Comparative Analysis of the Role of Premarital Education and Counseling in Appropriate Mate Selection and Sustainable Marriage from the Perspectives of University Students and Family Counselors

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article type: *Original Research* **How to cite this article:** Asghariganji, A., & Nouraei, M. (2026). Comparative Analysis of the Role of Premarital Education and Counseling in Appropriate Mate Selection and Sustainable Marriage from the Perspectives of University Students and Family Counselors. *Journal of Adolescent and Youth Psychological Studies, 7*(4), 1-9. http://dx.doi.org/10.61838/kman.jayps.4940 © 2026 the authors. Published by KMAN Publication Inc. (KMANPUB), Ontario, Canada. This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License.	**Objective:** The objective of this study was to compare the perspectives of university students and family counselors regarding the effectiveness of premarital education and counseling in appropriate mate selection and the formation of sustainable marriages. **Methods and Materials:** This study employed a descriptive–survey design with a cross-sectional approach. The population consisted of students from Islamic Azad University, Sari Branch, and professional family counselors in Mazandaran Province. A total of 450 students and 58 family counselors were selected using multi-stage cluster sampling and purposive sampling, respectively. Data were collected using the Mate Selection Criteria Questionnaire and a researcher-developed instrument. Psychometric properties were verified through confirmatory factor analysis, Cronbach's alpha, KMO, and Bartlett's test. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 24, employing factor analysis, Friedman test, Mann–Whitney U test, and Kolmogorov–Smirnov test at a significance level of .05. **Findings:** Inferential analyses revealed that premarital counseling, educational programs, educational content, and educational delivery significantly influenced appropriate mate selection and sustainable marriage (p < .05). Friedman test results indicated significant differences in the prioritization of these components within both participant groups (p < .001), with premarital counseling ranked as the most influential factor by both students and family counselors. Mann–Whitney U test results showed no statistically significant differences between the perspectives of students and counselors regarding the evaluated components (p > .05). **Conclusion:** Premarital education and counseling play a decisive role in enhancing conscious partner selection and promoting long-term marital stability, with consistent recognition of their importance among both emerging adults and professional practitioners. *Keywords:* appropriate mate selection, sustainable marriage, premarital counseling, family counselors.

1. Introduction

Marriage is universally recognized as one of the most fundamental social institutions, serving as a cornerstone for psychological well-being, social stability, and intergenerational continuity. The quality of marital relationships exerts profound effects on individuals' mental health, emotional regulation, life satisfaction, and overall adjustment across the lifespan. Contemporary psychological research consistently demonstrates that marital satisfaction predicts physical health, emotional resilience, parenting quality, and social functioning, while marital instability is associated with elevated risks of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and social dysfunction (Glasser & Glasser, 2024; Kazim & Rafique, 2021). Accordingly, the processes through which individuals select a spouse and prepare for marriage have become central concerns in both clinical psychology and family counseling.

Mate selection is a complex, multidimensional psychological process influenced by personality traits, emotional needs, cultural expectations, social norms, family background, and individual developmental histories. Empirical studies indicate that ineffective mate selection processes are among the strongest predictors of later marital dissatisfaction and divorce, whereas informed and psychologically grounded partner choice significantly increases the likelihood of long-term marital stability and relational satisfaction (Schwarz & Hassebrauck, 2012; Yazdani et al., 2020). Consequently, modern family psychology increasingly emphasizes preventive interventions that enhance individuals' awareness, decision-making capacity, and relational competencies before entering marriage.

Premarital education and counseling have emerged as primary preventive strategies aimed at strengthening couples' relational foundations prior to marriage. These interventions are designed to promote realistic expectations, improve communication skills, facilitate emotional intimacy, and support conscious partner selection, thereby reducing the probability of future marital conflict and dissolution (Bahari, 2018; Ghahari, 2022). The preventive orientation of premarital counseling aligns with public health models of mental health promotion, which prioritize early intervention over crisis-based treatment approaches (Asghariganji, 2025; Sayyad Shirazi & Nouri, 2025).

Theoretical frameworks in marital psychology conceptualize premarital counseling as an educational-therapeutic process that integrates cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and systemic components. Asghariganji (2024) outlines premarital counseling as a structured intervention encompassing partner selection criteria, emotional readiness assessment, conflict resolution training, communication enhancement, and the identification of maladaptive relational schemas (Asghariganji, 2024). These components are supported by schema-based and cognitive-behavioral models, which posit that early cognitive structures and emotional patterns shape individuals' expectations, perceptions, and interactions within intimate relationships (Fereydonpour et al., 2020; Mokhtari et al., 2022).

Empirical findings consistently confirm the effectiveness of premarital counseling in promoting marital success. Adzovie and Dabone's cross-cultural investigation demonstrated that couples who received premarital counseling reported significantly higher marital satisfaction, commitment, and relational stability compared with those who did not participate in such programs (Adzovie & Dabone, 2021). Similar conclusions were reached in studies conducted in Egypt, where medical students expressed strong positive perceptions regarding the necessity and effectiveness of premarital counseling in fostering stable marital relationships (Kabbash et al., 2019). These findings reflect the universal psychological mechanisms through which structured relational preparation enhances marital outcomes across diverse cultural contexts.

In the Iranian sociocultural context, marriage retains profound moral, religious, and social significance. However, rapid social change, economic pressures, evolving gender roles, and shifting interpersonal expectations have introduced new challenges to marital stability. Iranian researchers have reported increasing concerns regarding marital dissatisfaction and divorce, emphasizing the urgent need for systematic preventive interventions within the premarital period (Hossein-Khanzadeh et al., 2023; Simbar et al., 2021). In response, the development and implementation of culturally sensitive premarital education programs have gained prominence within Iranian counseling and mental health services.

Hossein-Khanzadeh et al. demonstrated that structured premarital education significantly enhances young adults' attitudes toward marriage and predicts higher marital success, particularly when such programs integrate emotional awareness training, communication skill development, and realistic expectation formation (Hossein-Khanzadeh et al., 2023). Likewise, Ahangar et al. found that personality traits, when systematically assessed within premarital counseling frameworks, substantially contribute

to partner compatibility and marital stability (Ahangar et al., 2024). These findings highlight the importance of evidence-based psychological assessment and intervention within premarital counseling protocols.

Mate selection criteria constitute another crucial domain within premarital preparation. Research indicates that individuals' priorities regarding physical attractiveness, social status, emotional compatibility, moral values, cultural similarity, and psychological traits significantly influence long-term marital satisfaction (Isanejad & Hooshmand, 2019; Schwarz & Hassebrauck, 2012). The Mate Selection Criteria Inventory developed by Schwarz and Hassebrauck has provided robust empirical support for the multidimensional structure of mate preferences, revealing consistent sex and age differences in partner selection priorities (Schwarz & Hassebrauck, 2012). Iranian adaptations of this instrument further confirm the central role of conscious and informed mate selection in marital stability (Isanejad & Hooshmand, 2019; Yazdani et al., 2020).

Beyond individual psychological factors, social and emotional readiness for marriage constitutes a critical predictor of marital outcomes. Studies reveal that unresolved emotional conflicts, maladaptive schemas, and unrealistic expectations contribute to fear of marriage, relational avoidance, and dysfunctional partner selection patterns (Fereydonpour et al., 2020; Mokhtari et al., 2022). Premarital counseling addresses these vulnerabilities through systematic cognitive-emotional restructuring, thereby fostering healthier relational trajectories.

The preventive value of premarital education extends to long-term help-seeking behaviors within marriage. Williamson et al. demonstrated that couples who participated in premarital education were more likely to seek timely professional support during marital challenges, which significantly reduced the risk of chronic conflict escalation and marital dissolution (Williamson et al., 2014). This finding underscores the enduring protective function of premarital interventions across the marital lifespan.

Despite the demonstrated benefits of premarital counseling, several structural and practical gaps continue to undermine its effectiveness. Experts report deficiencies in counselor training, lack of standardized curricula, limited accessibility, and insufficient integration of culturally grounded psychological models within existing programs (Sayyad Shirazi & Nouri, 2025). These shortcomings emphasize the necessity of continuous program evaluation, refinement, and evidence-based development within the field of family counseling.

Moreover, recent interdisciplinary research suggests that broader psychosocial stressors—including emotional distress related to societal instability and life transitions—interact with marital dynamics, further highlighting the importance of psychological preparedness before marriage (Keshchyan et al., 2025). The emotional states of individuals entering marriage significantly influence relationship formation, adjustment processes, and conflict management, reinforcing the need for comprehensive premarital psychological assessment and intervention.

Although extensive research confirms the effectiveness of premarital counseling, relatively few studies have systematically compared the perspectives of key stakeholders—namely university students as future marital candidates and professional family counselors as service providers—regarding the specific components and priorities of premarital education. Janbozorgi emphasizes that understanding these comparative perspectives is essential for designing responsive, client-centered counseling programs that address both professional standards and client expectations (Janbozorgi, 2023). The alignment between clients' perceptions and counselors' priorities is critical for maximizing program efficacy, engagement, and long-term outcomes.

In the context of higher education, university students represent a particularly important population for premarital interventions. This developmental period involves identity formation, relational experimentation, and the establishment of long-term life goals. Research indicates that targeted premarital education delivered during this stage significantly improves relational competencies, partner selection awareness, and psychological readiness for marriage (Afrooz, 2014; Salley, 2022). Consequently, universities serve as strategic platforms for preventive marital health promotion.

Given these theoretical and empirical foundations, a comprehensive examination of how students and family counselors evaluate the role of premarital education and counseling in appropriate mate selection and sustainable marriage is both timely and necessary. Such comparative analysis can illuminate critical convergence and divergence in perceptions, inform program development, and enhance the effectiveness of preventive marital interventions within both academic and clinical contexts.

The aim of the present study is to conduct a comparative analysis of the role of premarital education and counseling in appropriate mate selection and sustainable marriage from

the perspectives of university students and family counselors.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a descriptive–survey design with a cross-sectional approach. The statistical population consisted of all students of Islamic Azad University, Sari Branch, in the year 2024, from whom, based on the Krejcie and Morgan table, a sample of 450 participants (230 women and 220 men) was selected using a multi-stage cluster sampling method. In addition, in order to enrich the expert perspective, 58 family counselors (28 women and 30 men) from Mazandaran Province were selected through purposive sampling. To enhance the quality of the study, priority was given to premarital counselors with greater professional experience. The sampling process for counselors was conducted using purposive sampling in combination with snowball sampling.

2.2. Measures

Mate Selection Criteria Questionnaire. The Mate Selection Criteria Questionnaire was developed by Schwarz and Hassebrauck (2012) to assess individuals' criteria for choosing a spouse (Schwarz & Hassebrauck, 2012). In the original study, participants evaluated the importance of 82 mate selection criteria within the context of a long-term relationship. The findings indicated that the distribution of responses for most variables significantly deviated from normality. This questionnaire assesses multiple dimensions of personal, personality, social, emotional, and physical characteristics as potential mate selection criteria. Schwarz and Hassebrauck concluded that the response patterns lacked sufficient homogeneity and symmetry to conform to a normal distribution, thereby necessitating the use of robust or nonparametric statistical methods in data analysis (Schwarz & Hassebrauck, 2012). In Iran, this questionnaire was standardized and culturally adapted by Isa-Nejad and Hooshmand (2019). The Iranian version contains 58 items and 9 core factors representing diverse dimensions of mate selection criteria, including kindness and mutual understanding, social status, trustworthiness, similarity and creativity, ambition, physical attractiveness, cultural refinement, romanticism, and cheerfulness. Items are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not important) to 5 (Very important). The total score is obtained by summing item scores, with higher scores indicating more conscious and desirable mate selection standards (Isanejad & Hooshmand, 2019). Confirmatory factor analysis supported the adequacy of the nine-factor structure of the Iranian version. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.51 to 0.91, and test–retest reliability over a one-month interval ranged from 0.53 to 0.72. Significant positive correlations were also reported between the factors of this questionnaire and those of the Welfare and Others Mate Selection Prioritization Questionnaire (Isanejad & Hooshmand, 2019). In the present study, internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.92 for the total scale, indicating excellent reliability in the study sample.

Researcher-Developed Questionnaire. To assess the study variables, a researcher-developed questionnaire was constructed following systematic and scientific procedures. Initially, a comprehensive literature review and theoretical analysis were conducted to identify primary concepts and core constructs. Subsequently, in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with psychology experts, marriage and family counselors, and subject-matter specialists to extract relevant perspectives, components, and potential items. Based on these results, a preliminary version of the questionnaire was developed and submitted to a panel of psychology and family counseling experts for content evaluation. Revisions were made according to expert feedback, and the initial version was finalized. The questionnaire was then administered in a pilot study to a subset of the target population, and its psychometric properties were examined. Face validity was confirmed by a group of premarital counseling and psychology experts. Construct validity was assessed using factor analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to evaluate item alignment with the intended dimensions. Items with factor loadings below 0.50 were removed. Following refinement, the final version of the questionnaire was established. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all dimensions exceeded 0.80, and the coefficient for the total scale was above 0.90, indicating excellent internal consistency. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) index exceeded 0.80 for all dimensions, confirming sampling adequacy for factor analysis. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ($p < .0001$), demonstrating the suitability of the correlation matrix for factor analysis. Overall, the questionnaire demonstrated satisfactory validity and reliability for research application.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed at both descriptive and inferential levels. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to characterize the sample. Inferential analyses included factor analysis, Friedman test, Mann–Whitney U test, and Kolmogorov–Smirnov test to test hypotheses and assess the normality of data distribution. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 24, with a significance level set at .05.

3. Findings and Results

Descriptive statistics for the study variables, including means and standard deviations, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Students' and Family Counselors' Perspectives on Appropriate Mate Selection

Research Components	Family Counselors M	Family Counselors SD	Students M	Students SD
Educational Program	3.60	0.37	3.64	0.38
Educational Content	3.63	0.35	3.67	0.39
Premarital Counseling	3.80	0.43	3.74	0.46
Effect of Educational Program	3.65	0.38	3.72	0.41

Based on the results reported in Table 1, from the perspectives of both participant groups (family counselors and students), premarital counseling was identified as the most influential factor in appropriate mate selection. The mean score for this component was 3.80 for family counselors and 3.74 for students, which was the highest among all components. To assess the normality of data distribution, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was conducted. The results indicated that the significance level for all major study variables was less than .05, demonstrating that the data were not normally distributed. Accordingly, nonparametric tests were used in subsequent analyses to test the research hypotheses.

Table 2

Friedman Test Results for Prioritization of Research Components Based on Students' and Family Counselors' Perspectives

Group	Research Components	Mean Rank	χ^2	df	Sig.
Family Counselors	Premarital Counseling	2.70	56.37	3	.000
	Educational Program	2.69			
	Educational Content	2.26			
	Educational Delivery	2.21			
Students	Premarital Counseling	2.64	18.04	3	.000
	Educational Delivery	2.54			
	Educational Content	2.39			
	Educational Program	2.36			

According to Table 2, the significance level of the Friedman test was less than .05, indicating a statistically significant difference among the mean ranks of components related to appropriate mate selection and marital stability from the perspectives of both participant groups.

Based on the obtained results, family counselors prioritized the four components as follows: premarital counseling (2.70), educational program (2.69), educational content (2.26), and educational delivery (2.21). In contrast, students ranked the components as: premarital counseling (2.64), educational delivery (2.54), educational content (2.39), and educational program (2.36). Accordingly, it can be concluded that in both groups, premarital counseling was identified as the most influential component in appropriate mate selection and the formation of a sustainable marriage.

Table 3

Mann–Whitney U Test Results for Comparing Students' and Family Counselors' Perspectives

Research Components	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	Sig.
Factors Affecting Education	Students	390	226.41	91,211.00	10,425.00	2.80	.759
	Family Counselors	58	175.10	11,861.00			
Educational Program	Students	390	230.69	92,104.50	9,651.50	3.62	.769
	Family Counselors	58	154.38	11,141.50			
Educational Content	Students	390	221.24	91,578.50	11,316.50	2.01	.422
	Family Counselors	58	200.12	12,625.50			
Importance of Premarital Education and Counseling	Students	390	221.45	91,541.50	11,257.50	2.16	.030
	Family Counselors	58	200.00	12,601.50			

Based on the results presented in Table 3, the significance level of the Mann–Whitney U test for all components related to appropriate mate selection and sustainable marriage was greater than .05. This finding indicates that no statistically significant difference exists between the perspectives of family counselors and students regarding the evaluation of the research components and attitudes toward the role of premarital education and counseling. According to the findings, both groups emphasized that premarital education and counseling contribute to informed mate selection and the enhancement of marital stability; however, the intensity of this perception was reported differently between the two groups.

4. Discussion

The present study examined the comparative perspectives of university students and family counselors regarding the role of premarital education and counseling in appropriate mate selection and the formation of sustainable marriages. The findings demonstrated that both groups strongly endorsed the effectiveness of premarital education and counseling, with premarital counseling emerging as the most influential component in promoting informed partner selection and marital stability. This result is consistent with the growing body of literature emphasizing premarital counseling as a critical preventive intervention in relationship development and marital success (Adzovie & Dabone, 2021; Ghahari, 2022; Hossein-Khanzadeh et al., 2023). The convergence of perceptions between students and counselors suggests that the fundamental value of premarital counseling is widely recognized by both service recipients and professionals, reinforcing its central position in modern family psychology.

The prioritization of premarital counseling over educational programs, content, and delivery by both groups reflects the psychological depth and relational specificity that counseling interventions provide. Unlike general educational programs, premarital counseling allows for individualized exploration of emotional readiness, relational expectations, personality compatibility, and interpersonal skills. This finding aligns with Asghariganji's conceptualization of premarital counseling as a comprehensive psychological process integrating cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and relational components (Asghariganji, 2024, 2025). The superior influence attributed to counseling in the present study further corroborates Glasser and Glasser's assertion that sustained marital success requires deep psychological understanding and structured relational preparation rather than mere informational instruction (Glasser & Glasser, 2024).

The significant effects of educational programs and educational content on mate selection and marital sustainability observed in this study are likewise consistent with prior empirical findings. Hossein-Khanzadeh et al. demonstrated that structured premarital education programs significantly shape positive marital attitudes and improve long-term marital outcomes among young adults (Hossein-Khanzadeh et al., 2023). Similarly, Simbar et al. emphasized the importance of gender-sensitive premarital educational services in addressing the diverse emotional and psychological needs of couples, thereby strengthening relational foundations (Simbar et al., 2021). These converging results highlight the necessity of integrating educational frameworks with counseling processes to produce comprehensive premarital intervention models.

The present findings also underscore the pivotal role of mate selection criteria in marital outcomes. Both participant groups acknowledged that informed partner selection,

facilitated through premarital counseling and education, enhances marital stability. This observation directly supports Schwarz and Hassebrauck's model of mate selection, which posits that conscious evaluation of personal, emotional, social, and personality factors significantly predicts relational success (Schwarz & Hassebrauck, 2012). Iranian validation studies further confirm that awareness of mate selection criteria serves as a protective factor against maladaptive marital dynamics (Isanejad & Hooshmand, 2019; Yazdani et al., 2020). The consistency of these findings across cultures suggests that psychological mechanisms underlying mate selection operate universally, although culturally specific expressions may vary.

Another critical dimension of the current results lies in the absence of statistically significant differences between the perspectives of students and family counselors. This convergence is theoretically important, as it indicates a shared conceptualization of premarital preparation across professional and non-professional groups. Janbozorgi emphasized that alignment between clients' expectations and counselors' professional frameworks is essential for maximizing engagement and therapeutic effectiveness (Janbozorgi, 2023). The present findings thus suggest that existing premarital counseling frameworks are responsive to client perceptions, potentially enhancing participation and long-term program adherence.

The effectiveness of premarital counseling in addressing emotional readiness and psychological vulnerabilities is further supported by the literature on schema-based interventions. Mokhtari et al. demonstrated that schema-focused premarital education significantly reduces fear of marriage and maladaptive belief systems among young women, while Fereydonpour et al. reported improvements in attitudes toward romance and partner selection following schema and imago-based interventions (Fereydonpour et al., 2020; Mokhtari et al., 2022). These findings illuminate the mechanisms through which premarital counseling enhances emotional security and cognitive flexibility, both of which are essential for stable marital functioning.

The present results also align with cross-cultural research emphasizing the preventive value of premarital counseling. In Ghana, Adzovie and Dabone found that couples who engaged in premarital counseling reported significantly higher marital satisfaction and relational resilience (Adzovie & Dabone, 2021). In Egypt, Kabbash et al. observed widespread recognition among medical students regarding the importance of premarital counseling in ensuring marital success (Kabbash et al., 2019). These international parallels reinforce the global relevance of premarital counseling as a core component of marital health promotion.

Importantly, the study's findings resonate with contemporary models of marital psychology that conceptualize marriage as a dynamic system shaped by emotional regulation, communication competence, and adaptive coping strategies. Kazim and Rafique's cross-cultural analysis identified emotional compatibility and interpersonal skills as primary predictors of marital satisfaction across individualistic and collectivist societies (Kazim & Rafique, 2021). The strong endorsement of premarital counseling in the present study reflects recognition of its role in cultivating these competencies before marital entry.

The present results also support the view that premarital interventions exert long-term protective effects on marital trajectories. Williamson et al. demonstrated that premarital education enhances couples' willingness to seek professional support during marital distress, thereby reducing the likelihood of chronic conflict and divorce (Williamson et al., 2014). This longitudinal benefit underscores the enduring influence of premarital preparation beyond the initial stages of marriage.

The convergence of student and counselor perspectives further reflects increasing public awareness regarding the psychological complexities of marriage. Afrooz emphasized that contemporary marriages demand advanced psychological competencies, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal awareness to navigate modern relational challenges (Afrooz, 2014). The present findings suggest that such awareness has been internalized by both emerging adults and professional practitioners, contributing to more realistic and informed marital expectations.

Recent interdisciplinary research has also highlighted the interaction between broader psychosocial stressors and marital functioning. Keshchyan et al. demonstrated that emotional and psychological stress associated with life transitions significantly influences relational adjustment and marital satisfaction (Keshchyan et al., 2025). The strong endorsement of premarital counseling in the current study may reflect recognition of its buffering role against such stressors by strengthening emotional resilience and relational competence prior to marriage.

Despite these positive findings, experts have identified critical gaps in current premarital counseling practices. Sayyad Shirazi and Nouri reported deficiencies in program standardization, counselor training, and curriculum coherence, which may limit the full potential of premarital

interventions (Sayyad Shirazi & Nouri, 2025). The present study's results thus reinforce the urgency of addressing these systemic challenges to maximize the impact of premarital counseling on marital stability.

5. Conclusion

Finally, the present findings contribute to the growing literature advocating for the institutionalization of premarital counseling within educational and healthcare systems. Salley emphasized that faith-based and secular premarital programs significantly enhance relational understanding and marital satisfaction, particularly when delivered within supportive institutional contexts (Salley, 2022). The strong consensus observed in this study between students and counselors provides empirical support for expanding access to such programs across universities and community counseling centers.

6. Limitations & Suggestions

This study is subject to several limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts causal inference regarding the long-term impact of premarital education and counseling on marital outcomes. The reliance on self-report measures may introduce response bias related to social desirability or subjective interpretation. The sample was geographically limited, which may affect generalizability to other cultural or regional populations. Additionally, the absence of longitudinal follow-up prevents assessment of the durability of observed attitudinal changes over time.

Future research should employ longitudinal designs to evaluate the long-term effects of premarital counseling on marital stability, satisfaction, and mental health outcomes. Comparative studies across diverse cultural, socioeconomic, and religious contexts would enhance understanding of contextual moderators. Incorporating mixed-methods approaches could provide deeper insight into participants' lived experiences and the specific mechanisms through which premarital counseling exerts its effects. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs would further strengthen causal interpretations.

Premarital counseling programs should be expanded within university and community settings and integrated into public mental health services. Standardized, evidence-based curricula should be developed and adapted to cultural contexts. Counselor training programs must emphasize both theoretical knowledge and practical relational skills.

Accessible delivery models, including online and hybrid formats, can broaden program reach and engagement.

Acknowledgments

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.

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.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

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