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Effect of Communication Skills acquired during Premarital Counseling on Marital Stability among Newly Married Couples in Kamukunji Sub-County, Nairobi County

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Abstract

In this age of urbanization, conflicts among newly married couples can crop up if they had not been well prepared for marriage through effective premarital counseling. The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of communication skills on marital stability among newly married couples in the sub-county. The research was informed by the solution focused theory and the sound relationship house theory. The target population was 476 newly married couples in the sub-county and the 4 premarital counselors in the sub-county. The researcher targeted a population 480 respondents who were selected through census survey. The instruments used in the collection of data included a structured questionnaire for the newly married couples and face interviews for the marriage counselors. Pilot testing was done with 48 questionnaires given newly married couples of neighboring Starehe sub-county to ascertain the validity and reliability of the instruments. The study used a test-retest reliability method to test for reliability where a threshold of Cronbach's alpha coefficient of at least 0.7 was acceptable. The dependability and credibility were ascertained by ensuring that the data is collected from a population of respondents who are knowledgeable about premarital counseling. Qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis where certain words, concepts and themes were identified. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics including correlation analysis and were presented using tables. The study found that communication skills have a positive and significant effects on marital stability among newly married couples in Kamukunji sub-county, Nairobi County. Premarital counselling enables partners to communicate honestly with their spouses.

Keywords: Pre-counselling, skills, premarital, communication, marital stability, new married couples

1. Introduction

Marriage stability is under threat all over the world and the need to prepare dating couples with premarital counseling is therefore urgent. Marital stability is threatened by marital conflicts that lead to separation, divorce or domestic violence among newly married couples (Fincham, 2019). A great proportion of marriages end up in annulment with estimations stretching from 40 to 50% globally (Rogers, 2018). Referring to the United Nations Statistics Division, Maldives is the nation with the greatest divorce sum in the world with 10.97 divorces per 1,000 persons in a year, making it recognized in the Guinness Book of Records. The UN projected that the regular Maldivian lady, by the age of thirty, has been divorced approximately three times (Smith, 2018).

According to Stahmann, Young and Grover (2020), the main purpose of effective premarital counseling is to prepare engaged couples for their marriage and to guide newly-weds into their marriage with the intention being to strengthen marital stability. Effective premarital counseling contributes to marital stability which is manifested by effective communication and to the relationship and high levels of marital satisfaction between married spouses (Ambakederemo & Ganagana, 2016).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The problem of marital instability seems to be intensifying as spouses who had started off well became disillusioned with one another and could have been preoccupied and obsessed with thoughts of separation and divorce. Cases of marital violence have also been rising among newly married couples in the sub-county. A pattern of disputes has been occurring repeatedly characterized by quarrels. Some couples when faced by communication breakdown get preoccupied with thoughts of how they can run out of marriage so as to escape from the problem with options of separation or divorce constantly crossing their minds and there seems to be no way of resolving the problem. Such instability can threaten the entire relationship resulting in bitter quarrels, emotional withdrawal, deficiency of affection, separation, divorce and violence against spouse and children.

The researcher's concern was the rising cases of marital violence among newly married couples in the neighborhood and in Kamukunji sub-county. Cases of marital violence being repeatedly reported in churches, chief's barazas and in the local media demonstrated that the society was also concerned and the problem was therefore a social need. There is no existing literature on the problem and therefore it presented itself as an opportunity for the researcher to fill that knowledge gap by conducting a study concerning what can be done to empower dating couples to prepare them for marriage.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

To assess the effect of communication skills that were acquired during premarital counseling on marital stability among newly married couples in Kamukunji sub-county, Nairobi County.

2. Literature Review

For one to have a happy marriage, communication is key, even if you offer advice to a marriage that has a bad relationship, the advice is likely to fail since the couple must have good communication among themselves. To solve problems within a marriage, communication is vital (Kiuna, 2019). In order to achieve a fulfilling relationship, couples need to communicate and reveal their underlying needs and deepest feelings, this way they will be able to fully understand each other (Sauerheber & Bitter, 2017). Communication has a great impact on how humans relate to each other, whether it's good or bad. It can be made through statements, spoken or written, actions or symbols, silence or sound, touches that is a caring touch or avoidance of touch, facial expressions such as a smile or jeer among others (Yoo & Bartle, 2018).

Caughlin (2017) looked into communication within a family setup and its standards while trying to find out what is comprised in effective family communication and how it leads to stability within the family. While following the investigative induction of the description of contributors' concerning the standards of family interactions, there were 15 diverse communication standards which came up. Based on these standards, two-factor analyses proposed 10 distinct fundamental dimensions which talk about the contributors' standards in regards to communication within the family. Second, peoples' ratifications concerning several standards were likened to the reports about the behavior of their family's interactions. The results showed that unmet standards and distressful ideas were linked to instability within the family. Third, certain ideals of communication within the family regulated the link between insights of the behaviors of the family and the stability of individuals' family. The research concluded that majority of Americans take open communication as being vital for the well-being of an individual and their fulfilment within the relationship. The study was limited to a two-factor analysis while the current study focused on more communication dimensions.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the solution focused theory and the sound relationship house theory. The study was reinforced by a solution focused theory. Solution Focused Theory of premarital counseling was developed by Murray and Murray (2019). These theorists offer solution-based method as a short-lived, constructivist context that shows its usefulness concerning premarital couples whose focus is in building a sturdy groundwork for their future lives in marriage. Due to that, problem-solving premarital teachings, guides couples in establishing solutions to their conflicts and it assists them to embrace married life and developing an equally fulfilling and durable marriage. With solution focused counselling, the concentration is on the here-and-now of the affiliation and assesses each couple's strengths, cultural beliefs and perceptions of reality. In the current study, solution-focused theory was used as the theoretical lens in order to explain premarital counseling and their influence on marital stability among newly married couples in Kamukunji sub-county, Nairobi County.

The sound relationship house theory is an illustration, developed by John and Julie Gottman, to disclose the necessities to have a stable relationship. Like a house building, relationships need a firm foundation (Gottman & Driver, 2019). The foundation for a solid relationship is to form Love Maps of each other's reality to realize what is critical to each other. The Sound Relationship House Model (SRH) fills in as a blueprint to assist couples with extending their closeness, oversee conflicts, and offer in what is important to the two of them, independently, and as a team. The discoveries from the exploration upheld in the SRH model prompts two fundamental decisions about what makes for stable relationships: Partners deal with one another like buddies, with the relationship described by regard, compassion, friendship, and inspiration and partners oversee strife in delicate and positive manners (Gottman, 2018).

3. Research Methodology

The research applied mixed methods research methodology and concurrent triangulation design. The target population was 480 respondents comprised of 476 newly married couples and 4 marriage counsellors in Kamukunji Sub-County, Nairobi County and using Census method, they were all sampled.

Category	Sample	%
Newly married couples	476	100
Professional Pre-Marital Counsellors	4	100
Total	480	100

Table 1: Target population and Sample Size

The main research instruments that were employed for data collection were questionnaires and interview schedules. The data collected from the questionnaires for the four objectives was quantitative and was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics using the means, standard deviations frequencies and percentages. The Interview Schedules collected qualitative data for all the four objectives which was analyzed using content analysis where certain words, concepts and themes were identified.

4. Research Findings and Discussions

4.1. Effects of Communication Skills on Marital Stability

The study sought to evaluate the effects of communication skills that were acquired during premarital counseling on marital stability among newly married couples in Kamukunji sub-county, Nairobi County. Table 2 presents the respondents agreement levels with statements on communication skills.

Statements on Communication Skills	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
I use active listening skills with my partner	385	1.00	5.00	3.65	1.022
I express the things I like and things I do not like to my partner	385	1.00	5.00	3.76	0.998
I openly communicate with my spouse	385	1.00	5.00	3.95	0.401
I am fond of disagreeing for a long time with my partner	385	1.00	3.00	1.58	0.777
I am fond of using laughter and humor when communicating with my partner	385	1.00	5.00	3.69	1.057
I communicate honestly with my spouse	385	1.00	5.00	3.60	0.919
Valid N (listwise)	385				

Table 2: Statements on Communication Skills

The majority of the respondents agreed that they openly communicate with their spouses (mean= 3.95, standard deviation=0.401) and that they express the things they like and things they do not like to their partners (mean= 3.76, standard deviation= 0.998). The respondents agreed that they are fond of using laughter and humor when communicating with their partners (mean= 3.69, standard deviation= 1.057), they use active listening skills with their partners (mean= 3.65, a standard deviation =1.022), and that they communicate honestly with their spouses (mean= 3.60, standard deviation =0.919). The respondents however strongly disagreed that they are fond of disagreeing for a long time with their partners (mean= 1.58, standard deviation =0.777). The findings correspond to that of Ntim (2017) who observed that counseling was quite helpful to their marriages and aided in having effective communications.

4.2. Correlation Analysis between Conflict Resolution Skills and Marital Stability

		Communication Skills	Marital Stability
Communication skills	Pearson Correlation	1	.338**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	385	385
Marital stability	Pearson Correlation	.338**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	385	385

Table 3: Correlations between D Conflict Resolution Skills and Marital Stability

** Correlation Is Significant at the 0.01 Level (2-Tailed)

There was a moderate positive correlation between communication skills and marital stability among newly married couples in Kamukunji sub-county, Nairobi County ($r=0.338$, p value = $0.000 < 0.05$). The strength of the relationship was considered significant since the p value 0.000 was less than the significant level (0.05). In agreement with the study results, Town and Suleyman (2016) also found a positive correlation between couple communication and marriage stability.

From the interviews, the counselors noted that premarital counseling equips couples with communication skills to a large extent. The counselors noted that communication skills are crucial for marital stability. Effective communication makes partners feel good, and benefits everyone when ideas and sentiments flow freely between marital partners. When communication flows are turbulent, it may be hazardous and destructive. When communication is obstructed, pressure mounts. The counselors also noted that communication skills taught during premarital counseling enable both parties to speak in a polite manner, avoiding aggressive, insulting, or dominating remarks. They pay attention and attempt to comprehend what their spouses say with kindness, rather than looking for flaws or discarding what they hear, even if they disagree. The findings demonstrated that for a stable marriage, communication is inevitable and as such communication skills becomes very crucial. Consistent to the study's findings, Sauerheber and Bitter, (2017) revealed that couples must talk and share their fundamental needs and innermost sentiments in order to completely understand one other in order to have a successful relationship in marriage.

5. Conclusions

The study concluded that communication skills have a positive and significant effect on marital stability among newly married couples in Kamukunji sub-county, Nairobi County. The couples openly communicate with their spouses and express the things they like and those they do not like to their partners. The couples communicate honestly with their spouses. The study finally concluded that there is a significant effect of premarital counseling on marital stability among newly married couples in Kamukunji sub-county, Nairobi County.

6. Recommendations for Practice

Counseling should equip couples with problem solving skills. Couples should be enlightened on working together to handle difficulties constructively, minimize stress and strengthen their marriages. This will help couples to determine how to respond to issues jointly by improving their problem-solving abilities.

The premarital counseling sessions should continue equipping couples with decision making skills since the study has found that decision making skills have positive effect on marital stability. For marital stability, married couples should make decisions together in recognition of each other's opinion.

Premarital counseling help couples develop conflict resolution skills and as such the study recommends that couples should be encouraged to attend premarital counseling sessions as evidence has shown that conflict resolution skills increase marital stability. Couples should strive to solve conflicts promptly.

The study recommends that newly married couples should strive to communicate freely, honestly, and feel comfortable sharing their most personal ideas. When challenges emerge, they should comfortably and considerably express their concerns and sentiments, and when things are going well, they should express their positive ideas.

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