____(Name & Surname) provide consent for assisting the researcher in placing invitation letters concerning the research study on the perceptions of young Muslim South African adults regarding marriage in the Wits Musallah, as well as handing out letters to potential participants. I have read the information letter and am fully aware of what the research entails.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D: Request for assistance from Students Representative Council (SRC)

Dear SRC Chairperson

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IN RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

Good day. My name is Rayhanah Hassim. I am a psychology student at the University of Witwatersrand under the supervision of Dr. Zaytoon Amod. I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters Degree in Educational psychology. The area of focus is that of the perceptions of young Muslim South African adults regarding marriage. The significance of the study is that it aims to foster a deeper understanding regarding the meaning of marriage for young Muslim adults living in a modern and diverse society.

In order to conduct this research study, the researcher requires a sample of Wits Muslim students to participate in a one hour interview with her. Since this is a qualitative study, the researcher needs only eight volunteers and thus appeals to you for your assistance in recruiting participants, which will entail placing invitation letters on notice boards around campus on the researcher's behalf. The letters will include a description of the study as well as the researcher's contact details which volunteers can use to directly contact her if they are interested in participating. The researcher will ensure that the participants' identities remain undisclosed both during the research process and in the final write up of the report.

Once the research has been finalised, a summary of the research findings will be placed at the Wits University Psychology department as well as on the Muslim Students Association (MSA) notice board in the Musallah (prayer room) on East campus. Alternatively, participants may contact the researcher directly for a summary of the results. Your assistance in recruiting participants for this research study will be highly appreciated. This study will be a platform for pioneering research in this area as related to the South African Muslim context.

If you have any further queries on the research please feel free to contact the researcher or her supervisor who will answer any questions. Please let the researcher know as soon as possible if this proposition is a viable one.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher
Rayhanah Hassim
Cell: 072 525 7503
Email: rayhanah_h@hotmail.com

Supervisor
Dr. Zaytoon Amod
Tel no.: (011) 717 8326
Email: Zaytoonisha.Amod@wits.ac.za

Consent Form

Name/s & Surname: _____

Position Held: _____

Contact no.: _____

Email address: _____

I _____(Name & Surname) provide consent for assisting the researcher in placing invitation letters concerning the research study on the perceptions of young Muslim South African adults regarding marriage, on notice boards around campus. I have read the information letter and am fully aware of what the research entails.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E: Participant Information Letter

Dear Fellow Student
PARTICIPANT'S INFORMATION LETTER.

My name is Rayhanah Hassim. I am a psychology student at the University of Witwatersrand under the supervision of Dr. Zaytoon Amod. I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters Degree in Educational psychology. The area of focus is that of the perceptions of young Muslim South African adults regarding marriage. The significance of the study is that it aims to foster a deeper understanding regarding the meaning of marriage for young Muslim adults living in a modern and diverse society.

The researcher wishes to kindly invite you to participate in this research study. Participation is voluntary, and you will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not to participate in the study. Participation involves being interviewed by the researcher at a time and place that is convenient for you, and it should not take longer than one hour. With your permission, the interviews will be tape recorded, to allow for the answers to be accurately captured. All your responses will be kept confidential, as no names or any other identifying information will be used in the write up of the research report. You may refuse to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable in answering, and you may also withdraw from the study at any point without facing any penalty. There will be no risks or benefits for choosing to participate in the study.

Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the interview material (tapes and transcripts). All data will be kept safely and will be destroyed after two years if the research is published and after six years if no publication emerges. If you experience any distress as a result of participation, counselling is available and the contact details of the counselling services are provided at the end of this information sheet. Once the research has been finalised, a report will be made available at the Wits University Psychology department as well as a summary of the results will be placed on Muslim Students Association (MSA) notice board at the Wits Musallah on East campus, should you be interested in the results. Alternatively, you may contact the researcher directly who will provide a summary of the results to you.

Your participation in this research study would be highly appreciated, as this research will contribute to a greater understanding regarding young Muslim adult's perceptions of marriage. If you are interested in participating or knowing more about this research, please contact the researcher via telephone or email; contact details are provided below.

Kind Regards

Researcher
Rayhanah Hassim
Cell: 072 525 7503
Email: rayhanah_h@hotmail.com

Supervisor
Dr. Zaytoon Amod
Tel no.: (011) 717 8326
Email: Zaytoonisha.Amod@wits.ac.za

Contact Details of Available Counselling Services

Islamic Careline:
(011) 373 8080 / (011) 373 8000
Email: careline@islamsa.org.za

Counselling and Careers Development Unit (CCDU):
(**011) 717-9140/ (011) 717-9132**
Email: info.ccdu@wits.ac.za
Emthonjeni Clinic:
(011) 717 4513.

Family Life Centre:
011 788 4784/5
011 833 2057 (City Centre)
011 984 0266 (Soweto)
011 855 2359 (Lenasia South)
011 477 5531 (Westbury)
Email: famlife@iafrica.com

Appendix F: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM: PARTICIPATION

I _____(Name & Surname of participant) give full consent to being interviewed by Rayhanah Hassim for her study on the perceptions of young Muslim adults regarding marriage. I understand that:

- Participation in this interview is voluntary.
- I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report and my responses will remain confidential.
- The research report may use quotes as long as they are not identifiable as mine.
- The findings of this study, as informed by my contributions, may be subject to publication at some stage.
- The data will be destroyed after two years if the research is published and after six years if no publication emerges.
- I have provided my correct contact details below to allow for the researcher to contact me to clarify certain issues if the need arises.

Contact Details of Participant.

Cell phone no.: _____

Email address: _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Appendix G: Consent Form





CONSENT FORM: PERMISSION TO BE VOICE RECORDED

I _____(Name & Surname of participant) give full consent for the interview with Rayhanah Hassim on the perceptions of young Muslim adults regarding marriage to be voice recorded. I understand that:

- Any names or any other identifying information communicated in the interview will not appear in the research study.
- The recordings and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person in this organisation at any time, and will only be processed by the researcher and supervisor.
- The research report may use quotes as long as they are not identifiable as mine.
- The findings of this study, as informed by my contributions, may be subject to publication at some stage.
- The data will be destroyed after two years if the research is published and after six years if no publication emerges.

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Appendix H: Participant Invitation Sheet

Dear Fellow Student

AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY.

My name is Rayhanah Hassim. I am a psychology student at the University of Witwatersrand under the supervision of Dr. Zaytoon Amod. I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters Degree in Educational psychology. The area of focus is that of the perceptions of young Muslim South African adults regarding marriage. The significance of the study is that it aims to foster a deeper understanding regarding the meaning of marriage for young Muslim adults living in a modern and diverse society.

The researcher wishes to kindly invite you to participate in this research study. Participation is voluntary, and you will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not to participate in the study. Participation involves being interviewed by the researcher at a time and place that is convenient for you, and it should not take longer than one hour. With your permission, the interviews will be tape recorded, to allow for the answers to be accurately captured. All your responses will be kept confidential, as no names or any other identifying information will be used in the write up of the research report. You may refuse to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable in answering, and you may also withdraw from the study at any point without facing any penalty. There will be no risks or benefits for choosing to participate in the study.

Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the interview material (tapes and transcripts). All data will be kept safely and will be destroyed after two years if the research is published and after six years if no publication emerges. If you experience any distress as a result of participation, counselling is available and the contact details of the counselling services will be provided to you. Once the research has been finalised, a report will be made available at the Wits University Psychology department as well as a summary of the results will be placed on Muslim Students Association (MSA) notice board at the Wits Musallah on East campus, should you be interested in the results. Alternatively, you may contact the researcher directly who will provide a summary of the results to you.

Your participation in this research study would be highly appreciated, as this research will contribute to a greater understanding regarding young Muslim South African adult's perceptions of marriage. If you are interested in participating or knowing more about this research, please contact the researcher via telephone or email; contact details are provided below.

Kind Regards

Researcher
Rayhanah Hassim
Cell: 072 525 7503
Email: rayhanah_h@hotmail.com

Supervisor:
Dr. Zaytoon Amod
Tel no.: (011) 717 8326
Email: Zaytoonisha.Amod@wits.ac.za