

The Role of Counselling in Marital Stages: A Study on Strengthening Family Relations and Societal Harmony

Muthamsetty Lakshmana Siva Prasad¹, Prof. M. Trimurthi Rao²

¹LL.M; M.Phil Advocate and Family Counsellor Ph.D Research Scholar, Nagarjuna University

²Dean, School of Social Sciences, Acharya Nagarjuna University

Abstract:

This paper explores the critical role of counselling in fostering healthy marital relationships and preserving family harmony. By examining the various stages of the marital journey—from premarital counselling to post-marital guidance—it underscores the importance of emotional intelligence, communication, and conflict resolution in maintaining strong familial bonds. The discussion highlights the role of educational institutions in imparting family values and emotional resilience, emphasizing the long-term psychological consequences of neglecting these aspects. Family and parent counselling are examined as tools for resolving conflicts and promoting understanding, while marriage counselling is portrayed as a continuous process crucial for navigating marital challenges. The paper concludes that a collaborative approach involving counselling and education is vital for fostering societal harmony and emotional well-being.

Keywords: Marital counselling, family values, emotional intelligence, premarital counselling, parent counselling, post-marital counselling, communication, conflict resolution, family harmony, education, societal well-being.

INTRODUCTION

The institution of marriage has long been regarded as the cornerstone of family life, a union that not only brings two individuals together but also shapes the future of society. Yet, in the evolving landscape of modern living, marriages face increasingly complex challenges. Marital discord, often stemming from misunderstandings, unmet expectations, or external pressures, can ripple through the broader family unit, affecting children, aging parents, and even extended relatives. To preserve the health of these vital relationships, counselling emerges as a crucial tool. Counselling provides individuals with the guidance necessary to foster emotional growth, resilience, and mutual understanding, all of which are essential for maintaining harmonious familial bonds.

This paper explores the critical role of counselling at various stages of the marital journey—from premarital counselling to post-marital guidance. It also delves into how societal institutions, particularly educational systems, play a key role in instilling the family values and emotional intelligence necessary for future relationships.

Premarital Counselling: Laying the Foundation:

The importance of premarital counselling cannot be ignored or overstated. Many couples enter marriage

with romanticized ideals, often unaware of the challenges that come with building a life together. While love and attraction are the foundation of a relationship, successful marriages require deeper elements such as communication, conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence. Premarital counselling serves as a preparatory process where couples can develop a realistic understanding of marriage. It provides the tools to navigate potential conflicts and fosters an attitude of cooperation and mutual respect. However, the seeds of a successful marriage are not sown in the weeks or months preceding the wedding. They are planted in the formative years of a child's life. It is during childhood and adolescence that individuals develop their core values, their understanding of relationships, and their emotional resilience. Educational institutions, in particular, have a profound role in shaping these values, offering a form of premarital counselling through their curricula, which, when appropriately designed, teaches emotional intelligence, empathy, and conflict resolution.

The Role of Education in Fostering Family Values:

Family values—such as respecting others, empathy, responsibility, and cooperation—are essential for maintaining stable and loving relationships. Yet, in modern societies that increasingly emphasize individualism and personal achievement, these values can sometimes be overshadowed. Educational institutions have a responsibility to ensure that family values are not only taught but deeply ingrained in the lives of students. This can be achieved by integrating moral and ethical education into the school curriculum, from early childhood through college.

By incorporating lessons on emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and social responsibility, schools help students develop a comprehensive framework for navigating relationships. These values, when instilled early, serve as the foundation for future interactions, including those within marriage. For instance, emotional regulation, a key aspect of emotional intelligence, is essential for managing marital disputes. Schools can promote this by teaching students how to identify and express their emotions constructively, thereby fostering resilience in relationships. Furthermore, the role of holistic education in promoting family values extends beyond the individual student. It influences the broader societal context, contributing to societal harmony by reducing incidences of conflict, substance abuse, and other destructive behaviors. The long-term impact of neglecting family values in education is significant, contributing to rising divorce rates, juvenile delinquency, and emotional instability in future generations.

The Psychological Consequences of Neglecting Family Values:

The absence of a strong moral and emotional foundation, often a result of inadequate education in family values, can lead to a host of psychological issues. Emotional instability, characterized by feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression, often emerges in individuals who lack the emotional tools necessary to manage interpersonal relationships. These individuals may seek solace in destructive behaviors such as substance abuse, gambling, or even toxic relationships, which not only harm them but also undermine the stability of the family unit.

Premarital counselling cannot be directly incorporated in the educational system but at the same time it can be delicately woven into the fabric of individual grooming in shaping his/her personality. Ex., respecting others view point which are not consisting with ones own views or thoughts. Teaching self-regulation, emotional awareness, and conflict resolution as part of a holistic education program helps prevent the social consequences of neglecting family values. In doing so, schools and other institutions ensure that individuals are not only academically successful but also emotionally resilient, ready to

contribute to society's well-being.

Family Counselling: A Collaborative Approach:

Family counselling plays a unique and critical role in addressing the interpersonal dynamics that shape familial relationships. The Portland Counselling Institute's model of family group consultation offers a valuable framework for understanding how family counselling can help individuals recognize and resolve patterns of conflict. In family group sessions, members discuss their perceptions of events, and counselors facilitate the identification of recurring patterns of behavior that contribute to discord. These patterns often reveal underlying issues that can be addressed through careful guidance and mutual understanding.

For example, many family conflicts stem from poor communication, where individuals may misinterpret each other's actions or intentions. Counselling sessions help families confront these miscommunications, leading to deeper insights and solutions. The role of the counselor is to act as a mediator, helping family members express their feelings and needs, while also guiding them toward mutually beneficial resolutions. By fostering open communication, family counselling helps individuals develop more harmonious and productive relationships.

Parent Counselling: Strengthening the Parent-Child Bond:

Parent-child relationships are often fraught with conflict, particularly during periods of transition such as adolescence. Parent counselling addresses these conflicts by helping parents understand the impact of their behavior on their children. Many parents, driven by a protective instinct, may unknowingly stifle their child's independence, leading to feelings of resentment and rebellion. Counselling offers a space for parents to explore their own emotional responses and gain a better understanding of how to support their children without overstepping boundaries.

Moreover, parent counselling often addresses conflicts related to vocational choices and career aspirations. Parents, who believe they know what is best for their children, may push them towards careers that conflict with the child's personal interests or ambitions. Counselling helps bridge this gap by fostering open dialogue between parents and children, promoting mutual understanding and respect for each other's perspectives. By guiding parents through these complex dynamics, counselors help create a more supportive and nurturing home environment.

Marriage Counselling: Navigating the Complexities of Marital Life:

Marriage counselling, although often associated with crisis intervention, should ideally begin long before a marriage reaches a breaking point. Counselling can be preventative, helping couples navigate the various stress factors that may arise throughout their relationship. Marital conflicts can stem from a range of issues, including financial difficulties, differences in beliefs or lifestyles, and even external factors such as illness or the influence of a third party. Counsellors work with couples to identify these stress factors and develop strategies for managing them in a constructive manner.

In traditional societies, like those in India, marriage is often seen as a union between families rather than just individuals. This cultural context adds an additional layer of complexity to marriage, as couples must navigate not only their relationship but also the expectations and dynamics of their extended families. Marriage counselling in these contexts focuses on helping couples understand their roles within this broader familial structure, while also addressing the emotional needs of the individuals involved.

American society, by contrast, has embraced the institution of marital counselling as a critical service for

ensuring happy marriages. Practices such as dating, which allow couples to get to know each other before committing to marriage, are seen as an essential part of this process. Marriage counselling in the United States has evolved into a continuous service that begins in the early days of courtship and extends through the various stages of married life. By providing ongoing support, counselors help couples navigate the inevitable challenges of marriage, ensuring that their relationship remains strong and resilient.

Post-Marital Counselling: Sustaining Marital Harmony:

Even after the wedding, counselling remains an important tool for sustaining marital harmony. Post-marital counselling helps couples navigate potential conflict-generating situations that may arise in the future, such as disagreements over child bearing, parenting styles, financial management, or career choices. By continuing to engage in counselling, couples can maintain open lines of communication, preventing small issues from escalating into larger conflicts.

In some cases, couples may experience dissatisfaction or disillusionment even during the honeymoon phase of their marriage. While the honeymoon is traditionally seen as a time for celebration and bonding besides enjoying, it can also reveal differences in personalities, habits, or expectations that were not previously apparent (ex., *the honeymoon couple visiting Kashmir enjoyed themselves well in the Flower Garden. When the lady plucked flowers and the garden watchmen yelled at her, the husband became enraged with her, ruining the entire honeymoon mood*). Post-marital counselling offers couples the opportunity to address these issues early on, ensuring that their relationship remains strong as they move forward into married life.

Conclusion:

Counselling at various stages of the marital journey plays an essential role in fostering healthy relationships and ensuring the emotional stability of the family unit. From the formative years of childhood, where education in family values lays the groundwork for future relationships, to post-marital counselling, which helps couples maintain harmony, counselling provides individuals with the tools necessary to navigate the complexities of marriage. Educational institutions must also contribute by promoting family values and emotional intelligence from an early age. Together, these efforts will create individuals who are not only academically successful but also morally and emotionally resilient, capable of contributing to a harmonious and prosperous society. This version expands the content while retaining the core ideas. Each section delves more deeply into the themes of family values, counselling, and the role of educational and societal institutions in fostering healthy relationships. The ultimate mantra for better living in all phases of marital life is counselling... counselling... counselling...

References:

1. Gottman, J. M., & Silver, N. (2015). *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide from the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert*. Harmony Books.
2. Halford, W. K., & Snyder, D. K. (2012). *Couple Therapy: A New Hope-Focused Approach*. Wiley.
3. Corey, G. (2016). *Theory and Practice of Counselling and Psychotherapy* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.
4. Amato, P. R., & James, S. (2010). Divorce in Europe and the United States: Commonalities and differences across nations. *Family Science Review*, 15(2), 31-47.
5. Bowen, M. (1978). *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*. Jason Aronson.

6. Carr, A. (2012). *Family Therapy: Concepts, Process, and Practice* (3rd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
7. Fowers, B. J., & Olson, D. H. (1993). Predicting Marital Success for Premarital Couple Types Based on PREPARE. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 19(1), 13-28.
8. Shulman, S., & Connolly, J. (2013). The challenge of romantic relationships in emerging adulthood: Reconceptualization of the field. *Emerging Adulthood*, 1(1), 27-39.
9. Markman, H. J., Stanley, S. M., & Blumberg, S. L. (2010). *Fighting for Your Marriage: Positive Steps for Preventing Divorce and Preserving a Lasting Love* (3rd ed.) Jossey-Bass.