

PRE - MARITAL COUNSELLING INFLUENCE ON SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT AND MARITAL STABILITY AMONG COUPLES IN ENUGU METROPOLIS

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of pre-marital counseling on social adjustment and marital stability. Exposit facto and correlation designs were adopted. Three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The sample comprised of 300 couples selected through stratified random sampling. The instrument for data collection was the Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ) developed by the researcher. The instrument was validated by two experts in measurement and evaluation and one in Guidance and counselling while reliability was confirmed through the test-retest method. Analysis of data was done by using t-test and Correlation. The findings of the study revealed that counseled couples were better socially adjusted and had more stable relationship than non-counselled couples and also that there was a significant relationship between social adjustment and marital stability. Based on the findings recommendations were made such as families and Faith-Based Organizations conducting pre-marital counselling for intending couples and that marital education should be made part of the school curriculum.

Marital Counselling is a component of counselling psychology which offers expert suggestion for solution of personal, social educational and vocational problems especially in the school system. Marital counselling which is an interactive process characterized by a unique relationship between counsellors and clients (couples) leading to change in the counsees behaviour (Uba in Echebe, 2010) Marital counselling is as old as man himself, as all societies around the world offer counselling services before and during marriage relationship but formal marital counselling was first introduced into the Nigerian system through religious institutions as they seek to reduce friction and unhappiness and strengthen marital bond between couples in order to weaken the menace of divorce (Echebe, 2010). Today, both governmental and non-governmental organizations like Faith based organizations have strengthened marital counselling services to combat the problem of divorce which inadvertently results in problems such as drug abuse, high rate of school drop-out, truancy, teenage pregnancy and other behaviour problems (Otondo, 2008), The high rate of divorce has been compounded by erosion of traditional values and norms due to the complexities of societal changes caused by globalization which has produced a lot of strain on marriages. Urbanization and the advent of electronics have also led to the disintegration of traditional social values.

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The presence of electronic devices such as television and the internet have facilitated cultural revolution leading to changes in attitude about sex, sophisticated and expensive lifestyles and to several socio-cultural conflicts and subsequent marital instability (Metto, 2003).

A study carried out by Teibowei (2011) revealed that there is increased instability and divorce among couples in Enugu metropolis and the rate is alarming as four out of every ten marriages contracted breakup within the first two years of marriage while five out of every ten marriage breaking within the first four years.

Divorce which is the legal termination of a marriage has resulted in several problems especially with children (Products of the marriage) who most times live at the mercy of fate. Several factors are responsible for divorce and they include lack of mutual understanding and respect for either of the couples, interference in the affairs of the couples by parents, friends etc, financial problems, unfaithfulness, sexual dysfunction, lack of communication, inability to adjust to the challenge of marital life and lack of adequate information, pre-marital education and counselling.

Pre-marital counselling refers to services that are provided to help couples who are planning to marry strengthen their communication and problem solving skills in their relationship. Models range from those that adopt skill based instructional approach, to those that use a therapeutic approach which addresses the specific marital problems facing individual couples (Echebe, 2010) It is advised that couples should receive counselling services from a professional counselor before engaging in marriage relationship as this will help them have better knowledge of what the marriage union is all about, the good and bad moments, to know their spouses better, and know the adjustment and coping strategies to employ in their marital lives . Through pre-marital counselling, the counselor is able to provide couples with the tools needed to keep their relationship healthy and strong. The counsellor is also able to provide therapeutic information which helps couples eliminate habits that destroy relationships and inculcate good habits that build healthy relationship (Echebe, 2010).

Traditionally, counselling is a one-to one relationship that encourages clients to talk about the most intimate aspect of their lives (Idown in Disiye, Hezborn and Ongetti, 2011) However, it is not easy or common for people to disclose their personal matters that cause pain and discomfort to counsellors on their own and so, many Faith- Based Organizations organize pre-marital counselling services for their members. Research has shown that pre-material counselling which may involve individual couples or group activity with known acquaintances would be a more preferred context for counselling activity for

intending couples (Chibundu, 2004, and Makinde, 2004). Teibowei (2011) added that pre-marital counselling helps couples adjust to married life faster.

Adjustment refers to the process of restoring order for the purpose of controlling one's life. It is the process of the individual's effort to satisfy his/her physical, social and personality needs. It is the ability of an individual to adapt to a situation (Egbule, 2009) several studies have shown that pre-marital counselling improves couple's adjustment in marital life. . Adi (2008), Sutton (2010) and Sukori (2011) found that couples who receive pre-marital counselling have higher social coping skills because they are easily socially adjusted to situations. Additional studies by Teibowei (2011) revealed that pre-marital counselling leads to improved empathy skills and self-concept of couples and enhances personal adjustment and inter-personal relationship among couples. Chibundu (2004) reported that pre-marital counselling contributes to an overall improvement of behaviour of couple's marital stability.

Marital stability is another area where many studies like (Otondo, 2008, Echebe, 2010) indicate that pre-marital counselling has considerable influence. Marital stability refers to a firm, steady, well-balanced and healthy marital relationship between couples. Stability is ensured as each member fulfils his/her role in the relationship. Shirley (2005) and Echebe (2010) observed that marital stability leads to a well-balanced and well adjusted family which in turn leads to a well-adjusted progressive society. Studies carried out by Niolon (2005), Ikuraye (2006), and Adi (2008), reported a positive influence of pre-marital counselling on couples marital stability. Adi (2008) asserted that pre-marital counselling helps in redefining the role of couples in facilitating marital stability while Sukori (2011) opined that couples who are exposed to pre-marital counselling experience a sense of belonging, commitment to each other, acceptance of duties and upholding of marital vows, more emotionally involved and connected each other, participate in domestic activities and develop self-efficacy and increased attachment to one another.

Problem of the Study

The increasing rate of divorce among couples especially within the last two to four years is alarming. Many studies attribute this to several factors but little attention has been paid to pre-marital counselling. The problem under investigation in this study therefore is to examine the influence of pre-marital counselling on social adjustment and marital stability in marital life.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of pre-marital counselling on social adjustment and marital stability among couples in Enugu State metropolis . It also investigated whether or not there is a relationship between social adjustment and marital stability in Enugu metropolis. Specifically, the study pursued the following objectives.

1. To investigate the influence of pre-marital counselling on social adjustment of couples in Enugu metropolis.
2. To investigate the influence of pre-marital counselling on marital stability among couples in Enugu metropolis.
3. To find out the relationship between social adjustment and marital stability among couples in Enugu metropolis.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were to be tested at the 0.05 alpha level of significance.

H0₁ Pre-marital counselling does not have significant influence on social adjustment of couples in Enugu metropolis.

H0₂ Pre-marital counselling does not have significant influence on marital stability of couples in Enugu metropolis.

H0₃ There is no significant relationship between social adjustment and marital stability of couples in Enugu metropolis.

Method

The study was a multi-method quantitative study which involved export facto (causal-comparative) and correlation research designs. Export facto was used to pursue the first two objectives to ascertain the influence of pre-marital counselling on social adjustment and marital stability while correlation was used to investigate the relationship between social adjustment and marital stability.

The population of the study consisted of 3,042 couples in Enugu state metropolis sample of 300 couples were selected through stratified random sampling to participate in the study. The instrument for data collection was the Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ) designed by the researcher. The Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ) was a self-report instrument which consisted of two sections. Section A was made up of 6 demographic variables while section B comprised of 28 Likert scale items which were used to measure social adjustment of the participants.

Validity of the instrument was established through vetting by three experts two in measurement and evaluation and one in guidance and counselling. To determine the instrument's reliability, 15 couples were randomly selected which were not part of the sample size and administered with the instrument. Two weeks later, the same instrument was re-administered to the couples by the researcher. Statistical method used for computation of the reliability coefficient was Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient with .78 correlation which was high enough to guarantee its reliability.

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Results

Hypothesis 1: Pre-marital counseling does not have significant influence on social adjustment of couples in Enugu metropolis.

Table 1: Independent T-Test Analysis of the Influence of Pre-Marital Counseling on Social Adjustment.

Pre-marital Counselling	SD			t-cal	t-crit	Result	
	N	\bar{X}	df				
Counselled couples	200	3.29	0.54	298	10.94	1.96	Significant
Non-Counselled couples	100	3.21	0.64				

With the means of 3.29 and 3.21 respectively for counseled and non-counselled couples it means that counseled couples are more socially adjusted than non-counseled couples. Table 1 revealed that the calculated t-value of 10.94 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 needed for significance at the 0.05 alpha level. This shows that pre-marital counseling has significant influence on social adjustment of couples.

Hypothesis 2: Pre-marital counseling does not have significant influence on marital stability of couples in Enugu metropolis.

Table 2: Independent T-Test Analysis of the Influence of Pre-Marital Counseling on Marital Stability of Couples I Enugu Metropolis.

Pre-marital counseling	SD			t-cal	t-cal	Result	
	N	\bar{X}	df				
Counseling couples	200	3.32	0.52	298	8.41	1.96	Significant
Non-Counselling Couples	100	2.98	0.66				

Table 2 shows that the calculated t-value of 8.41 is higher than the table Value of 1.96 and with mean scores of 3.32 and 2.98 for counseled and non-counselled couples respectively, hypothesis 2 is rejected meaning that couples

who had pre-marital counseling have higher stability than their counterparts who did not. Pre-marital counseling therefore has significant influence on marital stability among couples in Enugu metropolis.

Discussion

It was hypothesized that pre-marital counselling does not have significant influence on social adjustment of couples. The hypothesis is rejected since the calculated t-value of 10.94 is greater than the critical t-value of t1.96.

This means that pre-marital counseling is important in improving social adjustment of couples. This implies that when couples undergo pre-marital counseling, they become more effective in handling issues and show more understanding. This result corroborate strongly with the findings of Adi (2008) and Sukori (2011)

Pre-marital counseling was also found to significantly influence marital stability. This may be attributed to the fact that couples who undergo counseling before and during marital relationship adjust faster and better than their counterpart who are closed to counseling as revealed by Sutton (2010). However, the finding is at variance with that of Parrot and Parrot (2008) and Shirley (2010) who stated that pre-marital counselling does not guarantee social adjustment and marital stability but it is the level of emotional intelligence couple exhibit that actually lead to social adjustment and marital stability. They concluded that no matter the amount of time couples spend in pre-marital counselling, if they are not emotionally intelligent, their relationship will be unstable. Sukori (2011) and Teibowei (2011) however, agreed that there is strong positive relationship between counselling and marital stability.

Finally, the results of the study indicated a significant relationship between social adjustment and marital stability. The implication of this finding is that social adjustment as a factor may improve marital stability of couples. These findings may be attributed to the fact that couples who are socially adjusted are able to successfully deal with their problems and therefore focus on the success of the marriage. They are also likely to have increased coping skills and social skills. This applies to both counseled and non-counselled couples. As long as they are likely to have more stable marriage relationship

Conclusion .

Based on the findings, the study concluded that pre-marital counselling leads to increased social adjustment which in turn leads to marital stability which leads to reduction of divorce among couples. When couples remain together they produce healthier, happier and well adjusted families which result in a well adjusted society.

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Recommendations

Based on the followings of this study, the researcher recommends that

1. Marital education should be made part of the school curriculum
2. Parents, families and faith-based organizations should endeavour to make it a point of duty to give marital education to their wards/members before they get married.
3. Faith-based organizations should employ professional counselors and make pre-marital counseling mandatory for intending couples.
4. Counsellors should focus on coping skills, adjustment and problem solving.
5. Government non-governmental, faith-based organizations and community-based organizations should organize seminars, conference, workshops and enlightenment programmes for both intending and married couples.
6. The mass media should carry out enlightenment programmes to educate and inform the masses about the importance of staying together as couples.
7. Government should help to establish counseling centres purely on pre-marital counseling.

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