Comparison of the Effectiveness of the Premarital Awareness and Interpersonal Choices Program (PICK) and the SYMBIS Premarital Model on Girls' Attitudes Toward Marriage

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A r t i c l e   I n f o

A B S T R A C T

Objective: The aim of the present study was to compare the effectiveness of the Premarital Awareness and Interpersonal Choices Program (PICK) and the SYMBIS Premarital Model on girls' attitudes toward marriage.

Methods and Materials: This research is a quasi-experimental study (pre-test, post-test with control group and one-month follow-up). The statistical population of this study included single female students over 30 years old at the Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch. After a call for participation at the university (through advertisements and social media networks of the students), 45 female students who met the research criteria were selected from 53 volunteers using the Braaten and Rosen (1998) Attitude Toward Marriage Questionnaire. They were randomly assigned into three groups: 15 girls in the Premarital Awareness and Interpersonal Choices Program group (Van Epp, 2006), 15 girls in the SYMBIS Premarital Model group (Parrott & Parrott, 2016), and 15 girls in the control group. Data were analyzed using repeated measures ANOVA.

Findings: The results showed that the premarital intervention programs, both the Premarital Awareness and Interpersonal Choices Program (PICK) and the SYMBIS Premarital Model, were effective on optimistic attitudes toward marriage (F=32.86, P=0.001), pessimistic attitudes toward marriage (F=91.51, P=0.001), and idealistic attitudes toward marriage (F=22.37, P=0.001). The results of the Bonferroni post hoc test indicated that this effect was stable at the follow-up stage. Also, no significant difference was observed between the effectiveness of the two approaches.

Conclusion: Based on the results, it is essential to use premarital education methods based on the Awareness and Interpersonal Choices Program and the SYMBIS Premarital Model to improve attitudes toward marriage and dysfunctional beliefs about marriage in girls on the threshold of marriage. Therefore, psychologists and marriage therapists can use premarital education methods based on the Awareness and Interpersonal Choices Program and the SYMBIS Premarital Model alongside other educational methods to improve girls' attitudes toward marriage.

Keywords: premarital counseling, Awareness and Interpersonal Choices Program, SYMBIS, attitude toward marriage, girls.

1. Introduction

Marriage is the most sacred and complex relationship between two individuals of opposite sexes, encompassing broad and deep dimensions and multiple objectives. It is a sacred covenant and bond between two opposite sexes based on stable sexual, emotional, and spiritual relationships, formalized by a religious, social, and legal contract that creates commitments for the spouses. Therefore, marriage is a delicate and complex decision that requires careful consideration of all aspects before any action is taken (Saadati & Parsakia, 2023). Generally, marriage is a union of two personalities while maintaining a relative degree of independence for both husband and wife, for mutual cooperation, not the obliteration of one personality to fulfill the desires of another. In other words, marriage is a formal contract for mutual commitment to family life, placing a person on a specific life trajectory. This contract, formed with the consent and desire of both parties and based on their complete freedom, creates very close relations between them (Ebrahimi et al., 2020; Fam et al., 2017).

The event of marriage marks the beginning of a new stage in life, encompassing a very significant part of an individual's personal and social life. The way relationships begin and form influences subsequent behaviors and interactions, potentially affecting spouses and their children positively or negatively (Shahabadi et al., 2016; Shahmoradi et al., 2021). Furthermore, marriage is one of the most important decisions in one's life. Before marriage, there is considerable power and choice in decision-making, allowing one to avoid problematic structures. However, after marriage, once the structures are formed, they are rarely changed (Perry, 2013). Being aware of one's attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs about marriage and adopting a logical and realistic approach can play a significant role in achieving a satisfying marriage (Keldal & Atli, 2020).

The concept of attitude is a key term in social psychology, gaining popularity since the 1950s and attracting much attention from researchers, leading to extensive studies. Attitude toward marriage refers to an individual's subjective beliefs and thoughts about marriage, formed in the early stages of life and remaining relatively stable (Hanachi et al., 2023; Jomenia et al., 2021). The formation of marriage attitudes can be justified from two theoretical approaches. First, based on attachment theory, the relationship between parents or primary caregivers (especially the mother) plays a role in creating active inner models. Active inner models may be one mechanism through which attitudes toward intimacy are transferred (Onsy & Amer, 2014).

One of the programs used in premarital education is the Premarital Awareness and Choices Program (PICK). This program is based on the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM) developed by Van Epp (2006) as a model for examining close relationships. The program includes five components: knowledge, trust, reliance, commitment, and touch. The combination of these five relational bonds provides an overall understanding of a relationship and meaningful information about the feelings of love, attachment, and closeness in a relationship. The PICK program organizes these five relational components into two sections: cognitive knowledge and emotional knowledge. The cognitive knowledge section refers to the acquired knowledge and understanding of the spouse or partner during the acquaintance and romantic relationship phase. In this section, the key component under the PICK program, i.e., knowledge, involves learning about five relational traits, identified in research as predictors of a successful marriage (Hashemi et al., 2022). These five traits, abbreviated as FACES, include Family Background (F), Attitudes and Actions of Conscience (A), Compatibility Potential (C), Examples of Relationship Patterns (E), and Skills in Communication (S). The emotional knowledge section, including components of trust, reliance, and touch, refers to

the growth of emotional connection or feelings of love between individuals during the acquaintance phase. In this section, participants learn the ways to develop, commit, and expand attachment in a relationship, along with balancing these factors and strengthening boundaries in a relationship (Azimikhoei et al., 2021).

Another premarital counseling program is the "Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts (SYMBIS)" model, a relatively new preventive program that prepares individuals for marriage. It aims to increase awareness of unwritten rules, thereby enhancing their freedom to accept, reject, or change the rules stemming from the family of origin that could undermine their future relationship (Rostami et al., 2020). This model emphasizes seven basic categories during the acquaintance and engagement phase, guiding couples to acquire these skills and enrich their communication skills (Hashemi et al., 2022). This model, designed by the Center for Relationship Development affiliated with Seattle Pacific University, was created by Les and Leslie Parrott (1995) in collaboration with the psychology department, aiming at preventive measures and improving couples' relationships before and after marriage, now a part of the university curriculum. The model's name is derived from the initials of "Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts." In recent years, hundreds of couples have participated in this program, and enrollment is increasing. A unique feature of this program includes a Marriage Mentors Club, connecting young couples in their first year of marriage with experienced and seasoned couples (Hashemi et al., 2022). In this model, engaged couples answer seven fundamental questions. The first question addresses marriage myths, focusing on harmful and incorrect myths that damage future marital life. The aim is to dispel these myths. The second question concerns couples' love styles, analyzing the components of love and exploring ways to keep love alive. The third question pertains to happiness in marriage, focusing on the individuals rather than the marriage, as couples' attitudes lead to happiness. The fourth question is about understanding and being understood, helping couples better understand each other. Emphasizing learning communication skills, this section establishes foundational communication skills in the early stages of marriage. The fifth question deals with gender differences, helping couples understand and act differently due to being of the opposite sex, recognizing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors compared to their own. Attention to these differences can lead to a powerful source of intimacy in marriage. The sixth question involves conflict resolution, showing couples how to confront conflicts while minimizing aggression. The seventh and final question explores a deep understanding and the spiritual dimension, the most crucial aspect of a healthy marriage. It begins with examining the need for spiritual intimacy and then focuses on nurturing the marriage spirit (Rostami & Ghezelseflo, 2018; Rostami et al., 2020).

Given the aforementioned, it can be stated that premarital skill training can improve skills, change attitudes toward marriage, and empower young people to prepare for marriage. Therefore, there are methods today to enhance the attitude toward selecting the ideal partner. This study aims to compare the effectiveness of the Premarital Awareness and Choices Program and the Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts (SYMBIS) model on attitudes toward marriage (partner selection) among girls.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study is quasi-experimental research (pre-test, post-test with control group and one-month follow-up). The statistical population of this research included single female students over 30 years old at the Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch. After announcing the call for participation at the university (through advertisements and social media networks of the students), 45 students were selected from 53 volunteers who met the research criteria through screening using the Fear of Marriage Questionnaire, based on the inclusion criteria: being a student, willingness to participate in the research, being over 30 years old. Exclusion criteria included: absence for more than two sessions during the educational program, having psychological disorders, addiction, taking medical or psychiatric drugs, previous marriage experience, and simultaneous participation in other educational courses. After screening, 45 students were selected based on the research criteria. They were informed about the research plan, including the number of sessions, venue, duration of each session, and the topics covered. After obtaining their full consent and willingness to participate, written consent was obtained, and their names were included in the research list. In this study, 15 students were randomly assigned to the Premarital Awareness and Choices Program group, 15 to the SYMBIS Premarital Model group, and 15 to the control group.

After selecting the research samples and obtaining their consent while ensuring confidentiality of the results, all three groups (experimental group A, experimental group B, and

control group) responded to the Attitude Toward Marriage Questionnaire before the intervention. Then, experimental group A underwent the Premarital Awareness and Choices Program for 8 weekly sessions, each lasting 90 minutes. Experimental group B underwent the SYMBIS Premarital Model program for 8 weekly sessions, each lasting 90 minutes. The control group did not receive any intervention during this period. After the intervention sessions, all three groups (experimental groups A and B, and the control group) again responded to the Attitude Toward Marriage Questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed using repeated measures ANOVA. To adhere to ethical standards, after completing the study, the control group was divided into two groups, each with 5 couples, and participated in 8 sessions of 90 minutes of the Premarital Awareness and Choices Program and the SYMBIS Premarital Model program.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Attitude Toward Marriage

The Attitude Toward Marriage Scale was developed by Braaten and Rosen (1998). This scale consists of 23 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree, measuring beliefs and attitudes toward marriage. It includes two separate but related factors: attitude toward one's own marriage and general attitude toward marriage. The general attitude toward one's own marriage includes pessimistic, optimistic, and idealistic attitudes. Items 1, 3, 5, 8, 12, 16, 19, 20, and 23 are reverse scored. The total score, ranging from a minimum of 23 to a maximum of 92, indicates higher scores reflecting more positive attitudes toward marriage. The Attitude Toward Marriage Scale has a convergent validity correlation of 0.43 with the Marriage Expectation Scale. Vallerand and Brown reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.84 and 0.82, respectively, for this scale. The Attitude Toward Marriage Scale was standardized in Iran by Nilforoushan et al. (2011), who reported a reliability coefficient of 0.77 using Cronbach's alpha method and 0.91 using the test-retest method. The content validity and cultural adaptation of this scale were confirmed by five family counseling faculty members.

2.3. Intervention

2.3.1. Premarital Awareness and Choices Program

One of the programs used in premarital education is the Premarital Awareness and Choices Program (PICK). This program is based on the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM) developed by Van Epp (2006) as a model for examining close relationships (Azimikhoei et al., 2021; Hashemi et al., 2022).

Session 1: Introduction and Initial Assessment

Objective: Establish rapport, assess initial relationship dynamics. Content: Introductions, building rapport, familiarizing couples with session principles, rules, and objectives, obtaining commitment, teaching communication principles, styles of communication, conversational skills, and speaker-listener rules. Assignment: Select an important life topic. One partner uses speaking skills, and the other uses listening skills (Action Plan for Speaking Skills and Action Plan for Listening Skills). Complete worksheets #1 and #2.

Session 2: Understanding Communication Styles and Skills

Objective: Familiarize with communication styles and skills. Content: Communication styles: ways to talk and listen, paying attention to the partner, giving encouragement in the relationship, understanding the relationship, teaching empathic skills, enriching communication practice, respectful communication, and constructive dialogue. Assignment: Continue daily conversations. Hold encouragement meetings three times a week, focusing on positive aspects of the partner and the relationship. Discuss "The most positive thing today was…" and "Today, I admired…about you." Show appreciation when the partner offers encouragement.

Session 3: Managing Relationship Styles and Conflict

Objective: Learn relationship management and conflict resolution. Content: Identify conflict resolution processes and styles using worksheet #3 at home, review conflict management strategies and outcomes, identify a conflict issue, and resolve it using conflict resolution steps. Assignment: Practice conflict resolution using worksheet #3.

Session 4: Conflict Resolution Process

Objective: Apply skills in relationship management and conflict resolution. Content: Apply relationship management and conflict resolution skills using worksheet #4. Assignment: Use the skills learned in worksheet #4.

Session 5: Exploring Couples' Value Systems

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Objective: Understand honesty and spirituality in relationships. Content: Discuss the importance of honesty, express emotions openly, share perceptions of partner's statements, listen empathetically, practice "I-messages," and integrate spiritual values into the relationship. Assignment: Practice honesty and express feelings, report three instances in the next session, practice "I-messages," and integrate spiritual aspects into daily life.

Session 6: Understanding Each Other's Value Systems

Objective: Increase awareness of cultural differences and unconscious roles. Content: Discuss family culture, ways to handle cultural differences, discover unconscious roles and unspoken rules. Assignment: Practice rituals, roles, goals, and symbols at home and report in the next session.

Session 7: Schema Mindset

Objective: Identify schemas and introduce dynamic mindset models. Content: Introduce schema concepts, dimensional and dynamic mindset models, mental maps, healthy and unhealthy co-functioning, relational imagery, hidden legacies, brain attraction, and schema connections. Assignment: Practice schema cycle conflict cards at home and report back.

Session 8: Schema Mindset

Objective: Explore attachment theory and adult attachment styles. Content: Discuss attachment theory, adult attachment styles, shaping behavior models based on attachment, examining basic needs and desires. Assignment: Identify individual and couple needs using the basic needs profile and worksheet #9, focusing on actions to satisfy these needs without external control.

Session 9: Family of Origin Health (Personal History)

Objective: Increase awareness of family of origin influences on current relationships. Content: Discuss the impact of the family of origin on current marital relationships, the influence of past experiences on present functioning. Assignment: Practice "conscious role selection," "healing excavation," and "touring the museums of past hurts and helplessness," using worksheets #11 and #12.

Session 10: Summary and Conclusion

Objective: Review learned skills, teach transfer and maintenance skills. Content: Review all learned skills, teach skills for transferring and maintaining these skills, troubleshoot any issues, and conclude sessions. Assignment: Conduct a post-test and end the sessions.

2.3.2. SYMBIS Premarital Model

In this research, the premarital counseling was based on the SYMBIS model, developed by Les and Leslie Parrott (2016) and validated in studies by Qazelsafloo and Rostami (2021), Rostami and Qazelsafloo (2018), Mirahmadi et al. (2019), and Rostami et al. (2020) (Hashemi et al., 2022; Rostami & Ghezelseflo, 2018; Rostami et al., 2020).

Session 1: Identifying Marriage Myths and Beliefs

Objective: Address harmful marriage myths and unspoken rules. Content: Discuss four harmful beliefs: identical marriage expectations, marital improvement, disappearance of bad things, and spouse completion. Examine unspoken rules and unconscious roles learned from the family of origin, and introduce the AHM couple styles. Assignment: Identify ten personal rules, make conscious role selections, move from idealizing to realistic spouse selection, and assess self-concept.

Session 2: Identifying Love Styles

Objective: Analyze and understand love styles. Content: Review homework, analyze components of love, and identify ways to maintain love. Discuss Sternberg's love triangle and stages of love (passionate love, power struggle, cooperation, mutuality, and co-creativity) and strategies for sustaining lasting love. Assignment: Define love from the couple's perspective, identify and adapt love styles, and create intimacy.

Session 3: Being Happy in Marriage

Objective: Focus on couples' attitudes towards happiness. Content: Review homework, focus on self-awareness, and discuss how attitudes affect happiness. Develop a precise plan for mutual happiness, introduce key attitudes for improving or distorting marriage, and identify destructive factors for a happy marriage. Assignment: Focus on self-talk, avoid the blame game, and adapt to uncontrollable aspects.

Session 4: Having Mutual Understanding

Objective: Improve mutual understanding through effective communication. Content: Review homework, discuss the importance of effective communication, build foundational communication skills, and introduce rules for successful communication. Assignment: Practice effective communication, daily temperature reading, and active listening.

Session 5: Understanding Gender Differences

Objective: Recognize and appreciate gender differences. Content: Review homework, discuss how understanding gender differences can enhance intimacy, examine

significant gender differences, and explore what men and women need to know about each other. Assignment: Identify gender roles and recognize over ten needs.

Session 6: Conflict Resolution Skills

Objective: Equip couples with conflict resolution skills. Content: Review homework, show how to confront conflicts while minimizing aggression, identify common sources of conflict, and equip couples with conflict resolution and problem-solving skills. Assignment: Identify sensitive issues, discuss financial matters, practice mind reading, and share withheld feelings with the partner.

Session 7: Role of Spirituality in Marriage

Objective: Explore spirituality as a key aspect of a healthy marriage. Content: Review homework, discuss the need for spiritual intimacy, and explore ways to nurture the marriage's spiritual aspect. Assignment: Undertake a spiritual journey and observe your partner's spiritual needs closely.

Session 8: Summary and Conclusion

Objective: Review all sessions, address questions, and conduct post-assessment. Content: Summarize all sessions, engage in Q&A, and ask participants to complete the pre-

marital evaluation questionnaire again. Assignment: Conduct the post-test.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient, multiple regression, and SPSS-27 software.

3. Findings and Results

The mean age and standard deviation of the participants in the PICK experimental group were 33.33 (SD = 1.96) years, for the SYMBIS experimental group were 32.75 (SD = 1.28) years, and for the control group were 33.91 (SD = 1.88) years. The educational levels of the participants in the PICK experimental group were as follows: 1 undergraduate student (8.3%), 6 master's students (50%), and 5 doctoral students (41.7%). For the SYMBIS experimental group: 1 undergraduate student (8.3%), 7 master's students (58.3%), and 4 doctoral students (33.3%). For the control group: 3 undergraduate students (25%), 6 master's students (50%), and 3 doctoral students (25%).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Pre-Test, Post-Test, and Follow-Up Scores on Attitudes Toward Marriage Dimensions

Variable	Group	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	Follow-Up Mean (SD)
Optimistic Attitude Toward Marriage	PICK Program	25.70 (1.34)	21.55 (1.46)	17.80 (1.73)
	SYMBIS Premarital Model	25.70 (1.71)	18.90 (1.20)	18.80 (1.19)
	Control	25.73 (1.26)	25.85 (1.30)	25.70 (1.34)
Pessimistic Attitude Toward Marriage	PICK Program	30.55 (1.82)	24.55 (0.99)	24.65 (0.93)
	SYMBIS Premarital Model	30.25 (1.74)	21.65 (1.03)	21.70 (1.21)
	Control	29.15 (1.69)	29.20 (1.67)	29.05 (1.63)
Idealistic Attitude Toward Marriage	PICK Program	29.65 (1.59)	24.30 (1.52)	23.40 (2.23)
	SYMBIS Premarital Model	29.25 (1.91)	21.75 (1.25)	21.65 (1.38)
	Control	29.00 (1.33)	28.90 (1.33)	28.80 (1.28)

The data in Table 1 indicate that the scores of the experimental groups in the subscales of optimistic attitude toward marriage, pessimistic attitude toward marriage, and idealistic attitude toward marriage decreased compared to

the control group in both experimental groups of single girls, indicating improvement in these subscales in the post-test stage and stability in the follow-up stage.

Table 2

Results of Repeated Measures ANOVA for the Effect of the Awareness and Interpersonal Choices Program and the SYMBIS Premarital Model on Attitude Toward Marriage Subscales at Pre-Test, Post-Test, and Follow-Up Stages Using Greenhouse-Geisser Correction

Variable	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Effect Size
Optimistic Attitude Toward Marriage	Within-Groups						
	Intervention Stages	417.31	1.21	342.96	419.61	0.001	0.90
	Stages × Group	222.14	2.43	91.28	111.68	0.001	0.83
	Error	42.76	52.32	0.81			

	Between-Groups						
	Group	294.70	2	174.35	32.86	0.001	0.60
	Error	192.77	43	4.48			
Pessimistic Attitude Toward Marriage	Within-Groups						
	Intervention Stages	569.28	1.22	466.35	591.48	0.001	0.93
	Stages × Group	289.44	2.44	118.55	150.36	0.001	0.87
	Error	41.38	52.49	0.74			
	Between-Groups						
	Group	661.53	2	330.76	91.51	0.001	0.81
	Error	155.42	43	3.61			
Idealistic Attitude Toward Marriage	Within-Groups						
	Intervention Stages	421.97	1.18	356.80	161.95	0.001	0.79
	Stages × Group	191.35	2.36	80.90	36.72	0.001	0.63
	Error	112.03	50.85	2.20			
	Between-Groups						
	Group	358.87	2	179.43	22.37	0.001	0.51
	Error	344.86	43	8.02			

The significance level of the repeated measures ANOVA indicates that the repetition of the test, i.e., the mean difference of all subscales of the fear of marriage at the three measurement stages, is significant (P < 0.01). The effect size for the optimistic attitude toward marriage, pessimistic attitude toward marriage, and idealistic attitude toward marriage subscales were 0.60, 0.81, and 0.51, respectively, meaning that 60%, 81%, and 51% of the total variance or individual differences in reducing the subscales are explained by the experimental variables. Based on the obtained results, the analysis of the three stages was carried out separately for each group.

Table 3

Bonferroni Post-Hoc Test Results for Comparing Attitude Toward Marriage Subscales in Three Stages: Pre-Test, Post-Test, and Follow-Up

Statistical Indicators	Pre-Test - Post-Test (M (SE))	Pre-Test - Follow-Up (M (SE))	Post-Test - Follow-Up (M (SE))
Optimistic Attitude Toward Marriage	3.55 (0.68)*	3.15 (0.72)*	0.48 (0.34)
Pessimistic Attitude Toward Marriage	3.78 (0.72)*	3.26 (0.70)*	0.56 (0.13)
Idealistic Attitude Toward Marriage	3.42 (0.60)*	3.46 (0.77)*	0.74 (0.19)

*p < 0.01

The Bonferroni post-hoc test results show that the mean difference in the subscales of optimistic attitude toward marriage, pessimistic attitude toward marriage, and idealistic attitude toward marriage between the pre-test with post-test and follow-up stages is significant (P = 0.001), but the mean difference between post-test and follow-up stages is not significant, indicating that the effects of the intervention remained stable in the follow-up stage.

Table 4

Tukey Post-Hoc Test Results for Pairwise Comparison of Groups

Variable	Group	Group	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Significance Level
Optimistic Attitude Toward Marriage	PICK Program	Control	4.54**	0.67	0.001
	SYMBIS	Control	3.81**	0.67	0.001
	PICK Program	SYMBIS	0.41	0.67	0.77
Pessimistic Attitude Toward Marriage	PICK Program	Control	2.78**	0.82	0.001
	SYMBIS	Control	2.36**	0.82	0.001
	PICK Program	SYMBIS	0.20	0.82	0.63
Idealistic Attitude Toward Marriage	PICK Program	Control	3.46**	0.49	0.001
	SYMBIS	Control	3.48**	0.49	0.001
	PICK Program	SYMBIS	0.10	0.49	0.59

Table 4 compares the effects of the two intervention approaches on dependent variables (optimistic attitude toward marriage, pessimistic attitude toward marriage, and idealistic attitude toward marriage). As shown, there is no

significant difference between the PICK Program and the SYMBIS Premarital Model in these subscales in the post-test and follow-up stages, indicating the effectiveness of both methods in improving the mentioned subscales.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the present study showed that both methods had a significant effect on the girls' attitudes toward marriage, and the comparison of the groups revealed no significant difference in the effectiveness of the PICK premarital program and the SYMBIS premarital model on girls' attitudes toward marriage. These findings are consistent with the prior results (Azimikhoei et al., 2021; Hashemi et al., 2022; Rostami & Ghezelseflo, 2018; Rostami et al., 2020). The SYMBIS model appears to work by addressing incorrect beliefs and common myths about marriage and love, and by modifying common attitudes, especially regarding gender differences. On the other hand, the PICK program effectively enhances girls' knowledge about marriage, thus influencing their attitudes toward marriage.

The effectiveness of the PICK program on girls' attitudes toward marriage can be explained by teaching individuals to create a mental profile of the person they intend to marry. All beliefs and expectations about their partner's behavior, needs fulfillment, and overall trustworthiness are designed into a mental trust profile (Azimikhoei et al., 2021). This profiling process allows individuals to learn the necessary skills to trust the relationship and have confidence in a stable and long-term relationship. Furthermore, the cognitive knowledge component of the PICK program involves acquiring knowledge about the romantic partner during the meeting stage and related processes, such as mutual self-disclosure, sharing separation experiences, and engaging in these behaviors over time, which are important in developing a relationship (Azimikhoei et al., 2021). Cognitive knowledge has five essential traits that predict a successful marriage (Stewart, 2015). These traits, abbreviated as FACES, include Family Background (F), Attitudes and Actions of Conscience (A), Compatibility Potential (C), Examples of Relationship Patterns (E), and Communication Skills (S) (Hashemi et al., 2022).

In line with this, Bohm (2017) found that the PICK program increases knowledge about the marriage partner, reduces the belief in blind love, decreases control over the marriage partner, and enhances understanding of healthy relationships. Thus, the PICK program helps individuals improve their attitudes toward marriage by addressing ambiguities and correcting personal misconceptions.

The SYMBIS model begins by addressing expectations and unspoken rules, raising awareness that everyone lives by a set of recognized but rarely articulated rules, which often become apparent when violated by significant others like spouses. The SYMBIS model effectively changes girls' attitudes toward marriage by providing accurate and comprehensive information about love and how to experience it throughout life. The exercise "Changing Love Styles," based on Sternberg's love triangle theory, identifies elements of sexual desire, intimacy, and commitment. Couples divide their relationship into three stages and create a love triangle best suited to each stage, allowing the fluidity of passion, intimacy, and commitment over time (Rostami & Ghezelseflo, 2018). This discussion enables couples to talk about their unique love styles, describing their current and past relationships. The exercise "Defining Love" helps couples take responsibility for nurturing sexual desire, intimacy, and commitment by identifying their definitions of love (Rostami et al., 2020). The SYMBIS model thus plays a crucial role in raising awareness and consequently changing attitudes toward marriage.

Additionally, one goal of the SYMBIS program is to debunk common myths about marriage and set realistic expectations. The exercises "Your Ten Personal Rules" and "Conscious Role Selection" are particularly designed to help couples openly discuss life myths, unspoken rules, and unconscious roles, enabling them to develop a healthy perspective on marriage that is unique to them and actionable (Hashemi et al., 2022). This approach positively impacts girls' attitudes toward marriage.

Moreover, the SYMBIS model aims to teach effective conflict resolution skills for marital disputes. Another goal is to foster an attitude and perspective that helps individuals sustain marriage despite unforeseen challenges (Hashemi et al., 2022). When individuals learn about marital conflicts and coping strategies before marriage, they develop a more realistic view of marriage. Therefore, the SYMBIS model effectively changes girls' attitudes toward marriage.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

Given the results, marriage counselors are advised to use both the PICK premarital program and the SYMBIS premarital model to increase counseling effectiveness. It is also recommended to conduct workshops for marriage counselors on these programs.

This study has some limitations, including the convenience sampling method, which lowers the generalizability of the results. The study's population consisted of female students, making it necessary to generalize the findings cautiously to other groups, particularly unmarried men. The short follow-up period and having only one follow-up stage limit the study. Additionally, uncontrolled variables might have interfered with the study, affecting generalizability.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent and confidentiality, were observed in conducting this study.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

Authors' Contributions

All authors made substantial contributions to the research process, covering various aspects from study design to data handling and manuscript preparation.

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