
**THE IMPACT OF COUNSELLING THERAPY ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF
MARRIAGE AMONG MAIRM CENTRE PROFESSION TRAINEES IN WOLAITA SODO
TOWN, SNNPRS, ETHIOPIA**

ABEBAYEHU WAJANA LEMO
Lecturer of Counselling Psychology
School of Psychology
Wolaita Sodo University, Ethiopia

ABSTRACT:

Educational institutions are among those areas where unmarried females found whose age permits to commit marriage. Various factors were accountable for not be effective on counselling therapy and not preparing for marriage. Trainee's personality, motivation, mental health and training also impact the effectiveness of premarital counselling, marriage preparation and reducing perceived marital distress. The main objective of the study was to examine the impact of counselling therapy on preparation for marriage among Maiam centre different profession trainees. The study employed quasi-experimental study where measurement was undertaken before and after the counselling intervention. Marriage Preparation Questionnaire was the instruments that the researcher used as data collection tools. To analyse quantitative data the researcher was used computer software SPSS version 20 by adopting different statistical techniques like descriptive, correlation and t-test. The findings of the study revealed that the impact of counselling intervention on preparation for marriage found to be statistically significant. Hence the researcher recommends the Mariam Centre Training Institution to extend the provision of counselling sessions to all female trainees in a regular basis to maintain their marriage life in future and psychological wellbeing. Specifically, counselling therapy plays great role on preparation for marriage.

On top of this, further research is recommended on examining the effect of the variables included in the present study and other variables like trainee's socio-economic status, educational background and institutional factors.

INTRODUCTION:

Marriage is the backbone of a healthy society. It is the basic unit on which society leans for proper functioning. According to Ng'ang'a and Wasanga (2010) marriage is the closest union that can occur between two people, but very few people really prepare for the demands of living together in such a way that needs are met, harmony is attained and dreams are fulfilled. The result of this is marital instability being so common among today's young couples.

On the other hand, premarital and marital counselling works to ameliorate marital discord and improve marital satisfaction. Bruun (2010) offers a definition of premarital education as "knowledge and skills-based training that provides couples with information on ways to sustain and improve their relationship once they are married". However, there are dozens of specific premarital education programs that are largely psycho-educational and skills-based and that follow a standardized curriculum (Bruun, 2010). Pre-marital counselling is fundamentally different from skills-based premarital education, involving more intensive work between couples and therapists and focusing on more specific personal problems (Duncan et al., 2010). Premarital counsellors operate from a variety of theoretical orientations: behavioural couple therapy, emotionally-focused couple therapy, insight-oriented marital therapy, Bowen family systems theory, and solution-focused brief therapy (Bruun, 2010).

Over the years, research shows that the effects of broken marriages such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, intimacy problems, finances and stress are far reaching and extend beyond the family to the society; however, the institution of marriage faces many challenges. It is therefore important that issues affecting the marriage are addressed before couple gets into marriage. One of the forums where these issues can be addressed is in premarital counselling, hence, there is need to evaluate the effectiveness of existing premarital counselling programs.

Marriage preparation is typically designed to help fiancées maintain relatively high levels of functioning. Because programs are provided to fiancées seeking to strengthen their relationships, premarital preparation can be described as preventative. Prevention efforts may be particularly important given the argument that once dysfunctional interaction patterns develop within a marriage, they become more difficult to change. Marriage preparation is offered with the goal of creating more stable and satisfying marriages and consequently preventing divorce (Stahmann, 2000).

Marriage counselling is not a form of therapy according to Futris et al. (2011); it is couples' education on skills that they will need to support them in having a happy, healthy and lasting marriage. It helps couples identify and communicate about their fears, desires, beliefs, values, dreams, needs, and other issues that would be avoided and never be discussed without premarital counselling (Marang'a, 2013). Individuals, who take part in premarital counselling compared to those who do not go through premarital counselling, tend to have a happier marriage.

According to Kepler (2015), there is a 40-50% chance of divorce among couples who do not go through premarital counselling. He posited that premarital counselling either secular or faith-based has a goal of supporting marriage to endure life challenges.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Counselling therapy is important for couples contemplating marriage, it provides couples with necessary information to establish and develop a strong marital foundation (Ng'ang'a & Wasanga, 2010). Counselling therapy programs offer the necessary guidance and groundwork to assist couples in evaluating their readiness to enter into a permanent life of commitment. In any endeavours, dreams or goals not backed by concrete plans and preparations can result into failure and marriage is no exception. However, if properly done, premarital counselling can play a vital role in building strong marriages (Kepler, 2015).

Marriage is a major avenue whereby every society is populated, hence, where there is marital instability, there is a problem in the raising and nurturing of the children, which often leads to an increase juvenile delinquency in the society. When the home front is faulty, parents are not able to cater for and correct their children who are the future of any nation.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of counselling therapy programs on marital stability among professional trainees in Mariam centre. The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To examine how preparation for marriage programs affect, emotional factors for marriage among profession trainees of Mariam centre Institution.
2. To examine how preparation for marriage programs affect motivational factors for marriage among profession trainees of Mariam centre Institution.
3. To examine how preparation for marriage programs affect dating and mate selection for marriage among profession trainees of Mariam centre Institution.
4. To examine how preparation for marriage programs, affect communication related to marriage among profession trainees of Mariam centre Institution.
5. To examine how counselling therapy programs affects readiness for marriage among profession trainees of Mariam centre Institution.

THE RESEARCH METHODS:

The study utilized quasi-experimental design with pre and post-tests to measure the level of preparation for marriage at the beginning of receiving counselling therapy services and again after eight sessions. This design allows comparison of pre and post test results. It found appropriate for this particular study because it enable the researcher to make comparisons between the pre and post results regarding the impact of counselling therapy services based on preparation for marriage among profession trainees of Mariam centre Institution.

The total population of the study was profession trainees of Mariam centre Institution. The total number of trainees was 35. The researcher included all 35 trainees for the study due to its manageability. Hence, census sample technique was adopted. All 35 trainees were female and their age ranged between 16 – 25 years. With regard to their religious background they are orthodox, Catholic, Protestant and Muslim followers.

Marriage Preparation Questionnaire were adopted from ENRICH scale (Olson and Larson2009). The Questionnaire contains both a fiancée's assessment and skill building exercises. The purpose of the questionnaire was to measure marriage preparation and the overall wellbeing of an individual (Fowers& Olson, 1986). The scores of the scale range from ten to fifty and the higher the number indicates the higher level of marriage preparation.

The perceived marital distress questionnaire was adopted from PERPAR/ENRICH developed by Olson and Larson, (2009). This PERPAR/ENRICH provide data in the area of strengths and growth of individuals, communication skills, relationship, problems of expectation, establishment of personal, family and couples goals. The Perceived Marital Distress questionnaire contains ten-question with five-point Likert scale with range of strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scores of the scale range from ten to fifty and the higher the number indicates the higher level of marriage preparation.

The group counselling was given to all trainees of five groups included in the study. In each group there were eight individuals and the counselling session began with an introduction to the trainees by the investigator through explaining about the counselling and the subsequent session. At the beginning of counselling the researcher started with informal talk and made the trainees to talk about the preparation of marriage and feeling, thoughts, and attitudes about marriage. To meet the specific needs of the fiancées the researcher used Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) while giving counselling. CBT is a short term, goal-oriented psychotherapy treatment that takes a hand-on, practical approach to problem solving. Its goal is to change patterns of thinking or behaviour that behind people's difficulties and so change the way they feel (Harper, et.la 1997).

The collected data was analysed to find out whether there is a significant difference in effectiveness of premarital counselling on the preparation of marriage and reducing perceived marital distress among profession trainees of Mariam centre Institution. A comparison was also done on impact of premarital counselling therapy services by pre-test and post-test measurements. The significance level was set at 0.05. Descriptive analyses were computed on the demographic data.

RESULTS:

The findings of the study on The Impact of Counselling therapy on the Advancement of marriage among Mairm Centre Profession trainees in Wolaita Sodo were explained in the following table by describing background information of respondents and elaborating the t-test and correlation results.

Distribution of respondents by Socio demographic profile

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	16 - 20	23	57.5
	21 - 25	17	42.5
	Total	35	100
Religion	Catholic	23	57.5
	Orthodox	6	15.0
	Protestant	8	20.0
	Islam	3	7.5
	Total	35	100
Presence of parents	Both father and mother present	28	70
	Only father present	2	5.0
	Only mother present	8	20
	Both father and mother not present	2	5.0
	Total	40	100

As indicated in the above table 4.1, all respondents’ age range between 16-25 years. Specifically speaking, 57.5% of the total trainees participated in the study were between 16 - 20 age and 42.5% were within range of 21 – 25. This is an indicator of a simple fact that almost all of them are enrolled to education during the normal school entry age and it seems the Ethiopian educational reality of girls in this regard has been changing.

Regarding religion, of respondents, 23 (57.5 %) were Catholic, 8 (20.0 %) were protestant, 6 (15.0%) were orthodox, and only the remaining 3 (7.5 %) were Muslim. Regarding the presence of parent’s affiliation of respondents, the above table reveals that about 28 (70 %) of them have both father and mother, 8 (20 %) of them have only mother, 2 (5%) have only father and the remaining 2 (5%) missed both parents.

Eight group counselling sessions were provided for those trainees on preparation of marriage and reducing perceived marital distress. Hence, the following tests are meant to prove whether the premarital counselling brought a statistically significant change on the preparation of marriage and reducing perceived marital distress.

Comparison of Pre and Post Test Result of Marriage Preparation Program on Emotional Factors related to Marriage

S.No		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	t-test	Significance
1	Emotional factors of Marital Distress (pre)	27.570	40	6.15562	3.184	0.003
2	Emotional factors of Marital Distress (Post)	24.050	40	6.04661		

In the above table, the t-value 3.184 indicated that there is a statistically mean difference in the scores of the emotional factors related to marriage among the trainees observed before and after receiving marriage preparation program (P < 0.001). This reveals that the negative emotional feeling of the trainees towards marriage decreased after the marriage preparation program and it has been effective due to the treatment effect and not by chance.

Comparison of Pre and Post Test Result of Marriage Preparation Program on Motivational Factors Related to Marriage

S.No		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	t-value	Significance
1	Motivational factors of Marital Distress (Pre)	27.5750	40	6.15562	3.184	0.003
2	Motivational factors of Marital Distress (Post)	24.0500	40	6.04661		

In the above table, the t-value 4.414 indicated that there is a statistically mean difference in the scores of motivational factors related to marriage among the trainees observed before and after receiving marriage preparation program ($P < 0.001$). This shows that the motivational factors related to marriage of the trainees enhanced after the marriage preparation program and it have been effective due to the treatment effect.

Comparison of Pre and Post Test Result of Marriage Preparation Program on Dating and Mate Selection related to Marriage

S.No		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	t-value	Significance
1	Dating and Mate selection with Marriage Preparation (Pre)	33.5500	40	6.45279	5.228	0.001
2	Dating and Mate selection with Marriage Preparation (Post)	41.8250	40	9.37232		

The above table showed that, the t-value 5.228 revealed that there is a statistical mean difference in the scores of dating and mate selection related to marriage among the trainees observed before and after marriage preparation program ($P < 0.001$). This indicates that the dating and mate selection of the trainees towards marriage enhanced after marriage preparation program and it have been effective due to the treatment effect and it was not happen by chance.

Comparison of Pre and Post Test Result of Marriage Preparation Program on Communication Related to Marriage

S.No	Groups	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	t-value	Significance
1	Communication related to Marriage (Pre)	36.7500	40	5.55509	4.4.23	0.001
2	Communication related to Marriage (Post)	42.7750	40	6.98162		

Based on the above table 4.8, the t-value 4.423 indicated that there is a statistical mean difference in the mean scores on the communication related to marriage among the trainees observed before and after marriage preparation program ($P < 0.001$). This refers that the marriage communication related to marriage of the trainees improved after the marriage preparation program and it have been effective due to the treatment effect and not by chance.

Comparison of Pre and Post Test Result of Marriage Preparation Program on Readiness for Marriage

S.No		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	t-value	Significance
1	Readiness for Marriage (Pre)	33.6000	40	7.68882	3.585	0.001
2	Readiness for Marriage (Post)	44.6500	40	18.64176		

In the above table, the t-value 3.585 indicated that there is a statistical mean difference in the scores on readiness towards marriage among the trainees observed before and after marriage preparation program ($P < 0.001$). This reflects that the trainees were ready to marry after the marriage preparation program and it have been effective due to the treatment effect and it is not considered as because of chance.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this research was to find the impact of counselling therapy on the advancement of marriage. The overall result of this study showed that the trainee’s perception towards marriage after counselling has been improved because pre and post-tests results were significant.

As the study shows that large number of trainees, 57.5% (23) were found within the age range of 16 – 20 age groups, whereas the remaining 42.5 % (17) were aged between 20 – 25 age groups. Regarding religion of respondents, 23 (57.5 %) were Catholic, 8 (20.0 %) were protestant, 6 (15.0%) were orthodox, and only the remaining 3 (7.5 %) were Islam. The presence of parent’s affiliation of respondents, shows that about 28 (70 %) of them have both father and mother, 8 (20 %) of them have only mother, 2 (5%) have only father and the remaining 2 (5%) missed both parents. With regard to respondent’s educational status, 29 (72.5%) completed their 10th grade, 9 (22.5%) completed 12th grade, and 2 (5%) had diploma. Regarding parent’s marital status, 29 (72.5%) were committed first marriage, 5 (12.5%) were widowed, 3 (7.5%) were divorced, 1 (2.5%) were re-married, and 2 (5%) were revelled on the other category.

On the motivational factors of perceived marital distress comparison result of both pre and post-test t-value 4.414 indicated that there is a statistically mean difference between the two mean scores of motivational factors of marital distress among trainees observed before and after receiving treatment ($P < 0.001$).

Dating and mate selection for marriage preparation pre and post test results on the t-value 5.228 indicated that there is a statistically mean difference between the two mean scores of the dating and mate selection for marriage preparation among trainees observed before and after receiving treatment ($P < 0.001$). The mean difference in dating and mate selection for marriage preparation (Pre) and dating and mate selection with marriage preparation (Post) score was statistically significant and it is due to the counselling intervention for the trainees by the researcher.

The readiness for marriage among trainees observed before and after receiving treatment on t-value 3.585 indicated that there is a statistically mean difference between the two mean scores of the readiness for marriage among trainees observed before and after receiving treatment ($P < 0.001$). The mean difference in readiness for marriage (Pre) and readiness for marriage (Post) score was statistically significant and it is believed by the researcher that it has been effective due to the treatment effect.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the collected data brought about the following conclusion:

- There is a statistical mean difference in the scores of the emotional factors for marital distress among trainees observed before and after receiving treatment. This reveals that the negative emotional feeling of the trainees towards marriage decreased after the counseling.
- There is a statistically mean difference between the two mean scores of motivational factors of marriage preparation among trainees observed before and after receiving treatment. This shows that the motivation of the trainees towards marriage enhanced after the counseling sessions and it have been effective due to the treatment effect.
- There is a statistically mean difference between the two mean scores of the dating and mate selection for marriage preparation among trainees observed before and after receiving treatment.
- There is a statistically mean difference between the two mean scores of the readiness for marriage among trainees observed before and after receiving treatment. This reflects that the trainees were ready to marry after the counseling.
- There is a statistically mean difference between the two mean scores of the perceived marital distress among trainees observed before and after receiving treatment. This tells that the perceived marital distress of the trainees towards marriage decreased after the counseling.
- There is a statistically mean difference between the two mean scores of the marriage expectation among trainees observed before and after receiving treatment. It reveals that the marriage expectation of the trainees towards marriage increased after the counseling.
- There is a statistically mean difference between the two mean scores of the communication related to marriage among trainees observed before and after receiving treatment. This refers that the marriage communication of the trainees improved after the counseling.
- There is a high negative correlation between emotional factors of marital distress and readiness of marriage among trainees and it is statistically significant. It revealed that high emotional factors of marital distress of trainees have low readiness for marriage among trainees. The correlation also further revealed that there is high negative relation between motivational factors of marital distress and readiness of marriage which is statistically significant. There is high positive correlation between dating and mate selection and readiness for marriage and it is statistically significant. Correlation of perceived marital distress and marriage preparation or readiness for marriage was highly negative, shows that it was statistically significant. Furthermore, there was negative correlation between marriage expectation and readiness for marriage statistically significant.

REFERENCES

1. Abanyam, Noah Lumun, Sambe, Ngutor, Avanger, Moses Yandev (2014), Sociological Analysis of the Impact of Premarital and Marital Counselling in Preventing the Global Trend of Divorce, American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, page 1-2.
2. Adams, C. R. (1946). The prediction of adjustment in marriage. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 6, 185-193.
3. Amanda Kepler (2005) Marital Satisfaction: The Impact of Premarital and Couples Counseling. Catherine University and the University of St. Thomas St. Paul, Minnesota
4. Amy R. Green & Lynn D. Miller (2013) A Literature Review of the Strengths and Limitations of Premarital Preparation: Implications for a Canadian Context. *Canadian Journal of Counseling and Psychotherapy*.
5. Avery, A., Ridley, C., Leslie, L. & Milholland, T., (1980). Relationship enhancement with premarital dyads: A six-month follow-up. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 8, 23-30.
6. Bader, E., Microys, G., Sinclair, C., Willet, E., & Conway, B. (1980). Do marriage preparation programs really work? A Canadian experiment. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 171-179.
7. Bagarozzi, D. A., & Rauen, D. (1981). Premarital counseling: Appraisal and status. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 9, 13-30.
8. Bagarozzi, D. A., Bagarozzi, J. I., Anderson, S. A., & Pollane, L. (1984). Premarital education and training sequence (PETS): A 3-year Follow-up of an experimental study. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 63, 91-100.
9. Boike, D. (1977). The impact of a premarital program on communication process, communication facilitativeness, and personality trait variables of engaged couples. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Florida State University.
10. Bowerman, C. E. (1964). Prediction studies. In H. T. Christensen (Ed.), *Handbook of marriage and family* (pp. 215-246). Chicago: Rand McNally.

11. Burgess, E. W., & Cottrell, L. S. (1939) Predicting success or failure in marriage. New York: Prentice-Hall Inc.
12. Burgess, E. W. & Wallin, P. W. (1953). Engagement and marriage. New York: Lippincott.
13. Cate, R. M., & Lloyd, S. A. (1992). Courtship. Newbury Park: Sage publications.
14. Cicchetti, D. & Toth, S. L. (1992). The role of developmental theory in prevention and intervention. *Development and Psychopathology*, 4, 489-493. Evaluation of Premarital Education 36.
15. Chelsi Klentz Davis (2015). An Evaluation of the Impact of a Couples Enrichment Program on Relationship Satisfaction, Communication, Conflict Resolution, and Forgiveness. *University of Nebraska-Lincol*.
16. Coie, J. D., & Watt, N. F., West, S. G., Hawkins, J. D., Asarnow, J. R., Markman, H. J., Ramey, S. L., Shure, M. B., & Long, B. (1993). The science of prevention: A conceptual framework and some directions for a national research program. *American Psychologist*, 48(10), 1013-1022.
17. C.R. Kothari, (2004). *Research Methodology methods and Techniques* (2nd revised ed.) New age international Press.
18. D'Augelli, A., Deyss, C., Guernsey, B., Hershenberg, B., & Sbordfsky, S. (1974). Interpersonal skills training for dating couples: An evaluation of an educational mental health service. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 21, 385-389.
19. Doherty, W. J., & Carroll, J. S. (in press). Health and the Ethics of Marital Therapy and Education. In J. Wall, D. Browning, W.J. Doherty, & S. Post (Eds.), *Marriage, Health, and the Professions: The Implications of New Research into the Health Benefits of Marriage for Law, Medicine, Ministry, Therapy, and Business*. Louisville, KY: William B. Eerdmans press.
20. Ferris, Roger H., "Premarital Preparation: An Educational Content Design for Seventh-day Adventists in the United States" (1985). *Dissertations*. Paper 363.
21. Freeman, D. (1965). Counseling engaged couples in small groups. *Social Work*, 10, 36-42.
22. Vincent Bennamin (2008) Premarital counseling model. At the university of KwaZulu-Natal.