

Influence of Premarital Counselling on Romance in Marriage Stability in Langata and Dagoretti South Constituencies of Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract

Marriage stability is pegged on spousal connectivity and agreement where sexuality is a central activity between husband and wife. Lessons on romance and intimacy are mandatory during premarital counselling and or education, as well as a conspicuous part of popular applied psychology. It involves married life's vulnerability in crossing personal boundaries. Couples are expected to share feelings of attachment, intimacy, emotional connection, love and closeness, which are central to passion and commitment. The study surveyed romantic behaviours among married men and women; guided by Bazizomenyi-Nagi's Contextual Family Therapy and Ellis's Rational Emotive Behaviour theories. This study aimed at finding out the influence of premarital counselling on romance and its contribution to marriage stability in Langata and Dagoretti South Constituencies, of Nairobi County, Kenya. Out of a total population of 355,005 in the two constituencies a sample of 416 married men and women participated in the study. The study revealed that gaps existing in access to the dissemination of premarital counselling are being addressed through trained counsellors, counselling psychologists and trained clergy. Further, findings revealed that romance in marriage, enhanced and maintained by cordial and intimate relationships, between husband and wife; together with fidelity and confidentiality, where mutual love, openness, lifelong commitment to the union, is maintained.

Key Words: *Romance, sexuality, connection/cohesion, longevity, emotional fulfilment*

INTRODUCTION

This article presents the findings of a study that assessed the influence of premarital counselling on marriage stability in Langata and Dagoretti South Constituencies, of Nairobi County, Kenya. The findings demonstrated that romance is an integral part of the influences that contribute to couples' positive or negative behavioural traits, within marriage. Romance, therefore, influences the satisfaction and longevity of the marriage both positively and negatively in reference to marriage stability, within the area of study.

1.1 Background

The institution of marriage has raised numerous concerns in relation to pathological function of many a married man and woman, in the context of their life together, and on the demands in reference to sex and romance, within the relationship and co-existence. Intolerance is manifest in many homes and unfortunately divorce has become an easy option in ending marriages, instead of working on conflict, in an effort to creating a stable environment to rear children and achieve personal effectiveness.

Premarital counselling on romance is crucial in order to inform prospective couples on the role of sex and romance within marriage. There is need to create awareness of those feelings of attachment and intimacy. It is important to point out that emotional connection and closeness is central to all types of love. What may differ across relationships is the degree of passion as well as commitment to spouse. Gao (2001) intimates that many couples complain that in their marriages there has been no passion, or desire to be intimate. Partners seem to have lost sexual desire with their spouses which may lead couples to seek sexual gratification outside the marital bed. Further, Kenny and Acitelli (2001) points out that the most desired and useful forms of support, in love making, a partner provides to another, as the climax and highest expression of feelings of intimacy and connection; is availability and meeting each other's emotional needs. Unfortunately, this connectivity has been lost and the partners have no desire to seek for sex therapy, exposing themselves to emotional dissatisfaction and ill feelings towards the spouse.

Kaplan in Baker Encyclopaedia (1993) asserted that sexual problems cannot be separated from individual psychopathology and interpersonal relationships. Trends in technology and economic priorities have placed pressure on husbands experiencing performance anxiety, to withdraw from a wife who constantly reminds him of poor performance. This may encourage either spouse to seek enjoyment and sexual fulfilment elsewhere. Such behaviour and misunderstandings brings ill feelings and could destabilize the marriage.

Erick Erickson's psychosocial development stresses that the idea of integration, where intimacy builds, enlarges, and incorporates what has gone before, that is a strong sense of identity is often lost, when intimacy in a marriage continues to decrease (Kroger 2007). Following this argument, no spouse feels gratified or willing to validate the partner's efforts in sexual encounters. Such behaviour could lead spouses to seek fulfilment in alcoholism and promiscuity, resulting in both physical and emotional abuse. Kroger continues to write that a manifestation of instability in marriage includes and is not limited to mistrust, anger, non-forgiveness, unhappiness, neglect, rejection, stress and psychological torture.

In line with these occurrences, this study is in agreement with sentiments expressed and concluded in an International Study by Curan, & Utley, et. al (2010); that marriage primarily signifies commitment, love, fellowship, trust, giving promise and family. In addition an individual who accepts marriage as a lifelong notion is thought to considerably solve his problems, and increase his individual happiness in marriage; because divorce is not an option for that individual (Amato &

Booth, 1997; as cited in Hall, 2006). Considering the fact that the meanings spouses attribute to marriage affect their expectations; it is believed that determination of these meanings are of vital significance. Thus there is need to explaining the true meanings as well as actualizing that men and women understand the importance of premarital counselling on romance, and its contribution to stable marriages.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Husbands and wives endeavour, to keep on expressing the reality of giving self to spouse, in order to create connectivity and closeness. The giving concept indicates total surrender of self, during and prior to the sexual act that would lead to fulfilment and feelings of total connection. Husband and wife often negate responsibility on mutual giving, which involves concentration on spouse and surrendering to them often, which would probably eliminate doubts on love and commitment. To express and confirm loyalty to spouse, actions and expressions of love and need for sexual fulfilments, should be constant common encounters within marriage. Unfortunately, many a couple complain of unfulfilment in reference to romance. This leads one to wonder if the premarital counselling given, or being carried out currently, portray detailed tuition on romance. One is bound to ask questions in reference to preparation for couples, before marriage. Could there possibly be proper detailed tuition on romance. One wonders are there adequate premarital counselling programs where proper tuition on love-making is disseminated before marriage. Other questions linger in reference to expressions of love and appreciation of partner, and wonder if this is emphasized. Without such understandings, many a married man and woman would hunger for lack of romance within marriage. Unfortunately within the area of study premarital counselling carried out currently, does not portray detailed tuition on romance, where proper tuition on love-making coupled with expressions of love and appreciation of partner, was taught and or encouraged.

1.3 Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following questions:-

- (i) To what extent does premarital counselling on romance contribute to marriage stability thereafter?
- (ii) To what extent do married men and women express love and show romantic feelings towards spouse to eliminate feelings of rejection?
- (iii) To what extent do married men and women encourage each other to indicate romantic feelings, which could lead to sexual intercourse regularly, to enhance romance within marriage?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In reference to romance, it is correct to point out that among all human relationships, marriage is regarded as the most profound and central feature of co-existence, established with the consent of both partners. It is an institution composed of a culturally accepted agreement, between a man and a woman, in husband-wife relationship; as well as roles that recognize an order of sexual behaviour,

and finally legalizes the function of parenthood (Hunter, 1990). In addition, Collins (2007) asserts that the traditional marriage includes a socially recognized sexual union which is begun with a public announcement or ceremony, which is defined by an explicit contract, and undertaken with the intent of permanence.

In reference to romance the study elaborated that tackling bedroom issues is a tedious task and pillow-talk is a private affair. In line with this argument the study was in agreement with sentiments expressed and concluded in an International Study by Curan & Utley, et. al. (2010) that marriage primarily signifies commitment, love, fellowship, trust, giving promise and family. In addition premarital counselling teaches problem solving and preventive features with the aim of preparing and improving relationships before marriage (Yalcim, 2012). It is correct to say that although not for everybody, a high number of men and women are fascinated by romantic love, and get married expecting irresistible happiness, and high expectation of finding their soul mate, which cannot be ignored (Pines, 2010).

In conclusion and in reference to the Contextual Family therapy, Boszormenyi-Nagy (1987, p. 244) sheds light that the person capable of earning entitlement through relationships is more able to claim his due in relationships. He is entitled to enjoy life, including sexuality, to undertake the risks of new relationships, and to be free of either psychosomatic illness or self-destructive patterns of behaviour. Because of this entitlement, both married men and women should ensure that they have to create adequate time to enjoy sexuality and to experience mutual enjoyment as a man and wife. This would be possible where the married couple creates a conducive atmosphere to express love. This can be exercised through manifestations of sweet speech, occasional kissing and caressing as well as verbal expressions of love to spouse, without inhibitions.

3. METHODOLOGY

Mixed methods research approach was applied to address qualitative and quantitative data. The researcher collected, analyzed, interpreted, and reported both quantitative and qualitative data in the research process, within a single study, in order to understand the research problem more completely. Qualitative information was sought in reference to social and behavioural aspects, including personal expressive open interactions with couples, as well as marriage counsellors and clergy. Quantitative data or numerical/statistical information was obtained through the questionnaire. The two data bases were analyzed concurrently in assessing the influence of premarital counselling (independent variable) in sustenance to marriage stability (dependent variable). This enabled the researcher to actualize the study in assessing the influence of premarital counselling on marriage stability, in Langata and Dagoretti South Constituencies of Nairobi County, Kenya.

3.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Independent Variable in this article is Premarital Counselling on Romance within marriage. This involves and calls upon married men and women to consider spending ample time together as much as they can. This would enable them to show and express romantic feelings that could lead to sexual

intimacy as well as faithfulness and commitment to one another. Such actions could create confidentiality and trust.

The dependent variable in this article is marriage stability. This would include mutual parenting of children where love is encouraged within the family members. The married men and women would often express love to one another. They would embrace mutual respect and appreciation to spouse, love and commitment, as well as eliminating deviant behaviours including and not limited to alcohol and drugs. This would culminate in joyous co-existence, feelings of wellness and fulfilment and excitement, which would keep fire of romance burning in marriage.

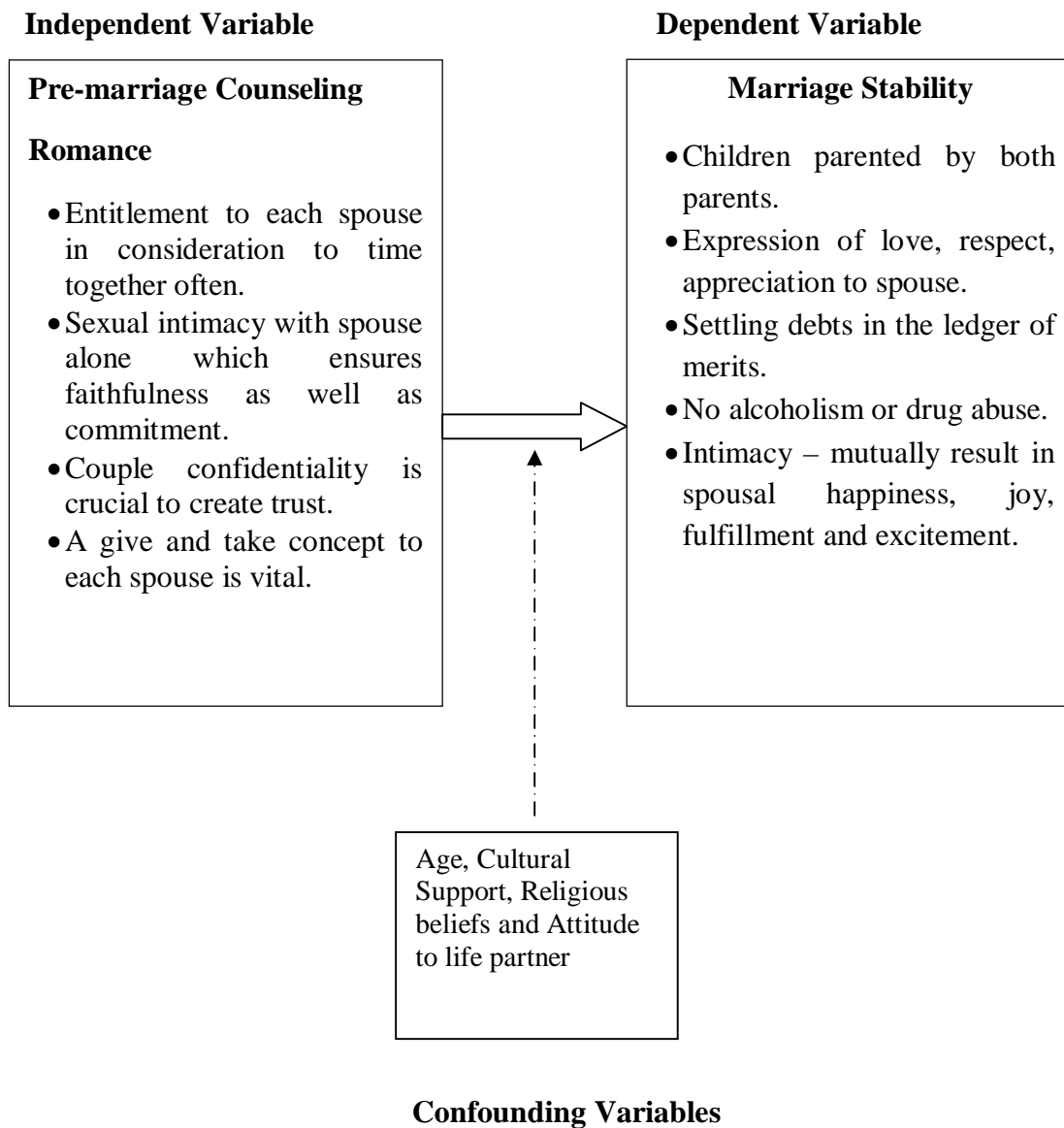


Figure 1: Premarital Counselling on Romance

Source: Marang’a L. W. (2019).

3.2 Participants

The study targeted 360 married men and women within Langata and Dagoretti constituencies of Nairobi County, Kenya. Out of these 175 (48.6%) were male while 185 (51.4%) were female. The whole sample had taken premarital counselling on romance within the area of study. The premarital counsellors who participated included 24 (54.5%) male and 20 (45.5%) female. This translates to the fact that both genders carry out or conduct premarital counselling on romance within the area of study.

3.3 Instrument and Data Analysis

Data was collected by use of a questionnaire which was developed by the researcher. This instrument was validated and estimated for reliability using the Cronbach Alpha for internal consistency. A coefficient of $\alpha = 0.9$ was obtained. Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23 for windows. Relationships were established by a Chi-square test. The study was interested in establishing the Influence of Premarital Counselling on Romance in Sustenance to Marriage Stability. Likert scale items were used to measure the various aspects of romance among married men and women as per results shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Influence of Premarital Counselling on Romance to Marriage Stability
SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Uncertain, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
Counselling on romance taught us courtship is a lifetime commitment	17 (4.7)	28 (7.8)	65 (18.1)	141 (39.2)	109 (30.3)
My spouse and I share roles at home in order to create time together	16 (4.4)	30 (8.3)	60 (16.6)	159 (44.2)	95 (6.4)
We prefer to show each other our need for sexual intimacy regularly	10 (2.8)	25 (6.9)	52 (14.5)	182 (50.6)	91 (25.3)
I have noticed that giving gifts to my spouse increases romance	18 (5.0)	23 (6.4)	88 (24.4)	131 (36.4)	100 (27.8)
I do not feel we learnt enough on romance before we got married	27 (7.5)	58 (16.1)	82 (22.8)	118 (32.8)	75 (20.8)
We are open to each other on sexual needs to eliminate feelings of rejections at any one time	13 (3.6)	23 (6.4)	69 (19.2)	153 (42.5)	102 (28.3)
Sometimes I feel attracted to other people even when with my spouse	110 (30.6)	80 (22.2)	77 (21.3)	67 (18.6)	26 (7.2)
Our mutual need for sexual intimacy keeps us connected regularly	9 (2.5)	20 (5.6)	61 (17.0)	176 (48.9)	94 (26.1)
Living together has taught us that keeping fidelity and confidentiality increases love and commitment	6 (1.7)	8 (2.2)	39 (10.8)	132 (36.7)	175 (48.6)
Though we did not go through premarital counselling on romance, we encourage prospective couples to take it	14 (3.9)	9 (2.5)	65 (18.1)	109 (30.3)	163 (45.3)

Source: Researcher (2018)

A Chi-square test was conducted to determine whether there was significant relationship between Premarital Counselling on Romance in Sustenance to Marriage Stability. The results obtained are as summarized below.

Table 2: Did you go through any form of premarital counselling

Did you go through any form of premarital counselling?	Romance					Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Count	22	192	92	5	0	311
Yes Expected Count	19.9	184.0	100.2	6.0	.9	311.0
% of Total	6.1%	53.3%	25.6%	1.4%	0.0%	86.4%
Count	1	21	24	2	1	49
No Expected Count	3.1	29.0	15.8	1.0	.1	49.0
% of Total	0.3%	5.8%	6.7%	0.6%	0.3%	13.6%
Count	23	213	116	7	1	360
Total Expected Count	23.0	213.0	116.0	7.0	1.0	360.0
% of Total	6.4%	59.2%	32.2%	1.9%	0.3%	100.0%

Data displayed in the table above show that most of the respondents (59.2%) underwent premarital counselling and were in agreement that romance influenced marriage stability. A sizeable proportion of the married men and women, who took part in the study, were indifferent over the same issue (26%). This is a clear indication that a number of couples could not relate romance to the premarital counselling they went through.

On the other side, the chi-square test results show that the P-value (0.002) is less than alpha (0.005), therefore the null hypothesis was rejected and conclusion made that there is a statistically significant relationship between premarital counselling on romance and stability among couples ($X^2=16.9$, $df=4$, $p<0.05$).

Table 3: Chi-Square Tests

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.851 ^a	4	.002
Likelihood Ratio	14.403	4	.006
N of Valid Cases	360		

a. 4 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .14.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Contribution of Premarital Counselling on romance to Marriage Stability

The study sought to find out how premarital counselling on romance contributed to marriage stability in Langata and Dagoretti South Constituencies of Nairobi County, Kenya.

Table 4

Stability of Couples who had taken Premarital Counselling before Marriage

Married men and Women	Taken PMC	Had not taken PMC
360	250 (69.8%)	110 (30.6%)

The findings shown in Table 4 indicate that 69.8% of the married men and women who had taken premarital counselling on romance before marriage had more stable marriages in comparison to the 30.6% of those who had not. This is an indication concludes that couples who took premarital counselling on romance have more stable marriages.

4.2 Importance of Married Couples Openness on Sexual Needs

The study endeavoured to find out to what extent married men and women express love and show romantic feelings towards partner to eliminate feelings of rejection, in Langata and Dagoretti South Constituencies of Nairobi County, Kenya.

Table 5

Openness on Sexual Needs in order to Eliminate Rejection within Marriage

Married men and Women	Open on Sexual Needs	Closed on Sexual Needs
360	255 (70.8%)	105 (29.2%)

The findings shown in Table 5 indicate that 70.8% of the married men and women, who had taken premarital counselling before marriage, were open to spouse on their sexual needs and this prevented them, from feelings of rejection in comparison to the 29.2% of those who did not. This is an indication that couples who had taken premarital counselling have more stable marriages and did not have feelings of rejection, in comparison to those who did not.

4.3 Encouraging One Another to Indicate Romantic Feelings

The study sought to find out to what extent married men and women encourage each other to indicate romantic feelings, which could lead to sexual intercourse regularly, to enhance romance within marriage, in Langata and Dagoretti South Constituencies.

Table 6

Encouraging one another within Marriage to indicate Romantic Feelings

Married men and Women	Indicating Romantic Feelings	Negating Fidelity
360	307 (85.3)	53 (14.7%)

The findings shown in Table 6 indicates that 85.3% of the married men and women who had taken premarital counselling in romance before marriage, indicated that living together had taught them that encouraging one another to keep fidelity increases mutual love and commitment in marriage, in comparison to the 14.7% of those who did not. This is an indication that couples who had taken premarital counselling on romance, and who keep fidelity in marriage, have more romantic feelings towards their spouses, in comparison to those who did not.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that a majority of the participants in the study were in agreement that premarital counselling influenced romance positively in marriage. For instance, 85% of the participants were in agreement that living together had taught them that keeping fidelity and confidentiality increases romance which is manifested in love and commitment to one another. At the same time 76% of the couples preferred showing each other their need for sexual intimacy while 75% indicated mutual need for intimacy and regular connection, which is often motivated by romance. In line with these occurrences, this study is in agreement with Curan and Utley, et. al. (2010) sentiments expressed and concluded in an International Study; that marriage primarily signifies commitment to spouse, in addition to love, fellowship, trust, giving promise and honouring the family.

Further an individual, who accepts marriage as a lifelong notion, is thought to considerably solve his problems, and increase his individual happiness in marriage, because divorce is not an option for that individual (Amato & Booth, 1997; as cited in Hall, 2006). Considering the fact that the meanings spouses attribute to marriage affect their expectations, it is believed that determination of these meanings, are of vital significance. Thus there is need to explain the true meaning as well as actualizing that those men and women understand the importance of premarital counselling on romance. This is based on sexual attraction as well as the enjoyment of affection and imagination of what the spouse will bring to the union while love is based on decisions, promises, and commitments to the partner.

Results show that premarital counselling teaches problem solving and preventive features with the aim of preparing and improving relationships before marriage. This is in line with statements made by Yalcim (2012). It became quite clear that many married men and women need regular counselling on romance. Premarital counsellors insisted on the importance of making conditions in living together conducive, as much as possible. Husbands and wives expressed fears, concerns, anxieties, discomfort or other destabilizing feelings; that may affect sexual connection, after marriage. Such fears should be shared before marriage, in order to salvage a breaking relationship. Pines (1996; Pines 2010) concludes that although not for everybody, a high number of men and women are fascinated by romantic love, and get married expecting irresistible happiness, and high expectation of finding their soul mate, which cannot be ignored. Unfortunately, when magic of romantic love is lost over time, their lives loose the meaning, they had assumed their soul mates had given them. They are left alone with serious disappointment and feelings of burnout.

In reference to connection, Robson (2000) insists that at premarital counselling couples should be taught the manifestations of true romance, for example physical closeness, holding hands, sitting

together, caressing and kissing. These could result in feelings of love and connection, possibly leading to sexual intimacy. Metcalf (2011) refers to this kind of behaviour as 'giving and receiving romance' as a confirmation of loyalty to one another.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion it is correct to state that the research realized a lot of positive and negative occurrences within marriage, in reference to romance. To begin with it is important to state that the foreknowledge acquired at premarital counselling, encourages couples to keep fidelity within marriage. Faithfulness and trust in marriage, in many instances translates to spousal cohesion and mutual understanding, trust, honesty and establishment of reliability on one another. Such behavioural traits would keep the fire of love and romance burning and eventually translates to marital stability.

The study clearly elaborated that married men and women who keep fidelity as well as confidentiality in their union, are bound to manifest behavioural traits that increases love and commitment. Results also show that premarital counselling teaches problem solving skills. In addition, preventive features should be evident, with the aim of preparing and improving relationships before marriage. Further premarital counselling encourages couples to create conducive environment at home where they could exhibit romantic behaviours to each other often; which encourages the family to thrive.

Thirdly living together and keeping fidelity as well as confidentiality increases love and commitment, within marriage. During premarital counselling couples should be taught the manifestations of true romance. These include and are not limited to physical closeness, holding hands, sitting together, and expressing love physically in caressing and kissing as well as in verbal assurance. These types of romantic actions could eventually result in feelings of love and connection, ultimately leading to sexual intimacy within marriage.

Finally, it can be concluded that in most cases couples benefitted a lot from the premarital counselling on romance, given within Langata and Dagoretti South constituencies, of Nairobi County, Kenya.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

In recommendations it should be emphasised that counselling psychologists and trained clergy should carry out structured premarital counselling, that embraces openness between spouses, in addition to giving emotional romantic support to spouse. Couples should be encouraged to continuously express their love to spouses to enhance commitment and cordial co-existence.

The study, further recommends that couples should guard against drifting apart from one another. Continuous dialogue should be embraced as a way of life in order to deal with anger, disappointment, resentment and tension, whenever it occurs. This would ensure that the fire of romance in the marriage keeps burning and sexual fulfilment between husband and wife is a continuous activity.

In addition the study also recommended that where spirituality and mutual understanding, which embraces openness, are adopted as a way of life; marital connection, joy and peace are bound to manifest. Further emotional support to spouse embraced in romance and sexual fulfilment, are vital points for married couples, who are well connected. This would translate to happiness and joy as well as great friendship, which would result to stability and longevity of marriage.

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