



INFLUENCE OF COUNSELING SERVICES ON COUPLES ATTITUDES TOWARDS PRE-MARITAL TESTING IN KATAGUM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BAUCHI STATE

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of counseling services on couples' attitudes towards pre-marital testing in Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi State. Pre-marital testing, particularly for genetic, infectious, and blood-related conditions, is crucial for promoting healthy marriages and preventing the transmission of hereditary or communicable diseases. Despite its importance, uptake remains low in many communities due to cultural beliefs, misconceptions, and lack of awareness. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from couples and intended couples through self-structured questionnaires. The study examines how counseling services influence knowledge, perceptions, and willingness to undertake pre-marital tests. Findings indicate that couples who receive counseling services a significantly more positive attitude toward pre-marital testing, with increased acceptance and intention to undergo the tests compared to those without exposure to counseling. The study recommends strengthening community-based counseling programs and integrating pre-marital health education into local healthcare initiatives to improve awareness and adoption of pre-marital testing. These findings underscore the pivotal role of counseling in shaping informed health decisions among couples.

Keywords: Counseling, services, couples, pre-marital



Introduction

Marriage is one of the most important social institutions in every society. It forms the foundation of the family, which is considered the basic unit of society. For marriage to be successful and stable, couples are expected to prepare themselves physically, emotionally, psychologically, and socially before entering into the marital relationship. One of the important ways of preparing couples for marriage is through premarital testing and counseling services. Premarital testing involves medical examinations carried out before marriage to detect possible health conditions such as genetic disorders, blood group compatibility, sexually transmitted infections, and other diseases that may affect the couple or their future children. These tests help couples make informed decisions and prepare adequately for married life.

Counseling services play a vital role in guiding couples through the process of premarital testing. Counseling involves providing professional guidance, education, and emotional support to individuals or couples to help them understand important issues related to their relationship and future family life. Through counseling, couples are informed about the importance of premarital testing, the health implications of certain diseases, and the need for mutual understanding and cooperation before marriage. Counseling also helps to address fears, misconceptions, and negative beliefs that couples may have about premarital testing.

In many societies today, premarital testing has become an important requirement recommended by health professionals, religious institutions, and government agencies. This is because it helps to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and reduce the risk of hereditary health conditions among children born into marriage. For example, screening for conditions such as

HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, sickle cell disease, and other genetic disorders enables couples to understand their health status and take necessary precautions. Counseling services therefore help couples develop positive attitudes toward premarital testing by educating them on its benefits and encouraging responsible decision-making. However, despite the importance of premarital testing, many couples still show negative or indifferent attitudes toward it. Some couples may avoid premarital testing due to lack of awareness, fear of discovering a health problem, cultural beliefs, religious misconceptions, or social stigma associated with certain diseases. In some cases, couples may also feel that premarital testing is unnecessary or that it interferes with their personal or cultural values. These attitudes can prevent couples from taking advantage of important health services that could protect their future families.

Counseling services therefore serve as an essential tool for changing couples' attitudes toward premarital testing. Through proper counseling, couples are provided with accurate information about health risks, the importance of compatibility testing, and the benefits of early detection of medical conditions. Counseling also helps couples communicate openly about sensitive issues related to health and marriage. As a result, couples who receive adequate counseling are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward premarital testing and take necessary steps to ensure a healthy and stable marriage. In Katagum Local Government Area, like many other communities, premarital counseling and testing are increasingly being promoted by health institutions, religious organizations, and community leaders. However, the extent to which counseling services influence couples' attitudes toward premarital testing is not fully known. Some couples may accept counseling and testing as an important step before marriage, while



others may still resist or ignore these services.

It is therefore important to examine how counseling services influence couples' attitudes toward premarital testing in Katagum Local Government Area. Understanding this relationship will help identify the role counseling plays in promoting awareness, encouraging positive health behavior, and preparing couples for successful marital relationships. The findings of this study may also help health professionals, counselors, and community leaders develop more effective strategies for promoting premarital testing among intending couples.

Counseling services refer to the professional guidance and support provided to individuals or couples in order to help them understand personal, emotional, social, and psychological issues that may affect their lives. According to Corey (2017), counseling is a process through which trained professionals assist individuals in understanding themselves better and making informed decisions about important aspects of their lives. Counseling services play a significant role in helping individuals deal with personal challenges and develop positive attitudes toward important life decisions.

In the context of marriage preparation, counseling services are often provided to intending couples to help them understand the responsibilities and expectations of marital life. Oladele (2015) explains that premarital counseling helps couples discuss important issues such as communication, financial management, family planning, and health-related concerns before entering into marriage. Through counseling sessions, couples are guided to build strong relationships and prepare for potential challenges in their future family life.

Similarly, McLeod (2013) states that counseling services provide a supportive environment where individuals can openly discuss sensitive issues that may affect their wellbeing. In the case of premarital counseling, couples are encouraged to discuss matters related to health, compatibility, and long-term commitment. This process helps them make informed decisions that will contribute to a successful and stable marriage.

Concept of Premarital Testing

Premarital testing refers to medical examinations carried out by intending couples before marriage in order to determine their health status and identify possible health risks. According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2019), premarital testing is an important preventive health measure that helps detect genetic and infectious diseases that may affect couples and their future children. These tests often include screening for conditions such as HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, sickle cell disease, and blood group compatibility.

Premarital testing is particularly important in regions where hereditary diseases such as sickle cell disorder are common. Akinyanju (2016) notes that genetic screening before marriage can help reduce the incidence of inherited diseases by enabling couples to make informed reproductive decisions. When couples are aware of their genetic compatibility, they can seek medical advice or consider alternative options that will protect the health of their future children.

Furthermore, Dada (2014) explains that premarital testing is not only about identifying health conditions but also about promoting responsible decision-making among couples. By undergoing medical screening, couples demonstrate commitment to protecting each other's health and ensuring a healthy family environment.



Couples' Attitudes towards Premarital Testing

Attitude refers to the feelings, beliefs, and perceptions that individuals hold toward a particular issue or behavior. Couples' attitudes toward premarital testing can significantly influence their willingness to undergo such tests before marriage. According to Ajzen (1991), individuals' attitudes toward a behavior play a major role in determining whether they will engage in that behavior or not.

In some communities, couples may have positive attitudes toward premarital testing because they understand its benefits. For example, Okonkwo and Obi (2018) found that couples who are well-informed about the health benefits of premarital testing are more likely to participate in medical screening before marriage. These couples recognize that premarital testing helps prevent health complications and promotes responsible family planning. However, not all couples have positive attitudes toward premarital testing. Ojo (2017) observed that some individuals avoid premarital testing due to fear of discovering unfavorable health results, particularly conditions such as HIV or genetic disorders. The fear of stigma, discrimination, or relationship breakdown may discourage couples from participating in such tests.

Cultural and religious beliefs can also influence couples' attitudes toward premarital testing. According to Ibrahim and Abubakar (2019), some communities believe that medical testing before marriage may create unnecessary suspicion between partners or interfere with traditional marriage practices. These beliefs may lead couples to rely on faith or cultural traditions rather than medical advice when preparing for marriage.

Influence of Counseling Services on Couples' Attitudes towards Premarital Testing

Counseling services are widely recognized as an effective way of improving awareness and influencing positive attitudes toward premarital testing. Through counseling sessions, couples are educated about the importance of health screening, the consequences of ignoring medical advice, and the benefits of early detection of diseases.

According to Gladding (2018), counseling helps individuals understand the long-term implications of their decisions and encourages them to adopt behaviors that promote personal and family wellbeing. In premarital counseling, couples are guided to consider the health implications of marriage and the potential risks associated with certain medical conditions. Research has shown that counseling services can significantly increase couples' acceptance of premarital testing. Eze and Nwafor (2020) conducted a study on premarital counseling in Nigeria and found that couples who attended counseling sessions were more likely to undergo premarital testing than those who did not receive counseling. The study concluded that counseling services play an important role in correcting misconceptions and promoting positive health behavior among intending couples.

Similarly, Umar and Mohammed (2021) reported that counseling services provided in religious institutions and healthcare facilities have helped increase awareness about premarital testing among couples in northern Nigeria. The study emphasized that when counselors provide clear and culturally sensitive information, couples become more willing to accept medical testing before marriage.



Counseling services also help couples overcome fear and anxiety associated with premarital testing. According to Santrock (2016), counseling provides emotional support that enables individuals to cope with uncertainty and make rational decisions. When couples receive proper guidance and reassurance from trained counselors, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward premarital testing.

Statement of the Problem

Marriage is widely recognized as one of the most important social institutions in society. It provides the foundation for family formation, reproduction, and social stability. For a marriage to be successful and sustainable, couples are expected to prepare themselves adequately before entering into marital life. One of the most important aspects of this preparation is premarital testing, which involves medical examinations conducted before marriage to determine the health status of intending couples. Premarital testing is essential because it helps identify potential health issues such as genetic disorders, sexually transmitted infections, blood group incompatibilities, and other medical conditions that may affect the couple or their future children.

In recent years, premarital testing has become increasingly important in many parts of the world due to the rising awareness of certain hereditary and infectious diseases. Conditions such as sickle cell disease, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, and other genetic disorders have raised serious public health concerns, especially in developing countries. Premarital testing provides couples with the opportunity to know their medical status early and make informed decisions about their marriage and future family planning. Through early detection, couples can seek appropriate medical advice, take preventive measures, or make necessary adjustments

that will help them build a healthier and more stable family.

Despite the importance of premarital testing, many couples still fail to undergo such tests before marriage. In some communities, premarital testing is often neglected or not taken seriously by intending couples. Some individuals may feel that love, trust, and emotional commitment are sufficient for a successful marriage, while health-related issues are often ignored or considered less important. As a result, couples may enter into marriage without adequate knowledge of their health status, which can later lead to serious challenges in their marital life. These challenges may include health complications, transmission of infectious diseases, birth of children with genetic disorders, emotional distress, and in some cases, marital conflict or separation.

One of the major strategies used to encourage premarital testing among couples is counseling services. Counseling services are designed to provide professional guidance, education, and support to individuals and couples who are preparing for marriage. Through counseling, couples are educated about the importance of premarital testing, the possible health risks associated with certain diseases, and the long-term implications of ignoring medical examinations before marriage. Counseling also helps couples understand the need for open communication, mutual understanding, and responsible decision-making regarding their health and future family life.

Counseling services are usually provided by trained professionals such as health workers, marriage counselors, religious leaders, and social workers. These services may be offered in hospitals, clinics, religious institutions, community centers, and other social organizations. During counseling sessions, couples are informed about the



benefits of premarital testing and are encouraged to undergo necessary medical examinations. Counselors also address common fears, misconceptions, and cultural beliefs that may discourage couples from accepting premarital testing.

However, despite the availability of counseling services in many communities, the level of acceptance and participation in premarital testing among couples remains relatively low in some areas. Many couples still demonstrate negative attitudes toward premarital testing even after receiving counseling. Some individuals may feel uncomfortable discussing personal health issues, while others may fear the possible outcomes of the test results. For example, a person who fears being diagnosed with a serious health condition may avoid testing in order to escape emotional stress or social stigma.

Cultural and religious beliefs can also influence couples' attitudes toward premarital testing. In some communities, people believe that medical testing before marriage may bring bad luck or create unnecessary suspicion between partners. Others may rely on faith or traditional beliefs rather than medical advice when preparing for marriage. These beliefs can discourage couples from seeking counseling services or undergoing premarital testing, even when such services are available.

Another important factor that affects couples' attitudes toward premarital testing is the lack of adequate awareness and education. In some cases, couples may not fully understand the purpose and benefits of premarital testing. They may view it as a mere formality required by religious institutions or health facilities rather than as an important step toward protecting their future family. Without proper understanding, couples may

not appreciate the significance of premarital testing and may therefore choose to ignore it. In Katagum Local Government Area, premarital counseling and testing have increasingly been promoted by health institutions, religious organizations, and community leaders. Many churches, mosques, and healthcare facilities encourage intending couples to undergo premarital counseling and medical examinations before marriage. These services are intended to educate couples about important health issues, promote responsible decision-making, and reduce the risk of health complications in marriage.

However, despite these efforts, there are still concerns that some couples in Katagum Local Government Area may not fully accept or utilize premarital counseling and testing services. Some couples may attend counseling sessions only because it is required by religious institutions, without fully understanding or appreciating the importance of the information provided. Others may completely avoid counseling and testing due to fear, ignorance, cultural beliefs, or lack of interest.

The persistence of these attitudes raises important questions about the effectiveness of counseling services in influencing couples' attitudes toward premarital testing. If counseling services are properly designed and delivered, they are expected to improve awareness, correct misconceptions, and encourage positive attitudes toward premarital testing. However, if couples continue to ignore or resist these services, the intended benefits may not be fully achieved. Therefore, it becomes necessary to examine the impact of counseling services on couples' attitudes toward premarital testing in Katagum Local Government Area. Understanding how counseling services influence couples' perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors regarding premarital testing will



help identify possible gaps in the current counseling practices. It will also help determine whether counseling services are effectively addressing the concerns and needs of intending couples in the community.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of counseling services on couples' attitudes toward premarital testing in Katagum Local Government Area. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. determine the role of counseling services in influencing couples' attitudes toward premarital testing.
2. identify the factors that affect couples' willingness to undergo premarital testing in Katagum Local Government Area.
3. assess the effectiveness of counseling services in promoting acceptance of premarital testing among couples.

Research Question

1. To what extent does role of counseling services in influencing couples' attitudes toward premarital testing?
2. What are the factors that affect couples' willingness to undergo premarital testing in Katagum Local Government Area?
3. What is the effectiveness of counseling services in promoting acceptance of premarital testing among couples?

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey design. This design is appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect information from respondents in order to describe their attitudes, opinions, and perceptions regarding premarital testing and counseling services. The survey design also helps the researcher to gather data from a relatively large number of couples within

Katagum Local Government Area and analyze how counseling services influence their attitudes toward premarital testing. The study will be conducted in Katagum Local Government Area, which is located in Bauchi State, Nigeria. The area consists of several communities with different cultural, religious, and social backgrounds. The people in the area engage in various economic activities such as farming, trading, and civil service. Katagum Local Government Area has several health facilities, religious institutions, and community centers where counseling services and premarital testing may be provided to intending couples. These institutions play an important role in educating couples about marriage preparation and health-related issues.

The population of the study will consist of all intending couples and newly married couples in Katagum Local Government Area who are within the age group considered appropriate for marriage. These couples are selected because they are directly involved in premarital preparation and may have experience with counseling services and premarital testing. The population may also include couples who have attended counseling sessions in hospitals, churches, mosques, or other counseling centers in the area.

Due to the large population of couples in Katagum Local Government Area, it may not be possible to study the entire population. Therefore, a sample of respondents will be selected to represent the population. For the purpose of this study, a sample of 100 respondents will be selected from different communities within the Local Government Area. Simple random sampling technique will be used to select the respondents. This method gives every member of the population an equal chance of being selected for the study. It also helps to reduce bias and



ensures that the sample represents the entire population.

The main instrument that will be used for collecting data in this study is a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire will consist of two sections. Section A will contain questions related to the personal information of the respondents such as age, gender, and marital status. Section B will contain questions related to counseling services and couples' attitudes toward premarital testing. The questionnaire will include only closed-ended. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, the research instrument will be reviewed by experts in counseling, and educational test and measurement unit. Their suggestions and corrections will be incorporated to improve the quality and

clarity of the questionnaire before it is administered to the respondents.

To ensure reliability, the questionnaire will be tested through a pilot study involving a small number of respondents who are not part of the main sample. The responses obtained will be analyzed to determine whether the questions are clear and consistent. Necessary adjustments will be made before the final administration of the questionnaire.

The data collected from the respondents will be analyzed using descriptive statistics by mean and standard deviation to answer three research questions.

Results

Research question: 1

To what extent does role of counseling services in influencing couples' attitudes toward premarital testing?

Table: 1 Descriptive Statistics on the extent do role of counseling services in influencing couples' attitudes toward premarital testing

S/N	Statement/Question	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Stand. D	Decision
1	Do you believe pre-marital testing is necessary for a healthy marriage among couple	123	78	40	23	264	2.6	44.41	Positive
2	Would you encourage your partner or friend to take pre-marital test	136	81	38	20	275	2.7	51.62	Positive
3	Do you believe counseling services assists you during pre-marital test before marriage	140	78	40	19	277	2.7	53.11	Positive
4	Do you believe in pre-marital counseling to be offered for all intended couple	80	57	68	27	232	2.3	22.70	Positive
Aggregate mean							2.0		

Source: Field work 2026



The results of respondents on the extent do role of counseling services in influencing couples' attitudes toward premarital testing is presented in table 1 the respondents items 1, 2, 3 and 4 indicates Positive responses towards extent do role of counseling services in influencing couples' attitudes toward premarital testing because all the items mean scores were above the decision mean of 2.5

Therefore, we can say that; pre-marital counseling services have positive impact on intended couple within Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi state.

Research question: 2

What are the factors that affect couples' willingness to undergo premarital testing in Katagum Local Government Area?

Table: 2 Descriptive Statistics on the factors that affect couples' willingness to undergo premarital testing in Katagum Local Government Area

S/N	Statement/Question	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Stand. D	Decision
1	Pre-marital testing is necessary for a healthy marriage	156	84	42	12	294	2.9	62.43	Positive
2	I am willing to undergo pre-marital testing	96	99	34	26	255	2.5	39.13	Positive
3	Pre-marital testing helps prevent health problem in marriage	116	90	48	17	271	2.7	43.93	Positive
4	I will always encourage my partner friends to go for pre-marital testing	160	48	52	18	78	2.7	62.21	Positive
Aggregate mean							2.1		

Source: Field work 2026

The results of respondents on the factors that affect couples' willingness to undergo premarital testing in Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi State is presented in table 2 the respondents items 1, 2, 3, and 4 indicates Positive responses towards the factors that affect couples' willingness to undergo premarital testing in Katagum Local Government Area because all the items mean scores were above the

decision mean of 2.5 Therefore, we can say that, most of the couple and intended couple are willing to go for pre-marital testing to avoid health problem after marriage.

Research question: 3

What is the effectiveness of counseling services in promoting acceptance of premarital testing among couples?

**Table: 3 Descriptive Statistics on the effectiveness of counseling services in promoting acceptance of premarital testing among couples**

S/N	Statement/Question	SA		SD		Total	Mean	Stand. D	Decision
		A	D	A	D				
1	Counseling has positively influenced my attitude towards pre-marital testing	156	84	42	12	294	2.9	62.43	Positive
2	After counseling I become convince to pre-marital counseling	96	99	34	26	55	2.5	39.13	Positive
3	Counseling has reduced my fear or concern about pre-marital testing	116	90	48	17	271	2.7	43.93	Positive
4	Counseling services effectively promote acceptance of pre-marital testing	160	48	52	18	278	2.7	62.21	Positive
Aggregate mean							2.1		

Source: Field work 2026

The results of respondents on the effectiveness of counseling services in promoting acceptance of premarital testing among couples is presented in table 3 the respondents items 1, 2, 3, and 4 indicates Positive responses towards the effectiveness of counseling services in promoting acceptance of premarital testing among couples because all the items mean scores were above the decision mean of 2.5 Therefore, we can say that, counseling services is very effective in promoting acceptance of pre-marital counseling services among intended couples.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of research question one on the extent do role of counseling services in influencing couples' attitudes toward premarital testing in Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi state the finding revealed that, pre-marital counseling services have positive impact on couples, and intended couple within Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi state. The finding is in line with Santrock (2016), whose finding revealed counseling services

provides emotional support, make rational decisions among couples.

Also the finding of research question two, on the factors that affect couples' willingness to undergo premarital testing in Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi State the finding revealed that, most of the couple and intended couple are willing to go for pre-marital testing to avoid health problem after marriage. The finding is in line with Okonkwo and Obi (2018) whose finding revealed that most couples recognize that premarital testing helps prevent health complications and promotes responsible family planning.

Lastly, the finding of research question three on the effectiveness of counseling services in promoting acceptance of premarital testing among couples in Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi state the finding revealed that, counseling services is very effective in promoting acceptance of pre-marital counseling services among intended couples in Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi state. The finding is in line with McLeod (2013).



Recommendation

Based on the finding of this research the following recommendations have been made:

1. Government should intensify pre wedding counseling services within the community in order avoid health problem.
2. Government should also intensify the counselors work in other community and make enlightens public more especially the intended couple on the importance of pre-wedding counseling.
3. Couple and intended couples must recourse to counseling session to reduce health challenges after wedding.

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