6.1 SUMMARY

The family, centered on marriage, is the basic unit of society. At times family members get busy with life and give in to the pressures and demands of a modern life and start taking each other for granted leading to disputes and discords in the family. Sometimes people manage to come out of such a situation and other times they need outside help. From time immemorial, people have provided help to one another. Much of this help has been in the form of giving advice or wisdom.

Healthy families and marriage are the foundation of thriving communities. When marriages break down, communities suffer and the role of government expands. Sound public policy places marriage and the family at the center, respecting and guarding the role of this permanent institution. The FCCs in India are the result of Government’s realization of the importance of family cohesiveness and its role in making a healthy and strong nation.

The results of the present study show that the beneficiaries availing the services of the FCCs are varied in terms of age, marital status, income level, and their goal is to seek help. A significant proportion of those who use FCC services come from the poorer sections of society. Also, FCCs’ image tends to be of service provider offering counseling and guidance to families/couples in marital disputes or couples going through family problems (relationship). However in the present study, results show that people of all ages, gender, education, and occupation come for seeking all kinds of help which comprises of guidance / counseling, mediation, facilitation and referral service for redressal of their problems.

The findings in this study also highlight the important issue of the type and nature of problems faced by individuals who seek assistance from FCCs. The level of distress experienced by beneficiaries is quite profound. Many critical situations emerge from issues of attachment, separation, loss, abandonment, abuse, and fear.

It is important for the agencies who finance these FCCs (the government and especially the CSWB) to understand the intensity and seriousness of the work...
undertaken by the FCCs. In the perception of a layman the main work at FCCs is helping couples in marital disputes by teaching problem-solving skills or solving relationship problems between family members especially mother in-law and daughter-in-law. However, such clear-cut cases are not coming forward to the FCCs. There are many beneficiaries who come with multiple-problems in various problematic situations. The elaborate nature of problems in the present study therefore illustrates the need for advanced and sophisticated service resources.

The present study shows that FCCs have gained confidence of people who are in need of help for dealing with the problems being faced by them. This study highlights the importance of providing help to the beneficiaries who come to the FCCs. Many people may visit FCCs not for counseling only. They come to FCCs with the hope that it may be a place of refuge, or a place where they can get information or wise guidance regarding how to handle a serious situation. FCC counselor need to know how to assess these kinds of situations and be able to offer more relevant or adequate alternatives.

The effectiveness of counseling is often doubted by the critics because it appears to involve one (or two) people “chatting” to another who is called a counselor. Counselors are trained to be able to offer special kind of help using appropriate techniques. There is enough evidence to suggest that counseling has an important preventive role in relation to family issues by preventing less serious problems from becoming more serious, and by helping people to maintain reasonably good levels of harmonious relations within the family.

To maintain high level of satisfaction, FCC counselors need to learn different types of counseling skills such as crises intervention, problem focused intervention, non directive listening skills etc. According to McKeown et al.(2002) interventions to support relationships must be tailored to the persons’ definition of need and their goals in coming to counseling. It implies forming a strong professional relationship with the client and enhancing the clients’ generic capacity to overcome his/her problems. Since there is no product that can be provided during the service, the process itself is the product. The clients’ perception of the quality is derived from both, the event of the service and the outcome. The FCCs must strive to increase the level of satisfaction of the beneficiaries by improving the standard of facilities being provided at the FCCs as well as technical skill of the counselors.
6.2 CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The present study is an attempt to study the working of FCCs, particularly the expectations that beneficiaries approach FCCs with and how much satisfaction they report with the services received. Counseling is the primary service that FCCs provide, although this study finds that the nature of counseling expected and offered goes beyond merely “family counseling”.

Both marriage and family (the two significant institutions of society) are going through several changes necessitating intervention by counselors. The most critical areas of family counseling requiring intervention include families with marital strains between married partners as well as disputes among family members; families with neglect, abuse or truants, vagrants and delinquents; families with neglect and abuse of elders; families with abuse and exploitation of women; step or reconstituted families; childless families; live-in relationships; families affected by natural disasters and families of displaced persons (Iyer, 2004).

The results of the present study revealed that people visit FCCs with all kinds of problems with the expectations of finding help to solve them. The popular belief that the FCCs are mainly providing services to women has been belied in this study as people from both the genders approached the FCC when they were in need of help. The results revealed that the beneficiaries approaching the FCC belonged to all age groups i.e. they ranged between the age of 14 and 62 years. The beneficiaries represented all marital backgrounds i.e. unmarried, married, divorced, widowed and separated. The beneficiaries had an educational attainment ranging from barely literate to post-graduate or professional degrees and in their occupation they were labourers, housewives, service people, self-employed and professionals with monthly family income which ranged from below Rs 10,000 to above Rs 30,000 per month. The problems with which these beneficiaries approached the FCCs could be categorized as personal, marital, medical, financial, career and family problems. The results further revealed that the relief expected by the beneficiaries from the FCCs could be described as help in seeking divorce/separation, maintenance; financial help and financial counseling; separation from joint families; police protection/police assistance/shelter; financial aid; and medical assistance. Many people were in the FCC with the expectations of seeking the service termed as “others” in the present
study, which included counseling of parents, getting help in putting police pressure on in-laws/husband, assistance in filling forms/attestation of documents etc.

FCCs provide various services in the shape of guidance/counseling; mediation; facilitation; referral services and others. The beneficiaries’ satisfaction with the services provided showed that more than 60% of the subjects of the present study could be described as “very” and “extremely” satisfied. These results confirm the earlier studies on satisfaction with counseling services conducted in many different countries. However, when we see the figures of those beneficiaries who were dissatisfied with the services in the present study, we find that 23.5% of males and 21.9% of females showed their dissatisfaction. When we see dissatisfied beneficiaries from different marital statuses, we find that 25.2% of married and 17.7% of unmarried beneficiaries were not happy with the services provided by the FCC. Further, it seems that socio-economic status of the beneficiaries has a bearing on their level of satisfaction with the services of FCC. We find that the level of dissatisfaction with the services provided is increasing with the decrease in level of education of the beneficiaries. The uneducated beneficiaries were the highest group of dissatisfied beneficiaries (37.3%) as compared to the highly educated (12.7%). Similarly, when we relate the satisfaction with the occupation of the beneficiaries, we find that the beneficiaries from the labour class were most dissatisfied (30.1%) as compared to the category of students (15.3%), service class (17.2%), unemployed (21%), self-employed (24.6%) and housewives (25%). These results show that the services being provided by the FCCs to the low socio-economic status people are not fulfilling their expectations. The counselors in these FCCs need to upgrade their skills so that they are able to communicate in a better manner with the beneficiaries belonging to the lower socio-economic status. They also need to improve their networking with other services like the police, those providing free legal aid, hospitals etc. so that the mediation and referral services being provided to the beneficiaries are availed by them easily and in an effective manner which will certainly raise their level of satisfaction with the FCC services.

Effective counseling depends to a large extent on the counselor’s ingenuity in linking the individual in distress to institutional supports. There have been instances where counselors have acted as pressure groups themselves and have helped women to get benefits from the administrative authorities without recourse to legal proceedings. According to Bhamathi (1996) “Counseling takes on the curative,
protective or rehabilitative approach depending upon the need of each case. In Western societies, counseling has become a way of life and court decisions in marital and family disputes and in cases of child abuse are taken after a full review by counselors (Bhamathi, 1996)."

Jain (2007) in her study of FCCs in Delhi observed that the service provided by FCCs had become just another service offered by service-based agencies (the NGOs engaged in educational and vocational training of women for their economic independence) rather than issue-based agencies (NGOs or women’s organizations focusing on advocacy of equal rights and elimination of dowry and domestic violence and other atrocities on women). She further writes that the purpose, process and expected outcomes of this service are not clear to most of the organizers of this service, which gets reflected in the nature of cases registered by the FCCs and the process utilized in handling the cases by the counselors. In her study she found that 18 out of 22 organizations that were part of her study were service-based organizations which were providing services for education, economic independence, health care and vocational training to girls and women and had taken up the FCC to get some infrastructure and monetary aid for their other programmes through this FCC scheme. They had no previous experience of running a family welfare programme or any other basic competency in counseling or family counseling. The counselors were not even aware of the theories of people, problems and solutions for dealing with cases (Jain, 2007).

Counseling as a profession is new in India. There is virtually a “free for all” scenario in the training and practice of counseling as there is no parent body or accreditation association in the country (Carson, Jain and Ramirez, 2009). According to Sheshadri, S., “In the field of counseling, good intentions are not enough; to be properly trained is essential” (www.parivarthan.org). A wide range of services exist which are referred to as “counseling” – from giving of practical information and advice to therapeutic counseling in hospital settings. (Netto et al, 2001). It must be ensured that clients receive the appropriate service for their needs and for this purpose; the need is to distinguish between counseling and the use of counseling skills. The FCCs must provide a more client-friendly environment in the shape of comfortable seating arrangements, provision of separate place/room for the beneficiaries to discuss their problems in private and improved toilet and drinking water facilities.
In addition to this, it will be appropriate if further research on the existing skills and knowledge of the counselors working in FCCs is carried out and they are imparted training for dealing specifically with the kind of cases coming to the FCC.

Counselors also need to learn different types of counseling skills such as crises intervention, problem focused intervention, non directive listening skills etc. and the CSWB needs to consider the usefulness of different approaches with different kinds of problems.

I. The counselors in these FCCs need to upgrade their skills so that they are able to communicate in a better manner with the beneficiaries belonging to the lower socio-economic status.

II. The FCCs also need to improve their net working with other services like Police, free legal aid, hospitals etc. so that the mediation and referral services being provided to the beneficiaries are availed by them easily and in an effective manner which will certainly raise their level of satisfaction with the FCC services.

III. An effective counseling depends to a large extent on the counselor’s ingenuity in linking the individual in distress to institutional supports. Counselors have often acted as pressure group themselves and have helped women to get benefits from the administrative authorities without recourse to legal proceedings in many cases.

IV. The FCCs must provide a more client friendly environment in the shape of comfortable seating arrangements, provision of separate place/room for the beneficiaries to discuss their problems in privacy and improved toilet and drinking water facilities.

V. To build upon the successful work of FCCs so far, and to further strengthen the institution the government could consider revisiting, reassessing and revising the scheme of Family counseling centers. Some areas that would obviously benefit from enhanced focus include

- (i) Hire better skilled and more qualified counselors trained in various disciplines
- (ii) Increase the number of counselors in each FCC.
- (iii) Physical facilities and the environment of the FCCs need to be improved.
- (iv) Create proper channels of liaison between FCCs and other service providers such as hospitals, legal aid services authorities, the law
enforcement agencies and district administration so that prompt and quick response is available to the beneficiaries for redressal of their problems.

VI. FCCs were established primarily as a place for refuge and help women in distress. Over the years FCCs have gradually have come to attract cases of varied nature - being Personal problems, financial problems, family problems, career related problems and medical problems- from not only women but also men, children, aged people and families. As per the finding of this study, the people who approach the FCC are mainly from lower socio-economic status whose expectations of services from FCCs are often at variance from the purpose envisaged by the policy makers when they created the FCCs. For instance many beneficiaries come for seeking help for police assistance, financial aid, skill building, employment, medical aid and guidance in selecting future academic careers and so on. This study of beneficiary’s expectations and their satisfaction with FCC shows that a majority of those who approach FCCs, whatever their expectations are, by and large happy with the services received. This shows that FCCs are fulfilling an unmet need in society albeit one not provisioned for by policy makers

6.3 SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:

1. It will be appropriate if further research on the existing skills and knowledge of the Counselors working in the FCC is carried out and they are imparted training for dealing with the cases coming to the FCC.

2. Counselors also need to learn different types of counseling skills such as crises intervention, problem focused intervention, non directive listening skills etc. and the CSWB needs to explore the usefulness of different approaches with different kinds of problems in future studies.

3. A longitudinal study may be carried out to see the effectiveness of the FCC intervention in the lives of the beneficiaries in the long run.

4. A similar study on beneficiary expectations and satisfaction may be carried out at regional and sub regional level as there are bound to be differences in people’s expectations and perception as well as FCCs services delivery in various States and Cities.