

DIVORCING COUPLES: A PROFILE ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

Why do couples in Singapore get a divorce? Some commonly held ideas are that divorces are usually due to infidelity of older men trying to run off with a younger lady, financial difficulties in poor families, uneducated partners, or maybe the pressures of raising teenagers. Divorced persons are stigmatised, often presumed to be more quarrelsome (and in other ways less pleasant) than the average married person¹. In Singapore, only 1 in 10 divorced individuals re-marry, reflecting the difficulties in finding another partner after divorce². Furthermore, the negative and residual fall-out of the effects of divorce on children is also widely known³.

From 3,004 civil divorce petitions filed in 1996, there was an increase to 4,849 civil divorce petitions filed in 2002 (Subordinate Courts Research and Statistics Unit). Out of the whole population of divorcing couples, we are particularly interested in those embroiled in acrimonious divorce situations that are referred for counselling by the Family Court (which make up about 216 cases in 2002). These acrimonious cases are typically surrounded by high levels of conflict and prolonged Court battles, thus heightening the stresses faced. Some of these cases may eventually be presented in the Family Court as contested cases. The couples and the children caught in the midst of these long-drawn battles may be more likely to suffer from the negative effects of divorce. These include financial difficulties, reduced work performances, psychological and emotional morbidity in adults⁴ or poor school performance, depressive symptoms and subsequent delinquency in children⁵.

Legally, the divorce petition should state which of the five facts (i.e. adultery, unreasonable conduct, desertion, 3 years' separation with consent or 4 years' separation) the divorce is based on. However, as most petitioners list "unreasonable conduct", the social issues, as well as the deeper emotional / psychological problems and negative interactional patterns are unspecified. Often, these issues are masked under the legal problems presented in Court. In order to delve into the deeper issues in the marriage and to identify the demographic and interactional profiles of divorcing couples (which will in turn potentially result in appropriate early intervention or "up stream" preventative measures to curtail or reduce divorce), the Family and Juvenile Justice Centre (FJJJC) of the Subordinate Courts launched this study in 2002. The Family and Juvenile Court has undertaken restorative efforts to address the acrimony precipitated by the multi-faceted problems — social, emotional / psychological and interpersonal — over and above the legal issues, faced by families that are in the Court. These efforts not only attempt to deal with the current issues but also work as a preventive measure to address the potential intergenerational effects of these family conflicts. In line with this working philosophy, this study will focus on the couples in acrimonious divorce cases.

¹ Becker, 1981

² The Straits Times, 8 June 2003

³ Block, Block & Morrison, 1981

⁴ Kitson & Morgan, 1990

⁵ Furstenberg, 1990; Hetherington, Camara & Featherman, 1982; Krein & Beller, 1988; Popenoe, 1995



METHODOLOGY

A six-page written survey questionnaire in English was used to collect data in this study. The Questionnaire consisted of 3 main sections, which were A) demographic information, B) major marital problems and C) feelings towards current marriage.

- The ‘demographic information’ section consisted of two parts — which were the couples’ personal background information and marital history.
- The background information consisted of questions asking for information such as the respondent’s age, occupation, income per month, etc.
- The ‘marital history’ section gathered data regarding the length of marriage, the problem year of their marriage and information about their marital property.
- In the ‘major marital problems’ section, couples were required to select the top three problems of their marriage from a list of possible marital problems stated — which included, for example, communication breakdown, financial difficulties, and problems over children.
- The ‘feelings towards current marriage’ section contained 15 questions regarding the feelings towards their marriage in various aspects which included for example, the ‘description of the marriage’, ‘level of coping’, or ‘degree of separateness.’ In this section, responses were coded on a Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (reflecting the most negative feelings) to 7 (reflecting the most positive feelings).

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Our sample group is made up of 50 couples (100 individuals) who were undergoing civil divorce proceedings in the Family Court. These were all contested cases that had been referred to FJJC for counselling. Most of the participants are able to read and write English.

The data collected were analysed through descriptive statistics, which are presented in the form of graphs and bar charts, as well as comparative and predictive statistics.

1. SUMMARY DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES

In summary, the demographics of the fifty divorcing couples were as follows:

- **Married young:** Married younger than the average Singaporean couple.
- **Relatively well educated:** Majority attained at least secondary school education with at least half having attained a degree or diploma.
- **Adequate combined household income:** The mode (most frequent income range) for both males and females as individuals was \$1000-\$2000 a month. Combining modal incomes of husband and wife yielded \$2000-\$4000 per household / per month.
- **Working women:** 88% of the wives were working.
- **Women with high earnings:** In only about half of the couples do the husbands earn more than the wives.

- **Private property/ High-end HDB ownership:** 18% stay in condominiums and landed properties (compared to 12% in the general population). Out of couples who own HDB property, 44% of them own 5-room & executive flats (compared to 27% of Singapore population).
- **Parents of very young children:** Majority of the couples have 1 to 2 children and 72% of them had an eldest child in primary school or below.
- **Mid-adulthood:** The average age for women was 37 and the average age for men was 40.
- **Married for a decade or more:** The average length of the marriage at the time of divorce was 14.3 years.
- **Early onset of problems:** Half of the sample felt that a problem in their marriage set in within the first 4 years.
- **Problem awareness:** Wives seemed to recognize the existence of a problem in their marriage earlier than their husbands.
- **Violence/ assault/ physical abuse against spouse:** Women rated violence as the second major problem encountered in their marriage.
- **Constant quarrelling & problems with in-law and/or relatives:** Husbands rated in-law problems and constant quarrelling as tied in second position.
- **Separateness:**
 1. **Degree of separateness:** This factor has the highest number of individuals who scored it most negatively on their feelings towards marriage.
 2. On regression analysis (i.e. a statistical method to obtain the predictive relationship between different factors), separateness, again, was significant in predicting negative description of marriage in both males and females.
- **Females want more love:** On regression analysis, feeling unloved was a significant predictor for description of marriage for the females.
- **Negative feelings:** Divorcing individuals generally have negative feelings towards their marriage, however wives tend to feel more negative towards the marriage in certain aspects compared to their husbands.

2. SUMMARY INTERACTION PROFILES

In addition to looking at demographics, the FJJC study attempted to examine the interactive patterns between the divorcing couples. From the demographics, one can target potentially “higher risk” couples such as those who have been married about fourteen years, with an eldest child in primary school or below and with a working wife, etc. Additionally, the psychological profiling yielded the following results:

- **Communication breakdown:** The top major problem faced by these couples in general is communication breakdown. Men, however, rated communication breakdown more often (23%) than women (15%).
- **Couple’s perception of future prospects for their relationship:**
 1. Wives desire more commitment from their husbands.
 2. Husbands desire to talk less to their wives about problems.
 3. Husbands want their wives to be more forgiving.
 4. Husbands recognize that if they are more committed, future prospects will be better.



DETAILED RESEARCH FINDINGS

1. DETAILED RESEARCH FINDINGS: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES

A more detailed presentation of research findings, as well as graphs and charts to facilitate ease of understanding, are presented in this section.

1) Age at which individuals got married (present marriage)

As shown in Figure 1, approximately 40% of our sample were married by the age of 25 years.

Comparing males and females, approximately 50% of the males and females were married by 27 and 24 respectively (Figure 2). In order to compare the sample with the general population, one-sample t-tests were used. The tests showed that the mean ages (27.9 years for males and 24.4 years for females) from the data are significantly younger than the mean age at marriage for Singaporeans males (30.1 years) and females (27.1 years)⁶, $p < .05$.

Figure 1
Cumulative Graph of Age at Marriage

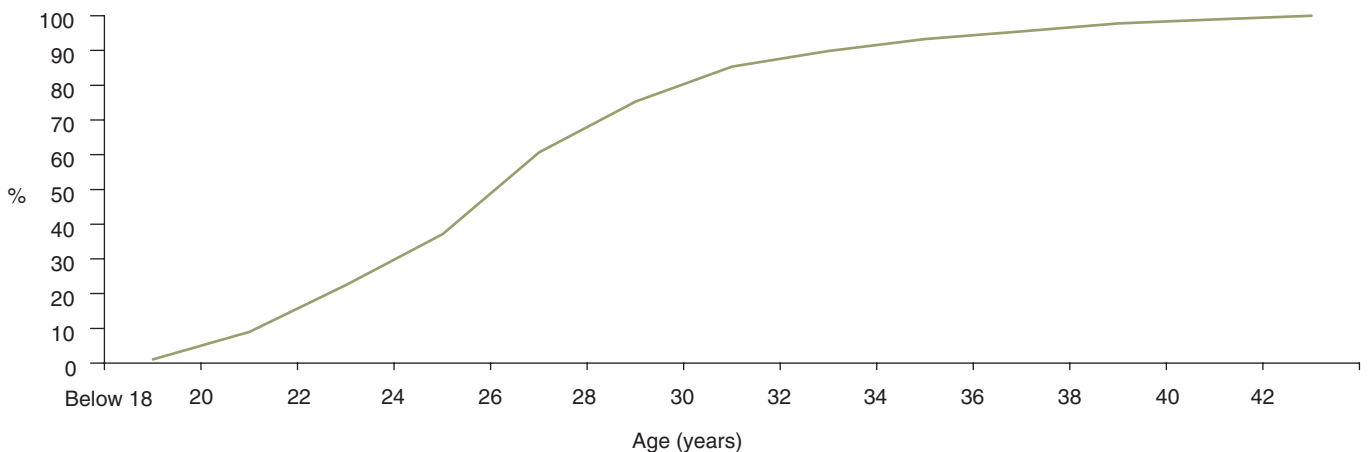
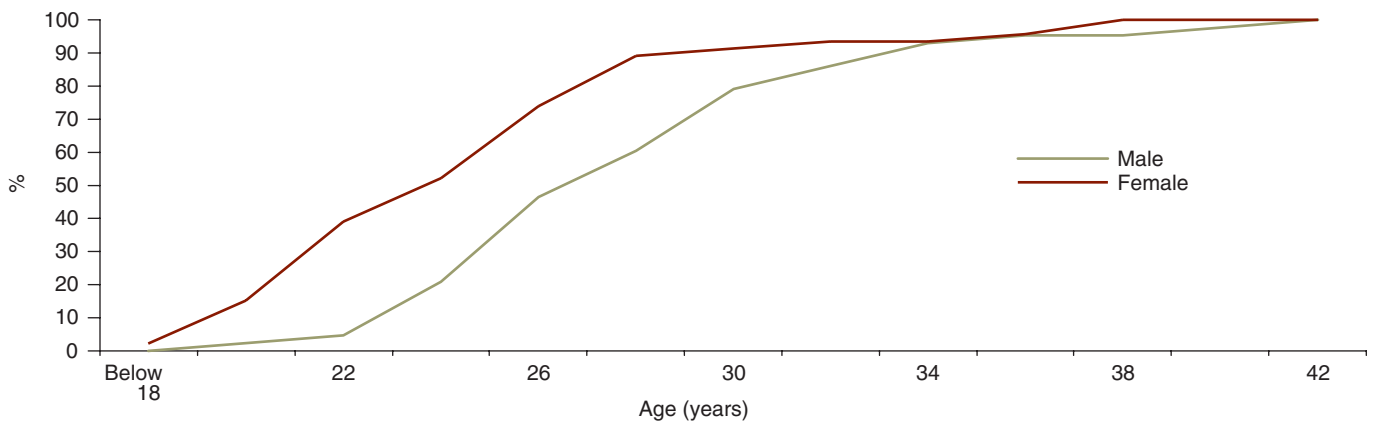


Figure 2
Cumulative Graph of Age at Marriage (For Males & Females)



⁶ Singapore Department of Statistics, 2000

2) Socio-economic status

93.2% of the sample have attained at least a secondary school education, while 48.8% have at least achieved a degree or diploma (Figure 3). The modal income is between \$1000 to \$2000 for both males and females (Figure 4). About 88% of the wives are employed compared to 50.2% for the Singapore population⁷ (Figure 5). About one-third of the wives earn more than their husbands while another 15% have similar earnings to their husbands (Figure 6). 18% stay in condominiums and landed properties compared to 12% in the general population. Out of couples who own HDB property, 32% of them own 5-room & executive flats compared to 27% of Singapore population (Figure 7).

Figure 5
Working status of wives

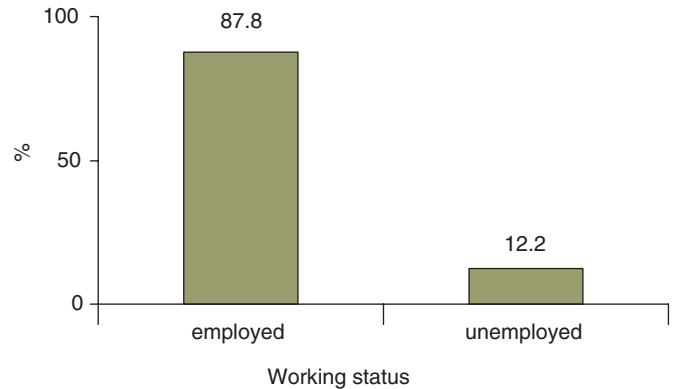


Figure 3
Highest Education Level Attained

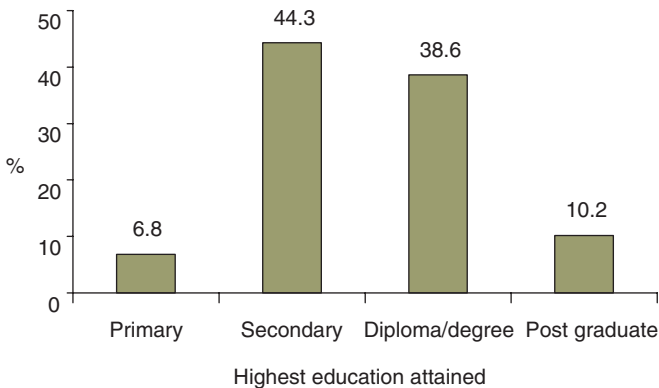


Figure 6
Difference in Income level within couple

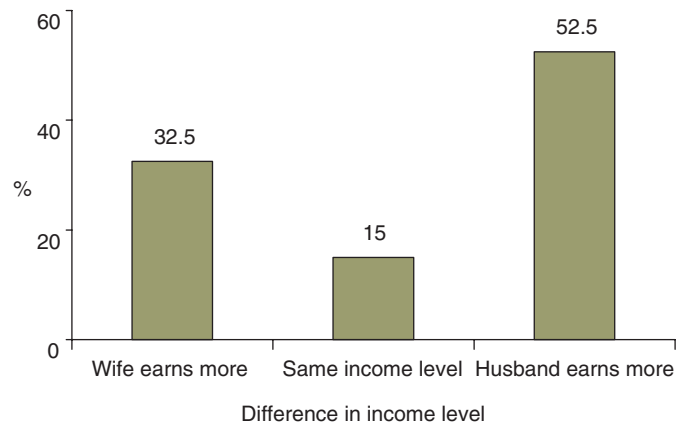


Figure 4
Income for males and females

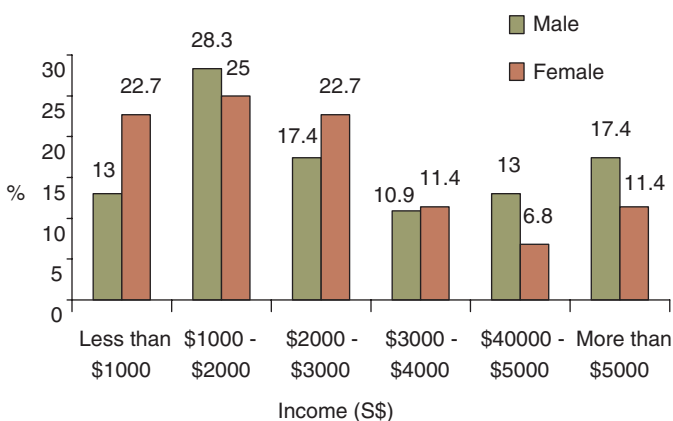
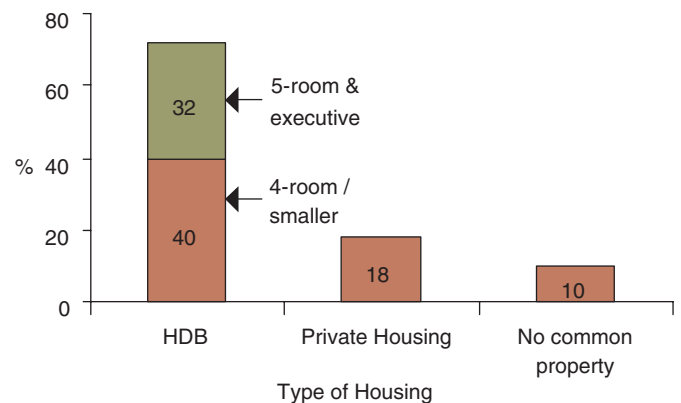


Figure 7
Types of housing

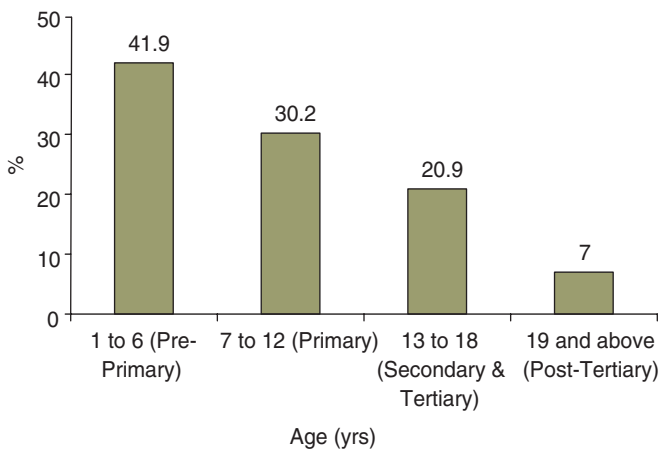


⁷ Singapore Department of Statistics, 2000

3) Children

From Figure 8, 41.9% of the couples with children have their eldest child aged below 7 years. As the age of their first child increases, the number of couples applying for divorce decreases.

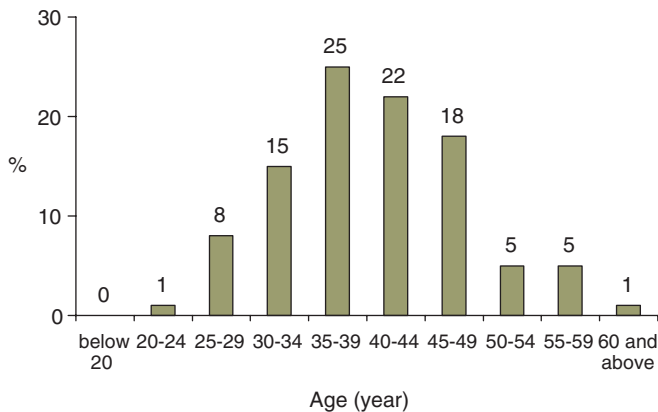
**Figure 8
Age of 1st child**



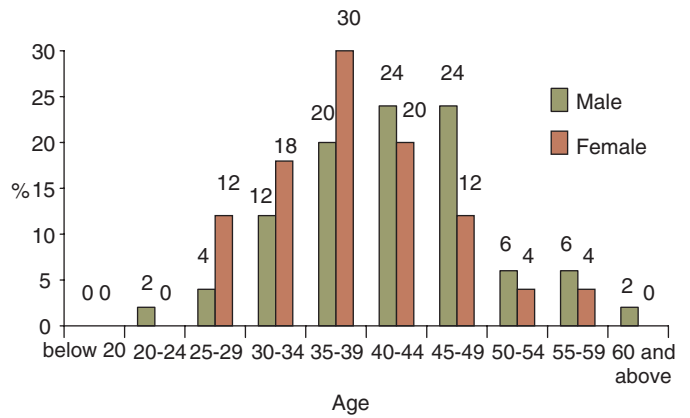
4) Age of sample

From Figure 9, 65% of the people who are going through divorce are between 35 and 49 years. A higher frequency of males are between 40 to 49 years while higher frequency of the females are between 35-39. The average age for males is about 40 years and for females about 37 years (Figure 10).

**Figure 9
Present Age**



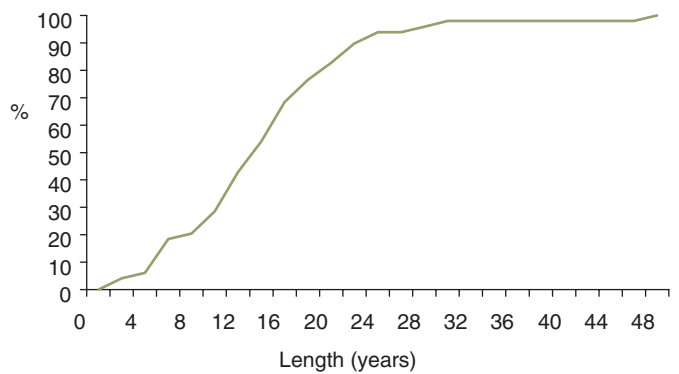
**Figure 10
Present Age of Males & Females**



5) Length of marriage

From Figure 11, 28.6% of the applicants have marriages that last between 11 to 15 years. The average length of marriage in the sample is 14.3 years and 50% of the couples have been married for less than 13 years.

**Figure 11
Cumulative Graph of Length of Marriage up to Application for Divorce**



Furthermore, 50% of the applicants feel that the problem in the marriage sets in within the first 4 years (Figure 12). In noticing a problem in the marriage, females ($M=4.56$, $SD=4.53$) take a marginally significant shorter time to note problems compared to the males ($M=7.69$, $SD=8.95$) (according to the paired-sample t-test, $p= .07$). In our sample, females

take a maximum of 17 years to notice a problem, while the males take a maximum of 45 years, which is about two and a half times longer than the females (Figure 13). Although females ($M=9.75$, $SD=9.22$) realise the existence of a problem earlier, they take a marginally longer time than males ($M=6.61$, $SD=5.59$) to proceed with the divorce, $p < .1$.

Figure 12
Cumulative Graph of Time-Span Before Problem Sets in the Marriage

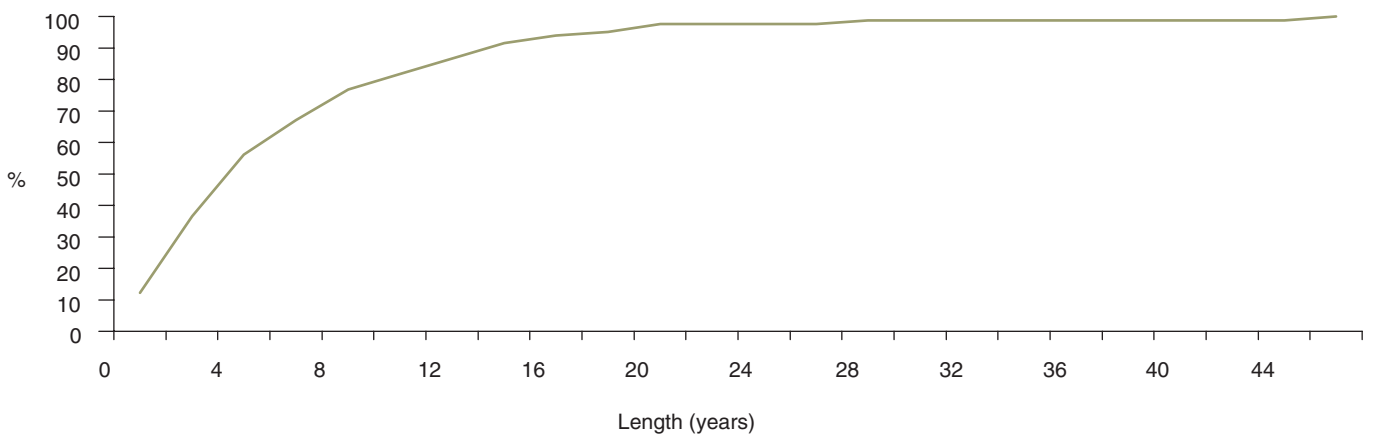
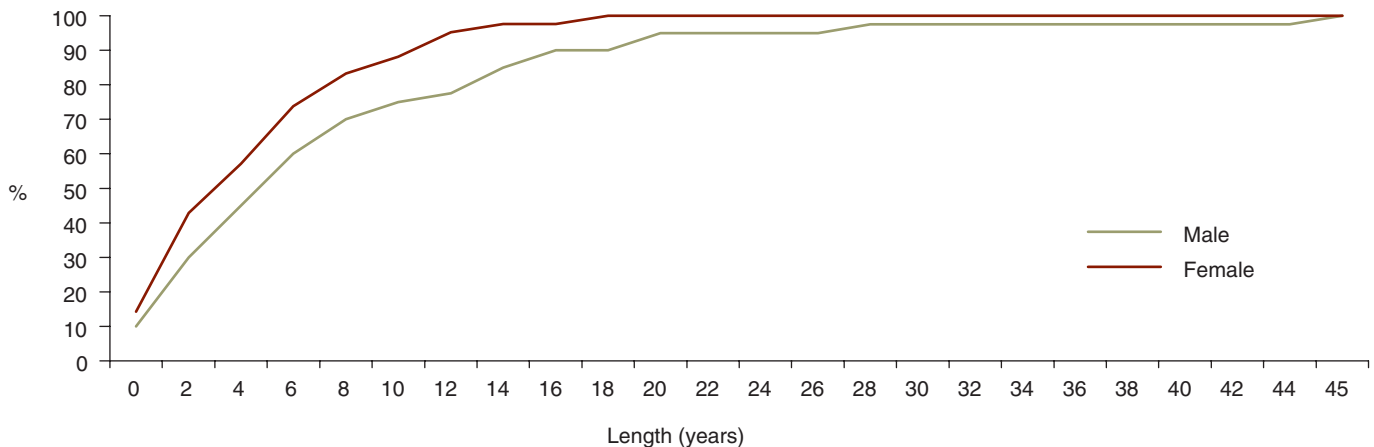


Figure 13
Cumulative Graph of Time-Span Before Problem Sets in the Marriage (Male vs Female)



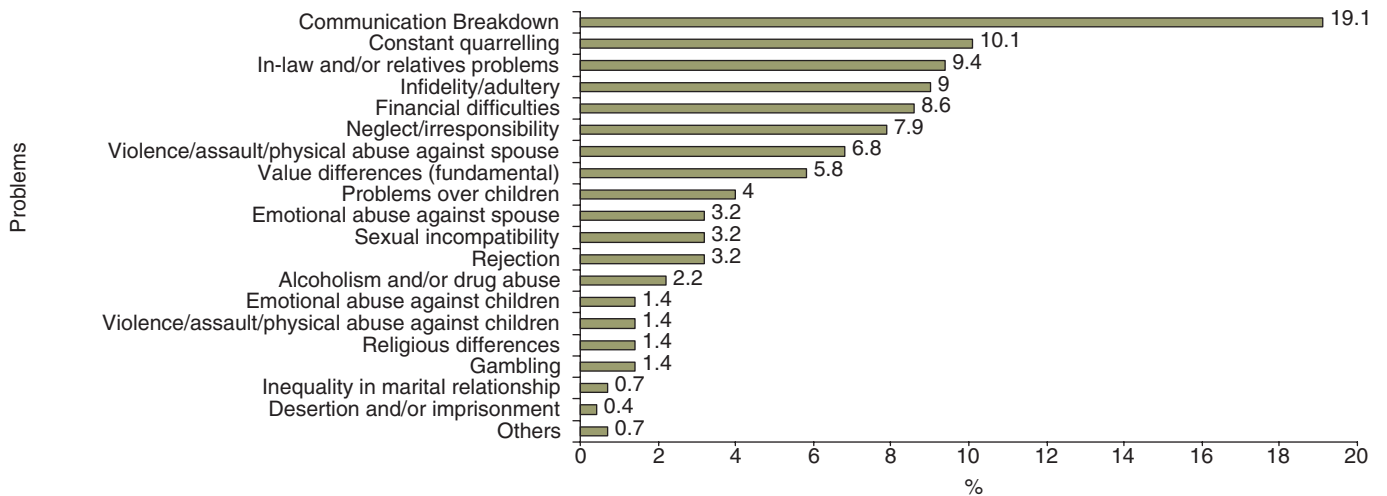
2. DETAILED RESEARCH FINDINGS: INTERACTIVE PROFILES

1) General

19.1% of the sample cited communication breakdown as the top problem in their marriage. Constant quarrelling (10.1%), problems with in-laws

and/or relatives (9.4%), infidelity/adultery (9%) and financial difficulties (8.6%) ranked second to fifth in the survey respectively (Figure 14).

**Figure 14
Major Problems in General**



2) Gender differences

Both males (23%) and females (15.4%) ranked communication breakdown as the top problem in their marriage. Males ranked problems with in-law and/or relatives (11.1%), constant quarrelling (11.1%), neglect/irresponsibility (8.9%) and infidelity/adultery

(8.1%) as the next four problems respectively (Figure 15). Females ranked violence/ assault/ physical abuse against spouse (12.6%), financial difficulties (11.2%), infidelity/ adultery (9.8%) and constant quarrelling (9.1%) as the next four problems respectively (Figure 16).

**Figure 15
Major Problems for Males**

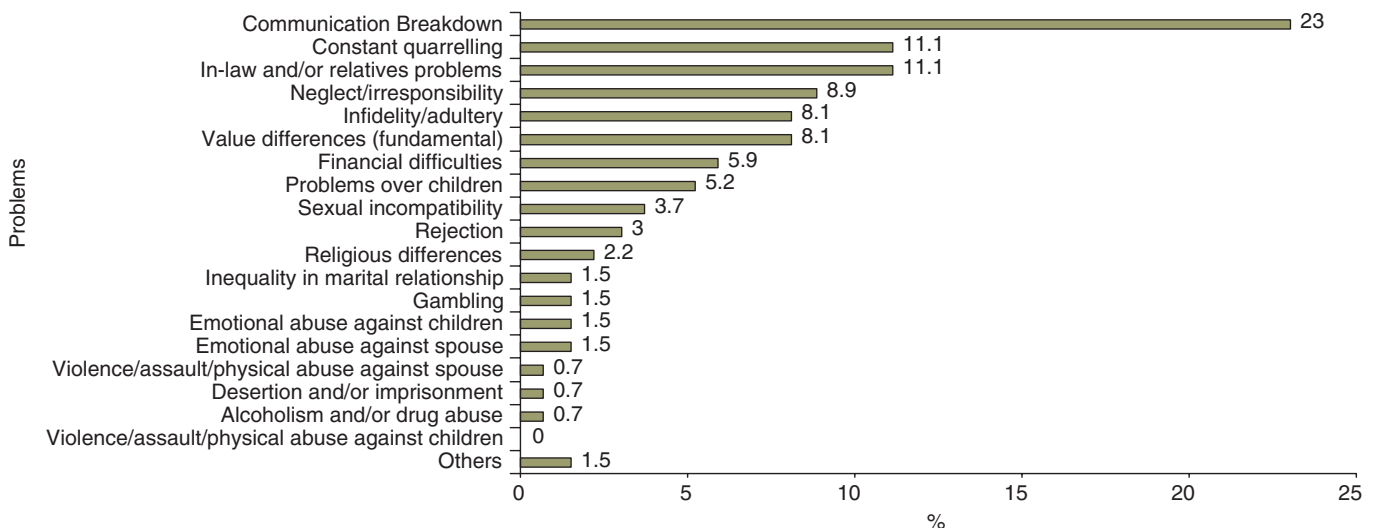
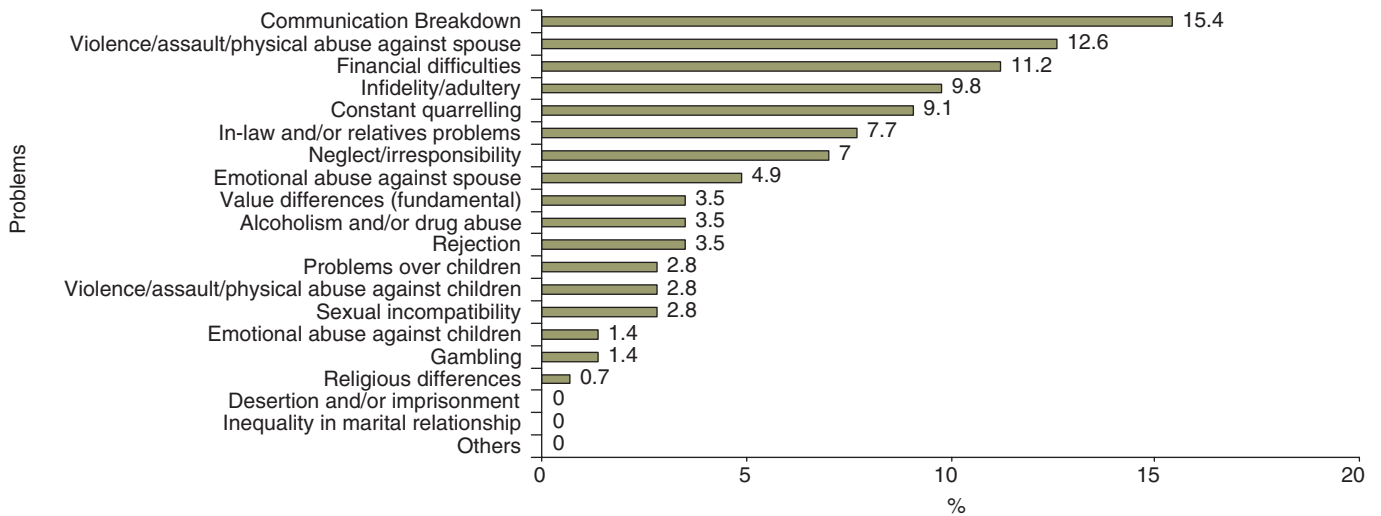


Figure 16
Major Problems for Females



3) Feelings towards current marriage

a) General

More than 50% of the individuals seeking divorce rated low (1 to 3) towards the variables, except for 'level of coping', 'own level of commitment' and

'talking to a friend for advice'. 'Degree of separateness' is the most highly scored variable in the extreme lowest category (54.5%) (Table 1).

Table 1.

% of Sample's Ratings on Certain Feelings towards Current Marriage

Ratings	(%)						
	1 (Lowest)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (Highest)
Description of Marriage	42.0	23.0	11.0	14.0	4.0	5.0	1.0
Level of Coping	13.0	13.0	10.0	24.0	22.0	13.0	5.0
Degree of Separateness	54.5	14.1	11.1	11.1	6.1	2.0	1.0
Ability to Communicate to Each Other	33.0	35.0	10.0	15.0	4.0	2.0	1.0
Feel Unloved	35.4	29.3	13.1	14.1	1.0	4.0	3.0
Unfairly Criticised	33.7	37.8	8.2	12.2	6.1	1.0	1.0
Degree of Control Over Marriage	23.0	29.0	10.0	26.0	6.0	6.0	0.0
Degree of Control Over Spouse	47.0	23.0	11.0	14.0	0.0	4.0	1.0
Own Level of Commitment to the Marriage	13.0	7.0	7.0	13.0	6.0	30.0	24.0
Spouse's Level of Commitment to the Marriage	24.0	22.0	11.0	30.0	7.0	4.0	2.0
Compatibility of Values Within Couple	24.0	25.0	11.0	27.0	7.0	5.0	1.0
Forgiveness of Spouse	26.5	30.6	11.2	19.4	5.1	3.1	4.1
Future Prospects of Marriage	40.4	18.2	7.1	20.2	4.0	9.1	1.0
If you have a serious problem, do you ...							
Talk to your spouse	20.0	16.0	19.0	6.0	18.0	10.0	11.0
Talk to a friend	2.0	5.0	8.0	8.0	29.0	33.0	15.0
Talk to a counsellor	35.0	13.0	7.0	10.0	25.0	6.0	4.0



b) Gender differences

Regression analysis tests were performed on both the males and the females separately with 'description of marriage' as the dependent variable and the other 15 variables as the independent variables. For the males, 'degree of separateness' was significant in predicting the dependent variable, $p < .05$. For the females, 'degree of separateness' and 'feeling unloved' were significant in predicting the dependent variable, $p < .05$.

Figure 17 shows the difference in mean ratings of feelings towards their marriage between the husbands and wives. From a series of paired-sample t-tests, it was found that males and females differed significantly in terms of their emotions towards their 'description of marriage', 'degree of separateness', 'ability to communicate with their spouse', 'own level of commitment', 'compatibility of values' and 'future prospects of their marriage', $p < .05$. The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the males' and females' ratings, as well as the difference in ratings within a couple (husband's minus wife's rating) are shown in Table 2 only for the significant differences.

Figure 17
Means of Feelings Towards Marriage (Male vs. Female)

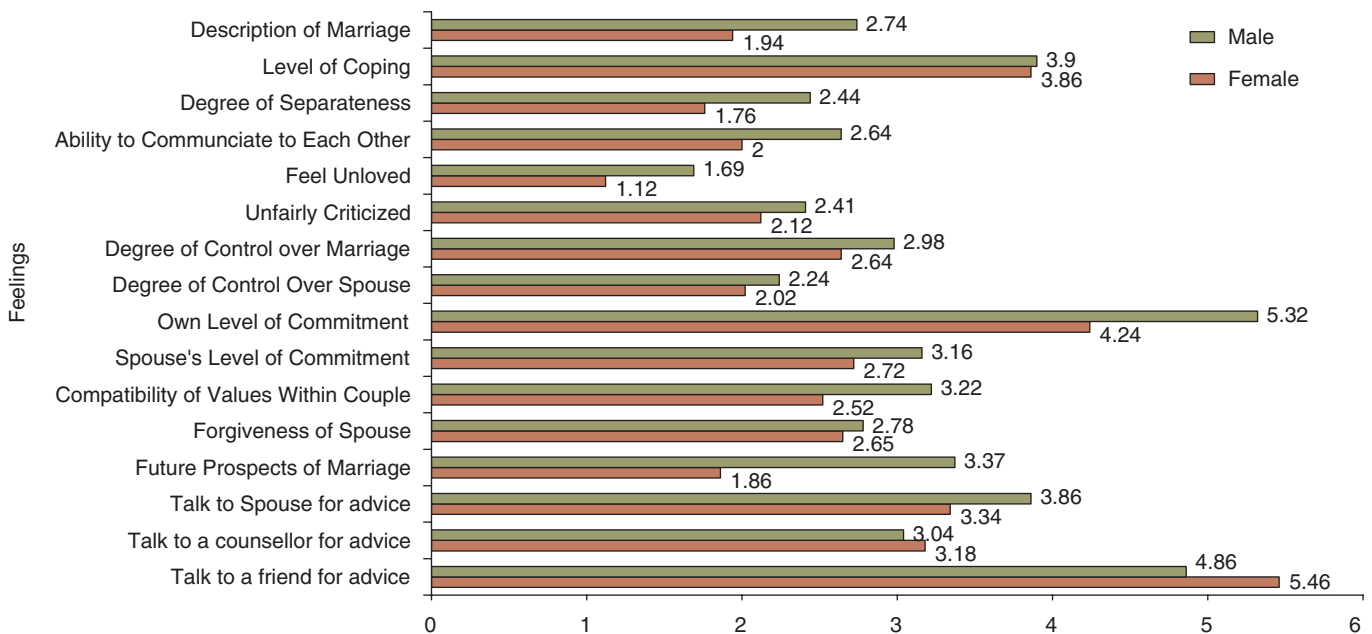


Table 2.

Means and Standard Deviations of Rating on Feelings between Males and Females

Feelings	Male		Female		Difference (Male – Female)		Sig. (2-tailed)
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Description of Marriage	2.74	1.664	1.94	1.331	.80	2.020	.007
Degree of Separateness	2.45	1.646	1.76	1.267	.69	2.094	.025
Ability to Communicate with Spouse	2.64	1.509	2.00	1.143	.64	1.804	.015
Own Level of Commitment	5.32	1.778	4.24	2.255	1.08	3.135	.019
Compatibility of Values	3.22	1.475	2.52	1.542	.70	2.252	.033
Future Prospects of Marriage	3.37	1.752	1.86	1.384	1.51	2.103	.000



Regression analysis tests were also performed on both genders separately with ‘future prospects of marriage’ as the dependent variable and the other 15 variables as the independent variables. For the males, ‘talking to spouse during a problem’, ‘forgiveness of spouse’ and ‘own level of commitment’ were significant in predicting the dependent variable, $p < .05$. For the females, ‘spouse’s level of commitment was significant in predicting the dependent variable, $p < .05$.

DISCUSSION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES

1) Age at which individuals got married (present marriage)

- The results show that the men and women in our sample got married significantly earlier than those in the general Singapore population.
- This finding supports previous research that individuals who marry early experience higher risks of divorce⁸.
- One possible explanation for this risk factor is given by Wu and Penning⁹ who argue that those who marry at younger ages tend to have a shorter time span to search for suitable mates, thus increasing the likelihood of a mismatch.

2) Socio-economic status

The majority of the sample consisted of well-educated employed individuals with substantial incomes. The modal combined household income of husband and wife ranges from \$2000 to \$4000 a month. Reflective of a well-off lifestyle, a higher proportion of the couples reported staying in a 5-room or executive HDB flats or private housing.

- It might be argued that seeking after the 5 Cs (car, cash, credit card, condominium, and club membership) can lead to disagreements over finances, and distancing of relationships due to long work hours and commitments.
- It has been found in the literature that dual-earning couples often struggle with the management of multiple demands placed on them — earning money, the responsibility of maintaining a home and raising kids¹⁰.

Another finding in our study is that 87.8% of the wives are working compared to 50.2% among the general population. Also, approximately half of the wives earned equal or more than their husbands.

- Becker¹¹ and Schoen, Urton, Woodrow and Baj¹² found that similarity of women’s and men’s roles predictably produces less marital cohesion than complementary roles do. In addition, dual-income earning couples have less shared time to spend with each other, creating marital strains, thus increasing the risk for divorce¹³.
- This finding could further suggest that at root, Singaporeans may be traditionalists at heart, patriarchal and uncomfortable when females gain ascendancy or independence¹⁴.
- Another possibility is that egalitarianism and economic independence (even superiority) of women gives women more freedom to divorce¹⁵. One set of researchers (South & Spitze, 1986) have termed this increasing financial independence of working women, “divorce insurance.”
- Further, other researchers highlight the disruptive effect of working women on traditional work roles¹⁶ and the reduction of long accepted sexual division of labor in marriage¹⁷ as increasing potential risks.
- However, a vital caveat is to note that a wife’s employment does not cause divorce in all marriages but only in “unhappy” ones¹⁸.

⁸ Becker, 1974; Bumpass & Martin, 1989; Bumpass, Martin & Sweet, 1991; Cook & Jones, 2002; South & Spitze, 1986; White, 1990

⁹ Wu & Penning, 1997

¹⁰ Heather, 2000

¹¹ Becker, 1981

¹² Schoen, Urton, Woodrow & Baj, 1985

¹³ Booth, Johnson, White & Edwards, 1984

¹⁴ Bumpass et al., 1991

¹⁵ Booth et al., 1984; White, 1990

¹⁶ South & Spitze, 1986

¹⁷ Becker, 1981

¹⁸ Schoen, Astone, Rothert, Standish & Kim, 2002



3) Children

As the age of the first child increases, the number of individuals filing for divorce decreases. Couples with their first child in pre-primary years make up a majority of 41.9% of the sample.

- One explanation for this proposed by Gottman, Shapiro and Carrere¹⁹ is that when first children come along, there is a major identity transition and adjustment to parenthood which causes disruption, conflict, change in roles, and in division of labour.
- Furthermore, with small children, both husband and wife may have to make major adjustments of time and energy as they go through a period where they are getting less sleep and have fewer opportunities to be together²⁰.

4) Age of sample

65% of our sample applying for divorce are between the ages of 35 to 49 years. This is similar to Gottman's & Levenson's²¹ thesis which is that these major transitions usually coincide with what is called the "midlife crisis". Further, our findings reveal that the percentage of individuals applying for divorce drop drastically from 18% (for those between the ages of 45 and 49) to 5% (for those between the ages of 50 to 54). This percentage remains low for individuals 55 years and above.

- Some argue that this declining risk may be due to the fact that older people accumulate wealth and income with age and are unwilling to risk losing it²².
- Becker²³ has also argued that the incentive to separate tends to decline with duration of marriage since specific investments grow.

5) Length of marriage

According to previous research, Clarke²⁴ also mentioned that half of the marriages that end up in divorce last for less than 7 years. This figure of Western marriages is quite different from our Singaporean sample where the median age of marriages is 13 years. Could it be that Singaporeans stick it out longer?

Looking more closely at our data, 65% of the sample found a problem in the marriage within the first five years. This coincides with the seven-year figure in the West.

- However, some²⁵ argue that such figures might reflect differences in social tolerance. Singapore may well be a relatively traditional culture where the norms for toleration of difficult marriages may be greater than in the more individualistic and rights oriented West.

2. INTERACTIVE PROFILES

1) Communication breakdown

Communication breakdown is the top problem among both males and females. However, most researchers argue that the breakdown is perceived differently by husbands and wives.

- For example, Fitzpatrick²⁶ and Gottman²⁷ posit that though communication is poor, the issues vary — e.g. men tend to withdraw from conflict and discussing issues in the marriage whereas women tend to engage in it.
- Generally, women want more communication of feelings while men resist feelings. To elicit a change in husbands, wives disclose their feelings (sometimes lovingly, sometimes resentfully) in hopes of getting husbands to disclose feelings. To the men, this is often seen as nagging and often leads to their withdrawal from communication altogether²⁸.

Constant quarrelling emerged as the second most important problem for all individuals overall in our sample. It was second for the males. This was consistent with Gottman's²⁹ findings that divorced men complained of constant bickering more than divorced women did. For the general sample, the third most major problem was in-law and/or relatives problem.

¹⁹ Gottman, Shapiro and Carrere, 2000

²⁰ Cowan & Cowan, 2003

²¹ Gottman & Levenson, 2000

²² Booth, Johnson, White & Edwards, 1986

²³ Becker, 1974; Becker, 1981

²⁴ Clarke, 1995

²⁵ Bumpass & Martin, 1989

²⁶ Fitzpatrick, 1987

²⁷ Gottman, 1994

²⁸ Orbuch, Veroff, Hassan & Horrocks, 2002

²⁹ Gottman, 1994



Specific to females, violence against spouse was ranked as the second most important problem. This is consistent with other findings that wives over time were more distressed in their marriage if they reported that their husbands were hostile in relation to conflict³⁰. The third major problem perceived by the females is financial difficulty. Indeed,³¹ financial problems can aggravate marital problems³¹ but it did not rank as highly or significantly as other factors.

2) Negative feelings

For the general sample, a majority of the individuals have generally negative emotions³² regarding marriage, consistent with other findings³². We found females to be more negative and pessimistic, supporting the findings of Cook and Jones³³. Perhaps that may account for why approximately two-thirds of applicants for divorce in Singapore are women.

3) Separation

Table 1 showed that many of the individuals felt separated from their spouses. Furthermore, from the regression analysis, 'degree of separateness' has been found to be predictive of their 'description of marriage' for both the males and females. This might imply that both genders view separateness as an important variable in determining how 'good' their marriage is. Specific to the females, 'feeling unloved' is also an important predictive variable for their 'description of marriage'. It might be argued that poor communications (e.g. conflict avoidance by the husbands) combined with a low perceived commitment level lead to feeling unloved, living under one roof but living emotionally divorced lives. For females, the issues of attachment and separation are more salient in constructing their social reality³⁴.

4) Future prospects

Females perceive a better future with their husbands if their husbands are more committed towards the marriage. Males perceive a better future if their wives are more forgiving, if their own commitment towards the marriage is higher and if, during a problem, they "talk less" to their wives about it. This seemingly amusing finding that husbands feel more hopeful if wives talk less is substantiated from our research findings outlined above.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has given us some insight into the general demographic and interactional profiles of divorcing couples who are in acrimonious situations. The socio-economic issue of dual-income struggles, differences in male and female marital interactional patterns as well as the lack of urgency and ability to address marital conflicts promptly (which are often left unresolved for prolonged periods of time) are some of the major issues identified. Crucially many children are also caught in the battle. The repercussions on children are extensive and intergenerational.

In having this knowledge, it is important that steps are considered to address these issues highlighted through the study. Some potential marital intervention points are suggested below. Other than simply dealing with the problem only when it arises, preventive steps to target pre-marital stages and critical periods are equally important. In order to address the intergenerational effects of divorce, post divorce support programmes, which focus on co-parenting children and the effect of divorce on children, will also need to play a pertinent role.

- Marrying couples

Pre-marital counselling and classes may be helpful in preparing the couple both emotionally and mentally for marriage, to set their expectations right for marriage. This is especially important for young people under 25 years of age entering a marriage to attend these sessions.

³⁰ Gottman, 1994; Roberts, 2000

³¹ Booth et al., 1986

³² Buehlman, Gottman & Katz, 1992

³³ Cook and Jones, 2002

³⁴ Fitzpatrick, 1987



- Couples at critical periods
 - 1) 1 – 4 years of marriage – Identification of “trouble signs” including education regarding adequate means of communication and conflict resolution; typical interaction patterns between males and females and especially how to deal with rather than suppress problems is a core skill.
 - 2) Parents with first child < 6 years old — Special preparation courses, prior to and following the birth of the first child, could be offered to these first-time parents as this may well be a “critical period” for marriages. Besides covering issues such as functional aspects of caring for infants and toddlers, first-time parents should also be familiarized with the hazards and stresses that come along with having pre-school and primary aged children.
 - 3) 14 years of marriage – Those with young children need to be particularly focused on building stronger marriages, dealing with problems that arise effectively and proactively.
 - 4) Ages 35 – 49 – How to rekindle romance and issues of mid-life (crisis signs and symptoms) need to be dealt with.
- Post-divorce couples

Divorce is a major stress to both the couple and the children. Post-divorce support such as counselling to help the individuals to adjust to life as a divorced person, co-parenting programmes to help the parents cope with their new roles as single parents and to learn to establish a new relationship with ex-spouses for the children’s welfare will be very helpful to these families. This source of guidance is especially critical for parents who are unable to resolve their own personal differences even after the divorce.

These are but some suggestions for marital interventions to be particularly focused on the areas which are highlighted by this study.

In the Family and Juvenile Court, we have instituted restorative practices for cases, which are presented with a combination of legal issues. This includes divorce cases, which have at the same time, maintenance and family violence matters pending. Through a Family Justice Team (FJT) session facilitated by FJJC, we aim to address the underlying emotional / psychological, social and interpersonal issues faced by the family, to settle the legal issues amicably and minimise / stop the intergenerational effects of these acrimonious conflicts. These FJT sessions adopted by the Family and Juvenile Court aim to address the multiple problems holistically focusing especially on cases involving children below 16 years old.

However, addressing the issues of divorce certainly cannot be a one-organisation effort. It is crucial that pro-active community involvement and efforts are also harnessed to create awareness of the problems and to tackle the issues presented. Evidently preventive work in the community and post divorce interventions with couples and children will be crucial in complementing the restorative objectives being pursued at the Family and Juvenile Courts.

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