

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT AND MARITAL SATISFACTION: A MIXED METHOD STUDY AMONG MARRIED INDIVIDUALS IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY

Kamomoe Peter Kamau

Masters Degree in Counseling Psychology (Marriage and Family Option), Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya

Fr. Hubert Pinto

Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya

Fr. Sahaya Selvam

Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya

©2017

International Academic Journal of Social Sciences and Education (IAJSSE) | ISSN 2518-2412

Received: 29th October 2017

Accepted: 1st November 2017

Full Length Research

Available Online at:

http://www.iajournals.org/articles/iajsse_v1_i5_58_74.pdf

Citation: Kamomoe, P. K., Pinto, H. & Selvam, S. (2017). The association between Christian religious commitment and marital satisfaction: A mixed method study among married individuals in Nairobi City County. *International Academic Journal of Social Sciences and Education*, 1(5), 58-74

ABSTRACT

The study explored the association between the Christian religious commitment and marital satisfaction. The results concurred with other research findings that show that commitment to Christianity enables married individuals to improve marital relationships despite the challenges and difficulties that arise in such dynamic interpersonal relationships. A mixed method of both qualitative and quantitative research design was used. A sample of about 278 married Christian individuals was picked in a convenient and purposeful sampling method from a population of 1000 Christians at the Holy Family metropolitan Church within Nairobi County. 234 respondents out of the 278 participants gave back the questionnaires. Through descriptive statistics and statistical inferences, the study examined the correlation between marital satisfaction and Christian religious commitment, employing Allport and Ross intrinsic religious orientation and KANSAS marital satisfaction scales. Further information was gathered through some open ended questions in order to capture

some in-depth experiences and perceptions. Qualitative results indicated that Christian commitment largely contribute to marital satisfaction while the quantitative outcome recorded a positive correlation, (coefficient level of 0.210). The regression analysis indicates a strong linear relationship where $R^2 = 0.702$. Since the p value is lower than 0.05 the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis supported in the sense that there is a positive correlation between Christian religious commitment and marital satisfaction. These findings are being utilized in the improvement of marital satisfaction and family life among married individuals in the Church and beyond through psycho-education and therapeutic interventions. The study recommends that the married couples become more committed to their Christian teachings and values as a way of enhancing their marital satisfaction.

Key Words: *Christian religious commitment, marital satisfaction, mixed method study, married individuals, Nairobi City County*

INTRODUCTION

Christian religious commitment entails translating of what one believes into practical life situations. This means that a believer is influenced by the Christian religious teachings and values to the extent that his/her thinking, attitude and behavior are strongly linked to the said religious teachings and values. This means therefore that the Christian religious beliefs and values that the believer espouses become an intrinsic character of his /her world -view. This intrinsic religious orientation of the believer in regard to his/her faith is the defining trait of Christian religious commitment as understood in this study.

Christian commitment is ordinarily manifested through one's commitment to daily prayer, Bible study, regular Church attendance, Christian practice and responsibilities like mutual affection in

marriage that foster marital satisfaction (Taylor & Croker, 1981). Taylor and Croker (1981) suggest that religious believers seem to enjoy greater marital satisfaction especially if they are committed to their religious beliefs. From such studies, it seems that religious commitment plays a positive role in the marital satisfaction of individuals. Marital satisfaction means that a married individual experiences fulfillment in terms of self-reported mutual affection, open communication, sexual satisfaction, cooperation and mutual respect as one relates with his/her marital partner. For a satisfying marital relationship, both partners are required to remain faithful and honest to each other (Bradbury et. al, 2000).

Through Christian religious socialization an individual is likely to adopt positive personality traits, emotional and psychological wellbeing and finally elicit appropriate social behaviour (Bandura, 1976). Such a person is likely able to respond appropriately in the interpersonal relationships like marital relationships and likely leads to satisfaction in marriage. Since family is the basic unit of every society, it means that proper attention should be paid to marital life as it forms the primary relationship in every family. Bowen (1913) argues that family is an emotional unit in the sense that all family members are affected by all the interpersonal interactions that happen in the family, this means that marital satisfaction is a necessary quality of any family.

The reasons for marital breakups and family violence could be attributed to such factors as infidelity and drug abuse which could be assumed to spring from lack of individual satisfaction in marriage. Operant functioning of human behavior shows that human beings tend to repeat the very behaviour that elicits pleasant or satisfying results and avoids any behaviour that is negative and rewarding. Therefore, it is likely that all the marital conflicts, divorce and separations are increasing because the marital satisfaction between husbands and wives are not rewarding or satisfying (Skinner, 1904).

Other previous studies indicate a strong relationship between religious commitment and marital satisfaction. For example Pitman, Price-Bonham and Mckenry, (1983) and Chamberlain and Hall (2000) show that there is still much to be known about the influence of religion on marital relationships. The two variables namely Christian religious commitment and marital relationship may lead to a more complex phenomenon that requires more studies and explorations (James, 1910). Allport (1967) indicates that throughout religious history especially in Christianity, a distinction has always been argued on the difference between committed and superficial believers or the intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientated believers. Some Christians emphasize values such as justice and adhere to strict behaviors while others emphasize virtues such as compassion and yet others integrate both (Worthington, Berry & Parrot, 2000).

It is also important to note that many devout and spiritual people do not necessarily attend and belong to religious institutions and many who do are not necessarily spiritual but may do it out of social reasons (Allport& Ross, 1967). The theory distinguished between extrinsic and intrinsic religious orientation using the religious orientation theory as their framework. The extrinsic

religious orientation serves utilitarian interests and is motivated by selfish needs such as moral superiority, comfort, to rationalize self-interest, self-service and self-justification. Belief system in this orientation is selected to fit one's own worldview; it is closed minded, exclusionary, inflexible and dogmatic. Religion in this case is casual and peripheral and actually prevents growth and creativity.

On the other hand, intrinsic religious orientation concerns commitment where the believers are characterised by motivations of growth, faith and humility. Religion to them is personal and meaningful with internalised doctrine. These are sacrificial and accepting people who are more orthodox than the extrinsically orientated, yet humble and empathetic. Their religious faith and doctrine permeates all aspects of their life and attend religious services often and joyfully. Their faith centres on God and transcends self and also goes to meet the others (Allport & Ross, 1967). In this study, Christian religious commitment variable will be treated within this understanding of intrinsic religious orientation. The current study will focus on those Christians whose commitment to their religious beliefs and daily practice especially in their married life reflects the intrinsic religious orientation. It is hypothetical therefore to mention that it is possible that those who experience their religious beliefs extrinsically, may find it difficult or cumbersome to experience marital satisfaction since their religious faith is more of a burden due to lack of internalization as observed in the intrinsically orientated people.

Christian commitment and its relationship with marital satisfaction are a multifaceted and complex phenomena and the nature of this relationship is dependent on the way the two variables are approached and measured. Thus, more explorations in this area of study are necessary so that social scientists can systematically show what Christian spirituality contributes to marital well-being and satisfaction (Musick, 2002). Fowler (2004) also demonstrates that faith development takes a dynamic process in the life of an individual person. This means that it could influence a person in diverse ways and at different stages of life. Fowler's faith development theory further indicates that there are possibilities of faith growth stagnation at the third stage due to the conventional faith complacency of an individual. And lack of faith maturity or the universalizing faith may hardly elicit appropriate influence or impact on the life of an individual and more so in the interpersonal relationships like in marital unions. Thus, the study intends to explore and investigate the association between the Christian religious faith commitment and marital satisfaction.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Marital satisfaction is a critical phenomenon in marriage as it tends to play a pivotal role in the success and fruition of any family institution (Mukolwe,2012). In recent times incidents of family violence, separations and divorces are increasing globally. Marriage trend is now shifting towards later marriages and early divorces. This is evident in the falling numbers of marriage in United Kingdom from 459,000 since 1971 to around 286,000 in 2011 (Barlow, 2004). Barlow (2004) also shows that Europe at large is losing heterosexual marriage which is the pivot of

human family. In his effort to mitigate this emerging trend he proposed the creation of some legal measures in order to curb the trends which are leading to a less marriage-centric society. In Kenya, surveys reveals that marriages are in crises and marriage trends are rather worrying. For example, a survey by Infotrak indicates that only 40% of Kenyans are happily married and the rest are either unhappy or not sure how to describe their state of marital unions. It further shows that 29% of married Kenyans admit that their marriages are on the verge of breaking and only 4 married individuals out of 10 indicated that they were experiencing love in their marriage. This could translate to show that 60% of married Kenyans are not satisfied in their marital unions (Infotrak, 2010). The above figure of 60% of unhappy married individuals is rather significant to warrant a concern for a more serious study on the root causes of dissatisfactions in marriages. There could be several factors contributing to marital frustrations and the association between marital satisfaction and Christian religious commitment could be a major area of concern which requires more explorations. In describing the religious character of Africans, Mbiti (1969) says that there was no separation between religious commitment and day to day life. The worldview of Africans was saturated by religious belief and marriage was approached as a holy and religious activity. This view of marriage largely sustained the commitment of the parties involved. The current study seeks to find out whether religious commitment still influences the marital satisfaction of married individuals today. Mbiti (1969) argues that the stability, satisfaction, and success of marriage and family determine and shape the quality of people's life in the society. Marriage institution, being the basic institution in the society, plays a major role in the well-being of the larger society. The assumption is that nobody would dare to engage in a marital relationship that is bound to be frustrating and unproductive. Marital satisfaction is an essential component in marriage and family relationships, hence there is a great need to identify the factors that are related or associated with it for instance Christian religious commitment with a purpose of enhancing it for its own sake and as a driving force of the wider society.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The research explored the association of Christian religious commitment with marital satisfaction among married Christian individuals in Nairobi Metropolitan City.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To find out the Christian religious practices that enhance marital satisfaction
2. To investigate factors that promote marital satisfaction

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Religious Orientation theory

Religious Orientation Theory was developed by Allport and Ross (1967) and it presupposes the existence of God or gods. It also prescribes morality, communal and individual spirituality. According to Allport and Ross (1967) religious orientation can be approached in two

perspectives, namely extrinsic and intrinsic religious orientations. Extrinsic religious orientation perceives religion as a means to achieve one's non-religious goals. In other words an individual with an extrinsic religious orientation uses religion to maintain social networks and one is hardly interested in adhering to the teachings of the religion. Individuals who are high in external religious orientation are more likely to conform to social norms and demands rather than what the religion teaches. Such people are often likely to twist religious beliefs for their convenience or even to serve their own interests/goal. Allport further indicates that such people use religion to provide security and solace, sociability and discretion, status and self-satisfaction (Allport & Ross, 1967, P. 434), a good example is a politician who goes to the Church to gain political mileage.

In the intrinsic religious orientation, a person honestly believes in his/her religion and all its teachings, and puts every effort to live in accordance with the religious teachings and preaching (Whitley & Kite, 2010). While a person with an extrinsic religious orientation views religion as a means to an end, a person with intrinsic orientation interprets religion as an end. This means to them religion is an active directing force, not merely a tool used to achieve self-serving interests (Whitley & Kite, 2010). People with intrinsic religious orientation take religion to be the most important dimension of the life and put all the efforts to contextualize other areas of their life though their religious beliefs and teachings (Whitley & Kite, 2010). For instance a married person with intrinsic religious orientation tries to relate all the marital experiences with his/her religious beliefs and teachings.

The current study focuses on the intrinsic religious orientation of married Christian individuals. These are Christians who have solemnized their marriages in the Church. The study assumes that these married Christian individuals have an intrinsic religious orientation of their Christian beliefs and teachings, hence use their Christian commitments to enhance their marital satisfaction. Their adherence to Christian beliefs and values as well as Christian teachings is likely to help them to live satisfying marital relationships. Their beliefs also may be used as tools to solve any form of conflict or misunderstanding that arise in the course of their marital life which may otherwise threaten or lessen their marital satisfaction. They are likely to use their Christian commitment/Christian religious orientation to guide them in their marriage life.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design of the study was a mixed study that is qualitative and quantitative in nature. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) assert that there are advantages of using both qualitative and quantitative methods as they give in-depth explanations of people's experiences and perceptions and the hard data to address the required objectives and testing the hypotheses of the study. A descriptive correlational research was used to determine the relationship between the association levels of Christian religious commitment and marital satisfaction. The predictive value of

Christian religious commitment on marital satisfaction was measured through the Allport and Ross intrinsic religious orientation sub-scale, and it was correlated with marital satisfaction levels as examined by Kansas marital satisfaction scale (Schumen, 1986).

Population of the Study

The population of the study was the entire membership of Holy Family Basilica metropolitan Church. The total population of this Church is approximately 1000 people according to the Church records in the year 2014. The researcher targeted 278 married Christian individuals who have formalized their marriages in the Catholic Church. This sampling was done in a convenient and purposeful manner and the sample size was obtained using the criterion recommended in the educational and psychological measurement document by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

Sampling and Sampling Technique

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) define sampling as a process of selecting the number of individual for the study in such a way the individuals are selected to represent the large group. In this study the researcher conveniently and purposefully sampled 278 married Christian heterosexual individuals whose marriages were formalized and validated in the Church between 1 to 50 years ago. This method of sampling was found to be suitable as it proved very convenient to both the participants and the researcher. The sample size was guided by the educational and psychological measurement scale adapted from Krejcie and Morgan (1970) {Appendix III}.

KANSAS marital satisfaction Scale

A self-reported 7- Likert Scale Intervals measure e.g. Extremely unhappy, Fairly unhappy, A little unhappy, Happy, Very happy, Extremely happy and Perfect was used in this study (Jaccard & Wan, 1996). Correlation research method was favoured in this research as it is normally considered the most reliable in determining the interpersonal relationships between the two variables, that is, marital satisfaction and Christian religious commitment (Ormrod, 2005). Kansas marital satisfaction scale is usually known to yield reliabilities at 0.90 or above (Gwanfogle, 1997). Therefore, the scale was used to measure the perceptions and experiences of married Christian heterosexual individuals and their general interpersonal behaviour in marital interactions (Schumen, 1986).

Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scales(KMSS) was suitable in this research as it helped in measuring marital relationships and has been used in other related researches, and its internal consistency indicates high reliability and it has also been tested for discriminate validity for instance, *Dimensions of marital quality towards methodological and conceptual refinement* (Johnson, White & Booth, 1986). Kansas marital satisfaction scale has also been used with South African Indian sample and recorded alpha coefficient of 0.95 with marital satisfaction in autonomous and arranged marriages (Dinna, 2005).

The Cronbach's Alpha (r) coefficient for intrinsic religious orientation is 0.85 (Laher, 2007). According to Laher (2007) the revised instrument has also indicated good reliability in a South African scenario with alpha coefficient of 0.77 for intrinsic religious orientation measurement (Appendix III).

Allport and Ross Religious Orientation revised Scale

A revised sub-scale invented by Allport and Ross intrinsic Religious orientation scale was used to measure the intrinsic religious orientation of the participants. The latest revised intrinsic religious orientation scale by Genia (1993) was used. Genia's version was preferred because it has eliminated the problematic areas and could also be widely applied. Genia's revised intrinsic religious orientation sub-scale has also improved the reliability of the instrument especially after removing and rectifying the cumbersome areas. The revised religious orientation scale comprises nine items and scores range from 9-45. It is also favoured in this study because its reliability is quite high (Appendix III).

Data Collection Procedure

On a Sunday when the Church attendance was in full capacity, the researcher explained to the members of the Church the purpose of the study and made an appeal for their cooperation. It was made clear that the study focused on those who were validly and sacramentally married in the Church and requested them to remain behind after the service. The participants were addressed and more clarification was made and appreciation was expressed. After ensuring that the participants were clear on the purpose of the study, they were invited in the Church hall and were given the instruments directly from the researcher. The researcher distributed 400 copies of the questionnaire in order to narrow the gap of the number questionnaires that may not be returned. The researcher also explained how the research would benefit individual families and the entire community of Christians. The time frame for the completion of the questionnaires was communicated also. Two research assistants were initially trained and made conversant with study purpose, hence were able to assist in that exercise. There was a drop in boxes in the church where the participant dropped their completed questionnaires after fortnight. The completed questionnaires were collected by the research assistants and submitted to the Researcher for further verifications. 236 instruments out of the 400 instruments that were dispatched were received back.

Data Processing and Analysis

The researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to enter and analyse the data through descriptive correlational research method. The data processing began with editing and coding of the data (Zigmond, 2003). Therefore once the questionnaires were collected from respondents, they were inspected to determine their acceptability and they were then coded with the numbers assigned to each question. Descriptive statistics was employed to analyze the data. For the quantitative data all the participants responses from their Christian and

marital experiences were correlated through SPSS software. For the qualitative data that inquired the factors that promote marital satisfaction, the themes were picked and coded. Tables and other graphical presentations as appropriate were used to present the data collected for ease of understanding and analysis. Tables were used to summarize responses for further analysis and facilitated comparison. This generated quantitative reports through tabulations, percentages, and measure of central tendency. The mean score for each attribute were calculated and the standard deviation used to interpret the respondents deviation from the mean. The results were presented on frequency distribution tables, pie charts and bar charts. Here the interest focused on frequency of occurrence across attributes of measures. Content analysis was used for qualitative data which was analyzed manually by first summarizing the information gathered, followed by categorization and coding into emerging themes and presented in a narrative form. Test of relationship between Christian religious practices that enhance marital satisfaction and factors that promote marital satisfaction was calculated using Pearson Correlation. The data collected in this study was non-parametric statistic and ordinal variables and therefore Pearson Correlation Ranking method was considered suitable for analysis and examining the relationship between the variables. This test has the obvious advantage of not requiring the assumptions of normality or homogeneity of variance.

RESULTS

Correlation Analysis

A Spearman correlation is used when one or both of the variables are not assumed to be normally distributed. The values of the variables were converted in ranks and then correlated. The study correlated Christian religious commitment and marital satisfaction under the assumption that both of these variables are normal and interval.

Table 1: Correlation between Christian religious commitment and marital satisfaction

	Christian Religious commitment	Marital satisfaction
Christian religious commitment	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	234
Marital satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.210*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035
	N	234

The results suggest that there is a positive but weak relationship between Christian religious commitment and marital satisfaction of the questionnaire ($\rho = .210$, $p = 0.035$) which is statistically significant at 95% confidence level. This infers that an increase in any variable under Christian religious commitment will lead to an increase in marital satisfaction.

Test of Hypotheses

Regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses in order to ascertain whether to accept or reject the null hypotheses. The researcher conducted a multiple linear regression analysis to determine the relationship between marital satisfaction as dependent variable and Christian religious commitment as independent variable. The factors that constituted the independent variable or the Christian religious Commitment included: sacramental life, Church attendance, daily prayer and practice of Christian teachings.

Table 2: Regression Results for the Direct Relationship

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
	.838 ^a	.702	.700	.07458

Table 3: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.72	9	1.302	44.231	.001(a)
	Residual	3.432	225	0.066		
	Total	15.152	234			

Table 4: Coefficients Results

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.116	.186		0.623	.003
Sacramental life	0.577	.068	.559	8.478	.000
Church attendance	0.157	.043	.257	3.676	.001
Daily prayer	0.082	.042	.301	2.252	.000
Christian teachings	0.121	.002	.245	6.906	.001

The regression analysis indicates a strong linear relationship where $R^2 = 0.702$ and Adjusted $R^2 = 0.700$ which shows that 70% of the corresponding change in marital satisfaction can be explained by a unit change in sacramental life, Church attendance daily prayer and Christian teachings. A further test on the beta coefficient of the resulting model, the constant $\alpha = 0.116$ is significant ($p = 0.000$) less than $p = 0.05$. The coefficient $\beta = 0.577, 0.157, 0.082$ and 0.121 of the four factors were also significant at $p < 0.05$. This explains that if $\beta_1 X_1$ were held constant then marital satisfaction will be 0.116 (low) and therefore the gradient (β) and the marital satisfaction would be very low.

The ANOVA statistics in, Table 4 shows that model had an $F = 44.231$ and a p-value of 0.001. This results show that the model was significant ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$) at 0.05 levels in explaining the multiple relationship between sacramental life, Church attendance, daily prayer, Christian

teachings and marital satisfaction. The study aimed at evaluating whether sacramental life has a relationship with marital satisfaction. Sacramental life reliability had a beta value ($\beta_1 = 0.577$). This meant that on an integrated scale, a unit change in sacramental life elements reliability would result in a 57.7 percent change in marital satisfaction. The model had a p-value of 0.000. Since the p value is lower than 0.05 the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted that is there is a positive correlation between Christian religious commitment and marital satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

Christian Practices Related to Marital Satisfaction

The first study objective was to find out the Christian religious practices that enhance marital satisfaction. Over 90% of the participants indicated that being a committed Christian entailed a personal engagement in Christian practices such as regular Church attendance, prayers, Church teachings, Bible knowledge and reception of sacraments. Davis (2008) also observes that Christian Spirituality and commitment affect everything people are and do as an inner motivation that drives all the patterns of thinking and behaviour. With regard to sacraments given in the church such as holy matrimony, 98 per cent of the respondents were positive that Church sacraments were helpful and beneficial in their marital life. The Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist were also indicated as helpful in marital relationships as confirmed by 94% and 99% of the respondents respectively. The church teachings were also helpful as evidenced by 97% of the respondents. According to the findings, some Christian values and practices contribute significantly to the enhancing of marital satisfaction which include;

Prayer life: According to majority of the respondents, 93 per cent, prayer life was very useful in their lives as it helps them restore the inner unity and peace especially during marital crisis. For example, one respondent noted “I always feel humbled when talking to God in prayer as God gives me the direction of how to tackle several issues.” The respondents further gave various ways in which prayer life was helpful with majority, 26 per cent indicating that it had helped them face and overcome difficulties. 20 per cent indicated that prayer life gave them hope, peace and comfort while 17 per cent noted that prayer life had united their families and enhanced togetherness. 13 per cent indicated that prayer life gave them encouragement in life and strengthened them while 8 per cent noted that it brought about reconciliation and helped them to forgive others. Other areas where prayer life was useful were providing guidance, wisdom and understanding; helped acknowledge short comings and agree on issues and relate well with the partner and other people. In one case prayers had helped in remarrying while in another case it had saved a marriage. This actually concurs with the findings given by Butler, Stour and Gardner (2002) who indicate that couples who pray increase their emotional intimacy and decrease negativity, contempt and hostility with their partners.

The sacrament of holy matrimony: Majority of the respondents, 93%, were married in church thus had received the sacrament of holy matrimony. 98% confirmed that it was helpful in their lives. 29% noted that the sacrament helped unit the partners, enhance togetherness and perceived it as a divine bond. 21% observed that the sacrament reminded them of their vows/covenant, provided guidance and enhanced their spirituality. 18% were of the view that the sacrament strengthened their relationship and their faith. 17% noted that the sacrament enhanced marital commitment while others noted that it gave them hope, grace, peace and encouragement. This is also supported by Mukolwe (2012), who indicates that appropriately 65% of all marriages are conducted within the realm of the Church because many people entrust their marriages to the care of Higher Being or God.

The sacrament of penance/reconciliation: Most participants, (94 per cent) noted that this sacrament was very helpful as it facilitated reconciliation with oneself, with God and others. It helped the respondents in being truthful, avoiding sinning regularly and bringing them back to the love of Christ. Ronzani (2007) indicates that one of the foundational virtues for ever married couple is the virtue of forgiveness or reconciliation after conflicts.

The sacrament of the Eucharist and attendance of holy Mass: According to most of the respondents, 36%, the sacrament of Eucharist had strengthened their faith, helped them grow spiritually thus provided spiritual nourishment and a sense of direction, and made them close to God. A further 17% of the participants noted that the same sacrament provided strength during difficult times and gave them hope in marital life and success. 16% reported that it enhanced togetherness in prayer and bible sharing within the family. 13% felt that the sacrament and attending mass promoted forgiveness, reconciliation, peace and fulfillment in their relationship. Other respondents observed that attending mass and the sacrament of Eucharist brought about blessings in the family, enhanced love, trust, bible knowledge, good values and promoted honesty, self-control and holiness. Richard, Bell and Carson (2001) observe that higher Church attendance reduces likelihood of marriage dissolution, while Francis and Kaldor (2002) show that Church attendance increases wellbeing for couples.

Church Teachings: With regard to church teachings, 30% of the respondents indicated that the teachings gave them hope, 14% of the participants observed that Church teachings provided guidance while another 14% felt that the teachings helped them to forgive. In addition, 8% noted that the teachings helped them to love, another 8% felt that teachings made them humble, respect and be submissive while a further 8% felt that the teachings made them more responsible, have good morals and be forthright. Others observed that the teachings made them endure and deal with challenges, be more understanding and obey the commandments that guide Christian marriage and Christian life in general. Haseley (2006) asserts that couples who share similar religious beliefs and teachings tend to record higher marital satisfaction, while Hunter (1998) also indicates that Christian spiritual commitment enables spouses to live their marriage life in the light of faith or what they believe in or committed to.

Bible Knowledge: The respondents were further asked to explain how the word of God/bible knowledge had benefited/helped them in their life and marriage. 31% observed that the word of God gave them wisdom, knowledge and guidance thus helped them to be morally fit, reminding them of their obligations, making them responsible and building their character. 19% reported that the word of God comforts them, provides understanding, encouragement when experiencing difficulties, consolation and tolerance. 17% felt that the word of God helped them grow spiritually and grow their faith, 11% felt that the word of God made their marriage strong and peaceful while 9% felt that it helped them raise a God fearing family. Other respondents felt that the word of God enhanced their relationship with their partners and family members, helped learn to forgive, to love, trust and be honest. Heaton and Pratt (1990) observe that the belief that the Bible contains solutions to human problems is positively associated with marital satisfaction.

Other Christian Lessons: Besides the sacraments and bible teachings, the study also sought to find out other Christian lessons/values that contribute marital satisfaction. These include participation in Bible classes, religious seminars, retreats, marriage encounter and Catholic Women Association (CWA) as observed by 18% of the respondents, 9% praying the rosary together as partners or in the family, forgiveness 9%, faithfulness between partners 9% and love of self, partner and neighbor 6%. Other lessons included fear of God, adoration, trust and patience. In addition, the respondents explained from a Christian point of view, other aspects/factors that had promoted/enhanced marital satisfaction in their marriage. 21 percent felt that love and forgiveness had contributed to marital satisfaction, 18 percent felt that praying together promoted marital satisfaction while 12% felt that putting God first, seeking the word of God and the fear of God promoted marital satisfaction. Other factors included dialogue where partners freely discuss and share issues, support groups, premarital counseling, doing things together and leadership in church. This concurred with Hunter's (1998) assertion that Christian spiritual commitment enables spouses to live their marriage life in the light of the values and truths of the gospel of Christ's teaching.

Factors that promote marital satisfaction

The second objective was to investigate factors that promote marital satisfaction. Satisfaction in marriage is characterised by various factors. Most of the respondents, 86.5 per cent noted that they still felt a strong connection with their partners. The findings were similar with Davis (2008) who asserts that marriage involves a project or endeavor of becoming one in terms of establishing a mutual relationship. This calls for a connection that is not only physical but also spiritual to ensure an intimate genuine relationship. Davis (2008) argues that spiritual intimacy is the highest form of relational connection, and it is the most difficult to develop, it is the most intense, most satisfying, most rewarding and longest lasting form of a relational connection, two people can have.

According to the findings 21.7 per cent of the participants would have second thoughts about their relationship in the recent past, which would imply that their marital satisfaction was

probably minimal. These findings concided with Allport and Ross (1967) theory that shows that Christian individuals who are high in external religious orientation are more likely to conform to social norms and demands rather than what the religion teaches. Such people are often likely to twist religious beliefs for their convenience or even to serve their own interests/goal. Allport further indicates that such people use religion to provide security and solace, sociability and discretion, status and self-satisfaction. The extrinsic Christian orientation of such married individuals could be down playing the benefits of Christian values and practices which are meant to promote their marital satisfaction.

The study findings shows that 80.9 percent wondered if there was someone else out there for them though 78.2 per cent affirmed that their relationship with their partner made them satisfied. With the similar variables the study by Whitley and Kite (2010) shows that some couples sometimes feel that someone else is out there for them although they are dictated by their conscience. This means to them religion is an active directing force, not merely a tool used to achieve self-serving interests. People with intrinsic religious orientation take religion to be the most important dimension of the life and put all the efforts to contextualize other areas of their life though their religious beliefs and teachings. For instance a married person with intrinsic religious orientation tries to relate all the marital experiences with his/her religious beliefs and teachings (Allport & Ross, 1967).

According to the findings 77.9 per cent and 79.7 per cent were warm/comfortable with their partners and would not imagine ending their relationships respectively. The study findings were similar to Sullivan's (2001) observation that couple's limitations and vulnerability could also be well compensated by religion and it makes them remain relatively comfortable. Despite the fact that Sullivan's analyses did not confirm all three models, it revealed that religiosity plays a key role in couples' attitudes in the first four years of marriage. For instance couples who are more religious are more likely to have more conservative attitudes toward divorce or separation since they demonstrate higher levels of marital commitment, and are more likely to seek interventions in times of marital distress.

According to the findings 74.5 per cent felt that they could confide in their partners about virtually anything while only. These findings are supported by Veroff (1998) who found out that men changed or accommodated their wives' more egalitarian ideals as marital satisfaction decreased for both men and women. Results of this study indicated that having a spouse with higher anxiety and agreeableness increased marital satisfaction for men but not for women. The findings show that 21.7 per cent have had second thoughts about their relationship in the recent past. These findings were similar Sullivan (2001) who examined the connection between religious experiences and marital satisfaction. Second thoughts about spouses relationship in the recent past was influenced by factors like attitudes toward divorce, commitment to the marriage vows, willingness to seek help during challenging or distressing moments in marriage etc.

Religion is found also to moderate marriage risk factors such as neuroticism through compensatory model.

Conceptual Framework in Relation to Research Objectives

The conceptual framework suggested that Christian religious commitment results from several Christian practises such as regular Church attendance, daily prayers, Bible study, sacramental life and adherence to Church teachings and it served as an independent variable in this study. This concept was largely supported by a majority of the participants (over 90%) who noted that such practises like Church attendance, Bible knowledge, and sacrament of reconciliation contributed significantly in improving their relationship with God and their partners.

Butler, Stout and Gardner, (2002), also noted that such Christian practises like prayer helped couples to reduce marital conflicts, negativity, contempt and hostility. Marital satisfaction was the dependent variable and it is manifested through experiences like mutual decision making, open and honest communication, mutual affection, sexual affection and religious congruence. Many participants showed that their commitment to values like Church teachings and Bible knowledge inspired them to respect and tolerate their partners. Pasch and Bradbury (1998) observe that couples who are satisfied are more likely to engage in ways that promote mutual understanding and less likely to disrespect or blame their partners. Feeling of love, trust, respect, fidelity and commitment have been identified as some components of a long-term satisfying marital relationship (Kaslow & Robinson, 1996; and Rosen-Grandon, 1998).

Marital satisfaction was the dependent variable and is manifested in marriage through attitudes and behaviour such as mutual affection, open and honest communication, and mutual decision making. These qualities are founded on Christian faith and developed through Christian socialization hence resulting in the enhancement of marital satisfaction among married Christian individuals. Rokeach (1973) observes that people use religious values to evaluate their world and social environment hence guiding them and motivating their entire behaviour.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that an increase in any variable under Christian religious commitment will lead to an increase in marital satisfaction. Statistics also conveyed that Christian spirituality was a positive contributor to the outcomes of health and longevity within a marriage. This qualitative study that is phenomenological in its view may have implications in the development of a marital growth that is steeped in the integration of Christian spirituality. A Christian developmental growth for marriages may have implications for marital enrichment programs for churches, for pastors conducting pre-marital and marriage counseling, and for counselors who work with couples that identify with Christian faith. Additionally, these findings can aid premarital and young couples in understanding what contributes to marital growth. The implications to pursue this new perspective of contributors to marital growth moves away from the prevailing deficits

model which looks at contributors to marital distress. This change from “what a couple shouldn’t do” to “what a couple should do” could provide a trajectory of growth for premarital and young couples to strive for as their marriages unfold over time.

FUTURE ORIENTATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

First, the study realised the need for more explorations in the area of religious experiences as the findings indicate that Religious phenomenon tend to elicit varying effects on individuals and may impact differently on marital relationships. There all indications that religious beliefs and practises play a key role in shaping peoples’ cognitions and behaviour. Since the concern of the study was about worrying trends of marriage and family related problems, there could be other undiscovered factors that still contribute positively to satisfactions in marital unions. A comparative study would also make the findings stronger and more interesting in that we would get to know what the variable of Christian marriage satisfaction is measured against, for example the married individuals who practised sacramental life can be measured against those who are not Christian oriented. Another future consideration concerns employing measuring instruments that are locally tailored to suit the population of the study as people from different cultures do conceptualise and respond to issues differently. For instance what constitutes and elicits satisfaction in marriage for an African could be totally different from a European or American.

REFERENCES

- Allport, G.W., & Ross, J.M. (1967). Personal Religious Orientations and Prejudice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 5 (4), 432-443 and Ireland. London: Collins Liturgical Publication.
- Butler, M. H., Stout, J. A. & Gardner, B. C. (2002). Prayer as a conflict resolution ritual: Clinical implications of religious couples’ report of relationship softening, healing perspective, and change responsibility. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 30(1), 19- 37.
- Bradbury, N., Fincham, F. D., Frank, D., Beach, & Steven, R. H. (2000). Research on the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(4), 964-980.
- Chamberlain, T. J. & Hall, C. A. (2000). *Research on the relationship between religion and health*. Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press.
- Davis, W. J. (2008). *Praying big for your marriage*. CA, Michigan: Grand Rapids.
- Fowler, J. W. (2004). Faith development at 30: naming the challenges of faith in a new millennium. *Religious Education*, 99(4), 405-421.
- Francis, L. J. & Kaldor, P. (2002). The relationship between psychological well-being and Christian faith and practice in an Australian population sample. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41(1), 179-184.
- Heaton, T. B., & Pratt, E. L. (1990). The effects of religious homogeneity on marital satisfaction and stability. *Journal of Family Issues*, 11(2), 191-207.

- Heraney- Hunter J, Louis P. (1998). *Unitas Couple's workbook: Preparing for Sacramental Marriage*, Amazon, Crossroad Publishing Company.
- Jaccard, J & Wan, C., (1996). *Lisrel approaches interaction effects in multiple regression*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kaslow, F. & Robinson, J. A. (1996). Long-term satisfying marriages: Perceptions of contributing factors. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 24(2), 153-170.
- Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D.W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30, 607 – 610.
- Laher, S. (2007).The relationship between religious orientation and pressure in psychology. *South African Journal of psychology*, 37, 530-551.
- Dinna, M, (2005). *Marital satisfaction in autonomous and arranged marriages: South African Indian sample*, University of Pretoria.
- Mukolwe, S. W. (2012). *Raising future parents*. Nairobi: Tyndale Hose Publisher.
- Mugenda, O. M & Mugenda, A. G. (2003). *Researcher Methods, Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, Nairobi: Acts press.
- Musick, K. (2002). Planned and Unplanned Childbearing Among Unmarried Women. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64(4), 915-929.
- Mbiti, J. S. (1969). *African religions and philosophy*. Nairobi: East Africa Education Publishers.
- Pasch, L. A. & Bradbury, T. N. (1998). Social support, conflict, and the development of marital dysfunction. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 66, 219-230.
- Ronzani, R. (2007). *Christian Marriage*, Nairobi: Paulines publication.
- Sullivan, K. T. (2001). Understanding the relationship between religiosity and marriage: An investigation of the immediate and longitudinal effects of religiosity on newlywed couples. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 15(4), 610-626.
- Taylor, S. E. & Crocker, J. (1981).Schematic bases or social processing.In E. T. Higgins, C. P. Herman, & M. P. Zanna (Eds.), *Social cognition: The Ontario symposium* (vol. 1, pp. 89-134). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Veroff, J., Douvan, E., Orbuch, T. L., &Actelli, L. K. (1998). Happiness in stable marriages: The early years. In T. N. Bradbury (Ed.), *The developmental course of marital dysfunction* (pp. 152-179). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Worthington, E.L., Berry, J.W. & Parrot, L.III. (2000). Unforgiveness, Forgiveness, Religion, and Health” in *Faith and Health: Psychological Perspectives* by T.G. Plante and A.C. Sherman (Ed.). New York and London: The Guilford Press.
- Whitley, B.E. & Kite, M.E. (2010). *The Psychology of prejudice and discrimination*, Belmont, CA Wadsworth.
- www.linkedin.com/company/infotrak-research-and-consulting, retrieved on 15/08/14
- Zigmond, W.G. (2003). *Business research methods*, Sidney: Thomson Publishers.