

A Review of Importance of Premarital Checkup and Counselling among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Premarital screening includes performing tests on the couples who are planning to get married soon, to identify common inherited disorders, infectious diseases, fertility issues, cancers etc. in them to help them identify potential health risks for themselves. It also aims at providing medical consultation to the couples on the probabilities of transmitting these risks to their children.

This study is aimed at understanding the awareness and importance of premarital screening among young adults (age 21-30 years) based out of Maharashtra state, India. This paper will also give insights about the preference for types of tests that are included in premarital screening, need for premarital counselling and the time duration for undertaking premarital screening and counselling

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Introduction

Premarital screening is defined as testing couples who are planning to get married soon for common genetic blood disorders (e.g. sickle cell anaemia and thalassemia and sickle cell anaemia) and infectious diseases (e.g. hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV/AIDS). For couples that are about to get married, pre-marital screening helps detect potential health problems and risks for themselves and also their offspring. It is very important for couples to be screened in order to help them understand their genetics and help them take the necessary precautions or treatments. It is one of the most important strategies for prevention of genetic disorders, congenital abnormalities and several medical, psychosocial marital problems. It also provides an opportunity of intervention including vaccination, genetic and behavioural counselling, guidance regarding contraception, medical treatment for infections or chronic diseases, and medication to decrease risks based upon identified disease, risks or anomalies. In addition to early detection, prevention and treatment of diseases or abnormalities, premarital screening and interventions have been found to be effective in different ways such as in improving interpersonal skills and overall relationship quality, decreasing risk factors such as poor communication skills for later marital problems and increasing the quality of life for couples and families who stay together. Premarital counselling is also generally acceptable because of its minimal cost and health requirements.

Premarital screening includes routine investigations such as Complete Blood Count (CBC), Complete Urine Analysis and Peripheral Blood Smears to check for normal and abnormal cells, Blood group testing (ABO-RH), Infectious diseases testing such as Syphilis, HI, Hepatitis-B and C Virus testing and Genetic testing such as Thalassemia.

This quantitative study explores the awareness and importance of premarital screening among young adults planning to get married soon and aims to develop insights regarding the type of screening tests to be included in the premarital screening based on their responses. This article also explores the need for premarital counselling among

young adults and the time duration when such tests and counselling can be undertaken.

Objectives of the study-

1. To understand awareness and importance of premarital screening among young adults (age 21-30) who are planning to get married within one year
2. To study the types of screening tests young adults prefer to be included in premarital screening
3. To determine the preference among young adults regarding when should they get premarital screening done

Research Methodology –

An exploratory research design was employed to collect data via face to face interviews and online structured survey. The sample size taken for this research is 45 respondents. Structured questionnaire was used as a tool for data collection. Data was mainly collected through free online survey wherein the research questionnaire was uploaded and shared with the respondents. The respondents involved in the survey were young adults aged between 21-30 years, who had plans to get married within one year (1st February 2019 – 31st January 2020). The list of participants was procured from a private marriage bureau in Pune while the respondents were based out of different parts of Maharashtra, but majority (n=35, 77%) was based out of Pune city.

Findings

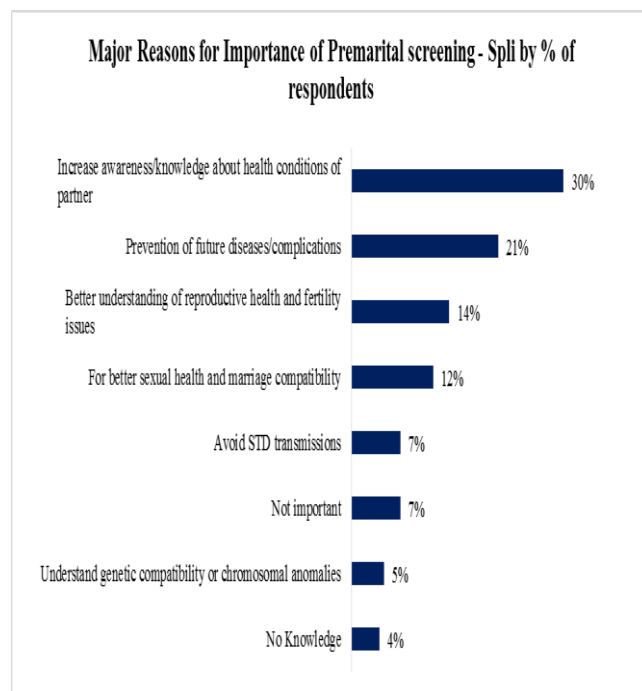
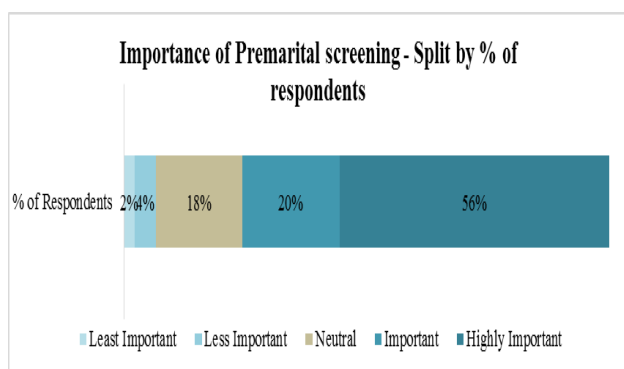
A small survey with 45 respondents was done to understand the importance of premarital screening among young adults (age group 21-30 years). An online questionnaire was floated targeting the young adults over email and social media pages. The responses were collected over online survey while some of the participants who were acquainted with the author agreed for face to face interview. The data was then compiled to understand the findings as follows-

1. Importance of Premarital Screening

On the basis of the responses received, more than 50% out of the 45 respondents consider that premarital screening as highly important. 20% of the respondents consider this as important but may not feel as necessary, while 18% of the respondents remain neutral over their stand regarding importance of premarital screening. A combined 6% of respondents do not consider premarital screening to be important.

Scale	Least Important	Less Important	Neutral	Important	Highly Important
Number of Respondents	1	2	8	9	25
% of Respondents	2%	4%	18%	20%	56%

For better sexual health and marriage compatibility	5	12%
Avoid STD transmissions	3	7%
Not important	3	7%
Understand genetic compatibility or chromosomal anomalies	2	5%
No Knowledge	2	4%
Total	43	



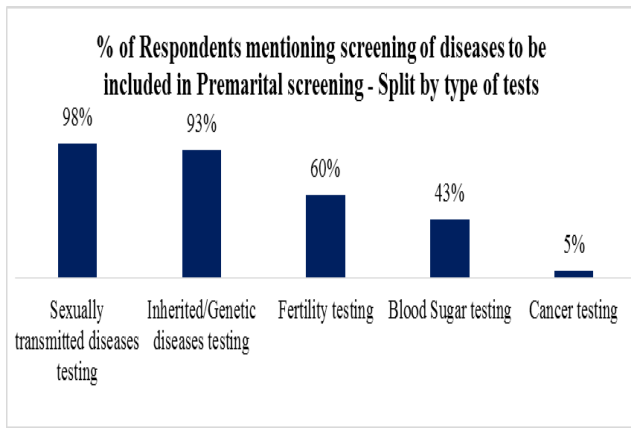
The major reason for the respondent’s stand on importance of premarital screening was to increase the awareness or to gain knowledge about the health conditions of their partner. Prevention of future complications, better understanding of reproductive health and fertility issues, to attain better sexual health and marriage compatibility were also some of the reasons mentioned by the respondents for considering premarital screening important. It was found that very few respondents gave importance to premarital testing so as to avoid Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and to understand the genetic compatibility or chromosomal anomalies that leads to hereditary disorders. The respondents who do not consider premarital testing to be important admitted that they are unaware about this screening and do not have any knowledge about the information that can be gained by undertaking the screening.

Reasons	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Increase awareness/knowledge about health conditions of partner	13	30%
Prevention of future diseases/complications	9	21%
Better understanding of reproductive health and fertility issues	6	14%

2. Type of tests to be included in Premarital Screening

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) testing was mentioned to be very essential in premarital screening by 98% out of the 40 respondents that responded to this question. 93% respondents mentioned that Genetic testing or testing for inherited diseases is very important and must be included in the list of premarital screening. Couples getting married also expressed concerns regarding rising infertility issues among adults and hence wanted fertility testing to be done before getting married. Only 5% respondents wanted to be get screened for Cancer risks in their premarital screening.

Type of Tests	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Sexually transmitted diseases testing	39	98%
Inherited/Genetic diseases testing	37	93%
Fertility testing	17	60%
Blood Sugar testing	24	43%
Cancer testing	3	5%



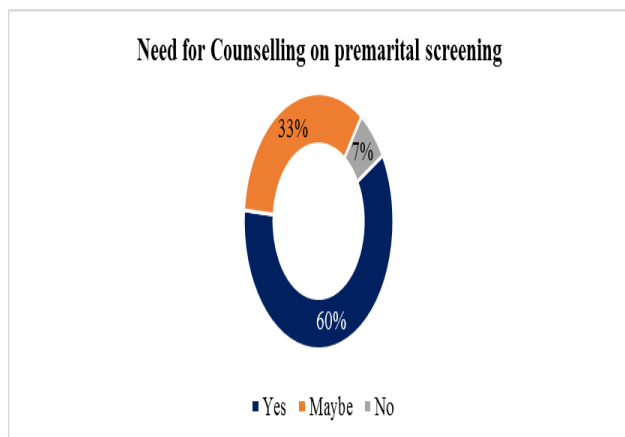
3. Requirement for Counselling after Premarital Screening

Majority of respondents, 60% mentioned that they require counselling after premarital screening. These respondents stated that the counselling is required to gain more understanding of disease and health related complications, preventive measures and available treatments after understanding the test results. Respondents also mentioned counselling is required to understand test results, or STDs and their preventive measures. Few respondents stated that they require counselling regarding what tests are to be undertaken before getting married and to understand the interpretation of the screening test results.

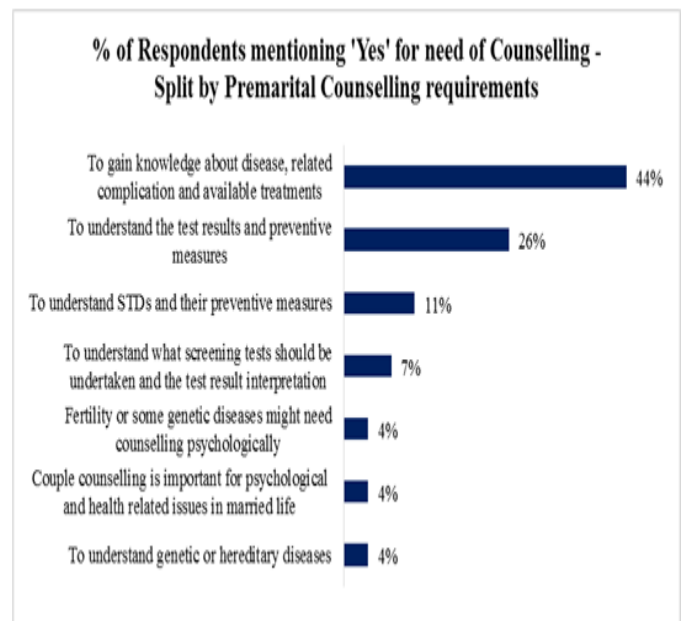
However, 33% of respondents mentioned that they may or may not require counselling mainly because the need for counselling depends on the risk that is detected during screening. Some of these respondents also opined that counselling may be needed to understand the genetic or hereditary disease complications detected during premarital screening.

Only 3 out of 35 respondents expressed that there is no need for counselling. These respondents do not find premarital screening and related counselling of much importance.

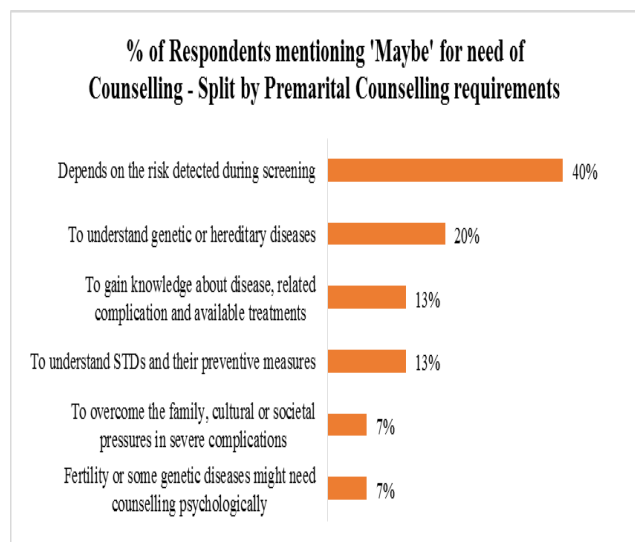
Response	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Yes	27	60%
Maybe	15	33%
No	3	7%
Total	45	



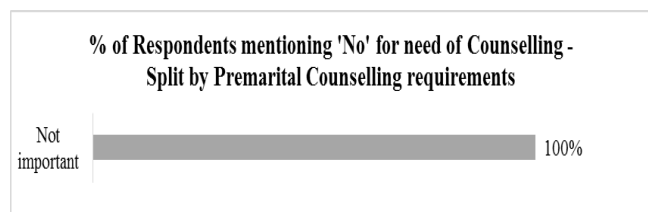
Reasons for Yes	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
To understand genetic or hereditary diseases	1	4%
Couple counselling is important for psychological and health related issues in married life	1	4%
Fertility or some genetic diseases might need counselling psychologically	1	4%
To understand what screening tests should be undertaken and the test result interpretation	2	7%
To understand STDs and their preventive measures	3	11%
To understand the test results and preventive measures	7	26%
To gain knowledge about disease, related complication and available treatments	12	44%
Total	27	



Reasons for Maybe	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Fertility or some genetic diseases might need counselling psychologically	1	7%
To overcome the family, cultural or societal pressures in severe complications	1	7%
To understand STDs and their preventive measures	2	13%
To gain knowledge about disease, related complication and available treatments	2	13%
To understand genetic or hereditary diseases	3	20%
Depends on the risk detected during screening	6	40%
Total	15	



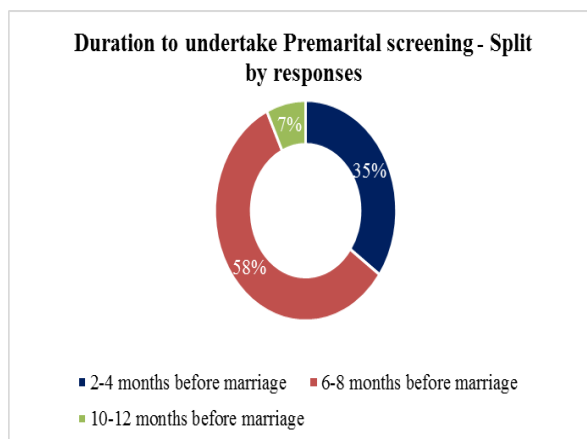
Reasons for No	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Not important	3	100%



4. Timing to undertake Premarital Screening

This question was answered by 26 respondents. Out of these, 15 respondents stated that couples should be going for screening 6-8 months before getting married. After getting screened, a couple can opt for available treatments or preventive measures or can change dietary regimen, lifestyle etc. necessary to mitigate health risks detected during premarital screening. 35% of respondents stated that premarital screening can be performed 2-4 months before marriage. Few respondents (2 out of 26) mentioned that premarital screening has to be performed at least 10-12 months before marriage. This proves to be helpful in for the couple to plan and get treated for any major risks or genetic complications detected. According to these respondents, one year prior to marriage is ideal for screening so that in case of any major complication detected, the couple gets enough time before marriage psychologically to prepare them or decide upon their marital future.

Responses	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
2-4 months before marriage	9	35%
6-8 months before marriage	15	58%
10-12 months before marriage	2	7%
Total	26	



Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of premarital screening among young adults aged between 21 and 30 years. The major reasons for rising awareness and importance of premarital screening are increased need to gain awareness regarding partner's health conditions and prevention of future diseases or complications. Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), Genetic or Hereditary diseases and Fertility are majorly requested to be included in Premarital testing. Counselling after premarital screening is considered to be important to gain knowledge about the disease risk detected and its available preventive measures or treatments to avoid future complications. Based upon the respondent survey, premarital screening can be performed 6-8 months before marriage

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