



Transforming Family Dynamics: Effectiveness Of Family Life Education Program For Developing Behavioral Patterns Of Young Family Members In Kerala

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Abstract:

The sanctity of family, deeply embedded in Indian culture, faces unprecedented challenges in the modern era, resulting in an alarming rise in dysfunctional families. Kerala, renowned for its cultural richness and communal harmony, has not been immune to this trend. The Brethren, longstanding custodians of Biblical values in Kerala, have witnessed an increase in family problems over the past decade, signaling a pressing need for intervention.

In response, a comprehensive module addressing seven crucial facets of family life—Physical, Mental, Intellectual, Emotional, Financial, Sexual, and Spiritual Maturity—was developed. This module aimed to reshape familial behavioral patterns through awareness talks and training classes conducted for 80 families.

Pre- and post-tests revealed a significant improvement in behavioral patterns among participants who attended the training classes compared to those who only received awareness talks. Further analysis utilizing ANCOVA confirmed that the observed differences were not influenced by extraneous factors, affirming the efficacy of the training program.

The success of this module underscores its potential to effect positive change in family dynamics, paving the way for functional familial relationships. Thus, we recommend the widespread adoption of this module to address the escalating challenges facing families in contemporary society.

Key Words: Family Dynamics, Family Life Education programme, Behavioral Patterns, Young Family Members

Introduction:

The family unit stands as the cornerstone of society, and within it, young couples hold a pivotal role in shaping its dynamics. However, in the idyllic landscapes of Kerala, India, the Brethren community faces a complex array of challenges that impede the development of positive behavioral patterns among its young members. Despite Kerala's reputation for high literacy rates and social progress, issues such as marital discord, intergenerational conflicts, and communication breakdowns persist, casting a shadow over the state's familial landscape.

In this context, family life education emerges as a beacon of hope, offering a structured approach to equip individuals and families with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary for fostering healthy relationships and informed decision-making. Yet, amidst the clamor of wedding celebrations and societal expectations, the solemn journey of marriage often remains overlooked, leading to a proliferation of dysfunctional families grappling with a myriad of physical, emotional, and spiritual challenges.

The Brethren community, with its steadfast commitment to Biblical principles, stands as a bastion of faith amidst the tumult of modernity. However, even within this community, the specter of marital strife looms large, with an increasing number of families grappling with discord and dissatisfaction. Against this backdrop, there exists an urgent imperative to explore the efficacy of family life education programs tailored specifically to the unique cultural and social milieu of the Brethren community in Kerala.

This study endeavors to bridge the chasm of knowledge by investigating the impact of family life education programs on behavioral patterns within young Brethren couples. By delving into the intricate tapestry of familial relationships, communication dynamics, and societal pressures, this research seeks to unravel the underlying factors contributing to the rise of dysfunctional families within the community. Through empirical inquiry and evidence-based interventions, it aspires to chart a course towards the restoration of familial harmony and the cultivation of enduring bonds rooted in love, understanding, and mutual respect.

In elucidating the significance of this study, it is imperative to confront the stark realities plaguing contemporary Kerala society. With divorce rates soaring and familial bonds fraying at the seams, the need for proactive measures to safeguard the sanctity of family life has never been more pressing. By illuminating the path towards holistic familial well-being, this research endeavors to serve as a beacon of hope for generations to come, fostering a legacy of love, unity, and resilience within the Brethren community and beyond.

There are some characters are very essential for making a healthy family.

1. Physical Maturity

Physical maturity is very important in family life. Today's environment is even more troubling. Especially those who work have lot of pressures in various ways. This stress affects their health. Due to busy work, they cannot cook so they eat junk food from outside. This diet affects many in the sex life during marriage. Today many people get married at the age of 30-35. People who get married at 20-25 have children by the age of 30. Health issues arise in old age. Health care is essential for a functional family life. It's my health article (2023) says "It's well established that lifestyle factors like diet, exercise, and smoking can impact health. However, many people overlook the effect of a family history on health outcomes. For example, a family history of disease could be one of the biggest influences on your risk for conditions like cancer, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Other potentially-inherited conditions or diseases include birth defects, cystic fibrosis, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, mental illness, osteoporosis, stillbirths, and stroke". (Understanding how your family can impact your health, 2023).

2. Psychological Maturity

Psychological maturity is a natural process individuals undergo as they navigate life's challenges, enabling them to react, cope, and reason appropriately. It plays a crucial role in personal growth and is essential for a prosperous life, particularly within family dynamics. Erik Erikson's Eight Stages of Psychosocial Development provides a framework illustrating the sequential stages individuals face from infancy to old age, each presenting psychosocial tasks vital for development.

Dr Sam (2016) who serves as the executive director of parivar international a family organization committed to serving the needs of Asian Indian youth, family and communities worldwide and his wife Dr. Mary works as a research scientist in the pharmaceutical industry, USA wrote the book to prepare young couples for lasting marriage. He deals with different aspects of marriage, He gives some foundational relationship principles for the young couples to understand and practice. He states that, "If we take a closer look at human physiology, biological functions or psychological makeup, it confirms that we are dissimilar from each other. The obvious one is male and female anatomy". Sam& Mary George. (2016). Before wedding Bells. Hyderabad: GS Books.

In the context of young couples, several psychological challenges arise:

Communication Issues: Effective communication is essential but may be hindered, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts.

Financial Stress: Managing joint finances can cause strain, requiring skills in budgeting and resolving financial disagreements.

Balancing Independence and Togetherness: Striking a balance between maintaining individual identities and nurturing the relationship is crucial but challenging.

Conflict Resolution: Developing effective conflict resolution skills is necessary to prevent unresolved disputes and tension.

Role Expectations: Societal and cultural expectations influence how couples perceive their roles, potentially causing conflicts and stress.

Overcoming these challenges requires mental maturity, which fosters personal growth and contributes to building a functional family life. By addressing these issues with understanding and resilience, young couples can strengthen their bond and navigate their journey together with greater harmony and success.

3. Intellectual maturity

Intellectual maturity transcends mere IQ levels, encompassing practical knowledge and wisdom essential for navigating life's complexities. While IQ measures knowledge, practical knowledge or wisdom involves understanding and applying information effectively. In the context of family life, practical knowledge plays a pivotal role in fostering positive behavior patterns and making informed decisions.

Gusty Sunseri (2013) states very clearly about the importance of Knowledge in the family that, "One of the main problems in any relationship is misunderstanding. The way to dispel misunderstanding is to get the proper information or knowledge of the situation. It has been said that knowledge is like light to darkness. Knowledge brings enlightenment and protects those who have it from operating in the dark, thereby avoiding making mistakes and causing hurt to each other. Knowledge is acquired; therefore, ever effort must be made to get that required knowledge for success in any adventure or relationship, especially a marriage. Knowledge and understanding are necessary to avoid the likelihood of [divorce](#)". Sunseri, G. (2013, December 2). Marriage and Divorce-The Importance of Knowledge & Understanding. Retrieved from Gusty sunseri and associates: www.sunserilawfirm.com/blog/2013/12/marriage-and-divorce-the-importance-of-knowledge-understanding/

To cultivate practical knowledge within the family outlines a four-step process:

Understanding the Context: Familiarizing oneself with the situation or subject matter at hand.

Analyzing the Subject: Delving deeper into the topic to gain insights and comprehension.

Exploring the Subject Further: Expanding knowledge through continued exploration and learning.

Reflecting and Learning: Reflecting on experiences and lessons learned to refine understanding and decision-making skills.

By following this process, family members can enhance their practical knowledge, enabling them to make informed decisions and navigate life's challenges with greater wisdom and effectiveness.

4. Emotional maturity

Emotional maturity is characterized by a high level of emotional control and expression, enabling individuals to manage their emotions appropriately regardless of circumstances. It involves understanding and responding to emotions in a balanced and constructive manner. Conversely, emotional immaturity entails expressing emotions without restraint or in disproportionate ways.

Dr. John Mathew (2016) states in his book, "The woman's emotional identification with people and places around her, causes her to need more time to adjust to change than a man. A man, on the other hand, can deduce the benefits of a change, and get psyched up for it in a matter of hours. This is not the case with a woman, instead, she will focus on the immediate consequences of the change, and difficulties it may involve for both her, and her family. She needs time to get over the initial adjustment before she can begin to acclimate to the advantage of the change". Mathew, D. J. (2016). Marriage and Morality. USA: Thekkel Publications.

There are three main behavioral patterns: aggression, assertiveness, and passivity. Aggression involves behavior aimed at harming others or damaging property, often disregarding others' rights. Assertive behavior, on the other hand, is ideal, characterized by respect for oneself and others, clear communication of needs and boundaries, and consideration for others' happiness. Passive behavior involves avoiding conflict and often entails suppressing one's own desires and needs.

Developing assertive behavior is crucial for achieving emotional maturity. It involves practicing active listening, clear communication of feelings and needs using "I" statements, and being mindful of body language and tone of voice. By cultivating assertive behavior, individuals can enhance their emotional maturity, leading to healthier relationships and effective management of emotions in various life situations.

5. Financial maturity

Financial maturity is crucial for family well-being, yet many young families face conflicts and stress due to financial issues. Establishing a family budget is essential to avoid wasteful spending and achieve various life goals efficiently. Chinwe's model divides the life cycle into five stages, each with unique financial considerations, guiding individuals and families in their financial planning strategies.

Josephine Turner (2008) writes about how to handle finance in the family; "Families have to make some decision about how they want to live and how they want to spend or use their resources, such as time, energy, interests, abilities and money. In other words, you can decide what you want your lifestyle to be. You might want your surroundings to be pleasant and as comfortable as possible. Because this is important, you will spend your time, energy, and money on your home and its furnishings. Another family might decide that travel is more important, so they may not spend as many of their resources on their home as you. You are both right, but just want different lifestyles. Talk over what you want and what you expect with your family members to prevent money problems". Turner, J. (2008, December). Money and Marriage: A Spending Plan. Retrieved from University of Florida: <https://rvs.umn.edu/Uploads/EducationalMaterials/406ddd01-2442-48ed-8213-b1e2ad5d6358.pdf>

Dave Ramsey's budget percentages offer a practical guide for allocating income into different spending categories, promoting effective financial management and stability. Family finance management entails utilizing resources effectively to achieve goals, emphasizing stewardship and responsibility in resource utilization.

Finance management challenges arise from differences in resource utilization, with values, goals, and decision-making playing crucial roles. Resources, both human and non-human, are limited and interrelated, requiring careful management to maximize satisfaction and avoid waste. Management involves planning, organizing, managing, and evaluating financial activities to reach goals, utilize resources efficiently, and maintain a good standard of living.

6. Sexual Maturity

Sexual maturity encompasses understanding, appreciating, and responsibly engaging with sexuality within the context of family life. Recognized as a divine gift, healthy sex is integral to marital bonds, fostering love, intimacy, and mutual fulfillment. However, misconceptions and societal pressures often distort perceptions of sex, leading to misunderstandings and relationship problems.

Sexual maturity involves acknowledging the sacredness of sex within marriage and embracing it as a celebration of love and intimacy. Understanding the differences between men and women in sexuality is essential, as it informs communication and mutual satisfaction. Additionally, practicing hygiene, maintaining privacy, and prioritizing mutual consent contribute to enjoyable and fulfilling sexual experiences.

There are various criteria for assessing an individual's sex, including physical characteristics, hormonal levels, and genetic makeup. These factors inform understanding and appreciation of sexual identity.

Selwyn Hughes (2009) states that “the husband is responsible to meet his wife’s sexual needs. He must lovingly and tenderly arouse her to as complete sexual experience as possible. Likewise, the wife must meet her husband’s sexual needs. She must regularly and lovingly arouse him to as complete, sexual experience as possible. A husband should not expect his wife to meet her sexual needs through masturbation and neither should a wife expect her husband to meet his own sexual needs in this way. If they are motivated by love they will want to meet each other’s sexual needs, it is only through giving that we truly receive”. Hughes, S. (2009). Principles for a happy marriage. secunderabad: Authentic Books Publication.

Differentiating healthy and unhealthy relationships, This emphasizes the importance of love, communication, respect, and boundaries in fostering fulfilling partnerships. Healthy sexual relationships are characterized by mutual care, communication, and respect, promoting intimacy and emotional connection.

In conclusion, sexual maturity involves embracing sexuality as a sacred and integral aspect of family life, characterized by love, intimacy, and mutual respect. Through open communication, understanding, and

mutual consent, couples can cultivate healthy sexual relationships that contribute to marital fulfilment and well-being.

7. Spiritual Maturity

Spiritual maturity within a family encompasses a deep understanding and embodiment of one's values and beliefs, leading to a purpose-driven and meaningful life. Signs of spiritual maturity include a strong sense of purpose, a deep connection with God, a commitment to personal growth, an ability to serve others, and a sense of peace and contentment.

Individuals can cultivate spiritual maturity by reflecting on their values, setting goals, connecting with others, spending time in prayer and meditation, studying religious texts, attending religious services, seeking feedback, practicing self-reflection, taking care of themselves, identifying passions, volunteering, making charitable donations, offering support to those in need, practicing empathy and compassion, practicing mindfulness, seeking balance in life, and practicing gratitude.

Sam & Mary (2016) states that; "Faith and spirituality is an integral part of marriage and family life. Marriage has spiritual core and helps us grow in every facet of life. Marriage helps us draw close to God and have a strong relationship with God first, and making that the basis of building a strong relationship with your mate. The stronger your relationship with God and the closer you feel toward him, same will be reflected in your marriage relationship." (Sam& Mary George, 2016).

Overall, spiritual maturity enhances familial well-being by fostering purpose, connection, growth, service, and contentment within each member of the family.

Method and Methodology

The methodology employed in the research on the "Effectiveness of Family Life Education Program for Developing Behavioral Patterns among Young Family in Kerala" is comprehensively detailed. Methodology is portrayed as a structured framework comprising both theoretical underpinnings and systematic analytical processes guiding the research journey. Pat Sikes' definition is invoked to underscore the systematic exploration of optimal methods for acquiring data to construct knowledge about the subject of research. The area of study is delineated, encompassing Family Life Education, Behavioral Patterns, Young Family Members, and the Brethren context of Kerala. These delineations lay the foundation for evaluating the impact of the Family Life Education Program on the behavioral patterns of young family members within the unique socio-cultural context of Kerala.

The research design, a pivotal aspect of the methodology, is meticulously outlined. A mixed method approach is adopted, amalgamating experimental and case study designs to effectively assess the program's effectiveness. The experimental method, deemed sophisticated and potent by Best and Khan, is utilized to establish causal relationships between the Family Life Education Program and changes in behavioral patterns. Employing a quasi-experimental pre-test, post-test, group design, the study examines the influence of the program on behavior patterns among young families in Kerala. Statistical analyses, including analysis

of covariance, underpin the rigorous evaluation of the program's impact. Additionally, the within-subjects design is elucidated as an alternative research model, offering insights into examining changes within the same group over time or under different conditions. These methodological choices underscore the research's commitment to robustness and precision in assessing the effectiveness of Family Life Education in Kerala's familial context.

The importance of methodology in research is underscored, delineating its role as a structured framework guiding the research journey. The definition of "population" is elucidated, emphasizing the necessity of selecting a representative sample due to resource constraints. Talbot's conceptualization of population is invoked to underscore the significance of individuals sharing specific attributes pertinent to the research inquiry. The population under scrutiny in this study is the Brethren Community of Kerala, with a focus on evaluating the effectiveness of a Family Life Education Program in fostering behavioral patterns among young family members within this context.

Sample size and design considerations are meticulously outlined, with 80 participants divided equally into experimental and control groups. The experimental group underwent the Family Life Education Program, while the control group did not receive any specific intervention. By maintaining equal sample sizes, potential biases are minimized, ensuring a robust evaluation of the program's impact on behavioral patterns. Purposive sampling is employed to select participants based on predefined criteria, ensuring the sample's relevance and representativeness. Inclusion criteria encompass young families aged 20 to 40 years, while families that have experienced divorce are excluded from the study.

Tools for data collection are carefully chosen to align with the study's objectives and participants' comprehension levels. Questionnaires, focus group discussions, interviews, and observations are utilized to gather comprehensive data on behavioral patterns among young families in the Brethren Context of Kerala. Additionally, the development and standardization of a Behavioral Pattern Scale are detailed, highlighting the meticulous process involved in creating a psychometric instrument.

The planning of the schedule involves extensive literature review and consultation with experts to identify common challenges faced by young families. Based on this feedback, a questionnaire comprising 45 standardized questions is developed to investigate these issues effectively.

Pilot testing of the scale is conducted on a sample of 60 family members, followed by scoring procedures to analyze respondents' responses. Overall, the methodology section provides a thorough overview of the research design, sample selection process, data collection tools, and analysis procedures, laying the groundwork for a rigorous and credible study on the effectiveness of Family Life Education in the Brethren Community of Kerala.

Ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to, ensuring participants' rights and well-being were protected. Informed consent was obtained, privacy and confidentiality were maintained, and vulnerable populations were safeguarded. Transparency, honesty, and avoidance of conflicts of interest were prioritized throughout

the research process. Data management and sharing were conducted responsibly, with authorization and secure storage.

Positionality and reflexivity are acknowledged as crucial factors shaping the research process and outcomes. The researcher's background in family studies and personal experiences with family counseling, as well as their membership in the Brethren community, may influence perspectives and interpretations. Positionality is recognized as essential for understanding and addressing potential biases, while reflexivity involves critical self-awareness and reflection on the researcher's role and influence.

To address biases, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal, engaged in discussions with supervisors and peers, and employed diverse data collection methods. Despite efforts to mitigate biases, the researcher acknowledges the possibility of residual biases and emphasizes the need for ongoing self-reflection and dialogue.

By incorporating ethical considerations and practicing reflexivity, the study aims to present a nuanced analysis of the data, considering multiple perspectives and potential influences. This approach enhances the credibility and validity of the research findings, fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities within the research context and ensuring respect for participants' rights and dignity.

Findings

The presentation of findings is structured around the research questions and hypotheses. Statistical techniques such as inferential analysis, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and ANCOVA are employed to determine the significance of observed differences between the control and experimental groups.

The analysis includes a comparison of pre-test and post-test scores, as well as gain scores, between the intervention and control groups, providing insights into the effectiveness of the family education program.

The results indicate that the intervention group, which received the family education program, demonstrated significantly higher mean scores, indicating better improvement in behavioral patterns compared to the control group. Statistical tests confirm the significance of these differences, supporting the effectiveness of the program in promoting positive behavioral changes among young families in the Brethren context of Kerala.

Moreover, ANCOVA is used to control for potential confounding variables and provide a more robust analysis of the intervention's impact. The adjusted means of post-test scores further validate the effectiveness of the program, showing a statistically significant improvement in the intervention group compared to the control group.

Conclusion

The study on family life education program effectiveness has shed light on important aspects while also acknowledging its limitations. The research underscores the significance of such programs in fostering healthy family dynamics and preventing breakdowns. Additionally, it emphasizes the holistic approach of

family life education in promoting overall family well-being and suggests its utility for families aiming to modify their behavioral patterns. The study's insights hold valuable implications for family life educators and policymakers, providing guidance for the development of effective programs and guidelines to enhance family standards.

Moving forward, the study recommends several avenues for further exploration and action. These include identifying research gaps, developing new interventions or programs, evaluating existing initiatives, exploring specific topics in depth, and contributing to theory development. Moreover, the study underscores the importance of comprehensive training programs in family life education, cultural sensitivity, ongoing professional development for educators, and ensuring accessibility to diverse populations. Additionally, it suggests forming partnerships with various stakeholders to expand outreach and utilizing evaluation techniques to assess program success and identify areas for improvement.

In summary, the study not only contributes to the existing knowledge in family life education but also provides a roadmap for future research, practice, and policy development in this critical field.

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