

Marriage and families

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



Introduction

Families are central institutions in our society. They are commissioned with the pivotal tasks of children upbringing and providing continuing intimacy and companionship to members. Traditionally, a family consists of persons related by blood, marriage or adoption. Other definitions of a family have specified a common household, economic independency, and sexual and reproductive relations (Lamanna and Riedmann, 2005)

Sociologists continue to recognize the family important responsibility in performing necessary social roles such as child rearing, economic support and domestic maintenance. As families are becoming less traditional, the legal definition of a family has become more flexible. Traditional or modern families have one mission in that they all create a place to belong in at least two ways. They create boundaries, and they serve as a repository or archive of family memories and traditions.

Marriage which is a formal agreement between two people is the initial stage of forming a family. Our discussion will answer the basic questions on the legal bindings in marriages and outline factors that may affect marital stability.

Primary provisions of a prenuptial agreement and personal contract

Back in history husbands and wives were prohibited from making any contract between themselves. Still on the same period prenuptial agreements particular those meant to provide property rights following a divorce were prohibited. It was thought that these agreements would encourage divorce. In the recent times this laws have gradually changed to

permit husbands and wives to make contracts with each other by which they agree about what assets would be held separately by either of them during the marriage. (Weisman, 2003)

In many states, prenuptial agreements and personal contracts are highly encouraged. They preserve assets for children in case there is a divorce or the parents die.

Weisman, (2003) comments that for a prenuptial agreement to be enforced, both people in the relationship must clearly disclose all the assets they have. Any agreement based on fraud will however not be recognized (pg, 7). The two parties are advised to have a lawyer for representation to ensure that the signing of the agreement is fair and reasonable.

In America most states follow the uniform provisions act on prenuptial agreement. The act provides matters that are subject to a prenuptial agreement. (Weisman, 2003). They include; the right and obligation to make a contract in regard to property; the modification or elimination of spousal support; ownership rights and disposition of death benefits from a life insurance policy; The disposition of property upon separation; a break up of marriage, death or the occurrence or any other event and lastly the making of a will, trust or other arrangement.

The above provisions for making of a personal contract are important because without such provisions in a prenuptial agreement, may result to fraudulent claims.

In the United States people who are old or senior citizens use prenuptial agreement to protect their assets and their children from previous marriages

in the event that a spouse goes into a nursing home and Medicaid cover is sought. (pg, 8)

Factor affecting marital stability

An analysis carried out by (Veroff and Shirley, 2002) describes these factors more schematically according to the process and number of years the couple has been into marriage. The first analysis is based on the factors that occur before getting married and starting a family. These factors are called pre-marriage factors and include; social status of spouses, pre-marital connections of the couple and family background of the spouses. The pre-marriage factors studied under social status include; father and mother education, own education, personal income, poverty ratio, race and educational attainment. Under the family background we have; number of siblings, broken home background and presence of older siblings

The second category discusses personal factors at the time of marriage. They are the characteristics comprising each spouse and their personality. They are; ambitiousness, cooperativeness, orientation of power and Neuroticism.

The third analysis is based on interpersonal factors which describe how each individual relates with other people, and how he or she views others. They include; interpersonal perceptions, perceived interacting attitude in compatibility, and actual interactions.

There are other factors that people face when they interact with others and they form our fourth category. These factors are referred to as external factors. Stress is one of the factors. Stress is an emotionally disruptive or

unsettling gap that may exist between how we would like our life to be and how it actually is. Another external factor is network support which describes how well the family is connected with the outside world. The amount of support they receive from other families and friends.

The final factor is the qualitative sense that the couple makes of their life together. These are the integrative feelings which can be both specific and general. Feelings in one year of set the stage for the marital factors in the next year which in turn affect the feelings in that year and so on. These feelings include marital happiness, marital competence, marital control, marital tension and marital equity. These are measured separately for each spouse. (Veroff and Shirley, 2002. pp 5-6)

The above factors underline the stability or instability of a marriage.

Forms of Marital Disruption

Marital problems are risk factors in a family environment where children are brought up. Marital conflicts that lead to divorce are the most detrimental towards children welfare. Marital disruptions according to (Richardson and Carol, 2002) are after associated with a change in economic circumstances and adjustments to altered living conditions (pg, 1907). When parents are stressed they affect their parenting practices.

A part from divorce parents may disagree but yet remain together. These parents have persistent conflicts that do not end. The end result of such conflicts is that they affect children's behavior and lower their self esteem.

Marital violence is part of marital disruption and involves physical aggression. This form is more upsetting to children than other forms of marital

disruption. When children are exposed to marital violence they tend to imitate this in their relationships with others and display violent behavior towards teachers, peers and family members. (Richardson and Carol, 2002) also suggest that where children are exposed to negative emotions, their safety and security may be threatened and therefore they express anger towards their parents. Marital Abuse also results when parents are use violence against each other in marriages. Parents who have no respect for their children and end up abusing them either physically or sexually. Abuse falls under the marital violence

Marital disruption may occur as a result of death of one person in a relationship. The irreversible loss of a close companion begins a process of grief and extended transition for the surviving spouse. There is an increased risk for emotional disturbance to bereaved individuals compared to their non-bereaved community counterparts. These effects may persist for second years or more for a significant number of individuals.

Epidemiological data has demonstrated that, there is a strong association between marital disruption and poorer health. This is because of the physiological suffering that the bereaved face, especially when their loved ones depart.

Conclusion

The family, functions to fulfill six basic human needs; socialization of children, economic production, welfare for the sick and the elderly, recreation and emotional attachment, sexual relationship regulation and reproduction. Through the ages marriages and family has been used to

establish basic patterns of inheritance, authority, lines of descents and mate selections.

These are some of the commonly accepted descriptions and functions of a family. The changing face of families structure has been as a result of certain factors which includes; the higher expectations for marriage, higher divorce and remarriage rates, expenses on personal fulfillment avoiding economic concerns and increased single parent families.

The primary provisions of a prenuptial agreement are important in a family setting whether the couple trust or mistrust each other. Marital stability and instability is part of normal experiences in marriage and family and the factors discussed in the document contribute negatively or positively towards the family. The various forms of marital disruptions described in this text include; death, separation or divorce. Strong marriages are therefore needed for families to be effective.

References

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