



ISSN No: 2319-5886

International Journal of Medical Research & Health Sciences, 2016, 5, 7S:354-359

The effect of marriage counseling on the knowledge of the married couples

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge on the reproductive system, significance of benefiting from the contraceptive methods and selection of the suitable contraceptive method during the first years of the marital life are of the main health issues. This study was conducted in order to determine the effect of the counseling on the reproduction and sexual health of the married couples. This pre and post partial experimental study was done on 40 couple participating at the pre marriage counseling classes selected by the improbable simple method. The data collection tool was questionnaire designed by the family planning office of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education of Iran and its validity and durability were confirmed. It comprised two individual and questions of knowledge assay sections filled before and after counseling by showing film and giving lecture. The collected data were analyzed by SPSS-11.5 software using the descriptive statistics and index of distribution and paired t-test. The study subjects, mean score of awareness at pre and post counseling increased to 2.4, which was statistically significant ($P < 0.0001$). The obtained data of the present study showed that counseling and instruction improve the level of awareness among the participants. Therefore, it is concluded that, it is possible to increase the level of knowledge and awareness on the married life among the marriage candidates, which is very helpful in their long lasting married life by applying the correct method of instruction and proper counseling.

Keywords: Marriage counseling, awareness, the marriage candidates.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage leads to developing family, the reproduction and extend of family in human being, which is recommended in all religions. If performed with proper knowledge, would have crucial effect on the health of the individuals and society [1]. With beginning of join life, the couples need the proper knowledge on different contexts of the safe reproduction, the reproductive system hygiene, the significance of benefiting from methods of family planning & proper selection of contraceptive [2]. The couples with insufficient knowledge on the context of sexual health are more susceptible to the development of the high risk sexual activity & reproduction. The cause of more than half of the sexual problems which is caused due to the improper knowledge and wrong believes which, leads to the separation [3]. According to the World Health Organization, education on sex is a need to those who are not at the age of sexual activity and to those who have sexual activity [4]. Reports indicate that the couples with pre marriage educations had 31% less chance of separation. Now days, the pre marriage education is known as a certain requisite. The history of premarriage education goes back to the 1931 [5]. The program of pre marriage counseling was approved in Iran in 1991 and declared to the provinces, and followed by establishing of the marriage counseling clinics in all provinces. The registering offices were bound to ask the health certificate from the marriage candidates[6].

At present, over 400 marriage counseling classes are active in Iran[7]. Sullivan and Brodurgin 1997 showed that attending the pre marriage counseling classes reduces the risk of separation and the participants in the such classes faced less married life problem.

Findings of Sehumma in 1998 showed that pre marriage counseling increases the couples' satisfaction and the candidates were pleased with such experiences[1]. The pre marriage counseling is a helpful process during which the counselor by rendering the basic and needed advices to the couples on the hygienic reproduction, sexual activity, helps them on the proper decision making and action to it [8]. With the development of science and entering to the new communication era, though, the young's have easy access to the media and news of different issues, but some times such information may divert them to deviation and confusion.

Access to the different informatics channels, proper education according to the need of the young's, particularly on the marriage is felt [9]. The pre marriage counseling must emphasize on the correct usage of contraceptive devices. Data indicate that providing proper information to the couples about the advantage and disadvantage of the contraceptive increases continuing gits use.

Studies indicate the presence of direct relationship between the level of knowledge and the proper usage of contraceptive devices. Understanding of the couples and their satisfaction from such services has very important role in continuing using such health tools [11].

The pre marriage consulting classes provide opportunity to the couples to know their right in benefiting the healthful reproduction and increase their relevant knowledge [12]. Presence of male and female counselor for male and female couples respectively, reduces the stress and increases the friendship circumstances in the subjects, as a result, causes better understanding of the issue in better implementing of the materials and reduction of the post marriage problems [13].

Since the rate of knowledge of married couples towards the sexual hygiene and reproduction has crucial role in accessing the family planning objectives, hence, this study was performed in order to determine the impact of pre marriage counseling on the knowledge of the married couples towards hygienic sexual activities & reproduction.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This pre and post partial experimental study was done on 40 marriage candidates attending to the pre marriage counseling classes of the Behshahr Township counseling center in 2012.

Since the counseling was centralized, conducted daily and the study subjects referred from different places of the Township and villages (without being referred), therefore they could be the indicator of the statistical society of the marriage candidates.

The subjects under study were selected by the simple improbable method among the marriage candidates participating the classes after being instructed about the objectives of the study and interested to participate in this study.

The data were collected in the questionnaire of family planning which was developed by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education of Iran. Its validity and durability was confirmed by the relevant experts and all of the counseling centers in Iran were bound to use it in the pre marriage counseling.

Its durability was confirmed by using repeated test in 10 days in 10 study subjects and by the alpha chronbakh coefficient of 0.81.

The questionnaire had two sections, the first with 5 questions on the individual features of the study subjects and second section with 10 questions on the sexual hygiene and reproduction, here, to each correct answer, 1 score, and to each wrong answer, zero score was designated.

The pre and post counseling data were collected in questionnaire. In the first phase the study subjects answered to the questions, then the counselor started counseling and answered to the subjects' questions.

The above said program was informed to the provinces center by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education of Iran and the contents were according to the objects of the study. Duration of this program was about 90 minutes and performed group wise for the participants as lecture and presenting film.

In the second phase, immediately after ending of the counseling the study subjects again answered to the questions. The data in two phases were analyzed, the descriptive statistics, distribution indexes and paired t-test using SPSS-11.5 software.

RESULTS

Finding on the individual features of the participants showed the mean and standard deviation of the age in the girls and boys 21.65 ± 3.73 yr and 25.5 ± 3.75 yr respectively.

The range of the age in the girls and boys was 15-31 yr and 19-34 yr respectively. The highest and lowest frequency of age in female was observed at the age range of 20-24 yr (42.5%) and 30 yr and above (5%) respectively.

The highest and lowest frequency of age in the male was at the age range of 20-24 yr (45%) and 14-19 yr (2.5%) respectively.

The highest frequency of education level in the female and male was university degree (50%). On the bases of profession, majority the female subjects were high secondary school or college student (50%) and majority of the male subjects were business men (62.5%). Also 77.5% of the female and 75% of the male were urban.

Table 1. Individual features of the participants in the counseling program

Individual features		Girls		Boys	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Age	14-19yr	13	32.5	1	2.5
	20-24yr	7	42.5	18	45
	25-29yr	8	20	14	35
	30 yr and above	2	5	7	17.5
Education	Reading and writing	1	2.5	2	5
	Guidance school	4	10	3	7.5
	High school or post high secondary	15	37.5	15	37.5
	University degree	20	51	20	50
Profession	Employed	3	7.5	5	12.5
	Business	0	-	25	62.5
	College or high school student	20	50	5	12.5
	Housewife	6	15	-	-
	Unemployed	9	22.5	2	5
	Other professions	2	5	3	7.5
Living place	City	31	77.5	30	75
	Village	9	22.5	10	25

The obtained score of 80 study subjects in the pre and post counseling is given in the table-2. It shows the increasing in mean score of knowledge 2.4, which is statistically significant ($P < 0.001$).

Table 2. Comparison of pre and post counseling mean score in both genders

Time of interference Gender	Pre counseling		Post counseling		The level of significance (paired t-test)
	Total score	Mean and standard deviation	Total score	Mean and standard deviation	
In both genders (boy-girl)	479	5.9 ± 2.37	664	8.3 ± 1.34	T=8.912 df=79 $P < 0.000001$

The level of $\alpha = 0.05$ considered significant

Also the mean score obtained at pre and post counseling based on the living place is shown in the table 4. It shows that rate of pre knowledge of the participants living in the city (5.9 ± 2.2) had insignificant difference compared with those from village (5.7 ± 2.8).

Based on comparison of the pre and post counseling, the obtained mean score by the gender (table 3) shows insignificant difference between the pre counseling mean score of knowledge in the female (6.02 ± 2.2) and male (5.77 ± 2.5) ($P=0.641$).

Table 3. Comparison of the pre and post counseling mean score by gender

Time of interference Gender	Girls	Boys	The level of significance (paired t- test)
	Mean and standard deviation	Mean and standard deviation	
Pre consulting	6.02±2.2	5.77±2.5	t=4.68 df=78 P=0.64
Post consulting	8.27±1.68	8.32±1.2	t=0.165 df= 78 P=0.869

The level of $\alpha=0.05$ considered significant

Table 4. Comparison of the score at the pre and post counseling based on the living place

Time of interference Gender	City	Village	The level of significance (paired t test)
	Mean and standard deviation	Mean and standard deviation	
Pre counseling	5.9±2.2	5.7±2.8	t=0.34 df=78 P=0.734
Post counseling	8.55±1.2	7.47±1.4	t=3.24 df= 78 P=0.002

The level of $\alpha=0.05$ considered significant

DISCUSSION

The new couples are the future markers of a country and healthy life of such group reflects the well being of the society. The health education program is the main and insured way of providing health of the family and society. Informing the couples on the safe reproduction issue prior to the marriage is very important. Regarding preventing pregnancy and keeping time distance between the pregnancies the couple should have sufficient knowledge and awareness.

When couples are not prepared economically in having child, it leads to significant problem in their married life. On the other hand, control of population depends on the knowledge and behavior of individuals in a society. One of the best and suitable strategy is instructing the couples prior to the marriage [1]. Education on the hygienic sexual contact improves the level of hygiene [14]. The mean of standard deviation (SD) in the females and males at the age of marriage was 21.65 ± 3.73 yr and 25.5 ± 3.75 yr respectively.

Data on the mean age of marriage in girls and boys in Birjand (Iran) indicated 22.4 ± 4.1 yr and 23.4 ± 4.7 yr respectively [1]. Report on mean age of marriage in the girls and boys in Isfahan (Iran) revealed 22.5 ± 2.4 yr & 26.2 ± 3.4 yr respectively [15]. Mean age of marriage in the boys and girls in Mashhad (Iran) was 21.2 ± 3.2 yr and 27 ± 2.4 respectively [5].

Study indicated the mean age of marriage in the girls and boys in Tehran (Iran) 24.4 ± 4.51 yr and 27.69 ± 4.61 yr respectively [11]. This finding shows that despite presence of cultural and racial differences in different Townships of Iran, the age of marriage is nearly similar, but the age of marriage in Tehran is higher as compared to the other cities of Iran, which could be due to accommodation problem, profession & proper income.

The comparison of mean score of knowledge from pre and post counseling shows that counseling results in significant increase of obtained knowledge score in both genders ($P < 0.001$), given in the table 2.

Moshiri et al., showed instruction with confidence of 95% is effective on the rate of knowledge [16]. ShojaeeZadeh and associates noticed that mean score of knowledge in the couples increased from 8.86 to 15 which is statistically significant [17]. Data given by Moadiet al., revealed that instruction increases knowledge but statistically insignificant [1]. Comparison of mean score of knowledge in the female and male (table 3) showed that rate of pre counseling knowledge in female was significant compared with that of same in the boys.

Data given by Mohammad et al. showed that knowledge in the girls is significantly higher than the boys (18). The findings of Mody et al., revealed insignificant difference between the mean score of knowledge changes at pre and post instruction in the girls and boys [1].

The study of Ashkvaryet al., also showed insignificant difference between mean scores related to knowledge in the girls and boys [19].

Comparison of mean score of knowledge in the girls and boys based on the living place showed insignificant difference between the rate of knowledge in the urbane and rural before pre marriage counseling (table 4). The reason is that, though in the cities the young's have more access to the internets and press media, but in the rural due to the presence of health staff at the health centers the young's can have communication with these persons about the sexual affairs and reproduction, therefore acquire more information. Also in some cases, the difference was statistically significant [20]. In the study of Mohebi et al., statistically insignificant relationship was observed between the living place and the view points of the help seekers regarding counseling[10]. The limitation of the present study was the lack of access to the study subjects following the counseling.

Their knowledge immediately after the completion of the program was evaluated. Also the present study only investigated the effect of counseling on the knowledge of couples during the marriage. It is suggested that in the future studies the effect of counseling, related to the time interval from the time of performing the program & the next referring's, and also benefiting from the health and counseling services in the boys and girls after marriage be studied as an index of the behavior. The pre and post counseling testing is necessary in assessing and evaluating the program, in improving the quality of educational classes and effectiveness of the programs. It is recommended that the outcome of counseling be evaluated during the married life of the participants. Those subjects who could not answer the questions correctly, be identified and repeated education be given, till they learn the materials completely.

The counselors and the instructors of such programs can have the highest impact on the quality of the services given and satisfaction of the couples.

Therefore, in addition to the study of knowledge & skills of the counselors, attention should be pain to increase their technical skills and by conducting more useful and effective programs increase more motivation in the marriage candidates.

CONCLUSION

The statistical analysis of the present study showed that the pre marriage their counseling increases the level of the knowledge in participants. Therefore, it is possible to put effective steps by giving proper education and apply proper technology in order to increase the capability of couples, increase the rate of knowledge and improve the attitude of the couples willing to get marry, which itself guarantees the health of family and society. The results of the present study could be used by the conductors of such program, to improve the level of their counseling. The authorities and the health managers could have effective role by conducting the relevant workshops in order to improve the level of the programs. The present study cleared the effect of counseling in increasing the knowledge of the marriage candidates. Considering the role of knowledge in strengthening the family tie & preventing the sexual transmitted diseases, the pre marriage counseling should be conducted in a way that has the highest effect in developing a healthy and satisfactory life.

Acknowledgement

Hereby thanks to the Behshahr Township health center managers, the pre marriage counselors, the study subjects and special thanks to Mrs Mahdeyan Babaei for her kind help in conducting this study.

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