

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

**Culturally Induced Male Dominance:
Addressing Breakdown of Harmony in Asian Indian Christian Marriages**

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of the Liberty University School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by
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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Marriage is an institution designed by God to fulfill the creation mandate and represent Christ and his bride in this world. Marriage is a universal social construct fulfilled in diverse ways across cultures and societies. In Asian Indian culture, marriages are mostly arranged where parents customarily choose a spouse based on the caste/ethnicity, religion, social and economic standing of prospective spouses and their families. Many Christians in India and those of Indian origin living in the United States adopt the cultural norm of arranged marriage. This DMIN action research project will explore the breakdown of harmony in Christian arranged marriages due to culturally induced male dominance. The action research project includes a four-part Marriage Seminar with a mono-ethnic Asian Indian para-church group in eight consecutive sixty-minute lectures. The seminar addressed culturally induced male dominance by teaching the biblical truths about marriage centered around, understanding culture and arranged marriages, the complementarian model, biblical manhood and womanhood, and biblical male headship. Quantitative data were collected from the seminar participants completing pre-seminar and post-seminar marriage enrichment surveys. In addition, qualitative data were gathered by interviewing seminar participants. The results indicated an internal transformation in the para-church group. Therefore, para-church/church groups of Asian Indian origin are encouraged to provide similar Marriage Seminar lectures on household codes prescribed in the Scripture and address the breakdown of harmony in marriage.

Contents

Tables.....	viii
Illustrations	ix
Abbreviations	x
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Introduction	1
Ministry Context.....	2
Problem Presented.....	9
Purpose Statement.....	10
Basic Assumptions	11
Definitions	13
Limitations	16
Delimitations	17
Thesis Statement.....	18
CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	20
Literature Review	20
Understanding Arranged Marriages in the Asian Indian Context.....	21
Complementarianism.....	25
Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.....	27
Male Headship.....	30
Male Dominance	32
Conclusion.....	35
Theological Foundations	36
Household Codes in Ephesians	37
Household Codes in Colossians	38
Household Codes in 1 Peter	40
Theoretical Foundations	42
Conclusion	46
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	49
Introduction	49
Intervention Design	49
Project Conceptualization.....	50
<i>Class Curriculum.....</i>	<i>51</i>
TBCF Marriage Seminar Part-1	52
TBCF Marriage Seminar Part-2	53
TBCF Marriage Seminar Part-3	54
TBCF Marriage Seminar Part-4	54
<i>Data Collection</i>	<i>55</i>
Permissions.....	57

Promotion and Recruitment.....	58
Project Participants	58
Implementation of the Intervention Design	59
Learning Environment.....	59
Consent to Participate and Course Surveys.....	61
Implementation Observation	62
<i>The Researcher's Angle</i>	64
<i>The Insider's Angle</i>	70
Summary of Intervention Implementation	71
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS	72
Descriptive Data Evaluation	72
Data Gathering.....	73
<i>Quantitative data Gathering and Scoring Protocols</i>	73
<i>Qualitative Data Gathering and Scoring Protocols</i>	75
Participant Demographics	77
Quantitative Analysis of Data from the Core Group	80
Overall Marriage Enrichment Survey Results by Demographics	80
<i>Survey Results by Gender</i>	81
<i>Survey Results by Length of Marriage</i>	83
<i>Summary of overall survey results by demographics</i>	87
Overall Marriage Enrichment Survey Results by Marriage Themes	88
<i>Survey Results on Culture and Arranged Marriage</i>	89
<i>Survey Results on Complementarian Model</i>	91
<i>Survey Results on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood</i>	92
<i>Survey Results on Biblical Male Headship</i>	94
<i>Survey Results on Male Dominance</i>	95
Qualitative Analysis of Data from the Core Group	98
Overall Qualitative Interview Results by Themes.....	99
<i>Theme One: Culture and Arranged Marriage</i>	100
Initiation of Marriage Alliance	100
Cultural Influence in Arranged Marriages	101
Influence of Immediate Family in Arranged Marriages	102
<i>Theme Two: Complementarian Model</i>	103
Relationship with Spouse	103
Partnership Status	104
Willingness to Learn from Spouse	104
<i>Theme Three: Biblical Personhood</i>	104
<i>Theme Four: Biblical Male Headship</i>	105
<i>Theme Five: Male Dominance</i>	106
Overall Summary of Interview Results by Themes	107
Summary of the Intervention Design Effectiveness Based on Results	108
Areas for Intervention Design Improvement.....	109
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION	112

Revisiting the Problem	113
Revisiting the Purpose.....	114
Revisiting the Thesis.....	115
Impact on Understanding Culture and Arranged Marriage	116
Impact on Understanding the Complementarian Model	117
Impact on Understanding Biblical Manhood and Womanhood	118
Impact on Understanding Biblical Male Headship	121
Impact on Understanding Male Dominance	122
Methodology Appraisal.....	124
Recommendations for Further Study	126
Researcher’s Overall Assessment	127
 Bibliography.....	 129
 Appendix A.....	 137
Appendix B.....	138
Appendix C.....	141
Appendix D.....	143
Appendix E.....	144
Appendix F	145
Appendix G	150
Appendix H	152

Tables

3.1	An illustration of tools used in triangulation	64
4.1	Core Group demographics.....	78
4.2	Interview group demographics	99

Illustrations

Figures

3.1	An illustration of the different phases of the intervention process.....	50
3.2	An illustration of the TBCF Marriage Seminar design	52
3.3	An illustration of concurrent triangulation design.....	57
4.1	Steps in the interview process	76
4.2	Overall demographics of the Core Group	77
4.3	Length of marriage distribution.....	79
4.4	Overall survey results for men	81
4.5	Overall survey results for women.....	82
4.6	Survey results for people married ten plus years.....	83
4.7	Survey results for people married fifteen plus years	84
4.8	Survey results for people married twenty plus years.....	85
4.9	Survey results for people married twenty-five plus years	86
4.10	Survey results for culture and arranged marriage.....	89
4.11	Survey results for complementarian model	91
4.12	Survey results for biblical manhood and womanhood	92
4.13	Survey results for biblical male headship.....	94
4.14	Survey results for biblical male dominance	95
4.15	Interviewing basics to affirm dignity	111
5.1	Lesson plan tasks	125

Abbreviations

DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
TBCF	<i>Tampa Bay Christian Fellowship</i>
IT	<i>Information Technology</i>
ESV	<i>English Standard Version</i>
LUSOD	<i>Liberty University School of Divinity</i>

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Marriage is God's gift to His image-bearers. God instituted the marriage covenant at the beginning of human existence (Gen 2:24). Jesus confirmed God's design for marriage in the New Testament (Matt 19:5-6). Marriage is also a universal social construct, important in almost every society. People across all cultures and nationalities celebrate marriage as the primary means of procreation and life. Mike McKinley defines marriage as something that is, "not merely a social construct or even primarily a way for people to find companionship and start a family. Instead, marriage is fundamentally a picture of God's love. It is a way for us to understand and display the depth and intensity of the love God has for his people."¹ In traditional Asian Indian culture, marriages are mostly arranged by the parents where parents customarily choose a spouse based on the caste/ethnicity, religion, and social and economic standing of prospective spouses and their family, and there is little or no contact between the prospective spouses prior to marriage.²

Many Christians in India and those of Indian origin living in the U.S. adopt the cultural norm of arranged marriages over couple-initiated marriages. The couples at Tampa Bay Christian Fellowship (TBCF) are a product of the Christian arranged marriages and are intimately familiar with the concept of an arranged marriage. There is a breakdown of harmony in some marriages at TBCF. This DMIN action research thesis will explore the breakdown of

¹ Mike McKinley, *Engagement: Preparing for Marriage* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2020), 14.

² Keera Allendorf and Roshan K. Pandian, "The Decline of Arranged Marriage? Marital Change and Continuity in India," *Population and Development Review* 42, no. 3 (2016): 435.

harmony in Christian marriages due to culturally induced male dominance in a local setting, the Tampa Bay Christian Fellowship.³

This chapter describes the ministry context, problem statement, and purpose statement and concludes with the project's thesis statement. The ministry context section explores the origins of Tampa Bay Christian Fellowship and its demographics, present functioning, cultural makeup, teaching programs, and the researcher's relationship with the group. The problem statement demonstrates a need for focused internal transformation in the form of targeted teaching on fundamental doctrines of complementarianism, biblical manhood and womanhood, and male headship to counter the effects of culturally induced male dominance leading to the breakdown of harmony in families. The purpose statement articulates the project's objective of developing and presenting Bible Study lessons designed to address the cultural norms challenging the biblical truths of marriage. Finally, a project thesis statement reflects what should happen if the goals meet the objectives.

Ministry Context

The immigrant community in the United States is diverse and multi-faceted. The United States is among the world's most ethnically diverse and multicultural nations and has witnessed extensive immigration from numerous countries.⁴ Ethnic minorities from all nations of the globe are visible in every metropolis. William Frey describes Asian Indian immigrants as "recent entrants from India and other countries, which will be increasingly important partners of the

³ Andrew Balfour, Morgan Mary, and Vincent Christopher, *How Couple Relationships Shape Our World: Clinical Practice, Research, and Policy Perspectives* (London, UK: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), 4.

⁴ Rohit M. Chandra et al., "Asian Indians in America: The Influence of Values and Culture on Mental Health," *Asian Journal of Psychiatry* 22, no. 1 (2016): 203.

United States in the global economy.”⁵ Matthew Kim defines the word ethnic as “the term ‘ethnic’ identifies an affiliated people group who share history, traditions, and culture, such as familial descent, language, and religious and social customs.”⁶

One of the ethnic groups that find their home in America is people from the Indian subcontinent. Asian Indians have been migrating to America since the early nineteenth century. Sanjoy Chakravorty states, “according to official U.S. government data, during the nineteenth century (the data is available from 1820), the number of persons obtaining legal permanent resident status whose country of the last residence was India was less than ten a year.”⁷ The number of Asian Indians moving to the United States drastically increased in the twentieth century. In 2019, fourteen percent (45 million) of the American population was foreign-born. Asian immigrants are a big chunk of the foreign-born residents. Asian Indians are the second-largest immigrant group in the U.S. and constitute 68% of the U.S. labor force.⁸ The researcher employed the Asian Indian immigrant community in business, Information Technology (IT), science, and arts. Uma Samritha states, “Asian Indians occupy a significant percentage of professionals and “high-tech” workers in the United States.”⁹

A sizable Asian Indian immigrant community is located in South Florida’s greater Tampa Bay area. Asian Indians have a sub-culture within the Asian American community. Daniel Lee

⁵ William H. Frey, *Diversity Explosion: How New Racial Demographics are Remaking America* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2014), 87.

⁶ Matthew D. Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 91.

⁷ Sanjoy Chakravorty, Devesh Kapur, and Nirvikar Singh, “A Short History of Small Numbers,” *The Other One Percent: Indians in America, Modern South Asia* (New York, NY: Oxford Academic, 2017), 6.

⁸ Shama Panjwani, Suneetha B. Manyam, and Priscilla Rose Prasath, “The Impact of Immigration Status on the Quality of Life Among Asian Indians in the United States of America,” *Journal of Asia Pacific Counseling* 11, no. 2 (2021): 109.

⁹ Uma Sarmistha, *Transnational Immigrants* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2019), 13.

highlights the importance of the sub-cultures within Asian American community as he states, “Considering the size of Asia, the term ‘Asian American,’ properly speaking, includes those of East Asian, Southeast Asian, and South Asian heritages at the very least.”¹⁰ Cultural heritage and particularity is an important context when addressing theological issues. Madhulika Khandelwal states, “members of the Indian community do not necessarily live in the same geographic area but do maintain links through visits, family gatherings, and communal religious observances.”¹¹ Not all Americans of Asian background are Buddhists, Muslims, or Hindus.¹² Among the Asian Indian immigrant families in Tampa, few are Christians from the twin states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.¹³ Their mother tongue is Telugu, and their primary field of employment is IT.

In 2008 some of the Asian Indian Christian families in Tampa, Florida, formed a fellowship of believers called Tampa Bay Christian Fellowship (TBCF). The researcher started leading this group in 2008. Donald Egle states, “The true test of leadership legacy is the degree of sustained impact made that is replicated in the development of others.”¹⁴ Currently, around thirty-five families regularly meet on Saturdays to study God’s Word and encourage one another. The growth in TBCF was gradual and organic to Telugu speaking people from India. TBCF is a mono-ethnic, mono-cultural group that caters to the needs of first-generation Indian Christians and their children (most of them born in the U.S.). TBCF families desire to grow in God’s Word

¹⁰ Daniel D. Lee, *Double Particularity: Karl Barth, Contextuality, and Asian American Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 3.

¹¹ Madhulika S. Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian: An Immigrant Community in New York City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 119.

¹² J. Milton Yinger, *A Nation Divided: Diversity, Inequality, and Community in American Society* (New York, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 231.

¹³ M. Christhu Doss, “Indian Christians and The Making of Composite Culture in South India,” *South Asia Research* 38, no. 3 (2018): 259.

¹⁴ Egle, Donald K. “A Christian Leader’s Mindset of Discipleship,” in *The Mind of a Leader Christian Faith Perspectives in Leadership and Business*, ed. Winston Bruce E (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 156.

and address the pressures of acculturation in a biblical setting. Preserving their Indian culture while staying true to the Scripture is very important to TBCF.

TBCF is a para-church organization.¹⁵ Its primary goal is to equip believers to serve their local congregations in various capacities.¹⁶ Members of TBCF are spread across the greater Tampa Bay region of central Florida. Many families attend local Anglo churches in their respective neighborhoods. TBCF believes that justification by faith is the doctrine upon which the church stands or falls.¹⁷ Over the past ten years, the equipping ministry at TBCF has been instrumental in producing deacons, elders, worship leaders, Sunday school teachers, and volunteers who serve in various capacities in their local congregations.¹⁸ A significant part of the TBCF ministry revolves around children's ministry. The children are divided into three groups for their classroom instruction when the group meets. Several dedicated teachers invest their lives in the youth to train them to be the next generation kingdom warriors. The children participate in a special Christmas program every year to celebrate the birth of Christ.

The secondary goal is to evangelize fellow Asian Indians in the community. TBCF has the unique privilege to introduce fellow Asian Indians to the gospel's message in a friendly atmosphere. Many Asian Indians are of Hindu origin.¹⁹ There is immense pressure from society and family to reject the gospel's good news. Christianity is a threat to their religious way of life.

¹⁵ John S. Hammett, "How Church and Parachurch Should Relate: Arguments for a Servant-Partnership Model," *Missiology* 28, no. 2 (2000): 199.

¹⁶ John Stott, *Ephesians: Building a Community in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 30.

¹⁷ Richard L. Starcher et al., "Perspectives on the missiological legacy of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation," *Missiology* 45, no. 4 (2017): 374.

¹⁸ Peter Botross, "How Do Churches Equip Their Disciple-Makers? A Case Study of Four Baptist Churches in Victoria, Australia," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 19, no. 2 (2022): 304.

¹⁹ Shyam Ranganathan, *Hinduism: A Contemporary Philosophical Investigation* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 6.

When these folks immigrate to the U.S., the pressures of society and the threat of the gospel as a foreign religion are deflated to a large extent. There is an opportunity to present the gospel in a different atmosphere.²⁰ TBCF can do more to reach out to their fellow Indians with the gospel message. Radha Hegde states, “The staging of Indian festivals such as Holi in public spaces celebrates the diversity of the Indian community and provides opportunities for co-presence, mingling and chance encounters as well as the opportunity to build friendship.”²¹ In the past, TBCF distributed gospel literature at local Indian festivals. This opportunity ceased to exist due to opposition from the local Hindu temple association, which manages the entry and operations at the festival. As more opportunities present themselves, TBCF actively engages in the evangelistic effort among fellow Asian Indians.

In the era where a multi-ethnic mandate in the American church is a desirable position, it is essential to realize that mono-ethnic, culturally strong enclaves of support and growth are vital to address the needs of first-generation immigrant Christian communities. Richard Hardison commenting on mono-ethnic congregations, states, “Scripture, therefore, does not frown upon mono-ethnic churches as if they are somehow less healthy than their cosmopolitan counterparts. Churches may be mono-ethnic if that is the natural byproduct of their righteous, contextualized ministries”²² The ministry context of TBCF is mono-ethnic and uniquely structured to serve the needs of Telugu Christians from India. TBCF welcomes other Asian Indian Christians with open arms if they desire to fellowship with the group. The growth in TBCF over the years was

²⁰ Charlotte Kumar, “Equipping Selected Members of First Baptist Church of Duluth, Georgia, with Personal Evangelism Skills to Reach Hindu Indians” D.Min proj., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019.

²¹ Radha S. Hegde and Ajaya Kumar Sahoo, *Routledge Handbook of the Indian Diaspora* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018), 242.

²² Richard W. Hardison, “A Theological Critique of the Multi-Ethnic Church Movement: 2000 – 2013” Phd diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019.

primarily among Telugu Christians. Being a part of a particular community that is facing similar challenges is key to development and problem-solving.²³ Christian love accounts for mutual affection and care in communities facing challenges. Jeannine Hill says, “Jesus illumines the need for intimate love among lifelong communities of mutual care that culminates in laying down one’s life.”²⁴

The believers at TBCF are not only learning to acculturate in the U.S. but, more importantly, learning to adapt to a new culture that challenges some of the norms they brought with them from their homeland. Tuula Lindholm articulates the process as “an inner sense of belonging to one culture while learning to live and settle in another.”²⁵ One of the norms that Asian Indians are familiar with is the concept of arranged marriage. Carole Rosenstein defines norms as “shared understandings and expectations. They help to establish a foundation of authority in situations where sovereignty remains undefined or where it is ambiguous or contested.”²⁶

Every culture has its norms. The definition of ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ varies across cultures.²⁷ Some norms are biblically correct, and some are contrary to the Scripture. There are many norms in every culture that fall on neutral ground. The concept of arranged marriage is one such norm deeply rooted in the Asian Indian culture. The family structure in India is very

²³ Daniel, Joshua. “Transforming Faith: Individual and Community in H. Richard Niebuhr,” *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 39, no. 2 (2018): 81.

²⁴ Jeannine Fletcher Hill, *The Sin of White Supremacy: Christianity, Racism, & Religious Diversity in America* (Maryknoll, NY: ORBIS, 2017), 145.

²⁵ Tuula Lindholm, and Johanne M. Myles. *Navigating the Intercultural Classroom* (Chicago, IL: TESOL Press, 2019), 1.

²⁶ Carole Rosenstein, *Understanding Cultural Policy* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 48.

²⁷ Chandra et al., “Asian Indians in America,” 203.

patriarchal and hierarchical.²⁸ Arranged marriage is a concept where two strangers agree to become spouses through family mediation. There is little familiarity between the spouses due to gender segregation and societal prohibitions of pre-marital relationships.²⁹

The concept of arranged marriage and harmony in a marriage relationship is under constant duress at TBCF. Most couples in TBCF entered their marriage covenant through arranged marriages. Gordon Wenham states, “In biblical times, marriages were frequently arranged for the bride and groom by their parents.”³⁰ As TBCF seeks to grow in Christ as law-abiding, first-generation immigrant families in the greater Tampa Bay area, it encounters many cultural norms that need to be examined under the scrutiny of Scripture.

A culture that contradicts Scripture makes it difficult for followers of Christ to exemplify Christ in their marriage.³¹ The breakdown of harmony in Asian Indian Christian marriages has not been adequately addressed at TBCF. A Bible conference addressing the covenant of marriage was conducted in 2015 to understand the biblical roles of husband and wife. Much of the instruction was generic and did not address any cultural nuances specific to Indian culture. In the summer of 2021, the researcher presented a short series on the biblical understanding of marriage. The area of male dominance in a marital setting was not adequately addressed.

Asian Indian culture is a collectivist culture that emphasizes the value of extended family or the immediate community. Marital harmony is not a priority in many families. The stress

²⁸ Edathumparambil, Binu. “Strangers to Spouses: A Study of the Relationship Quality in Arranged Marriages in India.” PhD diss., Saint Louis University, 2014.

²⁹ Ibid., 48.

³⁰ Gordon J. Wenham, *Jesus, Divorce, and Remarriage: In Their Historical Setting* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 10.

³¹ John Stott, *Ephesians: Building a Community in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 43.

factors emerging in marital harmony at TBCF are presented more broadly in the following section.

Problem Presented

Believers in Christ should form their worldview on Scripture.³² God's Word allows a believer to question the validity of cultural norms in daily life and practice. Cultural norms are derived from the culture of a particular society. Members of a society behave similarly because of shared cultural values among people in the group. Norhayati Zakaria attempts to define culture as something that "consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts."³³ Culturally acquired behaviors can be contrary to biblical standards. One such behavior is male dominance in the context of arranged marriage. Timothy Keller states, "The Gospel challenges every human culture at some point, so Christians will always be somewhat out of step."³⁴

A biblical worldview reexamines the cultural norm of arranged marriage and the breakdown of harmony in the marriage. Arranged marriages in the Indian context are skewed to favor the male over the female. Trent Katherine states, "A strong preference for sons over daughters in India derives from patriarchal culture that favors the familial and economic contributions of males over females."³⁵ One of the primary sources of violence and abuse in

³² Scott K. Leafe, "Maintaining a Biblical Worldview: Mitigating Emerging Syncretism with Worldly Philosophies Through Focused Instruction in Christian Theology." D.Min thesis., Liberty University, 2021.

³³ Norhayati Zakaria, *Making Sense of Culture: Cross-Cultural Expeditions and Management Practices of Self-Initiated Expatriates in the Foreign Workplace* (New York NY: Productivity Press, 2019), 16.

³⁴ Timothy Keller and Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: A Couple's Devotional: A Year of Daily Devotions* (New York, NY: Penguin Publishing Group, 2019), 692.

³⁵ Katherine Trent, South, Scott J., & Bose, Sunitha, "The Consequences of India's Male Surplus for Women's Partnering and Sexual Experiences," *Journal of Family Issues* 36, no. 8 (2015): 1062.

Indian arranged marriages is non-adherence to gender roles and responsibilities. Binu Edathumparambil commenting on gender roles, states, “Sons are preferred to daughters because of the patrilineal society that looks up to the son to continue the family line, contribute to the family income, take care of the parents in their old age.”³⁶

The presupposition that the male role in marriage is superior has caused emotional toil and abuse in some families at TBCF. The male dominance that is culturally induced into the marriage relationship is sometimes buttressed with a wrong interpretation of the biblical roles of husband and wife. A wrongful understanding of submission and improper leadership of the husband has compounded the breakdown of harmony in marriage. The problem is a breakdown of familial harmony and loss of witness at home in TBCF due to preferential male dominance in Asian Indian culture.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN action research thesis is to develop and implement an internal transformation ministry at TBCF. The researcher will design and teach an eight-week seminar that will address the cultural norms challenging the biblical truths of marriage. The participants will be couples and adult individuals who attend TBCF. The participants will commit to a twelve-week program that includes a two-week focus group, an eight-week Marriage Seminar, and a two-week interview process. The participants will provide qualitative and quantitative feedback paramount to the project. The objective of this research is to equip Asian Indian Christians within the body of Christ to overcome marital cultural challenges and establish a Christian witness at home.

³⁶ Edathumparambil, “Strangers to Spouses,” 49.

The primary goal of the action research project is to transform individual mindsets that lead to measurable change in actions. Mindset will have a significant impact on a person's attitude. Attitudes govern behavior, and behavior leads to action. Having a Christ-like mindset is essential for proper Christian action. Actions will permeate all areas of life, including marital relationships. The thesis will use surveys at the beginning and end of the intervention program at TBCF to assess transformational change in behavior and action in the marriage.

Basic Assumptions

This action research thesis's plenary assumption is that it is essential to realize that mono-ethnic culturally strong enclaves of support and growth are vital to address the needs of first-generation immigrant Christian communities. Being a part of a particular community that is facing similar challenges is key to development and problem-solving.³⁷ A vital distinction relevant to this research is that TBCF though a mono-ethnic congregation is not an organization that cares only about its ethnic group. TBCF is concerned about reaching other ethnicities and other language groups in the Indian community. Nevertheless, the ministry resulted in growth in Telugu-speaking Asian Indian believers from the twin states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

When a reference is made to churches as Anglo/White, the titles are descriptive of who comes to a particular church, and they normally suggest that the worship service is affected by the dominant culture. The titles do not convey that only these groups are welcome in that church. Hardison commenting on mono-ethnic congregations, states, "The term, then, does not define the hopes of the church or the target audience of the church."³⁸

³⁷ Joshua. "Transforming Faith," 81.

³⁸ Hardison, "A Theological Critique of the Multi-Ethnic Church Movement," 27.

In India, marriage practices vary by region, religion, and ethnicity. In the twin states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, arranged marriages are customary. Couples are not encouraged to form relationships before marriage, although such attachments develop afterward. Most families in TBCF are a product of arranged marriages because parents or other family members arrange their union. In recent years, there has been a decline in arranged marriages and a complementary rise in love marriages or self-choice marriages. In recent decades, young people have increasingly taken a more prominent role in choosing their spouses.³⁹ Parul Bhandhari commenting on the modern version of arranged marriages in the Indian subcontinent states, “Spouse-selection lies in the expansive understanding of ‘choice,’ one that seamlessly ties together parental consent with the sentiments of morality and class identity.”⁴⁰

Many of today’s arranged marriage practices are modified to various degrees to lessen or eradicate the significance of caste, dowry, bride, and groom not meeting until the wedding, and to introduce elements associated with Western love narratives like companionate marriage, freedom of choice, and a discourse of intimacy. New technologies, like social media, have changed the practice and increasingly merged more fundamental traditions with ideas associated with dating.⁴¹ This research assumes that many recent trends and changes in arranged marriages do not apply to the Christian marriages under review at TBCF.

Since the enemy is active in attacking harmony in Christian marriages in all cultures, including Asian Indian culture, this action research thesis assumes consistent participation in the

³⁹ Keera Allendorf, “Schemas of Marital Change: From Arranged Marriages to Eloping for Love,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 75, no. 2 (2013): 453.

⁴⁰ Leila Choukroune and Parul Bhandari, *Exploring Indian Modernities* (Singapore: Springer, 2018), 439.

⁴¹ Aguiar Marian, “Arranged Marriage: Cultural Regeneration in Transnational South Asian Popular Culture,” *Cultural Critique*, no. 84 (2013): 183.

proposed focused teaching on doctrines of biblical marriage covenant necessary to develop Christ-centered, God-honoring marriages. Andrew Davis states, “It is vital for husbands and wives to be deeply content with each other, lest they stray into infidelity.”⁴² The participants are anticipated to display this commitment because they acknowledge a well-developed, biblical understanding of manhood, womanhood, and male headship will allow them to respond to the culture in which they live and better equip them to restore harmony in marriages.

Responding to the culture in which the participants live also assumes they do what they believe.⁴³ Therefore, this action research will have accomplished little if the proposed merely teaches information that does not translate into life change by the participants, as evidenced in behavior. Consequently, the proposed curriculum emphasizes individual spiritual and behavioral growth. This emphasis is expected to result in an internal transformation that leads to abundant evidence of marital harmony and Christian witness at home. On these bases alone, this project is anticipated to be a success.

From a practical standpoint, this action research thesis assumes support from the TBCF leadership. Further, this research necessitates that a representative group of TBCF members and regular attendees have committed to attending all Bible study classes presented for this project. Finally, this research assumes that each seminar attendee will honestly and openly participate in the surveys needed to quantify the research data.

Definitions

This project focuses on Christian marriages at TBCF. Throughout this project, some terms are used, often interchangeably, to capture the essence of what Christian marriage and

⁴² Andrew M. Davis, *The Power of Christian Contentment: Finding Deeper, Richer Christ-Centered Joy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2019), 48.

⁴³ Leafé, “Maintaining a Biblical Worldview,” 18.

marital harmony mean at TBCF. Key terms used in this project include complementarianism, male headship, biblical manhood, biblical womanhood, and other terms significant to the conduct of this research thesis. It will become evident that each of these terms has some overlap and point to one another in some form or another.

Arranged Marriage. A marriage arranged by parents or other family members. Arranged marriages are the norm in India. Roshan Pandian says, “In traditional arranged marriages, parents customarily choose a spouse based on caste/ethnicity, religion, and social and economic standing of prospective spouses and their family, and there is little or no contact between prospective spouses prior to marriage.”⁴⁴

Complementarianism. God’s created order of humanity where man and woman are suited for each other, fit with each other, but not precisely the same as each other.⁴⁵ Complementarianism asserts that men and women, both equally created in the image of God, are created with inherent distinctions that correspond to distinctions in roles. Marriage is a true partnership between man and woman. The partners in this arrangement are different in their psychological and spiritual makeup but fit together.

Male Headship. Biblical male headship involves complementarity, authority, leadership, and human flourishing for the glory of God, which is actuated by marriage. The enterprise of headship is bounded by love.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Keera Allendorf and Roshan K. Pandian, “The Decline of Arranged Marriage? Marital Change and Continuity in India,” *Population and Development Review* 42, no. 3 (2016): 435.

⁴⁵ Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock, *The GRAND DESIGN: Male and Female He Made Them* (Scotland: UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2016), 23.

⁴⁶ Paul Allen Burton, “Training Married Men at Christ Fellowship Church in Edinburgh, Indiana, to Exercise Biblical Headship in Their Homes” D.Ed.Min., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022.

Biblical Manhood. A created identity and a functional role that allows a man to lead, provide, protect, and love his wife, family, and others.⁴⁷ Biblical manhood embraces the responsibility of leadership that God has entrusted to men, especially in the context of the home and church.

Biblical Womanhood. Biblical womanhood is rooted in its commitment to Christ. Mature femininity affirms and nurtures leadership from worthy men. In the home, God created order for the purpose of harmony. The primary task of a wife is to help her husband accomplish God's plan for the family.⁴⁸ That does not mean that women are incapable of leadership abilities. While Adam and Eve were made in God's image, equal in personhood and human dignity, they were given different roles.

Culture. Culture comprises norms, rules, convictions, moral codes, and philosophies of life that have developed through a history of social relations and are shaped, produced, and reproduced in everyday practices of human action and interaction. Martina Fuchs says, "Culture hence comprises commonly shared symbolic systems, values, and beliefs as well as collective assumptions, expectations, and traditions. It includes patterns of interpretation that guide economic and social life, and it influences individual activities."⁴⁹

Action Research. A qualitative research method that provides the stakeholders the means to gain clarity and understanding of events to construct effective solutions to problems. Stringer says, "action research, in its most effective forms, is phenomenological (focusing on people's

⁴⁷ Trent A. Rogers, "An Approach to Teaching My Son about Biblical Manhood," *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 30, no. 1 (2020): 72.

⁴⁸ Strachan and Peacock, *The GRAND DESIGN*, 58.

⁴⁹ Martina Fuchs et al., eds., *Managing Culture and Interspace in Cross-Border Investments: Building a Global Company* (New York: NY: Routledge, 2017), 3.

actual lived experience or reality), interpretive (focusing on their interpretation of acts and activities), and hermeneutic (focusing on how people make meaning of events in their lives).”⁵⁰

Mono-ethnic Church. A mono-ethnic church is a congregation where more than 80 percent of the church is from the same ethnicity.⁵¹ A mono-ethnic church is defined by whom it reaches, not by whom it hopes to reach. If a church or para-church primarily reaches a single ethnic group, it is still a mono-ethnic church.

Limitations

This DMIN action research project is anticipated to encounter certain constraints beyond the control of the researcher. Such limitations begin with a finite sample size. Currently, there are twenty-five active families that attend TBCF. Immigrant families are constantly on the move due to the availability of work and visa restrictions. Andrew Kennedy states, “Moreover, when skilled work is to be moved offshore, firms sometimes prefer to bring foreign workers to the United States before sending them back overseas.”⁵² The sample size for the will be less than twenty-five families. The action research thesis project will be unable to limit class participants to any specific demographic beyond those older than twenty-five and married.

The proposed action research thesis project will occur over an estimated twelve-week period, including an eight-week Marriage Seminar that will address the cultural norms challenging the biblical truths of marriage. As such, consistent full-time attendance by all the participants cannot be assured. Most couples that attend TBCF work in the IT field. The working hours in this field are not always predictable. As such, full-time attendance cannot be assured. In

⁵⁰ Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014), 36.

⁵¹ Hardison, “A Theological Critique of the Multi-Ethnic Church Movement,” 27.

⁵² Andrew Kennedy, A. (2019). “The Politics of Skilled Immigration: Explaining the Ups and Downs of the US H-1B Visa Program,” *International Migration Review* 53, no. 2(2019): 370.

much the same way, the action research thesis project will be taught by the researcher. Therefore, the researcher's ability to remain healthy enough to teach the entire curriculum is beyond the researcher's control.

Finally, TBCF is currently meeting via a video-conferencing platform called Zoom, as it does not have a permanent physical location. The proposed Marriage Seminar will be conducted over Zoom. The researcher has no control over the participant's internet connections or the facilities' continued week-to-week suitability to meet this research project's needs.

Delimitations

A specific challenge TBCF regularly encounters is limited participation. The ideal participants for this action research thesis are the twenty-five to fifty-five age group. This age group is predominantly first-generation immigrants who are exposed to arranged marriage and influenced by the cultural norms that induce male preference in Asian Indian society. Consequently, TBCF members and regular attendees in the twenty-five to forty-five age group will be targeted for participation in this action research.

The proposed seminars will be held from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm on successive Saturdays until the entire course of study is completed (estimated at approximately eight weeks). Anonymous surveys dealing with biblical roles in marriage, the effect of cultural norms on marriage, and behavioral tendencies in Asian Indian Christian marriages will be provided to all participants and completed before the first class and after the last class.

The course curriculum will include an inductive Bible study directly related to complementarianism, biblical manhood and womanhood, and biblical male headship. In addition to the inductive study, the researcher will conduct a focus group before the seminar to address current needs. The feedback from the focus group will be used to design the seminar content and approach. After the seminar, the researcher will conduct personal interviews with some

participants to assess their commitment to change. Each stakeholder will be encouraged to engage the researcher with questions and answers related to cultural applications of biblical male headship.

Thesis Statement

Culture plays a prominent role in character formation. People live out their character through actions that are governed by their behavior. If a person forms their core beliefs from Scripture, they will integrate them into their lifestyle and translate them into action in their community, workplace, church, and home.⁵³ Mahatma Gandhi argued that culture comes from the soul and resides in the heart of a person.⁵⁴ Zakaria highlights the importance of cultural influence on a person's attitudes. He states, "When a person's values, attitudes, beliefs, practices, and norms are affected by the group environment, these then become cultural values. Cultural values affect a person at the group level, where the culture belongs to a specific group or category."⁵⁵

If culture is a broad set of values shared by some subset of the human population, cultural norms that are not checked against the truth will result in wrongful living. The transformation leading to awareness of faults built into cultural norms is essential in correcting wrong thinking and living. Donald Morcom states, "Becoming authentic Christ-followers involves leaving behind the stories that our world and our culture have taught us and embracing an altogether new story, God's story, as revealed to us in the Bible."⁵⁶

⁵³ Leafe, "Maintaining a Biblical Worldview," 20.

⁵⁴ Zakaria, *Making Sense of Culture*, 15.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁶ Donald L. Morcom, Craig G. Bartholomew, and David J. H. Beldman, *Living in God's True Story: 2 Peter* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 6.

As immigrant Christian families in TBCF struggle to make their home in South Florida, they need a place to call their own to address inherent cultural flaws causing the breakdown of harmony in marriages. The cultural nuances that cause friction are not easily understood by mainline multi-ethnic church leaders who are not expected to be cultural anthropologists. Sarah Shin captures the difficulty in serving multi-ethnic congregations as, “Ethnicity-aware trust-building is essential to inviting people to Jesus’s table.”⁵⁷ TBCF can address the cultural issues by teaching fundamental truths in a mono-ethnic setting through regular participation in learning opportunities. Consequently, if one addresses false cultural norms and wrong biblical teaching on marital relations, then harmony in marriage can be restored, and a strong witness at home is established.

⁵⁷ Sarah Shin, *Beyond Colorblind: Redeeming Our Ethnic Journey* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 104.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

Marriage is a sacred covenant instituted by God. The creation narrative in Genesis manifests God's design for marriage. The crown of creative artistry reaches its zenith when God stretches His hand for clay to make and mold man in His image (Gen 2:7).⁵⁸ Ryan Peterson states, "The image of God refers to humankind as a whole."⁵⁹ According to Arand Charles the reason why God made man in His image served, "to highlight the unique fellowship that God had with humans and to explain why we were accountable to God."⁶⁰ Man becomes a living soul when God breathes His breath into the human being.⁶¹ In Genesis two, the mood in the story is drastically different. God proclaims His first malediction, "Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone'" (Gen 2:18 English Standard Version). God pronounced that man should not be alone. Human loneliness is not God's design for man.

Despite what one thinks of marriages today, God's creative genius in making humans sexual (male and female) beings is to complement individual humanity in a relationship of intimacy. Marriage was not an afterthought for God. He made someone extraordinary for Adam

⁵⁸ Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., Dane C. Ortlund, and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Marriage and the Mystery of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 14.

⁵⁹ Ryan S. Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity: A Theological Interpretation* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), 36.

⁶⁰ Arand, Charles P. "I Am God's Creature!" Luther's Confession of the First Article of the Creed," in *From Wittenberg to the World: Essays on the Reformation and its Legacy in Honor of Robert Kolb*, ed. Charles P. Arand, Erik H Herrmann, and Daniel L Mattson (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 230.

⁶¹ Brian Wintle et al., *South Asia Bible Commentary: A One-Volume Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2015), 16.

as a suitable helper. In the following sections, the researcher will address various essential themes of marriage in dealing with the problem at hand. Understanding complementarianism, biblical manhood and womanhood, male headship, and male dominance will provide a solid base for addressing the cultural norms in Asian Indian Christian marriages that cause the breakdown of harmony. First, the researcher will attempt to unfold the nuances of eastern thought and culture that deal with the concept of arranged marriage.

Understanding Arranged Marriages in the Asian Indian Context

This DMIN action research thesis revolves around addressing cultural issues in Asian Indian Christian marriages. Most Indian marriages are arranged by the families of the couple. The marriages which are initiated by the couple are referred to as love marriages in the Indian culture. The researcher himself is a product of an arranged marriage. Many Christian families follow this cultural norm to enter the marriage covenant. Contrary to popular belief, arranged marriage is not an extension of patriarchy where women have no say in whom they marry.⁶² Marian Aguiar attempting to define the term “arranged marriage” states, “a wide variety of marriages that fall under the rubric ‘arranged,’ and includes a range of situations, from a case in which a couple meets during the wedding to instances in which members of a couple validate their love choice to their respective families.”⁶³ Parents/elders on both sides are involved in choosing a spouse based on caste/ethnicity, religion, and social and economic standing of prospective spouses and their families, and there is little or no contact between prospective spouses before marriage.⁶⁴

⁶² Raksha Pande, “‘I Arranged My Own Marriage:’ Arranged Marriages and Post-Colonial Feminism,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 22, no. 2 (2015): 172.

⁶³ Marian, “Arranged Marriage,” 183.

⁶⁴ Allendorf and Pandian, “The Decline of Arranged Marriage? Marital Change and Continuity in India,” 435.

Culture has a significant influence on marriage practices in India. The Indian society adheres to a code of Law that prescribes marriage rituals and ceremonies. One of the proponents of Indian democracy B. R. Ambedkar introduced a Code Bill to build Hindu identity based on rational law. Eleanor Newbigin who extensively studied the Hindu family and the emergence of modern India, reflecting on Ambedkar's Code Bill states, "He saw the Code Bill as a means to build another version of Hindu identity based on rational law, which dismantled and made illegal not simply the practice of caste but all the religious sanctions that were seen to legitimate this hierarchy."⁶⁵ In spite of Ambedkar's efforts to liberate low-caste citizens from the burden of rigid and unfair Hindu practices, the questions regarding family structure in the Hindu family Law contributed to the power structures that consequently developed complex and unique relationship with Hindu Law.

Newbigin further comments on Ambedkar's efforts to deal with the problem of caste in marriages as, "Ambedkar's vision of caste-free democracy required the Indian state to take on a more involved relationship with the particularly divided and oppressive nature of Hindu society than it had with other, supposedly less caste-bound, religious groups."⁶⁶ According to Newbigin, Ambedkar devoted more energy to the clauses relating to who one could marry in the Indian society. Newbigin also comments, "The precedence given to textual sources in colonial understandings of religion meant that upper-caste marriage rituals were seen as more truly Hindu, compared with the non-textual-based practices of lower-caste groups, which were defined in terms of custom."⁶⁷ The legal age for marriage in India is eighteen years for girls and twenty-

⁶⁵ Eleanor Newbigin, *Hindu Family and the Emergence of Modern India: Law, Citizenship and Community* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 181.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Newbigin, *Hindu Family and the Emergence of Modern India*, 181.

one for boys.⁶⁸ While young people prefer to be consulted, they endorse the critical benefits of parental role in forming marriage alliances.⁶⁹

Many Christian families adhere to the principle of arranged alliance in a God-honoring way. The primary requirement for believing families looking for a spouse for their son or daughter is not a common set of personal interests and hobbies, or emotional compatibility, or even sexual chemistry, but that the matching spouse is a Christ-follower (2 Cor 6:14).⁷⁰ Matthew Kim reflecting on how people in Asian society choose their spouse shares, “Choosing a spouse reflects one’s self-identity and the people one wants to relate to in society.”⁷¹ Church leaders and pastoral staff are also heavily invested in matchmaking. The church acts as a support structure for the couple and extended families. Much prayer and seeking God’s will in the selection process led to Christ-centered marriages that celebrate the harmony and foster Christian witness at home.

Finding God’s will while choosing a spouse in an arranged marriage is not different than finding God’s will in another area of one’s life. Discernment is required to separate God’s voice from other competing voices. Elizabeth Liebert calls discernment as “a process for seeking God’s call in a particular situation.”⁷² It allows one to recognize and respond to the leading of God in a particular area of life. Liebert further clarifies that the author of discernment is the Holy

⁶⁸ Shalini Grover, *Marriage, Love, Caste and Kinship Support: Lived Experiences of the Urban Poor in India* (London: Routledge, 2018), 33.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Kutter Callaway, *Breaking the Marriage Idol: Reconstructing Our Cultural and Spiritual Norms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 166.

⁷¹ Matthew D. Kim, and Daniel L. Wong, *Finding Our Voice: A Vision for Asian North American Preaching* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 24.

⁷² Elizabeth Liebert, *The Soul of Discernment: A Spiritual Practice for Communities and Institutions* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 1.

Spirit “whose particular role in God’s out-facing toward creation is to animate, teach, enliven, provoke, empower, and nourish believers.”⁷³ In an arranged marriage, the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit is vital in choosing the right spouse. The Holy Spirit is always working in the life of a believer using all the material in her life to help her pay attention to see what God is doing in her heart. Discerning before deciding requires discipline to engage God’s word, His people and much prayer and reflection. It is important to make a distinction between the voice of Jesus and those competing voices that invariably speak in our hearts. Believers must test the spirits to see whether they are from God (1 John 4:1). A true spirit pulls toward God’s plan and toward faith.

Paul reminds his readers in Philippi to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God who works in them to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose (Phil 2:12-13). The decisions that a believer makes need to have a sacred quality to them. A believer does not use discernment to choose between something that is clearly morally evil and something that is morally good, for the simple reason that God, the author of all good, cannot be calling us to do that which contradicts God’s very nature.⁷⁴ Liebert states that, “God’s will in one’s life is cocreated in a dynamic relationship between God and individual persons and between God and the systems that make up life in various cultures, the natural world, and beyond to the universe as we know it.”⁷⁵ Finding God’s will in choosing a spouse in a Christian arranged marriage is vital to realize harmony and establish Christian witness in a marriage.

⁷³ Liebert, *The Soul of Discernment*, 19.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 20.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 21.

Many families in TBCF are no strangers to the arranged marriage concept. They do not see anything wrong biblically about how their families came to be. TBCF is proud of its heritage and blessed to have parents so intricately involved in decision-making. Timothy Keller states, “A wedding is not a declaration of present love, as much as it is a promise of future love.”⁷⁶ The researcher will address biblically wrong norms relevant to Christian marriage in this research action thesis. Male dominance is not unique to the Indian culture. Arranged marriage happens to be the frame of reference in which culturally induced male dominance is addressed. Before one can address the problem of male dominance, it is essential to review some essential biblical concepts that bolster the institution of marriage.

Complementarianism

In the Bible, marriage is a complementarian arrangement. God created man in His image. He created them male and female, thus endowing their manhood and womanhood. The differences are not mere physiological elements conducive to the sexual union but define the essence of personhood. God designed marriage as a complementary relationship. We cannot fulfill our divine design without relationships. Kent Ingle states, “You were created for relationships. God’s plan for your life includes relational intimacy with Him as well as with others”.⁷⁷ It is good to understand the differences and celebrate God’s creative genius in molding humanity. Laura Schilperoort, an opponent of biblical complementarianism, acknowledges the biblical definition of complementarian thought. Schilperoort states, “One complementarian scholar argues that this passage (Eph 5:21-25) reflects “God’s created order of headship and submission” and that these are to be the roles for husbands and wives within contemporary

⁷⁶ Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*, 696.

⁷⁷ Kent Ingle, *9 Disciplines of Enduring Leadership: Developing the Potential of Your Divine Design* (Springfield, MO: Salubris Resources, 2015), 67.

marriage.”⁷⁸ Russel Moore makes a valuable distinction in his quote, “For women, sexual and emotional purity means a refusal to submit to “men,” in order to submit to your own husband, even one whose name and face you do not yet know.”⁷⁹ As Ingrid Herrenbruck a Catholic nun says, “To surrender is not to say you aren’t afraid or that you lack desires and doubts. Surrender is managing those fears and feelings by turning them over to God and refusing to let them dictate the course of your life.”⁸⁰

Marriage is a true partnership between man and woman. The partners in this arrangement are very different in their psychological and spiritual makeup. David Ayers reminds us that, “outside of embracing Jesus Christ in faith and repentance, the most important decision most of us will ever make is choosing our husband or wife.”⁸¹ Understanding the nature of the partners is vital to the health of the partnership. John Piper reminds us of what Geoffrey Bromiley said about marriage in, “As God made man in his own image, so he made earthly marriage in the image of his own eternal marriage with his people.”⁸² Scripture shows the beauty of complementarian harmony in the marriage union and describes the pitfalls of fallen humanity. Sin’s devastating effect on marriage partnership is evident in culture. Piper states, “When sin

⁷⁸ Laura Schilperoort, “Preparing For Equality: Perspectives On Christian Marriage,” *Priscilla Papers* 33, no. 1 (2019): 8.

⁷⁹ Russell D. Moore, “Women, Stop Submitting to Men,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 17, no. 1 (2012): 9.

⁸⁰ Chloe Langr, *Letters to Women: Embracing the Feminine Genius in Everyday Life* (Gastonia, NC: TAN Books, 2021), 76.

⁸¹ David Ayers, *Christian Marriage: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 85.

⁸² John Piper, *Preparing for Marriage: Help for Christian Couples* (Minneapolis, MN: Cruciform Press, 2018), 21.

entered the world, it ruined the harmony of marriage.”⁸³ A lack of proper understanding of complementarian design can lead to unhealthy male dominance, causing disharmony.

The Bible provides redemption from the depths of sin’s fallenness through Christ. The belief that men and women are equal in God’s sight in their intrinsic value while they complement one another through their differences is a truth vital to the harmony in marriage relationships. It is essential to unfold the biblical roles of manhood and womanhood to understand how the differentiated roles in marriage complement one another in true partnership.

Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

The Bible teaches that men and women fulfill different roles in marriage and nature. Men and women have equal dignity but different roles. John Stott states, “It is important to grasp the difference between persons on one hand and roles on the other.”⁸⁴ Every culture recognizes these differences to some extent. The critical distinction in the Christian worldview is that the different roles in personhood are not based on temporary cultural norms but rooted in the facts of creation. John Piper states, “It’s the feel of a great, majestic God, who by His redeeming work in Jesus Christ, inclines men to take humble, Christ-exalting initiative, and inclines women to come alongside the men with joyful support.”⁸⁵ The concept started gaining recognition in the 1980s.⁸⁶ Joseph Bellamy asserted, “If a person had been given saving grace by God, which resulted in a spiritual new birth, only then could he or she truly love God and others.”⁸⁷

⁸³ Ibid., 22.

⁸⁴ Stott, *Ephesians*, 45.’

⁸⁵ John Piper, “‘The Frank and Manly Mr. Ryle:’ The Value Of A Masculine Ministry,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 17, no. 1 (2012): 9.

⁸⁶ Ronald W. Pierce, Cynthia Long Westfall, and Christa L. McKirland, *Discovering Biblical Equality: Biblical, Theological, Cultural, and Practical Perspectives* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 15.

⁸⁷ Yeager, Jonathan M. “*Summarizing God’s Law*,” in *Evangelicalism: A Reader*, ed. Jonathan M. Yeager (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 142.

Piper attempts to define the roles of manhood and womanhood as follows, “At the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for and protect women in ways appropriate to a man’s differing relationships. At the heart of mature femininity is a freeing disposition to affirm, receive and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to a woman’s differing relationships.”⁸⁸ A man is tasked with leading, providing, and protecting. In a marriage relationship, the biblical role of manhood is crucial to foster God-honoring harmony and Christian witness. David Dusek warns men by noting, “Solidify your role as a leader at home, without compromising your time on the job or your effectiveness as a business leader.”⁸⁹ Piper provides a nine-fold leadership model for men that imitates the kind of servant leadership Christ showed in His own life.

Biblical womanhood is rooted in its commitment to Christ. Piper, in his definition, pointed out that mature femininity affirms and nurtures leadership from worthy men. Does that mean that women are incapable of leadership abilities? Certainly not. While Adam and Eve were made in God’s image, equal in personhood and human dignity, they were given different roles. Matthew Barret illustrates how women lead in marriages where men are unbelievers; thus, “Peter, therefore, is not teaching absolute submission. Wives are to submit to their husbands, but should the husband tell his wife to sin or to worship a false god; she must refuse. At the same time, it is by her submission and her quiet purity that Peter says she is to win her husband

⁸⁸ John Piper et al., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 41.

⁸⁹ David Dusk, *The Battle: Tactics for Biblical Manhood Learned from the 7th Cavalry in Vietnam* (Nashville, TN: Fidelis Publishing, 2021), 18.

over.”⁹⁰ Tim Anderson states, “As Christ is the head of the church and she is to submit to Him, analogously, the wife is to be submissive to her husband.”⁹¹

Biblical manhood leads, provides, and protects, while biblical womanhood affirms, receives, and nurtures that leadership from worthy men. This principle is scripturally sound and will lead to harmony in marriages. It protects women from abuse and encourages men to display Christ-like servant leadership embedded in sacrificial love. Darby Strickland commenting on Christ the King who leads, and nurtures says, “This true king is the Lord Jesus who came to us in flesh and blood. He is a refuge and a shelter for His people. He protects and nourishes us (Ps 1:3). He provides shade (Ps 121:5) and produces good fruit (John 15:16).”⁹²

Richard Shenk tells us how the trinitarian God is reflected in his creation as seen through marriage when he quotes Chrysostom who said, “when the husband and wife are united in marriage, they are no longer seen as something earthly, but as the image of God himself.”⁹³ A misunderstanding of biblical personhood will lead to dominance, which can wreak havoc in marriage relations when unchecked. The action research of this thesis is to prevent dominance in marriage by providing a biblical hermeneutic that undergirds servant leadership. God in Christ can take on the sin of male dominance so one can live a forgiven, free and whole life. This wholeness can extend to every aspect of life.

⁹⁰ Matthew Barrett, “God’s Design for Marriage: Celebrating The Beauty Of Gender Roles in 1 Peter 3:1-7,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 20, no. 1 (2015): 60.

⁹¹ Tim L. Anderson, *Into His Presence: A Theology of Intimacy with God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2019), 118.

⁹² Darby Strickland, “Counseling in the Brambles: How to Help Oppressive Marriages,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 30, no. 3 (2016): 24.

⁹³ Richard Shenk, *The Genesis of Marriage: a Drama Displaying the Nature and Character of God* (Milton Keynes, UK: Authentic Media, 2018), 55.

Male Headship

The roles in a marriage covenant are different from each other and beautifully complement one another to produce a counter-cultural harmony to the norms dictated by society. Victor Kuligin states, “If I were Satan and wanted to destroy humanity, I would attack male headship and through it the family.”⁹⁴ Headship in marriage is based on Trinitarian roles between the Godhead. Vern Poythress states, “all the revelation from God to man will have a Trinitarian basis.”⁹⁵ Raymond Ortlund defines male headship as “In the partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, man and woman, the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction.”⁹⁶ Neville Curle commenting on authority and submission, states, “the Bible appears to indicate that, within the Trinity, there is apparent ‘headship’ by the Father and ‘submission’ by the Son. While the subordination does not appear to be ontological but relational.”⁹⁷

Without diminishing the value of either man or woman, the husband gives direction to marriage. The leadership does not undermine their one being in Christ (1 Cor 7:14).⁹⁸ The model of male headship is the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church. Paul Tripp states, “Worship turns demanding husbands and wives into thankful husbands and wives. Worship turns entitled spouses into grateful spouses. Worship turns disappointed husbands and wives into joyful

⁹⁴ Victor Kuligin, *Snubbing God: The High Cost of Rejecting God’s Created Order* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 164.

⁹⁵ Vern S. Poythress, “Multiple Patterns Reflecting the Trinity and Coinherence in Verbal Communication,” In *Scripture and the People of God: Essays in Honor of Wayne Grudem*, ed. John DelHousaye, et al. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 50.

⁹⁶ Piper, et al., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 119.

⁹⁷ Neville Curle, “Towards a Theology of Authority and Submission in Marriage,” *Conspectus (South African Theological Seminary)* 15, no. 1 (2013): 112.

⁹⁸ Curle, “Towards a Theology of Authority and Submission in Marriage,” 121.

celebrants.”⁹⁹ The equality that subtracts male headship is not biblical. In God’s eyes, both male and female are equal in personhood, value, and dignity. Genesis 2 teaches male-female equality and male headship in the same breath. So how can one account for this paradox? The equality between man and woman is in personal worth. God created an excellent partnership between Adam and Eve. The woman is equally gifted as the man with all the attributes to attain the righteousness of God. Kutter Callaway states, “In an ultimate sense, marriage is about emptying ourselves entirely—both as individuals and as married couples—so that the other might flourish, so that they might experience God’s shalom.”¹⁰⁰

Biblical male headship is one in which the man undertakes to serve his wife and family by providing leadership without regard for the price he pays. Clint Bragg states, “Unconditionally loving your spouse despite his or her choices will require the sustaining power of God. You are choosing humility over hatred.”¹⁰¹ Jon Gordon reminds biblical men that, “there will be times you have to give and compromise. Do it even if you don’t want to, because you care more about your marriage than about being right.”¹⁰² A Christian marriage reflects God’s plan for humanity in which he wrapped his saving purpose in human flesh and sent His son to this world to redeem for himself a bride. Christ gave His life for His bride. A Christian husband who is a true follower of Christ will love his wife sacrificially.

⁹⁹ Paul D. Tripp, *Marriage (Repackage): 6 Gospel Commitments Every Couple Needs to Make* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 193.

¹⁰⁰ Callaway, *Breaking the Marriage Idol*, 168.

¹⁰¹ Clint Bragg and Peggy A. Bragg, *Marriage Off Course: Trusting God in the Desert of Unwanted Separation or Divorce* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2018), 118.

¹⁰² Jon Gordon, and Kathryn Gordon, *Relationship Grit: A True Story with Lessons to Stay Together, Grow Together, and Thrive Together* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2020), 122.

McKinley explains submission to male headship as what “requires a wife to prayerfully support, encourage, and advise her husband as he directs the family under God’s authority. A wife executes her role well when she acts as an indispensable key to her husband’s success as the spiritual leader in the home.”¹⁰³ Secular writer Claudia Koonz commenting on the importance of male headship, states, “If family life was in trouble, then the fault lay with male escapism, not with women’s emancipation.”¹⁰⁴ The practice of headship following a biblical foundation eliminates dominance.

Male Dominance

The antithesis to male headship is male domination. John Collins states, “male dominance.”¹⁰⁵ Raymond Ortlund defines male domination as “the assertion of the man’s will over the woman’s will, heedless of her spiritual equality, rights, and value.”¹⁰⁶ Domination is asserted in the name of headship. Male dominance is a personal moral failure and not a biblical doctrine. The liberating alternative for male dominance is biblical male headship wedded to female help. The culturally induced dominance in Asian Indian marriages is a social evil that infiltrates the Indian family code. Asian Indian family code follows classical patriarchy. Gert Malan defines classical patriarchy as “Classical patriarchy refers to the domination of the male over the female, children, servants, and slaves. The father is the head of the family in patriarchal societies, leaving power essentially in the hands of men and resulting in male-dominated

¹⁰³ McKinley, *Engagement*, 40.

¹⁰⁴ Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), 106.

¹⁰⁵ John Collins, *What Are Biblical Values?: What the Bible Says on Key Ethical Issues* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 83.

¹⁰⁶ Piper, et al., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 120.

societies.”¹⁰⁷ On family structure in India, Susan Seymour states, “There have evolved in India a set of predominant kinship and family structures and beliefs that give precedence to men over women, husbands over wives and so on.”¹⁰⁸

Many factors create disharmony in Asian Indian marriages. Under the pretext of male headship, male dominance is sometimes used to control and victimize women. In her work on South Asian immigrant communities, Abha Rai states, “For 1st generation immigrant women, who arrive in a new country, in most cases without friends or family, are solely bound to their husbands for economic, emotional, and immigration-related support”¹⁰⁹ Most men in TBCF are the first to arrive in the U.S. Their spouses joined them later due to immigration restrictions and financial stability to provide for their spouses. Amy Bhatt describes women who joined their husbands in the United States on immigration visa as, “economically privileged women whose migration is the result of family decision-making; at the same time, they are viewed as either Third World subjects caught in culturally backward relationships or as potential economic threats to US workers.”¹¹⁰

Another factor that plays a significant role in the exercise of dominant behavior is the influence of the in-laws. Jaleel Ahmed commenting on the plight of women in Indian marriages, states, “In most parts of India, economic dominance in the family is highly skewed toward the male because men control income and resources. This has been also manifested in the patriarchal

¹⁰⁷ Gert J. Malan, “God’s Patronage Constitutes a Community of Compassionate Equals,” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 76, no. 4 (2020): 3.

¹⁰⁸ Carol C. Mukhopadhyay, *Women, Education, And Family Structure In India* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2021), 3.

¹⁰⁹ Abha Rai and Y. Joon Choi, “Domestic Violence Victimization among South Asian Immigrant Men and Women in the United States,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, (2021): 6.

¹¹⁰ Amy Bhatt, *High-Tech Housewives: Indian IT Workers, Gendered Labor, and Transmigration* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2018), 67.

family system where women were pushed into subordination positions.”¹¹¹ Harassment takes different forms, including emotional, economic, verbal, and immigration-related. Bhatt summarizes the plight of women who are dependent on their husbands as women who, “become financially dependent on their husbands and risk deportation should their husbands lose their jobs, become incapacitated and forced out of the labor market, or perhaps even more alienating, decide to leave them.”¹¹²

With the multi-faceted nature of the culture and values of patriarchy, collectivism, and male dominance, abuse manifests in several different ways. The wife is expected to comply with the ill-treatment due to familial pressure and vulnerable immigration status. Sometimes the only recourse is to go back to India. Having young children complicates the situation even further. There is hope for those willing to address the evils of marital breakdown and loss of witness in the home. Restoring biblical manhood and womanhood using the principles of complementarian theology is the key to restoring harmony in the marriage relationship. As shown by Christ himself, the servant leadership model is the ultimate answer for rescuing the marriage relationship and restoring the blessing God bestowed upon the marriage covenant.

Addressing male dominance starts by acknowledging the deceitfulness of human heart. A healthy interior examination can lead to contemplative recognition of the problem and dependence on the transformative power of the gospel. Believers often pray and ask God to show His glory. It is the great prayer of Moses, who desired to see God’s glory (Ex 33:18). Richard Villodas suggests that one should complement that prayer by asking God to show the interior contents of one’s own heart. David’s prayer in Psalms revolves around searching one’s own

¹¹¹ Jaleel Ahmed, “Spousal Violence Against Women in India: A Social–Ecological Analysis Using Data from the National Family Health Survey 2015 to 2016,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 36, no. 21 (2021):10175.

¹¹² Bhatt, *High-Tech Housewives*, 71.

heart and going beneath the surface (Ps 139:23-24). Villodas suggests a theology of examination for the purpose of self-awareness.¹¹³

Villodas states, “One of the most important theological statements of self-awareness and examination comes from the Reformed theologian John Calvin. He wrote, “The knowledge of God and that of ourselves are connected.””¹¹⁴ Male dominance is a sin that needs to be acknowledged and the knowledge of self, reveals the condition of sin. Villodas states, “Sin is a principle of captivity to a power that permeates and contaminates our human reality.”¹¹⁵ When we know that we are caught in sin, the knowledge of God and the transforming power of the gospel provide salvation from the evil grip of dominance in a Christian arranged marriage.

Conclusion

Understanding Asian Indians who come to the United States from various religious, cultural, and language backgrounds is complex.¹¹⁶ The first-generation immigrant families of TBCF are a product of the unique culture of this ethnic heritage. Many families in TBCF did not have the privilege of having pre-marital counseling in a professional setting. They are living their married lives based on limited information gleaned from their parents and relatives. The biblical doctrines of complementarianism, personhood, and Christ-like male headship are not adequately taught.

¹¹³ Richard A. Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus* (Colorado Springs: CO: Waterbrook, 2020), 98.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 99.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Varughese Jacob, *Counseling Asian Indian Immigrant Families* (New York: NY: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 203.

The process of acculturation and freedoms enjoyed in the U.S. can complicate the roles in a marriage relationship. Varughese addresses this conflict as “When Asian-Indian immigrants enter the United States, they are surrounded by a culture that holds very different views of the family as compared to their own.”¹¹⁷ Samta Pandya highlights marital stress in immigrant families as, “In addition to acculturation stress, couple relationships undergo changes and there are issues of marital adjustment that immigrant couples have to deal with.”¹¹⁸ The cultural norms that influence the marriage relationship in Asian Indian families are not always biblically sound. The result is culturally induced male dominance that creates a breakdown of harmony in the family.

Correcting the cultural norms that are biblically wrong is an essential and primary step in addressing the breakdown of harmony in the family. If not appropriately addressed, the problem can escalate into abuse (emotional and physical) and violence. If God designed marriage to complement individual humanity in a relationship of intimacy, there is no room for discord or breakdown of harmony in the marriage. When culture is under the scrutiny of Scripture, God’s purpose in creation always triumphs. If false cultural norms and wrong biblical teaching on marital relations are addressed, then harmony in marriages can be restored and strong witness at home established.

Theological Foundations

This section examines the biblical principles that address definitions and practice of household codes in the Scripture. The purpose of this DMIN action research thesis is to develop and implement an internal transformation ministry at TBCF that will address the breakdown in

¹¹⁷ Jacob, *Counseling Asian Indian Immigrant Families*, 33.

¹¹⁸ Samta P. Pandya, “Online Spiritual Counseling Mitigates Immigration Stress and Promotes Better Marital Adjustment of South Asian Young Dual-Earner Couples Who Emigrate to Western Countries,” *Contemporary Family Therapy: An International Journal* 43, no. 1 (2021): 35.

marital harmony due to culturally induced male dominance. The basis for internal transformation is rooted in the totality of Scripture. Richard Shenk states, “Biblical theology calls men and women who marry to take on the holy privilege of imaging God in their marriage and supporting the marriages of all in the church.”¹¹⁹ William Marsh posits that internal transformation is possible when believers enter a new household in Christ, clothed in the new garments living under the influence of the power of the gospel. Marsh states, “Paul’s vision for the ‘new household in Christ’ that is clothed with ‘(re)newed garments’ and enjoys the power of the gospel in an estate that has existed under the curse of Adam’s sin.”¹²⁰ Household codes that address male headship and complementarian theology are reviewed in the letters of Paul and Peter.

Household Codes in Ephesians

Tony Merida defines marriage as, “an exclusive heterosexual covenant between one man and one woman, ordained and sealed by God, preceded by the leaving of parents, consummated in sexual union, issuing in a permanent mutually supportive partnership, and normally crowned with the gift of children.”¹²¹ The role of husband and wife in a Christian marriage is an overflow of Spirit-filled living (Eph 5:18). The precursor to the household code defined in Ephesians 5 is a Spirit-filled life (Acts 13:52) that leads to mutual submission. A Wife’s submission and a husband’s love are so intertwined that there is no room for inferiority or superiority (Eph 5:21). Apparently, Paul did not view mutual submission and hierarchical roles as incompatible.¹²² Tim

¹¹⁹ Shenk, *The Genesis of Marriage*, 106.

¹²⁰ William M. Marsh, “The New Household in Christ: How Wives and Husbands are to ‘Put on the New Self’ in Colossians 3:18-19,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 21, no. 1 (2016): 40.

¹²¹ Tony Merida et al., *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 111.

¹²² William W. Klein et al., *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2017), 170.

Muehlhoff states, “As Christians, we are pulled in two directions. Our selfish nature tempts us to fixate on and protect our own needs, while the Scriptures call us to give preference to the needs of others (Phil 2:3-4).”¹²³ A Christ-follower consistently puts the needs of his wife ahead of his desires. When the submission is within the body of Christ, there is no room for domination. Christ never dominates His bridegroom. He gave His life to the church.

Husbands are to love their wives (Eph 5:25). They are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. The primary purpose of Christ loving the church is to sanctify the church, present her to himself, and enable her to be holy and blameless (Eph 5:26-27). Throughout this passage (Eph 5:21-33), the Christ-church relationship supports the wife-husband relationship. In his work on Ephesians, Andrew Lincoln writes, “To be sure, his primary aim in the pericope is to give instructions about marriage, but he bases these on assertions about the relationship of the heavenly bridegroom Christ, to His bride, the church. Throughout the passage, there is this interplay between the two relationships.”¹²⁴ The creation reference brings the two relationships together (Gen 2:24). The oneness between husband and wife is the guiding principle for the household code in Ephesians 5.

Household Codes in Colossians

The code in Colossians is precise and direct. Paul writes a considerable amount preparing the church to put on Christ before addressing the household code. Believers are new creatures in Christ Jesus. Putting on new humanity is essential for living a transformed life (Col 3:12-14).¹²⁵

¹²³ Tim Muehlhoff, *Defending Your Marriage: The Reality of Spiritual Battle* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 148.

¹²⁴ Andrew T. Lincoln et al., *Ephesians*, vol. 42 (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2014), 451.

¹²⁵ G. K. Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Robert Yarbrough and Joshua Jipp (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 324.

Colossian saints are growing in faith with the help of the indwelling Spirit. The means of grace (forgiving, loving, studying the Word, thanksgiving, and worship) are evident in their growth. Paul exhorts the wives to submit to their husbands (Col 3:18). Submission for the wife is voluntary and reflected in the creative design and not in the fall (Titus 2:5, 1 Pet 3:1). But submission to any human is always conditioned by the ultimate submission that each believer owes to God. This appeal to submit, however, is not grounded in the cultural convention; instead, it is linked to Christ's lordship.¹²⁶

Loving someone towards whom you feel resentment is hard. Husbands must love their wives whether they submit or not. It is not a conditional statement to love her only when she submits. Steadfast love is evident in actions when one acts justly, loves mercy, and walks humbly (Mic 6:8). A woman will never have a problem submitting if her husband is Christ-like. She will never be abused or battered. A husband must sacrifice his life for his wife. Headship is not oppressive; instead, it must be a headship of love in which the husband gives of himself for his wife's good, nourishing and cherishing the beloved one who, as his equal.¹²⁷ If the Christian virtue of love is a (Col 3:14) bond of perfection, a loving husband brings perfection into marriage.¹²⁸

A husband transformed by means of grace displays a Christ-like love. Christ's love is evident in his death on the cross (Rom 5:8). Similarly, husbands take up their crosses when they crucify their self, set something aside to focus on the wife? But true spirituality is death to self. Sometimes it's hard to recognize the natural spiritual solid leader in a family because he's

¹²⁶ Klein, et al., *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 376.

¹²⁷ Piper, et al., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 170.

¹²⁸ Klein, et al., *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 377.

humble, taking up his cross daily, and willing to be crucified with Christ. He's setting aside his desires for her.

Christ's sacrificial love is a foot-washing love. His headship is the Christian model. He came to serve, though He was the head. In Christ, authority is coupled with unparalleled humility and love.¹²⁹ It saves one from being defensive, vindictive, retaliatory, and hostile. Somewhere along the pilgrimage as a Christian, the believer needs to learn to die to self regularly. When a husband is forgotten, neglected, or purposely set aside, and there is hurt with the insult, a true leader's heart is happy.¹³⁰ It is a privilege to suffer for Christ. As the head of the church, Christ is the ultimate example of servant leadership. When a wife misunderstands her husband, when the husband's desires are not attractive to the wife, when his advice is disregarded, and opinions are ridiculed, a Christian husband refuses to let anger rise in the heart (Col 3:19).

Household Codes in 1 Peter

Peter is evident in his communication about household codes to the saints dispersed across Asia Minor during the first century AD. He prepares the church in Asia to brace for the Neronian persecution on its way to Asia from Rome. He advocates hope that is bright during suffering.¹³¹ Peter presents Christ as the ultimate example of someone who suffered (1 Pet 1:11). Peter prescribed household codes that result in Christian witness at home and society (1 Pet 3:1-7). Wives are to submit to their husbands willingly. Highlighting the willingness from the wife, Wayne Grudem comments, "The idea of willing obedience is involved in this submission, as is clear from verses 5 to 6. There Peter illustrates 'being subject to their own husbands' with the

¹²⁹ Merida, et al., *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, 113.

¹³⁰ Klein, et al., *Ephesians*, 377.

¹³¹ Edmund P. Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 22.

example, ‘as Sarah obeyed Abraham’, thus showing that obeying is the means by which Sarah was being submissive.”¹³² Peter extends the submission of the wife to an unbelieving husband. This statement is qualified with the goal of the submission, which is to win the husband to Christ. Peter was addressing believers living in a first-century Roman patriarchal society where male dominance was the norm. Sandra Glahn responding to Peter’s address, comments, “A twenty-first-century Western reader of 1 Peter might assume that Peter was a misogynist product of his patriarchal times. A better option, however, is to recognize that Peter is truly a champion of women and equality but working in an unideal context.”¹³³ Peter did not believe wives to be inferior ontologically or spiritually. He urged (not command) wives to be submissive to bring about a change in the husbands. Peter asked the wives to use pure and respectful conduct (1 Pet 3:2) to accomplish the task.

Finally, in Peter’s address to the husbands, there is no hint of dominance, even though it was the cultural norm of his day in Roman society. Peter instructs the husbands to honor their wives when the surrounding culture tells them to abuse their wives. Glahn focusing on Peter’s instruction to husbands says, “Indeed, in Peter’s essential conclusion, he tells husbands to ‘show them [wives] honor as fellow heirs of the grace of life,’ warning that ‘in this way nothing will hinder your prayers’” (1 Pet 3:7 ESV). In Peter’s view, godly husbands were to view their wives not as deficient creatures, but as co-heirs.”¹³⁴ In Christ, the wife is granted equal inheritance. A husband who views his wife as a fellow heir of the grace of life will love and respect her as God’s precious gift on this side of eternity.

¹³² Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 143.

¹³³ Sandra L. Glahn, “Weaker Vessels And Calling Husbands ‘Lord’: Was Peter Insulting Wives?,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 174, no. 693 (2017): 76.

¹³⁴ Glahn, “Weaker Vessels,” 75.

Theoretical Foundations

The teaching methodology at TBCF primarily consists of expository teaching. There is a heavy emphasis on the gospel (1 Cor 15:1-4). Members of TBCF hail from different denominational backgrounds. Despite various views on non-essentials, there is a strong sentiment of support for unity on the essentials. The gospel is the essential aspect of faith and practice at TBCF. Comprehensive reaffirmation of the gospel is key to avoiding a compromise of the gospel and lack of witness at home and Church. Topical studies addressing particular needs are not the norm at TBCF. Focused attention on biblical manhood, biblical womanhood, and male headship has not been programmed with any intentionality or frequency.

Several therapeutic models address marriage counseling. Several researchers have developed theoretical models and constructs that predict successful relationships and marriages. Most of this research is based on marriages of choice or romantic relationships in the Western world, particularly in the United States.¹³⁵

Research on Christian marriage therapy and counseling has often included three models centered around the western concept of marriage. These revolve around the key psychotherapeutic frameworks, namely, structural family therapy (SFT), emotionally focused therapy (EFT), and dialectical behavior therapy (DBT). The three models highlight key components of personhood and relationships. Olimpio Wen, in his research on marriage therapy, states, “Generally speaking, DBT highlights cognition and behavior, EFT places an emphasis on emotion, and SFT focuses on the family system.”¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Edathumparambil, “Strangers to Spouses,” 51.

¹³⁶ Olimpio Wen, “A Christian Integrative Perspective of Marriage and Family Therapy.” D.Min., Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2015.

At the heart of the structural family model is the understanding that what ails or empowers a family has primarily to do with its structure. People are relational beings who are always connected to their families. According to Wen, “A structural perspective, therefore, examines closely the implicit or explicit communication patterns and rules, and the corresponding roles, which characterize and sustain these boundary systems.”¹³⁷

The EFT, on the other hand, is based on the power of empathy. The model is built on the premise that healing must involve a genuine human encounter, and the relationship is built on empathy and acceptance. The therapy emphasizes the need for emotional experiences. Wen commenting on EFT states, “Emotion is the primary agent for how we experience both self and others in intimate relationships.”¹³⁸ EFT also focuses on attachment issues through emotional experiences. EFT believes that attachment bonds are at the core of healing and care.

Finally, the DBT approach is based on the cognitive-behavioral model. DBT is built on the premise that relationship distress is due to behavior. The presence of negative behavior and lack of positive reinforcing behavior is the root cause of distress. Wen highlights the strength of DBT as “self-validation as the cornerstone for change became the central element in the new approach. The dialectic between acceptance and change, in fact, is one of the theoretical pillars of this psychological model.”¹³⁹

Having discussed the various models available for addressing the breakdown of harmony in Christian marriages, it is wise to gauge the effectiveness of these models in ethnic minorities. Man Keung Ho in his treatment of family therapy with ethnic minorities, states, “The acceptance

¹³⁷ Wen, “A Christian Integrative Perspective of Marriage and Family Therapy,” 29.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 39.

¹³⁹ Wen, “A Christian Integrative Perspective of Marriage and Family Therapy,” 51.

of the family-centered approach to problem solving has generated many treatment theories and models. The philosophical orientations and techniques employed by some of the theoretical approaches may diametrically oppose the indigenous cultural values and family structures of ethnic minority families.”¹⁴⁰ Some factors that play into the ineffectiveness of Western therapeutic models in the Asian Indian community are cultural values concerning family structure, extended family ties, husband-wife relationships, arranged marriages, and the impact of immigration and cultural adjustments.¹⁴¹

Asian Indian culture is collectivistic. Individual needs are set aside to promote collectivistic ideals. Indian culture promotes male preference and a patrilinear society. Male dominance is accepted as a cultural norm. Indian society discourages any change in the unhealthy system.¹⁴² Correcting cultural norms that are not scripturally right is essential for Christians. Most marital counseling in the U.S. is done by a therapist or church leadership in an individual setting. Indians are not forthcoming to receive counseling in this format. First, they are unwilling to trust an outsider (to the culture) with their personal problems. Second, they are skeptical about an outsider’s understanding of the cultural nuances embedded in the Indian marital relationship.

This action research thesis differs from the norm because it focuses on a unique cultural setting where biblical household codes are undermined. In other words, searches of dissertation and theses databases for research related to addressing culturally induced male dominance reveal a lack of scholarly assessment. This observation does not imply a scarcity of academic literature

¹⁴⁰ Man Ho, Janice Rasheed, and Mikal Rasheed, *Family Therapy with Ethnic Minorities*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2004), 2.

¹⁴¹ Ho, *Family Therapy with Ethnic Minorities*, 8.

¹⁴² Edathumparambil, “Strangers to Spouses,” 50.

on biblical household code instruction. Indeed, much has been written on the household codes in a Christian marriage and the impact such a code has on believers, and the harmony enjoyed in such a relationship.¹⁴³ Nevertheless, the lack of focused, intimate learning opportunities within the mono-ethnic churches ensures a decline of harmony in Asian Indian Christian marriages.¹⁴⁴

Given the precedent research and challenges in mono-ethnic group learning, a suitable alternative may be based on Robert Pazmiño's method of anointed teaching. Pazmiño provides a lens for understanding the work of the Holy Spirit in Christian teaching. Anointed teaching liberates, celebrates, and sustains.¹⁴⁵ Pazmiño provides the basis for liberation as he states, "For Christians, an education that liberates has implications for the personal as well as the social dimensions of our lives. First, in the personal dimension, in the realm of our inner life and that of our students, education that liberates has implications for our experience of redemption and personal piety or holiness."¹⁴⁶ Once liberated from the clutches of cultural norms that contradict Scripture, it is the work of the Spirit to sustain believers as they constantly depend on his transforming work.

Hostility in mind toward God and his Scriptures is conquered through reconciliation in Christ and internal transformation. This model includes proclamation and reception of the Bible study curriculum, engaging the participants in Christian fellowship within and outside the class

¹⁴³ For example, see "Identifying Oppression in Marriage by Darby Strickland," Canyon Hills Counseling, last modified 2020, accessed March 30, 2022. <https://www.canyonhillscounseling.org/oppressionabuse/>.

¹⁴⁴ Most counselling programs appears to be tailored to the contemporary American church arena. For example, see "Helping Churches Better Handle Cases of Abuse by Jim New Heiser," Canyon Hills Counseling, last modified 2020, accessed March 30, 2022. <https://www.canyonhillscounseling.org/oppressionabuse/>.

¹⁴⁵ Robert W. Pazmiño, "Deuteronomy 32 and Anointed Teaching: Bearing Fruits of Liberation, Celebration and Sustenance," *Christian Education Journal* 9, no. 2 (2012): 279.

¹⁴⁶ Pazmiño, "Deuteronomy," 281.

with anointed teaching that liberates, celebrates, and sustains. Spirit anointed teaching will bring about a renewal in the knowledge that leads to internal transformation.¹⁴⁷

The Bible study class and curriculum proposed for this action research thesis project represent traditional adult Christian education formats within a local church context that focus on conservative complementarian theory. The research will also include focus groups, surveys, and interviews. The surveys will be presented before and after the curriculum to assess any changes in theological knowledge that should engender internal transformation. In the end, this action research thesis project will correspond to the biblical examples of group teaching based on the described theoretical foundations in a mono-ethnic setting.

Conclusion

Research on household codes in Christian marriage continues to grow. As researchers investigate the history, definition, and practices of marriage, they find that individualistic and collectivistic cultures differ in how they conduct marriages.¹⁴⁸ In India, most marriages are arranged marriages. This DMIN action research thesis addresses the breakdown of harmony in Asian Indian Christian marriages in TBCF due to culturally induced male dominance. Culturally acquired behaviors can be contrary to biblical standards. One such behavior is male dominance in the context of arranged marriage.

The purpose of this DMIN action research thesis is to develop and implement an internal transformation ministry at TBCF that will address the breakdown in marital harmony due to culturally induced male dominance. The researcher will design and teach an eight-week marriage counseling seminar that will address the cultural norms challenging the biblical truths of

¹⁴⁷ Marsh, "The New Household," 55.

¹⁴⁸ Edathumparambil, "Strangers to Spouses," 64.

marriage. The primary goal of the action research project is to transform individual mindsets that lead to measurable change in actions. Cultural norms that are not checked against the truth will result in wrongful living. TBCF can address the cultural issues by teaching fundamental truths in a mono-ethnic setting through regular participation in learning opportunities. As a result, if false cultural norms and wrong biblical teaching on marital relations are addressed, then harmony in marriages can be restored, and strong witness at home can be established.

The theological foundation for addressing male dominance is primarily rooted in the Pauline epistles of Ephesians, Colossians, and Peter's first epistle to the dispersed believers across Asia Minor. Peter and Paul prescribe household codes rooted in God's design for a healthy, God-honoring marriage built on the creation design. As Marsh clearly states, "To put it theologically, redemption in Christ undergirds and commends the wife's submission to her husband according to God's design at creation rather than, as some feminists claim, overturning a submission rooted only in the fall."¹⁴⁹ Paul rules out any form of social hierarchical domination in the Christian marriage.

The theoretical foundation required to address the problem of the breakdown of harmony in marriages is built on transformed lives that the Holy Spirit indwells. Marsh reinforces this idea as he states, "But, now as a beneficiary in Christ's new creation, the call to return to this role's rightful creation-design is a response that can be enacted clothed in the power of the 'new self' with a renewed image in true knowledge 'after the image of its creator.'"¹⁵⁰ This DMIN action research thesis prescribes an anointed teaching that leads to liberation from sins' hold on individuals influenced by wrong cultural norms. Once liberated from the clutches of cultural

¹⁴⁹ Marsh, "The New Household," 55.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

norms that contradict Scripture, it is the work of the Spirit to sustain believers as they constantly depend on his transforming work.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is create an internal transformation at TBCF to address the breakdown of harmony in marriages. The primary goal of the intervention is to transform the individual mindset, which leads to measurable change in actions. The methodology presented in this chapter will explain the design of the project intervention. The intervention design will include information about conducting a focus group interview (see Appendix A) on the breakdown of harmony in Christian arranged marriages at TBCF, pre-seminar and post-seminar data gathering surveys (see Appendix F), participant information, an in-depth interview process (see Appendix G), and details regarding the seminar.

Intervention Design

The intervention of this DMIN action research project is designed to address the breakdown of harmony in Asian Indian Christian marriages. The intervention aims to address culturally induced male dominance in Asian Indian Christian marriages. The methodology will identify and analyze the breakdown of harmony in Christian arranged marriages. Stringer writes that the “primary purpose of action research is to provide the means for people to engage in systematic inquiry and investigation to design an appropriate way of accomplishing the desired goal and to evaluate its effectiveness.”¹⁵¹ This DMIN action research thesis aims to restore

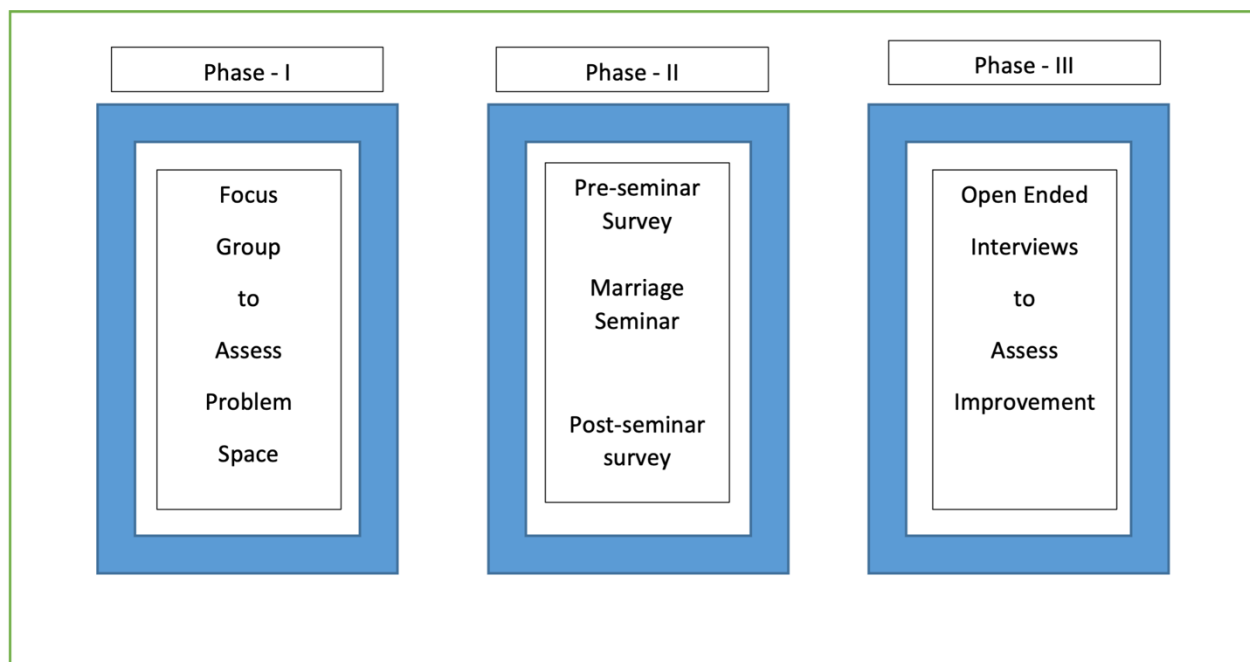
¹⁵¹ Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, 4th ed, (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2014), 5.

harmony in Asian Indian Christian marriages and address cultural norms responsible for the loss of Christian witness at home.

Project Conceptualization

The intervention was implemented over twelve weeks. The first two weeks were dedicated to conducting a focus group on the breakdown of harmony in Christian arranged marriages. A pre-seminar survey (see Appendix F) was collected from the participants at the beginning of the class. This phase was followed by an eight-week Marriage Seminar that focused on conservative complementarian theory with a particular concentration on addressing male dominance. The Marriage Seminar concluded with a post-seminar survey (see Appendix F) to measure the change in attitude and commitment to addressing the breakdown in harmony in Christian marriages. An in-depth interview process measured the effectiveness of the intervention qualitatively. The following diagram (Figure 3.1) illustrates the intervention process in a phased manner.

Figure 3.1: An illustration of the different phases of the intervention process



Class Curriculum

Implementation of the Marriage Seminar started in the third week of the program. The seminar was divided into four parts and lasted for eight weeks. Each part lasted for two weeks. The lectures were delivered on Saturday evenings at TBCF. The teaching curriculum was interactive. The group was encouraged to ask questions and offer comments during the class. Each lecture was taught during a sixty-minute session. The purpose of the seminar is not to push Christian doctrine on the participants. According to Stringer, action research “is to provide the means for people to engage in systematic inquiry and investigation to design an appropriate way of accomplishing the desired goal and to evaluate its effectiveness.”¹⁵² Action research is aimed at producing transformation. The end goal is to achieve a behavioral change. The Marriage Seminar lectures and their order of presentation to the participants are illustrated in the diagram listed in Figure 3.2.

¹⁵² Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014), 6.

Figure 3.2: An illustration of the TBCF Marriage Seminar design

Overview of TBCF Marriage Enrichment Seminar		
Subject	Description	Timing relative to the Seminar duration
TBCF Marriage Seminar Overview	Researcher will provide a brief overview of the marriage seminar and what to expect over the next eight sessions.	Week -1
	Format of the seminar lectures will be explained with the following guidelines. Each lecture will comprise of: Introduction Presentation of relevant material Discussion Application Conclusion	
Lecture Series Overview	TBCF Marriage Seminar Part-1 Introduction and Presentation of Complementarian Model Completion of pre-seminar surveys (see Appendix F)	Week-1 & Week-2
	TBCF Marriage Seminar Part-2 Feedback from previous lectures will be collected Presentation of Biblical manhood and womanhood	Week-3 & Week-4
	TBCF Marriage Seminar Part-3 Feedback from previous lectures will be collected Presentation of Biblical male headship	Week-5 & Week-6
	TBCF Marriage Seminar Part-4 Feedback from previous lectures will be collected Address Male dominance in Christian marriage Completion of post-seminar surveys (see Appendix F)	Week-7 & Week-8

TBCF Marriage Seminar Part-1

The first lecture was taught during the first two weeks of the Marriage Seminar. The first lecture focused on the complementarian view of the marriage relationship, emphasizing the creation account of the marriage covenant described in Genesis. Special attention was given to the deficiencies discovered in the pre-seminar surveys (see Appendix F). Marriage was presented as a true partnership between man and woman. Understanding the nature of the partners is vital to the health of the partnership. Scripture shows the beauty of complementarian harmony in the

marriage union and describes the pitfalls of fallen humanity. Sin's devastating effect on marriage partnership is evident in culture. A lack of proper understanding of complementarian design can lead to unhealthy male dominance, causing disharmony.

The Bible provides redemption from the depths of sin's fallenness through Christ. The belief that men and women are equal in God's sight in their intrinsic value while they complement one another through their differences is a truth vital to the harmony in marriage relationships. It is essential to unfold the biblical roles of manhood and womanhood to understand how the differentiated roles in marriage complement one another in true partnership. The lecture included the truths presented in this section in great detail.

TBCF Marriage Seminar Part-2

Feedback regarding the first part was collected at the beginning of the session. The complementarian view was reinforced. Questions and concerns regarding the complementarian view were addressed. Part 2 of the Marriage Seminar presented biblical manhood and biblical womanhood. John Piper's definitions of these topics were considered. Piper attempts to define the roles of manhood and womanhood as follows, "At the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for and protect women in ways appropriate to a man's differing relationships. At the heart of mature femininity is a freeing disposition to affirm, receive and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to a woman's differing relationships."¹⁵³

A man is tasked with leading, providing, and protecting. In a marriage relationship, the biblical role of manhood is crucial to foster God-honoring harmony and Christian witness. The Bible teaches that men and women fulfill different roles in marriage and nature. Every culture

¹⁵³ John Piper et al., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (Revised Edition): A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 41.

recognizes these differences to some extent. The critical distinction in the Christian worldview is that the different roles in personhood are not based on temporary cultural norms but rooted in the facts of creation. The lecture concluded by answering any relevant questions.

TBCF Marriage Seminar Part-3

Feedback regarding the second part was collected at the beginning of the session. Biblical manhood and biblical womanhood were reinforced. Questions and concerns regarding the previous lecture were addressed. The third part presented biblical male headship.

Headship in marriage is based on trinitarian roles between the Godhead. Raymond Ortlund defines male headship as “In the partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, man and woman, the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction.”¹⁵⁴

The husband gives direction to marriage without diminishing the value of the woman. The leadership does not undermine their one being in Christ (1 Cor 7:14).¹⁵⁵ The model of male headship is the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church. The equality that subtracts male headship is not biblical. In God’s eyes, both male and female are equal in personhood, value, and dignity.

TBCF Marriage Seminar Part-4

Feedback regarding the third part was collected at the beginning of the session. Biblical male headship was reinforced. Questions and concerns regarding the previous lecture were addressed. The fourth part of the Marriage Seminar addressed male cultural dominance.

¹⁵⁴ Piper, et al., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 119.

¹⁵⁵ Neville Curle, “Towards a Theology of Authority and Submission in Marriage,” *Conspectus (South African Theological Seminary)* 15, no. 1 (2013): 121.

Raymond Ortlund defines male domination as “the assertion of the man’s will over the woman’s will, heedless of her spiritual equality, rights, and value.”¹⁵⁶ Domination is asserted in the name of headship. Male dominance is a personal moral failure and not a biblical doctrine. The liberating alternative for male dominance is biblical male headship wedded to female help.

The culturally induced dominance in Asian Indian marriages is a social evil that infiltrates the Indian family code. Asian Indian family code follows classical patriarchy. Gert Malan defines classical patriarchy as “the domination of the male over the female, children, servants, and slaves. The father is the head of the family in patriarchal societies, leaving power essentially in the hands of men and resulting in male-dominated societies.”¹⁵⁷

The fourth part dealt with cultural issues and norms causing the breakdown of harmony in some marriages at TBCF. The cultural issues were examined in light of the Scripture. An awareness of the problem of male dominance in Asian Indian society was brought to the forefront. Liberation from sin’s hold on Christian marriages was presented. The importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in transforming one’s thinking and behavior was presented. Discipleship was emphasized for sustaining the renewal of the heart and constantly addressing flawed cultural norms. During this part, a post-seminar survey (see Appendix F) was distributed and collected to assess change in attitude and commitment to change in behavior.

Data Collection

The intervention was implemented over twelve weeks. Each participant provided their informed consent using the consent form (see Appendix B). The first two weeks were dedicated to conducting a focus group on the breakdown of harmony in Christian arranged marriages due

¹⁵⁶ Piper et al., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (Revised Edition)*, 120.

¹⁵⁷ Gert J. Malan, “God’s Patronage Constitutes a Community of Compassionate Equals,” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 76, no. 4 (2020): 3.

to culturally induced male dominance. The recruitment for the focus group began soon after the announcement (see Appendix C) at TBCF. The focus group was limited to the leadership of TBCF. The data gathered during the focus group was used to design the curriculum for the Marriage Seminar. The wisdom gained by the researcher during this focus group was indispensable in designing the class curriculum for the intervention.

The first survey (see Appendix F) was administered to establish a baseline data set. Each participant was requested to complete the survey (see Appendix F) during the first session of the Marriage Seminar. The pre-seminar survey (see Appendix F) was collected from the participants during the same period. This intervention phase was followed by an eight-week Marriage Seminar that focused on conservative complementarian theory with a particular concentration on addressing male dominance. The Marriage Seminar concluded with a post-seminar survey (see Appendix F) to measure the change in attitude and commitment to addressing the breakdown in harmony in Christian marriages. Finally, the researcher conducted in-depth personal interviews to measure the effectiveness of the intervention. All completed surveys will always remain in the researcher's custody. The strictest confidentiality was maintained for all returned surveys, and no personal information was solicited or collected.

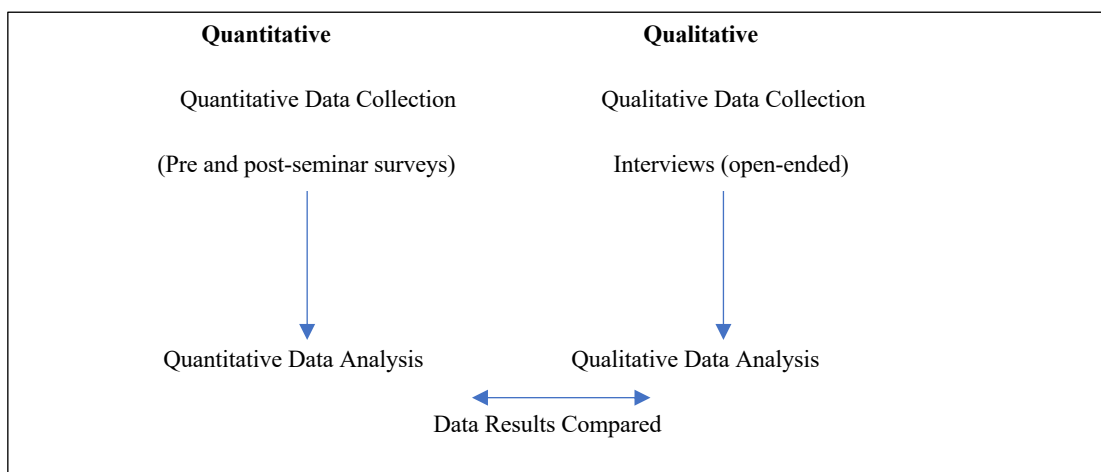
The researcher maintained a reflective journal during the entire project. The journal provided an audit trail for the entire process. The researcher used the journal to bracket any biases and maintain confidentiality. Following each class session, the researcher journaled the participants' characteristics, their interaction with one another, the content and manner of their conversations, and questions.

The researcher used triangulation methodology. The triangulation covered qualitative and quantitative aspects of data gathering. First, there was a focus group in the initial phase of the intervention. Second, two surveys (see Appendix F) were administered during the Marriage

Seminar. The surveys were administered at the beginning and end of the seminar. Finally, the researcher conducted individual interviews after the conclusion of the Marriage Seminar to measure the effectiveness of the intervention.

The current action research collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Using multiple instruments, the researcher collected quantitative data to measure the participant's level of understanding of the complementarian model, biblical manhood and womanhood, biblical male headship, and male dominance. Using an open-ended interview guide, the researcher gathered qualitative data through one-on-one, face-to-face interviews with a small sample of participants. The data obtained from the quantitative and qualitative phases were analyzed separately. The results were compared to determine whether there was an improvement in awareness and understanding. The following diagram illustrates the triangulation design that was used.

Figure 3.3: An illustration of concurrent triangulation design



Permissions

The researcher obtained the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before implementing the research project design at TBCF. The researcher completed

training through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative to submit the IRB application. The researcher also obtained approval (see Appendix D) from the leadership at TBCF for this action thesis.

Promotion and Recruitment

During the summer of 2022, the researcher announced (see Appendix C) the purpose and aim of this DMIN action research thesis at TBCF's regular weekly gatherings. The current Bible study class at TBCF was the primary source of participants for this action research thesis. The researcher solicited participation in the action research from the members of TBCF. The program was announced over two weeks before the commencement of the action research at the regular weekly gatherings.

The program was announced over two weeks before the commencement of the action research. Members were encouraged to contact the researcher to clarify information about the program. Information on reaching the researcher via email and phone was provided to the group. In the announcement, the researcher explained the required commitment and expectations from the participants to complete the intervention phase of the research. Caution was exercised not to impose the researcher's personal bias in addressing the breakdown of harmony in Christian marriages

Project Participants

For this action research thesis, the participants were limited to adult (i.e., over twenty-five years old) attendees of TBCF. The researcher solicited (see Appendix E) TBCF members to participate in the action research. Participation in the pre and post-seminar (see Appendix F) marriage surveys (the data gathering portion of this research) was limited to individuals who provided their written consent (see Appendix B). Participation was voluntary, with the option to

withdraw at any time. The participants were Asian Indian individuals who were married and exposed to the arranged marriage concept.

The researcher is a leader and adult Bible study teacher at TBCF. The researcher developed and taught the Marriage Seminar curriculum for this action research thesis project. The project designer had previously taught adult Bible study classes at TBCF, and the lessons and material presented were well received. The researcher holds to a complementarian Christian theology belief system and possesses a cohesive biblical worldview.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The implementation of the intervention for the current thesis project included quantitative data gathering using TBCF Marriage Enrichment Survey, qualitative data gathering using interviews, and the TBCF Marriage Enrichment seminar. The transformation was aimed to take place in the , which consisted of an intense eight-week lecture series and discussion time. The lectures were designed to stimulate thinking and reflection. The researcher implemented the lecture series as a learning opportunity for all participants, including the researcher. This setup allowed for an open forum to learn from each other and address culturally induced male dominance as a group that is heavily influenced by the societal practice of patriarchy and male dominance.

Learning Environment

There were some changes to the implementation of the action research thesis design due to modifications in the operational dynamics of the participant group. The leadership team at TBCF insisted on moving to an in-person gathering in the spring of 2022. TBCF has been meeting over Zoom for more than two years due to the pandemic. The attention span of the listeners and reverence for scriptures during the teaching sessions seemed to have diminished

over time. As a result, the leadership decided to resume in-person gatherings. The leadership at TBCF decided not to provide an online gathering option over zoom once we moved to in-person attendance. During the summer of 2022, the researcher approached a local church pastor in Tampa, Florida, to request the use of their church premises for TBCF gatherings. The pastor of Free Will Baptist Church in Seffner, Florida, graciously granted access to their youth center (Wilson Center) and agreed to allow TBCF to meet in person. The researcher and TBCF started meeting at the Wilson Center starting July 2022. The researcher was able to conduct the intervention of the action research thesis in person as opposed to a Zoom session, as initially planned in the design phase of the thesis. The researcher was eager to orchestrate an in-person gathering for the intervention and conduct the Marriage Seminar.

The learning environment took place in an elaborate building that seats roughly two hundred people. The building has a raised platform for the speaker and a projection screen in front of the building. The premises are climate controlled and have good acoustics all around. The seating is arranged in two sections with an aisle in the middle. There is adequate space for the entire TBCF group to participate and learn in a comfortable setting. The researcher observed and interacted with the participants in a well-lit classroom setting.

The TBCF Marriage Seminar lecture series took place exclusively in the Wilson Center on Saturdays at 6:00 pm. The location of the new premises is convenient for many families who participated in the action research thesis, allowing for better attendance. One of the families that was keenly interested in participating in the action research thesis had to move out of state due to job relocation and could not participate. As a result, they were not able to contribute to the research.

When the researcher presented the topic of addressing culturally induced male dominance in Christian arranged marriages, two couples approached the researcher about their concern

regarding their participation in the action research thesis. These couples initiated their marriage on their own. The researcher asked them if they were exposed to the concept of an arranged marriage as they were born and raised in the Asian Indian culture. Since they were familiar with the cultural norms surrounding the arranged marriage, the researcher allowed them to participate.

Some couples requested the researcher to allow their young adult children to attend the lectures. The researcher permitted the young adults to attend the lectures but did not include them in the research. The young adults listened Marriage Seminar attentively and took notes during several sessions. The researcher provided a two-pocket poly folder to each attendant to store lesson materials and note-taking paper. The folders were distributed during the first session of the Marriage Seminar lecture series. The researcher reminded the participants to bring their folders to the weekly lecture series. After noticing that no one paid attention to instructions, the researcher collected the folders from the participants and distributed the folders during the lecture time and collected the folders at the end of the lecture session. The folders were returned to the participants on the last week of the lecture series. In addition to the folders, writing instruments were provided weekly to those who needed them.

Consent to Participate and Course Surveys

Twenty-two people attended the initial lecture and were introduced to the topic of arranged marriages. At the beginning of the initial session, the researcher and other TBCF members performed a skit that showcased the process of arranging a marriage alliance in a traditional South Indian cultural setting. The skit was instrumental in breaking the ice to allow the participants to address the issue of culturally induced male dominance in Christian arranged marriages. The researcher explained the layout of the Marriage Seminar and reminded the participants that the seminar was the action research component of the researcher's doctoral thesis. There was a reminder that the action research would include collecting quantitative data

via question surveys administered in the initial session and near the end of the Marriage Seminar. Finally, the participants were informed that each session would be audio-recorded. The audio recordings and session notes were made available to the participants each week and stored on the researcher's password-protected laptop for further access.

The researcher reminded the participants that they must be twenty-five years old Asian Indian individuals who are married and exposed to the arranged marriage concept to participate in the action research. During the initial session, a consent form (see Appendix B) was distributed, and nineteen people signed the consent form indicating their willingness to participate in the action research. The researcher also distributed a pre-seminar (see Appendix F) marriage survey (the data gathering portion of this research) to the participants who signed the consent form. The researcher went over the survey and explained each question on the survey. The researcher answered any questions that were relevant to the survey. The surveys (see Appendix F) were initially designed to be administered using the cloud-based internet software SurveyMonkey. As the Marriage Seminar lecture series was conducted in a physical location, the researcher administered the surveys in person using a paper copy and collected the completed surveys at the end of the class. The conclusion of the initial class was celebrated with a breakout session which included Asian Indian sweets typically eaten during marriage alliance traditions in South India. The breakout time allowed the researcher to engage further with the participants and answer relevant questions.

Implementation Observation

The action research component of the action research thesis project began with a focus group with the TBCF leadership team. The researcher met the leadership team at one of the leader's homes to discuss the current challenges in Christian marriages. The focus group was divided into two sessions. In the first session, the researcher explained the purpose statement of

the action research thesis and collected their consent forms. In the second session, the researcher reviewed an interview questionnaire with the members who participated in the focus group. As a result of the focus group discussion, the researcher modified the first section of the Marriage Seminar. In part one of the seminar, the researcher added an extra lecture to discuss the practice of arranged marriages in Christian households from the twin states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The addition proved to be very helpful to the participants. The researcher allowed discussion in each class to review any comments, concerns, or questions.

The implementation of the Marriage Seminar was classified into four distinct sections that lay the groundwork for addressing the problem statement and the associated data-gathering exercise. Sensing proposes a triangulation model to gather and record observations from various angles.¹⁵⁸ Sensing defines triangulations as “comparing observational data with interview data; it means comparing what people say in public with what they say in private; it means checking the consistency of what people say over time; and it means comparing the perspectives of people with different points of view.”¹⁵⁹ After considering the tools suggested by Sensing, the researcher decided to use the insider’s angle and the researcher’s angle to implement the intervention for the said action research thesis. The researcher’s angle included observation and taking field notes during the Marriage Seminar. The insider’s angle included focus groups, surveys, interviews and observation from the participants themselves.

The following tools were utilized in implementing the angles of vision selected for the observation of the research thesis.

¹⁵⁸ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 82.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 72.

Table 3.1. An illustration of tools used in triangulation

Tool	Insider	Researcher
Observation	X	X
Focus Group	X	
Surveys	X	
Interviews	X	
Field Notes		X

The insider's angle viewed the data from the initial focus group conducted with the leadership team, the pre- and post- surveys administered in the class, and one-on-one interviews conducted by the researcher. The researcher observed the intervention during and after class and maintained detailed notes on every interaction during and after the class sessions. Given the contextualized particular focus of the intervention addressing Christian marriages of Asian Indian origin, the third angle of an outsider's view was not proposed for this action research thesis project. An outsider's angle may be interesting, but to find an outsider familiar with the arranged marriage concept in Asian Indian culture would be difficult to procure and not essential to evaluating the intervention's success.

The Researcher's Angle

The researcher began the intervention with a focus group. The focus group is comprised of five TBCF members who are on the leadership team. Each focus group member consented to participate in the research aspect of the thesis project. All the focus group members are married to their spouses in an arranged marriage setting. They are instrumental in addressing any marital issues that surface in the life of TBCF members. The researcher began the focus group by

explaining the problem statement and the purpose statement of the action research thesis. There was a unanimous agreement within the focus group that the problem addressed in the action research thesis is an existential threat to married families in TBCF.

Some concerns surfaced in the focus group that needed to be addressed by the researcher. The first concern was the introduction of the topic of arranged marriage. The practice of arranged marriage in the South Indian community is changing every year. The couples who are going to participate in the action research thesis project will have a wide range of experiences concerning how their marriages were arranged. Defining what we mean by an arranged marriage in a Christian context is essential. Marian Aguiar comments on the changing landscape of the practice, “arranged marriage is made of an amorphous set of practices that are themselves changing.”¹⁶⁰ A definition that is appropriate to the TBCF married couples was necessary. The researcher addressed this concern by performing a skit that enacted a scene from the traditional bride-viewing ceremony where the boy’s family comes to see the girl who demurely serves tea and then politely answers questions.¹⁶¹ The skit also provided enough freedom for the girl to ask any relevant questions. Contrary to the traditional Asian Indian cultural norm where males are given preference in marriage relationships, the researcher emphasized the equal worth of males and females in God’s eyes and, as a result, in arranged marriages.

The second concern raised in the focus group was regarding the topic of marriage. In 2015, a Bible conference addressing the covenant of marriage was conducted for the members of TBCF. Many TBCF couples attended the conference and benefitted from the teaching. In 2021 the researcher presented a short series on roles and relationships in a Christian marriage. One

¹⁶⁰ Aguiar, Marian, “Introduction: Discursive Contexts” in *Arranging Marriage: Conjugal Agency in the South Asian Diaspora*, 1–36. University of Minnesota Press, 2018, 6.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

focus group member thought that the material that would be covered in the Marriage Seminar intervention would be a repeat of what was taught in previous settings. The researcher addressed the question by reminding the member that the researcher was tackling the particular problem of culturally induced male dominance in the current Marriage Seminar. This topic was never addressed before in TBCF. Some couples in TBCF have shown symptoms of the problem of male dominance in the recent past. It is vital to the health of the marriages in TBCF to address the problem statement of the action research thesis. After considering the researcher's explanation, the focus group member understood the context of the current intervention plan and was in complete agreement with the importance of the intervention plan.

One last concern raised during the focus group was the tone in which the marriage series lectures will be presented. The group did want the lecture series to be perceived as accusatory. The researcher explained the teaching mode the researcher would adhere to during the Marriage Seminar. The researcher will implement Robert Pazmiño's method of anointed teaching.¹⁶² It is a teaching that liberates, celebrates, and sustains. The material will be presented in a way that brings forth redemption from the cultural norms that rob us of the victory in Christ that needs to be celebrated. The researcher will adhere to a non-confrontational tone that will address all members of the TBCF family, including the researcher, while tackling the historical, cultural, and traditional aspects of male dominance in Asian Indian society. Finally, Pazmiño reminds us that the work of the Holy Spirit can sustain us in our victory over sin and Satan.

The first session of the Marriage Seminar started with a brief introduction by the researcher about the problem of culturally induced male dominance in arranged marriages and the loss of harmony and Christian witness at home. The researcher explained the lecture series format and reviewed some housekeeping items relevant to the meeting venue. The researcher and

¹⁶² Pazmiño, "Deuteronomy," 281.

two other couples involved in the skit that showcased traditional bride-viewing ceremonies in South Indian culture arrived at the venue early to set the props and arrange audio for the skit. The stage was set on an elevated platform to give a clear view to the audience. A pulpit announcement was made in the previous weeks to encourage adequate participation.

An alumnus from the Liberty DMIN program who happened to be the lead pastor of the host church that provides the meeting place for TBCF gave introductory remarks highlighting the importance of the action research thesis and enlisted the support of the TBCF members for the project. The acting team performed the bride-viewing skit to set the context of the problem statement. The skit highlighted the customs, traditions, and cultural nuances surrounding the typical South Indian arranged marriage traditions. There was a lot of enthusiasm in the crowd as they watched the skit and reminisced about their marriages in years past. It was a delight to have an elderly couple in the audience who were visiting from India. They shared their own experiences after the skit.

Twenty-five people attended the first session, and nineteen people formally consented to participate in the research aspect of the action research thesis project. After the skit, the researcher reviewed the consent form with the audience. The researcher distributed the pre-seminar marriage survey. The responses were collected, and the class was dismissed with a prayer and some refreshments.

During the intervention, various behaviors were observed in the audience. There were times when there was disagreement about roles defined in the Scripture in the marriage relationship. And there were times there was silence or no verbal or body-language feedback was present. Sensing commenting on these type of observations states, “Your analysis must account for both the convergence and divergence in the data. One way to organize the data is to discuss

the areas of significant overlap as themes or patterns, the areas of disagreement as slippage, and the ‘realities’ not represented in your findings as silences.”¹⁶³

The marriage series curricula were divided into six distinct categories. Each category addressed a unique aspect of the marriage relationship described in the Scripture. The content spanned from the creation order in Genesis to the household codes described in the epistles of Peter and Paul. Each category, when presented, prompted distinct responses from the participants, which can be classified as themes, slippages, and silences. The convergence of these data points became more apparent during the one-on-one interview process. The researcher presented his material in multiple formats to make it accessible to his audience. The primary format of the presentation was using a screen to display slides.

During the second week of the lecture series, there was a thunderstorm that resulted in several lightning strikes in the area. One such lightning strike knocked off the communications systems responsible for displaying the presentation slides in the classroom. The researcher quickly adapted to a different format by creating lesson outlines and supportive questionnaires to drive home salient points of the lecture. Each class started with a prayer time and transitioned to a 40-minute lecture followed by a 20-minute discussion session. There was a recap of the previous session in each class, and time was allotted to address any issues or questions from the previous session.

A few vocal participants emerged throughout the lecture series and discussion sessions. One participant approached the researcher to request permission to clap their hands when there was an overlap with a particular theme. The men and women in TBCF typically sit in separate sections during class time. Some couples were sitting together. The researcher observed a change in the sitting patterns after the first session. When the research focused on culturally induced

¹⁶³ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 197.

male dominance, there was a concern among the participants that there was room for female dominance, which also needs to be addressed. The researcher acknowledged the factual evidence of female dominance in some marriages but humbly reminded the participants that this action research thesis does not address that topic in its scope.

There was overwhelming agreement among the women about the importance of servant leadership from the men in their marriages. The women also agreed that their role in the marriage is voluntary submission and not enforced submission, which is sometimes exercised in Asian Indian Christian marriages. The topic of physical abuse was raised in a discussion session. The researcher suggested counseling and professional help when the abuse is a serious concern. The men appreciated the Christ-like loving leadership they must exhibit in their marriages to be an instrument of God's blessing in their families. Both men and women appreciated the complementarian model portrayed in the Scripture.

Asian Indian homes are typically patriarchal. When addressing the patriarchy in Asian Indian culture and how it can lead to culturally induced male dominance, some participants expressed tense body language that could be interpreted as something that challenged their traditions. When the researcher presented unique marital roles defined in the Scripture that led to complementing each other, some of the tension in the room eased, and a better understanding ensued during the discussion time.

Culturally induced male dominance was addressed in the final session, and there was silence when men were conscious of their behaviors in the past that led to the breakdown of harmony in their marriages. The researcher used the teaching model prescribed by Pazmiño to bring about an attitude of redemption from sin, celebrating victory in Christ, and finally, depending on the work of the Holy Spirit to sustain us to be godly men and women fulfilling the unique roles God has given to each one in their marriages.

The Insider's Angle

The insider angle for the action research thesis project views the data set from two perspectives. The first view comprises a quantitative analysis of the pre-seminar and post-seminar marriage enrichment surveys. The second view comprises one-on-one qualitative interviews with the participants. The qualitative interviews were conducted with seven participants representing a good mix of men and women.

To facilitate the quantitative data analysis, the researcher distributed the surveys during the first and last classes of the seminar. The same survey with the same questions was used for pre-seminar and post-seminar exercises. The surveys are identical in content and layout. The researcher mentioned that the data is anonymous, and to ensure the anonymity of the participants, they were asked to provide a unique code on the last page of the survey. All the participants that signed the consent form returned their pre-marriage survey at the end of the first class. There was some confusion while answering the pre-seminar survey regarding the questions directed toward one's marriage experiences. The participants wanted clarity on how to answer the personal questions. The researcher encouraged them to answer the questions based on their real-life experiences and not what they think is the correct answer.

For the post-seminar surveys, only thirteen people returned the surveys. The surveys were collected by a statistician in the group who was helping the researcher with data gathering and analysis. The researcher encouraged some participants absent from the final class to complete the surveys and submit them the following week.

A significant issue emerged at the end of the final class while collecting the post-seminar surveys. Several participants did not fill out the unique code they used while filling out the pre-seminar surveys. The unique code matches pre-seminar and post-seminar surveys that belong to a unique individual. The researcher asked the participants to look at their handwriting and

recognize their unique code. The researcher asked them to use their mother's birth date to generate the code as MMDD (July 1st is 0701) pattern. The reconciliation of the surveys took a lot of effort.

The researcher made a list of seven individuals who expressed their willingness to participate in one-on-one interviews to facilitate the qualitative data view. The researcher visited the participants in their homes to gather qualitative data. It took considerable effort for the researcher to schedule the interviews with the participants. The researcher wanted to interview the participants soon after the seminar, while the teaching material was still fresh in their minds. The format of the interview process was informal, and the researcher allowed the participants to speak in their native language to communicate. The researcher started with a written script for the interviews (see Appendix D) and allowed the participants to lead the interview process by asking open-ended questions. The participants lived in three different areas of Tampa, Florida. The researcher made three separate trips to each area to visit the participants who expressed their willingness to participate. The drive to each location took roughly one hour one way.

Summary of Intervention Implementation

The implementation of the intervention design was completed as proposed. Overall, the promotion of the action research thesis resulted in nineteen initial participants in the Marriage Seminar lecture series who provided their consent to participate. Sixteen participants completed the entire course and returned both pre-seminar and post-seminar surveys. In addition, seven participants completed the post-seminar interviews. The next chapter will evaluate the quantitative data collected from the pre-seminar and post-seminar surveys and the qualitative data collected from the post-seminar interviews to assess any impact of attending the Marriage Seminar lecture series.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Descriptive Data Evaluation

Throughout this action research thesis, the stakeholders aimed to address the breakdown of harmony in Asian Indian Christian marriages at TBCF. The results will showcase the seriousness of the problem of culturally induced male dominance in Christian marriages. The results measure the effectiveness of the intervention at TBCF. The internal transformation may be hard to measure, but the awareness of the problem of male dominance and its impact on Christian marriages at TBCF can be assessed. Finally, the results inform us how the marriages at TBCF benefited from the conservative complementarian theory presented during the intervention of this action research thesis.

Many couples at TBCF started their marriages in an arranged setting. The couples are consenters to an arranged relationship. The results show a transition from being consenters to becoming partners in a marital relationship. Marriage is a true partnership between a man and a woman. The partners in this arrangement are often extremely different in their psychological and spiritual makeup. Understanding the nature of the partners is vital to the health of the partnership. The results demonstrate the lack of partnership due to cultural norms that are biblically wrong. The beauty of complementarian harmony in the marriage union will be measured, and the pitfalls of fallen humanity will be addressed.

The transformation leading to awareness of faults built into cultural norms was assessed. The results show how internal transformation can correct wrong thinking and living. The results measure the willingness to address the breakdown of harmony in Christian marriages at TBCF.

The process may be gradual for some couples as they work on restoring harmony in their marriages with the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

The action research results are presented in three sections. The first section consists of a brief review of the data collection and evaluation methodology, followed by the second section, which describes the demographic characteristics of the study participants and the relationships between their survey scores. The final section will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the intervention design.

Data Gathering

The data were gathered in two distinct phases. There was a quantitative section and a qualitative section. The quantitative data were gathered using survey questionnaires, and the qualitative data were gathered using one-on-one interviews. The following sections will present the data-gathering protocols for the quantitative and qualitative phases of the action research.

Quantitative data Gathering and Scoring Protocols

The quantitative data were obtained through pre-seminar and post-seminar marriage enrichment surveys administered to the action research participants. The pre and post-seminar survey formats were similar, and the content was identical. The surveys contained questions based on the five aspects of marriage relationship dynamics in Asian Indian marriages solemnized in an arranged marriage setting (see Appendix C). The survey questions were a mix of multiple-choice and, Likert scale formats. The questions were divided into five categories: culture and arranged marriage, complementarian model, biblical manhood and womanhood, biblical male headship, and male dominance. The content addressed in the questionnaire was closely related to the topics addressed in the Marriage Seminar curriculum.

The researcher communicated to the participants about the anonymity of surveys at the beginning of the Marriage Seminar. The anonymity was preserved by recording a unique four-digit code in the space provided on the last page of the pre-seminar and post-seminar surveys. The researcher used the codes entered on the last page to match pre-seminar and post-seminar surveys for data analysis. While participants completed fifteen pre-seminar surveys, only thirteen post-seminar surveys were completed in the final class. As a result, only post-seminar surveys with corresponding pre-seminar survey codes were deemed usable for the data analysis, thus accounting to thirteen pairs.

The completed marriage enrichment surveys were evaluated based on a survey key developed by the researcher. The researcher used the resources surveyed in the action research thesis literature review to develop the survey key. Preference was given to a resource edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem called “*Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*” to evaluate the responses to the questions on the survey, correct responses were given a positive score, and incorrect responses were assigned a value of zero. When a given question was unanswered, the response was deemed incorrect for data analysis and was assigned a value of zero. One of the questions on the marriage enrichment survey was a multiple-choice question. Only one of the responses was deemed correct for this question, and the rest were given a zero score.

The researcher asked the participants to answer the survey truthfully and not tailor their responses to make the researcher succeed in his intervention. The participants were asked to consider the intervention an opportunity to learn and grow in their marriages.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 82.

Qualitative Data Gathering and Scoring Protocols

The researcher obtained the qualitative data by conducting one-on-one interviews with seven participants in the Marriage Seminar. The researcher approached the participants in their residences to make the process less taxing. Most participants are working parents and have busy lives caring for and providing for their families. The researcher made appointments before making the house calls to ensure the participant's availability. The researcher practiced his interview skills by learning to listen, affirm dignity to the participant, and not try to solve their marital problems during the interview. A good contact was established¹⁶⁵. By approaching the participants with pure motives and the heart of a student, the researcher provided them an opportunity to narrate their stories.¹⁶⁶

Qualitative research is all about collecting and identifying themes in the interview process.¹⁶⁷ The researcher transcribed the recorded interviews with the TBCF participants and saved the audio recordings on a password-protected laptop computer. The raw data were analyzed for coding and clustering. The quotes and descriptions were carefully analyzed to account for the conversations' overlapping themes, slippages, and silences. The words were carefully considered to capture the meaning of the dialogue.¹⁶⁸

The researcher is familiar with all the participants that showed a willingness to be interviewed for the action research thesis. The researcher explained why he wanted to interview them. The participants needed to know why their life experiences are valuable and what are the

¹⁶⁵ Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann, *INTERVIEWS: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009), 128.

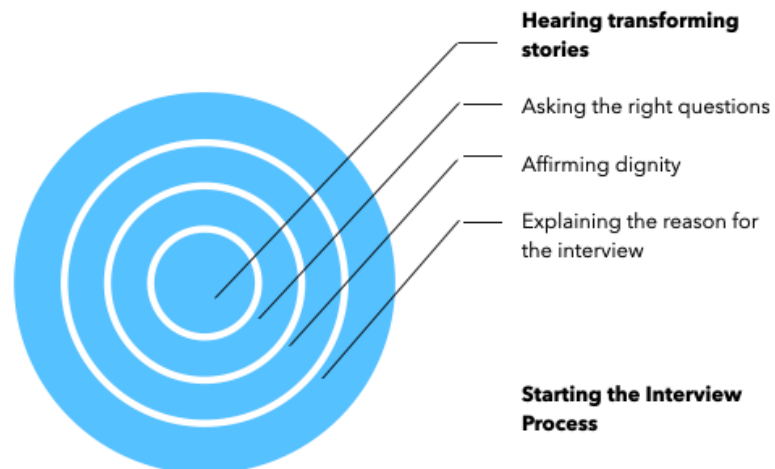
¹⁶⁶ Hercyk, Darren. "Engaging the Poor: Leveraging Local Poverty Assistance Programs to Prepare for Global Engagement." D.Min thesis., Liberty University, 2020.

¹⁶⁷ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 202.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 302.

motives of the researcher. Asian Indian culture values hospitality as an esteemed virtue, and most conversations start with a cup of tea or other refreshments. The researcher respected the participant's culture and started all his conversations with a time of fellowship. On average, it took five minutes to go from the introduction to the first question. The researcher decided to start the interview with the question, "Tell me a little about your marriage?" The first question, along with some clarification, provided the participant to open up and share their story. The interview questions were designed to allow the researcher to move from a friendly introduction to hearing meaningful stories. The process is captured in the following diagram, where the researcher approached the participant in an informal, friendly manner and progressed to gain the participant's goodwill and hear their narratives.

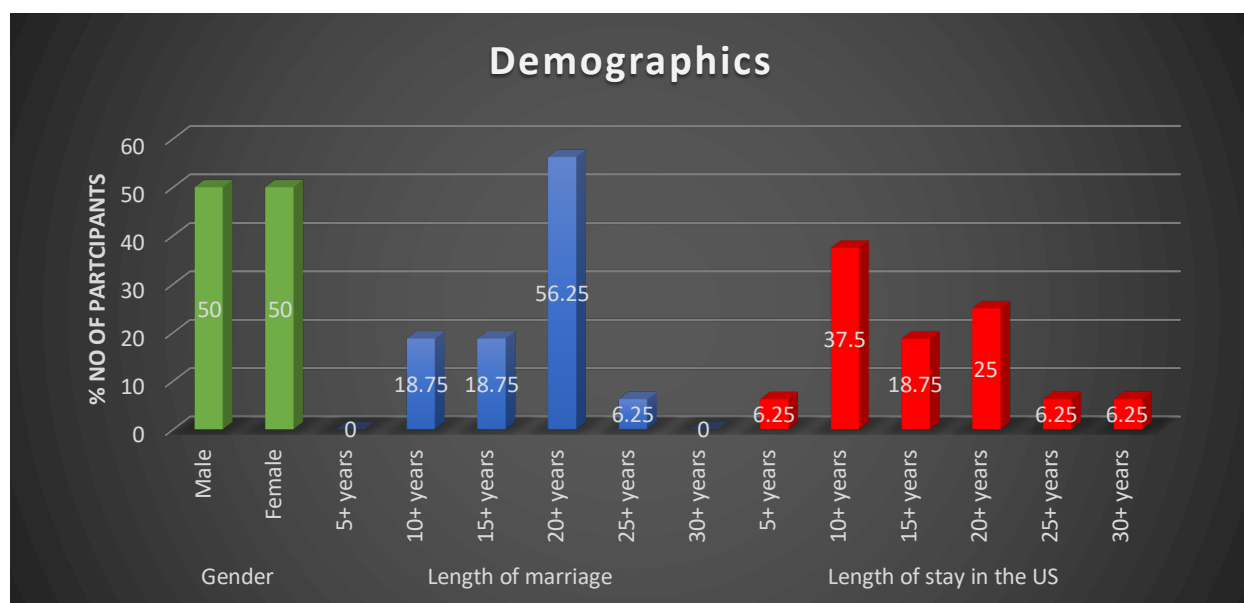
Figure 4.1 Steps in the interview process



Participant Demographics

The participants in the action research thesis project comprised nine males and ten females, totaling nineteen people who signed the consent form. Out of the nineteen folks, only sixteen completed the pre-seminar and post-seminar surveys (see Table 4.1).

Figure 4.2. Overall demographics of the Core Group



The sixteen participants who completed the surveys are included in the data-gathering exercises and referred to as the Core Group. A high-level distribution of the participants is presented in a graphical form (see Figure 4.2). The Core Group is equally divided between males and females. The researcher is not aware of the makeup of the Core Group on an individual basis, as the surveys are anonymous. More than half of the participants have been married for more than twenty years. Nearly forty percent of the participants have lived in the United States for more than ten years. Table 4.1 lists the details of the Core Group in a tabular form.

Table 4.1. Core Group demographics

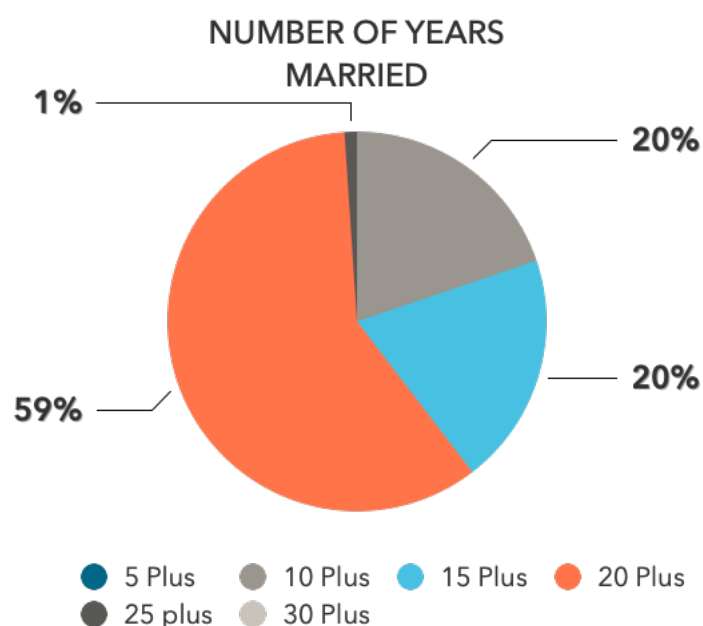
CORE GROUP - DEMOGRAPHICS

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

	Frequency	% of Core Group
Gender		
Female	8	50.00
Male	8	50.00
Years Married		
5 Plus	0	0
10 Plus	3	18.75
15 Plus	3	18.75
20 Plus	9	56.25
25 plus	1	6.25
30 Plus	0	0
Stay in the U.S.		
5 Plus	1	3.85
10 Plus	6	23.08
15 Plus	3	11.54
20 Plus	4	15.38
25 plus	1	3.85
30 Plus	1	3.85

All the participants in the Core Group are regular members of TBCF. They are first-generation immigrants from India. All of them were married in India and are exposed to the concept of an arranged marriage. The following graphic (see Figure 4.3) shows that most (59%) of the Core Group have been married for over twenty years. Twenty percent were married for fifteen years or more, and another twenty percent were married for ten years or more.

Figure 4.3. Length of marriage distribution



Exposure to an arranged marriage for most people in the group is a distant past. Many of the Core Group are permanent residents in the United States. The researcher wanted to remind the participants of the cultural nuances that surround the arranged marriage concept. The intervention started with a small skit where the typical traditional marriage alliance was enacted to refresh the participant's memory and allow them to address the issues related to the breakdown of harmony in Christian arranged marriages.

Quantitative Analysis of Data from the Core Group

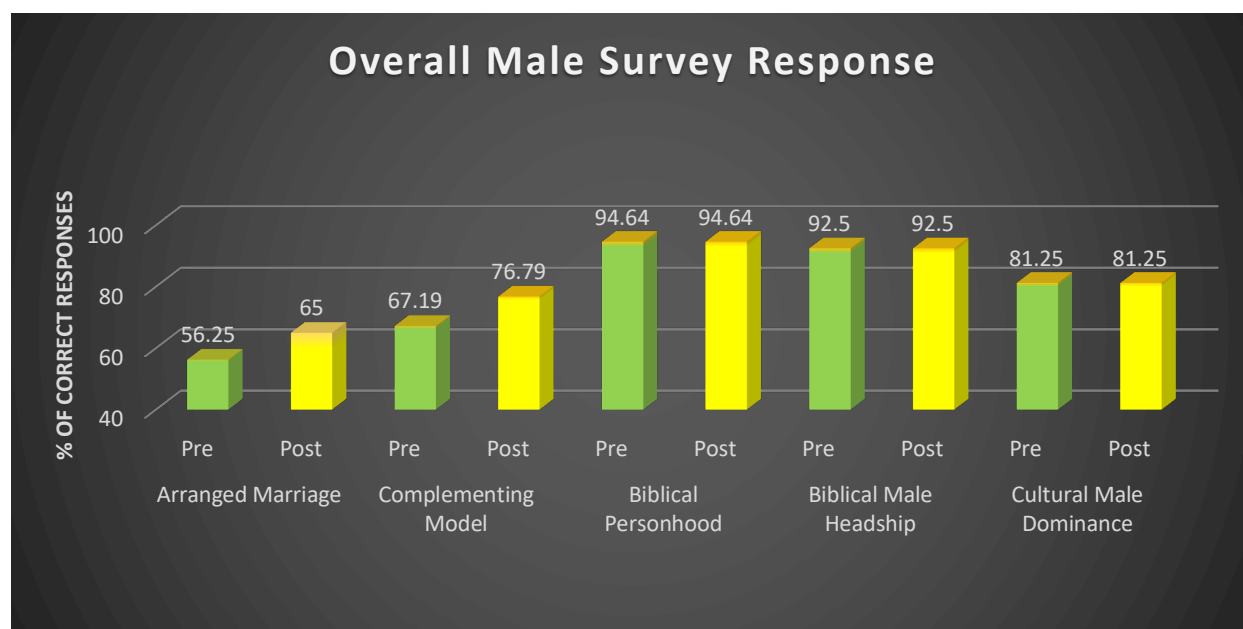
This section will evaluate the Core Group responses to the pre-seminar and post-seminar marriage enrichment survey questions utilizing standard descriptive statistics and different comparisons. First, the overall pre-seminar versus post-seminar survey data will be analyzed. Next, the data is analyzed within each demographic grouped by gender, the number of years married, and years of stay in the United States. Next, the relationships of responses to survey questions in the five categories of culture and arranged marriages, complementarian model, biblical manhood and womanhood, male headship, and male dominance will follow. Finally, a summary evaluation of the comprehensive marriage enrichment survey results is performed, describing the observed impact of the intervention on the development and cohesiveness of the research participants.

Overall Marriage Enrichment Survey Results by Demographics

The researcher designed the marriage enrichment survey to measure understanding and awareness of essential principles of the biblical marriage relationship at TBCF. The survey was administered in a combined setting where male and female participants were present. There was enough privacy in the meeting place, and participants were given writing instruments to answer the surveys. Complete anonymity was promised, and honest responses were encouraged. The following graphics illustrate the progress made in the intervention process as part of the action research thesis project. The first section analyzed the results by demographics. The participants were classified by gender, their years of marriage, and their length of stay in the United States. All the participants were married to the same person for the entire length of the marriage and stayed in their relationships during that time.

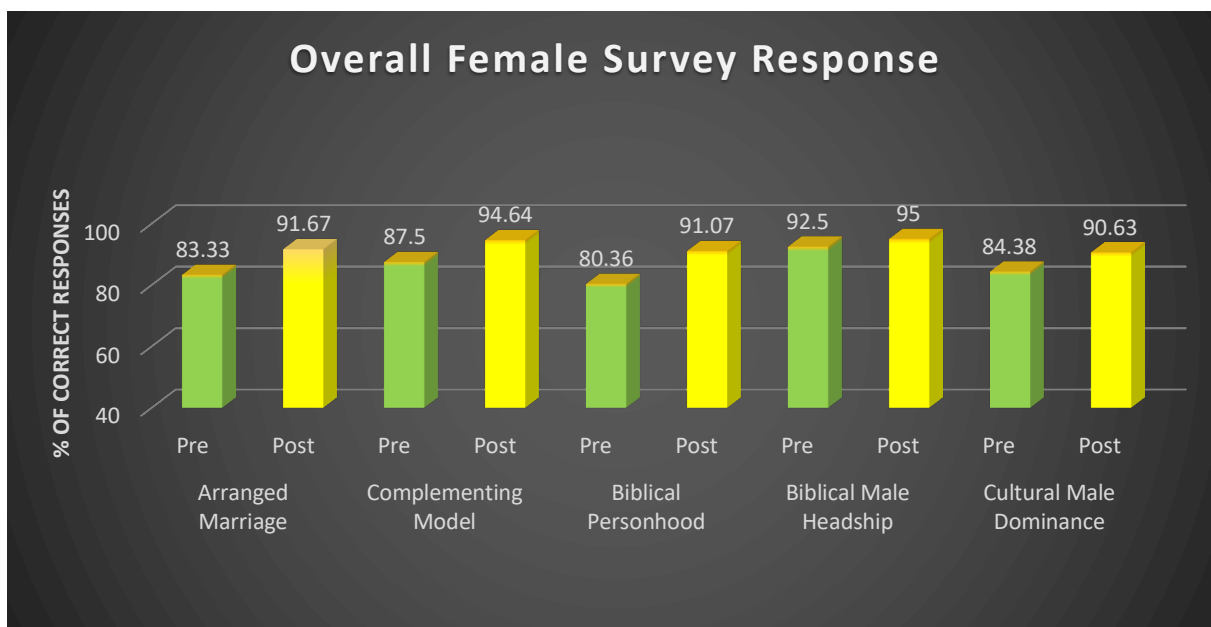
Survey Results by Gender

Figure 4.4. Overall survey results for men



The data in Figure 4.4 clearly illustrate the progress made among men during the intervention in two categories. The concept of arranged marriages as practiced in Asian Indian culture was better understood. Even though all the participants were exposed to the concept of arranged marriage, some men learned the nuances that culture could introduce into this tradition that can curtail harmony in marriage. In addition, there was a 9.6 percent increase in understanding the conservative complementarian model as a marriage relationship that complements one another.

The men did not show any improvement in their understanding of male dominance. The problem statement of the action research thesis can be accusatory to men. The researcher established a spirit of introspection and self-reflection while teaching the seminar to minimize undue bias against the men in the Core Group.

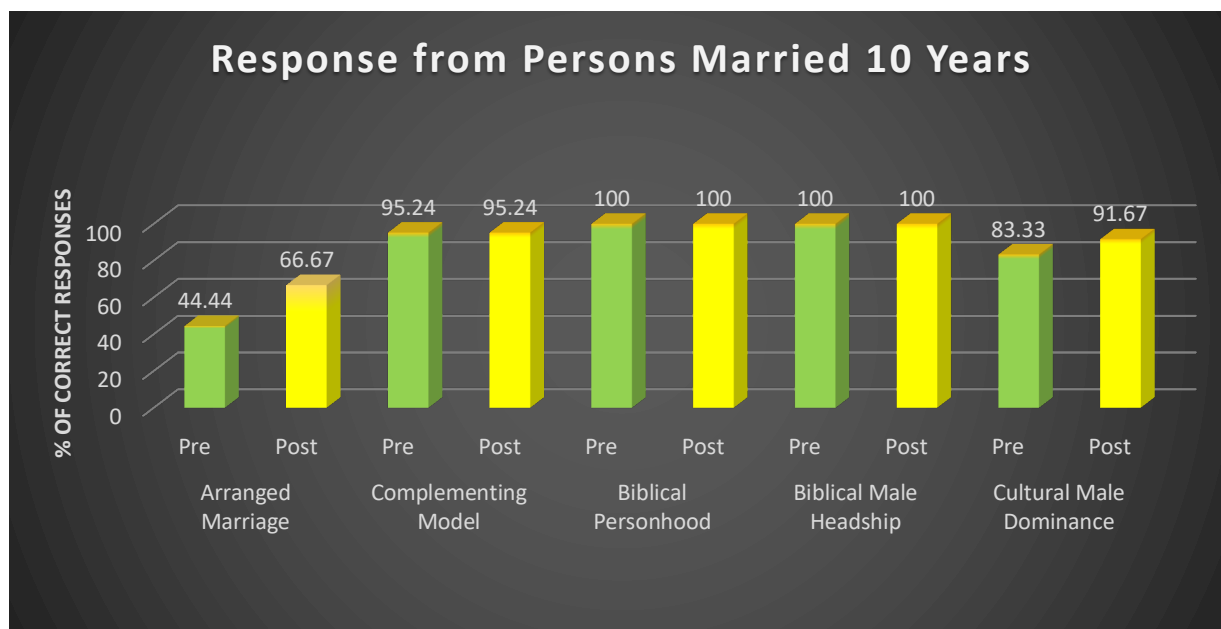
Figure 4.5. Overall survey results for women

The women at TBCF who participated in the action research thesis project are mature Christians familiar with arranged marriages. Most women have grown to understand how patriarchy works in the Asian Indian culture and how it influences harmony in Christian marriages. Biblical manhood and womanhood roles were received with openness and willingness to stay faithful to the Scripture in their marriages. There was no new growth in understanding the complementarian model, but there was agreement that the partners in a marriage relationship complement one another (see Figure 4.5).

The unique responsibilities given to men as leaders in the marriage relationship are well received by the women. Their affirmation to support the biblical male headship is evident. Finally, the pitfalls of culturally induced male dominance were understood. Most women did not think that submission in marriage could lead to sinful dominance in a Christian marriage.

Survey Results by Length of Marriage

Figure 4.6. Survey results for people married ten plus years



The graphic above (see Figure 4.6) displays a cohesive picture that showcases the understanding of the various areas of marriage relationships among the participants who have been married for ten or more years. The participants in this demographic were married in India and later moved to the United States. There is a 22% increase in knowing the effects of cultural influence on arranged marriage. The researcher noticed no growth in the perception of the complementarian model. Given that there were only three participants in this demographic, this reading could be an outlier in the survey response.

The area of culturally induced male dominance showed a slight improvement. Having been married for ten years, the participants in this category are familiar with the pitfalls that male dominance can cause in a marriage relationship. One respondent still thought that parental failure in teaching masculinity does not cause male dominance.

Figure 4.7. Survey results for people married fifteen plus years

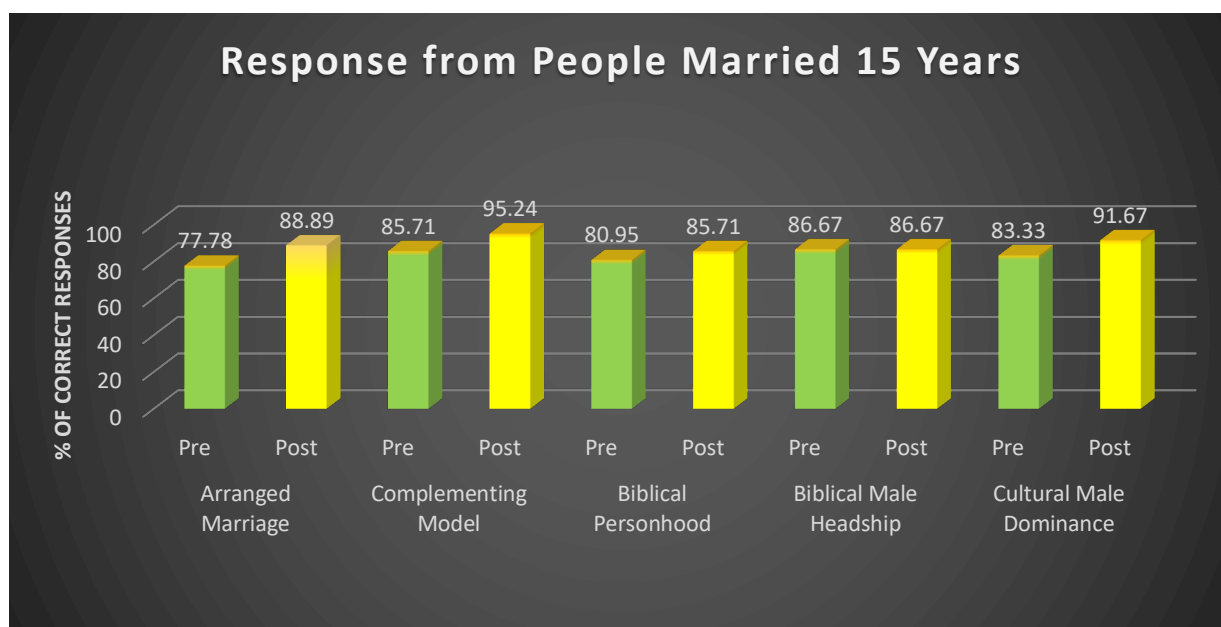
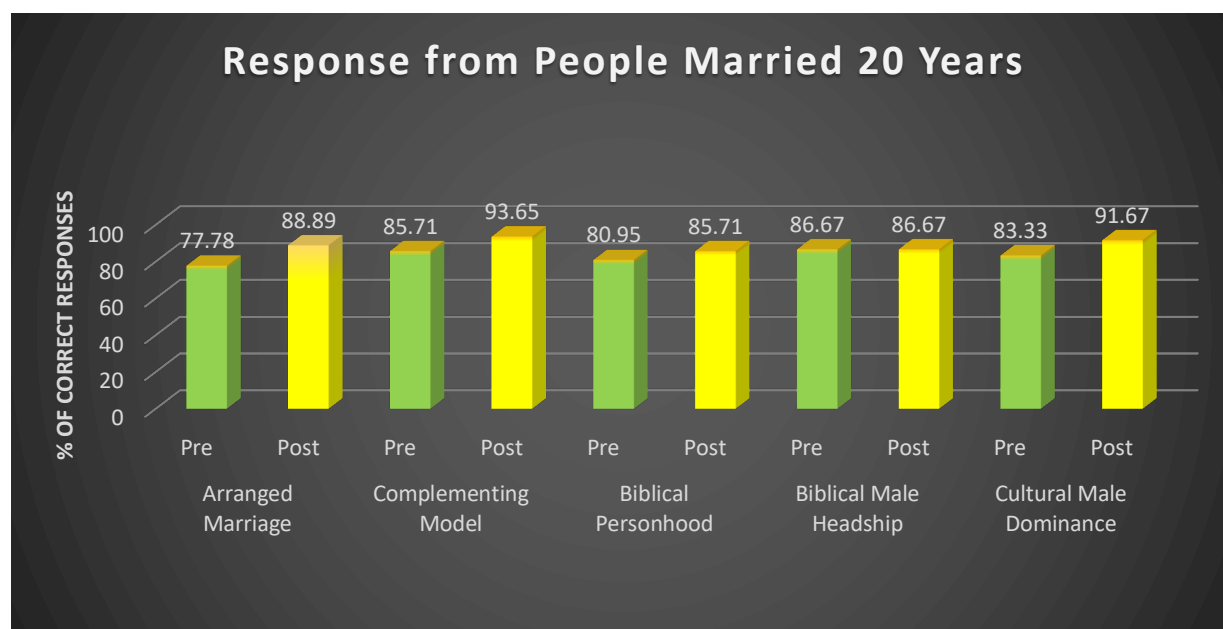


Figure 4.7 summarizes the survey responses from participants who were married for more than fifteen years. The number of participants in this group was three. There was growth in every area of the survey categories except the biblical roles of manhood and womanhood. There was an improvement in realizing the effects of culture on arranged marriages. The Asian Indian society is patriarchal, and in some rare cases, the family unit is an extended setup where the male siblings and their families live under one roof. There is one patriarch who runs the family affairs. One participant in the Core Group was exposed to this setting as a child.

Understanding culturally induced male dominance was also addressed in this demographic. Male headship, as defined in the household codes prescribed in the Bible, should not result in male dominance. When culture clashes with the Scripture, the Bible must triumph in Christian arranged marriages.

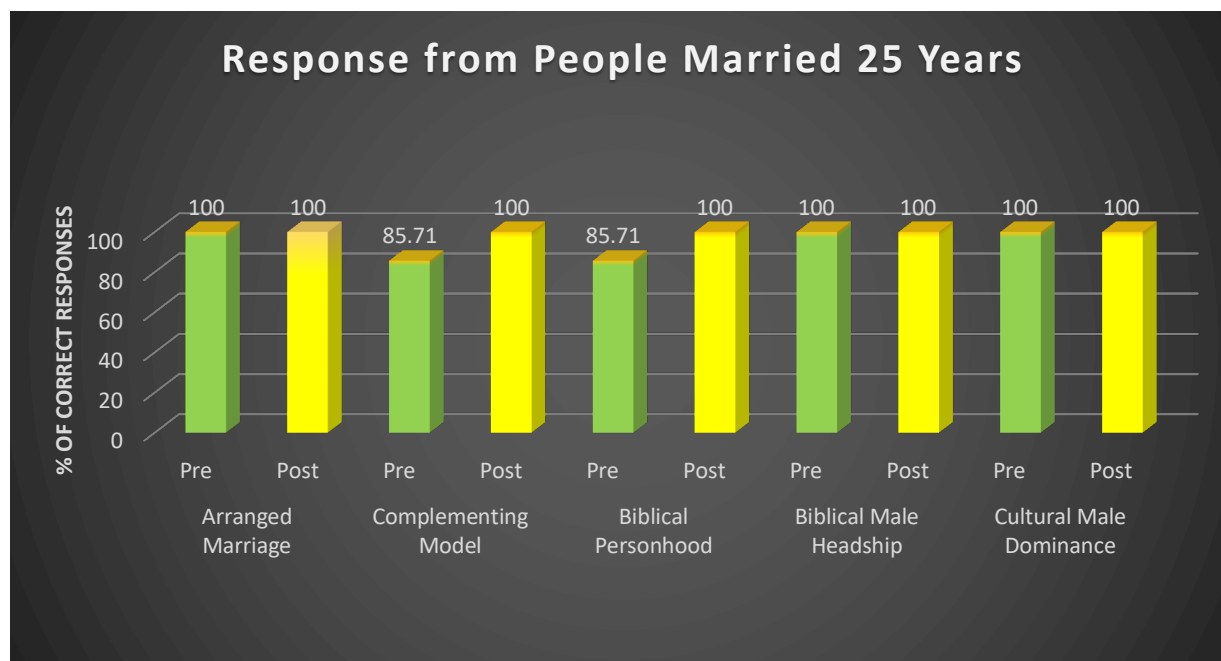
Figure 4.8. Survey results for people married twenty-plus years



The graphic (see Figure 4.8) for this demographic shows improvement in most areas of understanding within the marriage enrichment survey. There is no growth in understanding the biblical male headship in a Christian arranged marriage. There was still room to grow in understanding the influence of culture on arranged marriages. The practice of arranged marriages and cultural nuances that influence arranged marriages has changed considerably since some of the participants in this group were married.

There is an acknowledgment that culturally induced male dominance is not biblical. Eight of the nine participants in this group agreed that biblical leadership in marriage does not mean one can make unilateral selfish choices. This group is one of the most significant sub-sections in the survey demographic, and they have shown improvement in several areas of understanding. The researcher is pleased with the effectiveness of the intervention and the growth that can lead to transformation in these lives.

Figure 4.9. Survey results for people married twenty-five plus years



There was only one participant in this group. The researcher noticed maturity in several areas of the marriage relationship (see Figure 4.9). It could be related to the fact that the person was married for more than twenty-five years and has experienced the grace of life in her marriage. The person did not need to grow in her understanding of the effects of culture on arranged marriages and male dominance.

In the area of biblical manhood and womanhood and biblical male headship, there was no need for growth. The participant in this group showed remarkable knowledge in all areas of the marriage relationship represented in the marriage enrichment survey. There is a fifteen percent increase in her understanding of biblical manhood and womanhood. The Marriage Seminar was transformational in two areas for this individual. After being married for more than twenty-five years, the participant is still conscious about the pitfalls of male dominance in Christian arranged marriages.

Summary of overall survey results by demographics

The researcher designed the marriage enrichment survey to measure understanding and awareness of essential principles of the biblical marriage relationship at TBCF. The survey was administered before and after the intervention was implemented in the action research thesis project. The demographic survey results were a good indication showing how different genders and different marriage lengths impacted the participants.

The issue of culturally induced male dominance is a sensitive subject where males can exhibit dominance. Understanding the biblical principles of the marriage relationship can prevent leadership roles that practice dominance. The survey results by gender show that there was more growth among women across all areas of the survey, whereas there was growth in the area of the complementarian model for men. It could be inferred from the results by gender that men did not change their perspective and their views about biblical personhood, biblical male headship, and male dominance.

The effectiveness of the intervention was also measured among different groups that were married for different lengths. The survey results show that the longer one was married, the more mature their understanding of masculinity and femininity. There was uniformity in understanding the role culture plays in arranged marriages. The largest group of participants classified by the length of their marriage was the one married for twenty years or more. This group showed improvement in all areas of marriage categories in the survey.

Finally, there were some groups by gender and length of marriage where there was no improvement due to the intervention in certain areas. The researcher believes that real change and transformation can be measured only by observing their lives over a long period. The breakdown of harmony in Christian arranged marriages due to male dominance is real.

Overall Marriage Enrichment Survey Results by Marriage Themes

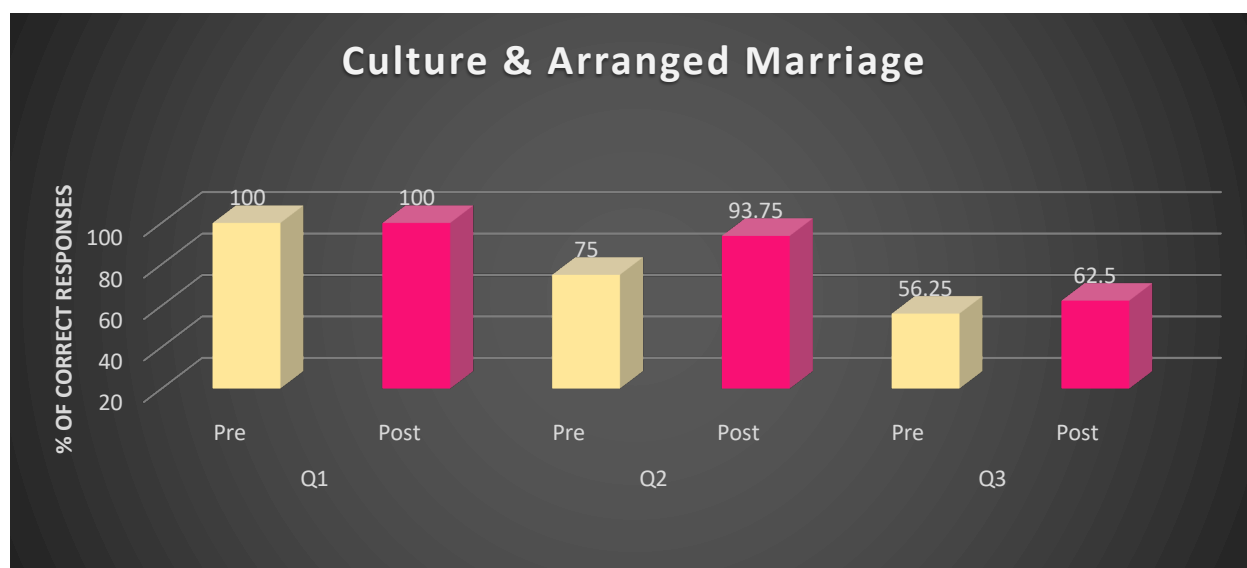
The marriage enrichment survey was divided into five major sections, each addressing a significant theme in the intervention process. The researcher focused on culture and arranged marriages, the complementarian model, biblical manhood and womanhood, biblical headship, and culturally induced male dominance. The researcher designed each section in the survey to measure awareness of each theme by creating multiple-choice and Likert-scale type questions.

Sixteen people completed the pre-seminar and post-seminar surveys. Some additional surveys were collected, but the researcher could not successfully match the pre-seminar and post-seminar portions of the survey. As a result, the researcher could not include these surveys in the analysis section. The following section will analyze the survey results for each theme and measure the impact of the intervention in the lives of the participants in the Core Group.

The questionnaire format (see Appendix F) consisted of twenty-eight questions to cover the major themes addressed during the intervention. Additionally, there was a section for gathering statistical data to account for participant profiles. The first section addresses culture and arranged marriages. This section has five questions. The second section addressing the complementarian model has seven questions. The third section, addressing biblical manhood and womanhood, has seven questions. The fourth section addressing biblical male headship has five questions. Finally, the last section addressing male dominance has four questions. The researcher did not want to make the survey unnecessarily long by adding too many questions. There was a concern that the participants would lose focus as they approached the end of the survey if it was inundated with too many questions. Asking very few questions on a survey can be inconclusive in assessing the progress made in a particular section.

Survey Results on Culture and Arranged Marriage

Figure 4.10. Survey results for culture and arranged marriage



The theme addressed in this survey section deals with awareness and understanding the influence of culture on Christian arranged marriages in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, India. There are five questions in this section. The first two questions are qualifier-type questions requesting information about the participant's exposure to an arranged marriage. The rest are part of the analysis. The three diagnostic statements addressed in the survey are as follows: "which of the following statements do you agree with," "arranged marriage is an extension of patriarchy where women have no say in whom they marry," and "many Indian Christian families adhere to the principle of an arranged alliance in a God-honoring way" (see Appendix F).

The questions are depicted in Figure 4.10 as Q1, Q2, and Q3, respectively. It was noted in Figure 4.10 that there was an improvement in awareness and understanding of the issues related to questions two and three (see Figure 4.10). There was unanimous agreement that marriage, as defined in the Bible, is between one man and one woman. The definition of marriage, as per the survey results, is not an instruction but a description.

Patriarchy is defined differently in different cultures. Question two addresses patriarchy as practiced in Asian Indian culture. Even though in some cultures, patriarchy has been misused to oppress women, the participants in this survey concluded that the influence of patriarchy in Christian arranged marriages does not rob women of the freedom and choice to participate in the decision-making process of selecting a spouse.¹⁶⁹ The question was answered by the majority of the participants in the negative, suggesting that women have a say in arranged marriages.

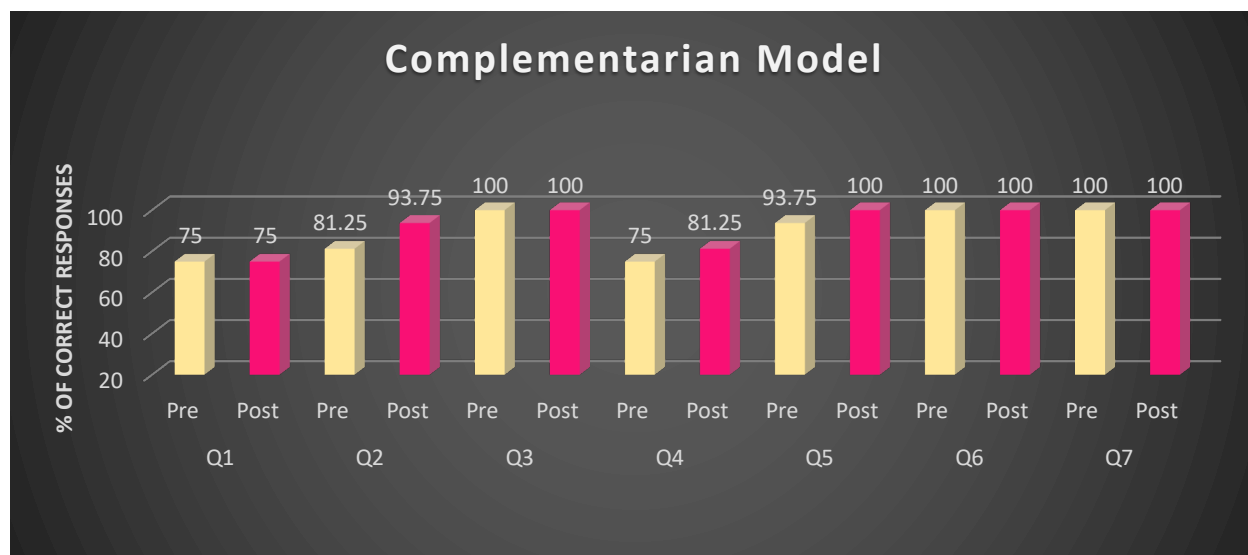
All the participants were married in India and then migrated to the United States. Arranged marriage is a cultural tradition in South India. In non-Christian homes, specific Hindu rituals are followed per Vedic scriptures. The blessing of various deities is invoked to remove all obstacles in the ceremonies.¹⁷⁰ Christians do not practice these Hindu customs and adhere to a biblical format where everything is done for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31). The alliance between the boy and the girl in the relationship is formed in a God-honoring way in most families.

¹⁶⁹ Raksha Pande, “‘I Arranged My Own Marriage:’ Arranged Marriages and Post-Colonial Feminism,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 22, no. 2 (2015): 172.

¹⁷⁰ Linda Penkower and Tracy Pintchman, *Hindu Ritual at the Margins: Innovations, Transformations, Reconsiderations* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2014), 45.

Survey Results on Complementarian Model

Figure 4.11. Survey results for complementarian model



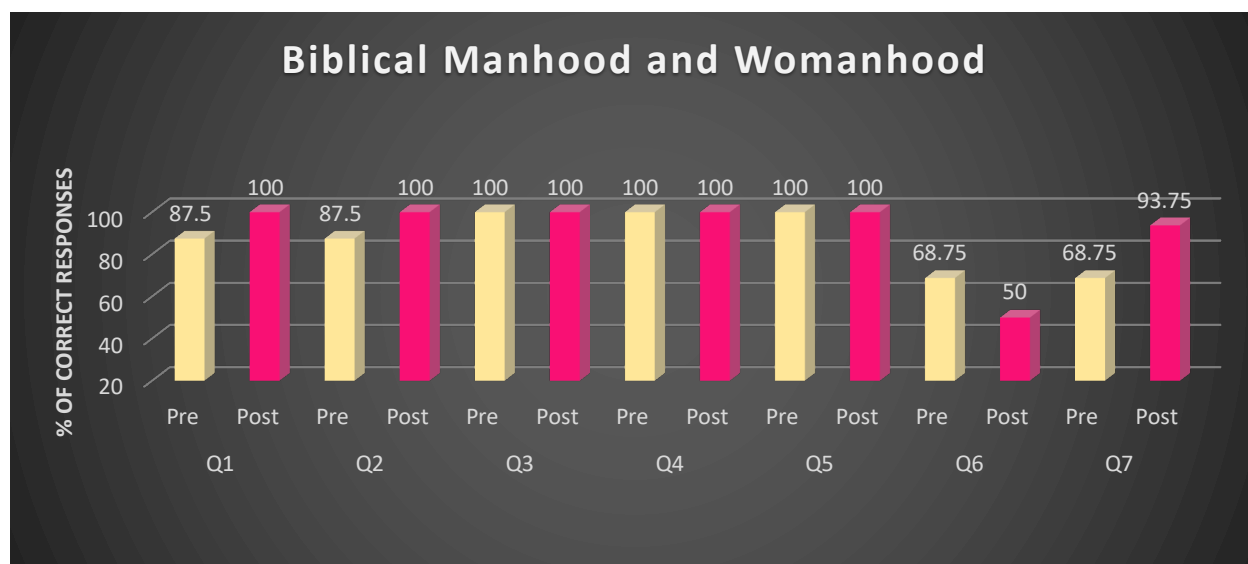
The theme addressed in this survey section deals with the conservative Christian complementarian model. There are seven response prompts in this section as noted here: “in a marriage, submission means absolute surrender of will,” “submission is a divine calling to honor and affirm male leadership at home,” “complimentary manhood and womanhood are visible in creation order in Genesis,” “submission can allow the husband to sin,” “do you understand what suitable helper means for in a marriage,” “marriage is a true partnership between men and women,” “a lack of proper understanding of marriage can lead to unhealthy male dominance” (see Appendix F). The questions are depicted in Figure 4.11 as Q1 through Q7. The questions one, three, six, and seven did not show any improvement in the pre-seminar and post-seminar results. The researcher observed the participants during the intervention process. Based on his observation and post-seminar qualitative analysis, it is reasonable to conclude that there is good awareness and agreement on the complementarian model, where the partners in the marriage relationship complement one another.

Affirming male leadership in a home where the man and woman are complementing each other is based on the household codes given in the Word of God. The researcher observed maturity in this area among the participants during discussion time in the intervention process. There is improvement in the areas addressed by questions two, four, and five, which primarily deal with the topic of submission in a marriage.

Question four was explained to the participants during the administration of the survey as submission in a Christ-centered marriage, where household codes in the Scripture are practiced regularly. When the leader exercises his responsibility as a Christ-like servant leader, submission does not allow a husband to sin. Rather, it leads to voluntary submission from the women. The concept took time to be grasped by the participants, and the researcher answered pertinent questions during the intervention.

Survey Results on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

Figure 4.12. Survey results for biblical manhood and womanhood



The theme addressed in this survey section deals with biblical manhood and biblical womanhood. There are seven survey items in this section. They are as follows: “in a

marriage, the husband models the loving sacrificial leadership of Christ,” “mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead in the marriage,” mature femininity affirms, Christ-like male leadership in marriage,” “men and women have different roles in marriage,” “women, in general, do not have leadership skills,” “women in general, do not display Christ-like servant leadership embedded in sacrificial love in a marriage, and “I have a good understanding of the household codes defined in the Bible,” (see Appendix F).

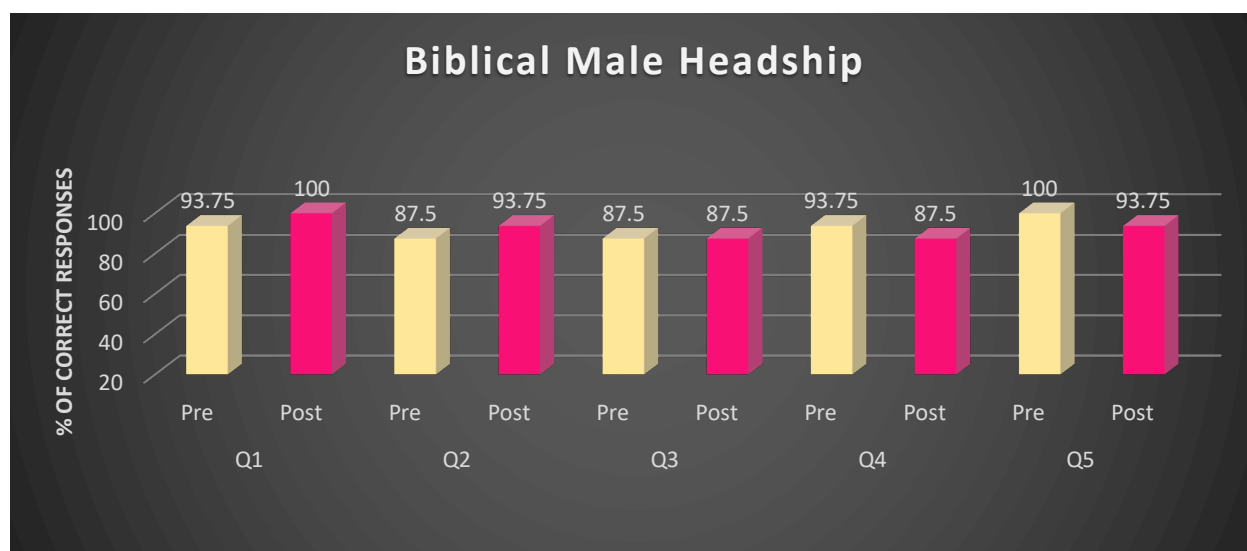
The questions in this section of the marriage enrichment survey are designed to measure the improvement in understanding the unique roles given to Christians in a marriage relationship. The understanding of biblical mature masculinity and femininity is measured. The results for questions three, four, and five do not show any improvement (Figure 4.12). The lack of progress could be attributed to the fact that the participants were well aware of these issues and were informed before the intervention.

There is improvement in areas addressed by questions one, two, and seven. Question one deals with servant leadership in marriage. The researcher asked the participants to answer this question based on their personal experiences in their marriages. There was an improvement in two individuals and their marriages in this area before and after the intervention. The researcher must attribute the transformation to the Holy Spirit’s work in the participants’ lives.

There is an improvement in the understanding of household codes mentioned in the letters of Paul and Peter. A lot of discussion centered around this area during the intervention. The unique roles in a marriage relationship were reinforced while celebrating the complementarian design in the marriage. There was an anomaly in answering question six, which deals with Christ-like servant leadership in men. This anomaly could be related to misunderstanding the question.

Survey Results on Biblical Male Headship

Figure 4.13. Survey results for biblical male headship



The theme addressed in this survey section deals with biblical male headship. There are five questions in this section. The questions addressed in this section revolve around the following points: “male headship includes primary leadership at home,” “do you believe that men bear the primary responsibility to lead, protect, and sustain,” “headship bears the primary responsibility for moral design and planning at home,” “do you believe that male leadership is God’s original design,” “according to the Bible, male headship is distinctively wrong,” (see Appendix F).

Questions one and two in the survey under this section show progress (see Figure 4.13). There is agreement that God has designed man to be the leader in the family unit. Biblical male headship, as defined in the Scripture, is the necessary succession of biblical manhood. Leadership is based on the creation order and not on the specific skills of a particular individual. God will graciously grant the leadership ability to the Christ follower who desires to fulfill the mandate given to the servant leader in the home.

Question three deals with primary responsibility for moral design and planning at home. The intervention addressed this topic as a male responsibility where the woman affirms and helps

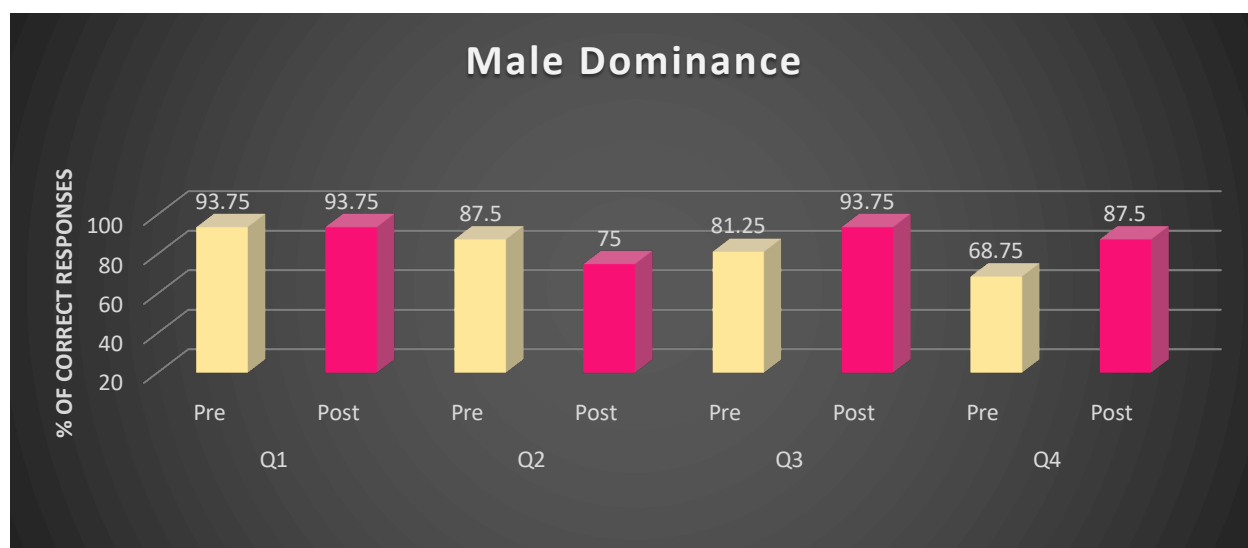
in the planning and moral design. Two individuals did not answer the question in the affirmative. This could be because the reality in this participant's home is contrary to what the Bible prescribes. This could be very well the reason why this question was not answered correctly by everyone.

There is a slight setback in the understanding of biblical male headship in this section. The researcher noticed an anomaly in the results pertaining to questions four and five. The questions deal with one's belief about biblical male headship. Because of the anonymous nature of the surveys, the researcher could not address the lack of improvement in their understanding of this marriage principle.

The overall improvement in understanding biblical male headship is evident in the survey results. Even though the Marriage Seminar design utilized an eight-week intervention, the researcher is hopeful that the Holy Spirit will change the participants' lives for years to come.

Survey Results on Male Dominance

Figure 4.14. Survey results for biblical male dominance



The theme addressed in this survey section deals with addressing culturally induced male dominance. Male headship, as defined in the Bible, gives room for wife abuse. There are four questions in this section. The questions addressed in the survey center on the following points: “men and women have different roles in marriage,” “wife abuse has deep roots in parental failure in teaching masculinity,” “is leadership synonymous with getting one’s way,” and “leadership in marriage involves unilateral selfish choices” (see Appendix F).

This action research thesis project aims to address the breakdown of harmony and lack of Christian witness in the home due to culturally induced male dominance. This section deals with addressing male dominance in Christian arranged marriages. The question in this section of the marriage survey is designed by the researcher to measure progress in addressing male dominance.

TBCF is a mono-ethnic group influenced by strong cultural overtones from South India. The cultural practices and nuances can sometimes hinder biblical growth and contradict Scripture. The intervention for this action research thesis project addressed how the partners in a marriage relationship are of equal worth in God’s eyes and still have unique roles in a marriage relationship. The intervention also addressed biblical male headship and voluntary submission by the wife to be a suitable helper as defined in the creation order.

The Bible sets the precedence for leadership and submission, not culture. This section of the survey stresses the importance of not using the Scripture to allow for dominance in the name of leadership. Questions three and four are designed to measure the participant’s understanding in these areas. The results of these questions show progress in understanding and gradual transformation in the participants’ lives (see Figure 4.14).

The researcher did notice a slight anomaly in response to question two, which addresses the parent’s responsibility in teaching mature masculinity. Spousal abuse is a serious matter and

can be detrimental to the health of a marriage relationship. There is some confusion in the participant's response to this vital issue. In Asian Indian culture, wife abuse is an existential threat to family unity and harmony. It is not conclusive that parental failure in teaching proper masculinity is the only cause for wife abuse. The survey rather suggests that it is a vital part of the problem of male dominance and wife abuse.

Summary of Overall Survey Results by Themes

The marriage enrichment survey was designed to measure the effectiveness of the intervention in the action research thesis project. The survey used twenty-eight questions to perform the measurement. Five broad themes were selected for the intervention, including culture and arranged marriages, the complementarian model, biblical manhood and womanhood, biblical male headship, and male dominance.

The survey results showed significant progress in the area of the complementarian model. The subsequent biggest gain was observed in understanding culture and its influence on Christian arranged marriages. The participants also understood biblical male headship and male dominance, and the results show some progress in these areas.

The chronological order in which the themes were addressed in the intervention and how the progress was measured is the same. The researcher was able to build an awareness of the cultural nuances that influence Christian arranged marriages. This helped the participants deal with the breakdown of harmony and lack of Christian witness in Christian arranged marriages. Not all Christian marriages have disharmony or a lack of witness at home. The intervention helped the participants to be aware of the pitfalls and avoid them in the future.

Complementing each other in a marriage relationship while adhering to the unique roles given to Christian couples in the Scripture was a significant aspect of the intervention. The

interconnectedness of the themes addressed in the intervention was vital to bring out lasting change in the thinking and mindset of the participants. The survey results show a quantitative data trail that points to the fact that the intervention was influential in the participants' lives. The researcher's observations during the intervention corroborate the findings in the marriage enrichment survey results.

Qualitative Analysis of Data from the Core Group

The goal of the qualitative data-gathering for this action research project was to allow the researcher to understand the experiences and realities of the participants regarding their views on arranged marriages in Asian Indian culture, the complementarian model of marriage, biblical roles for man and women in marriage, biblical male headship, and addressing culturally induced male dominance in Asian Indian Christian marriages. The interpretation began with a summary of the major qualitative findings.¹⁷¹

The goal of the interviews was not to fix their marriages or give counsel but to learn from the participants' experiences. The narratives revealed a diversity in the background concerning marriage alliances but uniformity in agreement with the biblical roles and household codes defined in God's Word for marriages. Finally, there was broad agreement in acknowledging the presence of male dominance in Asian Indian culture and how the gospel can transform lives to address this issue in Christian homes.

The researcher recruited the participants in the interview process by extending an invitation to participate in the qualitative data-gathering initiative. All the participants agreed to do the interviews and provided their valuable time in their busy schedules. Table 4.2 lists the TBCF participants interviewed. The table is a list of pseudo names and does not reveal the real

¹⁷¹ John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2018), 216.

identities of the participants in the qualitative study. The nature of the qualitative study is open-ended, giving much freedom to the participants to drive the conversation. The researcher showed respect and assured confidentiality during and after the interview process. Gaining trust from the participants in a qualitative study is vital to the success of the data-gathering exercise. There were a couple of occasions where the participants became emotional during the interview.

Table 4.2. Interview group demographics

INTERVIEW DEMOGRAPHICS-1				
Number	Interview Date	Pseudo Name	Gender	Comments
1	9/17/22	Martha	Female	Audio Recorded
2	9/17/22	Oscar	Male	Audio Recorded
3	9/17/22	Samantha	Female	Audio Recorded
4	9/17/22	Tyler	Male	Audio Recorded
5	9/17/22	Diane	Female	Audio Recorded
6	9/18/22	William	Male	Audio Recorded
7	9/18/22	Barbara	Female	Audio Recorded
8	9/18/22	Tucker	Male	Audio Recorded
9	9/18/22	Libby	Female	Audio Recorded

Overall Qualitative Interview Results by Themes

The TBCF participants shared meaningful and personal experiences from their lives through their narratives. It was not a response to a list of quantitative questions. Sensing comments, “Collecting and identifying themes is the primary way qualitative researchers process and analyze data.”¹⁷² The researcher processed the qualitative data and identified several themes.

¹⁷² Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 201.

From the intervention fieldwork, five themes emerged: Arranged marriage culture in Asian Indian Christian homes, complementarian model, biblical personhood, biblical male headship, and culturally induced male dominance. The action research thesis employed a mixed-method approach. The researcher learned that the qualitative data revealed more insights about the progress made due to the intervention.

Theme One: Culture and Arranged Marriage

All the participants who provided qualitative interviews are Asian Indian immigrants to the United States, are thoroughly familiar with the Asian Indian culture, and the concept of arranged marriages. The researcher also hailed from the same background and was able to connect with the participants meaningfully. All the interview conversations were thoroughly enjoyable and were conducted in a non-accusatory tone, where the participants felt comfortable narrating their experiences and realities.

Initiation of Marriage Alliance

In Asian Indian culture, marriages are a product of an alliance between the groom, the bride, and their respective families. The participants in the qualitative data-gathering exercise hail from the twin states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, where the initiation of the marriage alliance is carried out by friends and family. In almost all cases, a close family was responsible for bringing the couple together. In a few cases, the couple met through other means and then involved their parents in arranging the marriage. All the participants were Christ-followers at the time of their marriage alliance. The most important factor in choosing a spouse revolved around the spouse's standing in Christ.

The initiation of a marriage alliance during the interview process was explained in many unique ways. In response to the question, "Who was involved in arranging your marriage?"

Barbara shared, “My immediate family member arranged my alliance. But I was the one who prayed and asked the Holy Spirit to guide me through Scripture to bring me the right match” To the same question, Libby answered, “It was asking the right questions about the person’s faith and practice on an online forum that led me to get my family involved in the pursuit of my marriage alliance.”

Cultural Influence in Arranged Marriages

Culture plays an important role in the inner workings of an arranged marriage. One of the areas where culture seemed to have a prominent impact in Asian Indian Christian marriages was how patriarchy was practiced in their homes and extended families. Kalwant Bhopal, in *Gender, Race, and Patriarchy*, states, “Theories of patriarchy have universalized women’s experience which may conceal other forms of oppression based upon ‘race’ and class.”¹⁷³ In response to the question, “Did your family subscribe to patriarchy where men hold power?” Many respondents shared their experiences on how patriarchy was practiced in their own family and their extended family. In response to the above-mentioned question, William shared, “Patriarchy was evidenced in my mother’s side of the family where men made all the important decisions for the family, but women had a good say in domestic matters.” Barbara responded to the same question stating, “Patriarchy was enforced to the full extent in her extended family, and there were times when she felt that women should also have a voice in decision-making.”

Samantha commented on the practice of patriarchy by saying, “Patriarchy was practiced in her family to the full extent in financial matters, but her mother was more responsible for the kid’s education. She also noticed that her parents did not complement each other.” Libby was so frustrated with male dominance in her own family that at one time in her life as a young adult,

¹⁷³ Kalwant Bhopal, *Gender, "Race" and Patriarchy: A Study of South Asian Women* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 5.

she decided not to be married. Oscar responding to the topic, stated, “I am so glad that the Bible does not give us household codes based on a particular culture but uses the creation order as the underlying source.” Martha remembers how women were abused among her friends and family circle as victims of culturally induced male dominance. Martha states, “From a very young age, I prayed regularly, asking for a husband that is not abusive like the rest of the society to which I have been exposed.”

Influence of Immediate Family in Arranged Marriages

All participants who participated in the interview were married in India and later immigrated to the United States. Some couples started their early married lives in their parent’s homes. Many others moved out and started making their own home but stayed close to their parents. Two couples in the participant group were already in the United States when they got their proposals to be married and had to go back to India to get married. They immediately returned to the United States and established their lives. The influence of an immediate family in the early stages of marriage greatly impacts the health and harmony of one’s marriage. When asked about his family’s influence in his marriage, Tucker responded, “I did not want my parents telling me what to do in my own marriage, so I moved out on my own soon after getting married.” Martha, on the other hand, shared, “My parents were my role models, and the Bible was my main guidance when I began my married life.”

In response to the question, “Did coming to America improve/worsen your marriage relations?” Libby shared, “We as a couple were better off in the United States because my husband’s uncles and aunts were interfering in our marriage.” Oscar shared, “Being in the United States helped us work our marriage much better.” Samantha also chimed in on this topic and shared, “Coming to the U.S. enhanced our married life because there was no peer pressure.”

William, on the other hand, stated, “Being with the family and parents helped us make better decisions as a couple.”

Theme Two: Complementarian Model

The Bible teaches that in God’s created order, men and women are suited for each other but not precisely the same as each other.¹⁷⁴ Marriage is a true partnership between a man and a woman. The partners in this arrangement are different in their makeup but fit together. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that men and women are equal in Christ (Gal 3:28-29). They are equally justified by faith, equally free from the bondage of legalism, clothed with Christ, possessed by Christ, and heirs to the promises. God intends for all the “weaknesses” that characteristically belong to man to call forth and highlight woman’s strengths. And God intends for all the “weaknesses” that characteristically belong to woman to call forth and highlight man’s strengths.¹⁷⁵

Relationship with Spouse

Complementing each other in a marriage centers around one’s relationship with their spouse. When asked about their relationship status, the participants responded that the Marriage Seminar was instrumental in enhancing their understanding of complementing one another. William shared, “The Marriage Seminar made me realize that God made couples complement each other.” Tyler responded, “I do not have any problem treating my wife as an equal partner.” Samantha replied, “I learned over the years to complement each other even though the marriage was rough in the beginning.” Libby commented, “The complementarian

¹⁷⁴ Strachan, *The GRAND DESIGN*, 23.

¹⁷⁵ Piper, et al., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 59.

model helped me understand God's design for marriage." Martha shared, "I am not a vocal person in my marriage, but I strive to complement and understand my husband."

Partnership Status

When asked about the impact of the Marriage Seminar on their partnership status, the participants responded positively. Responding to the question, "What are your thoughts about wife and husband complementing each other?" Oscar shared, "A change in heart allowed me to easily follow God-given roles and complement each other." Libby stated, "It was reassuring to know that my worth is in Christ and that men and women are of equal worth in God's eyes." Barbara answered, "I learned that men and women are of equal worth in God's eyes, and one is not superior to the other." William also responded to the question and shared, "Even though there are times when we are not on the same page, I learned to view my wife as a valuable partner in the decision-making process."

Willingness to Learn from Spouse

The complementarian model works when the couple is willing to acknowledge that God has given each one unique roles and strengths that complement the other. There is a willingness to celebrate strengths and learn from each other. William shared, "I learned how to budget and spend responsibly from his wife. I am working on doing things differently and not procrastinate." Martha chimed in by stating, "I always look forward to learning God's will for my life and my family from my husband."

Theme Three: Biblical Personhood

Biblical personhood entails a clear understanding of biblical manhood and biblical womanhood. Mature masculinity and mature femininity are built on the household codes given to a Christian home in the Scriptures. Jesus called the leader in the marriage relationship to lead

with a serving, sacrificial love (Luke 22:26). Biblical manhood expresses itself not in the demand to be served but in the strength to serve and to sacrifice for the good of the woman.¹⁷⁶ Biblical womanhood affirms the husband's leadership in a marriage wherever it does not lead to sin.

The participants in the interview process showed a healthy understanding of the roles defined in the Bible for men and women. William stated, "I am comfortable accepting the unique roles God has given in the Scripture regarding marriage." Barbara affirmed her understanding of the roles in a marriage relationship by stating, "I understood the unique role of husband and wife much better after attending the." Tyler, who struggled with identifying the difference between Christian and non-Christian marriages, commented, "After attending the seminar, I learned that understanding and following the biblical roles for man and woman eventually bring glory to God." Diane also expressed a similar sentiment and shared, "After attending the, I am convinced that God has a better plan for us in giving us unique roles for men and women."

Some participants shared their personal feelings about accepting the roles given in Scripture and narrated their experiences in their marriages. Libby commented, "I was very stubborn in not accepting the submission role in marriage. But after seeing the relationship between Christ and church, I learned to embrace the roles of manhood and womanhood as prescribed in the Scripture." Martha shared, "My husband made it easy for me to affirm his leadership role, but I believed that God has put him in my life for my good."

Theme Four: Biblical Male Headship

Biblical male headship is a vital role for men in Christian marriage. It is a privilege and a sacred responsibility. The Bible defines the husband's responsibilities regarding biblical headship. Thorough knowledge of the Scriptures is vital for godly men to lead their wives and

¹⁷⁶ Piper, et al., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 44.

families. Biblical headship involves self-sacrifice displayed in practical leadership. Jesus cited the creation order when referring to biblical roles in marriage (Matt 19:4-5).

The participants in the interviews exhibited a healthy acceptance of biblical male headship. Personal sanctification and knowledge of Scriptures were mentioned as the key ingredients for the faithful execution of male headship in marriage. Martha shared, “I am in complete agreement with the doctrinal position on male headship.” She also believes that the Bible triumphs over culture and every man-made practice regarding male headship. Oscar commented, “After understanding servant leadership in the Scripture, I started treating my wife with love and concern.”

Libby shared that she attended a women’s Bible study where she learned about male headship and submission. Samantha commented, “I thought that I was a second-class citizen to submit to my husband’s leadership and did not want to be submissive in my marriage relationship. The Marriage Seminar clarified what biblical male headship means.” The rest of the participants clearly stated their agreement with the biblical male headship and wanted to strive to be Christ’s followers in this area of their marriages.

Theme Five: Male Dominance

Culturally induced male dominance is a threat to Asian Indian society and can be a real manifestation in Christian arranged marriages. Male dominance can be defined as the assertion of a man’s will over a woman’s will. Sometimes domination is asserted in the name of biblical headship. Male dominance is a personal moral failure and not a biblical doctrine.¹⁷⁷ Biblical male headship does not give the man all the rights and authority that Christ has.

¹⁷⁷ Piper, et al., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 120.

The theme of male dominance and addressing its evil through the saving work of Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit emerged clearly towards the end of the interview process. There was an acknowledgment that male dominance is an existential threat to arranged marriages and needs to be addressed. The before and after views on male dominance after attending the Marriage Seminar were highlighted.

Responding to the question, “What are your thoughts about male dominance in your marriage?” William shared, “I learned that dominance is asserting one’s will over the other. The husband’s will is not final in the family.” Barbara mentioned that she witnessed male dominance in her own family growing up as a child. Tyler confessed that he exhibited patterns of dominance in his own marriage and later corrected his behavior by the grace of God. Libby was very much aware of dominance in her own family and hated it. She shared, “I became very egotistic and did not like to be told what to do.”

Martha was traumatized when she witnessed dominance that resulted in abuse of many families in her neighborhood. She stated, “I started observing abuse and dominance in society from age 16 to age 26. During this time, my sole comfort was the word of God and his plan for my own marriage. I was praying that God would give me a husband who is not dominating and abusive.”

Overall Summary of Interview Results by Themes

The researcher gave the participants in the action research thesis project an invitation to participate in a qualitative study at the end of the seminar. Many participants showed a willingness to assist in the study. He later approached seven individuals to enlist them in qualitative data gathering. He was able to recruit three couples and one additional individual. The data gathering involved having a one-on-one interview with the participant.

The interview results clearly demonstrated a positive impact on the lives of the participants. The results not only corroborate the evidence gathered quantitatively but also provide an in-depth insight into the way the intervention addressed personal issues in Christian arranged marriages. All the participants in the interviews were able to share their personal life experiences and provide confirmation that their lives were transformed. Barbara was pleased to hear her husband participate in the discussion sessions during the intervention. She noticed a positive change in his demeanor at home after the intervention. Many others provided similar feedback.

Summary of the Intervention Design Effectiveness Based on Results

The action research thesis was designed as a strategic initiative to address a unique cultural practice among Asian Indian Christian couples.¹⁷⁸ The intervention was designed to address the breakdown of harmony in Asian Indian Christian marriages due to cultural norms that are biblically incorrect. The research methodology identified that the breakdown of harmony is due to a lack of pre-marital counseling and awareness of biblical household codes, which promote a complementarian theory. The researcher desired to address this problem by conducting a Marriage Seminar that will address the concepts of the complementarian model, biblical manhood and womanhood, biblical male headship, and addressing male dominance.

However, due to a change of venue for the seminar and the aftermath of a pandemic, the class resulted in fewer members than anticipated. The leadership at TBCF decided not to provide the seminar over Zoom for various technical and non-technical reasons. There was a good number of visitors that attended the series who were not regular members. The researcher had to work around this program by facilitating the visitors while engaging the regular participants.

¹⁷⁸ Stringer, *Action Research*, 6.

A couple of participants had travel overseas due to family emergencies which limited their participation. The researcher provided written notes and audio recordings to those participants to cover the material. One of those participants was not available for a post-seminar interview and missed out on important concluding sessions.

Due to a steady stream of visitors, the researcher had to modify his teaching material. Some of the visitors had a language barrier and did not speak or understand English fluently. The researcher had to communicate in Telugu, their native tongue. This impacted the researcher's ability to communicate fluently and impacted the clarity of thought.

Finally, the weather in Florida between June and November is prone to afternoon thunderstorms and occasional hurricanes. One Saturday, during the Marriage Seminar, there was a big thunderstorm that resulted in a lightning strike on the premises. The strike knocked out the communications network responsible for showing audio-visual content. The researcher had to modify the class material and use printed materials to teach the class and communicate with the participants. The weather also resulted in a heavy downpour on certain sessions where the attendance was less than expected.

Areas for Intervention Design Improvement

The intervention design's primary purpose was to address culturally induced male dominance in Christian arranged marriages that can cause the breakdown of harmony and lack of Christian witness at home. The overall results of the intervention are narrated by the researcher in the previous section of the thesis. The quantitative and qualitative measures show an improvement in the understanding of the issue of male dominance. More importantly, the results show a transformation in the lives of the participants.

There are, however, several areas of the intervention design that can be modified to achieve better results from the intervention. The first aspect that can be improved is to provide a

section that addresses female dominance in Christian arranged marriages. Many participants during the intervention and in post-seminar interview sessions expressed a concern that the researcher did not address female dominance. Even though female dominance is not culturally induced, it is a fact that needs to be addressed. The researcher did not include this topic in his intervention because it was not in the scope of the problem statement. The participants who expressed concern about female dominance are not limited to the male gender.

The questionnaires in the pre-seminar and post-seminar surveys were administered during the first and last sessions of the project seminar. The responses to some questions in the survey seemed ambiguous and unclear. The researcher believes that each question needs to be clarified while administering the survey. Some of the participants in the Core Group are not fluent in English. The researcher believes that a Telugu (the native tongue of the participants) translation should be provided to those who are not well-versed in English.

There was some confusion at the end of the seminar trying to match the pre-seminar and post-seminar surveys. The researcher asked the participants to fill out a unique four-digit identifier to match the pre-seminar and post-seminar marriage enrichment surveys. This approach did not work well. There were twenty-two pre-seminar and twenty post-seminar surveys collected from the participants. Many surveys did not have matching identifiers. The researcher was only able to match sixteen surveys, reducing the number of participants in the study to sixteen ($n \leq 16$).

The researcher would like to propose populating the unique identifiers (four-digit codes) for the surveys and establishing an honor system where the participants can register their identifiers with a neutral third party. The third party can provide these identifiers (four-digit codes) to the participants when they are answering the survey questionnaires.

The researcher would like to propose the following interviewing basics when conducting the qualitative data-gathering interviews.¹⁷⁹

Figure 4.15. Interviewing basics to Affirm Dignity

Interviewing Basics to Affirm Dignity	
1. Type of Questions: Ask Open-Ended Questions ²³⁵	
2. Posture: Have the posture and attitude of a student. Think about Larry King's posture in the video. ²³⁶	
3. Silence: A long pause indicates you are ready to hear more. ²³⁷	
4. Follow the Conversation: After you get the first question out, listen to what they are telling you. They will tell you where they would like to go with the questions. ²³⁸	
5. Use Extension or Clarification statements: "Tell me more about..." ²³⁹	
6. Use Encouragement: "Fascinating. . ." "Please go on. . ." or a simple "un-huh." Practice positive attribution. ²⁴⁰	

Asking open-ended questions allows for heartfelt, sincere responses.¹⁸⁰ The researcher observed that silence is golden during the interview process. It shows respect for the participants and encourages them to collect their thoughts before responding to a given question.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Darren Hercyk, "Engaging the Poor: Leveraging Local Poverty Assistance Programs to Prepare for Global Engagement." D.Min thesis., Liberty University, 2020.

¹⁸⁰ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 86-88.

¹⁸¹ Larry King, interview by Cenk Uygur, Los Angeles, CA, March 26, 2014.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YqNyfelyNc>.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Chapters one and two of the action research thesis described a unique problem encountered in mono-ethnic, mono-cultural para-churches of Asian Indian origin. The problem addressed in this action research thesis is the breakdown of harmony in Asian Indian Christian marriages due to culturally induced male dominance. The mixed-methods study explored the relationship quality and biblical household codes in arranged marriages at TBCF. The research specifically considered the areas of understanding culture and arranged marriages, the complementarian model, biblical manhood and womanhood, biblical male headship, and male dominance.

The quantitative survey addressed five measures, and the qualitative interviews considered the phenomenological aspects of Christian arranged marriage. The quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed to assess the effect of culturally induced male dominance in Christian arranged marriages at TBCF. The data sets were checked against the hypothesis. The results of the quantitative data will show whether there is an awareness of the problem of male dominance in Christian arranged marriages at TBCF. The data measured the commitment to address the problem through internal transformation. The mixed-method study clearly showed that Asian Indian culture induces male dominance in arranged marriages. We need to address male dominance by understanding biblical household codes and applying them with the help of the Holy Spirit in daily living.

The qualitative findings are checked against the quantitative data for consistency. Major themes were generated from the qualitative data: Cultural issues related to marriage,

understanding the complementarian model, knowing God's design in providing unique roles for manhood and womanhood, understanding biblical male headship, and addressing male dominance. The intervention also addressed biblically wrong norms, household codes that need to be reinforced, and persistence in applying biblical principles in marriage as a priority. Quotes from the participants were cited to validate the accuracy of the themes. The study's findings added to the existing literature on Christian arranged marriages in India. It will help couples address cultural norms that need to be corrected in Christian marriages while considering biblical principles.

Revisiting the Problem

The members of TBCF comprise a mono-ethnic community of believers who migrated from the twin states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The group (TBCF) has origins in a more diverse community where some members were from other parts of India. Gradually the growth has been more predominant in one particular sub-group that belonged to the twin states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. TBCF does not discriminate or restrict others of Indian origin from joining the group. The current makeup of the group is exclusively from one area in India, and they are Telugu-speaking.

The primary mission of the group is to equip believers in the group to be faithful servants of the gospel first within their own families and as an extension to the outside world. As a result, being rooted in the Scripture allows a believer to question the validity of some cultural norms in daily life and practice. One such cultural norm is the concept of arranged marriage. In an arranged marriage, some culturally acquired behaviors can be contrary to biblical standards. One such behavior is male dominance.

The intervention implementation results of the action research thesis project partly corroborate such male dominance in Christian arranged marriages, which could lead to a

breakdown of harmony and a lack of witness at home. A buttress to these cultural norms and culturally acquired behaviors would be to reexamine regularly the cultural norms under Scripture and let Scripture guide one's daily life and practice.

Revisiting the Purpose

The primary focus of this action research thesis was to address the cultural norms that contradict biblical principles of marriage in the Asian Indian community by implementing an internal transformation ministry at TBCF. The internal transformation ministry was designed by the researcher and comprised of conducting an eight-week seminar to address male dominance. Teaching God's word and examining cultural norms under the lens of sacred Scripture is an indispensable task of Christian education.¹⁸²

This DMIN action research thesis aimed to implement internal transformation by teaching biblical principles of marriage. The seminar covered five areas of the marriage relationship as prescribed in the household codes of the letters of Paul and Peter. The areas covered in this section were understanding culture and its impact on arranged marriages, the complementarian model, biblical manhood and womanhood, biblical male headship, and male dominance. Teaching can sometimes be mechanical, with less than the desired outcome. Interactive teaching allows for a robust grasp of the material taught and proper understanding. The researcher integrated discussion time in each lecture to allow for clarification and healthy debate.

Changing a person's attitudes and beliefs rooted in unbiblical cultural norms can be hard. The researcher approached the teaching ministry with a humble attitude of prayer and respect for the research participant. Rebecca McLaughlin writes about changing a person's beliefs and

¹⁸² Pazmiño, 65.

states, “When examined more closely, attempting to persuade others to change their beliefs is a sign of respect. You are treating them as thinking agents with the ability to decide what they believe, not just products of their cultural environment.”¹⁸³ Since the Marriage Seminar was received with eagerness and a healthy discussion to address male dominance ensued, the purpose of this action research thesis was accomplished.

Revisiting the Thesis

The purpose of the action research thesis was to design and implement an internal transformation ministry at TBCF that leads to change in the individual’s mindset. The objective was approached by the researcher by teaching an eight-week seminar to address the cultural norms challenging biblical truths of marriage.

The participants who successfully completed the surveys were equally distributed between men and women. The group size was sixteen (n=16). More than half (56.25%) of the Core Group (people who completed the surveys) have been married for more than twenty years. More than a third (37.5%) of the Core Group have been United States residents for more than ten years. The majority of the participants started the intervention program with a good understanding of the biblical truths of marriage. They were exposed to the concept of an arranged marriage in the Asian Indian context. Even though they had a good biblical foundation on the principles of marriage, the action research thesis revealed that the Core Group benefited from the internal transformation ministry.

In the following section, the researcher will analyze the impact of the Marriage Seminar in each area of the marriage relationship in the lives of the transformation. The immediate measure of the impact is only for a short duration of eight weeks. The real impact can be

¹⁸³ Rebecca McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World’s Largest Religion* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 49.

expected to follow for years to come. Only the work of the Holy Spirit can produce lasting results in the lives of the participants. The qualitative and quantitative measures taken during the twelve-week intervention, which included an eight-week seminar, showed a positive outcome and a promising future in the lives of the Core Group participants.

Impact on Understanding Culture and Arranged Marriage

Many of today's arranged marriages are modified to various degrees to lessen or eradicate the significance of cultural overtones like dowry, bride, and groom not meeting prior to the wedding, and allowing freedom of choice. As the researcher stated earlier, the majority of participants in the Core Group have been married for more than twenty years. The changes in recent arranged marriage practices are not relevant to the participants at TBCF.

The Marriage Seminar defined cultural norms as shared understandings and expectations. The expectations in the Asian Indian culture, which consist of patterns acquired and transmitted, are skewed to favor the male over the female. Cultural norms need to be examined under the scrutiny of the Scripture. In Asian Indian culture, all ideas are evaluated based on how they will affect the culture. The action research addressed the importance of evaluating ideas based on Scripture and not culture. Male dominance that is culturally induced into marriage relationships is sometimes buttressed with a wrong interpretation of the biblical roles of husband and wife.

God instituted the marriage covenant at the beginning of man's existence (Gen 2:24). Jesus confirmed God's design for marriage in the New Testament (Matt 19:5-6). TBCF is learning to adapt to a new culture that challenges some of the norms they brought with them from their homeland of India.

So how did the Core Group respond to the aspect of culture and arranged marriage after the Marriage conference? The researcher took a mixed-method approach to the action research thesis. He measured the impact of the seminar and the intervention process quantitatively and

qualitatively. The quantitative approach involved taking a pre-seminar and post-seminar survey from the participants to measure progress. The Core Group responded with good progress, where there was an eight percent increase in the overall score.

The qualitative study corroborates this progress as many confided in the researcher that the intervention played a major role in raising their awareness of the pitfalls of cultural influence on Christian arranged marriages. The patriarchal system in Asian Indian culture was analyzed to curtail dominance and encourage biblical male headship. The qualitative study also noted that the Bible does not give us household codes based on culture. The biblical truths about marriage are rooted in the creation order.

Impact on Understanding the Complementarian Model

In the Bible, marriage is a complementarian arrangement. The seminar focused on highlighting the differences between men and women. God created and designed men and women differently. It was God who perceived Adam's loneliness and hence created woman (Gen 2:18). It was not an afterthought for God to create a suitable helper for man. He providentially provided each one a companion. The term suitable helper drives the importance of the role distinction while complementing the relationship between Adam and Eve. Kathryn Joyce shares the biblical perspective on marriage, "The biblical understanding, of course, is that men and women are one, united, and equally important in the eyes of the Lord. But within that understanding, the first created human, Adam, has authority- demonstrated by God's choosing him to name the animals and to, in fact, name Eve when she was taken from his side to be his servant and companion."¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Kathryn Joyce, *Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2009), 49.

The partnership in marriage is there to complement one another. While the partners are equal in worth in God's eyes, they are distinct and hold submission and leadership in balance. Understanding the nature of the partners is vital to the health of the marriage. Sin's devastating effect on marriage partnerships is evident in culture. The Marriage Seminar focused on celebrating the differences that men and women bring to the partnership while uniting with each other as redeemed image-bearers.

So how did the Core Group respond to the aspect of understanding the complementarian model after the Marriage Seminar? The quantitative and qualitative data results show good progress and personal transformation. The overall score for this category increased by ten percent (10%), showing a positive impact on the lives of the participants. The area where there was a remarkable improvement is acknowledging that submission in a Christian marriage is a divine calling to honor and affirm biblical male leadership at home. There was agreement in the group that there is no room for dominance in biblical male leadership.

The qualitative phase of the intervention corroborates with the survey results in this area. Many participants grew in this area and started showing a willingness to submit and affirm biblical male leadership. Some marriages in TBCF started with a breakdown of harmony because of a lack of understanding in this area. After the intervention, the participants started treating their spouses with love and respect while striving for Christ-like servant leadership.

Impact on Understanding Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

Mature masculinity and femininity are based on biblical truths and creation order. Understanding this model is vital for a healthy marriage. Susan Hunt comments, "Any discussion of femininity must be driven by God's Word, or it will lack substance, integrity, and

longevity.”¹⁸⁵ The intervention at TBCF as part of the action research thesis addressed biblical manhood and womanhood in two separate sessions. The marks of mature men and mature women rooted in Christ were studied extensively. The discussion that ensued in these sessions was instrumental and edifying.

The participants learned that mature men do not demand to be served but serve and sacrifice for the good of women (Luke 22:26). Godly men do not assume the authority of Christ over women but advocate it (Eph 5:23). Lonny Hughes defines biblical manhood as, “Manhood is not defined by a single event, age, or accomplishment. It is living a life in relationship with God and others.”¹⁸⁶ In a good marriage, decision-making is focused on the husband but is not unilateral. The call to leadership in a marriage is a call to humble oneself and take the responsibility to be a servant-leader (Matt 13:43). Hughes confirms leadership mandate by stating, “Men need to know that being made in God’s image includes ordained roles to be fulfilled according to their position in creation.”¹⁸⁷ When men love their wives, they are loving themselves because Christ commanded people to love their neighbor as themselves.

The Marriage Seminar also focused on the role of women in Christian marriage. The participants learned that biblical submission is a divine calling for wives. Bunny Wilson states, “submission has gotten a bad rap because it has been defined improperly and applied incorrectly.”¹⁸⁸ When women follow God’s idea of marriage and not their own idea, God is the one who is most glorified. Wilson also reminds us, “Our daughters must know the wondrous

¹⁸⁵ Hunt, Susan. “Liberated Through Submission,” in *Becoming God’s True Woman*, ed. Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 111.

¹⁸⁶ Hughes, Lonny E. “Equipping Selected Men of Perdido Bay Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida, in Biblical Competencies For Men’s Ministry.” D.Min. proj., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Wilson, Bunny. “Liberated Through Submission,” 101.

truth that their overarching purpose in life is God's glory. This must determine every decision they make, from their choice of clothes to their choice of a husband."¹⁸⁹ In a marriage, women should not return insult for insult but reciprocate with a blessing. Older wives should encourage younger wives to be submissive (Titus 2:4-5). Confrontation, if necessary, is done in a loving submissive manner.

So how did the Core Group respond to the aspect of understanding biblical manhood and womanhood? The quantitative and qualitative data results demonstrated progress in this area. The overall score for this category increased by five percent (5%), showing a good impact on the lives of the participants. Many participants in the Core Group have heard this message before in their churches and homes. They started on a good footing. Applying these principles to an arranged marriage setting really helped their practical day-to-day application. Maturity was gained by understanding God's design for men and women in a marriage relationship.

The qualitative study showed more profound improvement in this area. One participant was convinced that God has a better plan for marriage by giving unique roles to men and women. Commenting on how to view the roles that God has given us, Matt Damico shares, "The roles are not mere *limitations* as to what men and women can and cannot do, they are *invitations* to live in accordance with the way our wise, good, and gracious God has made us."¹⁹⁰ The group learned that biblical roles bring glory to God. Understanding the relationship between Christ and the church helped the Core Group to accept submission and embrace the roles given in Scripture.

¹⁸⁹ Wilson, Bunny. "Liberated Through Submission," 113

¹⁹⁰ Matt Damico, "Men and Women in the Church: A Short, Biblical, Practical Introduction," *Eikon* 3, no. 2 (2021): 99.

Impact on Understanding Biblical Male Headship

Male headship, defined in the Scripture, is sacrificial, intelligent, and informed. The group learned that leadership is sacrificial and leading the household in a godward direction. It is intelligent because it is knowledgeable in Scripture and one's wife. Finally, leadership demands well-informed decision-making and delegation of responsibility. A leader is first a servant (Matt 20:26). Leadership in marriage is a form of self-sacrifice.

A husband must die to selfish claims on their time and energy. Leadership is never usurped to satisfy personal desires and aggrandizement. Husbands are called to live with their wives in an understanding way (1 Pet 3:7). A Christian husband is a learner of his wife. He leads his wife with grace and poise. Being rooted in God's Word is vital for exercising biblical male headship.

Complementarianism articulates what the Bible teaches about gender roles in a marriage. God-given authority is part of the husband's mandate to lead. The partners in a marriage are equal in personhood and only unequal in authority. Eric Mason articulates man's responsibility as, "to live out representation, responsibility, and relationship not only in how they related to God but also how they related to each other."¹⁹¹ Men must resist the temptation to abuse their authority. Legitimate authority is inherent in male headship. It would be sinful to avoid exercising authority in God-honoring ways.

So how did the Core Group respond to understanding biblical male headship? The quantitative and qualitative data results show progress in this area. The overall score for this category increased by three percent. The participants started the with a good understanding of the

¹⁹¹ Eric Mason, *Manhood Restored: How the Gospel Makes Men Whole* (Edinburgh: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 21.

household codes in marriage and the importance of male headship. There was agreement that headship was instituted in the creation order.

Even though Asian Indian culture models a patriarchal system where male headship is traditionally practiced, there is widespread abuse of male headship in secular and Christian marriages. Joel Beeke warns husbands to be wary of abuse as he states, “God gives a husband authority to do his wife good, but these husbands pervert that authority by using it to do their wives evil.”¹⁹² The researcher addressed the importance of servant leadership in marriage. The qualitative study revealed a clearer picture of the effectiveness of the intervention plan. Beeke also states, “It is vitally important that we recover a biblical understanding of the husband’s headship.”¹⁹³ Many participants changed how they lead and how they affirm leadership in marriage. Men started to lead their families with love and concern. Women who previously struggled with male headship learned to trust God and affirm male headship.

Impact on Understanding Male Dominance

Male dominance can cause a breakdown in harmony in any marriage. In Asian Indian arranged marriages, the breakdown of harmony can be amplified by introducing cultural norms that are unbiblical. Assertion of man’s will over the woman’s causes dominance which leads to discord. William Gouge states, “Hatred of heart is against love. This vice as it is very offensive and detestable in itself, so much more when the wife is made the object of it.”¹⁹⁴ The intervention ministry of the action research thesis addressed male dominance by teaching the importance of complementing each other in a marriage relationship. The highlighted the

¹⁹² Joel R. Beeke, and James A. LaBelle, *Living in a Godly Marriage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016), 135.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 136.

¹⁹⁴ William Gouge, *Building a Godly Home: A Holy Vision for a Happy Marriage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2013), 123.

importance of unique roles given to men and women in a marriage. Male headship was understood as defined in the Scripture.

Sacrificial, loving leadership is practiced in the lives of the patriarchs, kings, and priests mentioned in the Scripture and later in the life of Jesus and his disciples. Male leadership does not give the husband all the rights and authority that Christ has. The husband is preparing a bride, not for himself but for Christ. Male dominance should not be used under the pretext of male headship to control and victimize women. Tony Evans defines headship as something that is contrary to dominance when he states, “This is not a blanket ticket for male domination; rather this is a hierarchical structure for the home.”¹⁹⁵ The goal of leadership is holiness.

So how did the Core Group respond to the aspect of addressing male dominance? The quantitative and qualitative data results show progress in this area. The overall score for this category increased by eight percent. The participants started the with a good understanding of the household codes in marriage. Culturally induced male dominance was seen as a cultural norm that is unbiblical. There was unanimous agreement on the fact that headship, as defined in the Bible, does not give rise to wife abuse.

The qualitative study shed more light on the evil consequences of male dominance in Asian Indian society. Some participants witnessed male dominance in their families and were victims of this evil practice. The intervention helped some people in healing their wounds and trusting Christ for restoration and rebuilding their lives. Many men have expressed their awareness of the subtle dangers of male dominance after the seminar. The Core Group realized the importance of the intervention as part of the action research thesis and was committed to transform their lives to glorify Christ in their marriage going forward.

¹⁹⁵ Tony Evans, *Kingdom Man: Every Man's Destiny, Every Woman's Dream* (Colorado Springs, CO: Focus on the Family Publishing, 2012), 73.

Methodology Appraisal

The intervention design and implementation for this action research thesis were originally planned to be administered using an online Zoom gathering. Due to the global pandemic related to COVID-19, TBCF decided to gather virtually and relinquished their lease for a physical building in Tampa, Florida. In the summer of 2022, the leadership at TBCF decided to pursue options to procure a physical meeting place. The researcher was able to procure a meeting place to implement the intervention. As a result, some changes had to be made to conduct the lecture series in person and encourage in-person participation.

Having a place to meet resulted in better communication, and the researcher was able to observe the participants in person. However, several challenges arose during and after the intervention. The classroom space was designed for a church gathering and did not offer proper desk space to take notes. The researcher provided notebook paper and writing instruments for each class. The participants had to use their laps to take notes and answer surveys. A formal classroom setting would be ideal for implementing the action research thesis. The researcher was able to promote decent participation by using pulpit-type announcements.

The location of the meeting place was convenient for all participants. The meeting place was close to two major U.S. highways. The average commute time for the participants was around thirty minutes. Many TBCF members welcomed the opportunity to meet in person after a long season of virtual gatherings. A regular TBCF gathering is comprised of adults and their children. The children are dismissed to a kid's program after a brief time of praise and worship. The teaching staff, who ministered in the kid's program, did not participate in the research.

The classroom setting and lecture delivery included a lesson plan with the following details.

Figure 5.1. Lesson plan tasks

Definition
Introduction of the topic
How does this fit in the big picture?
Reading of Scripture
Presentation of relevant material
Discussion: Time to discuss what was presented.
Application: Look for areas of application
Conclusion: Recap of lessons learned, answer any questions, and present next steps
Go over the charge for women to practice biblical womanhood
Go over the charge for men to practice biblical manhood
Solicit items for prayer
Solicit items for praise

Some participants expressed a desire to include testimonies from mature couples on how they addressed culturally induced male dominance in their marriages. They wanted to learn from each other's practical experiences and benefit from real-life examples.

Some answers to the questions in the pre-seminar and post-seminar marriage enrichment surveys showed ambiguity based on the participant's responses. The aforementioned questions could be answered either as one's opinion or one's personal experience. This resulted in inconclusive data available for the category of biblical male headship. The researcher should have clearly mentioned how the questions should be interpreted. Having an in-person gathering helped collect the feedback more quickly but did not allow the participants to answer all concerns due to

the confidential nature of the survey. The researcher was not able to follow up with participants after the administration of the surveys because of anonymity.

Finally, many participants expressed the importance of pre-marital counseling to address cultural norms that contradict biblical principles. The lecture series was not designed to do pre-marital counseling. Many couples in Christian arranged marriages did not have the privilege of going through counseling in their local churches. This adversely affected their marriages in areas where there was a breakdown of harmony. In the future, the intervention can provide post-marital counseling resources for those who are interested.

Recommendations for Further Study

The next step in addressing unbiblical cultural norms in Asian Indian Christian arranged marriages is to tackle the area of female dominance. The landscape of Asian Indian arranged marriage is vastly changing. Couple-initiated marriages are becoming a norm. Parents are still involved in selecting a spouse for their children, but their level of involvement is drastically reduced. The independence afforded to the couple to make their own choices is changing the traditional patriarchy and empowering women to make their own decisions.

In some marriages, there is a concern that female dominance is causing a breakdown of harmony. This concern was expressed by the participants in the action research thesis. The researcher would like to propose a separate action research thesis to curtail the problem of female dominance in modified arranged Christian marriages. Addressing female dominance even though it is not culturally induced will provide a balance in addressing marital disharmony.

TBCF is comprised of Asian Indian Christians who migrated to the United States for a better life and enhanced opportunities to work in newer technologies. As a result, their families are becoming part and parcel of the American culture and way of life. There is a concern among some participants about educating and preparing their children to face gender confusion in the

public square and educational institutions. A future study can be designed to equip children of first-generation immigrant parents to face societal pressures related to gender issues and evaluate the culture in light of biblical principles.

Finally, some participants expressed a need to address intimacy issues in Christian-arranged marriages. Due to the nature of the problem space, a private teaching series is suggested with a separate focus on intimacy in Christian marriages. The intervention can be designed separately for men and women and conclude with a list of Christian resources available for couples which can include counseling.

Researcher's Overall Assessment

The researcher concluded that culture has a great influence on one's practice of faith in daily life. If cultural norms that contradict Scripture are not addressed, there can be a breakdown of harmony and a lack of Christian witness in Asian Indian Christian marriages. Having a systematic theological understanding of household codes defined in Scripture is vital to address cultural influence in practical living.

Conflict resolution in Christian arranged marriages can be difficult because of culturally induced male dominance. Having a good understanding of the complementarian model, where the partners in a marriage relationship are of equal worth before God, is vital to address conflicts and give Christ priority in a marriage. The intervention design and implementation accomplished this task successfully by providing biblical instruction and measuring the success using quantitative and qualitative data gathering. The researcher was able to observe transformation in the mindset of several participants. The real fruit of the internal transformation can only be observed over several years. Having a comprehensive understanding of the household codes prescribed in the Scripture will allow Christian couples in arranged marriages to overcome cultural barriers and exemplify Christ and His bride in their marriages.

The roles of biblical manhood and womanhood are not properly defined in Asian Indian culture giving rise to male dominance in families that are still adhering to a patriarchal structure. The intervention addressed biblical male headship based on Christ-like servant leadership with a corresponding voluntary submission by the wife who affirms the godly husband's leadership in marriage. The success measured in this area is more pronounced in the qualitative data-gathering exercise. So the intervention addressed cultural nuances and provided a solid foundation in Scripture to curtail the breakdown of harmony in Christian arranged marriages.

Overall, the intervention implementation was successful at TBCF, and the researcher is looking forward to seeing more fruit in the years to come as the relationships at TBCF grow stronger and more rooted in the biblical principles of marriage that reflect Christ and His bride. Erin Davis writing about God's plan for marriage, comments, "Marriage will stand, but there is a battle to be fought. God's plans will not ultimately be thwarted. Kings cannot stop the plans of God. Neither can angry mobs [*sic*]. Cultural trends do not change his mind or dilute his message."¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ Erin Davis, "Equipping The Generations: How I Know Marriage Will Stand," *Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 5, no. 1 (2015): 113.

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Appendix A

RECRUITMENT LETTER FOR FOCUS GROUP

This appendix includes the researcher's letter requesting participation from the TBCF leadership in a focus group.

Dear TBCF Core Team Member,

As a graduate student in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree in Apologetics and Theology. My research aims to develop and implement an internal transformation ministry at TBCF addressing Asian Indian cultural norms that challenge biblical truths of marriage, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join a focus group.

I will be conducting a two-week focus group to understand the problem of the breakdown of harmony in Asian Indian Christian marriages due to cultural norms challenging the biblical truths of marriage. Participants must be 25 years of age or older of Asian Indian origin and exposed to the concept of arranged marriage. Participants will be asked to participate in a focus group discussion. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected. It should take approximately two hours to complete the procedures listed.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you must sign the consent document and return it to me by email.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Mulaparthi
Principal Investigator



Appendix B

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Principal of the Project: Culturally Induced Male Dominance: Addressing the Breakdown of Harmony in Asian Indian Christian Marriages

Principal Investigator: Benjamin Mulaparthi, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University.

Invitation to be part of Research Study

You are invited to participate in an action research study. To participate, you must be twenty-five years of age, of Asian Indian origin, and exposed to the concept of arranged marriage. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please read this entire form before deciding whether to participate in this research project. You can ask any relevant questions before deciding.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

Marriage is God's gift to His image-bearers. God instituted the marriage covenant at the beginning of human existence. In traditional Asian Indian culture, marriages are mostly arranged by the parents. Cultural norms are derived from the culture of a particular society. Members of a society behave similarly because of shared cultural values among people in the group.

Culturally acquired behaviors can be contrary to biblical standards. One such behavior is male dominance in the context of arranged marriage. This action research project explores the breakdown of harmony in Christian marriages due to culturally induced male dominance.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

1. Participate in eight 60-minute lectures to be held at 6:30 pm on Saturdays beginning late May 2022. Zoom audio recordings of each class will be performed for the researcher's post-lecture evaluation only.
2. Participate in pre-seminar and post-seminar surveys (i.e., before the first lecture and after the last lecture). The surveys should take no more than 45 minutes each to complete. The surveys will be anonymous.

3. Some of you will be asked to participate in an interview after the last lecture. The interview will be kept confidential and will take around 45 minutes to an hour.

How could you benefit from this study?

This study aims to bring about an internal transformation to address the breakdown in marital harmony due to culturally induced male dominance. The study will address the cultural norms challenging the biblical truths of marriage.

The primary goal is to transform your mindset, which leads to measurable change in actions. Cultural norms that are not checked against the truth will result in wrongful living. If false cultural norms and wrong biblical teaching on marital relations are addressed, then harmony in your marriages can be enhanced, and strong witness at home can be established.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will your personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Anonymous data collected from you may be shared in future research studies or with other researchers.

- Participant responses will be anonymous and kept confidential using unique codes selected by each participant.
- Data will be stored on a password-protected computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Each lecture will be audio-recorded and assessed by the researcher only. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings. Recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer for three years and then erased.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Tampa Bay Christian Fellowship. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation and do not submit your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have concerns or questions about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Benjamin Mulaparathi. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [REDACTED]

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you agree to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I am 25 years of age or older. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Participant's Name

Signature & Date

Appendix C

PULPIT ANNOUNCEMENT AND PROMOTIONAL FLYER

The following pulpit promotion will be part of the regular TBCF Bible study announcements starting two weeks before the lectures begin.

Pulpit Announcement

A new adult will start two weeks from today at TBCF in the regular meeting place. The estimated eight-week seminar will be taught by Benjamin Mulaparthi and will address cultural norms that challenge biblical truths of marriage. The lectures are part of Benjamin's research as a doctoral candidate at Liberty University.

Culturally acquired behaviors can be contrary to biblical standards. One such behavior is male dominance in the context of arranged marriage. The seminar will examine the cultural norms of arranged marriages and the breakdown in marital harmony from a biblical worldview vantage point. Arranged marriages in the Indian context are skewed to favor the male over the female partner. The male dominance that is culturally induced into the marriage relationship is sometimes buttressed with a wrong interpretation of the biblical roles of husband and wife. A wrongful understanding of submission and improper leadership of the husband has compounded the breakdown of harmony in marriage. The problem is a breakdown of familial harmony and loss of witness at home due to preferential male dominance in Asian Indian culture.

The objective of this research is to equip Asian Indian Christians within the body of Christ to overcome marital cultural challenges and establish a Christian witness at home. The primary goal of the action research project is to transform individual mindsets that lead to measurable change in actions. Mindset will have a significant impact on a person's attitudes. Attitudes govern behavior, and behavior leads to action. Having a Christ-like mindset is essential

for proper Christian action. Actions will permeate all areas of life, including marital relationships.

Participation in the research portion of the classes is entirely voluntary, and even if you volunteer to be part of the research, you can “un-volunteer” at any time. Everyone is encouraged to participate in the classes. However, some of Benjamin’s research will require volunteers to take two anonymous marriage surveys. Those who participate in the surveys also need to attend all or most of the eight seminar lectures. Benjamin asks for as many volunteers as possible to commit to attending the classes and participating in the marriage surveys.

If you would like to volunteer for Benjamin’s research study, please contact him after the Bible study. We encourage everyone to consider attending this class. We believe the information will teach you how to respond appropriately to your culture and equip you to build marital harmony and develop a strong witness at home.

Appendix D

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT TBCF

This appendix includes the researcher's letter requesting permission to conduct the action research thesis intervention at TBCF.

TBCF Core Group
TBCF

Dear Core Group Members,

As a graduate student in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree in Apologetics and Theology. My research aims to develop and implement an internal transformation ministry at TBCF addressing Asian Indian cultural norms that challenge biblical truths of marriage. My research aims to conduct an eight-week to address the breakdown of harmony in Asian Indian Christian marriages due to cultural norms challenging the biblical truths of marriage. The primary goal of the action research thesis is to transform individual mindset that leads to measurable change in actions.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at TBCF and contact members of TBCF to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants will be asked to complete pre-seminar and post-seminar marriage surveys. A few participants will be asked to participate in a post-seminar interview. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected. It should take approximately two hours to complete the procedures listed. Participants will also be presented with informed consent information before signing up.

Thank you for considering my request. Please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval if you choose to grant permission. An example permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Mulaparthi, M.S., M.A.B.S.
Principal Investigator

Appendix E

RECRUITMENT LETTER

This appendix includes the researcher's letter to recruit potential participants in the action research thesis intervention at TBCF.

Dear TBCF Member,

As a graduate student in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree in Apologetics and Theology. My research aims to develop and implement an internal transformation ministry at TBCF addressing Asian Indian cultural norms that challenge biblical truths of marriage. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

I will be conducting an eight-week seminar to address the breakdown of harmony in Asian Indian Christian marriages due to cultural norms challenging the biblical truths of marriage. Participants must be 25 years of age or older of Asian Indian origin and exposed to the concept of arranged marriage. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in pre-seminar and post-seminar marriage surveys. A few participants will be asked to participate in a post-seminar interview. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected. It should take approximately two hours to complete the procedures listed.

Please complete the attached survey and submit your responses to participate. Each participant will be asked to choose a unique four-digit code in the survey. The code will be used to correlate pre-seminar and post-seminar surveys for statistical analysis. Please use your mother's birth date using the format [MMDD].

A consent document is attached. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me before the first lecture of the Marriage Seminar. After you have read the consent form, please proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to participate in the survey.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Mulaparthi
Principal Investigator

Appendix F

TBCF Marriage Enrichment Survey

Instructions: These questions consider different aspects of biblical marriage principles. The questions stem from a person's beliefs about the complementarian view, biblical personhood, and male headship. Select the answer that best fits your perspective.

Culture and Arranged Marriage

1. What is your mother's birth date in the format MMDD?

2. Was your marriage arranged?

Yes No

3. Though my marriage was arranged, I had some say in choosing my spouse.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

4. Which of the following statements do you agree with?

Marriage is one man married to one woman for life.

I don't think God is concerned about what kind of marriage is best.

A marriage is two adults bound by legal marriage regardless of their gender.

Not Sure

5. Arranged marriage is an extension of patriarchy where women have no say in whom they marry.

Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree

6. Many Indian Christian families adhere to the principle of arranged alliance in a God-honoring way.

Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree

Complementarian Model

7. In a marriage, submission means the absolute surrender of will.

Agree Disagree

8. Submission is a divine calling to honor and affirm male leadership at home.

Agree Disagree

9. Complimentary manhood and womanhood are visible in the creation order in Genesis.

Agree Disagree

10. Submission can allow the husband to sin.

Agree Disagree

11. Do you understand what a suitable helper means in a marriage?

Yes No

12. Marriage is a true partnership between men and women.

Agree Disagree

13. A lack of proper understanding of marriage can lead to unhealthy male dominance.

Agree Disagree

Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

14. In a marriage, the husband models the loving, sacrificial leadership of Christ.

Agree Disagree

15. Mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead in the marriage.

Agree Disagree

16. Mature femininity affirms Christ-like male leadership in marriage.

Agree Disagree

17. Men and Women have different roles in marriage.

Agree Disagree

18. Wife abuse has deep roots in parental failure in teaching masculinity.

Agree Disagree

19. Men, in general, do not display Christ-like servant leadership embedded in sacrificial love in a marriage.

Agree Disagree

Biblical Male Headship

20. Male headship includes primary leadership at home.

Agree Disagree

21. Do you believe that men bear the primary responsibility to lead, protect and sustain?

Agree Disagree

22. Headship bears the primary responsibility for moral design and planning at home.

Yes No

23. Do you believe that male leadership is God's original design?

True False

24. According to the Bible, male headship is distinctively wrong.

Agree Disagree

Male Dominance

25. Male headship, as defined in the Bible, gives room for wife abuse.

Agree Disagree

26. Wife abuse has deep roots in parental failure in teaching masculinity.

Agree Disagree

27. Is leadership synonymous with getting one's way?

Yes No

28. Leadership in marriage involves unilateral selfish choices.

Agree Disagree

Appendix G

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

As a graduate student in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree in Apologetics and Theology. My research aims to develop and implement an internal transformation ministry at TBCF addressing Asian Indian cultural norms that challenge biblical truths of marriage. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

The breakdown of harmony in Christian marriages affects first-generation Asian Indian Christians exposed to the concept of arranged marriages. This interview aims to measure the effectiveness of the transformation ministry conducted during the marriage enrichment seminar to address the breakdown of harmony and loss of Christian witness at home due to culturally induced male dominance.

There are no right or wrong answers; all married persons are different. I am a student researcher interested in your experiences as an individual living in a Christian arranged marriage. I have a few semi-structured questions to start the conversation. I am interested in listening to your feedback. The questions are optional. Thank you for allowing me to be here (Sample of Introduction).

Semi-structured Questions

1. Could you tell me a bit about your marriage?
 1. When and how did you get married?
 2. Who was involved in arranging it?
 3. What was the measure of your participation in making the decision?
2. How did Asian Indian culture have a significant role in your marriage?
 1. Did your family ask you to rule your wife if you are a man?
 0. Did your family subscribe to a patriarchy where men hold power?
 1. Did you have problems adjusting to treating your wife as an equal?
 2. What are your thoughts about wife and husband complementing each other?
 2. Did your family ask you to put up with your husband if you are a woman?
 0. Did your family subscribe to a patriarchy where men hold power?
 1. Did you have problems adjusting to treating your husband as an equal?
 2. What are your thoughts about wife and husband complementing each other?

Optional Questions

1. What are your thoughts about male headship?
 1. Are you convinced that the Bible subscribes to male leadership in marriage?

2. Do you have a problem treating your spouse as an equal?
3. Do you think that men can exhibit servant leadership with God's help?
2. As much as possible, describe in your own words the overall feeling you have about your marital relationship now.
 1. Are you happy and satisfied with this relationship?
 2. How healthy is your relationship with your spouse?
 3. Did coming to the United States improve/worsen your marriage relations? If so, how?
 4. In your opinion, what makes a marriage happy and successful?
3. What did you learn from the Marriage Seminar?
 1. Do you think marriage is a mutually supportive partnership?
 2. Do you think you and your spouse are significantly committed to your relationship?
 3. Are you convinced that a Spirit-filled life leads to mutual submission?
4. What are your thoughts about male dominance in your marriage?
 1. Did you ever experience dominance in your marriage?
 2. Do you think that Christ ever dominated his bride?
 3. What is the primary purpose of Christ loving the Church?
 4. What do you think is the guiding principle of household code in the Bible?
5. What are some practical ways to apply the truths you learned in the Marriage Seminar?
 1. If headship is not oppressive, how can you change how you treat your wife?
 2. If headship is not oppressive, how can you support your husband as a servant leader?
 3. Do you think that you can be less judgmental in your relationship?
6. What do you think we should have covered in the seminar that was missed?
 1. Do you think that it was awkward to talk about personal matters?
 2. Did you feel that this seminar helped improve your marriage? Explain how?

Appendix H

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 10, 2022

Benjamin Mulaparthi

Robert Lytle

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY21-22-1160 Culturally Induced Male Dominance: Addressing Breakdown of Harmony in Asian Indian Christian Marriages

Dear Benjamin Mulaparthi and Robert Lytle,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason: Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not “designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge” according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word research with the word project throughout both documents.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application’s status, please email us at [\[REDACTED\]](#)

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office