

Important Topics to Be Addressed in a Premarital Counselling Course - A Survey from College Students.

JASNA. M*

Assistant professor[IC] ,AMAL college of advanced studies, Nilambur,Malappuram [dt] Kerala, India.

ABSTRACT: *A peaceful married life is the dream of the most of the individuals. Leading a happy family life is a difficult task for majority of the couples, since there are difference in the attitudes, perceptions, personality,etc among the individuals. Nowadays the problems between the couples increasing day by day and finally they reach in the divorces. In this context premarital counselling help them for better results. The topic or matters discussed in such programmes will be relevant for the need of the audience or clients. The investigator selected forty unmarried college students for the study purpose, twenty males and twenty females. And asked them to write a report about their opinion on “ if they get a chance to participate in a premarital training, which are the topics you prefer to hear”. The time allotted for reporting was fifteen minutes. And the responses of girls and boys analysed differently, using thematic analysis and coded. The major concern of girls are Accepting a partner, Family adjustment and in-law adjustment and of the boys is about sex education.*

KEY WORDS: *Pre marital counselling, thematic analysis.*

Date of Submission: 09-05-2020

Date of Acceptance: 22-05-2020

I. INTRODUCTION

one of the desire of the human being is to lead a peaceful family life,especially among kerala people. Most of the people marry in their twenties.College and non college youth alike say that, the most important thing in life is having a good marriage and family life . But among the new generation the rate of divorce increasing dramatically. Due to this reason , there has been an increasing concern among the helping professionals to find a specific method to improve the quality of marriage and family life.

Premarital counselling or training is a type of training that helps youngsters to prepare for marriage.The topics addressed in premarital counseling are intended to bring about positive changes in the individual in order to enhance the marriage.[Holman, 2001). The premarital counseling programs that are described in the literature incorporate numerous topics, and topics vary among programs. Commonly addressed topics that are found in the literature include the following: careers, finances, friendship and social support, parenting and children, religion, family of origin issues, attitudes and beliefs toward marriage, gender role expectations, personality characteristics, values, adjusting to married life, commitment to marriage, communication skills, conflict resolution skills, coping skills, emotional management, fun and leisure, the importance of spending time with one's partner, problem-solving, romance, and the sexual relationship. [Bodenmann,1997] . In addition to these topics, counselors may address client motivation for participating in interventions such as premarital counseling.[Curtis, 1984].Previous research examined couples' perceptions of the usefulness of various topics. Russell and Lyster examined consumer satisfaction among participants in a marriage preparation program in Canada.[Russell And Lyster. 1992,]Their results indicated that participants are generally satisfied with premarital education . The order of satisfaction in specific components of the program was as follows: (a) family-of-origin issues, (b) finances, (c) communication and conflict resolution, (d) sex roles and sexuality, (e) children and parenting, and (f) family and friends.

In a later report, Lyster, Russell, and Hiebet ,found that satisfaction in specific program components may differ according to the context. For example, they reported that couples who are remarrying are more likely to value discussing the topic of spirituality as compared to couples who are entering their first marriage. Williams and Riley[1999] examined the topics that participants in marriage preparation programs view as most helpful. The results indicated that nearly two-thirds of couples thought that marriage preparation was a valuable experience. Results also indicated that some aspects were more valuable than others. The researchers suggest that marriage preparation should focus primarily on dealing with the initial transitions of adjusting to married life. In this study the investigator analysed the opinion of college students about the topics addressed in a premarital counselling.

II. METHODS

The investigator used self-reported survey method for the data collection and analysed using thematic analysis.

Participants

The participants used for this study were unmarried college students age ranges from 18 to 21. Twenty girls and twenty boys were selected for the study.

Measures used

The investigator used self-reported survey method for data collection and it was analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis.

Procedure

The investigator obtained permission from the authority of the Amal college of advanced studies, Nilambur to invite the students to take part in the study. The investigator used Open-ended question, asked the participants to write about their opinion about "if they get a chance to participate in a premarital training, which are the topics you prefer to hear". The time allotted for reporting was fifteen minutes.

Analysis

The method of data analysis chosen for the present study was a qualitative approach of thematic analysis. Generally, thematic analysis is the most widely used qualitative approach. Thematic frame work was developed and used to classify and organize data according to key themes. Key themes were developed from the responses of the participants

III. RESULTS.

Findings

The responses of the participants are categorized according to the themes. After repeated reading of the transcripts, themes are developed and coded. The details of the findings are given below in the tables.

Table 1: Topics reported by unmarried girls.

TOPICS	Frequency	Percentage
1.Conflict resolution	4	20 %
2.Family adjustment	9	45 %
3 In-law adjustment	9	45 %
4.Responsibilities	1	5 %
5.Accepting a partner	11	55 %
6 Need of marriage	2	10 %
7.Sex education	1	5 %
8.Relationship formation	1	5 %
9.Anger management	1	5 %
10Reducing anxiety	1	5 %

Table 2: Topics reported by unmarried boys

TOPICS	Frequency	Percentage
1.Psychology of females	2	10 %
2.Happy married life	3	15 %
3.Becoming a good partner	3	15 %
4.Conflict resolution	1	5 %
5.Sex education	7	35 %
6.Relation with in-laws	1	5 %
7.Social aspect of marriage	2	10 %
8. Need of marriage	3	15%

IV. DISCUSSION

A wide range of topics are important to address in premarital counselling. However, the participants in this study indicated that certain topics were more important to address than others. The topics that were suggested as most important were accepting a partner, family adjustment, In-law adjustment and sex education.

The topics preferred by girls and boys were different. From the reports of the girls the most important topics were accepting a partner, family adjustment, In-law adjustment and conflict resolution. And the important topics reported by boys were sex education, need of marriage, becoming a good partner and happy married life. Here the girls given more importance to the adjustment to the partner and his family. In our Kerala culture majority of the family system is that girls are shifted into the husband's house. Here she requires a lot of capabilities for better adaptation. So from the reports the investigator can understand that girls are more concerned about this adaptation to the new life. And when considering the boys group they focused mainly on

the sexual aspect of the marriage. The sample selected for the study were college students age ranging from 18 to 21 and they may not be able to think about the other serious issues related to life and focused mainly only one important concern that is sex education.

The topics that previous researchers have found to be important vary. Risch, Riley, and Lawier [2003] employed a different approach to identifying the topics that are most appropriate to address in premarital counseling. These researchers surveyed couples in their first five years of marriage in order to identify the most common problem areas faced by newly married couples. Their findings suggest that the most common issues faced by the couples in their sample included balancing job and family, the frequency of sexual relations, financial issues, expectations about household tasks, communication and conflict resolution, family-of-origin relationships, and spending time together as a couple. Risch, Riley, and Lawier [2003] assert that these problem areas are useful topics to address in premarital counseling and educational programs. The results of these studies suggest that couples do not value all potential premarital counseling topics equally. Because couples enter premarital counseling with unique life experiences and relationship histories, each couple may exhibit preferences in the topics they wish to address.

More research is needed to examine inclusion criteria for the topics that may be addressed in premarital counseling programs. Because time limitations render it likely that not all possible topics can be addressed, future research should continue to examine which topics are most appropriate to address in premarital counselling. The needs of the clients may be most relevant in determining which topics are addressed in a premarital counseling session. Further research may examine how premarital counselors choose the topics they address, as well as identify the most effective strategies for doing so with diverse client populations. Providers may choose which topics to discuss based on their own experience, training, and preferences.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have the following implications for counsellors who practice premarital counselling. First, a singular prescription to topics for premarital counselling is not possible. Previous research and the current findings suggest that premarital counselling topic preferences vary. Clients have a need to address the topics that are most relevant to their lives and to their relationships. The discussion of many different topics in premarital counselling may prove fruitful in helping clients to enhance their future marital relationships. Premarital counsellors, therefore, must select the topics that are most appropriate within the practical constraints—such as the length and format—of the premarital counselling session. Second, it is necessary for premarital counselling to maintain a flexible approach to discussing the topics that are most relevant to each client during premarital counselling. Standardized programs that include a fixed prescription of topics and formats may be less useful than programs that are targeted to the unique needs of clients. [Russell and Lvster, 1992]. Awareness of these variables allows counselors to develop premarital counseling programs that meet the needs of the clients they serve.

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JASNA. M. "Important Topics to Be Addressed in a Premarital Counselling Course - A Survey from College Students." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI)*, vol. 09(5), 2020, pp 39-41.