

Premarital Counseling and Marital Stability among Couples in Kahawa West Ward Nairobi-Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The rising number of marriage breakups has become a universal disastrous phenomenon in recent times. There is an increase of reported cases of domestic violence some resulting to serious injuries and deaths. Domestic violence is like a symptom of marriage instability that can be addressed by Premarital Counseling. There are various factors that destabilize marriage in the recent time, therefore this study purposed to investigate the relationship between premarital counseling and marriage stability among couples in Kahawa West ward Nairobi Kenya. The study was guided by four objectives, to examine forms of premarital counseling given to couples, to determine levels of marriage stability among couples, to examine the perception of Premarital counseling among couples and to establish strategies that enhance marriage stability among couples. Family development theory (FDT) and Gottman theory supported the study. The study used convergent parallel design. The target population was 738 registered marriages from 6 denominational churches and one service provider from each church. A sample size of 259 marriages and 6 purposive sampled service providers totaling to 265 was employed to provide data. Purposive sampling technique was used to select service providers and simple random technique used to select couples. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation were used to analyze Quantitative data through SPSS version 2021. Findings from respondents indicated that Religious PMC was most preferred by couples. It was found that there was high level of marriage stability. Findings showed traces of variables that can cause instability such as rejection, dominance, dissolution, discontent and despair. Findings showed positive perception for PMC by couples. Finding showed strategies that can enhance stability in marriage such as mutual communication, General action, Ongoing Counseling and genetic counseling were established. Finding showed a positive significant relationship between premarital counseling and marriage stability. The study recommended Churches to advocate for PMC programs to sensitize future partners.

Keywords: Premarital counseling, Marriage stability, Couples

BACKGROUND

In today's society a developing assumption on marriage preparation has been identified where Partners cohabit living as husband and wife without paying attention to factors or considerations pertaining a happy marriage life. In the recent years, preparation for marriage and the various factors that contribute to its stability have been discussed. According to Kiura (1987), Such factors include length of courtship, priorities of each spouse, goal of marriage and other important aspects such as home, finance, work, religion/faith, status, interests, habits, sexual life in marriage, number of children, communication, parents' involvements, friends, in-laws and relatives, personality differences and role expectations. Premarital counseling attends such considerations as partners get prepared for marriage. Marriage preparations that lead to stability in the recent past has been viewed as a condition in the entire marriage life. These preparations depend with individuals settling for marriage, therefore, this study is purposed to investigate the relationship between premarital counseling and marriage stability among couples in Kahawa West Nairobi Kenya. Kepler and Baker (2015) states that God predestined marriage for three purposes, companionship, pleasure and recreation but marital dissatisfaction seems to affect people of all ages, races,

and cultural backgrounds and often leads to divorce. Premarital counseling is usually intended to keep couples working at a high level so it can be described as preventative. Individuals getting married have to be prepared to stay with each other and face every challenge that may come their way together. Premarital counseling is one of the major ways of preparing couples for marriage. According to a survey by Stupart (2018) in America, 93% of Americans would like to have a happy marriage and a successful marriage. The poll found that couples who sought counseling before getting married had a 30% higher rate of marital success than couples who didn't. 40% of partners agreed to premarital counseling before taking their wedding vows. 75% of weddings and marriages take place in a religious setting where premarital counseling is mandatory for individuals getting married. Krupa and Bino (2017) did a survey in India among young people on their perception of premarital preparation and counseling indicated that young people in India wanted successful marriages and therefore viewed premarital counseling as an important aspect of preparation. Oludare and Ogili (2013) did a review in Nigeria on Knowledge, attitude, and practice of premarital counseling for sickle cell disease (SCD) among youth in Yaba. In Botswana, Moet, et al. (2017) illustrated that traditional premarital therapy proved beneficial and might keep couples stable.

In Tanzania, premarital education and counseling were viewed as an important part of beginning a marriage. According to an investigation by Basela (2015) showed that 100% of all the participants indicated receiving premarital advice and counseling traditionally either from, relatives or other organized traditional rulers before getting married. 80.8% of the participants stated that they had received premarital counseling from religious institutions which was mandatory before they got married. In Kenya Barasa and Nzangi (2015) surveyed 59 respondents on the role of marital counseling in handling marital issues. The survey revealed that 86% of the respondents agreed that counseling played a major role in supporting marriages in Kenya. 4% of the participants said that marriage counseling supported marriages to a rate of 61 – 100%. 32% of the couples argued that counseling holds their unions to a rate of 31-60%, while 13% rated it at between 1-31%. These findings indicated that counseling plays a key role in supporting marriages during difficult times. As Odero (2018) described that partners that received premarital counseling had more stable marriages with higher satisfaction than those who didn't sought counseling prior to their marriage.

Kariuki (2018) indicated that premarital counseling increased marital satisfaction. However, as much as premarital counseling has been advocated to address marriage stability, domestic violence has been recorded in the recent times leading to dysfunctions in marriage such as fights, separations, divorce and even partner planned deaths. Partners failure to engage in adequate marriage preparation but rather cohabit living as husband and wife, sometimes are easily carried away by disagreements leading to domestic violence. Premarital counseling enables partners with knowledge and skills on how to overcome any challenge that come along with marriage experiences. Premarital preparation is therefore an important foundation for future stable marriage relationships.

There is concern in this recent times on marriage breakdown where individual partners sometimes contributed partly in failing to prepare for future stability of their marriage done through cohabitation. Studies conducted agree that marriage stability does not accidentally happen, instead couples should adequately prepare before getting married if at all they should have stable unions. Premarital counseling prepares partners for unexpected eventualities whereby different forms were used such as religious counseling, personal therapy, traditional, legislative, medical and financial counseling.

Premarital counseling is presumed to minimize dysfunctional bringing stability reflected by quality communication, conflict solving, quality financial management, mutual understanding, satisfaction, role function, self-disclosure and decision making. Marriage stability can also be influenced by partner's economic status, educational level, career, personality type and sometimes age of the partner. Premarital counseling could address intervening variables hence maximize the stability of the marriage. Therefore, this study sought to explore the relationship between premarital counseling and marriage stability among

couples at Kahawa west Nairobi.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The approach focuses on the systematic and patterned changes that occur in families as they move through the family life course. The family development theory provides a basis to study families over time. Secondly, it emphasizes the developmental tasks of individual family members and families at every stage of the cycle. Fourthly, the model built-in recognition of family stress at critical periods in development; and lastly, ever since 1949 it recognizes the necessity for services, supports, and programs for families throughout their family life cycles (Russell & Russell, 2018). The study also included Gottman theory of relationship which is preferred by many counselors since it gives a couple a background of their relationship as well as the purpose of their being. This again would enable them to withstand the differences that each carries hence ability to maintain their relationship in their marriage. The two theories combined could help the counselor taking the partners through supporting them in each stage of their marriage addressing any eventuality that comes along in life.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted mixed methods- convergent parallel design which involves collecting and analysing both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously and independently and then comparing or relating the two sets of results to draw overall conclusions. The researcher used Convergent parallel design to enhance the validity and credibility of the findings. It was applicable in this study since it captures on behavioural, health and complex societal situations. The design enabled the researcher to identify areas of convergence or divergence between qualitative and quantitative results. It also helped the researcher to generalize the findings and provided rich contextual information that enhanced understanding of the problem and of the group under study. The study was carried out in different denominational churches situated in Kahawa West Nairobi namely; Our Lady Consolata (Catholic), A.C.K, Baptist, Methodist, P.C.E.A and K.A.G and they were purposively selected. The area occupies a high population of mixed diversities of ethnic communities in the republic of Kenya. Different denominations hold different perceptions in handling marriage partners before are engaged in marriage. In that background the researcher aimed to seek the relationship between premarital counselling and its effects attached in marriage.

Sampling Technique

This study used non-probability and probability sampling techniques

Purposive sampling technique was used to select churches which were each presented by a service provider/ Counsellor. This technique enables individual who have knowledgeable and with experience to provide an in-depth information. Reason for selecting service providers was because they have experience in dealing with preparation of couples ready for weddings so they had relevant information needed in the study. A sample size of 259 marriages and 6 purposive sampled service providers totaling to 265 was employed to provide data. Purposive sampling technique was used to select service providers and simple random technique used to select couples. This technique eliminates bias (Creswell and Clark, 2012).

By use of NVIVO common information was grouped together and produced a theme. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation were used to analyze Quantitative data through SPSS version 2021.

The researcher employed simple random sampling for the married couples who participated in the study from the six churches that were randomly sampled in Kahawa west Ward. Simple random sampling gives each member of the population an equal chance of being chosen for the study. The above method of

sampling guarantees that the sample selected is representative of the population and not biased in any way (Taherdoost, 2016).

Validity

The study used the content and face validity. Content validity was used to find out whether the instruments covered the content purposed to measure in relation to the study. Face validity evaluated the questionnaire in terms of readability, consistency and clarity of the language used. Face validity was checked when the researcher administered the questionnaires to the respondents during pretest. Validity analysis was conducted to determine whether the research instrument represented the underlying construct it purported to measure (Heale & Twycross, 2015) Pearson Correlation analysis was employed to determine the validity on the levels of marriage stability and relationship between forms of premarital counseling and marriage stability among couples. ** Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed) and Correlation is Significant at the 0.05 (2 tailed)

Reliability

Cronbach Alpha technique was used in this study to determine reliability of the instrument used. The higher the co-efficient the higher the degree of reliability measure (Taber, 2018). Where co-efficient is more than it's a good measure of reliability as Taber stated (2018). The study Cronbach Alpha level was 0.8 with 65 N of Items. A research instrument is reliable if it has a Cronbach Alpha co-efficient of above 0.70. Therefore, Cronbach Alpha 0.792 indicated that all the items had an adequate level of inter-item reliability.

Instruments

The study used Questionnaires for the couples and Interview guide for Service providers. Section A was only for couples since it contained relevant details as per the background of the study which consisted of Gender. With the presence of gender, one partner could have participated in the study in the absence of the other. Duration in marriage was significant since experience gained in marriage could be a contributing factor for stability. The number of sessions attended in premarital counseling could also be a contributing factor for in-depth acquisition of knowledge and skills Finally different forms of premarital counseling accorded to couples as per individual couple's choice.

Section B Self-developed questionnaire by Watenga, J. N (2022). The purpose was to assess the forms of premarital counseling offered to couples. It was important because counsellors would know the most preferred form of Premarital counseling. It consisted of 15 statements reflecting different forms of premarital counseling where respondents were asked to rate the level of agreement or disagreement on a 5 point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree to 5 (strongly agree) It was completed as it was administered.

Section C Marital Quality Scale by Anisha Shah (1995). Standardized Questionnaire. The purpose was to assess the level of marital stability among couples. This allowed the collection of data from a large number of respondents in a relatively quick and easy way and enhanced reliability and validity of the data. One limitation is that it doesn't capture the diversity and complexity of opinions. It consisted of 50 statements where respondents rated themselves on a 4 point Likert scale ranging from Usually, Sometimes, Rarely and Never.

RESULTS

Results were presented in form of tables where independent variables and dependent variables showed correlation.

Table 1 Validity Analysis

		I and my partner were taken through marital counseling regarding emotional support before we got married	My partner and I were taken through financial expectations in counseling before we got married
I and my partner were taken through marital counseling regarding emotional support before we got married	Pearson Correlation	1	.673**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	176	173
My partner and I were taken through financial expectations in counseling before we got married	Pearson Correlation	.673**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	173	176

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).**

Table 1 represented the correlation between the dependent variables and questionnaires that covered all the objectives of the study.

Table 2 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach Alpha	N of Items
.792 = 0.8	65

Table 2 agreed with Taber (2018) as he stated that a research instrument is reliable if it has a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of above 0.70. Therefore, the Cronbach Alpha of the study 0.8 being greater than .07 indicated that all items in the tool had an adequate level of inter-item reliability.

Table 3 The correlation between Premarital Counseling and Marital Stability Among Couples

	Understanding	Rejection	Satisfaction	Affection	Despair	Decision Making	Discontent	Dissolution Potential	Dominance	Self-disclosure	Role Function
Personal Therapy	0.21	-0.235	0.239	-0.124	-0.172	0.157	-0.241	-0.111	-0.077	0.161	0.236
	0.012	0.004	0.003	0.144	0.033	0.056	0.003	0.159	0.336	0.046	0.004
	142	147	149	141	154	149	154	162	157	154	151
Financial Counseling	0.24	-0.132	0.176	-0.213	-0.124	0.183	-0.232	-0.074	-0.013	0.11	0.21
	0.004	0.108	0.03	0.011	0.123	0.024	0.004	0.346	0.869	0.172	0.009
	144	149	152	142	156	152	156	164	159	156	154
Traditional Counseling	0.251	-0.152	0.177	-0.044	-0.087	0.12	-0.186	-0.042	-0.073	0.144	0.21
	0.002	0.062	0.028	0.602	0.273	0.14	0.019	0.588	0.36	0.072	0.008
	145	152	153	143	159	154	159	167	161	158	156

Legislative Counseling	0.154	-0.141	0.201	-0.132	-0.122	0.084	-0.245	-0.086	-0.095	0.096	0.166
	0.07	0.09	0.015	0.122	0.133	0.313	0.002	0.284	0.241	0.242	0.043
	139	145	146	139	152	147	153	159	155	151	150
Religious	0.294	-0.225	0.236	-0.056	-0.159	0.137	-0.212	-0.031	-0.005	0.201	0.24
	0	0.006	0.003	0.506	0.047	0.092	0.008	0.691	0.952	0.012	0.003
	144	149	151	142	156	152	156	164	160	156	153

Table 3 shows correlation between variables which was moderately represented. These included Personal therapy and understanding, satisfaction and role function where a mean of $r= 0.228$ was identified. Moderate correlation between Traditional counseling and role function and understanding with a mean of $r= 0.231$ and Moderate correlation between religious counseling and understanding, role function, satisfaction and self-disclosure with a mean of $r= 0.177$.

Table 4 Levels of Marriage Stability Among Couples in Kahawa West by Watenga, J.N

	Mean	Std Dev
Understanding	3.25	0.71
Rejection	2.59	0.56
Satisfaction	3.36	0.66
Affection	2.46	0.64
Despair	2.23	0.74
Decision Making	3.28	0.97
Discontent	2.09	0.94
Dissolution Potential	2.13	1.88
Dominance	2.59	0.85
Self-Disclosure	2.83	0.57
Role Function	3.39	1.04

Table 4 represented the stability achieved by couples through premarital counseling. They were in two dimensions that is high and low. The highest level was reflected on role function followed by satisfaction, decision making, understanding and self –disclosure. The lowest level of marriage stability was reflected by discontent, dissolution potential and despair. The findings were in agreement that premarital counseling is important in supporting marriages for it not only enhance stability but also minimizes low level variables.

DISCUSSION

The literature reviewed showed that all the forms of premarital counseling used were utilized which influenced marriage thus minimized the low levels of marriage stability that caused instability in marriage. Literature showed that religious form of premarital counseling was most preferred by couples. Marriage stability was identifying in the increase of dependent variables that depended on Independent variables represented by different forms of premarital counseling. The results were in agreement with the literature reviewed that religious form was embraced by the highest percentage of participants 70% with a great big difference in comparison with other forms. Religious counseling was identified to correlate with dependent variables such as Role function with a mean score of 3.30, Satisfaction means score of 3.36, Understanding mean score of 3.25 and self-disclosure with a mean score of 2,83 respectively. The results showed personal therapy influencing dependent variables positively and minimizing the low levels of marriage stability. This

result was in agreement with the literature that premarital counseling was found to be a valuable tool to enhance skills and knowledge for a successful marriage. Traditional counseling influenced the dependent variables positively and influenced the low levels of marriage stability negatively. This was in agreement with the literature that premarital counseling had a significant impact on marital satisfaction. Financial counseling influenced dependent variables positively and minimized the low levels of marriage stability. This result was consistent with the literature that counseling before marriage based on the program on love relations leading to marriage reduced the uncompromising marital anticipation and increased realistic expectations. Legislative counseling influenced dependent variables positively and minimized the low levels of marriage stability which was in agreement with the literature that premarital counseling had a significant impact on marital satisfaction. Literature reviewed was in agreement with the results that premarital counseling maximizes dependent variables and reduces the low levels of marriage stability. Every time that couples could receive premarital counseling, negative variables would reduce. This was in line with the correlation results that ** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed) which meant when premarital counseling is done, the low level variables increases in marriage hence bring stability in marriage.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings in this study revealed that premarital counseling and marriage stability relates in the sense that prior preparations for marriage enhances positive perception in the relationships of partners. There was significant relationship between premarital counseling and marriage stability among couples in Kahawa west. The findings also indicated that premarital counseling is an important tool for a successful marriage and therefore the researcher opines partners to embrace premarital counseling as they settle in marriage. In addition, service providers to be adequate for the in-depth provision of premarital services. This would help many couples to get well equipped as they also get their marriage safe by attaining knowledge and skills for a successful marriage.

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