

Family Counselling and Its Role in Solving Family Problems

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Abstract:

Family is the main cell of society and is the first among social institutions responsible for preparing and educating the child to be an effective element in society.

In the light of the increasing psychological, social and economic pressure that families are currently undergoing, Family Counselling has become one of the most reliable methods for psychologists to help family members achieve stability, family compatibility and solve family issues of all sorts.

Key words: Family, counselling, family issues, family counselling, counsellor, patient.

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Introduction:

Family is one of the first and most essential social institutions responsible for preparing the child to enter into social life, as a viable and effective component of society.

Family is the starting point that contributes to the upbringing of the human race and affects all stages of its life both positively and negatively. (Ahmad Abdul-Latif and Muhssen Al Khatatna, 2011, P37)

Family is one of the most influential groups in the formation of an individual's personality and behaviour and is the effective instrument for the transfer of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that prevail in society to the child, interpreted into the methods of guidance.

Family counselling is the process of assisting family members including parents, children or even relative, be it individually or collectively in order to achieve family stability, harmony and solve all sorts of problem.

Family counselling considers the family as an integral unit where the individual is one of its components. It also considers the cooperation of the family what guarantees the process of counselling better chances of success. A human being needs his/her family be it a child, a young or elderly person, as it is a source of upbringing and care for the child and then for the adolescent and finally a source of hope and stability for the adult and the old. (Mufid Hawashin, Zeidan Hawashin, 2005, p197)

First, we will define the Term Of family Counselling, It is the process of guiding a family as a system and a group rather than as separate individuals.

Family may be, in one way or another, a fuel to the causes affecting the child under counselling at school. However, despite the family being a cause of this disorder, it is an indispensable tool to finding an effective solution to the child's problem.

The cooperation of the family in achieving the desired solution increases the chances of its success and ensures its stability during future follow-up as well as it improves the atmosphere of family relationships. (Mufid Hawashin, Zeidan Hawashin, 2005, p197)

According to Al- Hashimi, family counselling is the process of assisting all the members of the family individually or as a group in order to understand the necessities of family life and all that is related to it such as mutual rights and duties. Family, from the counselling point of view, includes all the relatives; grandparent and uncle of both the mother and the father's side. (Salah Hassan Al-Dahiri, 2008)

The Importance of family counselling is a thoughtful assistance process provided by a family counsellor who specializes in using the foundations and techniques of counselling to help individuals and families in a unilateral or collective form, to solve problems and achieve stability, compatibility and family adaptation From this definition, it is clear that family counselling is not just about giving advice to solve a problem, it is a scientific method that proceeds according to specific goals and plans to rid the individual and the family of the problems they are experiencing while creating purely mental trends that help them to get rid of emotional trends that impede or enable them to reduce their thinking.

It is therefore unethical for anyone to practice family counselling, which emphasizes the responsibility of societies and their official institutions to set limits and constraints and formulate a policy of family counselling, academic, systemic and ethical controls for its application and practice in society.

Family counselling has become an important method for psychologists, for it does not only deal with individual problems, it assumes that people are a product of their environments and is also a product of personal family installation that is part of the environment, as a result of which helping an unhappy individual requires us to research his or her relationships with family members. In many cases, the family counsellor meets with all the family members and sets ways for the family members to communicate with each other by asking several questions which help him or her observe the interaction in the family through the information about individuals' relationship with each other in order to see the nature of the internal relationship between the family members.

Family counselling objectives: The psychological, social and economic pressures on the family are increasing in today's global situations. These pressures would undermine entrenched family values and lead to many psychological conflicts between family members, It leads to increased anxiety and stress among its members. Family counselling has therefore been directed to help family members to achieve happiness, stability and sustainability of the family, and thus the happiness and stability of society.

1-Family issues requiring family counselling:

The family with all its members forms an integrated system to which its members are linked to balanced relationships through role distribution where each member performs a certain task within a system that is not closed but opens to a wider circle, which is the society from which families obtain ideas, beliefs and standards then transmit them to their children. This results from the cultural difference in families.

Within this holistic family system, internal subsystems are active, namely the types of relationships between members of this family, since there is a relationship between the father and the mother, and then between the father and the children, the mother and the children, and the mutual relations between brothers and sisters.

Whenever the relationships within these subsystems expand, it is more likely to characterize the family by socially sound compatibility and vice versa. When relationships within these subsystems collide it indicates their failure as an integral system. At the end, all the consequences of these matters be it problems or family disorders, all fall on family counselling.

Below, we will present some family problems that need counselling:

1- Domestic abuse:

According to Hamed Abdul-Aziz Alabd (1993), abuse is the intentional, non-accidental act that results in physical, health or sexual harm. It is any form of physical, sexual or emotional abuse occurring within the scope of an intimate relationship which, in most cases, applies to relationships between spouses.

Domestic violence can be intellectual, physical, sexual, economic, or manifest through the loss of freedom, or the destruction of property. In each of these forms, it is a matter of control.

2- Family Disintegration:

Family disintegration refers to the loss of one or both parents, divorce, abandonment, death or prolonged absence.

Yasin (1988) classified family disintegration patterns into two main types:

- Partial family disintegration: resulting from separations, intermittent abandonment, where the spouses return to family life, but from time to time they remain threatened by abandonment or separation.
- Total family disintegration: resulting from divorce, death, suicide, murder of one or both spouses.

(Ahmed Abdul-latif Abu Assaad & Sami Muhssen Al Khatatna, 2011, p203, 2021,2023)

2-Burgess identified a range of family problems:

1. Emotional and psychological issues: They are due to the different mood and nervous state of each spouse; one may be calm and the other is intemperate
2. Cultural issues: These are due to the contrast between the spouses' customs, traditions and tendencies as a result of their different upbringing methods, as well as to the dissonance of personal orientation, values between the spouses and the varying level of education.

3. Problems of social roles: Tension and problems arising from differences between the practiced role and the expected role of each individual within the family towards others. Multiple and conflicting roles also lead to differences and incoherence in the family, such as: women's multiple roles.

4. Economic problems: Lack of material resources may lead to disputes within the family such as: spousal quarrels and physical abuse, and this may lead to emotional mismatch, sexual mismatch, jealousy and infidelity.

5. Health issues: Chronic illnesses, disabilities and infertility. (Rafika Ikhlef)

As an extension to the previously mentioned issues, there are other issues such as: Couple's intemperateness and violence, the absence of the husband from home, wives 'excessive jealousy, avariciousness and non-providence, husband's sexual infidelity and emotional insensitivity, use of intoxicants, smoking and narcotics, obsessive doubting of the husband and the failure to perform religious duties.

3-Family counselling services:

Studies have demonstrated the importance of the home environment in guiding the child, the stability and family cohesion and its impact on the child's upbringing and social normalization.

Parent can provide a lot of counselling services if they acquire an educational background or at least certain knowledge of the child's demands and needs and what factors affect them.

Furthermore, the counsellor can primarily coordinate with the parents, either individually, when needed, according to seminars and meetings where more than one family meets, to explore matters concerning children.

During these sessions, they discuss the ways parents and siblings should deal with the child and identify the problems, which the child can suffer from in case parents choose the wrong behaviour dealing with their child. The most dangerous part about these relationships is when parents, sometimes, abstain from taking part in counselling processes, especially those who are indifferent to their children. (Moufid Hawashin, Zidan Hawashin, 2005, p 195)

Through collective family counselling, all concerned parties in the family meet with a counselling team comprising a psychologist, a social worker and a physician, each one of them deals with the family problem from the standpoint of their competence. The sessions may involve more than one family. In this case, special topics must be discussed in the presence of all family members together.

The philosophy of collective family counselling is that the individual is a social being interested in the formation of social relations, as well as in the social interaction defined by values and norms, and that the individual modifies his or her behaviour according to the reactions of the group surrounding him or her, especially the family. It is often difficult for the individual to achieve consensus and modify his or her behaviour without the presence of those who stand by him or her.

Interaction takes place during mentoring sessions in the form of a lecture or debate and an effective and dynamic dialogue geared towards changing thinking and behaviour, which includes

optional mentoring functions through reality orientation, venting, mutual trust, attention and understanding, acceptance and support.

The family's collective guidance increases the degree to which its members understand and accept each other.

It may serve as a preventive, helping individuals overcome difficulties before they become a serious issued. It can also serve as therapy that helps family members solve the problem that's facing them in order to achieve harmony within the family. (Salah Hassan El-Dahiri, P 166-167)

The task of the family counsellor is based, in the first place, on Acceptance, as it is the first step to communication and interaction between the social worker and the client. At the beginning of each work, it may be noted that many clients do not have a clear and specific opinion regarding the family counsellor and usually ask themselves this question: **“Is the therapist really capable of helping me?”**

Glasser emphasizes that there are differences between therapists when it comes to the application of reality therapy, which reflect the divergence of the characteristics of the personality, as each therapist owns a personal approach of work and execution. A successful therapist is the one who constantly works on developing and strengthening his or her own approach.

One of the main tasks of the family counsellor is to guide. Since the Theory of Choice is the essence of Reality Therapy, The family counsellor has to explain the theory to the client. In this particular phase, the therapist plays the role of a teacher and the client acts as the pupil just as in school. The therapist must ensure the client's assimilation of the theory. The therapist may resort to other means and tools to clarify the theory, and should be ready to answer the client's questions, queries and observations about the theory. And through a good professional relationship the family counsellor can sense the satisfaction of the client with the theory as well as with the therapist. As for the client, he or she will learn, through the relationship with the therapist, about the Theory of Choice as well as the importance of the relationships with others.

4-Principles of family counselling:

Family counselling is based on a set of principles:

- 1- The patient is considered a symptom of the family's illness, which means not only the patient who needs treatment but the family as a whole.
- 2- The counsellor must define a theory on which to rely in the treatment of the family.
- 3- The counsellor must objectively take part while interacting with family members in order to fix their behaviour and not bias one member at the expense of the others.
- 4- Identifying the changes, the family wishes to make in its environment.
- 5- The counsellor must pay attention to the strength points within the family.
- 6- Involving children in the family counselling process because children are the most sincere members when it comes to expressing the family's emotions, system and communication.
- 7- Dealing with the transference phenomenon during the treatment.
- 8- Maintaining the confidentiality of the provided information.

9- The counsellor must define the number of sessions that both the family and the patient need.

10- It is possible for more than one counsellor to be involved in treating the problem. (Rafida Al-Hariri and Samir AL-Imami, 2011 p61)

5-Steps of family counselling:

The process of family counselling goes through the following stages:

1. Preparation/warming-up: In which the counsellor allows the family members who enter the interview room to sit wherever they want. The therapist should prepare a number of seats that is more than the number of the attendees and give them the freedom to pick their own seats and it is considered the first vital contact with the family. The way the family organizes and arranges the way each member sits says a lot about their relationships: who sits next to whom? Are the spouses sitting next to each other? Are the children sitting close to one another or not, all this reflects unions and defections within the family. Furthermore, the counsellor welcomes the family starting with the parents then the children which means from the eldest to the youngest. This stage is important as it is relied upon in the family's acceptance of the guide who is actually an outsider which is why it is important for the counsellor to introduce him/herself before asking them to introduce themselves. (Abdu-Latif and Sami Muhsen,2011,P96)

2. Reframing the problem: After meeting all the members of the family, the counsellor then asks the father this question: "what can I offer you?" this question helps communicate some important tendencies to the therapist. By so, the therapist pushes the father to define his problem such as defining a person, specific emotions or behaviours as being the issue. Some families might disagree with the father's decision on the problem, so instead of reacting directly, the counsellor can summarize this phase by saying: "it seems like your points of view regarding this family issue are slightly different!" The next step is to rename the problem. By following this approach, the therapist avoids any disagreement with the family members about what the real issue is. (Ahmad Abdu-Latif, 2008, P190-191)

3. Problem solving: The focus here is on the conflict in the family. After listening to all the different points of view from each member, the counsellor reformulates the issue in the form of a hypothesis then lets the family ponder upon it. This way the counsellor focuses on the family's need for specialised external assistance and tries minimizing the guilt feelings and increasing optimism and hope. The observations on the guilt, pain, frustrations and other emotions the family is going through indicate the inability of the family system to solve its own problems.

4. Need for change: The counsellor starts this phase by asking the family about the solutions that have been addressed in the past. This task drives the family toward making changes. The counsellor might ask this question: "what have you done regarding this problem? Or have you done something about this problem?" This question helps the family understand its inability to:

- Accessing successful approaches to deal with the problem.

- Showing that there is nothing meaningful that has been done regarding the problem until now.

There are two types of change; the first-order change which is the type that keeps the structure of the system as it is without any change. The second-order change is the type where fundamental changes occur within the system of the family itself. (Ahmad Abdu-Latif and Sami Muhsen, 2011,P 97)

5. Shifting: This step begins when the therapist gets to the executive procedures with the family through suggestions, and it starts with changing the methods of communication between the family members as well as the communication between parents and children. For instance, the therapist proceeds to ask one of the parents whom he finds is not involved to be responsible for the behaviour of one of the children and thus build an emotion or bond between that parent (father or mother) and the child.

Conclusion:

Despite the differences of therapeutic approaches among the family therapy schools, they all agree on the fact that the therapist must let the family know that each member is a part of the treatment process and that every problem is not at all considered a personal characteristic of an individual instead, it is considered a problem of two members or more, as well as showing that the human behaviour (here and now) is the generator of this problem or the reason why it keeps going.

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