

Effect of Marital Challenges on Christian Couples' Mental Wellness

George W. Nzioki, Susan K. Muriungi, Julius M. Limbitu
Daystar University, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

The prominence of marriage as an institution and its importance in human history cannot be overemphasized. In biblical history the first institution to be created by God was marriage (Genesis 2:24). Marriage is the most elemental relationship for all society. All other relationships in the society are born out of father-mother relationship. The problems associated with family are also relatable to marriage since sturdy marriages are the bedrock of strong and effective families. This justifies why family and marriage symbols are habitually used to express a significant closeness or affection between people. The family is always suggested to be the most reputable and customary environment that animates responsible and synergistic society. A healthy marriage bequeaths a health family. A happy family bequeaths a lasting legacy on socio-economic and political development. Therefore, as the core units that constitute society, each and every family is equally important to the health of the society, and correspondingly, the whole world. Consequently, the family is the nexus to the health of individuals, the strength of the nations and the happiness of the world. In other words, marriage as an institution should be blissful and foster the wellbeing of the couples involved. This implies that there are a considerable number of expectations that are to be fulfilled in marriages if they are to maintain the intended bliss and synergy.

Omange (2013) explains that marriage is an institution found everywhere because it incorporates all cultures, races, ethnic groups or religious groups. By definition, marriage is as a union between a man and woman for life, and it is voluntary and legal (Vincent-Osaghae 2007). The Canon Law also recognizes the indissolubility of marriage when it describes the essential properties of marriage as compassing both companionship and indissolubility (Canon 1056). Marriage is a covenant that is entered into by the agreement and a vow made by the parties and it is based on "till death does us part" commitment from both parties (Mark 10:11-12; Canon Law, 1056). The perspectives from which couples understand this marital injunction—till death do us part—are sometimes at variance. The interpretations are as myriad as there are couples. The effects of such divergent perspectives are the perennial challenges evident in many marriages.

Statement of the Problem

Omange (2013) argues that in a marriage union, the presence of togetherness based on love and submission cannot be overemphasized as necessary. Studies have indicated that the solution lies in the simple injunction where husbands are taught to love their wife. Wives are also taught to submit to their husbands (KJV: Holy Bible, Ephesians 5, 25, 22), although spouses are not always willing to carry out this humble assignment. Hence challenges in marriages inevitable owing to the fact that the important ingredients (love, submission and communion) in marriage are constantly depreciating.

It is also factual that the effects of the challenges in marriage are devastating and contagious. The negative effects diffuse from the couples themselves to their children and dependents. The chain effects of these challenges are also emotionally manifested in the society. Broken homes hamper economic growth and stifle development. Therefore, it is expedient to tackle the problem from its roots. The first place to turn to is to determine the prevalence of the challenges and what causes those challenges in marriage. It is important to also note that working together in mutual love and submission makes up for lapses and the factors that influence matrimonial challenges. In a marital atmosphere an individual's weakness regarding the other partner could be transformed to strength, such that the individual becomes better of thereby bringing

stability to their marriage and family (Omange, 2013).

Thus, this study sought to bridge this existing gap in literature about the practice of protecting the institution of the family. Therefore, the study focused on determining the prevalence of marital challenges within Christian marriages with a case study of selected churches in Dagoretti Sub County Nairobi Kenya.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the marital challenges within Christian Marriages, with a case study of selected churches in Dagoretti North Sub-County, Nairobi Kenya. Being a Christian does not immune or exonerate one from marital challenges and broken homes. Thus, the study purpose to inform married and potential couples about the inevitability of marital challenges. It is believed that knowledge is power. When people are aware of the challenges inherent in marriage as a human institution and its debilitating effects, they will be in a better position to manage themselves as and when necessary especially when they are faced with marital challenges.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were to: analyse the socio-demographic characteristics of Christian marriages in Dagoretti North sub-county in Nairobi Kenya; identify marital challenges within Christian marriages; examine the effect of marital challenges on the mental health of couples within Christian marriages; and to evaluate the relationship between social demographic characteristics and marital challenges within Christian marriages in Dagoretti North sub-county in Nairobi Kenya.

RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section presents a synthesis of literature related to the research topic. It includes the theoretical framework and the general literature review as per the research objectives. These are presented in the following sections, beginning with the theoretical basis of the study.

Lazarus Stress Theory

This theory states that stress is experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize. Maito (2013) notes that people alter their circumstances, or how they are interpreted, to fit into the status quo. This process is referred to as coping (Lazarus, 1966). The theory further explains that traditional approaches to coping had emphasized traits that is, stable properties of personality. But coping is said to be a process is a person's ongoing efforts in thought and action to manage specific demands appraised as taxing or overwhelming (Lazarus, 1966). The theory further explains that although stable coping styles do exist and are important, coping is highly contextual, since to be effective it must change over time and across different stressful conditions (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). The theory also explains that coping affects subsequent stress reactions in that, if a person's relationship with the environment is changed by coping actions the conditions of psychological stress may also be changed for the better.

The theory proceeds to explain that coping is complex, and people use most of the basic strategies in coping in every stressful encounter. The theory further explains that coping depends on appraisal of whether anything can be done in order to change the situation. Later if indeed appraisal says something can be done, then problem-focused coping predominates should be enhanced. If appraisal says nothing can be done then emotion focused coping predominates. Coping strategies change from one stage of a complex stressful encounter to another; the utility of any coping pattern varies with the type of stressful encounter, the type of personality stressed (Ruark, 2015). Therefore, the operation of the Lazarus Stress Theory is such that a

community faced with a particular challenge or a couple dealing with marital conflict may try out or tests different alternative ways that they can resolve or address the challenge. Lazarus stress theory, provides the road map for this study on the prevalence and causes of marital challenges in Christian marriages. Scholars agree that there is no one particular marital challenge that can be used in managing all types of marriage conflicts, Lazarus Theory (1966) was deemed appropriate, because the conflicts in Christian marriages have different causes.

Resource Theory

Oyewale (2016) explains that a number of the early research in family decision-making significantly drew from the resource theory model proposed by Blood and Wolfe (1971). The theory examined the associations between power inside the family and power outside the family. It was noted that power was apportioned between husbands and wives based on the resources that each contributed to the family. The special focus was on the resources of income, occupational prestige, and educational attainment. The theory further explains that the greater a spouse's resources in these areas, the greater the perceived power within the family. Further, it has been observed that sociologists take great interest in determining which spouse assumes the decision-making role in the family. This is usually of prime importance because it often indicates which spouse has the power, influence, or authority (Blood & Wolfe, 1960).

In this study, the theory was used to explain how strategic resources can provide the foundation to develop firm capabilities that can lead to superior performance over time. Oyewale (2016) further explains that resource theorists argue that the relative power that a spouse wields in the family decision making process varies directly with the socio-economic resources contributed by that spouse rather than being based on traditional patriarchal ideas. A valued resource is typically defined as anything one partner may make available to the other, helping the latter satisfies his or her needs. There is an association between power inside the family and power outside the family; power is apportioned between husbands and wives based on the relative resources that each contributed to the family. Thus, within the highly dominating patriarchal society, the resource theory will be used in this study to show that opening up women's access to resources outside the family could result in a more evenly balanced distribution of power within the family (Blood & Wolfe, 1960).

General Literature Review

The Concept of Marriage

The terms marriage and family may not be mutually exclusive but there are nuances. Nwayo (1992) argues that these two terms should be differentiated to grasp their proper meaning and understanding. He believes that the two terms may be reasonably interrelated they have characteristics peculiar to each of them. This is because the features of marriage as a heterosexual union of consenting adults cannot be said to be the same with family, which basically is a social grouping that has people who are either consequently or conjugally related or both ways related.

Hornby (1981) defines marriage as a legal union between a man and a woman as husband and wife. This definition limits marriage to only heterosexual union. To collaborate this point, Undiyaundeye (2002) posits that marriage is a statutory expectation of a young man and woman who are supposed to pledge their love for each other to live as husband and wife under acceptable marriage or cultural ordinance. Similarly, David (1982) proposes that marriage should be a legal union between a physically and emotionally matured man and woman within a cultural setting and within the juridical norms of a society.

The Christian Concept of Marriage

The concept of Christian marriage as an institution, ordained by God, is well accepted by all Christian cultures and denominations. Marriage then is a gift and a sacred institution designed by God to establish an intimate relationship between a man and a woman. According to Christian tradition God sketched his original plan for marriage in Genesis 2:24 when Adam and Eve united together to become one flesh; “therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh”.

For Christians, marriage is not merely a contact but a holy covenant before God (Malachi 2:14) reminiscing the relationship between Christ and His Bride the Church. Thus, just as there is permanence between Christ and his Church, Christian marriage enjoys indissolubility and permanence ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children (Canon 1055). According to Lewis (1985), unity and indissolubility are essential properties of marriage. Through unity and permanence, the couples give to each other definitiveness and exclusiveness of their very self (Gangwari 1996). Hence the marital bond of sincerity and faithfulness is geared towards self-sacrifice as well as marital bliss. It is appropriate to explain here, that, the exclusiveness of unity is intended to mean one man one woman (Canon 1057).

Marital Challenges amongst Christians

Evolutionary psychologists tend to agree that marriage enhances reproductive success by recruiting the father to aid in parental care and family protection (Chapais, 2010; Dollion, 2015). However, around the world, most adults seek to marry and most of them do marry. This suggests that marriage constitutes an evolutionarily stable strategy that generally maximizes fitness for a discussion of marriage from an evolutionary standpoint (Weisfeld & Weisfeld, 2014). Understanding marital challenges is important because conflict may lead to dissatisfaction and instability in this potentially long-term, beneficial relationship. Studies indicate that even if the marriage remains intact but filled with conflicts that detracts from nurturance of the children, the couple’s reproductive fitness may suffer. Although the institution of marriage may provide some feeling of security that may allow married couples to experience less conflict relative to dating couples (Buss, 1989) and cohabiting couples (Kenney & McClanahan, 2006), all married couples probably experience some challenges. It has further been noted that sources of conflict may share some commonalities across cultural groups. Buss’s (1989) explains that cross cultural research on attributes sought in a mate revealed a universal desire in both sexes for kindness, dependability, and understanding, so a dearth of these attributes might often lead to marital challenges. Sources of marriage challenges may also vary across cultures. Buss (1990) explains that culture accounted for 37% of the variance the highest amount in the emphasis placed on premarital chastity in mate preferences, indicating potential cultural differences in the role of this factor in marital challenges.

Social Demographic Characteristics

Age at marriage is an important demographic factor. Musau (2016) argues that studies done globally indicate that in most developed countries it has been noted that the age at first marriage is a major predictor of marital challenges (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). In Australia, it has been revealed that, early marriage is said to increase the likelihood of marital separation/ divorce especially to those who marry under age of 25 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000). He further argues that according to Kalmijn and Poortman (2006), those who marry while young rush into marriage and in the process they end up making poor mate selection. According to Booth and Edwards (1985), this has been attributed to lack of role models, failure of the couples to seek approval from family members and friends. Others scholars have argued that that, such marriages face greater risk because the couples are less likely to have developed the maturity and social skills required to negotiate a long term marital relationship and often do not have access to adequate socio-economic and financial resources (Wolcott & Hughes, 1999).

Age difference has been associated with separation/ divorce especially in cases where the husband is more than three years older than the wife (Tzeng, 1992). It is also argued that individuals marrying at a young age may be less compatible with one another, less prepared for marriage, and lack economic resources (Oppenheimer, 1994). Studies by Amato and Rogers (1997), found out that that delayed marriages are associated with a decline in separation/ divorce. This is attributed with a decline with age of behaviours such as infidelity, alcohol/drug misuse among other behaviours which are associated with separation/divorce. Recent studies in some developed countries seem to relate effects of age at marriage with varied socio-economic changes in the society. In United States, since the 1950's the median age at first marriage has risen for both men and women, increasing from 23 for men and 20 for women in 1950 to 28 for men and 26 for women in 2009 (US Household Economic Studies, 2009). This is attributed to changing male and female opportunities, the increasing rates of cohabitation and an emerging view of formal marriage as a transition to be postponed until financial security has been attained (Cherlin, 2004).

Further studies indicate that in Africa, there are differences in the median age at first marriage between countries from under 18 years in Malawi, Mozambique and Uganda to more than 19 years in Zimbabwe and Kenya. In Namibia, the median age at first marriage is more than 24 years. In Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Madagascar and Namibia, the age at first marriage is rising (Harwood, 2001). According to United Nations (2009), age at marriage is earliest in Savannah West Africa and in Eastern Zaire and Eastern Angola and those who married before 20 years are mostly found in Chad (86%) and Niger (85%). This has been attributed to low level of female education and small per capita incomes. Other countries where at least 75% of women in this cohort were married before age 20 are Bangladesh and Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal and Uganda. Countries with the lowest proportion of women married as teenagers are Namibia and South Africa at 20 and 14%, respectively (Charles, 2003). According to UN (2009) the oldest median age at marriage for men 30-34 is 30 years in Senegal and the youngest is 22.3 years in Uganda. In Kenya, about 10% of men marry before their 20th birthday and nearly half marry before age 25 (KDHS, 2010).

Presence of children: Studies conducted in Denmark found out that, children do not increase marital stability but rather raises the probability of separation/divorce (Svayer & Verner, 2008). Contrary to these findings, research in Britain by Berrington and Diamond, (1997), in Canada by Hall and Zhao (1995) and in United States by Lillard et al. (1995) revealed that, separation/divorce is more common among childless couples. The increase in marital breakdown of couples with larger family size is also associated with non-marital fertility (Murphy, 1985). Earlier studies in Britain revealed a decline in marital breakdown, among childless couples who married while young compared to those who married at later ages (Berrington & Diamond, 1997).

Number of marriages: The probability of separation/divorce is higher among those who are remarried (Amato, 1996). The rate was found to be 25% higher in second marriages than first marriages since the couples bring with them similar interpersonal and intrapersonal character traits that affected their first marriage (Martin and Bumpass, 1989). On the other hand, Waite (1985) suggested that, such marriages fail because they generally present more complex family dynamics than first marriages. Studies in United States found that, women in remarriage were less likely to divorce than those in first marriage and that the proportion ever divorced and married are highest among individuals aged 50 years and older (Amato, 2010; Kreider and Ellis, 2011).

Musau (2011) undertook a study on demographic and spatial-temporal dimensions of marital instability and its effects on the family livelihoods in Machakos County, Kenya. The studies major objective was to investigate the demographic and spatial-temporal dimensions of marital instability and its effects on family livelihoods in Machakos County, Kenya. The study adapted a case study design in which through simple random sampling, one Division was randomly selected in each of the three sampled Districts in Machakos

County. The study findings recommended that, there is need for the Kenyan Government, the County Governments and NGO's through the relevant department offices to sensitize the public about the causes and outcomes of family conflicts and to address the root cause of child labour create livelihood opportunities and poverty reduction schemes for separated/divorced parents in the rural areas. These recommendations is key in improving the livelihoods and reduce poverty especially among the affected female headed households in the rural areas.

Causes of Marital Challenges in Christian Marriages

Personality difference: Personality differences may be treated as ephemeral and trivial but, if not handle with care, can disrupt essential relational constituents such as compatibility, cooperation, emotional support, and intimacy. The very qualities that formerly entice and draw couples together can later seem like flaws that need eliminating within the marriage. God created people unique and irreplaceable with their own peculiar style.

In-laws Interference: The role of in-laws in marriages cannot be underestimated. They can inspire blessing but also they can be a channel through which tension radiate in the marriage. When in-laws overstep their boundaries and infiltrate the privacy of the couples. This scenario most often creates intense challenge for the married partners to grapple with. On one hand couples would have to respect their families from which they owe fraternal allegiance.

Unfaithfulness: Marital infidelity can presents itself as both a problem as well as a symptom for whatever else may be defective or not functioning within the marriage. Infidelity can be a symptom with trust related issues, lack of sexual intimacy and poverty.

Infertility: When couples are unable to have children, it causes great pain emotionally, intellectually, physically, and spiritually (Annon, 1976). The feelings of emptiness and loss can be overwhelming. In the book of Genesis, we find God's first commandment to humankind: "Be fruitful and multiply. . ." (Genesis 1:28).

Sickness: Ailments, particularly chronic illness, have the capacity to change the nexus of relationships one has with spouse, family, and friends.

Household Duties: In studies that measure marital satisfaction, the topic of sharing household duties is one of the primary sources of dissatisfaction for couples, especially in the early years of marriage and when both spouses work outside the home (Pedersen, 2008).

Financial Constraints: Finance and financial management is one of the commonest cause of divorce within Christian marriages. According to Jeffrey (2010), the study showed that "financial problems are as much a result of how we think about money as how we spend it."

Disillusionment: According to Kendrick and Kendrick (2010), disillusionment is as a result of unfulfilled expectations which lead to frustration in the family. Most couples enter marriage with high hopes and ideals. However, very small number of couples fully understand the ramifications of "I do."

Addictions: Substance abuse is a key problem in Christian marriages and it is a one basis for marital breakups and family problems. It affects all the members of the family, not just the one abusing drugs or alcohol. Individuals with alcohol or other substance addictions have a distorted sense of reality.

They will justify hiding their addiction from family and friends. They might even explain that they drink or escape through drugs to deal with a spouse who makes life difficult, or because they have a stressful job, or their children are such problems. Addiction can be a perverse challenge for Christian marriages.

Exigencies of Employment: There is the cliché amongst some people that get ‘job to pay the bills so we can live happily ever after.’ This cliché sometimes is far from the reality. Most time it takes a lot of time to secure a job. Couples who are redundant in the job market because of their joblessness can be a daunting task for the family. There is dignity in human labor. Joblessness deprives couples to attain inner satisfaction associated with human labor (Ruark, 2015).

However, careers can also be an impediment to family unity. Career requires dedication and commitment to the field of work. The balancing act is often not easy (Ruark, 2015). Sometimes the workplace provides the temptation to pursue an extramarital affair. “The challenge is to give work and children their due but to balance them with what’s needed to keep a marriage strong (Jeffrey, 2010). Furthermore, the loss of a job has repercussions besides loss of income. Identity is closely tied to one’s work. Work helps us feel productive, important, and useful. We may need to grieve the loss of this identity. Loss of employment also takes away important social networks. The caregiver may have to take on additional employment or household responsibilities. These role reversals can be difficult for both partners (Hanks, Jerry and de Cordova-Hanks, Bobbie, 2006). Few people like depend on another for daily care. The ill spouse may feel guilty about burdening the caregiving spouse. Self-esteem takes a hit. Meanwhile, as generous and loving as the caregiver is, this “job” is time-consuming and draining.

Lack of Communication: Communication is key to healthy relationships and marriages. Open and authentic discussion plus respectful communication will assist the couples to deal with challenges they experience in the course of their lives together. When communication is obviated there is the proclivity for couples to be suspicious of each other. Deprived of a positive model of communication, husbands and wives may be unacquainted to and ignorant about their partner’s thoughts, needs and feelings. Lack of communication can result in couples lacking understanding of each other, being oblivious towards one each other, eventually estranging their relationship and love for one another (Ruark, 2015).

Lack of humility and forgiveness: Marital challenges are inevitable and disastrous if not managed properly. What aggravates those challenges are lack of humility by one of the spouses to accept his/her fault and inability to ask for and render forgiveness to the other partner. Humility and forgiveness are two important ingredients for sustainability of all relationship. When these Christian virtues are lacking amongst Christians in their marriage marital challenges will be exacerbated (Amato & Anthony, 2014).

Effect of Marital Challenges

Musau (2016) explains that indeed it has been theorize that, changes in the family structure, especially parental separation, indeed has a negative impacts on a child’s future development (Amato & Anthony, 2014). It is also argued that, couples whose parents have divorced are more prone to divorce. Salau (2014) explains that studies on effect of marital instability on children have fast become a central point for both discussion and research among Social Scientists. He further explains that a substantial number of women and children now spend some fraction of their life as singles. He continues to explain that female-headed households have faced socio-economic challenges (Manning & Gupta, 2009). Evidence from the United States and Britain suggest that the risk of divorce is higher among those who experience the instabilities of their parent’s marriage. This phenomenon has been labelled the intergenerational transmission of divorce risk (Amato & Gernsheim, 2002). Musau (2016) further explains that studies in United States by Amato (1996), based on longitudinal data found that, intergenerational transmission of divorce was as a result of increased likelihood of children from broken families to exhibit behaviours that interfere with the

maintenance of mutually rewarding intimate relationships. The study further found out that, parental divorce is associated with an increase in problems among offspring's due to jealous, promiscuity, bad habits, misuse of money and drinking/drug abuse (Pope & Mueller, 1976).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is one of the principal factors for every research enterprise since it deals with methods and procedures upon which the entire study hinges. It spells out the action plan, structure, and strategies that are adopted to actualize the research. Therefore, this chapter entails the methods that will be used in the current study. This includes: the research design, target population, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection tools, data collection procedure, pre-testing, Data analysis plan, ethical considerations, and summary.

Research Design

The study adopted a correlational research design. According to Bell (2003), a correlational research design is a type of research design where a researcher seeks to understand what kind of relationships naturally occurring variables have with one another. The study was carried out in Dagoreti North Sub-County, which is one of the seventeen (17) electoral constituencies of Nairobi County in Kenya. It was established by Independent Electoral and Boundary Commission (IEBC) before the 2013 general election. It had a population of one hundred and eighty one thousand, three hundred and eighty-five (181,385) people. Dagoreti North has a total of fourteen (14) mainstream churches where St Austin Parish and Lovington United Church are found. These two churches were conveniently selected because they are the largest mainstream churches situated in the same locality. They draw the majority of their congregants from both an affluent and a slum environment which are in a close proximity with both churches. The affluent environments are Lovington, Kilimani and Westlands whereas the slums are Kangemi and Gatina. This means the respondents from both the churches will be congruent.

The target population

The study targeted the population of respondents who met the inclusion criteria seven hundred and eighty (780) participants from both St. Austin's Parish and Lovington United Church who met the inclusion criteria. Target population is important to the research study since it includes the entire group of people, objects or entities that is of interest to the researcher.

The target respondents for this study came from different socio-economic backgrounds and it was predicted that their orientation and background will affect and inform their responses. The respondents will be married and in the range of 18 to 70 years. All couples who attended the two selected churches had a chance to participate in the study. Hence the target population for this research was a set of individuals who met the inclusion criteria of concern to the researcher (Cooper, 2000). The target population for this study was 780 respondents.

Sample Size

The sample size for this study was calculated using Fisher's formula (Fisher, 2017).

The calculation is shown below:

$$N = Z^2 p \{1-p\}$$

D 2

N=Sample size.

Z=Standard error from the mean corresponding to 95% confidence level=1.96

P=20% taken to be estimated prevalence of marital conflicts

d=Precision/ reliability with which to determine p =5%

$N = \frac{1.96 \times 1.96 \times 0.2 (1-0.2)}{0.05 \times 0.05}$

$= \frac{3.8416 \times 0.2 \times 0.8}{0.0025}$

$= 212$

=10% attrition rate brings the total number of respondents who will be considered to 234 for the research. Therefore, the working sample size for this study was 234 couples i.e. 102 men and 132 women.

Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling was employed by the researcher. This is a type of nonprobability sampling in which participants are sampled simply because they are “convenient” sources of data for researchers. In probability sampling, each element in the population has a known nonzero chance of being selected through the use of a random selection procedure. Nonprobability sampling does not involve known nonzero probabilities of selection. Rather, subjective methods are used to decide which elements should be included in the sample. The researcher visited the selected churches on specific days and collect the data from the available population of couples. The numbers were not sufficient on day one, therefore the researcher visited the same churches for other consecutive Sundays till the appropriate sample is obtained.

Data Collection Instruments

The study used a set of self-administered questionnaires for primary data collection and also Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMBS). The Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) is a scale of 14 positively worded items for assessing a population’s mental wellbeing. The respondent was required to tick a statement that best describes his/her experience over the last 2 weeks. It had 5 response categories, summed to provide a single score ranging from 14–70. The items were all worded positively and covered both feeling and functioning aspects of mental well-being. The WEMWBS was scored by summing the responses to each of the 14 test items on a 1 to 5 Likert scale (1 = None of the time to 5 = All of the time). All questions are equally weighted. Scores can range from a minimum of 14 to a maximum of 70 points. Higher scores are associated with higher levels of mental well-being.

The questionnaire was developed by the researchers and was divided into four main sections. Section A sought general social demographic information about the respondent; basically his/her education level, marital status, age bracket, and occupation. Section B dealt with the identification of the prevailing marital challenges and their causes within Christian marriages. Section C asked questions on the effect of marital challenges and section D evaluated the relationship between the demographic characteristics and marital

challenges within Christian marriages.

Data collection Procedure

Permission to proceed with the study was sought from Daystar University Counselling and Psychology department, the researchers submitted the proposal to DU-Ethics and Review Board (DU-ERB) for ethical examination of the study. Once it was cleared, authority to collect data was sought from the Kenyan government body, NACOSTI and once given, the researchers proceeded to seek permission from the senior Father in charge at St Austin Parish and senior pastor in charge of Lovington United Church for permission to collect data among their congregants.

A pretesting of the research data collection instruments was done at the Riruta Catholic Church in Dagoretti South. The church was chosen owing to its similar situational, demographic and geographical characteristics as the sampled churches.

Data Analysis

The data collected was checked for completeness, accuracy, and reasonableness. The analysis entailed coding the responses, and this was carried out using statistical package for social science (SSPS). Descriptive statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation and percentages was determined. Relationship between the study variables was determined using Spearman's Rank Correlation technique. The Chi square was used to study the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The findings were presented via tables, charts and graphs, statistical analysis tools upon which conclusion and recommendations will be drawn. Data analysis is a crucial part of making sense of the data (McDanile and Gates, 2001). This was done to improve on the quality through data analysis and correlation of detected errors or omissions. The findings were presented using pie charts, and tables.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher presented the proposal to the Daystar Ethics and review board for ethical clearance after which it was presented to the Kenya government organization which gives authority to collect data. Permission was sought in from the senior father/pastor from the two churches to involve their congregants in the study. The selected respondents were allowed to consent to be involved in the study after reading the transmittal letter where adequate and clear explanation on the purpose of the study was provided.

Respondents were also assured of the confidentiality of the information they provided. This was done by giving the questionnaires anonymous numbers and not names. The completed questionnaires were handled with confidentiality by ensuring they are stapled, put in envelope,s and transported to the data entry point in a ballot box.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section presents the research findings as follows:

Socio-demographic Characteristics of all the respondents

The first objective of this study was to analyze the socio-demographic characteristics of Christian marriages in Dagoretti North sub-county in Nairobi Kenya. The respondents were asked to respond to items in the questionnaire including their age, gender, level of education, whether the marriage was a first marriage or subsequent one, length of marriage, and number of children. The findings were presented in table 4.1.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (N=234)	Percentage (%)
Site	St. Austin's Parish	120	51.3
	Lavington VC	114	48.7
Gender	Male	102	43.6
	Female	132	56.4
Age Group	17-23	8	3.4
	24-30	38	16.2
	31-36	59	25.2
	37-42	50	21.4
	43-49	36	15.4
	50 and above	43	18.4
Age at Marriage	Mean(SD)	26.9	4.4
Age at Marriage	18-20	18	7.9
	21-25 years	70	30.6
	26-30 Years	105	45.9
	31 and above	36	15.7
	<i>Non-Response</i>	5	
First Marriage	No	15	6.5
	Yes	216	93.5
	<i>Non-Response</i>	3	
Years in Marriage	1-5 Years	45	19.2
	6-10 Years	53	22.6
	11-15 Years	45	19.2
	16-20 Years	38	16.2
	21-30 Years	26	11.1
	Above 30 Years	27	11.5
Number of Children	Mean(SD)	3.1	1.8
Number of Children	2 and Below	92	39.7
	2 and Above	140	60.3
	<i>Non-Response</i>	2	
Education Level	Masters and Above	49	20.9
	Undergraduate	54	23.1
	Diploma	48	20.5
	Certificate	43	18.4
	Secondary and Below	40	17.1
Employment Status	Formal employment	138	59.5
	Self Employed	65	28.0
	Unemployed	29	12.5
	<i>Non-Response</i>	2	
Mental well being	Mean; Median; SD; Range	49.5; 50.0; 9.3; 24-70	

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. A total of 234 respondents participated in the study. Among them 120(51.3%) were congregants at St. Austin's Parish and 114 (48.7%) were congregants from Lavington united church. One hundred and thirty-two (56.4%) were females and 102 (43.6%) were males. With regards to 59 (25.2%) of the respondents were aged between 31-36 years, 3.4% were aged 18-23; 16.2% were aged between 24-30 years. 21.4%, 15.4% and 18.4% were aged between 37-

42 years; 43-49 years and 50 and above years respectively. In terms of age at marriage, the mean age was 26.9 years. The age at marriage in ranged from 18 years (youngest) to 44 years (oldest).

Two hundred and sixteen (93.5%) respondents were in their first marriage while 6.5% of respondents were in their second or subsequent marriages. In terms of years in marriage 137 (58.5%) had been in marriage for more than 10 years, while 97(41.5%) had been in marriage for less than 10 Years. With regards to the number of children 92(39.7%) had 2 children and below and 140 (60.3%) had more than two children. In terms with the highest level of education attained, 103 (44.0%) respondents were graduates, 91 (38.9%) had certificate /Diploma, while 40 (17.1%) had secondary and below level of education. In terms of employment status 203 (86.8%) respondents were in some form of employment while 29 (12.4%) were unemployed.

The findings on socio-demographic characteristics were significant to this study because there seems to be a correlation between the intensity of marital challenges and a number of socio-demographic characteristics. There are unique developmental tasks specific to each stage in marriage and if couples are not able to resolve the developmental crises at each stage, it is likely to result in frustrations, hence intensifying the challenges.

Prevalence of marital challenges within Christian marriages

In an effort to find the prevalent challenges facing Christian marriages, the percentages were calculated and arranged from the highest to the smallest as shown in figure 2.

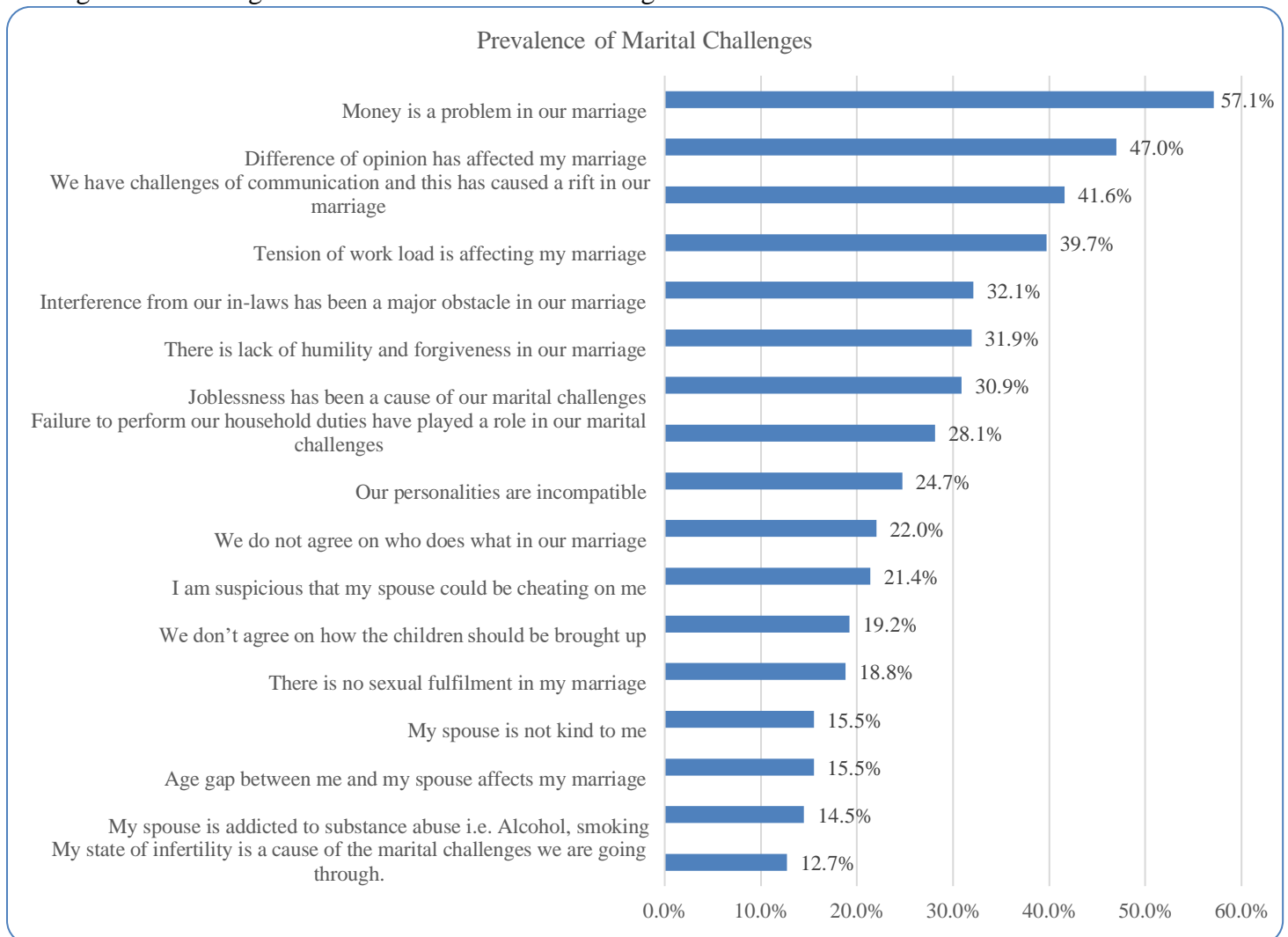


Figure 1: Prevalence of Marital Challenges

The findings in figure 1 show that Christian couples experience marital challenges just like any other

marriages. Regardless of the extent, the data in figure 1 demystifies the perception that religious couples are more likely to enjoy stable and happy marriages. They are also less likely to experience marital challenges perhaps because religion offers couples theologically grounded guidelines on how to handle marital challenges when they arise.

Data reduction techniques summarized the observed marital challenges variables into a few dimensions through latent variable modeling using the “eRm”(Mair & Hatzinger, 2007), “ltm”(Ltm, 2006), and “difR”(Magis, Beland, Raiche, & Magis, 2020) R package.

Component internal consistency and reliability used for calculating marital challenges scores were assessed by calculating Cronbach’s alpha (?), which was found to be 0.718.

Pairwise associations between 17 items corresponding to the two-by-two contingency tables for all possible pairs were computed and all variables were found to be significantly positively correlated to each other hence all items were retained. Factor scores were then generated by fitting a one parameter logistic model, also known as the Rasch model (Rasch, 1960). The scores had a bimodal negatively skewed distribution, suggesting that there were two groups. Respondents scoring less than zero were classified as not having marital challenges while those with more than zero meant they had marital challenges. This translated to that the participant needed to endorse/ score a 1 in at least 10 of the 17 items (58.8% and above) of which 32.9% (n=77) 95% C.I 26.9% -38.9%) of the respondents were found to have marital challenges. A total of 77 participants had marital challenges giving a prevalence rate of 32.9% 95% C.I. 26.9% to 38.9%.

Marital challenges within Christian marriages

The second objective of this study sought to identify marital challenges within Christian marriages in Dagoretti North sub-county in Nairobi Kenya. Respondents were required to give their level of agreement regarding a number of items. Seventeen (17) questions measured the respondent’s marital challenges in Christian marriages. The respondents answered by rating through: “Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly disagree” in all questions. Questions ii, iii, iv, iv were positively framed. These questions were later coded as 1 if they agreed and 0 if they disagreed. The positively asked questions were reversed coded so that the all the question read in one direction. The findings were presented in table 2.

Table 2: Prevalence of Marital Challenges

Marital Challenges	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	% Agreeing	Mean±SD
1. Money is a problem in our marriage	44(19.0%)	55(23.8%)	91(39.4%)	41(17.7%)	132(57.1%)	2.6±1.0
2. We agree on who does what in our marriage*	8(3.4%)	43(18.5%)	117(50.4%)	64(27.6%)	181(78.0%)	2.0±0.8
3. My spouse is kind to me*	9(3.9%)	27(11.6%)	107(45.9%)	90(38.6%)	197(84.5%)	1.8±0.8
4. There is sexual fulfilment in my marriage*	11(4.8%)	32(14.0%)	109(47.6%)	77(33.6%)	186(81.2%)	1.9±0.8
5. We agree on how the children should be brought up*	9(3.9%)	35(15.3%)	89(38.9%)	96(41.9%)	185(80.8%)	1.8±0.8

6. My spouse is addicted to substance abuse i.e. Alcohol, smoking	158(67.5%)	42(17.9%)	16(6.8%)	18(7.7%)	34(14.5%)	1.5±0.9
7. I am suspicious that my spouse could be cheating on me	113(48.3%)	71(30.3%)	31(13.2%)	19(8.1%)	50(21.4%)	1.8±1.0
8. Tension of work load is affecting my marriage	47(20.1%)	94(40.2%)	65(27.8%)	28(12.0%)	93(39.7%)	2.3±0.9
9. Difference of opinion has affected my marriage	50(21.4%)	74(31.6%)	87(37.2%)	23(9.8%)	110(47.0%)	2.4±0.9
10. Age gap between me and my spouse affects my marriage	123(53.0%)	73(31.5%)	20(8.6%)	16(6.9%)	36(15.5%)	1.7±0.9
11. Joblessness has been a cause of our marital challenges	98(42.1%)	63(27.0%)	47(20.2%)	25(10.7%)	72(30.9%)	2.0±1.0
12. We have challenges of communication and this has caused a rift in our marriage	61(26.2%)	75(32.2%)	72(30.9%)	25(10.7%)	97(41.6%)	2.3±1.0
13. There is lack of humility and forgiveness in our marriage	82(35.3%)	76(32.8%)	50(21.6%)	24(10.3%)	74(31.9%)	2.1±1.0
14. Interference from our in-laws has been a major obstacle in our marriage	89(38.0%)	70(29.9%)	54(23.1%)	21(9.0%)	75(32.1%)	2.0±1.0
15. Failure to perform our household duties have played a role in our marital challenges	88(38.1%)	78(33.8%)	49(21.2%)	16(6.9%)	65(28.1%)	2.0±0.9
16. My state of infertility is a cause of the marital challenges we are going through.	155(68.0%)	44(19.3%)	19(8.3%)	10(4.4%)	29(12.7%)	1.5±0.8
17. Our personalities are incompatible	87(37.7%)	87(37.7%)	46(19.9%)	11(4.8%)	57(24.7%)	1.9±0.9

Note*Reverse coded.

Table 2 presents the responses to individual items of marital challenges. Among the most prevalent challenge in which more than half (57.1%); Mean±SD =2.6±1.0 of the respondents agreed that money is the problem in the marriage, followed by difference in opinion (47.0%); Mean±SD =2.4±0.9 and communication barriers (41.6%); Mean±SD =2.3±1.0. Among the least marital challenges were state of infertility (12.7%); Mean±SD =1.5±0.8, Substance and alcohol addiction (14.5%); Mean±SD =1.5±0.9and

age gap at 15.5%; Mean±SD =1.7±0.9.

The findings here can be interpreted to mean that among Christian marriages, finances, differences in opinion, and communication are significant challenges. It is possible that religion cushions couples from anticipated challenges once they get married and also boosts their resilience once they dive into some challenges.

The effect of marital challenges on the mental health of couples within Christian marriages

The third objective of this study sought to examine the impact of marital challenges on the mental health of couples within Christian marriages in Dagoretti North sub-county in Nairobi Kenya. Individual responses on the effects of marital challenges within Christian marriages were summarized in table 4 and figure 3.

Table 4: Effects of marital challenges within Christian Marriages

Effects of Marital Challenges	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	% Agreeing	Mean±SD
1. Low income in managing the family needs	17(7.3%)	38(16.3%)	21(9.0%)	79(33.9%)	78(33.5%)	157(67.4%)	3.7±1.3
2. There is lack of shared parenting	39(16.7%)	47(20.2%)	25(10.7%)	83(35.6%)	39(16.7%)	122(52.3%)	3.2±1.4
3. Social stigma faces a broken family	23(10.0%)	24(10.4%)	47(20.3%)	77(33.3%)	60(26.0%)	137(59.3%)	3.5±1.3
4. Marital challenges effects leads to the messy dissolution of families, which hurts children.	11(4.7%)	10(4.3%)	10(4.3%)	84(36.2%)	117(50.4%)	201(86.6%)	4.2±1.0
5. Marital challenges lead to loneliness among the family members	8(3.5%)	16(6.9%)	17(7.4%)	90(39.0%)	100(43.3%)	190(82.3%)	4.1±1.0
6. Marital challenges effects is associated with stress that leads to depression	10(4.3%)	13(5.6%)	17(7.3%)	85(36.5%)	108(46.4%)	193(82.9%)	4.2±1.1

Table 4 presents the individual responses to effects of marital challenges in Christian marriages. The findings showed that two hundred and one (86.6%); Mean±SD =4.2±1.0 respondents agreed that marital challenges lead to messy dissolution of families, which hurts children while 82.9%; Mean±SD =4.2±1.1, agreed that marital challenges effects is associated with stress that leads to depression, 82.3%; Mean±SD =4.1±1.0, agreed that marital challenges leads to loneliness among family members. 67.4%; Mean±SD =3.7±1.3, agreed that marital challenges leads to low income in managing family needs while 59.3%; Mean±SD =3.5±1.3 and 52.3%; Mean±SD =3.2±1.4, agreed that marital challenges leads social stigma and

leads to lack of shared parenting respectively.

The effects were arranged in order of highest level of agreement to the lowest as shown in figure 3.

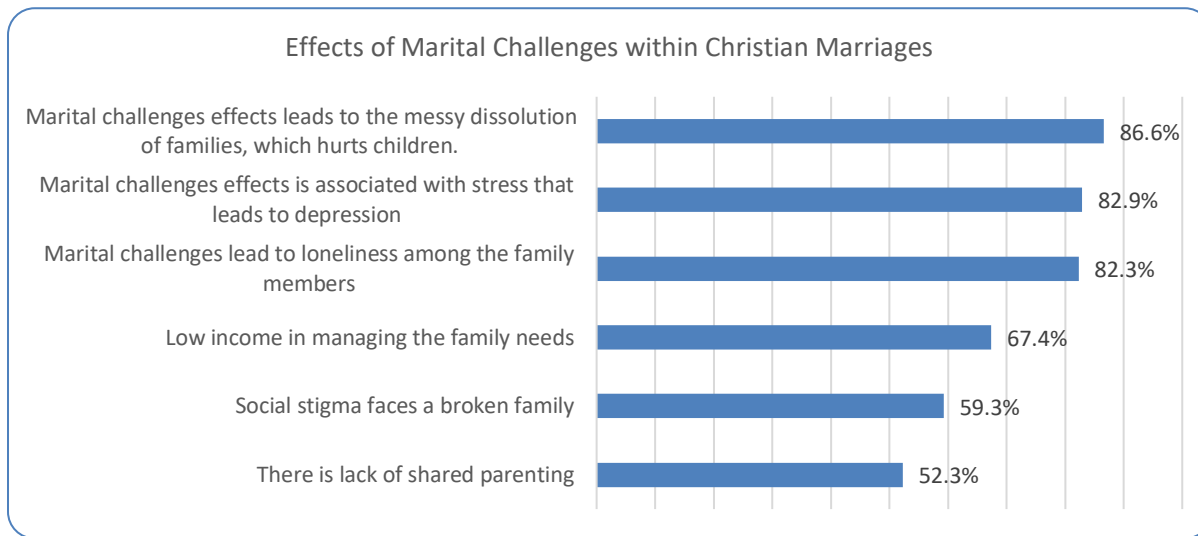


Figure 3: Effects of Challenges within Christian Marriage

Figure 3 presents the effects of marital challenges within Christian marriages from the highest in terms of agreement to the lowest. Majority of the Christian couples agreed that marital challenges lead to the messy dissolution of marriages which hurts children, they are associated with stress that leads to depression, they lead to loneliness among the family members, may end in a situation of low income in managing family needs, can make families experience social stigma, and there is lack of shared parenting.

Other effects of marital challenges

From the qualitative part where participants were asked about other effects of marital challenges, the respondents mentioned, marital challenges leads to; arguments and differences within the family, unproductivity, breakdown of the society, child with social anxieties/ demoralized children, children having poor grades at school, dishonesty, disrespect and violence, drug abuse/ addiction, infidelity suicide and homicide.

Relationship Between socio-demographic Characteristics and Marital Challenges

The fourth objective sought to evaluate the relationship between social demographic characteristics and marital challenges within Christian marriages in Dagoretti North sub-county in Nairobi Kenya. The findings were presented in table 5 and figure 4.

Table 5: Relationship Between socio-demographic Characteristics and Marital Challenges

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Mean±SD
1. Education status has affected our marriage	76(32.8%)	70(30.2%)	21(9.1%)	40(17.2%)	25(10.8%)	65(28.0%)	2.4±1.4
2. Age difference is affecting our marital status	97(42.2%)	61(26.5%)	23(10.0%)	33(14.3%)	16(7.0%)	49(21.3%)	2.2±1.3

3. Our annual income levels affect our marital stability	54(23.3%)	56(24.1%)	18(7.8%)	68(29.3%)	36(15.5%)	104(44.9%)	2.9±1.4
4. The number of children we have or intend to have is affecting our marital stability	79(34.2%)	66(28.6%)	40(17.3%)	32(13.9%)	14(6.1%)	46(20.0%)	2.3±1.2
5. Unemployment has caused marital stability	61(26.4%)	47(20.3%)	19(8.2%)	65(28.1%)	39(16.9%)	104(45.1%)	2.9±1.5
6. The number of children that we have are affecting our marriage	85(36.6%)	69(29.7%)	43(18.5%)	23(9.9%)	12(5.2%)	35(15.1%)	2.2±1.2

Table 5 and figure 4 presents the results individual items on relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and marital challenges. One hundred and four (45.1%); Mean±SD =3.2±1.4, of the respondents agreed that unemployment/ joblessness is affecting their marital stability while 44.9%; Mean±SD =2.9±1.4, indicated that their annual income is affecting their marital stability, 28.0%; Mean±SD =2.4±1.4, agreed that education is affecting their marital stability, 21.3%; Mean±SD =2.2±1.3, agreed that age difference is affecting their marital stability, while 20.0%; Mean±SD =2.3±1.2, and 15.1%; Mean±SD =2.2±1.2, agreed that the number of children they intended to have and the number of children that they have is affecting their marriage and marital stability respectively.

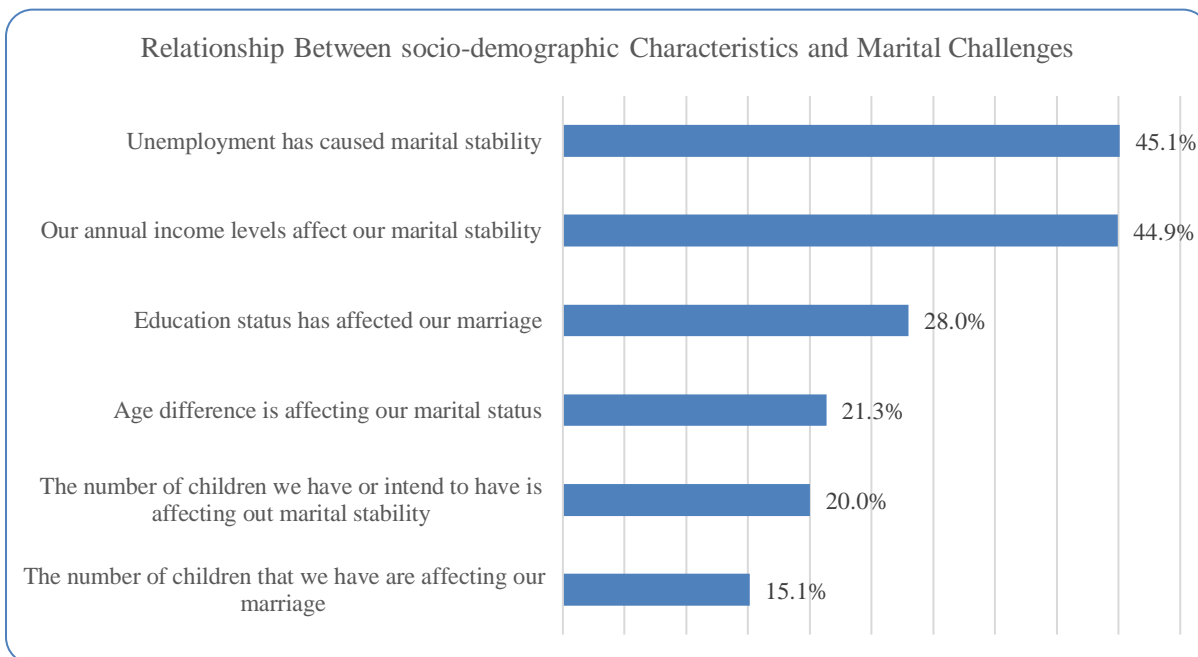


Figure 4: Relationship between Socio-demographic Characteristics and Marital Challenges

Mental Well-being of the respondents

It was also important for this study to find the mental well-being of Christian couples. The respondents were required to respond to a set of 14 items. The findings were presented in table 6 and figure 5.

Table 6: Mental Well-being of the respondents

Mental Well-being	<i>None of the time</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Some of the time</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>All lthe time</i>	<i>Mean±SD</i>
1. I've been feeling optimistic about the future	6(2.6%)	25(11.0%)	52(22.8%)	85(37.3%)	60(26.3%)	3.7±1.0
2. I've been feeling useful	8(3.5%)	14(6.2%)	51(22.5%)	82(36.1%)	72(31.7%)	3.9±1.0
3. I've been feeling relaxed	10(4.4%)	40(17.5%)	96(42.1%)	58(25.4%)	24(10.5%)	3.2±1.0
4. I've been feeling interested in other people	30(13.1%)	34(14.8%)	74(32.3%)	58(25.3%)	33(14.4%)	3.1±1.2
5. I've had energy to spare	15(6.6%)	52(22.8%)	86(37.7%)	47(20.6%)	28(12.3%)	3.1±1.1
6. I've been dealing with problems well	5(2.2%)	29(12.6%)	89(38.7%)	87(37.8%)	20(8.7%)	3.4±0.9
7. I've been thinking clearly	2(0.9%)	15(6.7%)	72(32.0%)	85(37.8%)	51(22.7%)	3.7±0.9
8. I've been feeling good about myself	3(1.3%)	19(8.3%)	66(28.8%)	79(34.5%)	62(27.1%)	3.8±1.0
9. I've been feeling close to other people	12(5.2%)	31(13.5%)	77(33.5%)	71(30.9%)	39(17.0%)	3.4±1.1
10. I've been feeling confident	2(0.9%)	24(10.5%)	64(27.9%)	80(34.9%)	59(25.8%)	3.7±1.0
11. I've been able to make up my own mind about things	4(1.7%)	24(10.4%)	64(27.8%)	75(32.6%)	63(27.4%)	3.7±1.0
12. I've been feeling loved	8(3.5%)	21(9.2%)	62(27.2%)	78(34.2%)	59(25.9%)	3.7±1.1
13. I've been interested in new things	3(1.3%)	17(7.5%)	66(28.9%)	70(30.7%)	72(31.6%)	3.8±1.0
14. I've been feeling cheerful	5(2.2%)	15(6.5%)	83(36.1%)	80(34.8%)	47(20.4%)	3.6±0.9

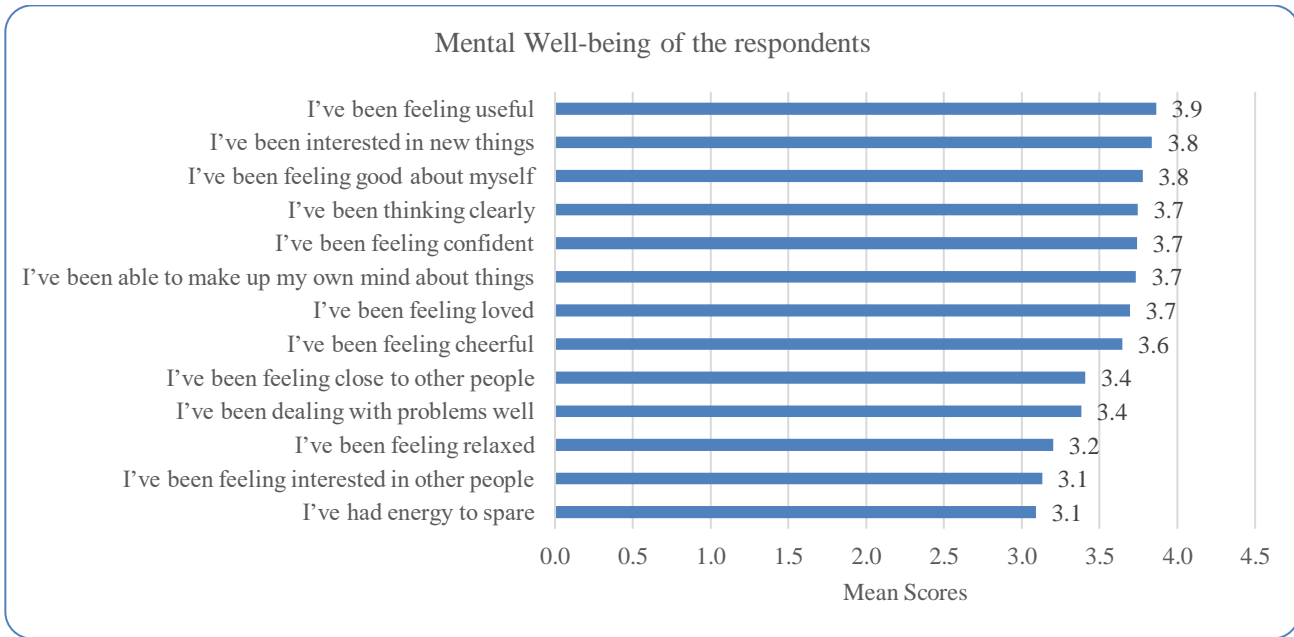


Figure 5: Mental Well-being of the respondents

Table 6 and figure 5 presents the mental well-being of the respondents. The most prevalent well-being item was feeling useful; Mean±SD =3.9±1.0, followed by being interested in new things; Mean±SD =3.8±1.0, and feeling good about themselves; Mean±SD =3.8±1.0. The least prevalent well-being items was about having energy to spare; Mean±SD =3.1±1.1; being interested in other people; Mean±SD =3.1±1.2 and feeling relaxed; Mean±SD =3.2±1.0.

Factors associated with Marital Challenges

Further, the study sought to find out the factors that were associated with marital challenges. The findings were presented in table 7.

Table 7: Factors associated with Marital Challenges

Variable	Category	Marital Challenge		χ ²	d.f	p-value
		No	Yes			
Location	St. Austin's Parish	90(75.0%)	30(25.0%)	6.97	1	0.008
	Lavington VC	67(58.8%)	47(41.2%)			
Gender	Male	76(74.5%)	26(25.5%)	4.50	1	0.034
	Female	81(61.4%)	51(38.6%)			
Age in Years	18-30Years	21(45.7%)	25(54.3%)	11.92	1	0.001
	31 and Above	136(72.3%)	52(27.7%)			
Age at Marriage	25 and Below	59(67.0%)	29(33.0%)	0.03	1	0.865
	26 and Above	93(66.0%)	48(34.0%)			
First Marriage	No	8(53.3%)	7(46.7%)	1.48	1	0.225
	Yes	148(68.5%)	68(31.5%)			
Years in Marriage	10 Years and Below	53(54.6%)	44(45.4%)	11.64	1	0.001
	Above 10 Years	104(75.9%)	33(24.1%)			
Number of Children	2 and Below	49(53.3%)	43(46.7%)	13.53	1	<0.001
	2 and Above	107(76.4%)	33(23.6%)			
Level of Education	Graduate	68(66.0%)	35(34.0%)	0.32	2	0.852

	Certificate/Diploma	63(69.2%)	28(30.8%)			
	Secondary and Below	26(65.0%)	14(35.0%)			
Employment Status	Employed	143(70.4%)	60(29.6%)	5.70	1	0.017
	Unemployed	14(48.3%)	15(51.7%)			
Effect of Marital Challenges Score	Mean±SD	22.1±5.5	23.9±3.6	-2.54	232	0.012
Sociodemographic factors on Marital Challenges Score	Mean±SD	13.8±6.3	16.8±5.5	-3.48	230	0.001
Mental well-being	Mean±SD	50.6±8.2	47.2±10.9	2.62	229	0.010

Table 7 presents the results of the socio-demographic and other factors associated with marital challenges. Participants who were worshipping at Lavington VC had significantly high proportion of marital challenges as compared to those at St. Austin’s Parish (41.2% vs 25.0%), $p=0.008$. Female participants had significantly higher proportion of marital challenges as compared to their male counterparts (38.6% vs 25.5%), $p=0.034$.

Respondents aged 30 years and below had significantly high proportion of marital challenges as compared to those aged 30 years and above (54.3% vs 27.7%), $p=0.001$.

Participants who had been in marriage for 10 years and below had significantly had high proportion of marital challenges as compared to those who aged above 30 years (45.4% vs 24.1%), $p=0.001$.

Respondents who had 2 children and below had significantly had higher proportion of marital challenges as compared to those who had above 2 children (46.7% vs 23.6%), $p<0.001$.

Respondents who were unemployed had significantly higher proportion of marital challenges as compared to those who were employed (51.7% vs 29.6%), $p=0.017$.

Participants who had marital challenges had significantly higher scores of effects of marital challenges scale as compared to those who did not have marital challenges (mean 23.9 vs 22.1), $p=0.012$.

Participants who had marital challenges had significantly higher scores of socio-demographic factors affecting marital challenges scale as compared to those who did not have marital challenges (mean 16.8 vs 13.8), $p=0.001$.

Participants who had no marital challenges had significantly higher scores of mental well-being scale as compared to those who had marital challenges (mean 50.6 vs 47.2), $p=0.010$.

Independent Predictors of Marital Challenges

Regarding predictors of marital challenges, the findings were presented in table 8.

Table 8: Independent Predictors of Marital Challenges

Variable	Category	a.O.R.	95% C.I a.O.R.		p-value
			Lower	Upper	
Location	Lovington VC	6.43	1.30	31.91	0.023
	St. Austin’s Parish	Ref.			
Gender	Female	3.24	0.65	16.03	0.150

	Male	Ref.			
Age	31 and Above	0.44	0.06	3.47	0.434
	18-30Years	Ref.			
Years have you been in marriage	Above 10 Years	0.22	0.04	1.33	0.099
	10 Years and Below	Ref.			
Number of Children	2 and Above	1.74	0.30	10.16	0.536
	2 and Below	Ref.			
EmploymentCat	Unemployed	1.23	0.11	13.40	0.864
	Employed	Ref.			
Effect of Marital Challenges Score		1.18	1.00	1.39	0.048
Sociodemographic factors on Marital Challenges Score		1.73	1.50	1.98	<0.001
Mental well-being		0.84	0.77	0.92	<0.001

Table 8 presents the results of independent predictors of marital challenges after controlling the factors that were associated with marital challenges at the bivariate level ($P < 0.05$).

Participants in Lovington VC were 6.4 times more likely to have marital challenges as compared to those in St. Austin’s Parish (A.O.R=6.43, 95% C.I 1.30-31.90; $p=0.023$).

For every unit increase in effect of marital challenge score the risk of having marital challenges increases 1.18 times (A.O.R=1.18, 95% C.I 1.001-1.39; $p=0.048$).

For every unit increase in socio-demographic factors affecting marital challenges score the risk of having marital challenges increases 1.73 times (A.O.R=1.73, 95% C.I 1.50-1.98; $p < 0.001$).

For every unit increase in mental well-being score the risk of having marital challenges decreases by 16% (A.O.R=0.84, 95% C.I 0.77-0.92; $p < 0.001$).

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This section gives a discussion of the research findings, conclusions and recommendations. The contents of the chapter are on primary data collected. The study sought to was to assess marital challenges within Christian marriages, with a case of Dagoretti North sub-county, Nairobi Kenya. The study was guided by four objectives namely, to analyze the socio-demographic characteristics of Christian marriages in Dagoretti North sub-county in Nairobi Kenya, to identify marital challenges within Christian marriages in Dagoretti North sub-county in Nairobi Kenya, to examine the effect of marital challenges on the mental health of couples within Christian marriages in Dagoretti North sub-county in Nairobi Kenya, and to evaluate the relationship between social demographic characteristics and marital challenges within Christian marriages in Dagoretti North sub-county in Nairobi Kenya.

Marital Challenges Within Christian Marriages

Findings indicated that the prevalence of marital challenges was found to be 32.9% (95% C.I 26.9 to 38.9%). Findings likewise showed that most prevalent cause of marital challenges were lack of money/financial difficulties, difference in opinions, and communications. Other prevalent challenges included tensions in marriage, interference from in-laws and lack of humility and forgives in marriage. The least prevalent marital challenge was age gap between the spouses; substance/ alcohol abuse and state of

infertility.

These findings concur with those of Tolorunleke (2013) who pointed out that many factors have combined to affect marriage institutions thus causing many challenges which both young and old married couples must contend with. This is in line with findings of Ilumoka (2010) who asserted that whatever the nature of the union, spouses experience challenges from time to time.

The findings as well concur with those of Musyoka (2014) that found out that merged gender roles have resulted in mutual husband-wife disrespect, competition over family headship, and unfair distribution of house chores between husbands and wives. Further, the findings are coherent with those of Maito (2013) who noted that a number of issues have been raised in connection with marital challenges. These issues include instability, lack of marital satisfaction, and adjustment. The researcher further found that communication between couples can pose challenges in marriages because the couples who are not able to communicate well may not reach a consensus on resolving their marital challenges.

Effects of marital challenges within Christian Marriages

The findings indicate most of the participants agreed that marital challenges lead to the messy dissolution of families which hurts children, and that marital challenges is associated with stress that leads to depression and loneliness among family members. From the findings, two hundred and one (86.6%); Mean±SD =4.2±1.0 respondents agreed that marital challenges lead to messy dissolution of families, which hurts children while 82.9%; Mean±SD =4.2±1.1, agreed that marital challenges effects is associated with stress that leads to depression, 82.3%; Mean±SD =4.1±1.0, agreed that marital challenges leads to loneliness among family members. 67.4%; Mean±SD =3.7±1.3, agreed that marital challenges leads to low income in managing family needs while 59.3%; Mean±SD =3.5±1.3 and 52.3%; Mean±SD =3.2±1.4, agreed that marital challenges leads social stigma and leads to lack of shared parenting respectively.

These findings concur with those of Musau (2016) that found out that jealous, promiscuity, bad habits, misuse of money and drinking/drug abuse were some of the effects of marital challenges in marriages. The findings are also in line with those of Salau (2014) who tend to point out that marital challenges are likely to cause instabilities. This study therefore points out that marital challenges may have tremendous effects on marriages hence affecting the mental well-being of couples.

Relationship Between socio-demographic Characteristics and Marital Challenges

The findings of this study showed that younger age; younger families (i.e. being new in marriage); having fewer children as opposed to many children, being unemployed, were among socio-demographic factors that were associated with marital challenges. The study revealed that one hundred and four (45.1%); Mean±SD =3.2±1.4, of the respondents agreed that unemployment/ joblessness is affecting their marital stability while 44.9%; Mean±SD =2.9±1.4, indicated that their annual income is affecting their marital stability, 28.0%; Mean±SD =2.4±1.4, agreed that education is affecting their marital stability, 21.3%; Mean±SD =2.2±1.3, agreed that age difference is affecting their marital stability, while 20.%; Mean±SD =2.3±1.2, and 15.1%; Mean±SD =2.2±1.2, agreed that the number of children they intended to have and the number of children that they have is affecting their marriage and marital stability respectively.

The findings of this study concur with those of Musau (2016) who argues the age at first marriage is a major predictor of marital challenges. In this study, female participants had significantly higher proportion of marital challenges as compared to their male counterparts (38.6% vs 25.5%), $p=0.034$. Respondents aged 30 years and below had significantly high proportion of marital challenges as compared to those aged 30 years and above (54.3% vs 27.7%), $p=0.001$.

Conclusion

Regardless of any type of marriage, marital challenges among couples are very common. It is worrying that even Christian couples experience marriages. The denomination of a couple may not matter in this case. This seem to indicate that church leaders have more to do regarding equipping their own congregants with appropriate skills and knowledge regarding marital functioning.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

1. The church needs to come up with intense marital trainings for couples to equip them with knowledge and skills on how to handle the issues well.
2. Counselling centres need to be put in place by churches to help couples who might be having challenges in their marriages.
3. Mental health professionals need to consider extending their services to churches to help the congregants.

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