

**AN AFROCENTRIC MUSE ON SIS NOE'S BLOGSPOT IN 'COUNSELING' YOUTHS ON COURTSHIP,
MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL MATTERS IN SUNDAY NEWS**

BY

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A dissertation submitted to the Department of African Languages and Culture of the Midlands State University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts degree in African Languages and Culture.



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JUNE, 2018

DECLARATION

I declare that “ **An Afrocentric muse on Sis Noe blogspot in ‘counselling’ youths on courtship, marriage and sexual matters in Sunday News**” is my own work and it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university. I declare that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as a complete reference. I authorize the Midlands State University to lend this dissertation to other institutions or individuals for purposes of scholarly research only.

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APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommended to the Midlands State University for acceptance of a dissertation entitled: “**An Afrocentric muse on Sis Noe blogspot in ‘counselling’ youths on courtship, marriage and sexual matters in Sunday News**”, submitted by **Jeremiah Mlauzi** in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Bachelor of Arts Honours in African Languages and Culture.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my stepmother Khohliwe Nyoni and her young sister Siphokuhle Nyoni to whom I am chiefly indebted for their unwavering love, physical and emotional support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all those who helped me in various ways during the period of writing this dissertation. First and foremost, I want to acknowledge and express my profound appreciation and gratitude to my academic supervisor, Ms. S. Dlodlo, whose comments and guidance helped me in this dissertation.

My deep and humble appreciation also goes to Prof C. Tembo, Dr P. Mpofo and all lecturers in the department of African Languages and Culture at Midlands State University for the great work they have done during my four years at University.

My special thanks also goes to my research participants like the Sunday News Staff, the elderly interviewed and the youths in general whose various views and information contributed immensely in the writing of this dissertation.

It would sound unfair not to thank my beloved stepmother Khohliwe Nyoni and her young sister Siphokuhle Nyoni for their unwavering love, physical and emotional support that kept me going during the four years of my academic journey.

It is also important to thank my colleagues at University which include but not limited to Prosper Moyo and Elisha Chigubu. Thank you so much guys, your jokes and laughs gave a vibrant meaning to my academic life and a source of inspiration that kept me going.

Finally, I thank God the Almighty for whose his indelible signature in the form of his sufficient grace he was bestowing upon me manifested itself before my eyes from day one of my academic journey.

ABSTRACT

The research focuses on an Afrocentric muse on Sis Noe's blogspot in 'counseling' youths on courtship, marriage and sexual matters in Sunday News. It explores how relevant is Sis Noe's 'counseling' role on youths as far as the handling of courtship, marriage and sexual matters is concerned within the African cultural matrix. As such, this study is largely informed by the traditional way of counseling which is rooted in the fecund African philosophy of life in dealing with or transcending life problems. The study is basically qualitative in nature. Data gathering tools considered chief in this study included the semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion and document analysis in acquiring the needed data from the elderly people, the academics in the field of culture, the youths and the Sunday News staff. Afrocentricity theory became imperative to inform arguments and analysis of this study. The research observed that while Sis Noe's blogspot is playing a crucial role in 'counseling' various youths experiencing a number of life challenges that include courtship, marriage and sexual problems amongst others, however, some of the approaches used to handle those problems tend to be Eurocentric and in turn jeopardize the African existential philosophy.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 AREA OF INVESTIGATION

This study is in the area of culture specifically counseling as it takes an Afrocentric muse on Sis Noe's blogspot in 'counseling' youths on courtship, marriage and sexual matters in Sunday News. The traditional way of counseling immensely informed this study as it is rooted in the African people's worldview, (Ndlovu and Hove, 2015). Hence the Afrocentric stance adopted by this study is largely hinging upon how African people, through traditional counseling, understood and carried out their counseling sessions as well as the counseling procedures and strategies they used in helping the individuals transcend life challenges since African people are not junior brothers to counseling as a phenomenon but pioneers in their own right (Mutswanga, et al., 2014). This study argues that it is only the understanding of the African people's philosophy of life embedded in traditional counseling that can fully empower the researcher with a critical Afrocentric stance to interrogate and exhume the African people's sense of the world (Asante, 1998), from the 'counseling' role of Sis Noe's blogspot to the youths on courtship, marriage and sexual matters in Sunday News. In the context of this research, the notion 'traditional' does not mean static or unchangeable, but rather in keeping with the original sense and implies that the living experiences, expressions or practices are handed down from one successive generation to another in perpetuity (Chiboola and Munsaka, 2016). Also this study preferred treating the term 'counseling' in quotes as it depart from a point where it does not fully regard Sis Noe's blogspot in Sunday news as an actual counselling platform per se but which seem to be largely guidance.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

There has been a shift from a valued traditional way of guidance and counselling which was premised on and woven into the cultural fabric of the African societies before the advent of colonialism in precolonial era to a 'professional' way in this contemporary Zimbabwean society. According to Rupande and Tapfumaneyi (2013), counselling as a 'profession' is a new and even

questionable phenomenon as it finds its roots in Europe and carrying with it alien agendas to the people of Africa. Thus, the creation or formation of various counselling media platforms in Zimbabwe which came through the tide of modernity seem to be carrying with them alien philosophies of life and values which appear irrelevant to the African audience. Hence, the researcher seeks to excavate the relevance of Sis Noe's blogspot in the Sunday Newspaper in 'counselling' youths as to whether it seeks to empower or 'kills' their latent potential to be effective citizens of the African societies in this contemporary Zimbabwe.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study has noted that people, mostly youths have opted for counselling from the various media platforms like print, a shift from the valued traditional way of counselling in the contemporary Zimbabwe. As such, this research seeks to find out as to whether the 'counseling' role of Sis Noe blogspot is in tandem with the African people's philosophical approach as far as the handling of courtship, marriage and sexual matters are concerned.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To outline and discuss in detail the African understanding and philosophy of life behind courtship, marriage and sexual matters
2. To expose the nature of 'counselling' delivered to the youths on issues of courtship, marriage and sex through Sis Noe's blogspot.
3. To explore how relevant is such 'counselling' to the people of Zimbabwe.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How were issues of courtship, marriage and sex treated among the African societies during the precolonial era?

2. Of what nature is the ‘counselling’ delivered to the youths via Sis Noe blogspot in Sunday News?
3. To what extent is that ‘counselling’ relevant to the African understanding of courtship, marriage and sexual matters?

1.6 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Cautioned and energized by Nzewi (2007) statement that “contemporary Africans must strive to rescue, resuscitate and advance their original intellectual legacy,” before the onslaught of external forces now rampaging Africa obliterate the African origin intellect and lore of life, this research is justified as it seeks to conscientize the Zimbabwean people, specifically youths, who are both the hope and future of the Zimbabwean African societies, that through these numerous counselling media platforms, they are liable to be miss-informed about their own African cultural realities with the fact that taking away what they are supposed to know have the equal effect of taking away who they are or supposed to be.

This study is also justified on the grounds that it seeks to enrich the body of knowledge in the academic circles, specifically in the department of African Languages and Culture. Also this study is significant as it seeks to instil confidence among the African people in their own history and culture which may be more relevant to diagnose “Africa’s aches and pains” to use Mazrui (1979:1) words.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section explores and review in-depth different scholars on what they have noted pertaining the phenomenon of counselling in Africa and how it has changed in this contemporary era. Contributions from those scholars were of paramount importance as they guided and vindicated the researcher’s line of departure on the selected topic. In addition to that, this section clearly reveals the novelty of this study from other researchers, hence the originality of the study grounded.

According to Rupande and Tapfumaneyi(2013) in their journal article titled '*The Challenges of professionalizing counselling in Africa*', there has been a shift in the way counselling was done in the pre-colonial compared to nowadays and 'professionalizing' counselling is one major characteristic giving ample testimony to the change. Whereas in the precolonial era there was nothing 'professional' about counselling, that is to say someone being formally trained in schools how to counsel others, in this present era it has become a profession, a paid service, a means of earning a living. That is to say one way or the other money has lured people to be the so-called 'professional' counsellors. This runs contrary to the African cultural context and expectations of counselling where it was chiefly the community's responsibility to collectively contribute towards the development of upright citizens of society (Chakuchichi and Zvaiva, 2010).

Another disapproving challenge in this professionalized counselling noted by Rupande and Tapfumaneyi (2013) is the factor that these 'professional counsellors' are seen as entire strangers, people who are not closely related to the individuals seeking help and therefore lacking a relevantly knit and informed specific cultural orientation suitable to their counselees, which has greatly undermined the whole essence of African secrecy and confidentiality on some culturally sensitive matters. This contribution has immensely provided this research with a clear line of departure on the fact that Rupande and Tapfumaneyi(2013), give a significant insight on how counselling has shifted from a traditional way to a 'professionalized' way and its clearly stated effects it has as far as counselling is concerned in this contemporary Zimbabwe. However, this study differs from the above research in the sense that while Rupande and Tapfumaneyi were largely concerned with identifying challenges of counselling as a profession, this researcher seeks to look at the 'counseling' role of Sis Noe to the youths on courtship, marriage and sexual matters in Sunday News from an Afrocentric standpoint.

In addition to the above, Ndlovu and Hove (2015) in their journal article titled '*Old wine in new wineskins: Revisiting counselling in the traditional Ndebele and Shona societies*', clearly posits that counselling is not a new phenomenon in Africa but rather existed long before colonialism with its western formalised counselling institutions which came to window dress this old institution among the African societies. More so, Ndlovu and Hove (2015) add that one of the key and unique attributes of traditional counselling is it being preventive and preparatory in nature rather than the reactive western type of counselling. That is to say, people of different ages among African societies, through counselling, they were forewarned to be forearmed to be fully empowered and prepared to confront life adversities head-on. This type of counselling did not wait for a problem to manifest. In this case, people in African societies, nourished by the wit and wisdom from traditional counselling, were engineered to understand that life is not just a plain, rosy journey as other people would imagine it but a series of challenges which are supposed to be confronted or dealt with head-on.

Like Rupande and Tapfumaneyi (2013), Ndlovu and Hove (2015) also note that counselling in this contemporary Zimbabwean society has been professionalized and commercialised. As well, they also acknowledge that marriage counselling and teenage grooming which 'professional' counselling has assumed the role as if it was 'natural' through a number of ways, is not something new to African societies but old culturally-oriented practises that existed outside and before the European thinking in the pre-colonial era. In short, they reveal that in the olden days, counselling was a process and a way of life, incorporated in culture and celebrated together with the culture of the Ndebele and the Shona, among other African societies. This contribution is very fundamental to this study as it enlightens the researcher that "culture is central to all counselling", to use Pedersen (1991) words. That is to say, any counselling process that does not consider or tends to neglect the culture of the counselee in question might be deleterious if not totally biased. However, this research differs in the sense that while the above study outline a general and wide subject of traditional counselling comparatively with the western 'professional' type of counselling, it is confined to the

Afrocentric muse or interrogation of Sis Noe blogspot in ‘counselling’ youths on courtship, marriage and sexual matters in Sunday News.

In addition to the above scholarly ideas, Sibanda and Hlongwane (2018) in their research article titled *‘The degradation of the Afrocentric counselling perspective as a function of the perpetuations of engendered Eurocentric hegemonic practises in Zimbabwe’*, contends that the perpetuation of Eurocentric ideologies has left a trail of extreme distortion of most if not all, the cultural values of the African people to the advantage of the West which has left Africa confused and uncertain culturally, philosophically and religiously as to which counselling perspective to follow between the Afrocentric and Eurocentric perspective. They further contend that the unjustified colonial invasion have permeated the Afrocentric perspectives and approaches to counselling in the name of ‘formality’ and ‘profession’ to the extent of undermining their cultural and spiritual significance in transcending life adversities encountered by the African people in their everyday lives. While this study focused on simply the effects of the so-called professional counselling on how counselling was understood and carried out within the African cultural matrix, this research differs in the sense that it seeks to go a step further to single out and critically interrogate from a Afrocentric standpoint, Sis Noe blogspot in ‘counselling’ youths on courtship, marriage and sexual matters.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is informed by the Afrocentricity theory, a theory propounded by Cheikh Anta Diop and further popularized by Molefi kete Asante in the late 1980s. This theory is concerned with centering Africans, that is, both their history and culture and not treating them as marginal to Europe. It is relevant to this study as it helps the researcher understand and to critically interrogate matters deliberated on Sis Noe’s blogspot in Sunday News from an Afrocentric point of view, that is, an interrogation that is putting African values, customs, practices, beliefs, knowledge systems and existential philosophy of life at the center. It is this theory that gave life as well as an informed direction of thought which ensured the confident march of this study as it seeks to dig deep on Sis

Noe's blogspot as to whether it is in tandem with how African people understand their world view as far the handling of courtship, marriage and sexual matters is concerned. Only four Afrocentricity tenets provided by Gray (2001) that inspired this research include:

- **The Meta-Constants: Humanizing and Harmonizing.** That is to say, an effort or product that qualifies to be Afrocentric, shows its pure intention to humanize and harmonise the African people. As observed by Gray (2001) cited in Tembo (2012), this principle attempts to beg answers from the questions like: Does that particular Sis Noe's blogspot invite African people, specifically youths, "to stand tall and realize their full potential" within their own cultural context in this contemporary Zimbabwean society? Does that blogspot also help restore harmony among those youths seeking help specifically on marriage problems?
- **The principle of an African audience as the priority audience.** In this instance, this research, according to Karenga in Hudson-Weems (2007: 29) cited in Tembo (2012), seeks to find out whether Sis Noe's blogspot in Sunday News provide therapeutic deliberations that are nourished with "a quality of thought that is rooted in the cultural image and human interest of African people".
- **Njia as theme.** This principle rests upon the primacy of victorious thought where profound hope is central to Afrocentric thought and praxis (Tembo, 2012). Thus, it is chief in this study as it helped the researcher to unravel Sis Noe's blogspot 'counseling' role as to whether it brings out hope or preach hopelessness to the individuals experiencing various life problems and seeking 'counseling' from their 'counsellor' Sis Noe.
- **Sankofan approach.** Using this principle, this research was interested in whether Sis Noe's blogspot is tapping or sees any importance of the lessons and indigenous approaches from traditional counseling in imparting life-affirming knowledge and problem-solving skills to the 'counselees' in question.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research method was employed by the researcher to gather information for this study. Data was collected across different levels of people who were relevant to the study. A purposeful sampling technique during data collection through the semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion (introduced that column to them and provided the researcher with the needed information) was effective in this study. Among targeted respondents included Sis Noe as the primary source of the study, the elderly in the community on their various views on how courtship, marriage and sexual matters were handled among the African societies. Also a questionnaire was used as an alternative after the conduction of an physical interview with the primary source Sis Noe failed due to the respondent being hesitant to the researcher for a face to face interview which might be attributed to the questionable identity of the person being a male person though ‘clandestinely’ claiming to be a female character as discussed later in chapter 3 on the glance of Sis Noe’s identity. Also document analysis became part of the rich source of information that was relevant to this study.

1.9.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to gather the needed information. This type of research design was imperative and relevant to this study as it kept the researcher closer to the targeted respondents. In other words, as concurred by Lincoln (2000:3), the qualitative research design allowed the researcher to go into the natural setting of the targeted respondents in an attempt “to make sense of, interpret phenomena in terms of the means [the respondents brought] to the researcher.

1.9.2. Target population

The targeted respondents included Sis Noe as the key informant on the questions that will beg answers about Sis Noe’s blogspot. Alternatively, to substantiate and verify the validity of the information provided by Sis Noe, the researcher had to interview the Sunday News Editor together with other two senior reporters. In addition to that, this study also targeted the elderly people as they provided the researcher with a crucial in-depth understanding of how courtship, marriage and sexual matters were handled among the African societies. They became relevant to this study as the researcher felt they are

the experienced, hence this research holds the view that ‘experience is the best teacher’. Also this research invited views from the youths in general as their opinions mattered and became relevant to this study as far as the role of Sis Noe’s blogspot in ‘counselling’ the youths on various matters such as courtship, marriage and sexual matters is concerned. Also some academics in the field of culture were considered worthy to be part of the target population as they provided the researcher with constructive contributions that aided this study.

1.9.3. Sampling technique

This study used a purposive sampling technique. According to Babbie (1990) purposive sampling is selecting a sample on the basis of one’s knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of one’s research aims. As such, the chosen sampling technique became relevant to this study as the researcher already knew where to get the needed information which then allowed him to purposively selected his target audience such as Sis Noe who is in this case, the primary source, the Sunday News Editor with other two senior reporters, the elderly people, some academics in the field of culture and the youths in general on their various views that contributed immensely to this study.

1.9.4 Data collection tools

This study used the data collection methods that were considered relevant in excavating the needed data and these included the semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion and document analysis amongst others. Semi-structured interviews were used to solicit needed data from the elderly, the Sunday News staff and the academics in the field of culture. A focus group discussion became of paramount importance as it allowed the researcher to simultaneously collect in abundance various views and opinions of the youths as far as the ‘counseling’ role of Sis Noe blogspot is concerned, while a single questionnaire was sent online to the key informant Sis Noe who was comfortable that way as ‘she’ was hesitant to the researcher for a face to face interview due to ‘her’ questionable identity to be discussed later in chapter 3.

1.9.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to ensure the trustworthiness, the reliability and the validity of the research findings, the researcher employed some necessary ethical considerations that were useful in this study. One of the adopted ethical considerations in this study is the use of informed consent, whereby the researcher firstly asked for a permission from the participants to interview them, which were the Sunday News staff, the academics in the field of culture, the elderly in the community and the youths as it helped the researcher to be accepted and get more information from the targeted informants in question as they knew what exactly the researcher was looking for rather than to use deception which was not conducive for both the researcher and the respondents as suspicion was liable to arise and therefore affect data collection during the research process. Also another ethical consideration used by the researcher is confidentiality whereby the researcher did not divulge personal information such as the names of the participants so as not to jeopardize their status. In addition to that, the researcher also avoided, by all means, the falsification of research findings to ensure the authenticity and the credibility of the study by verifying the research findings on Sis Noe blogspot from the Sunday News staff and also asking for clarity during the interviews conducted with the elderly people among other targeted respondents.

1.10. DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was largely concerned with the excavation of the relevance of Sis Noe blogspot in Sunday News within an African audience or cultural context when ‘counselling’ youths on courtship, marriage and sexual matters having informed by the traditional way of counseling which is rooted in the African people’s philosophy of life. As Scholars like Pedersen (1991) contends that “culture is central to all counselling” this research sought to find out whether Sis Noe blogspot is informing youths with perceptions and thinking that is rooted within the African people’s cultural understanding and philosophy of life as far as the handling of courtship, marriage and sexual matters is concerned. In case, there are other Sis Noe blogspots from various print media platforms

like Bulawayo24, this study mainly concentrated on Sunday News as a single primary source. This study was carried out from December 2017 to May 2018.

1.11. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It became a possible challenge during the research process that the researcher obtained very shallow information from the respondents, especially youths who were part of the target population as many of them did not know about Sis Noe's blogspot. However, in overcoming such a challenge the researcher had to consult a number of youths through a conducted focus group discussion to compensate and combine the little information they could provide to the researcher as they gave different valuable opinions. Interviewing everyone was not possible for this research, hence as such, some information might have been left out. Also as another challenge that the researcher experienced was that despite having informed the target respondents like the youths, the elderly and the Sunday New staff that the information would be used only for academic purposes, they still showed fear for themselves being caught in wrong circles for answering some research questions. However, the researcher tried to overcome such a challenge by assuring the respondents of the absence of harm and their names not being cited in the research findings.

1.12. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Afrocentric muse- refers to a critical interrogation of a subject matter which is strongly informed by an African world view, understanding and perception of reality or philosophical approach.

Culture- refers to beliefs, practices, values and knowledge systems, governing the life of a society.

Traditional Counselling-refers to indigenous approaches or ways used by the African societies to assist those experiencing various life problems transcend them.

1.13. DISSERTATION LAYOUT

The study have five chapters. Chapter one comprises the introduction, background of the study, area of investigation, objectives of the study, justification of the study, literature

review, research methodology, definitions of terms, delimitation and limitation of the study to mention a few. Chapter two discusses in detail the African understanding and philosophy of life behind the handling of courtship, marriage and sexual matters. Chapter three is largely on the interrogation of the nature of ‘counselling’ delivered to the youths on various problems of courtship, marriage, sex and relationships through Sis Noe blogspot in Sunday News. Chapter four deals with the relevance of Sis Noe blogspot on the African philosophy as revealed by the research findings in ‘counselling’ youths on courtship, marriage and sexual matters. Lastly, chapter five is the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

THE AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY IN THE HANDLING OF COURTSHIP, MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL MATTERS

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was largely concerned with the area of investigation, the background of the study, objectives of the study, justification of the study, literature review, research methodology, definitions of terms, delimitation and limitation of the study to mention a few. However, this chapter seeks to start by defining what is meant by the term African philosophy. It further looks at the nature of traditional counselling, followed by courtship counselling and its cultural importance among the African societies, marriage counselling and lastly, the treatment of sexual matters within the African cultural context.

2.1 AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY DEFINED

A number of scholars have attempted to define the term African philosophy. Mbiti, (1969:2) among other Afrocentric scholars defines African philosophy as "...the understanding, attitude of mind, logic and perception behind the manner in which African peoples think, act or speak in different situations of life..." In other words, it is the worldview of African people, how they make sense of the world, how they perceive their own reality and how they interpret their surrounding environment and the universe at large. By implication, such a philosophy is very unique and very different from the so-called Western philosophy. Thus, whenever an African person acts, does something, behaves, performs or speaks in a certain way, it is not just a mere exercise but the manifestation of a philosophy of life, a genuine and logical reasoning behind it.

2.2 THE NATURE OF TRADITIONAL COUNSELLING

According to Egan, (1994) cited in Chiboola and Munsaka(2016), traditional counselling denotes those indigenous ways that were used by the African societies to help and empower those experiencing different problems to be able to transcend them. Because of its preventive and preparatory nature as well, not only was it offered when someone experienced some problems but also prepared and empowered those that wished "...to take a life commitment such as initiation at puberty and marriage" among other things (Hartworth, Chiboola and Kwapa, 2008 cited in Chiboola and Munsaka 2013:2). However, this does not imply that traditional counselling only waited for people to reach a certain stage of age for it to be offered to them, but

rather it was process which started from cradle to the grave (Bedu-Addo, 2014). In other words, an individual was to be counselled starting from his or her childhood to adulthood and up until he or she dies.

Central to traditional counselling were the beliefs, values, customs, norms and the indigenous knowledge systems that define Africans as a people (Mwiti and Dueck, 2007). To them, they did not have the luxury of divorcing their own culture and philosophy of life during the counselling process as it would render the whole process irrelevant and meaningless to their everyday different life adversities.

According to Chiboola and Munsaka, (2013) the significant role players in traditional counselling were mainly the elderly people as they were taken in high regard as a valuable resource in the society. These included the obabakazi/vatetes (aunties), ogogo/vanambuya (grandmothers), okhulu/vanasekuru (grandfathers) and omalume/vanasekuru (the uncles). Not only were they a valuable resource but also “repositories of traditional knowledge and skills, the experts in social skills and the cherished models of emulation” (Chiboola and Munsaka, 2013:2). In other words, only these ‘experts’ or ‘masters’ of life experiences who had been ‘tried and tested’ by the length of time, were qualified to counsel. It is for this reason that the Ndebele among other African societies would say *indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili* to literally mean (you seek advice from the experienced). From an African cosmological perspective, as noted by Mpfungu, (2006), knowledge is not necessarily based on what is researched and verified. Only the ‘tried and tested’ experience and accumulated wisdom passed down from the elderly people in the community is more valued. That is why when an elderly person passes away in an African society, it is the whole library which disappears (Ki-Zerbo, 1990).

Contrary to the western types of counselling, traditional counseling is anchored on the African worldview and philosophy of life embedded in the counselling strategies like folktales, proverbs, idioms, songs and taboos amongst others mechanisms. Through these counselling strategies, harmonious blending, communalistic approach of life, cooperation, hope in times of hardship, Ubuntu, respect, sharing, caring and solidarity to mention a few, were imparted to the individuals in question. So life-affirming, was traditional counselling which raised the more empowered and responsible upright citizens for the well-being of the society.

2.3 COURTSHIP COUNSELLING AND ITS CULTURAL IMPORTANCE AMONG AFRICAN SOCIETIES

Courtship is one of the common and crucial stages before any marriage takes place among the African societies and its understanding should not be confused with that of the West as it has its own cultural features that are peculiar and meaningful to African people, (Nyathi, 2001). This stage is usually referred to in Ndebele society among other African societies as ukukhombisana and kupfimbana in the Shona equivalent. This is the time when the suitor, a boy, approaches a girl to propose love to her. This courtship phase was a fundamental determinant of whether the following marriage was going to be disaster or a fruitful long-lasting union between the two lovers. Hence it was not a pleasure seeking exercise as it appears to be the norm in this modernized contemporary Zimbabwean society where colonial influence has become the master (Nyathi, 2001) but a seriously seeking mission with a clear purpose of finding an ideal life-long companion. However, from a close critical and objective appreciation of their philosophical approach to courtship matters, African people realized potential dangers which lie behind the real intentions of courtship hence courtship counselling became imperative. In that manner, it then invited, the elderly to help the loved girl or lover find a good partner. Thus, the African people's communalistic approach to life played a pivotal role during the courtship stage.

In case of a girl who was now tempted to accept the advances of a boy who was proposing love to her, she would go and tell her aunt or grandmother about the matter. Among the Ndebele, according to Nyathi, (2001:111), the girl will present her matter in this way:

Kulomuntu ongidubayo esengiyengane laye

(There is someone who is bothering me and we seem to be fooling each other)

Among the Ndebele people, *ukuyengana* means fooling each other and courtship was likened to the same concept. Hence although the aunties or grandmothers knew that the boy's proposal could be genuine, they had to somehow express some doubts about it. Thus their role was crucial in helping the wife-to-be control her emotional feelings that might cloud her judgement in choosing her compatible male partner (Kurfi, 2012). In other words, they saw the importance of a relaxed, sober mind which was then critical in the process.

Moreover, knowing your partner was one of the major issues hammered during the courtship counselling process (Ndlovu et. al., 1995). To the girl, these included knowing who the boy was, that is whether he is a person who is responsible to qualify to be a father, where he comes from, his parents and whether their background is of good repute. Although it may sound laborious to the contemporary generation, it used to play a crucial role in helping the loved girl and the lover make informed choices as far as their partners were concerned since marriage in an African society was an irreversible contract (Nyathi, 2001). In other words, it was a way of making sure the boy or girl does not make a mistake which later on would backfire resulting in a life of regrets.

According to Clive and Kilef (eds.) (1970), among the Shona society, when a girl found her jaya she would introduce him to her aunt who will then decide if the boy is a worthy gentlemen and if the aunt was not convinced that he will make a good husband, she could stop her niece's love. The welfare of the girl's life took precedence over her feelings which were bound to betray her. By implication, "therefore marriages were to be built on solid and reliable foundations as against fantasies, fancies or passion" (Kurfi, 2012:49) as it is the case today where the so-called 'romantic love' has lured many disciples especially youths although sadly, it has betrayed them in the long run which has resulted in short-term or unsuccessful marriage contracts.

2.4 MARRIAGE COUNSELLING

Marriage is one of the core cultural values that is cherished and held dear among the African societies, (Mbiti, 1969). It is the focus of life, hence it guaranteed perpetuation of human existence. That is why anything that had the potential to harm, dismantle or threaten the survival of any marriage was dealt with accordingly using whichever means necessary. That is when traditional marriage counselling became a vital tool to sustain and conserve the marriage institution. From an African's worldview perspective, marriage was more than just a relationship between two people. It was a social institution, (Alan et. al, 2002). Marriage "meant that the partner's responsibilities are not limited to them alone but have much wider applications" (Magesa, 1998:110 cited in Kyalo, 2012). According to Hendrix (1996:173) cited in Kyalo, (2012), in most African healthy marriages, "there is an expectation of relative permanence, co-

residence, a division of labor, sharing of resources, a sexual relationship, procreation and cooperation in child-bearing and training”. If any one of the partners did not fulfill their expected roles, they failed not only themselves but the community at large. Hence, the need for marriage counselling from the premarital stage and after marriage to checkmate such marriage problems.

Marriage counselling as alluded above on the nature of traditional counselling was a prerogative of the elderly people in the community (Clive and Killef, 1970). They were the key actors in the marriage counselling sessions. These were the people who had ‘seen it all’ and therefore able to help and empower any individual who was entering the institution of marriage to transcend any marriage-related problem.

In the marriage counselling phase, they were two categories of the people that needed to be counselled, that is, those who are about to get into the marriage institution (asebethombile) and the ones who are already married (asebengabalobokazi) (Ndlovu et al, 1995 and Nyathi, 2001). Like in other African societies, in the Ndebele culture, the ones who are about to get married were to go through a ‘thorough induction course’ during the puberty ceremony called indudzelo “where they were prepared to cope with difficult household chores, harsh and sometimes violent married life”,(Nyathi, 2001:97). They needed such a psychological kit with which to discover and cope with the ‘marriage world’. Of critical attention here is not how the process of counseling was done but the philosophy embedded behind the act. African people, as argued by Gray (2001) do not celebrate nihilism but endurance and life struggle no matter how difficult the situation is. Otherwise, that is a naked reality of life anyway and running away or giving up is a sign of cowardice. In an African worldview, problems regardless of how “hot” they may be, soldiering on is the only key to transcend them. That is why those izintombi/mhandara who were about to enter the marriage institution were to be counselled the hard way. After all, this was their “survival and fall-back-on-kit” (Nyathi, 2001) as they were empowered and well prepared for any challenge they may come across in their marriage life.

Respect was at the very core of the African people’s life as it kept not only marriages intact but the societies at large. According to Nyathi(2001) and Ndlovu et. al,(1995), among the Ndebele society as African people, when the betrothed bride was now leaving for her new home, obabakazi(aunties) and ogo(grandmothers) would take her to a secluded place or hut where they would counsel her. She was told the following words:

Ungachithi umuzi wabantu(do not destroy your in-laws home)

Landela imilayo yakulowo muzi, utshiye eyalapha(please follow the laws of that home and leave ours here).

According to Mbiti (1969), Ubuntu philosophy which goes along with respect is a celebrated value among African societies. Hence, a bride was to be counselled to go and jealously conserve her marriage through respecting not only her husband but her in-laws and other relatives of the husband since failure to do that meant her marriage was to crumble any time soon. That is for this reason why Nyathi (2001) says, traditional marriage counselling was the cornerstone of all the stable marriages in the Ndebele society as well as among other African people.

In case of a marriage problem that had the potential to disrupt the marriage, the spouse especially the bride was told that divorce was not an option. It simply meant giving up on something that you had committed your life to in the first place. That kind of despondency in its horrendous nature was a monster not to be tolerated among the African people. This is why Clive and Killef (1970) posits that among the Shona people, if the couple had wanted to divorce and went to a chief to be counselled, it is only when and until “they gave sound reasons” for their ‘story’ to make sense. Among the African societies, marriage was an irreversible contract, hence among the Ndebele society, for example, they will always say to the bride: *wavela wavuma* (Nyathi, 2001) to literally mean you are the one who consented in the first place. In a therapeutic way, the couple was made to realize how important marriage is and not only to them but to the whole community as it is the focus of human existence, hence a value not to be just taken for granted. Thus the philosophy of communalism took precedence over individual interests or reasons, hence the marriage institution was sustained.

African people understood that until and unless a marriage was characterized of a viable sexual relationship between the husband and the wife problems were bound to happen. Marriage without sexual satisfaction between the couple did not prosper. That is why both *izintombi/mhandara* and *amajaha/majaya* had to go through initiation practices as rites of passage to adulthood where in-depth sexual education, both in theory and practice, was thoroughly drummed into their mental coffers (Sommer and Sandtrock (2005). Sex in a marriage

was not a privilege but a right for both the woman and the man concerned and they would cater for the urge of each other (Chigwedere, 1996 cited in Makaudze, 2015).

2.5 TREATMENT OF SEXUAL MATTERS IN THE AFRICAN CULTURAL CONTEXT

Sex among other culturally sensitive issues within the African cultural context is not a thing to be talked of or exposed publicly just like that. African people are sensitive to any departure from the accepted norm that pertains all aspects of sex (Kyalo, 2012). Their exposure in the public is a taboo and very offensive (Chabata and Mavhu, 2005). However, it must be emphasized that African people, as a people of social order, the offensiveness of the sexual matters was circumstantial. That is to say although these issues are taboo in speech, they are used freely in an appropriate setting. For instance, “they are licensed for use when people are intimate or when maturing youths are taught about sex and sexuality” (Chabata and Mavhu, 2005:257).

According to Mbiti, (1969), in an African worldview, sex organs are the very gates of life. Any reckless attempt that is meant to ‘undress’ them in the public trivializes life itself. Hence any issue that is attached to them is therefore a culturally sensitive and therefore unbearable matter to be just talked of or paraded in the public eyes and ears. The Ndebele people, among other African societies, have this proverb to say: *injobo ayithungelwa ebandla* to mean do not expose something that is very disgusting or culturally offensive to the public. In this case, any sexual matter, among other culturally sensitive issues within the African cultural context, is to be treated with great respect and hence alternatively in public speeches they find euphemistic or polite ways of deliberating about it. Thus, sex is usually referred to as *ucansi* or *bonde* (an African mat) in both Ndebele and Shona societies respectively. This is evident that any sexual issue is not said as it is among the African societies but rather they find other means of talking about it using figurative sayings and idioms to feel more comfortable.

Moreover, according to Makaudze (2015:147), love making among the African societies is considered a sacred act where even the ancestors are invited to participate through the use of bedroom praise poems (*nhetembo dzemugudza*). And with its dramatic nature, it had to be done away from both the eyes and ears of the children, hence the bedroom of the father and mother was usually away from that of the children to make sure they were not exposed to sexual

language and activity before they matured. Of paramount importance here is the African philosophical underpinnings behind the act that any sexual related matter among the African societies is considered culturally sensitive and therefore not something to just expose to everyone or anyone but an affair done in an appropriate and a very secluded setting. That on its own meant respect not only to an individual but to the community at large.

In case of an individual who had encountered any sexual related problem, appropriate key actors like the elderly and traditional healers were consulted for help and the problem was dealt with in a secretive manner.

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter was largely concerned with exploring African philosophy of life and its manifestation on the nature of traditional counselling, courtship counselling, marriage counselling and in the treatment of the sexual matters within the African cultural context. This chapter has established that African people have got their unique way of understanding themselves as a people and the universe at large therefore, their values, beliefs, norms and customs during the counselling process becomes meaningful and justified. Otherwise, any counselling session that is bereft of their cultural beliefs, norms and values is robbing not only their philosophy of life but who they are.

CHAPTER THREE

INTEROGATING THE NATURE OF SIS NOE BLOGSPOT IN SUNDAY NEWS

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was mainly hinging its trajectory of thought on the manifestation of the African Philosophy of life in the handling of courtship, marriage and sexual matters among the African societies. Thus, the chapter firstly looked at the nature of traditional counselling, that is to say, what characterizes or make traditional counselling so unique when compared to the Western professional type of counselling. It then followed by delineating courtship counselling and its cultural importance among the African societies, marriage counselling and lastly, the treatment of sexual matters within the African cultural context and existential philosophy. This chapter then goes a further march forward in an attempt to expose and interrogate the nature of Sis Noe blogspot in Sunday Newspaper, taking into consideration the Afrocentricity tenets of the African audience as the priority audience, Njiya as theme and the sankofan approach in those ‘counseling’ deliberations. It commences by unpacking the concept of youth, followed by an in-depth exploration of Sis Noe’s identity, the background of Sis Noe blogspot and lastly, an Afrocentric interrogation of the matters that are deliberated on Sis Noe BlogSpot using the above mentioned theory tenets. Content analysis largely informed this chapter, although the researcher also consulted some secondary sources to further substantiate his arguments.

3.1 UNPACKING THE CONCEPT OF YOUTH

The concept of youth which is the very centerpiece of this research has necessitated the researcher to firstly appreciate and understand how the concept of youth has been defined by different scholars. Otherwise, leaving the concept undefined and fairly appreciated, before heading to the core of this Chapter to interrogate the nature of Sis Noe blogspot, is something self-defeating that this research considered should not be left out as it imperative. Hence, the researcher’s sentiment is that the concept of youth is not a ‘neutral’ notion which simply implies the general description of young people. Such a sweeping generalization could not be taken as the ‘absolute truth’ by this study to represent the complex understanding and meanings attached on being young in any given society as the concept has both the socio-cultural as well as biological underpinnings, (Spence, 2005). Thus, the researcher argues that it was only when the concept of youth was clearly understood by the researcher that gave this study a further confident

march towards a critical interrogation of the collected data from the Sunday newspaper with a clear demarcation of what and who is a youth.

This study has noted that there is no commonly accepted definition as far the concept of youth is concerned. However, age which has become the mostly preferred criterion, has led to several different proposed definitions of the term youth by the United Nations entities among other proponents. Among them is the UN Secretariat, the UN Habitat (Youth Fund), UNFPA, UNICEF and African Youth Charter to mention a few. According to the information available on the following website: www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition, the youth age ranges are as follows: UN Secretariat proposes 15-24 years, UN Habitat (Youth Fund) proposing 15-32 years, UNFPA proposing 15-24 years whilst the African Youth Charter proposes 15-35 years. It must be noted that while there is some kind of agreement between these above entities on the lower age-limit which is 15, it is lucidly evident that it's not always the case when it comes to the upper age-limit. However, for the best of this study, the researcher then used the proposed African Youth Charter age range as it enhanced the flexibility of the study since it allowed a wider collection of the much needed data from the Sunday Newspaper, which is the primary source of this research, on courtship, marriage and sexual matters mainly targeting the youths as the 'counselees'.

3.2 A GLANCE INTO SIS NOE'S IDENTITY

According to the research findings collected via the interview with the Sunday News Editor on the 19th of April 2018, the researcher learnt that Sis Noe is a male journalist though currently a pseudo 'counsellor' pretending to be a female person, who has a passion with various social issues or problems affecting family institutions as well as offering guidance and counseling to the youths experiencing different problems in their lives. 'Sis Noe' is said to be someone who is in his early 30s and said to be married. Communication to 'her' is granted only through the two contact numbers (appearing on Sunday newspaper under *Chat with Sis Noe* column) only active for WhatsApp messaging and not by any other means, hence 'she' has remained a hidden face from the public or 'her' 'counselees'. Though the researcher tried to consult Sis Noe for a face to face interview, 'she' seemed hesitant to the researcher and however opted for a questionnaire which was then administered online as indicated under the research methodology section in Chapter 1. Thus, more information as to authenticate the research findings on Sis Noe identity

was further acquired from the Sunday News Editor and other two senior reporters who also confirmed and verified the provided data from the key respondent Sis Noe through the conducted physical interviews with the researcher. Nevertheless, according to the information put on the Sunday newspaper under '**Sunday Life/Entertainment Column**' with the sub-column '*Chat with Sis Noe*', Sis Noe is claimed to be a "mother, grandmother, a grand-grandmother and an aunt to some, who has seen it all" and ready to help various age groups solve different problems they are encountering in their lives.

As to why the preferred name 'Sis Noe' and not 'Aunt Noe' which seems mostly to be the preferred norm by other media platforms like 'Aunt Tilder program' on Star FM who assume the role of aunties as they were one of the key actors in the traditional counselling set up, the respondent Sis Noe labelled the title 'Aunt' as a "very tired" term that has since lost its essence and meaning in this contemporary Zimbabwean society with a new generation that "has lost touch with their cultures that required them to be counselled by their aunties". Hence the preferred term 'Sis' Noe as it sounds more appealing and 'moving with time' to the ears of the 'counselees' who then become more comfortable to tell their so-called hidden 'sister' to respond to their various physical, social, emotional and psychological problems. However, whilst this can be true, the respondent should not totally assume and expect such a reality to be taken as the 'absolute truth' to every African person where no matter how corrosive colonialism was to the cherished role of the extended family among the African societies in Zimbabwe, they still honor the role of aunties though it may be largely in the rural settings.

Besides, it is self-betrayal as to how the column itself is labelling Sis Noe on the Sunday newspaper as someone who is very old enough to be a "mother, grandmother, grand-grandmother and aunt who has seen it all" with a very clear agenda to justify why the person is in the first place fit or qualifies to counsel those who have problems, while on the other hand the respondent seems not to like to be associated with the title 'aunt' which 'she' lambasts as a "tired" term. 'Her' association with the 'tiredness' seems to be carrying Eurocentric connotations where the role of aunties and traditional counseling to 'her' is safer to be 'buried' in the dustbin of history if not considered irrelevant to this modernized Zimbabwean society, which is not as 'holy' as 'she' might think it to be. Sis Noe fails to acknowledge that traditional counseling is still a 'living' practice among the African societies and what the so-called modernity did through

urbanization was only to disintegrate the extended family setup which automatically gave it no chance to its effective role in guidance and counseling.

3.3 BACKGROUND ON SIS NOE BLOGSPOT

The blogspot according to the key respondent Sis Noe, also confirmed by the current Sunday News Editor, was initiated in the year 2011. The major impetus behind its initiation was that the former Sunday News Editor Paul Mambo felt it is what was lacking in the column ‘**Sunday Life**’ of the Sunday newspaper. Hence, in other words, it came to cater for and to somehow close a ‘perceived’ gap of the people who might be experiencing various problems out there and in need of ‘guidance and counseling’ via the print media like the Sunday Newspaper. In aiding ‘her’ feedback, the respondent Sis Noe labelled it as “an agony aunt column which offers advice in all aspects of life”. It is very interesting to note that unlike the traditional type of counselling which was mainly preparatory and preventive in nature (Ndlovu and Hove, 2015), this type of ‘counselling’ by Sis Noe blogspot is largely reactionary in its approach when imparting problem-solving skills to its ‘counselees’. In other words, tantamount to the Western type of counselling as argued by Ndlovu and Hove (ibid), it waits for problems to manifest which is tempting to be seen as mainly a ‘crisis counseling’ platform.

On how the ‘counselees’ get in touch with their ‘counselor’ Sis Noe, the researcher learnt that the dialogue is conducted through chat messages that are sent via a WhatsApp platform which has got two numbers that also appear on the Sunday newspaper under the sub-column ‘**Chat with Sis Noe**’, where the ‘counselees’ send their various social, emotional, psychological, behavioral and physical problems, after which Sis Noe then responds or gives feedback through a section dedicated under the **Sunday Life/Entertainment** column titled as **Chat with Sis Noe** where they can then read their suggested possible solutions to the problems they are facing. However on a comparative note with traditional counseling as highlighted in the previous chapter, on how this type of ‘counseling’ is done, which most probably from a ‘modernized’ sense someone can see it as a platform that is ‘moving with time’, the researcher argues that WhatsApp as a vehicular means of dialoguing even some culturally delicate matters has rather trivialized the understanding of counseling within the African context and therefore remains a mockery.

3.4 MATTERS DELIBERATED ON SIS NOE BLOGSPOT

This section primarily exposes as well as interrogate the nature of the matters that are deliberated on Sis Noe blogspot with specific attention as to how life-affirming, considering the Afrocentricity theory tenets of the African audience as the priority audience, Njiya as theme and the Sankofan approach, are the suggested possible solutions or guidance which is provided by the platform to various ‘counselees’ who would have sent their various problems.

3.4.1 SEXUAL MATTERS

Sexual matters or problems are prevalent on Sis Noe blogspot where the ‘counselees’ send their problems and are given response by the ‘counselor’ Sis Noe. These issues include sexual dysfunction, abnormalities in sex drive, sex skills, sexual dissatisfaction and sex positions to mention a few.

To single out one of the sexual problems (refer to **Plate 1**), is the case from the Sunday newspaper of 25 February 2018 where a female ‘counselee’ asks for advice from Sis Noe on whether anal sex which her boyfriend seems to be obsessed about is good for her health. Though she is given a number of risks associated with the act, she is alternatively advised to do it in a more ‘comforting’ manner with emphasis on the use of lots of lubrication as to reduce friction during the act which might result in the tearing away of some anal tissues. However, it is clearly evident that while Sis Noe ‘counselling’ role may be helpful in imparting the sexual knowledge on the ‘counselee’ in question, this value-free ideology makes ‘her’ a western oriented suspect where sex which is mainly understood as for procreation and production among the African societies (Nyathi, 2001 and Makaudze, 2015), has been not only reduced to be for recreation, but having its sacredness within the African cultural existential philosophy of life jeopardized.

Another case from the same newspaper (refer to **Plate 2**), is of a 25 year old female who is experiencing abnormalities in her high sex drive. She is ‘counselled’ by Sis Noe that the problem could be due to dementia, which is a symptom of bipolar disorder and she is advised to go and see a medical doctor. However, from a close objective analytic point of view, the approach of Sis Noe’s ‘counselling’ response to the problem at hand is optimistic and paints a hopeful picture of the ‘counselee’s’ problem by advising her that such abnormalities can be treated if she can make efforts of seeing the doctor who can easily detect the root cause of the problem. Thus, in this instance Sis Noe as a ‘counsellor’ seems to tap from the rich wellspring of an African world

view, where hopelessness has never defeated any life challenges but only courage and resilience which have been both at the center of the African ethos in order to help African people transcend life adversities (Gray, 2001).

To add on (refer to **Plate 3**), is another sexual problem from the Sunday newspaper of 28 January 2018 where a “worried” 26 year old male ‘counselee’ asks for advice from Sis Noe on his sperms which after every ejaculation find their way out of her wife’s vagina. However, although he is told that such circumstances are very normal and no need to worry about, which is indeed therapeutic in a way as it carries an emotional healing effect to the ‘counselee’ in question, the setting itself for such a sexual explicit content becomes inappropriate and irritating for such a culturally sensitive matter to be publicly dished out to the ears of the African audience. Besides, it causes disgust and huge discomfort as it tramples upon and equally undermines the African philosophy of respect as far as sexual matters are concerned where such issues were talked of in a secluded place to show respect towards them and acknowledge the cultural weight they have among the African societies (Ndlovu et al., 1995).

Another case of a sexual problem (refer to **Plate 4**) is taken from the Sunday newspaper of 29 October 2017 where a sexually dissatisfied female ‘counselee’ asks for advice from Sis Noe on the problem that whenever she is in the mood for sex, her husband seems not to notice her and she only waits for him to ask for it. However, Sis Noe ‘counsel’ her that she must not be passive when nature calls but rather actively play her part as a woman to take control of the attention she need from her husband. Undoubtedly, this is what an aunt or grandmother in a traditional counselling setup will teach umlobokazi/muroora as African people cherish the social philosophy that musha mukadzi/umuzi ngumfazi, which means that the African societies understand a woman as the center of life and this is what gives her the power and privilege to either build or destroy her own home which then motivate her to be an active central role player in anything that threatens harmony in her own home which is in this case her marriage which is the focus of human existence (Mbiti, 1969). Thus, Sis Noe in this case goes the Sankofa way to solve the problem at hand.

3.4.2 MARRIAGE PROBLEMS

Also marriage problems are commonly found on Sis Noe blogspot. These include infidelity issues, sexual dissatisfaction between married partners as well as general misunderstandings amongst other issues.

One of the infidelity issues (refer to **Plate 5**) is from a Sunday newspaper of 18 February 2018 where the wife who is married for 10 years is saying her marriage has become very sour since she is always fighting with her husband and seem to be not agreeing on anything and gives out the intention of leaving the whole marriage thing. She is however ‘counselled’ by Sis Noe that although she can try to save her marriage by “if possible” communicating with her husband, she is on the other hand advised that she cannot put up with things she is not comfortable about. Thus, the latter given advice by Sis Noe automatically nullifies the one offered first which is meant to save the marriage in question. By implication, she is given an option to leave the marriage if she wants to if the situation is “toxic” as Sis Noe put it in her ‘counselling’ response. However, the researcher doubts if ever Sis Noe is really the sister to look up to in times of marriage problems experienced by the youths as ‘she’ fails to impart the life-affirming reality and understanding of marriage among the African societies that marriage is not always a bedrock of roses as some people fantasizes it to be but a life commitment with challenges as well that are to be confronted head-on rather than running away from them (Ndlovu et al., 1995 and Nyathi, 2001). Thus ‘she’ fails to go the ‘Njia as theme’ way in ‘her’ approach to solve the problem in question.

Also another extra marital problem (refer to **Plate 6**) from the same newspaper is a case of a married male youth who is confused as to who to choose between his wife and a colleague whom he has just fallen in love with at work. The response he gets is that crushing on someone is normal but when it comes to an extent of the ‘counselee’ leaving his wife for a colleague, it then becomes a marriage threatening feeling which must be curbed as early as possible. He is further advised to discuss the issue with his wife. However, the response from Sis Noe gives a twilight on the importance of marriage as a cherished core value among the African people which the individual in question is made to safeguard and realize together with the responsibilities that goes with fatherhood. Bourdillon(1976) is quick to garner the above Sis Noe’s offered response to the ‘counselee’ in question by noting that marital fidelity issues among the Shona society as African

people, were very common and it was the expected role of the husband to keep his wife informed about his extra-marital relations which failure to do so was regarded as endangering his children. Hence, such a ‘counselling response is rooted with the quality of thought and the cultural image of the African audience (Gray, 2001), which then credit Sis Noe for that. However, such an advice although seems to be in tandem with how such marital problems were handled among the African societies, the problem lies on how the wife of the ‘counselee’ in question will digest the matter taking into consideration in this contemporary Zimbabwean society where the issue of polygamy have been regarded as an ‘uncivilized’ practice which has been equated to ‘cheating’ in these so-called modern marriages.

Another marriage problem taken from the Sunday newspaper of 29 October 2017 is (refer to **Plate 7**) that of a female married ‘counselee’ who asks Sis Noe on what to do with her husband who she accuses of ‘raping’ her every night. She is told by Sis Noe to report the husband to the police as ‘she’ deems it “RAPE”. However such an approach becomes questionable if ever harmony which is the chief concern in any marriage problem occurrence among the African societies (Bourdillon, 1976), is to be achieved in that marriage as these two married individuals are made to see each other as rivals and not husband and wife. It actually valorizes the prevailing feminist ideology with its alien agenda that wants to intoxicate the African women to see their male counterpart as vulturous, chauvinistic predators, which rather preaches schism than to restore harmony and denies the chance to let the ‘counselee’ in question see the complementarity nature of the African woman and man. Besides, research findings points to the fact that marital rape among the African societies was something unheard of because as indicated in chapter 2, as both parties (man and woman) were to be taught both in theory and practice during the rites of passage like circumcision and initiation practices how to collectively cater for the urge of each other when sexual needs arose in their marriages. In other words, sex among the African people was not a privilege but a right for both a woman and a man concerned as noted by Chigwedere (1996) cited in Makaudze, 2015). This corroborates with the view of interviewee C in the following statement:

Okunye mntanami osekubulele imendo kulezinsuku ngama rights abesifazana esesitshunyayezwa ngawo kulezinsuku. Ungakhangela kahle umfazi wakulezinsuku sesala ngitsho ukuya ecansini lomkakhe ethi yena yi right yakhe leyo nxa engafuni kafuni. Kukanti kudala bekungenjalo. Umakoti wayetshelwa ngobabakazi ukuthi mntanami

indoda iyanakekelwa njalo iphathwa njani ecansini ukuze umendo ulondolozeke hatshi namhlanje. Sokulabo marital rape into esasingayazi thina

Some of the things my son that have caused serious marriage problems nowadays are these so-called women rights which are being preached to us. If you look carefully nowadays, the wife may choose to refuse to make love with her husband in the name of her 'rights' to just prove a point that she doesn't want while in the pre-colonial African set up there was nothing like that. A bride was thoroughly counselled by her aunties how to take care and satisfy her husband sexually so that the sustainability of marriage is guaranteed. Unfortunately, it seems not to be the case today. There are even marital rape cases nowadays which were things unheard of back then.

It becomes evident from the above view that African people understood that marriage cannot thrive or be sustained whenever there is sexual dissatisfaction between both parties (husband and wife) and that is why they had to be taught in depth on how to deal with such problems before entering the marriage institution itself. As such, this is contrary to Sis Noe's above stated approach in addressing the marriage problem in question which is largely carrying Eurocentric connotations.

3.4.3 COURTSHIP MATTERS

Courtship matters or problems also dominate Sis Noe blogspot as well. This is where the 'counselees' asks for advice or help in finding their 'ideal' suitors. While some, usually the 'single and searching' ones send their contact details to the platform to make it easier for those who are interested in them to get in touch, some youths generally ask for advice as to how they can choose their 'ideal' suitors.

From the Sunday newspaper of 15 February 2015 (refer to **Plate 8**) is the case where a mother on behalf of her daughter posted to Sis Noe that her daughter wants to get married to a man who has divorced twice and she mentions that she was fearing for her daughter that the very marriage that her daughter was about to enter into was doomed as well. She is then advised by Sis Noe to let her daughter make her own decision on her own with an emphasis of "whether right or wrong as long as it is her choice". However, Sis Noe's role as a 'caring sister' becomes questionable if ever she understands a communalistic approach of life among the African societies as far as courtship is concerned. She is rather spearheading for individualism which is the very anathema

to the African philosophy of life for its heinous consequences which might betray the ‘counselee’ in question.

Also another case is from a Sunday newspaper of 18 February 2018 (refer to **Plate 9**) where a male youth ‘counselee’ asks for some help from Sis Noe that he wants to settle down but is in a dilemma as to who to choose between his ex and current girlfriend. He is ‘counselled’ by Sis Noe not to mistake “availability for suitability” which is typical to what an uncle in a traditional counselling set up will advise his umzokulu/mzokuru (Makaudze, 2015 and Ndlovu et al., 1995). However, although the advice is empowering the ‘counselee’ in question to make informed decisions in finding his ideal suitor, he is deprived of the advice from his relatives in the ‘counseling’ feedback which might also help him overcome the problem at hand. Hence, he is made to individualize the matter which then brings the probability of him making another mistake in choosing the right woman for himself alone.

3.4.4 RELATIONSHIP MATTERS

Love or relationship problems are also evident on Sis Noe blogspot. These include disappointments, cheating or break ups between lovers.

One of the cases (refer to **Plate 10**) is taken from a Sunday newspaper of 21 January 2018 where a 22 year old female youth ‘counselee’ who is feeling insecure about her boyfriend whom she suspects is cheating her although he is assuring her that he is not, asks for help from Sis Noe. She is advised that communication among other key ingredients of a happy relationship is paramount. However, in her response, Sis Noe unlike showing compassion which Haselau(2015) notes it as an important social value of Ubuntu which characterize traditional counseling, where everyone who engages in counseling someone, he or she is inspired and motivated by the love and self-responsibility he or she has towards the welfare of another particular individual in need of help and advice, she adopts the confrontational approach which is too harsh and western in approach when she injects phrases like “don’t be silly” and “stop behaving like a spoilt child”. Most probably for an already confused individual who is hoping for a ‘sisterly’ advice, such words might not go down well as helpful advice to the individual in question but rather might feel judged and insulted and likely not to take heed of the whole ‘counseling’ response. It rather

dehumanizes and equally injure the dignity and subjectivity of the ‘counselee’ in question to realize her agency in solving her problem at hand which fails the Meta constants: humanizing and harmonizing as one the crucial Afrocentricity theory tenets that informed this study.

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter was mainly concentrating on interrogating the nature of the matters that are deliberated on Sis Noe blogspot on the Sunday newspaper. This chapter established that Sis Noe blogspot is playing crucial role in helping the youth transcend various life problems like marriage, courtship, sexual matters and relationship problems amongst others. However, this chapter also noted some implications of the blogspot in question that tend to jeopardize the African philosophical understanding as well as the handling of the above stated problems is concerned within the African cultural matrix. It is in this chapter that the researcher noted Sis Noe as a ‘counselor’ who is characterized with too much inconsistencies in ‘her’ ‘counseling’ approaches which then betray ‘her’ position to be considered an effective ‘counselor’.

CHAPTER FOUR

RELEVENCE OF SIS NOE BLOGSPOT ON THE AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY ON COURTSHIP, MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL MATTERS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was largely concerned with exposing the nature of the matters deliberated on Sis Noe blogspot with specific focus on its consideration of the African audience together

with its cultural values and philosophy of life, as the priority audience in those deliberations. It started by looking at the concept of youth which was necessary for the researcher to firstly understand and deeply appreciate what or who is termed a youth by who and why. It further looked at who is Sis Noe, background on Sis Noe blogspot and lastly, the matters deliberated on Sis Noe blogspot. This chapter then seeks to excavate the relevance of Sis Noe blogspot on the African philosophy on courtship, marriage and sexual matters. In other words, it aimed at answering the question as to whether the blogspot in question is playing a positive role or downplaying the African philosophy and the latent potential of the African audience specifically the youths to realize themselves within their cultural existential philosophy in this Zimbabwean contemporary society. Such a measure was immensely informed by the findings in Chapter 2 on the African understanding on courtship, marriage and sexual matters in a traditional counselling setup which made it lucid that at the epistemic core of any counseling process, African people had well-developed mechanisms and strategies that enabled them to transcend life adversities long before Europe could naturally claim the whole thing as ‘hers’ in the name of the so-called professional counselling in this contemporary epoch. It is also clear that central to that type of traditional counseling is their philosophy of life cemented with the cultural values of the African people to make it meaningful and relevant. It was noted in the previous chapter which interrogated on the nature of the matters deliberated on Sis Noe blogspot that while print media (Sunday News) as a ‘counseling’ platform is playing a crucial role especially among the youths through the impartation of problem-solving skills to their everyday life challenges, its downplaying role on the African philosophical understanding of courtship, marriage and sexual matters triggered questions to be answered. This then motivated the researcher to further seek the relevance of Sis Noe blogspot within the African cultural matrix since culture is central to all guidance and counseling (Pedersen, 1991).

The media practitioners specifically from the Sunday News staff as mainly targeted participants of this study, the academics in the field of culture, the youths as well as the elderly people in the society were interviewed by the researcher. A Focus group discussion of twenty youths also supplemented with the needed data of this study as the participants immensely contributed to the questions that begged answers from the researcher and various constructive views and opinions dominated the discussion. This study used the content analysis method which allowed the

researcher to critically explore from an Afrocentric standpoint various matters or problems that are deliberated on Sis Noe blogspot through the means of reading them from the Sunday newspapers he came across and considered relevant to the study.

4.2 The Participants' Profile

This section comprises of a brief description of the respondents which provided the researcher with the relevant data from the conducted interviews only.

The researcher managed to interview four elderly people who were accessible to the researcher, with two coming from Hwange district and the other remaining two from Lupane area who immensely explained on how courtship, marriage and sexual matters are handled among the African societies. These respondents had to demonstrate to the researcher that African people have their own unique understanding and philosophy of life which manifest whenever they approach any courtship, marriage and sexual problem. Hence any counseling and guidance setup which revolves around these matters is to be deemed meaningful and culturally satisfying and relevant if ever it aligns itself with how African people perceive their reality. These participants will be labelled as **A**, **B**, **C** and **D** in table 1 as illustrated below.

Interviewee	Description
A	A male person who is a village head of the Nguminja residential area in Hwange and he is in his early seventies.
B	A headman of the Gundwane rural area in Lupane who is turning 82 years this year.
C	A female interviewee who is in her early seventies and residing at Menyezwa ward 20 in Lupane
D	Another female participant in her late sixties residing in Hwange area

In addition to the above information, four academics in the field of culture were also interviewed. These respondents constructively gave this study a critical stance and appreciation

of Sis Noe blogspot in ‘counseling’ youths on courtship, marriage and sexual matters. These will be presented as **E**, **F**, **G** and **H** in table 2 as demonstrated below:

Interviewee	Description
E	A male who is also a renowned cultural historian who wrote a number of books on the Ndebele, Kalanga, Tonga, Nambya and Shona cultures.
F	A male participant who is also a Professor in the Department of African Languages and Culture at Midlands State University.
G	Another doctorate holder in the Department of African Languages and Culture and also an expert in culture and counselling studies
H	A female participant who is also an expert in culture and counselling studies at Midlands State University.

Also three media practitioners specifically from the Sunday News staff were interviewed physically by the researcher. These largely furnished the researcher with the needed information on who is really Sis Noe, background of Sis Noe blogspot and its role as a ‘counseling’ platform. These will be labelled as **J**, **K** and **L** as indicated in table 3 below:

Interviewee	Description
J	A senior reporter in Sunday News
K	Another Sunday News correspondent from Hwange
L	Sunday News editor

4.3 POSITIVES OF SIS NOE BLOGSPOT

4.3.1 Sharing of knowledge through dialoguing

Findings have indicated that Sis Noe blogspot is playing a crucial role in the sharing of knowledge with ‘her’ ‘counseles’ through creating a platform where ‘she’ dialogues with them

pertaining their various social, behavioral, physical, psychological and emotional problems. According to Freire Paulo cited in Durakoglu (2013:105), dialoguing which is "...the encounter of the people with each other", is part and parcel of human nature and by implication, African people are not an exception when one objectively looks at the nature of traditional counseling which has been discussed in 2.3 in Chapter 2. That is to say, dialoguing points to the undeniable fact that people need each other in order to discover and know more about themselves which even in turn affirm their identity. For this reason, Ramose cited in Coetzee and Roux (eds) (2002) further cement the above view that dialogue is the basis of deliberation. Thus, according to Freire(2011) cited in Durakoglu (2013:105), it is clear that the one who does not love the life and the people, who lacks humility, who does not have faith, hope and courage as essential preconditions of a dialogue, "cannot enter into a dialogue". As a matter of fact, Sis Noe as 'she' also pointed out in 'her' responses to the researcher, shares the necessary knowledge 'she' possesses with 'her' 'counselees' in order for them to learn more, discover and understand themselves better as they engage in a dialogue via the WhatsApp platform after which the exchange of that knowledge as feedback is dedicated under a Sunday Newspaper section titled '**Chat with Sis Noe**' as indicated in section 3.3 in the previous chapter in an effort to solve their life problems. To concretize and further cement this view, one of the respondents from a focus group discussion conducted by the researcher had this to say:

According to my own opinion, I think people who chat with Sis Noe are given a chance to ask and open up on things they do not know and they are told free of charge unlike in other professional counselling sessions. Also, you will realize that a lot of youths nowadays are filled with ignorance on certain issues to do with sex, marriage, courtship and other life problems they are experiencing and Sis Noe comes in to fill that missing gap

This idea also corroborates with the following evidence from the Sunday news Online of 17 April 2017:

Hi Sis Noe

I JUST found out I am two months pregnant. I want to know whether it is ok to run while I am pregnant. — **Worried.**

Reply

Yes, you can run but not too much. In fact, you should visit your doctor to find out how and when you should run.

Physical activities during pregnancy help to increase endurance, muscle strength, blood flow, and energy levels. It also helps to soothe and prevent back pain and cramping and helps to deliver oxygen to the foetus. For these reasons, medical professionals usually advise those who are healthy and not experiencing a complicated pregnancy to engage in at least 150 minutes of physical activity every week.

What is of chief importance about the above dialogue is that the ‘counselee’ in question seems to lack knowledge about whether it is good for her to exercise through running as she is pregnant and fearing for the complications that might result from that. The response itself to the problem in question is elevating as it explains how important physical exercises are especially during her pregnancy period. At the end of the day she becomes empowered with some knowhow as a new mother on how to cope with such a precarious situation.

4.3.2 Empowerment of the youths with problem solving skills

Not only does the platform provide its ‘counselees’ with just knowledge ranging from relationships, marriage, courtship and sexual problems as indicated in section 3.4 in the previous chapter but also nourishes them with some necessary problem solving skills as also concurred by the research findings from the interviews and focus group discussion. From a human factor perspective, which is also grounded on an Africentric thought, Sis Noe on behalf of the Zimbabwean communities, is making individuals to become empowered beings with survival or problem-solving skills in case of looming problems they encounter which is one of the essential components of human factor development which valorizes the impartation of life skills to a person (Chivaura and Mararike, 1998).

Thus, Menkiti, (1984:179) has the following to say:

“...in the African understanding, human community plays a crucial role in the individual’s acquisition of full personhood”

It is evident in the above statement that for an individual to be called a ‘complete’ being, which is the major drive of human factor development, it is the role of the community, usually the elderly who are both the conscience as well the experts on life in a given community to impart to that ‘incomplete’ individual the needed necessary skills for survival during her/his life endeavors since life from an African philosophical standpoint is understood as never always rosy but coupled with challenges that are to be dealt with head-on.

Looking at the case of Sunday News Online of 15 February 2015, the worried female youth ‘counselee’ asks for advice on her husband who seems to be complaining about the cost on everything that his wife wants to buy ever since he got retired from his job and she is advised as following:

Reply

Adapting to retirement after a busy career is incredibly difficult, which is why he is probably trying to take on your role. Clearly he still has a lot to give, so calmly discuss what he could do next. Above all, you have to keep communicating. He needs to understand his role at home and you need to be patient with him. Urge him to find a hobby that will take up most his time. Being idle is the reason he is taking out his frustrations on you.

Of paramount importance to note in this response to the above stated problem is that the ‘counselee’ in question is geared to learn and realize the importance of communication among other marriage problem-solving skills in any marriage set which are essential to diagnose marital disputes between married couples rather than keeping quiet about the problem at hand which can be detrimental and marriage threatening. Hence Van Pelt (1980) is quick to concur with the above observation by noting that building up a healthy marriage is a complex task altogether that can only be achieved through acquiring necessary knowledge, skills and efforts by the married couples. A happy marriage from an Afrocentric perspective is not defined by the absence of conflict but rather the possession of conflict resolution skills needed to hold the marriage

together(Kapwepwe, 1994). This therefore credits Sis Noe positive role in imparting problem solving skills to the youths.

4.4 WEAKNESSES OF SIS NOE BLOGSPOT

The research findings indicated that Sis Noe blogspot role in ‘counselling’ the youths is questionable which cannot go unraveled although the above section has highlighted on its positive role.

4.4.1 Lack of respect of the African audience’s cultural values

According to the research findings, the blogspot in question seem to pose a serious downplaying of the African philosophical approach as far as sexual, courtship and marital issues are understood within the African cultural matrix. Interviewees **A** and **D** who also confirmed to have come across with Sis Noe blogspot on Sunday newspaper, raised concerns and lamented on how the once respected sexual matters which were talked of in private settings have turned to be a publicized phenomenon regardless of who hears or sees it in this so-called modernized Zimbabwean society. Interviewee **A** went on to say this has even distorted the sacredness that was attached to sexual matters in the African context and he had the following words to say:

Mzukulw wami into zocansi esintwini zazihloniphisa kakhulu njalo kuyazila ukuziveza nje ephakathini bhadla. Kodwa isikhathesi senu lesi kasiselandaba lakho lokhu sekuyinto nje ethathwa kalula kungakhathalekile ukuthi ngubani ozwayo

My grandson, the sexual matters were treated with great respect among the African society and it was a taboo and culturally offensive to be just paraded in the public. But today things have changed and people no longer have that respect anymore.

This concern corresponds with the view from the Research paper on Africa’s Print Media (2006) titled **Sexuality in the media ‘Emerging issues in Africa’** that while the sexual issues in this contemporary Zimbabwean society seems to have achieved extraordinary prominence in print media which automatically points to Sis Noe blogspot in Sunday News as one of them, this does not necessarily denote that therefore there is widespread comfort or acceptance of their explicit exposal among the African audience. Mpofu, (2012:93) is quick to agree with interviewee **A** as far as the Sis Noe blogspot is concerned and notes that “it is offensive to notice that the marital and sexually related issues which have always been private matters have been pushed into the

public sphere” hence showing a serious lack of respect of the African audience’s cultural values in the name of the so-called business.

4.4.2 Undermining the efficacy of African beliefs and indigenous knowledge systems

Research findings revealed to the researcher that Sis Noe blogspot is ‘too’ silent in considering the culturally diverse beliefs systems as well the cultural capital from indigenous knowledge systems which might even prove fruitful to problem solving among ‘her’ ‘counselees’ in question as ‘she’ seems to be assuming that every problem’s solution is only obtained via the western models of dealing with problems and forgetting the multi-cultural environment of the contemporary Zimbabwe fecund with its indigenous knowledge systems . This is corroborated with some problems to do with sexual problems like sexual dysfunctions whose solutions seem to only overemphasize on the western methods and denying the effectiveness and the capacity of the indigenous traditional medicinal methods that might help the ‘counselees’ solve their sexual problems. Everyone who has the problem is advised to go and see a doctor or a therapist as ‘suitable’ problem solvers. As argued by Gross and Adebowale, (2014:355), this is far from suggesting that western models of solving such problems cannot be used in this contemporary Zimbabwe but Lalonde (2006:693) cited in Makaudze (2015) is quick to respond to that by noting that “not all western approaches can successfully address Zimbabwean Africanized problems”. Hence such lack of consideration of the efficacy of the African people’s belief and indigenous knowledge systems, whether done deliberately or out of mere ignorance, implies that at the end of the day ‘she’ is grooming the youths who will fail to see any contribution of their local cultures or indigenous knowledge systems in an attempt to diagnose their problems and with an effect of making them think that only modern ways are forward-looking while African traditional ways are backward looking and therefore belonging to the dustbin of history. Besides, Bourdillon, (1976:172) among other scholars notes that there are indigenous ways of dealing with various problems, for instance, the sexual matters among other problems “about which western medicine is thought to know nothing”. According to Sis Noe response to the researcher, ‘she’ had to say that African traditional mechanisms of dealing with such problems are still very much relevant to this contemporary era but however, ‘her’ too western discipleship approach to problem-solving automatically betrays ‘her’ on what ‘she’ deems necessary. Emeagwa and Sefa Dei (2014: vii) also lament Sis Noe approach with the fact that only if ‘she’ knew that “even

western-trained doctors have testified the brilliance and superiority of the African indigenous medical ways although too afraid” to swallow their pride and “openly acknowledge their findings”.

4.4.3 Directional ‘counseling’ approach

Another exposed weakness of Sis Noe blogspot, as revealed by the research findings is its directional ‘counselling’ approach in the sense that unlike the traditional way of counselling which is bidirectional, meaning the presence of the expected conversation between the two persons, that is, the counselee and the counselor one on one, the blogspot in question is quite the opposite. According to interviewees **D** and **H**, the researcher learnt that this rather complicate the whole ‘counselling’ process as there will be need for clarifications as the ‘counsees’ only attempt interpreting what is written without further clarity from their ‘counselor’ Sis Noe. Hence, there is possibility of the ‘counsees’ misinterpreting the intended suggested possible solutions from their ‘counselor’ Sis Noe which might pose serious setbacks. To cement the above view, one of the participants from a focus group discussion had this to say:

Counselling on its own is a process that needs to be done one on one since non-verbal communication also counts because the counselor has to take note of such information from his or her client so as to give satisfactory advice

It becomes clear from the above statement that Sis Noe blogspot which is bereft of such crucial non-verbal communication has been found wanting, hence its effectiveness doubted (Rochlen, et. al, 2004).

4.4.4 Changing role of who is supposed to counsel who

Findings have revealed a changing scenario on who is supposed to counsel who as Sis Noe seems to ‘counsel’ everyone regardless of age and sex. Unlike the traditional counseling set up which had its clear demarcations on who counsels who as indicated in chapter 2, the blogspot in question boggles the mind of the researcher as it tends to centralize such a big task to a single person. Besides, according to interviewees **J**, **K** and **L**, the researcher learnt that Sis Noe is a male person who is in his early 30s and that on its own becomes problematic and questionable as far as the knowledgeable and experience which made a counsel fit to counsel someone in the traditional counselling setup (Ndlovu and Hove, 2015). How can ‘she’ claim to be ‘all knowing’ while even the African sages who are the elderly as the key actors in traditional counseling felt a

demarcation on who counsels who was very paramount? While ‘she’ has remained a hidden face from the public which has made the ‘counselees’ not to notice who really the person is and meant ‘business’ as usual, such becomes problematic as questions like how reliable then is that information which ‘she’ will be offering the youths? And if ‘she’ does research, does ‘she’ carefully extract the information which is relevant or in tandem with the African existential philosophy on those deliberated matters? Such doubts have been proven correct after the interrogation of the matters in Sis Noe blogspot in section 3.4 in Chapter 3 on sexual matters, for instance, where Sis Noe’s advices like anal sex styles are clearly against the African ethos, hence betraying the effectiveness as well as relevance of that given information to the African audience, the youths to be specific.

4.4.5 Language as a problem

Despite of the fact that English language which is only a preferred language in the blogspot as it cut across ethnic boundaries of the youths in need of the advice from Sis Noe, the research findings from the focus group discussion revealed that the use of the local indigenous languages which can still accommodate other recipients who are not well-versed with English is not given any room. By implication, those who are not proficient in speaking the English language are automatically shut out of the dialogue.

4.4.6 Ineffective counselling strategies

According to the research findings, they also indicated that the counselling strategies employed by Sis Noe are palliative rather than attacking the root causes of the problems experienced by the youths. Unlike, the traditional type of counselling that had to explore the root cause of every problem that an individual happened to experience as concurred by Bourdillon (1976), both Interviewee **E** and **D** highlighted to the researcher that the blogspot in question seems to be tantamount to a “pain killer” as it simply react to the problems at hand and not necessarily dig deep to understand their root causes. At the end of the day the suggested solutions may be biased and not addressing what really gave rise to the problem at hand hence complicating the situation of a ‘counselee’ in question than solving it.

Another participant from a focus group discussion, also highlighted that even the space dedicated under the section ‘**Chat with Sis Noe**’ for information or advice becomes inadequate as it tend to

limit the ‘counselee’ in exploring a lot of issues surrounding the problem at hand while on the other hand limiting the ‘counselor’ Sis Noe in giving enough detail in ‘her’ responses as she will be attending to a number of ‘counselees’ who would have sent their various problems and all to be accommodated in that same column simultaneously.

The research findings also reveal that Sis Noe blogspot does not allow people especially married couples to get that kind of ‘counselling’ together as a couple. Thus, one can get it undercover without the knowledge of the other partner which might even threaten the marriage itself as the other partner is made to conform and abide by certain ideas brought into the marriage setup by the ‘third party’ Sis Noe. Hence, this kind of individualism which is not even African at all overrides the effectiveness of those marriage suggested solutions given to the ‘counselees’ in question since among the African societies success in any marriage setup requires the couple who collectively understand after being taught to them what is required of them after which they collectively work towards achieving it, (Van Pelt, 1980).

Also noted from the research findings is the nature of the blogspot in question which interviewee **D** labelled as “too open to the public” to the extent that with various delicate matters like marriage problems which were handled in an appropriate secluded setting as argued by one of the Afrocentric scholars like Nyathi,(2001), can even today scare away youths from entering the marriage institution itself which becomes contrary and in turn decampaign the African existential philosophy where being husbandless and wifeless is never a virtue at all (p’Bitek, 1986).

4.5 POSSIBLE EFFECTS ON YOUTHS RELYING ON SIS NOE BLOGSPOT

4.5.1 Promotion of immoral behavior

Research findings revealed that rather than helping the youths to solve their different problems they encounter, the very blogspot is on other hand indirectly recruiting youths with unbecoming immoral behavior. Interviewees **D** and **H**, highlighted to the researcher that the blogspot is likely to promote immoral behavior, citing the kind of sex styles like anal sex and oral sex which are encouraged among the youths to quench their sexual desires. Suffice to say that the above interviewees made it clear that such advices are mind polluting and very irrelevant to the African ethos as far as sex is understood. Besides, as pointed out in chapter3 on the section of sexual matters in the blogspot, it is clear that sex has been reduced to a mere recreational activity or a

hobby where anyone can experiment as long as he/she feels like doing it contrary to the African understanding which was solely meant for procreation and production. In other words, the youths are made to adopt the western understanding of sex, hence killing their latent potential to become effective, morally upright and responsible citizens within their African context in this Zimbabwean contemporary society.

In addition to the above findings, interviewee **D** further indicated that even when it comes to courtship which is done via the blogspot it has the possible effect of promoting prostitution and loss of morals among the youths as indicated in his following statements:

That kind of courtship is promoting prostitution and loss of morals. It creates problems than solving them as those relationship that take place via the blogspot may not even last since those who seek relationships through the media usually have sinister agendas.

It is chief to notice from the above view that at the end of the day, the traditional type of courtship which is genuinely done face to face claims its credibility as it gives the ‘lost and found’ lovers enough room to fully know each other by giving ample room for the ‘loved’ ones to physically assess the genuineness of their suitors’ love proposals and intentions.

4.5.2 Wheelbarrow mentality

Among other possible effects of Sis Noe blogspot on the youths as revealed by the research findings is the wheelbarrow mentality as pointed out by the focus group discussion participants as some indicated that the blogspot has cultivated a ‘stupid’ feeling among the youths where they can even ask for advices on somethings which have obvious answers of which they can figure out solutions on their own. One of the respondents in a focus group discussion highlighted that it has made some youths to become very lazy to take action on serious issues that they will be experiencing with the false impression that ‘I will wait for Sis Noe to tell me what to do’ as if they are the objects to be acted upon. This wheelbarrow mentality then fails the Afrocentricity paradigm which advocates for the African people to view themselves as active subjects who have the agency to stand tall and solve their own problems and not objects to be acted upon.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has established that Sis Noe blogspot is playing a crucial role in the sharing of knowledge through dialoguing with the ‘counselees’ the youths who seems to be experiencing various problems in their lives. Not only does it offer them knowledge on sexual, marriage, courtship and relationship problems but with problem-solving skills to their problems. However, its weaknesses as well as the possible effects on youths relying in that blogspot in question did not go unnoticed as these have undermined and downtrodden African philosophical understanding on the matters of sex, courtship and marriage, hence its effectiveness and relevance to the African audience questionable and problematic.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, the researcher seeks to summarize, give out the conclusion as well as the recommendations that can motivate and inspire further research to be carried out.

The major drive of this study is the Afrocentric muse on Sis Noe blogspot in ‘counseling’ youths on courtship, marriage and sexual matters in Sunday News. This study is made of five chapters with chapter 1 being the general introduction of this research which highlights area of investigation, background of study, statement of the problem, research objectives, justification of the study, literature review, theoretical framework, research methodology, ethical considerations, delimitation as well as limitations of this study.

The Afrocentric stance adopted by this study wanted to find out whether this type of ‘counselling’ is in tandem with the African cultural matrix and world view as far as the handling of courtship, marriage and sexual matters is concerned. Energized by the Afrocentricity paradigm which was popularised by Molefi Kete Asante in the 1980s, this study meant to understand the African understanding and the treatment of courtship, marriage as well sexual matters by centering African people’s history and cultural values, norms, beliefs in any deliberation of the matters from Sis Noe blogspot.

The objectives of this study meant to outline and discuss the African understanding and philosophy of life behind the handling of courtship, marriage and sexual matters, to explore the nature of ‘counseling’ delivered to the youths through Sis Noe blogspot and to excavate the relevance of such ‘counseling’ vis-a-vis the African understanding of courtship, marriage and sexual matters. The qualitative research design was adopted by this study and the target population was purposively chosen. Data gathering tool deemed necessary for this research include interviews and a focus group discussion.

In chapter 2, the research further explored the African philosophy in the handling of courtship, marriage and sexual matters after having defined the concept of African philosophy. It established that African people think, understand, interpret, perceive their own world differently from that of Europe, hence at the end of the day they tell their own unique special cultural truth

in a different manner which need not to be overlooked. Also the exercise of understanding the concept of African philosophy was also necessary for the researcher to further understand how it permeates or influence or shape the nature of traditional counselling which was also looked at in this chapter. The study also established that the African philosophy of life act as the fecund wellspring that nourishes and embellish traditional counseling with its communalistic approach of life, compassion towards one another, harmonious blending, cooperation, hope in times of hardships, Ubuntu, respect, sharing and solidarity to mention a few. Anything outside this African existential philosophy is alien and therefore not African at all and this then motivated the researcher to further look at the nature of ‘counseling’ or matters deliberated in Sis Noe blogspot.

The researcher advanced to Chapter 3 where he then interrogated the nature of Sis Noe blogspot in Sunday News after being informed by the traditional ways of dealing with courtship, marriage and sexual matters. This study established that Sis Noe blogspot is playing a crucial role in offering advice to the youths on various problems such as sexual, marriage, courtship and relationship problems amongst others. It is in this chapter that the concept of youth was further unpacked as the researcher felt that the concept of being a youth cannot be taken as a ‘neutral’ phenomenon which simply implies the general description of youth people. The questions like who is a youth and what makes the person to be called a youth and by who, necessitated the unpacking of the concept as scholars like Spence, (2005) noted that meanings attached to being young in a given society has both socio-cultural as well as biological underpinnings. A detailed background of who is Sis Noe and brief information on when the blogspot was initiated as well the major impetus for its initiation was provided in this chapter. The chapter concluded that although Sis Noe blogspot is playing a crucial role in ‘counseling’ or offering problem-solving skills and knowhow to the youths experiencing various aforementioned problems, the researcher noted that it had its weaknesses as far as the African treatment of sexual, marriage and courtship matters is concerned. This then triggered the effort to further look on the positives as well as the weaknesses of the blogspot in question in chapter 4. Unlike, in chapter 3 where the researcher was interested in tackling various matters deliberated in the blogspot, this chapter 4 focus narrowed to excavate the relevance of Sis Noe blogspot vis-à-vis with the African philosophy on courtship, marriage and sexual matters as guided by the major mission of the study.

From the research findings, it can be noted that Sis Noe blogspot despite having its positive role of sharing knowledge through dialoguing with the youths as well as empowering them with the problem-solving skills, its weaknesses could not go unnoticed and one of them is the glaring lack of respect of the African audience's cultural values. Unlike the traditional ways of handling the culturally sensitive matters like sexual problems with great respect and in a private setting as African people uphold respect, as a crucial element of Ubuntu philosophy, it is sadistic to note that it has become the other way round with Sis Noe blogspot which has shown serious lack of the African audience cultural values as even cemented by interviewee **A** and other scholars as highlighted above.

The research findings also proved beyond reasonable doubt that the blogspot in question is being 'too silent' or undermining the efficacy of the African beliefs and indigenous knowledge systems which other Afrocentric scholars like Mutswanga, Tom and Tsvuura(2014) in a research article titled "*A Relook at the Usefulness of Indigenous Knowledge systems in Counseling: A Focus on views of Zimbabwe Open University Master of Science in Counseling students*" have seen the necessity of the indigenous approaches to be effectively blended together with the western models of solving problems for the so-called professional counseling to be meaningful and effective to the Zimbabwean African societies. Such concern emanates from the fact that Sis Noe as a 'counsellor' seems to overlook the aspect of a culturally diverse Zimbabwean society where 'she' has only offered advice that overemphasize the western ways of dealing with the various problems from 'her' 'counselees', that is, going to a therapist or seeing a doctor as 'suitable' problem solvers. Thus the researcher noted that 'she' tend to forget or rather fail to acknowledge the indisputable fact that African people are not junior brothers to counseling which is rather an old institution that existed among them before the intrusion of the so-called professional counseling (Ndlovu and Hove, 2015) and as such, indigenous knowledge and African beliefs systems have since time immemorial proved their brilliance in solving the problems than the western ways which tend to be more scientific in addressing than being realistic within the African understanding or existential philosophy.

Further weaknesses of the blogspot in question came out when the research findings revealed that there is a changing role of who is to counsel who as highlighted in the previous chapter. Interviewee **E** made it clear to the researcher that traditional counseling have clear demarcations

on who counsels who since both cultural sensitivity and experience in those deliberated matters is imperative in any counseling session. Although Sis Noe has remained as a hidden face from the public according to the information got by the researcher from interviewees **J, K** and **L** as indicated in Chapter 3 that Sis Noe is said to be a male person who is in his early 30s, this then cast serious doubt as to how such a big task has been now trivialized to be carried out by a single male person who ‘out of the blue’ claims to “have seen it all” without tangible evidence after which ‘she’ feels ready to ‘counsel’ or offer advice to people in all facets of life regardless of age or sex. Hence such a ‘counselor’ becomes questionable as far as the African ethos is concerned.

Furthermore, a further inquiry on the blogspot’s ‘counseling’ strategies, research findings have proved that they are not effective to produce the desired goal of counseling or advice giving. Interviewee **D** and **E** noted that the blogspot in question seem to be palliative than attacking the root causes of the problems experience by the youths as it simply reacts to the problems and not necessarily digging deep to understand their root causes. That is completely contrary to the traditional way of counseling where the root cause of the problem was the major targeted culprit as argued by Bourdillon, (1976) and not manifestations of the problem at hand which is Sis Noe blogspot is targeting, hence complicating the situation rather than solving it.

More so, the research findings from the focus group discussion as another employed crucial data gathering tool, noted another weakness of the blogspot in question as it promotes individualistic behavior among the married couples to single out marriage matters among other problems as it seems to open room for one partner to get ‘counseling’ undercover without the knowledge of the other partner which might even threaten the marriage itself as the other partner is made to conform and abide by certain ideas brought into the marriage setup by the ‘third party’ Sis Noe. This is completely a different case altogether when one looks at the traditional counseling set up where marriage problems were addressed with both husband and wife present before the elders so as to collectively empower them to stand tall and realize their responsibilities and roles to play in their marriage to achieve unity of purpose and harmony which are essential elements for marriage sustainability.

The research findings further established that there are possible effects of relying on the blogspot by the youths and one of the glaring ones is the promotion of immoral behavior among the

youths. This study established that unlike the traditional counseling set up which groomed youths with a sense of responsibility and moral values of the African communities, the blogspot in question is recruiting youths with unbecoming immoral behavior. As indicated in chapter 3 on the section of sexual matters in the blogspot, it is clear that the sex styles like anal or oral sex are mind polluting to the youths and indicate that sex has been reduced to being a mere recreational activity or hobby where anyone can experiment as long as he or she feels like doing it which is the very anathema to the African understanding of sex which was meant for procreation and production.

The researcher recommends further research on the effectiveness of the media platforms like Mai Chisamba and other television or radio programs in counseling the people of Zimbabwe as this research was mainly concerned with the role of media through Sis Noe blogspot in counseling youths on courtship, marriage and sexual matters in Sunday News.

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APPENDIX 1

IMIBUZO EQONDANE LABANTU ABADALA

Ibizo lami nginguJeremiah Mlauzi ngifunda e-Midlands State University, ngiku**Department ye-African Languages and Culture**. Ngikumnyaka wesine. Ngesidingeko sokugqiba izifundo zami, ngiyenza i-research elesihloko esithi **An Afrocentric muse on Sis' Noe blogspot in 'counselling' youths on courtship, marriage and sexual matters in Sunday News**. Lesihloko sijonge ukuzwisisisa ukuqutshwa kwendaba eziphathelane lokukhombisana, umendo locansi okwenzakala ku-blogspot ka**Sis Noe** ephuma kuphephandaba leSunday News lapho exwayisa khona intsha yeZimbabwe ngezinhlobo zayo ezitshiyeneyo. Ngicela ukuphathiswa ngolwazi engiludingayo ngokuphendula imibuzi elandelayo. Ukuphathisa kwakho kuyamukeleka kakhulu njalo ulwazi lonke oluzatholakala luzalondolozwa ngefihlo luphinde njalo lusentshenziswe ezifundweni kuphela.

1. Ngamazwi akho, yisiphi isiqokoqela kumbe umkantsho wenjongo wokulaywa ngomendo (marriage counselling) kubantu abansundu?
2. Eshlakalweni sokuthi omunye umuntu uvelelwe yindaba kumbe inkinga emendweni, kwakuqhutshwa njani?
3. Ngubani okwakumele atshelwe ngaleyo nkinga yomendo njalo kwakulesizatho bani?
4. Ucabanga ukuthi indlela yokuqhutshwa lokulungiswa kwezinkinga ezazisehlela immendo ekadeni ilokhe isalandelwa yini kulezinsuku? Nxa kungenjalo kuyini imbangela?
5. Ngolwazi lwakho, kuyini ukukhombisana esintwini sabantu abansundu?
6. Kwakuqakatheke ngani njalo kuqhutshwa njani?
7. Yiphi inguguko ongayitsho kumbe osuyibonile ngendlela ukukhombisana okwakusenziwa ngayo ekadeni uqathanisa lakulezinsuku kweleZimbabwe?
8. Nxa ikhona inguquko kundlela zokukhombisana kulezinsuku ungathini ngakho nje ngamafitshane?

9. Nxa kwakulomuntu ophathwe yinkinga loba uhlupho oluphathelane lokukhombisana, ngubani owayebikelwa njalo ngasizatho bani?
10. Indaba ezaziphathelane locansi zaziqhutshwa njani kubantu abansundu?
11. Ekwenzekeni ukuthi omunye umuntu ayehlelwe luhlupho oluphathelane lozecansi, kwakuqhutshwa njani njalo ngubani owayebikelwa indaba enjalo njalo ngasiphi isizatho?
12. Ngombono wakho yikuphi ongakutsho ngendlela ucansi osoluphathwa ngayo kungabe kumaphephandaba loba ngezinye indlela zakulezinsuku nxa ulolwazi oluthile ngakho?

Ngiyabonga ngethuba lenu

English Version

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ELDERS

I am Jeremiah Mlauzi, an undergraduate student with the Midlands State University in the Department of African Languages and Culture. I am carrying out an academic research with the title “An Afrocentric muse on Sis Noe’s blogspot in ‘counselling’ youths on courtship, marriage and sexual matters in Sunday News”. I kindly ask for your contribution by explaining to me how the issues of courtship, marriage and sex were handled or dealt with among the African people in trying to solve them. Your responses will be of great help as they will assist the researcher to generate arguments for the dissertation. Please be assured that the information will be strictly used for academic purposes only and your effort will be greatly appreciated.

1. In your own words, what were the purposes of marriage counselling among the African societies?
2. In case of any marriage related problem occurrence, how was it handled during your times?
3. Who was supposed to be told or hear that particular problem and for what reasons?

4. Do you think marriage problems are still handled effectively nowadays the way they were dealt with according your experiences and knowledge of the past? If not, what could be the causes of that?
5. According to your understanding and knowledge, what is courtship?
6. What is its importance and value in the African societies?
7. Any changes that you have noted in the way courtship is done nowadays? What is your comment on that?
8. If an individual was having a courtship-related problem, who was supposed to hear that problem and for what reason?
9. How were the issues to do with sex treated among the African people?
10. In case of a sexual problem from an individual, how was it dealt with?
11. Who was to hear that kind of a sexual problem and for what purpose?
12. What is your opinion the way sexual issues are dealt with especially in the print and electronic media platforms in this contemporary Zimbabwe if you have any knowledge on that?

Thank You for Your Time

APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SIS NOE

I am Jeremiah Mlauzi, an undergraduate student with the Midlands State University in the Department of African Languages and Culture. I am carrying out an academic research with the title “An Afrocentric muse on Sis Noe blogspot in ‘counselling’ youths on courtship, marriage and sexual matters in Sunday News”. I kindly ask for your contribution by way of filling in this questionnaire. Your responses will be of great help as they will assist the researcher to generate arguments for the dissertation. Please be assured that the information will be strictly used for academic purposes only and your effort will be greatly appreciated.

1. When was this blogspot initiated in Sunday Newspaper and what gave impetus to its initiation?.....
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2. In your explanation, what is Sis Noe blogspot all about?

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3. According to your exposure and accumulated experiences, what kind of problems or matters sent to your blogspot by the youths?

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4. In understand you have received various sexual, courtship and marriage problems from various individuals, how have you helped them deal with or overcome such matters? Which strategies do you use?

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5. I understand most counselling and guidance procedures follow a certain standard of rules or ethics when counselling? If ever the blog is playing a similar role, what are the guidelines

that you employ, follow or use when imparting problem solving deliberations in your blogspot?

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6. In your opinion, do you think an African understanding or ways of handling courtship, marriage and sexual matters is still relevant to the youths in this Zimbabwean contemporary society as far as the problems they encounter are concerned? In what way if so? If not, express yourself

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7. In your own opinion, what do you think can be the causes of such marriage, courtship and sexual problems among the youths in the contemporary Zimbabwean society?.....

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8. I find the title ‘Sis Noe’ fascinating. Why the preferred term ‘Sis Noe’ as the name of your platform?.....
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9. Some would deem traditional way of courtship as outdated as compared to the modern way which is quick and fast especially via media. What is your view on that?.....
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APPENDIX 3
FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

I am Jeremiah Mlauzi, an undergraduate student with the Midlands State University in the Department of African Languages and Culture. I am carrying out an academic research with the title **“An Afrocentric muse on Sis’Noe blogspot in ‘counselling’ youths on courtship, marriage and sexual matters in Sunday News”**. I kindly ask for your contribution by responding to the following questions that I will be asking you in this focus group discussion and

all of your different views and opinions will be of great help in this discussion. Please be assured that the information will be strictly used for academic purposes only and your effort will be greatly appreciated.

1. What can you say about courtship/ukukhombisana/kupfimbana that is done through media platforms?
2. According to your own opinion, do you think marriage counselling via media platforms is effective? If yes how? And if not express yourself?
3. In your own view, how is media treating the sexual matters putting in mind the culturally sensitivity of those among the African Cultures? What are your comments on that?
4. What do you think can make media an effective and successful counselling tool in this contemporary Zimbabwean society?
5. What can you say are the challenges or problems that are associated with media as a counselling platform?
6. Do you know Sis Noe blogspot in Sunday News? If yes, what do you think is its sole purpose?
7. If you know it, do you think it is a necessary platform for the youths? If yes how and if not express yourself?

Thank you for your contributions!

Plate 1

Hi Sis Noe

My boyfriend wants us to have anal sex. Is it painful? Won't it jeopardise my health? — **Worried.**

Reply

Anal sex has become more common in heterosexual relationships, partly because people have watched porn in which this activity so frequently occurs. In porn it is presented as something that is both routine and painless for women. In real life, this is not the case. Anal intercourse is often very painful for women, particularly the first few times. Contrary to what you probably heard, anal sex does not loosen the anus or cause an inability to control bowel movements. However, there can be risks associated with anal sex other than sexually transmitted infections, so it's important to take steps to minimise these risks. Friction, the enemy of pleasure and safety during sex, is produced during anal sex, much as it is during vaginal sex. However, friction may be more of an issue during anal sex because the lining of the anus is more delicate and produces less natural lubricant than the vagina. So if you are going to do it, use lots of lubrication and your man should wear a condom.

Your man should not move from your anus to your vagina using the same condom and you must stop him if the pain is unbearable. Anal sex may make a person more susceptible to bacterial infection around the anus and rectum. This is because the lining of the rectum is not as heavy as the lining of the vagina, so it is more susceptible to tears. If the anus or rectum does get torn, it does not heal as quickly. Because faeces that pass through the rectum contain bacteria, any tear in the lining is at risk of getting infected. Lining tears may lead to other problems such as an anal abscess, which can make transmission of STIs and HIV more likely. This is why unprotected anal sex is often considered riskier than unprotected oral or vaginal sex.

Plate 2

Hi Sis Noe

I'm a 25-year-old woman and I am always horny. I always want sex even if I have it five times in one day. I masturbate every day and I can't stop touching myself. It's been about a year now since my sex drive has increased. I can't stop thinking about sex. — **Help.**

Reply

It is quite natural for some people to have a relatively strong sex drive. Sometimes, you have increased sex drive because of hormonal and physical changes. You may even feel sexually excited when you are in a new relationship.

There are instances, however, when increased sex drive indicates a psychological and even a physical problem. That is when it starts interfering with your daily life. Five times a day is a bit too much. Maybe you have bipolar disorder, it is characterised by extreme changes in your mood — from the lows of depression to the highs of mania. Hyper sexuality is often a symptom of bipolar disorder. This mental illness is treatable. Your overactive sex drive could be due to dementia. Research shows that people with dementia may exhibit inappropriate sexual behaviours, such as masturbating, using obscenities or exposing themselves. It affects both men and women and is usually common in people with severe dementia. Maybe it's persistent genital arousal disorder — women with this condition are always in a state of arousal and do not find relief even after having an orgasm. The feeling may last from days to weeks.

Several treatment options are now available, including hormonal therapy, antidepressants, behaviour therapy and anaesthetising gels. There are also other diseases such as rabies that cause an abnormal sex drive, I can't list them all.

In a nutshell, your sex drive has interfered with your daily life, you need to talk to your doctor and figure out if you have any medical problem. Your doctor can usually identify the underlying cause of your high sex drive

Plate 3

Hi Sis Noe

I AM 26 and married. After ejaculation, my sperms find their way out of my wife's vagina. Will I be able to reproduce? — Worried.

Reply

Sperm leakage from the vagina is normal and to be expected when there is enough of the ejaculate. Sperm leakage means there is enough of the ejaculate. Most people notice some discharge immediately after sex and some think it's the cause of infertility. The fluid coming out of the vagina is a portion of the ejaculate. But less than five percent of the ejaculate is actually sperm; over 95 percent is made up of other fluids. Leakage of the ejaculate from the vagina is highly unlikely to prevent your wife from getting pregnant. In fact, it's totally normal for some of the ejaculate to come out of her vagina after intercourse. If you ejaculate deep inside her, then you can be sure that no matter how much of the ejaculate leaks out afterward, enough sperm will reach the cervical mucus. If your wife stays on her back for the suggested 15-20 minutes after intercourse, hips slightly elevated, this leakage of the ejaculate is usually not a cause of infertility. But usually it is a good sign that some ejaculate leaks out because it may mean that you are depositing your semen normally in her vagina and that there is enough of it

Plate 4

Hi Sis Noe

Whenever I am in the mood for sex my man doesn't even look at me, I have to wait on him until he wants sex. What should I do? — Starving.

Reply

You should know if your man is ignoring you or if he is genuinely tired. You should not be passive. You should take the initiative and do things that would turn him on. It is unfair for a man to ignore his woman when she wants to make love but whenever he is interested she must always be ready.

Plate 5

Hi Sis Noe

I am always fighting with my husband of 10 years. We fight about everything and we never seem to agree on anything. I am thinking of leaving him. There is no passion left anymore. — Help.

Reply

Instead of heading for the door what about trying to disrupt the status quo? You claim opposing interests, but I would describe them simply as individual pursuits that only become a point of contention if you try to force them on each other. Instead, welcome your development as individuals as a bonus to your life together, take holidays alone or with friends when you can't find mutually acceptable locations, indulge your hobbies and when you meet in the bedroom you may find your passion revitalised.

Like all relationships there will be much that could be improved on and new issues to resolve. I don't want to burden you with onerous responsibility but if you and your husband can find a way of communicating more constructively there is hope for your marriage. We must be the change we want to see and the qualities that will improve your relationship – including compromise, commitment and empathy – must be embedded in you. Otherwise if your issues are really toxic then leaving is an option

Plate 6

Hi Sis Noe

I am a married man and I have children but I have fallen in love with a colleague. I have not told her that I want her. What should I do? — Worried.

Reply

Once you develop a big crush on someone it's really hard to stop thinking about them unless you stop seeing them and actively stop thinking about them or the crush wears itself out. Both take time. I do think this is a huge crush you have. That is not to undermine how you feel, but I think you need to see it for what it is. I think you also need to ask yourself what you would like to happen — really like to happen. Because I bet that, when you consider the reality of what leaving your wife and starting a relationship with this woman might look like, it won't appear to be quite so much fun. The great thing about fantasies is that they can be whatever you want.

That said, it did make me wonder whether you have much time for fun in your life and whether this provides some levity away from what may be the “grind” of everyday life. It's totally normal to have crushes, but when they tip into being all-encompassing like this, something else is going on. Really intense crushes can also be less about the person you are projecting on than about yourself. Admittedly, married people fall in love with other people and they leave their partners and start a new relationship. It happens. But I don't think that's happening here — at least not yet. Not least because nothing concrete has happened; it's all, still, very much in your head. I don't think you should communicate how you feel to the woman at work. I think this has the potential to have a negative impact on your work environment and may be seen as harassment if it's not welcome. But you could definitely work on the communication with your wife – this is what intimacy is

Plate 7

Hi Sis Noe

I don't want to have sex with my husband but he rapes me almost every night. But he does not see anything wrong with what he does to me. — Help.

Reply

I regret hearing that you are suffering psychologically, physically and emotionally. The man with whom you are living is very abusive. If indeed he has sex with you without your consent, then that is sexual abuse — RAPE. He claims that he is not doing anything wrong, but he needs to understand that he should not do anything that you do not love or consent to. If the marriage has broken down then what you need to do is to leave him as soon as possible. Report him to the police if he is threatening to harm you if you leave him

Plate 8

Hi Sis Noe

MY daughter wants to get married to a man who is totally wrong for her. I fear that the marriage will not last because the man has been divorced twice. She says we must allow her to marry the man she wants because we allowed our other daughter to marry. We are not rich but we do well as a family but I fear that we will spend money on a wedding that is doomed. — Help.

Reply

You can't discriminate between your girls and you can't presume anything. Who knows? This marriage might just work out and surprise you all. If the wedding goes ahead, plaster on a smile, be positive and keep everything crossed. She is an adult and has a right to make her own decisions whether they are right or wrong. You told her what you think of her man, she still wants to get married to him so there is nothing you can do. Let them marry

Plate 9

Hi Sis Noe

I want to settle down but I don't know which woman to choose. I have a girlfriend that I love and an ex-girlfriend that I also love. We have a good time together. What should I do? — Confused.

Reply

The answer to your dilemma is that, very probably, neither of these women is right for you. When there is a choice between two people, it is not always a case that one of them must be right for you, if you could only work out which. It is more likely that you have two not-quite-right-for-you people in front of you at the same time. I think the fact that you are feeling ready to "settle down" is making you look at your situation and evaluate — and that is good. Just don't mistake availability for suitability. My advice is to break from both women.

Let them be free to meet someone else if they choose to. Don't give them false hope and string both of them along — that would be really cruel. I know this is not going to be easy for you because of your indecision, but you also seem to be trying to keep everyone. But you have to do it; otherwise you are going to make a really big mess. So take time to find out a bit more about yourself, who you really are, and what you want. Our own insecurities can make us indecisive — and I think these two women are manifestations of yours. Take time to work this out now and there is no reason you can't settle down in the future. But don't be surprised if it is with someone you haven't met yet.

Plate 10

Hi Sis Noe

I AM 22 years old and my boyfriend is 30. I love him very much. He makes me happy but we don't really see each other often because of some circumstances. He says he is not cheating and I believe him at times, but sometimes he gives me reasons to doubt him. I am a very insecure and jealous girlfriend. He recently got a job and I am very happy for him but inside I am not because I feel he is going to meet some other girl out there. — Uncomfortable.

Reply

If you cannot trust this man the relationship will not work. You have to learn to grow up. Trust, respect and communication are ingredients for a happy relationship. If a couple does not trust each other or respect each other and they don't communicate the relationship is bound to fail. You say this man has given you reasons not to trust him but you didn't say what these reasons are.

It seems to me that you are immature. You cannot do what so many women try to do and that is to watch their men. And some foolish men try to watch their women, but if a person wants to cheat you could even hire a private detective, it won't help you. Some women cheat in the kitchen, in the bathroom and in the office to name a few places. If this man loves you, you need not worry. You are afraid that he might see another girl now that he has got a new job. Don't be silly. Girls would always be around.

He will see them and they will see him. Men will always be around. You will see them and they will see you, but that does not mean that a relationship will develop between this man and the girls or between you and the other guys, so stop behaving like a spoiled child who wants her mother for herself