

Chapter-II

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FAMILY COUNSELLING CENTRES - ORIGIN, CONCEPT, OBJECTIVES AND OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES IN INDIA

The Central Social Welfare Board working in the area of women and child welfare since 1953 and set up the Voluntary Action Bureau in 1983. In all states Board Officers to provide crisis intervention and counselling to women who were victims of violence on domestic and other spheres and dowry demands. This innovative experience lead to the formulation of the scheme of Family Counselling Centres (FCCs) to be implemented by voluntary organizations for providing counselling, referral and rehabilitative services to women and families affected by domestic violence, maladjustment and discord. The centres also create awareness and mobilize public opinion on social issues affecting status of women. The FCCs work in close collaboration with the local administration, police, courts, free legal aid cells, medical and psychiatric institutions, vocational training centres, short stay homes, etc. While the FCCs are run by voluntary organizations, the Voluntary Action Bureau (VAB) in the State Boards identified areas, where such an activity is required and accordingly motivated organizations to take up this scheme. They also monitor and provide professional inputs to the FCCS already running in the state.

This scheme was sanctioned by the Planning Commission in 1984. In 1992, the Delhi police requested the Central Social Welfare Board to set up a Family Counselling Centre in the crime Against Women Cell at Nanakpura, as it was felt that a male dominated police

force was insensitive to the needs of women, who come for assistance on social problems such as harassment, dowry matters etc. and that preventive counselling could greatly answer the psychological needs of women, besides police action. The success of this venture led to the opening of FCCs in all the police stations at the police headquarters in state capitals.

Starting with 12 Family Counselling Centres in 1984-85, there is a total number of 600 FCCs running in the country. In West Bengal, there are 48 FCCs running presently through NGOs including police head quarters, Mahila Jails, Rape Crisis Intervention and Potentials counselling.

Concept:

Counselling is a process of developing a cooperative relationship and then using that interaction to help clients or a group to explore themselves and their environments, gain a clearer understanding and then work out appropriate behaviours. The purpose of counselling is to enhance the personal development, the psychological growth toward a socialized maturity, of its clients.

Counselling is a therapeutic growth process through which individuals are helped to define goals, make decisions and solve problems related to personal, social, educational and career concerns. Specialized counselling provides assistance with concerns related to physical and social rehabilitation, employment, mental health, substance abuse, marital and family problems, human sexuality, religions and value choices, career development and other concerns.

While concentrating on client, the counsellor recognizes the role of client's environment in counselling. Counsellor's ability to

conceptualize and assess the social ecology in which the client lives and works in a vital asset to maximize treatment gains. Relationship oriented environment produces high degree of self-esteem and satisfaction in individual. The social environment that emphasizes personal development produces high level of skills learning. Since it is learning and achievement oriented, it may also tend to produce high level of anxiety in the individuals.

Moreover, treatment gains can also be maximized if the environments are chosen, shaped or created by the counsellor to increase congruence between client's needs (current as well as anticipated) and the environment. If a client needs support, the counsellor selects shape or creates such an environment which is high in relationship characteristics. The counsellor first helps the client 'select' conducive environment. In case, that is not feasible, the second strategy of 'change' should be attempted failing which the third strategy of 'creation' should be implemented. A counsellor's ability to visualize the social milieu of a client is vital for the optimization of treatment gains. Often the people around the client also need to be counselled in order to facilitate effective treatment.

Purpose of counselling intervention:

Purpose of counselling intervention can be of three kinds:

- Remediation of an existing problem.
- Prevention of a potential problem.
- Development of skills leading to positive and creative growth.

Remedial intervention is called for when individuals have some problem or go through some achieving situation. In relation to a group, counselling intervention is involved when the groups is faced with some

failure such as problems of lack of interpersonal and social skills, failure to make valid decisions or failures due to organizational or structural deficiencies.

Counselling in terms of preventive measures is concerned with identifying those skills and measures which are needed now or which may be needed in future to fight out or cope with a problem. Identification will be followed by providing means or by enabling individual or group to acquire means to develop skills or measures. The focus is to anticipate future problems and take measures to prevent them by providing individuals or groups with needed skills or by creating changes in the environment so as to prevent development of the problem.

Development interventions include those programmes which are designed to enhance the functioning and developmental potential of healthy individuals or groups. The primary focus is to promote and enhance positive growth for all. It entails not only those who are identified as having or about to have problems but each and every member of the group or the community.

Counselling Relationship:

The counselling relationship is an alliance between counsellor and client formed to help the client move toward a goal - more appropriate behaviour. The client is able to bring about changes due to counsellor's acceptance of the client as a person as well as rendering help in solving a problem.

Characteristics of counselling relationship:

- Counselling relationship is established and continued till client feels the need for a special help with a problem that he or she cannot solve independently.
- The counselling relationship is formal and structured in that it is not continued on a casual social basis, It is characterized by specified duration, privacy and confidentiality.
- The counselling relationship is limited to the therapeutic hour and purpose.
- Although counselling relationship is limited in time, it is a deeper and closer relationship than ordinary social friendship.
- The counselling relationship is powerful and thus effective because the principles of good human relationships are applied consciously and purposefully.

Essential conditions for Effective Counselling:

For any effective counselling the facilitative conditions are the core. The conditions like empathy, positive regard, genuineness, congruence elicit greatest involvement of the client and ultimately significant constructive gains or change in the client.

- 1) Unconditional Positive Regard: Growth and change are more likely to occur in the client, if the counsellor is experiencing a warm, positive, accepting attitude toward "what is" in the client, It means that the counsellor considers the client as an important and worthy individual regardless of his particular behaviour, It means that he cares for the client as a person with potentialities

and in a non-possessive way. He respects the client as an individual and shows positive liking unconditionally without passing judgements or evaluating.

- 2) Empathy: Empathy is the capacity to enter not the feeling and experiences of another without losing oneself in the process. it promotes growth in the relationship between client and counsellor. Empathy makes it possible for the client to learn, change and *develop*. Conscious practice on part of the counsellor sensitively, to receive more of the subtle meanings the other person expressing in words, gesture and posture, and reflect upon them deeply the significance of those expressions. That means an ability to communicate to the client that the counsellor cares, has concern for the client and is hearing and understanding what the client is perceiving.
- 3) Congruence: In her/his relationship with client; the counsellor should be genuine and without any facade. He should be open and not hide his feelings and attitudes which at that moment are flowing in him. Congruence, here, means that counsellor is herself/himself, not denying herself/himself. The more genuine and congruent the counsellor is in the relationship, the greater probability for a change in the client. It is easier to trust and to relate with a person who is open and honest about herself/himself, than one who is polite but superficial. The counsellor should rely on his won experience and expertise in order to determine the time, contest and manner or self disclosures to achieve the counselling goal.
- 4) The Client's Perception: It is when the client perceives the genuineness of the counsellor and acceptance and empathy on

- To make efforts for the reconciliation in the cases of separation and out of court settlement in marital cases;
- To provide referral services like short stay homes, free legal aid, police assistance etc.;
- To make the counselling services available in short stay homes, remand homes, orphanages, drug de-addiction centres, old age homes, shelter homes, prisons, schools for gifted children etc.;
- To educate and mobilize public opinion against social problems and pre-marital issues.
- To arrange for suitable rehabilitation services for the victims and their dependants;
- To educate and impart information regarding social welfare activities aided and undertaken by various governmental and non-governmental agencies for better coordination and services to the people.

The above objectives of FCCs are to provide social intervention through professional counselling:

- Where the family disputes do not fall within the purview of law;
- where a woman is harassed and seeks support but does not want to take recourse to law due to social constraints;
- To guide, assist and counsel women, who are victims of atrocities, on available legal and rehabilitation measure;
- To act as a catalyst between NGO's working in the same field and the law-enforcing agency, legal aid cells, short stay homes,

psychiatrists, psychologists etc. and developing accessible resource networks.

Operational Strategies:

Counselling is a scientific process of assistance extended by an expert, in an individual or group situation, to persons who need such help. The process aims at enabling the individual to learn and pursue more realistic and satisfying solutions to her/his difficulties. The process revolves primarily around the relationship between the counsellor and the client. It is this relationship that leads to growth and change. The counsellor helps the client to develop the ability to take wise, discrete, independent and responsible decisions.

When any individual comes to a Family Counselling Centre, the case is first registered on a prescribed format, The counsellors construct the socio-cultural background through geno-grams or eco-maps to understand the psychic and emotional status of the individual with respect to her/him immediate and larger environmental i.e. family, community and society. This process is time-taking and is generally completed over many sittings either in the counselling centre or through home visit. Case records are simultaneously prepared and this should tell the complete story and the counsellors' diagnosis of the case. Through such a process, the counsellor builds up the potential intervention points of a case i.e. whether the case requires simple counselling, mediation, negotiated settlement, conciliation or whether it requires other institutional supports such as the police, legal and psychiatric help etc.

The scheme provides for 2 counsellors in a NGO. This is to ensure that there is at least one counsellor present at the centre, while the other is free to move on home visits.

Each Family Counselling Centre has a sub-committee consisting of teachers, lawyers, social workers, psychiatrist, representative of District Magistrate Office and Superintendent of Police etc. to assist and advise the counsellors in handling sensitive and difficult cases, sub-committee meetings attended by both counsellors are to be convened at regular intervals. A case is technically not considered close still all interested parties state that they are satisfied with whatever understanding they have reached.

Counselling takes on curative, protective or rehabilitative approach depending upon the need of each case. However, effective counselling depends as much on the counsellor's ingenuity in linking the individual in distress to institutional supports. It is crucial to understand that the client, who is a product of a society riddled with low societal perceptions of women, would again have to seek remedies, through the counsellors in that very society which perpetrates such atrocities. Hence instances of non-response, non-cooperation, wilful and prejudicial actions have to be faced and counteracted by the counsellors, if they have to win the faith of their clients. Instances such as the police letting off the dowry takers with bribes, or the services of Short Stay Home not being available or if available, further aggravating the trauma of the clients as some of these short stay homes have themselves fallen into disrepute, delays in grant of legal aid or delays in provision of maintenance by family courts, high legal costs, an insensitive police and judiciary can completely dampen the morale of even the most committed counsellors. Psychiatric assistance, is generally not available as women fight shy of meeting psychiatrists in hospitals/clinics, where as psychiatrists are not available on visits except with high fees, The police FCC's have this peculiar problem of having to attend cases only

after the case is registered in the attached police stations, which can effectively ward off counselling if so willed.

When counsellors, on behalf of their clients are pitted against non-supporting social institutions, their effectiveness could still depend greatly on how they understand the checks and balances in society, and put it to professional use, very often ingenious, extra-institutional and sometimes anti-establishment. A conscience raising effort by involving social activities, as co-actors through protests and processions, to handle insensitive state led agencies like the police usually has impact, but not without costs. There are instances where counsellors, have acted as pressure groups themselves and have won direct grant of maintenance to women from administrative authorities without recourse to legal problems. Instances of counsellors assisting family courts on the request of the lawyer representing the women client has met with limited success. The sub-committees also effectively intervene with referral agencies to provide relief to clients. Instances of cross-country networking by NGOs to find solutions, where the aggrieved and the aggressor reside at different places have also been reported. These are clear indications that despite constraints, counsellors/NGOs can combine effectively to disharm and overcome a ubiquitous and non-caring bureaucracy.

Awareness building through programme which reaches out to community for legal literacy is extremely effective. Social mobilization is indeed a crucial prologue and epilogue to counselling. Vocational training and guidance regarding economic- assistance, if done, practically completes the task of rehabilitation.

On the Central Social Welfare Board's request, a notification was issued in 1988 by the State Government to issue identity cards of FCC

counsellors by police authorities to make the police more accessible to the client and to impart the necessary respectability and credibility to the counsellors.

The recognition of the role of FCCs in the family courts has not made any headway in most states. From time to time, different courts have entrusted cases to FCCs for out-of- court settlement in maintenance cases and cases involving family disputes.

With increasing number of atrocities on women and girl children there is no doubt that counsellors have a greater role in handling their crisis, in building their awareness and preventing atrocities.

FAMILY COUNSELLING CENTRE AT SALT LAKE AND FAMILY COUNSELLING CENTRE AT BHABANI BHAVAN, ALIPORE

Domestic Violence against women exist both in rural and urban areas. Professional service like family counselling has got its roots in the country. The present study has been therefore limited to those individuals who have received some kind of services from the counselling centres. Therefore, the study covers the three districts of West Bengal, viz, North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas and Kolkata, both rural and urban population. The data have been collected through interview of the victims registered during the last 5 years in the two family counselling centres one is situated at Salt Lake and other at Bhabani Bhavan, Alipore, Kolkata, run by Jaysprakash institute of Social Change.

Jayaprakash Institute of Social Change founded as an Non-governmental organization in **1973**, the Institute was named after the well known scholar, freedom fighter and a venerable social revolutionary, the late Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan. In this endeavour, the Late Prof. Sugata Dasgupta, a renowned social scientist and Late Khitish Roy Chowdhury, an ardent follower of Gandhian philosophy with a life dedicated to social work, volunteered their services for the healthy growth of the nascent organization. Mission of the Institute is to create a no-poverty, gender-just and an equitable social order to reach out to all people conjuring a composite spectrum of developments for social change. The objectives of the institute, inter alia, are to study the social work, economic and cultural changes taking place in independent India, and also to generate action-oriented programmes for the upliftment of the micro-societies through public awareness, community development

and social action. The main emphasis of the Institute's work is thus development per se, and in attending to this task, the Institute seeks to formulate its approach to research, survey, training and other such activities in a manner such that the programmes act as input to development. The genesis of the Institute is rooted in the need for an organizational platform that would be able to provide the multidimensional support and integrated services for effective and appropriate solutions to a spectrum of national socioeconomic problems. While translating policies into action, the Institute emphasizes an empirical analysis of the problem and methodological soundness to combat them.

Since December 1987, the Institute has been running a Family Counselling Centre. Earlier the centre was located at M. B. Road, Birati. Now the centre has been shifted to Head Office at DD-18/4/1, Salt Lake City, in the district of North 24 Parganas. Another Family Counselling Centre is operating at Bhabani Bhavan, Alipore by this Institute from 10th August 2001, for looking into the cases of marital discords, violence against women and trafficking. Identifying the cause(s) of disharmony and violent behaviour and exploring ways of grievance redressal in individual cases for peaceful rehabilitation within the existing family set-up are normally aimed at achieving. The objective of the entire exercise is to address family problem through intervention and counselling. In some cases, when necessary, FCC may also provide legal advice and/or refer them for legal aid and other support services.

Activities of the Two Family Counselling Centres:

Family Counselling Centres of Jayaprakash Institute of Social Change are working in the two broad fields. The first category consists of interventions directed towards the individual victims of violence.

These tasks have been done by the counsellors through individual counselling and psychotherapy (when need arise) services for the victims, legal aid and obtaining legal redressal for the victims (this includes getting the accused convicted, seeking monetary and other custodial rights for the client in case of legal separation, striving to obtain legal aid or police help for protecting of the victim from further harm etc.), medical aid, linking the individual (victim) to existing community resources and building new linkages for long term support to the client and other potential victims.

The interventions in the second category aim at making some positive difference in the larger environment of the client. This category includes advocacy interventions, extending the scope of existing services and developing new services for dealing with the issues at the macro-level. Generally through this service FCCs try to influence the general public opinion and mobilize community networks for prevention of such instances and promotion of gender equality.

The counsellors not only direct the interventions towards the victim alone, but also try to look into the other dimensions of the problem such as, the custody of children, economic need of the individual/family in combating the current crisis etc. The counsellors try to assess the needs and resources of the family and the expectations of the client vis-à-vis the counsellor, when a client approaching the Family Counselling Centre, the concerned case would typically go through the following ways:

- ❖ Registration of complaint with case history.
- ❖ Interview with complainant.
- ❖ Calling the other party.
- ❖ Home visits and investigation.

- ❖ Joint meeting with conflicting parties.
- ❖ Arrival at compromise.
- ❖ Follow up home visit.

The counselling centres entertain complaint for both the parties/husband and the wife. The first meeting is primarily intended to hear out the complaints case and to assess the complexities involved in the client's expectations.

The counsellors felt that the most problematic stage in these cases are the handling the 'Other Party'. The counselling centre followed a routine schedule of serving three notices to the other party, requesting the latter to come and meet the counsellor. In most cases the parties did respond. In case of default, the counsellors make home visits and involve the larger kin network, neighbours or colleagues in persuading the errant party to come to the counselling centres. Following a closed door meeting with the second party where his/her side of the story is heard, a mutually convenient date for a joint meeting is fixed. Joint meetings may be close door meeting the counsellor and the couple only or may involve kin of the two sides and in some cases the sub-committee providing guidance and technical support to the counsellors. When a compromise is reached, these are usually recorded.

With a view to formalizing this understanding counsellor recording it on a stamp paper. Though this has no legal validity yet it is claimed to be a useful deterrent, especially in cases involving parties from an illiterate or semi literate background. The fear of consequences of breach of a formal and supposedly 'legal' contract is said to have a restraining influence on these parties.

The couples/victims are advised to keep in touch and especially the victimized wife is assumed that she could in case the need arose come back at anytime to the centre for help. Counsellors confirmed that this process of resolution takes on an average 5 - 7 sessions.

After reconciliation, counsellors wait for 6 to 12 months before closing a case. The follow up visits are sometime surprise visits and the number of such visit varied from one to four visits.

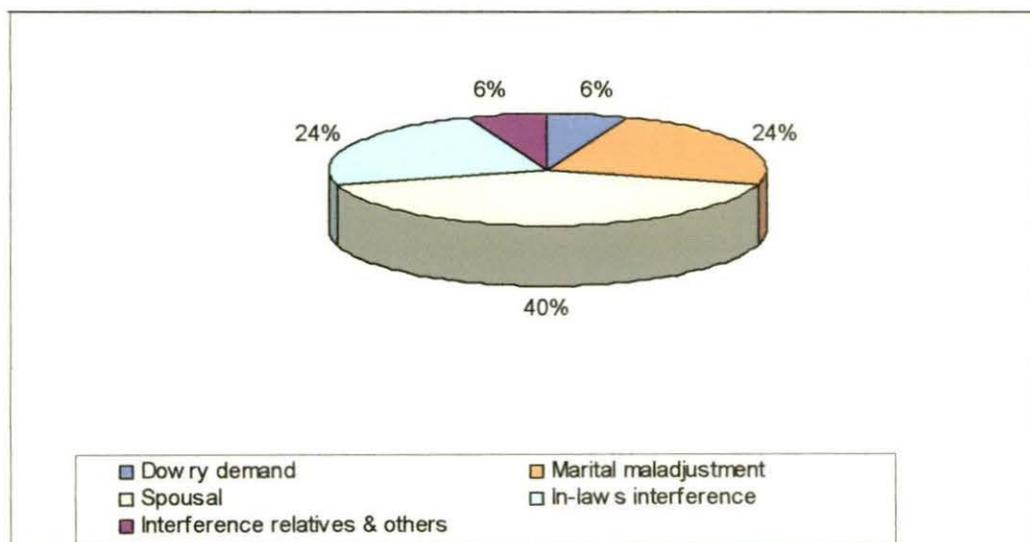
Apart from counselling, the counselling centres are also involved in referral services. This involved sending grievously injured woman to governmental hospitals, helping women to file cases under the free legal aid scheme or even in registering complaints with the police and asking for police action, women in need of shelter are referred to Governments shelter homes.

To understand the type, nature and causes behind family dispute and discord, secondary data was collected from the FCCs run by Jayaprakash Institute of Social Change. Type of cases received by the F.C.C.s of domestic violence against women is seen in the Table No.-2 of the total cases 41.2% marital discord are spousal, followed by an equal percentage of marital maladjustment and in-laws-interference i.e., 23.6% and equal percentage of 5.8% are dowry demand and interference of relatives, parents of both the sides and sibling interference.

Table 2: Types of cases received by FCCs during last 5 years

Type of cases received	Percentage
Dowry demand	5.8%
Marital maladjustment	23.6%
Spousal	41.2%
In-laws interference	23.6%
Interference of relatives, parents & siblings	5.8%

Figure 1 : Types of cases received by FCCs during last 5 years



Today family relations and marital adjustments are affected by multiple factors operating inside as well as outside family environment. Now there is more emphasis on economic development than on healthy and balanced human growth. New social legislation, women's education, reduction in women's economic depending, high ambitions, widening generation gaps, growing selfishness, downward motion in ethical and social values, more emphasis on individual rights than on duties, growing menace of dowry, westernization, urbanization, impact of media and films, vast differences of opinion, ideas, behaviour

patterns, values, interests, background and thought process between the spouses, conflicts of personal interests between the spouses etc. are such factors contribute to dissatisfaction, maladjustment and discord in marital ties.

Marital union involves a set of role expectations from the spouse, especially the female in her new "home". Expectation from the newly wed daughter-in-law in terms of behaviour, duty, sentiments are always quite high.

Relationship with the in-laws also possesses serious threats to familial harmony in most marriages. Marital partner and other family members may have different aspirations and evaluations of the roles which they play and expect from each other. As a result, conflicts in the marriage and family roles may arise between the spouses over their duty and obligations. Each marital partner is motivated by his/her own performed role concepts; his/her own role expectations from each other, mate's role expectations to himself and the degree of correspondence between the two sets of role concepts and expectations. If there exists a wide gap in both the role sets, it leads to role conflicts and marital discord. There exists temperamental incompatibility. Spouses have differences of opinion on most issues and both of them fail to resolve conflicts amicably. Differences in cultural background and/or socio-economic status of spouses' families of orientation also become reasons for friction and conflict. There are differences in perception of self and other's roles vis-à-vis family and society. Either one or both spouses failing to accept the changing roles and duties of each other due to the needs of changing time play create tensions in the marital life. Dowry demands 5.8% and conflicts with in-laws 29.4% also common cause of disharmony in the family.

Parent-child conflicts also lead to family turmoil. It is an extension of spousal conflict or exclusive in nature. Parents have autocratic, authoritative or permissive socialization patterns. Authoritative parenting suppresses the personality of child and in turn he/she become rebellion, Permissive parenting perceived as indifference and timidity on part of parents and children become stubborn, hostile and arrogant. Family values and parent-child relations are important variable especially when children come in conflict with societal norms and expectations.

Sex is a highly influencing factor in marital life. Sexual relationship in marriage is a function of the entire personality which in turn is a product of a variety of biological and cultural constituents. When husbands are responsible for sexual disharmony, the reasons come out as excessive sex demands. On the other hand, when wife is responsible for sexual disharmony, wilful refusal to cohabit may be a projection of her frigidity around by improper upbringing or lack of guidance and sex instruction before marriage.

Ill-treatment by husband, acute shortage of accommodation, quarrels over trifles, wife wanting to stay separately from the husband's family, neglect of household duties etc. lead to an indifferent attitude of the spouses which lead to refusal to cohabit.

Extra-marital relations 23.6% appear to be more frequent by husbands than by wives. However, husbands often appear to be more suspicious about the extra-marital affairs of their life,

Economic distress 23.6% appear to be the main cause of marital discord, due to insufficiency or irregularity of income or unemployment of the spouses, particularly husband.

Many personal defects 11.8% also be responsible for unhappy marital relationship which lead to desertion, separation and divorce. Such defects include, suspicious husband; bad temper of wife, disturbed personalities, dominating wife, demanding husband, sadist husband, unsteady wife, inferiority complex of wife, irresponsible wife etc.

Marital relationship breaks because of internal or external or both reasons. Family crisis results when old coping skills of the family have failed and members feel helpless and clueless to deal with the situation, unless an external help is provided. Reasons of family crisis range from financial to social stigma, discrimination, security threats, separation, death, divorce etc. Incompatibility of age, of religion, of background, of temperament, of opinions, of status, of education and of outlook also badly affect marital adjustment.

Thus, there are several causes of marital disputes. It is not necessary that only one or two factors responsible for marital disunion. Many intra as well as extra familial factors operate simultaneously, creating psychological tensions and adjustment problems which lead to desertion, separation or divorce resulting into family maladjustment.