

## **EFFECTIVENESS OF PREMARITAL COUNSELLING FOR THE COUPLES WITH INTENTION OF CONSUMMATION IN COLOMBO**

**Hangawatta, C.<sup>1</sup>, Herath, W.<sup>2</sup>, Rev. M. Sugathananda<sup>3</sup>, Deshpriya, A.<sup>4</sup>, and  
Karunaweera, J.<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>Institute of Human Resource Advancement, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

<sup>1</sup>chandanahangawatta@gmail.com

Despite a low official divorce rate in Sri Lanka, high case filings reveal significant marital conflict. Strict laws, requiring fault-based grounds and not recognizing irretrievable breakdown, create barriers to divorce, leaving many in “empty marriages”. Cultural and religious pressures also discourage dissolution. A proposed no-fault divorce bill by July 2024 aims to modernize the process, potentially reducing unresolved cases and better reflecting actual relationship health.

This study examines the effectiveness of premarital counselling (PMC) in enhancing marital satisfaction among couples in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The focus is on how (1) Overall Marital Satisfaction (2) Couple Communication skills (3) Conflict Resolution skills (4) Childhood Parental experiences are influenced by PMC. Furthermore, attempts defining what high quality PMC would mean in contrast with internationally developed MC models. Using a cross-sectional design, Data were collected from 110 couples through structured online questionnaires using Convenience Sampling & Snowball Sampling, assessing PMC attendance, Marital satisfaction, Communication patterns and Conflict resolution and childhood experience while, in person, open ended structured interviews were conducted with PMC delivering institutions from whom consent was received. With Statistical analyses, including independent t-tests, effect size calculations (Cohen’s d), and subgroup comparisons, revealed that PMC attendees reported significantly higher marital satisfaction ( $M = 2.06$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ) vs non-attendees ( $M = 2.33$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ), Had better Communication skills ( $M=1.23$ ,  $SD=0.45$ ) vs non-attendees ( $M=0.96$ ,  $SD=0.68$ ), Better Conflict resolution skills ( $r=0.259$ ,  $p=0.006$ ), Childhood experiences emerged as a critical moderator: individuals with negative childhoods exhibited the largest PMC benefits, narrowing satisfaction gaps with their positive childhood counterparts ( $\Delta = 0.24$ ,  $p = .008$ ). Positive childhood impressions independently correlated with higher satisfaction, even

without PMC. Researches reviews based on international studies suggests that delivery content , delivery method, advance enrolment and MC models (Gottman, Taylor-Johnson) and MC programs (PREP, RELATE, FOCCUS) and tools (CPQ, CSI, IMS , ADPM ) will further optimise the effectiveness delivering high-quality PMC which can be adopted to the existing PMC context of Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** *Premarital counselling, couples, systematic, marriage preparation, marriage education*