

Premarital Counseling as a Strategy to Combat Divorce

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ABSTRACT

Globally marriage is a threatened entity today. To help curb this high rate of failed marriages and to promote a healthy marriage for the sake of the couple involved (as well as their children, whether already present or planned for the future) pre-marital counseling should be a requirement for all couples before entering into a marriage. Premarital counseling is training provided through courses, seminars, or counseling that prepares couples for a successful marriage. The training often focuses on developing skills such as communication, conflict management, problem solving, and decision making. It might also include help in developing the knowledge, attitudes, expectations, and characteristics that are important in creating a satisfying relationship. An important purpose of premarital counseling is to help each partner assess his or her personal readiness for marriage. In other words, premarital counseling allows couples to plan their marriage rather than just the wedding. This paper is based on the UGC sponsored minor research done on importance of premarital counseling today. 100 persons those who had attended premarital counseling were taken as respondents following purposive sampling technique. Information was collected using questionnaire with an objective to get to know about existing premarital counseling practices, respondents' opinion regarding the premarital counseling, to know how it helped them in improving their marital relationship and to study how it can be used as a strategy by Social Work and other allied professionals to reduce the increasing rate of family disorganizations, separation and divorce.

Key Words : Marriage, Counseling, Premarital counseling, Divorce

INTRODUCTION

Families today are experiencing unprecedented change and are coping with a variety of problems, both old and new. Technology accompanying industrialization and urbanization, with increased population density, frequently is identified as making daily life more complex and impersonal. Gender roles have blurred, traditional values are being questioned, and even traditional definitions and conceptualizations of 'family' have changed in response to the increasing options of postmodern society. Over the past hundred years or so, there have been changes in moral values that influence marriage, personal development and family relationships. Over the last 40 years an increased acceptance of divorce has produced profound changes in our attitudes about marriage and family. The roles of men and women not only changed with industrialization and urbanization in the 20th

century, but also during World War II when women entered the workplace. These societal changes brought freedoms that previous generations did not have. During the 1970s, the divorce rate doubled as young folks' attitudes on fidelity, chastity and commitment became very different from those of their parents. The change created less of an incentive to work out marital difficulties.

Marriage is a momentous step in the life of a person. Every individual who intends to get married desires for a perfect and happy marriage. Stress and fighting over money constitute one of the most often cited marriage problems that couples face. The advent of children brings another potential source of marriage problems. Children are wonderful, and can bring wonderful and meaningful gifts into everyone's lives. However, having children can bring additional stress into a marriage because the caretaking of children requires more responsibility as well as a change in roles, provides more fodder for disagreement and strain, and reduces the amount of time available to bond as a couple. Perhaps the biggest predictor of marriage problems is poor communication, or negative communication that belies damaging attitudes and dynamics within the relationship. Sometimes couples experience marriage problems that could be solved if the two could notice their habits and change them.

The negative impact of divorce goes beyond the individuals and families involved. Reductions in marital breakup would presumably enhance the mental and physical health of those involved, and the political hope is this would lead to a decrease in the amount of government funds currently used for treating individuals and families and coping with the societal consequences of marital breakdown. Divorce also has an effect on the couple's social lives.

The use of premarital education remained relatively rare until the 1970s, even though clergy would often meet with couples prior to getting married. Since the 1970s, the focus of meeting with couples has shifted from educating them about marriage to preparing them for marriage. Many couples spend significant time, effort, and money preparing for their wedding, while little time, if any, is invested in preparing for their marriage. Planning the perfect wedding too often takes precedence over planning a successful marriage. And a lack of planning is the ultimate saboteur of marriage. Premarital programs for couples provide an alternative, preventative approach for anticipating and addressing the risk factors associated with couples' distress and divorce.

A simplistic definition of premarital education is "knowledge and skills based training that provides couples with information on ways to sustain and improve their relationship once they are married." Premarital education programs are best defined as a knowledge and skills-based training procedure which aims at providing couples with information on ways to improve their relationship once they are married. The programs are typically educational in nature.

Many of the premarital preparation programs are consistent, including sections on communication, conflict resolution, financial management, sexuality, parenting expectations, religion and family origins. Among other benefits of premarital education, is couples who have gone through such a program are more likely to seek counsel themselves should they encounter difficulty in their marriage later on. At the least, they can contact their premarital counselor/facilitator who may be able to assist them, or if not, that person can refer them to someone else who can assist them.

Premarital counseling is a type of therapy that helps couples prepare for marriage. Premarital counseling can help ensure that the married couples have a strong, healthy relationship — giving a better chance for a stable and satisfying marriage. Premarital counseling can also help you identify weaknesses that could become problems during marriage.

Premarital counseling prepares the ground for laying a strong foundation for the marital bond to ensue. It provides an exciting opportunity to learn about each other and about oneself, so that

they are not completely taken by surprise when they run into rough weather after marriage. It provides the necessary impetus to pave the way for stable, successful and happy marriage. Premarital counseling is essentially about identifying their assumptions and also about how to deal with conflict. The initial objective is to assist the couple to communicate honestly and deeply to identify challenges in their relationship. The next step would be to help them develop skills to recognize strengths and weakness of each partner and what each brings into the relationships. Lastly, it is to enable the couple plan for growing together without losing their individual identities. This means not only spelling out what is common to both but also acceptance and appreciation of their differences.

Premarital counseling can be done with either couples alone or even couple groups. It would either involve weekly sessions for a fixed length of time, like an hour with the counselor, or be in the form of a more lengthy weakened retreat for couple groups. The counseling could also include some kind of assessment procedures through questionnaires of personality, compatibility, expectations etc. This kind of process would require time, commitment and a willingness to invest both financially and emotionally.

Premarital counseling can help couples improve their relationships before marriage. Through premarital counseling, couples are encouraged to discuss topics related to marriage, such as:

- Finances, Beliefs and values, Roles in marriage, Affection and sex, Children and parenting, Family relationships and Issues, Decision-making, Dealing with anger, Time spent together, Interests and Activities, Role expectations and Marriage Expectations, Personal Adjustment, Interpersonal Communication, Religion And Philosophy

Objectives of the study:

1. To get to know about existing premarital counseling practices
2. Respondents’ opinion regarding the premarital counseling
3. Know how it helped them in improving their marital relationship
4. To study how it can be used as a strategy by Social Work and other allied professionals to reduce the increasing rate of family disorganizations, separation and divorce.

Sampling and Method of data collection:

Persons those who attended pre marital counseling Belthangady Taluk was the Universe of this study. Descriptive Research Design and purposive sampling technique was used. Data was collected from 100 respondents using Questionnaire.

Major Findings:

- The following are the major findings which were drawn on the basis of data collection.
- 80% of the respondents’ marriage was in the age between 21 to 30.
 - 52% of the respondents’ life partner did not attend the Premarital Counseling.
 - 88% of the respondents had premarital counseling for 3 day.
 - 84% of the respondents feel that marriage is important in every individual’s life.
 - 96% of the respondents feel that Premarital Counseling is good.
 - 80% of the respondents could identify their weaknesses from attending the PMC.
 - 52% of the respondents attended premarital counseling because it was compulsory.
 - 84% of the respondents have satisfaction with the topics they spoke in the premarital counseling.
 - 88% of the respondents say the classes in the premarital counseling should be together for

men and women.

- 86% of the respondents had reduced the stress of pre wedding period through premarital counseling.
- 88% of the respondents think that premarital counseling will help them to understand their differences which will create problems in their married life.
- 78% of the respondents are feeling that PMC has helped them to bring faith and spirituality in their marriage.
- 98% of the respondents are comfortable in discussing their sexual likes and dislikes with their spouse and an open interaction with each other.
- 92% of the respondents learnt conflict resolution technique from premarital counseling.
- 100% of the respondents got tips for parenting.
- 96% of the respondents support PMC.
- 80% of the respondents feel that PMC will build a healthy family.
- 88% of the respondents reported that PMC should be made compulsory for people of all community and religion.

Suggestions:

- The researcher suggests that the premarital counseling should be there for at least one week because usually PMC is providing only for two or three days.
- Premarital Counseling should make compulsory in other religion too because except in Christianity in other religion no Premarital Counseling is provided.
- Because now a day the rate of divorce is increasing so the counseling team should take special attention to reduce the rate of divorce.
- Every engaged couples will be going through a type of stress during their marriage so the premarital counseling team should be able to reduce the stress of pre-wedding period.
- In most of the marital problems the family members play a major role so the counseling team should be able to provide premarital counseling along with their family.
- Only the professional counselors and the subject expert should give the PMC sessions.

Conclusion:

With the new strains and challenges that have emerged for the Indian family, the latter has been going through a new kind of transition. It has been wavering between traditional and Western models. The fast-changing social and family environment has thrown up new challenges, particularly to the young people, like growing instability, lack of communication, changing attitude towards sex, changing roles of husband and wife, and tensions of fast life. All these have resulted in the lack of harmony among married couples. The decline in harmony can be associated with values that emphasize individualistic, materialistic and self-oriented goals over family well-being. The awareness of the concept of living in a healthy and close knit family is the probable solution to lessen the increasing rate of divorce. In light of the damage divorce does to individuals and society, it is important that people understand the factors that contribute to divorce as well as the best ways to prevent it. But the present day nucleated families are not that fortunate enough to get the opportunity to reconsider their marriage under the presence of close family members.

Keep in mind that one brings his/her own values, opinions and history into a relationship, and they might not always match their partner's. In addition, many people go into marriage believing it will fulfill their social, financial, sexual and emotional needs and that's not always the case. By

discussing differences and expectations before marriage, he and his partner can better understand and support each other during marriage. Early intervention is important because the risk of divorce is highest early in marriage.

Premarital counseling helps partners improve their ability to communicate, set realistic expectations for marriage and develop conflict-resolution skills. In addition, premarital counseling can help couples establish a positive attitude about seeking help down the road.

“Prevention is better than cure”

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