

# Social-Economic Factors and Christian Marital Stability in Tharaka-Nithi County, Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

Social-economic status plays significant role by guiding couples pursue and maintain intimacy and healthy marital affairs. It also provides couples with the necessary social and economic elements that improve their social and economic life. The study examined the influence of social-economic factors on Christian marital stability in Tharaka- Nithi County Kenya. Tharaka-Nithi County was purposively selected using purposive sampling technique since it is highly affected by cases of Christian marital divorces and conflicts. It adopted descriptive survey design. The researcher used Krejcie and Morgan sample determination table to determine 254 respondents from 750 target population. 250 married couples were randomly selected using simple random sampling technique and 4 priests purposively sampled using purposive sampling technique. A reliability coefficient of 0.740 was obtained using person's product correlation coefficient. The researcher made questionnaires were utilized to collect data from 250 married couples and 4 priests. The data was organized and analyzed using inferential statistic of data analysis. Mean and standard deviation was used to analyse qualitative data. T-test was used to test null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The finding of the study revealed that there was significant influence of couple's income level in Christian marital stability in Tharaka- Nithi County. The study further found that there was a significant influence of couple's educational level on Christian marital stability in Tharaka- Nithi County. The researcher concluded that Couples' income level has significant influence on Christian marital stability in Tharaka-Nithi County. Couples' educational level has significant influence on Christian marital stability in Tharaka- Nithi County. Social-economic factors are fundamental necessities in development and stability of Christian marriages in Tharaka-Nithi County. The researcher recommended that each partner in a Christian marriage should improve income by venturing into business activities. Every partner in marriage should promote educational level by attending technical and vocational educational training institutes.

**Key words:** Social economic factors, Christian marriage, divorce, marital stability, separation, couple's educational level couple's income level.

## INTRODUCTION

The universal institution in every marriage and culture play a basic value in the advancement of human race. According to Killewald (2016), marriage is a fundamental human relationship that ushers in a family that is legally, culturally, socially and religiously ordained; basing on related rules, laws, beliefs and customs and attitudes that govern the rights and duties of each partner. Marriage as a social institution has both rates of marital stability and its determinants that may vary across time and place. Bradbury (2000) claimed that marriage in some societies like Islamic allows a man to have multiple wives while in Christian perspective, one man is entitled to only one wife. Marriage has unique aspect of human culture in every society, culture and religion. It provides financial stability, shares one's feelings, experiences besides companionship. Holt-lunstad, (2021) in his study on loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for mortality argued that a healthy marriage needs to provide social, physical, economic, mental and sexual benefits to the concerned couple. Therefore spouses are happier, healthier and live longer if their marriages are stable and fulfilling. Marital stability is a unique parameter for marital satisfaction.

According to Kuorosh (2020), social economic status plays a significant role in guiding couples pursues and maintains intimacy and healthy marital affairs. The stability of the family structure depends on couples' relationship quality. Marriage provides couples with necessary social and economic elements that improve their social and economic life. Hardie (2010) came to a conclusion that occupational status, income level of couples, educational qualification and social status of couples are critical social-economic factors that determine quality of marriage with regards to harmonious relationship. Ojukwu (2014) argued that most men prefer to marry less educated women to more educated ones. He believed that such women do not see their husbands as equals and therefore they give them the due respect enabling them to be master of their respective homes.

A study by Maciver, (2004), the omission of gender, class, race and sexuality as categories of social-economic analysis has significant consequences for economic models as they embedded in notions of family. The ancient economy depends on modern economic theory, in which women and lower-status men remain in the margins even in the analyses of contemporary economic system. The women's religious status has rested on views of women's social status. Brabdry, (2000) on his study on the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction observed that most couples have an emotional need for affection and a social need for acceptance. Couples seek companionship, approval, support and acceptance from others family members. Such relationships are important for an individual's social, emotional and mental health and are forged when the couples feel connected to others through experiences such as openness, honesty, love, acceptance, support, advice and respect. Kourosh, (2020) on his study on the relationship between personal; traits and marital satisfaction pointed out that relationships are socially and culturally constructed in the family. Sociocultural factors such as community expectations and rules, laws, economic and physical resources and ethical factors can influence couples' attitudes towards, behaviors in relationships. Many young couples experience confusion about the physical and emotional boundaries of relationships.

A study by Maciver, (2004) on effectiveness of communication intimacy and problem solving training fostering; marital adjustment among some working class couples claimed that unemployment and work related problems, unemployment and other work related challenges contribute to marriage and relationship breakdown. Pressures placed on family life from unemployment are great and have a strong effect on the well-being of relationships. Unemployment not only has the effect of causing financial challenges but also lowers self-esteem, creates isolation and limits the ability of families to lead fulfilling lives in the family. Similarly, other couples due to financial pressures and fear of losing employment are working longer hours with a consequent reduction in time for family.

According to Ojukwu, (2016) in his study on effects of educational attainment on marital stability among married persons in Imo state pinpointed that marital breakdown evidence from a diverse range of organizations such as federally funded service providers, church organizations, government bodies, legal centers and associations represented a diverse range of community interests. The views varied depending on the background and status of those who hold them, so that professionals in relationship development may hold theoretical understandings that vary widely from the personal experiences of couples within the community. Couples have opportunities to understand how social and economic factors influence their attitudes towards, behaviors in and expectations about relationships.

A study by Ebrahim, (2012) on cause of divorce among men and women referred to marriage and legal office in Qazvin claimed that poverty is related with inadequate employment that has a pressing issue in a family. Unemployment, underemployment and changing nature of paid work from full time permanent toward casual employment all contribute to reduced financial security, lowered expectations, and disharmony for many families. Couples are faced with increasing pressure from changing nature of paid work. Uncertainties limit the ability of families to purchase homes, have access to funds or lead fulfilling lives in the community. The pressure has a strong impact upon the well-being of couples' relationships. Many couples struggle with poverty, unemployment or the uncertainty and fear of unemployment. Children growing up in such families frequently have lower expectations of stable economic futures. Financial strains are a major factor in family breakdown. Khezri, (2020) in his study on factors affecting marital satisfaction and marital communication among marital women reviewed that families are spending less time together and there is inability of various family members to communicate effectively with each other. The issue is exacerbated by some employers who

refuse to recognize that workers have family responsibilities. The challenges which couples face in dealing with social pressures can exacerbate relationship hardships. Work practices which are family unfriendly can reduce the ability of couples to resolve differences. The pace of change combined with accumulated uncertainty about the future of jobs can be very destabilizing.

According to Killewad, (2016) in his study on money work and marital stability: Assisting change in gendered determinants of divorce, argued that apart from the economic drain; couples often experience problems of domestic violence. The influence of the feminist agenda of equality has made the style of relationships change. The traditional roles of earlier generations have become more diverse with several styles of relationships. Conflict and breakdown may occur when one partner changes and the other do not understand how to renegotiate their role within a relationship. Brabdury, (2000) on his study on the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction suggested that the changing status of women and the resultant demands on men being agents of social changes to which many people have not adjusted, particularly in relation to concepts of marriage. Changing roles of couples have challenged expectations of marriages and lead to uncertain and unrealistic divisions of labor within families.

### **Statement of Problem**

Marital stability is a unique parameter for marital satisfaction. A social economic status play a significant role in guiding couples pursues and maintains intimacy and healthy marital affairs. However, in a contemporary world especially in Kenya, Christian marriage stabilities seem limited depending on their social-economic status. There are heightened cases of divorce and conflicts in Christian marriages; contrary to Christian teachings today. Therefore the researcher investigated the influence of social economic factors on Christian marriage stability in Tharaka- Nithi County, Kenya.

### **Objectives of the Study**

#### **General Objective**

To investigated the influence of social economic factors on Christian marriage stability in Tharaka- Nithi County, Kenya.

#### **Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study were:

- i. To determine the influence of couple income on marriage stability in Tharaka- Nithi County.
- ii. To examine influence of coupe education level on marriage stability in Tharaka- Nithi County.

### **Study Hypothesis**

The study was guided by the following hypothesis at 0.5 significance level.

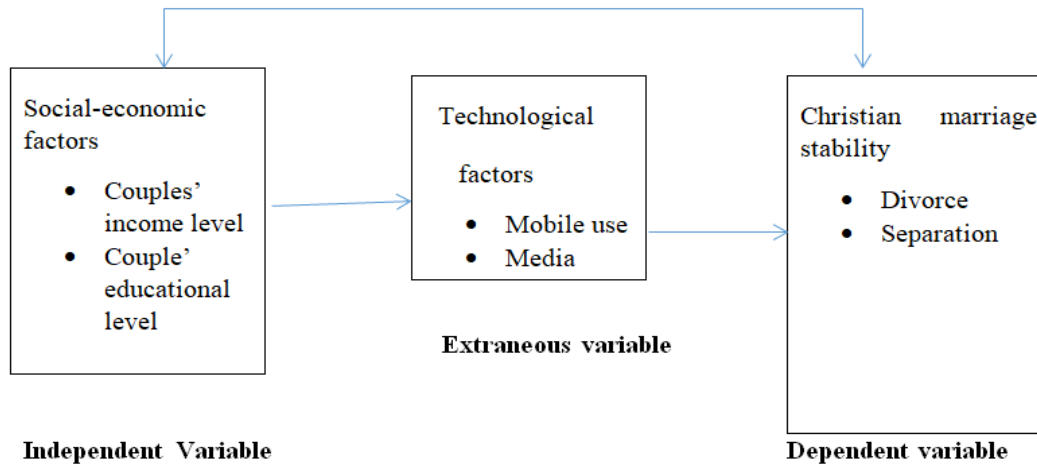
$H_0^1$  Income level has no statistical significant influence on Christian marital stability in Tharaka-Nithi County.

$H_0^2$  Couples' educational level has no significant influence on Christian marital stability in Tharaka-Nithi County.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study was based on Maslow's need theory of motivation which postulated that human beings are motivated by primary needs or drive such as hunger, thirst and avoidance of pain or secondary drives like money, success, self-esteem or self-actualization. Therefore marital stability of Christian couples may be facilitated by desire to fulfil both primary and secondary drives such as education success and money as suggested by Maslow.

## Conceptual Framework



Indicators of social-economic factors were couple's income level and educational level that seemed to have direct influence on Christian marriage stability indicated by divorce and separation. The influence was extraneously affected by technological factors such as use of mobile phones and media.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Study Location

The study was conducted in Tharaka-Nithi County. Tharaka-Nithi county was purposively selected using purposive sampling technique since it is highly affected by cases of Christian marital divorces and conflicts.

### Research Design

The study employed descriptive design. Descriptive design enhances insight into complex world of reality in its natural settings; by helping researcher develop theories and make predictions regarding causal-effects on a given phenomenon.

### Sampling Technique and Sample Size

#### Sampling Technique

The researcher used Krejcie and Morgan sample determination table to determine 254 respondents from 750 target population. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample determination table, 254 respondents under study are adequate to represent the total of 750 individuals. 250 married couples were randomly selected using simple random sampling technique and 4 priests purposively sampled using purposive sampling technique from 750 study population.

#### Sample Size

The sample size of the study was 250 married couples and 4 priests who were selected using simple random sampling technique and purposive sampling technique respectively from 750 study population.

### Research Instruments

#### Questionnaires

The researcher employed questionnaires for married couples and priests. The five-Likert skill was used in scoring the items in the questionnaire. Questionnaire was most efficient since it is a standardized measuring instrument where questions are phrased exactly the same way for all respondents.

## Data Collection Procedure

First researcher conducted pilot study in Meru County. Then, researcher employed research assistants. The researcher conducted actual study in Tharaka-Nithi; by collecting data starting with married couples then priests; using questionnaires.

## Validity and Reliability of the Study

The study instrument was validated by experts in the field of educational psychology and counselling. The reliability coefficient of 0.740 was obtained using person's product moment correlation coefficient.

## Ethical Considerations of Study

Researcher observed principles of informed consent from National Council of Science Technology and Innovation to carry out study in Tharaka-Nithi, Kenya. The researcher considered ethical issues by adhering to assured non-discrimination, confidentiality, anonymity to maintain privacy of participation in the study.

## Data Analysis

The data was organized and analyzed using inferential statistics of data analysis. T-test was used to investigate the influence of social economic factors on Christian marriage stability in Tharaka-Nithi County, Kenya at 0.05 significant level. Mean and standard deviation was used to analyse qualitative data. Data processing adopted statistical package for social sciences software program, version 26.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher analysed study findings in table 1,2 and 3,4 gave discussions as follows:

Table 1: Analysis of Data on Influence of Couple's Income Level on Christian Marital Stability in Tharaka-Nithi County

S/N Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
1. Couples income level dictate their social life in a family.	254	2.58	0.79	A
2. Stability of couples' economy enhance their healthy relationship in a family.	254	3.10	0.93	A
3. Financial stability shares one's feelings, experience, besides companionship.	254	2.51	0.76	A
4. Couples' income level guide them pursue and maintain intimacy and healthy marital affairs.	254	3.12	0.94	A
5. Income level of couples determine quality of Marriage and harmonious relationship.	254	2.37	0.85	D
6. Stability of family structure depends on couples Level of income.	254	2.42	0.83	D
Grand Mean			2.68	

Table 1 shows analysis of data on influence of couple's income level on Christian marriage stability in Tharaka-Nithi County. Items 1, 2, 3 and 4 shown criterion mean above 2.5 indicating acceptance by the respondents. On the other hand, items 5 and 6 reflected the criterion mean below 2.50 suggesting disagreements by the respondents. A grand mean of 2.68 which was greater than criterion mean indicated that majority of the respondents agreed on influence of couple's income level on Christian marital stability in Tharaka-Nithi County. The findings correlated with study of Killewad, (2016) in his study on money work

and marital stability: Assisting change in gendered determinants of divorce, who argued that apart from the economic drain; couples often experience problems of domestic violence. The influence of the feminist agenda of equality has made the style of relationships change.

Table 2: Analysis of Data on Influence of Couple’s Educational Level on Christian Marital Stability in Tharaka- Nithi County

S/N	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
1. Couples educational level determine quality of Marriage and harmonious relationship	254	3.23	0.93	A
2. Educational level of couples shares one’s feelings, experience, besides companionship.	254	2.87	0.91	A
3. Stability of family structure depends on couples level of education.	254	2.14	0.83	A
4. Couples’ education level guide them pursue and maintain intimacy and healthy marital marital affairs.	254	2.14	0.83	D
5. More educated women sometimes do not have Healthy family relationship	254	2.41	0.89	D
Grand Mean			2.72	

Table 2 indicated analysis of data on influence of couple education level of Christian marital stability in Tharaka- Nithi County. Items 1, 2 and 3 revealed criterion mean above 2.50 indicating acceptance by the respondents. Items 4 and 5 reflected criterion mean below 2.50 pinpointing disagreement by the respondents. The grand mean was 2.72 pointing out that majority of the respondents agreed that majority of the respondents agreed that was influence of couple educational level on Christian marital stability in Tharaka- Nithi County. The findings correlated with ideas of Ojukwu, (2016) in his study on effects of educational attainment on marital stability among married persons in Imo state who pinpointed that marital breakdown evidence from a diverse range of organizations such as federally funded service providers, church organizations, government bodies, legal centers and associations represented a diverse range of community interests. The views varied depending on the background and status of those who hold them, so that professionals in relationship development may hold theoretical understandings that vary widely from the personal experiences of couples within the community. The findings was also in line with views of Hardie (2010) who came to a conclusion that occupational status, income level of couples, educational qualification and social status of couples are critical social-economic factors that determine quality of marriage with regards to harmonious relationship.

**Hypotheses Testing**

**Hypothesis One**

Couples’ income level has no statistical significant influence on Christian marital stability in Tharaka- Nithi County.

Table 3: Summary of T-test on Mean Rating on Influence of Christian Marital Stability in Tharaka- Nithi County

Variable	N	Mean	Std Deviation	df	t-test	sig.	Remark
Low	70	2.84	.65	119	81.79	0.020	significant
High	50	2.46	.92				

The data in table 3 showed the mean and the standard deviation of couples from low income level in Tharaka-Nithi County as 2.84 and 0.65 respectively while mean and standard deviation from high income level in Tharaka Nithi County as 2.46 and 0.92 respectively, t-cal (81.79)  $p > 0.05$ . Hence null hypothesis one that stated that couples' income level has no statistical significant influence on Christian marital stability in Tharaka- Nithi County was rejected retaining alternative hypothesis. Therefore couples' income level has significant influence on Christian marital stability in Tharaka- Nithi County. The findings were in line with Bradbury (2000) who claimed that marriage in some societies like Islamic allows a man to have multiple wives while in Christian perspective, one man is entitled to only one wife. Marriage has unique aspect of human culture in every society, culture and religion. It provides financial stability, shares one's feelings, experiences besides companionship.

**Hypothesis Two**

Couple educational level has no statistical significant influence on Christian marital stability in Tharaka- Nithi County.

Table 4: Summary of T-test on Mean Rating on Influence of Couples' Educational Level Christian Marital Stability in Tharaka- Nithi County

Variable	N	Mean	Std Deviation	df	t-test	sig.	Remark
Less educated	80	2.87	.86	119	82.65	0.012	significant
Educated	40	3.45	.72				

The data in table 4 revealed the mean and the standard deviation of couples from low income level in Tharaka-Nithi County as 2.87 and 0.86 respectively while mean and standard deviation from high income level in Tharaka- Nithi County as 3.45 and 0.72 respectively, t-cal (82.65)  $p > 0.05$  Tharaka- Nithi County was rejected retaining alternative hypothesis two. Therefore couples' educational level has significant influence on Christian marital stability in Tharaka- Nithi County. The findings correlated with view of Hardie (2010) who came to conclusion that occupational status, income level of couples, educational qualification and social status of couples are critical social-economic factors that determine quality of marriage with regards to harmonious relationship.

**CONCLUSION**

Basing on findings of the study, the researcher concluded that:

Couples' income level has significant influence on Christian marital stability in Tharaka- Nithi County.

Couples' educational level has significant influence on Christian marital stability in Tharaka- Nithi County.

Therefore, social-economic factors are fundamental necessities in development and stability of Christian marriages in Tharaka- Nithi County, Kenya.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The researcher recommended that:

Each partner in marriage should improve his/her level of income by venturing more in business related activities.

Every partner in marriage should promote their educational level by attending technical and vocational training institutes.

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