CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES IN SELECTED NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN NAIROBI COUNTY

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my original work that has not been presented for a degree in any other University for an academic award.
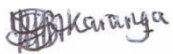
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my dear parents, Rev. Domnick and Eunita Otieno.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACK- Anglican Church of Kenya

AICs- African Instituted Churches

CAC- Couples Affirmation Class

CBD- Central Business District

CfAN- Christ for All Nations

CRI- Calvary Road Incorporation

CROMIA- Church Research on Marriage in Africa

DoZ- Daughter of Zion

FEM- Faith Evangelistic Ministry

FREQ- Frequency

JCC- Jubilee Christian Church

LCI- Lighthouse Chapel International

MC- Mavuno Church

MHC- Mavuno Hill City

NC- Nairobi Chapel

NIV- New International Version

NRM- New Religious Movements

PBM- Plymouth Brethren Movement

PCEA- Presbyterian Church of East Africa

PMCC- Pre-Marital Counseling Class

Pst. - Pastor

RCC- Roman Catholic Church

Rev. - Reverend

SALT- Serving a Living Transformer

SCC- Small Christian Communities

VoK- Voice of Kenya

DEFINITION OF TERMS

African Christian Marriage: Marriage between Christian converts of African origin, built on Christian faith and embracing certain African values that do not contradict Christian faith in celebrating the marriage ordinance and strengthening the union (Kisembo et. al.1998: 53).

Africanization: The process of integrating Christian doctrines and teachings with useful African traditional cultural values and modern way of life with an aim of making Christianity more relevant and acceptable to the African cultural context (Magesa 2004: 23).

Christian Marriage: A monogamous heterosexual union where either or both parties profess Christian faith (The Marriage Act 2014: Part 3).

Civil Marriage: A marriage which is celebrated by a government registrar of Marriages, instead of Church or religious official (The Marriage Act 2014: Part 4).

Customary Marriage/ African Marriage: A monogamous or polygamous heterosexual union between African people, celebrated in accordance with the customs of the community or communities to which the parties belong (The Marriage Act 2014 Part 5).

Holy Matrimony: A Christian marriage instituted through Church wedding. It also refers to the Christian wedding ritual (Ronolick 2004:121).

Mainstream Church: Christian denomination, whether Roman Catholic or protestant that was initiated directly or indirectly by a foreign European missionary initiative (Moorhead 1999: 16).

Mediator/a go-between*:* A person (among the Luo community) who assists young relatives to identify potential marriage partners, spearheads the marriage negotiations and remains a mentor to the couple throughout their marriage life.

Movement: A sub category of Christian denominations that operates outside or within a mainstream church and seeks to change one or several aspects of the main denomination (Moorhead 1999: 16).

New Religious Movements: Separate movements that emerge as splinter or autonomous religious groups, which operate outside and are alternatives to the traditionally known mainstream denominations (Barker 1989: 26, Clarke 2006:6).

Prosperity Gospel: A religious belief and teaching that is dominant among certain Christian movements which holds that financial well-being and physical health are direct indicators of faith in God. They further assert that such well-being is catalyzed with motivational preaching and generous material donations to the movements and their leaders (Shorter & Njiru: 2001).

Rite of Passage: A culturally recognized ritual that marks transition of an individual from one phase of life to another such as birth, initiation, marriage and death (Alviar1997: 20).

Sexuality: Human orientation, behaviour and roles assigned to one on the basis of his or her gender (Macquarrie 1975: 137).

Toleration: A case in which certain African cultural values and customs that are incompatible with Christian faith are permitted to thrive in Christianity. This is based on the observation that instant abolition of such customs is impossible and impractical due to the disorders that they could create in society. It is also based on the conviction that continued adoption of Christian faith could make such values gradually disintegrate and eventually collapse (Kaplan 1995:12).

ABSTRACT

This study examined the new social dynamic challenges facing contemporary African Christian marriages and attempts by New Religious Movements in Nairobi to address them. The study was guided by four objectives. First, it compared and contrasted the African religio-cultural beliefs and Christian views on marriage. Second, it examined the challenges facing contemporary African Christian marriages in Nairobi County. Third, it assessed the processes and strategies employed by selected New Religious Movements in instituting marriages among their members. Lastly, it evaluated the selected New Religious Movements' responses to marital problems. The study utilized the structural functionalist theory as propagated by Jean McIntyre and cyclic theory of social change by Oswald Spengler and Piritin Sorokin. Structural functionalist theory was employed to explain how marriages function as constituent units of the society, to diagnose the problems that affect marriages and to prescribe practical solutions to such problems. Cyclic theory of social change was pivotal in locating contemporary marital challenges as consequences of social change and to justify the rediscovery of traditional religious values as a cure to such challenges. Four New Religious Movements in Nairobi County namely; Nairobi Chapel, Mavuno Church, Jubilee Christian Church and Lighthouse Chapel International were sampled. A total of 332 respondents were targeted. These included 240 married people, 80 marriage candidates who had undergone premarital training and 12 pastors. The researcher observed 12 wedding ceremonies, three from each movement. The study established that certain aspects of African culture were more complementary than contradictory to Christian views on marriage. Common themes such as sacredness of marriage, intended permanency, authority of the husband and communal participation were noted. The study found that 70% of the married informants entered into marriage with incompatible partners, hence regretted later of their choices. The study also established that cultural conflicts, change of traditional family roles, economic pressure, over-emphasis on sex, infidelity, negative family models, unhealthy competition between spouses and with outsiders, strained relationships with in-laws, long distance relationship arrangements, miscommunication, lack of commitment, drug addiction, domestic violence and inability to cope with mid-life crisis were some of the challenges facing contemporary African Christian marriages. The study recognized that pre-marital counseling was the most basic New Religious Movements' response to marital problems. It was noted that each movement had a different strategy which targeted different groups within their congregations. The study concluded that New Religious Movements (NRM) are not very effective in offering holistic response to contemporary marital problems. The study recommends that churches should adopt a holistic approach to marital issues, teach marriage and family values from earlier stages of life and emphasize African ideological concepts and formations, such as small Christian communities to enrich contemporary marriages. The study further advocates for formal post marital counseling and divorce care programs.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0. Background of the Study

Before the advent of foreign religions in Africa, traditional African communities were known for their strong family and cultural values. Individual members existed within the extended family ties and chains of relationships known as kinship system (Kyomo & Selvana 2004:6). It was through child birth that new members were welcomed into the community and were taught by their mothers, siblings and younger peers. But, as they grew up, they transited into maturity and were continually taught their societal and moral values by elders and older peers in preparation for marriage.

They were taught and guided in their lives by taboos, oral traditions, cultural and moral regulations which defined how they should relate with God, the community and nature. For instance, it was a taboo among the Luo for a man to have close contact or shake hands with his mother-in-law (Magesa 1997:112). This limited the possibility of conflict or confrontation between the two. Among the Luyia, a woman was prohibited from sitting on her husband's stool (Akaranga 1996: 63). Such an act could mean that the woman was claiming equality with the husband, wishing his dethronement or death. These taboos prevented moral and social impunity in family relationships (Kayode (1984:11).

In the African Traditional Society, marriage was perceived as a sacred institution that was endowed with the gift of procreation (Magesa 1997:110). The well being of a marriage was based on communal responsibility (Mbiti1969: 133). The Luo, for example believed that wives belonged to the community, hence husbands were only custodians of marriage on

behalf of God and the community (Mboya 2001:64). Among the Yoruba of West Africa, an oath was taken during a wedding ceremony by a prospective couple and their clans where both parties pledged commitment, faithfulness and support to the marriage covenant (Kayode 1991:225). In most African societies, polygamy was commonly practiced symbolizing prestige and wealth. Virtues such as communalism, hospitality, courtesy and chastity were highly regarded (Mugambi 1997:17).

African communities had stable social-religious and moral structures that they subscribed to until they were interrupted by colonial imperialism and European Christian missionaries (p'Bitek 1970:140). Their way of life was distorted, while certain traditional values were condemned and termed as primitive or barbaric. Any disregard of such strong values resulted into moral dilemma and made marriage problems to persist within African Christianity. During the advent of Christianity in 19th Century in the African continent, the main threat to marriages among African converts was the stern effort by European missionaries to replace African marriage and family values with Western Christian values (Welch 1933:17). African marriage and family structures were despised by European missionaries who did not consider such unions as orthodox social institutions (Nwoye 2007: 36). They not only disputed such marriages, but also did not acknowledge that women in such marriages were legitimate wives, and were often referred to as mere concubines. Terms such as marriage, husband and wife were not applicable to polygamous unions (Fiedler 1996: 113).

Later on, the missionaries realized that such a perception was not only failing, but also dangerous and unfair to Africans whose families had remained stable, sustainable and functional in their own traditional and cultural contexts. They noted that the future and stability of marriage institutions in African Christianity must adopt certain African values in

light of the Christian faith acting as the pillar of African Christian marriage (Fiedler 1996: 118).

Despite the fact that Christianity has thrived in Africa for several centuries, various churches still hold different opinions regarding the status of polygamous marriages. The mainstream churches view monogamy as the golden rule for Christian marriage (Waruta & Kinoti 2000: 108). They no longer demand for the expulsion of multiple wives at conversion as propagated by early missionaries. Polygamists are instead converted, but restricted from partaking the Holy Communion (Maillu 1998: 1). In some African Instituted Churches like the Nomiya Luo Church, polygamy is encouraged as a strategy for church growth. Pentecostal churches however hold that polygamists can be converted and included in partaking the Holy Communion, but they are exempted from church leadership positions (Hillman 1975: 178).

Since the colonial period, African societies have undergone many changes that not only affect religion, but also other spheres of life (Kyalo 2011: 42). In 1931, the colonial government in Kenya attempted to implement the policy of Africanization of Christian marriages through the enactment of "African Christian Marriage and Divorce Act of 1931." This act appreciated the positive interaction between Christianity and African values in instituting marriages among African Christians. The law governed marriages that were celebrated in Church until 2014 when the new Marriage Act was enacted. The concept of "African Christian marriage" was replaced by "Christian marriage." In the new law, a Christian marriage is defined as a monogamous union involving parties who profess the Christian faith (The Marriage Act 2014: part 3). The Church however maintains its place in solemnizing marriages among their members as long as the ceremonies are conducted by licensed church ministers (The Marriage Act 2014: 43).

In the contemporary society, many New Religious Movements have emerged which like other Christian denominations, have a role in celebrating Christian marriages among their members. These movements continually attract youth who emigrate from their rural homes to urban centres in pursuit of employment, business opportunities and education. They are charismatic in nature, preach prosperity gospel and incorporate modernity in their worship services therefore the youth tend to be attracted to them as opposed to mainstream churches which are dominated by old and rigid religious traditions (Shorter & Njiru 2001:17). Some of these youth end up joining the Nairobi Chapel (NC), Mavuno Church (MC), Lighthouse Chapel International (LCI) and Jubilee Christian Church (JCC) in Nairobi County that are discussed in this study as a source of guidance and in search of new friends and spouses (Kelley 1986: 74).

1.1.1. Nairobi Chapel

The Nairobi Chapel traces its roots to the Plymouth Brethren Movement (PBM) in Britain which emerged among the elite members of society and encouraged free fellowship among its members. As a British colony, Kenya was influenced by the Anglican Church which was the dominant religion in England. In 1952, some few middle class British settlers broke away from the Anglican Church at All Saints Cathedral in Nairobi and launched the Nairobi Chapel as an interdenominational movement similar to the Plymouth Brethren Movement in Britain. It was located at Old Girl Guide Headquarters near Arboretum Park in Nairobi.

The followers were dissatisfied with certain Anglican practices, especially the wide gap between the clergy and laity; and the rigidity of Anglican liturgy. They appointed leaders from the lay people who ministered alongside their professional jobs, although they had no formal theological training (Informant X, Interview: 30.8.2017).

They conducted services which were free from Anglican liturgy and started the "Gospel Hour" radio program which was broadcast by the Voice of Kenya (VoK). It was through this initiative, that the Nairobi Chapel marketed its activities and attracted some commendable membership among foreign settlers and a few Africans (Informant X, Interview: 30.8.2017). Nairobi Chapel faced challenges when Kenya attained her independence in 1963 that threatened its continuity. Many settlers who formed the majority of the worshippers emigrated to Britain, leaving only a few foreigners and less committed Africans. The rapid expansion of Nairobi's Central Business District led to the demand for residents to vacate areas adjacent to the city to create room for expansion. More followers relocated to other estates and suddenly stopped attending the Nairobi Chapel's services (Nairobi Chapel 2017): https://nairobichapel.net/).

By 1980s, Nairobi Chapel's attendance had declined tremendously. This challenge exposed the movement to two options. They had to either close down or indigenize the fellowship. Nairobi Chapel responded by relocating to Ufungamano House, just adjacent to the University of Nairobi's Hostels and recruited Campus students in her neighborhood to its fellowship (Informant X, Interview: 30.8.2017). The movement was also financially strained because, students did not have sufficient monetary capacity to sponsor its expenses. Nairobi Chapel leaders approached Rev. Mutava Musyimi of Nairobi Baptist Church, Ngong' Road for support and advise. In response, the Baptist Church sent a team of seven families led by an intern, Pastor Oscar Muriu who received tremendous support from the families. The number of students who attended the services increased culminating into a new dawn for the movement. Nairobi Chapel acquired a piece of land at Mamlaka Hill, just within the vicinity of the University of Nairobi's Main Campus female hostels (Nairobi Chapel 2017: https://nairobichapel.net/).

Nairobi Chapel remained outstanding in reaching out to new students yearly, though it was surrounded by major mainstream denominations like the St. Andrew's PCEA Church, St. Paul's Catholic Chapel, Lutheran Church and the Anglican- All Saint Cathedral. Their worship services were captivating, free from liturgical orders incorporating modern music and dance. By mid 1990s, the movement had recorded numerical growth of up to 3500 congregants. Seven series of services were conducted every Sunday to meet the spiritual needs. Nairobi Chapel launched special Thursday night services termed Serving a Living Transformer (SALT) for students and another special Sunday evening Chinese service to cater for the increasing Chinese population in the city (Informant XI, Interview: 30.8.2017).

By the year 2000, the Nairobi Chapel had grown by leaps and bounds to the extent that the Mamlaka Hill premise could no longer accommodate their surging activities. The congregants hired halls at Ufungamano House and ran concurrent worship services. But, this was not sufficient. They further acquired a 14.5 acres' piece of land next to Jamhuri Forest off Ngong' Road in 2003 at a cost of Ksh 40 Million (Informant XII, Interview 30.8.2017). By then, the majority of followers who had joined the movement as students were working professionals and could affordably raise funds to purchase the land. The property along Ngong' Road at the time of writing this research (2021) hosted the movement's main campus which had six huge tents with a vast car parking lot. The Mamlaka Hill services still remained as the students' entry point into the movement. The Nairobi Chapel had opened more branches in Nairobi and other Kenyan towns like Kisumu, Mombasa, Machakos, Embu, Meru and Kitale. They also had branches outside Kenya in Kigali in Rwanda, Lilongwe in Malawi, Kampala in Uganda and Gaborone in Botswana. The Nairobi Chapel was headed by Bishop Oscar Muriu who was assisted by more than 50 pastors and trained more than 100 university students annually who opted to pursue church ministry after graduation (Informant XI, Interview: 30.8.2017).

1.1.2. Mavuno Church

During Nairobi Chapel's dispersal from Mamlaka Hill in 2005, the quest to spread her flock into three other directions across Nairobi was conceived as a growth strategy. The main objective was to reach out to young educated adults in Nairobi who could not fit freely in either the mainstream protestant churches or into the New Pentecostal movements. One group moved to Westlands reaching out to the Asian community, another one went to Eastlands towards Jogoo Road launching their meetings at Jericho Social Hall. A third group moved southwards to Mombasa Road under the leadership of Pastor Muriithi Wanjau. They started their services at South C Sports Club on 7th August 2005, culminating into the Mavuno Church (Mavuno Church 2017: https://www.mavunochurch.org/).

The term *Mavuno*, is a Kiswahili word meaning harvest. It is grounded on the premise that Nairobi had many young adults who had been uprooted from their rural homes as well as their traditional churches and could no longer fit into the Mainstream or Pentecostal churches. Mainstream churches focused on the poor and vulnerable, yet the number of young well educated income earners was rising in the city. They could not fit among the poor or vulnerable groups, while the Pentecostal churches had lively worship services, but failed to accommodate this unique group and address their contemporary challenges. The Pentecostal doctrine of salvation followed by Spirit the Baptism coupled with Speaking in tongues locked out a large number of these young people (Informant IV, Interview: 20.6.2018).

The majority of these youth had Christian backgrounds, but they could not fit into the established churches in the city and had become "unchurched". They ended up spending their Sundays by mingling with friends, going out to social gatherings, drinking, hanging around with their boy or girl friends or just simply staying in their houses. These "unchurched" people attracted the attention of Mavuno Church.

During the launch of Mavuno Church, a congregation of 400 people attended the service and continued to attend the other subsequent Sunday services. The numerical growth of adherents led to its relocation to "Mavuno Hill City" (MHC) near Mlolongo in 2014 at the border of Nairobi and Machakos counties which could host 5000 congregants. Mavuno Church sought to win souls of non-church goers and accommodated them without condemnation or ridicule. It created a fellowship with a sense of belonging without necessarily insisting on conversion as a prerequisite. Mavuno church believes that if these young people could belong to a church, then they could later be converted. The movement therefore accommodates and tolerates many youth who have neither confessed salvation nor experienced the Holy Spirit Baptism as expected in other Pentecostal movements (IV, Interview: 20.6.2018).

The Mavuno Church has three other branches within Nairobi apart from their main campus at Mavuno Hill City. These include; Mavuno Church Life-way in Kasarani, Mavuno Church Down Town in Ufungamano House adjacent to University of Nairobi and Mavuno Church Mashariki along Jogoo Road. The Down Town Campus targets University students in the neighbourhood. The movement also has four branches in other African cities including; Kampala in Uganda, Kigali in Rwanda, Lusaka in Zambia and Blantyre in Malawi. Mavuno church ventured into Europe and established a branch in Berlin-Germany (Informant IV, Interview: 20.6.2018).

1.1.3. Lighthouse Chapel International

The Lighthouse Chapel International (LCI) is rooted in Ghana from Calvary Road Incorporation (CRI). Dag Heward Mills became a leader of this association while studying medicine at the University of Ghana. He mobilized followers to start Sunday services in the University lecture halls (Commey, Interview: 21.7.2018). Some members became suspicious of his intention and wrote a letter to dethrone him from leadership and excommunicate him

from the association. A few of his fellow leaders and friends moved with him to another hall within the campus' vicinity and started a house of light to the lost world which was named "Lighthouse Chapel International" in 1987 (Informant IV, Interview: 20.6.2018).

After completing his medical course in 1989, Mills got married the same year and practiced his profession for a short while before resigning to embrace a full-time pastoral call in 1991. He was deputized by Sackey, E.A.T. This vibrant students' movement believed in expressing and sharing their Christian faith through creative acts such as music and drama. In 1992, Lighthouse Chapel International acquired a cinema hall in North Kenashie area in Accra which hosted the growing congregation. In 2006, the Lighthouse Chapel International moved its headquarters further to Qodesh and built three mega halls with a total sitting capacity of 10,000 (ten thousand) people. The movement's strength and growth since its inception is based on the connection with university students and young professionals. In the initial stages, Mills motivated, recruited and trained many students who easily secured well-paying jobs alongside their pastoral ministry. This enabled them to serve without financial strains. It is through such initiatives that he launched his global missionary campaigns that attracted many students who volunteered to serve as missionaries to Africa's major cities as well as other parts of the world (Informant IV, Interview: 20.6.2018).

It is through these efforts that Lighthouse Chapel International found its inroads into Kenya in Jericho Estate in Nairobi along Jogoo Road in 1998. Since then, the movement has grown to approximately 3000 congregants who comprise the youth and young adults. It has five more branches within the city. Lighthouse Chapel International has also opened other branches in other towns such as Mombasa, Kisumu, Kajiado, Rongai and Ruiru. It has more branches all over the world (Lighthouse Chapel International 2017: www.lighthousechapelkenya.org).

1.1.4. Jubilee Christian Church

The Jubilee Christian Church (JCC) traces its roots from Reinhardt Bonke's Christ for All Nations (CfAN) evangelistic crusades across Africa in the 1980's. These crusades were non-denominational and were not interested in planting local churches. But, after their departure several movements thrived. One example is the "Faith Evangelistic Ministry (FEM)" which was initiated by Rev. Teresia Wairimu who had been converted in 1977 while studying at Ngiriambu Girls High School and further received Holy Spirit Baptism in 1985. Rev. Wairimu received emotional healing from a heartbreaking divorce experience in 1988 during Bonke's Crusade in Nairobi's Uhuru Park. She then became an ardent follower of Christ for All nations (CfAN) which earned her a ticket to travel to Oslo in Norway. It was during this visit that Bonke laid hands on Rev. Wairimu on 17th May 1992 crowning her to evangelize, heal and prophesize. She held outdoor crusades in various parts of Nairobi before finally establishing the Faith Evangelistic Mission, at Karen in Nairobi (Wairimu 2011:6-14).

It is at the Faith Evangelistic Ministry that Allan and Kathy Kiuna met and got married in 1994. One Sunday, James Macdonald, a British preacher who had been invited to give a sermon singled out Allan and Kathy that God was calling them to the ministry to mentor great leaders across the world (Informant III, Interview: 21.5.2017). The couple launched Jubilee Christian Church in a small restaurant in Nairobi's Central Business District on 17th January 1999 which was attended by forty people, but only four remained to attend subsequent services. They held their Sunday worship services in several hired restaurants in the hub of Nairobi city, before relocating to Ngara shopping centre.

Jubilee Christian Church attracted many business men and women from Nairobi's City centre and its environs and has grown gradually to 6000 adherents (Jubilee Christian Church 2017: https://jcckenya.org/). The Church acquired property in Parklands and built a sanctuary with a

seating capacity of 10 000 (ten thousand) congregants. Jubilee Christian Church has established branches in Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru, and Roysambu in Nairobi, Johannesburg in South Africa, London in United Kingdom, Dallas and Atlanta in the United States. Allan Kiuna is the current Presiding Bishop, while his wife Kathy pairs up as a deputy to the Bishop and Senior Pastor at the Parkland's Church (Jubilee Christian Church 2017: https://jcckenya.org/). The two church ministers are popularly known for their opulent romantic public shows expressing the success of prosperity gospel.

The brief summary of Nairobi Chapel, Mavuno Church, Lighthouse Chapel International and Jubilee Christian Church depicts that many youth are attracted to New Religious Movements which are found in major towns in Kenya. As they attended these churches, they ended up losing touch of their traditional religious values which were under the custody of elderly rural based parents and grandparents. It is within these New Religious Movements that the youth grew physically, materially and spiritually. Social interactive forums such as youth retreats, singles' dinners and couples' night outs were organized to accommodate their life styles (Wambui 2014: 81). As these youth matured, many of them sourced for life partners within their congregations and conducted marriages which were outside their traditional contexts and were sometimes guided by a few elderly couples (Beckford 1995:94). They then joined the wider society where marriage bonds were already shaken. This called for the need to investigate how they coped with contemporary marital challenges in their lives.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The general perception of African Christian scholars studying inculturation is that some African values do not contradict Christian principles and are useful in strengthening African Christian families (Magesa 2004: 13). This has however left the Church with arbitrary values that need to be adopted. Many married couples are losing their social religious tenets, making

marriage institutions vulnerable to numerous problems which include separation and divorce. The increase in divorce cases in Nairobi County has been progressive since 2001. Records from Kenya's Milimani Law Courts alone accounts that 101 divorce cases were filed in 2001, 115 cases in 2002, 206 cases in 2003, 296 cases in 2004, 295 cases in 2005, 357 cases in 2007 and 369 cases in 2008. These statistics reveal that between 2010 and 2015, a total of 1,246 divorce cases were filed in the same court. The Federation of Women Lawyers had handled 398 divorce cases in 2014 and 406 in 2015. In the 2009 national census, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics recorded an over-all 212, 972 divorced couples across the nation (Muthoni & Makana 2015:1-4).

Instances of abnormal violent behaviours in families had been reported, some resulting into either the murder of spouses or offspring (Ombati 2016: 22). Illegitimate sexual behaviours evident in rape and defilement cases had increased too. This could be the reason why some people avoid marital relationships leading to increase in single parent families. The youth seek for alternative private civil marriages which are joined outside the church with less religious strictness (Waruta & Kinoti 2000:106). These are clear indications that marriage is a troubled institution.

Since African traditional values are perceived to be stronger in the rural than in urban setups, many urban marriages are further shaken by the struggle to shift from a familiar religious and cultural context to a new urban environment (Parrinder 1969:229). Although some urban marriages attest to the continuity of certain African values like bride wealth payments and premarital parental visitations, these have been modified to the extent of losing their cultural meaning. The commercialization of bride wealth in the contemporary society has decimated its cementing value, while parents have lesser or no say in choosing spouses for their children (Kayode 1991:225). The wedding arrangements are also dominated by new friends from

churches or work places as opposed to members of the extended family. The struggle to cope up with new changes makes urban marriages more vulnerable to contemporary life challenges.

A rapid growth in New Religious Movements has been witnessed, especially in urban centres, anchored on individual charismatic founders or leaders who are highly trusted by their followers (Shorter & Njiru 2001:25). These movements attract youth who by virtue of their age are either young in marriage or they are preparing to get married (Shorter & Njiru 2001:75). Some solemnized marriages are multicultural, and are often celebrated outside the couples' traditional contexts and need to be handled with caution (Beckford 1995:94).

New Religious Movements have attempted to create an environment where the youth mingle and inter-marry freely away from their cultural contexts (Shorter & Njiru 2001:76). The young people nevertheless end up being mentored into marriage by leaders of these movements who are less informed about their cultural backgrounds and personal traits. This study investigated contemporary African Christian marriages in Nairobi County with specific focus on the challenges facing such marriages and the selected New Religious Movements responses to the marital problems.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the contemporary African Christian marriages in Nairobi County by explaining the challenges affecting such marriages and evaluating the selected New Religious Movements' responses to such challenges. The study was further guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To compare the African Religio-cultural beliefs and Christian views on marriage.

2. To examine the challenges facing the contemporary African Christian marriages in Nairobi County.

3. To assess the nature and procedures of instituting contemporary African Christian marriages of selected New Religious Movements in Nairobi County.

4. To evaluate the processes and strategies employed by selected New Religious Movements in responding to marital challenges in Nairobi County.

1.4. Rationale for the Study

The 21st century has posed various challenges that affect marriage institutions, especially among the youth who have continued to lose their contact with African values and have instead adopted pro-western Christian tenets of life. This research therefore examined the integration of African traditional religious values and Christian teachings in strengthening contemporary marriages. The findings of the study are informative to young people preparing for marriage and are ready to appreciate and embrace African values which are not contradictory to their Christian faith.

The study provides a useful guide to Church ministers who handle marriages. The problems and attempted solutions discussed in the study should not be used to discourage the youth from marriage, but ought to promote a positive view which should build them into responsible spouses. A proper utilization of this study could provide a proactive solution to marital problems and address the issues affecting current families. This is actualized by underscoring the roots of African values, yet building on the pillars of Christian teachings to complement the entire process.

This study contributes to debates on Africanization, liberation, liturgy, structure and leadership perspectives in Christianity. It provides some insights in understanding African Christian theology which govern marriage and family institutions basing on relevant contemporary issues in urban contexts.

Marital counseling tackles marriage issues from both psycho-social and religious points of view. Psychotherapists focus on psychological and social issues affecting marriage. This study appreciated and applied African and Christian religious views of marriage in marital counseling thus saving the future generation from possible dilemmas which interfere with the functionality of current family institutions.

1.5. Scope and Limitations of the Study

Marriage is not only the most intimate level of human relationships and the basic unit of human society, but problems affecting marriage and the family are also likely to affect other segments of society and need to be addressed accordingly. This study focused on marital challenges and how the selected New Religious Movements addressed them.

Marital challenges could be addressed by employing professional counseling and legal interventions. The study however focused on the religious approach offered by the church in shaping family life relationships in Kenya. It is very broad to incorporate the Catholic Church, Mainstream Protestant Churches, Pentecostal Churches, African Instituted Churches.

The research was limited to New Religious Movements which are more attractive to the youth and young couples in urban areas. Four New Religious Movements namely: Nairobi Chapel, Mavuno Church, Jubilee Christian Church and Lighthouse Chapel International were selected, because they reflected different church models and emphasize on different segments of the Kenyan population. The Nairobi Chapel program focused more on men, Jubilee

Christian Church on women, Lighthouse Chapel International on youth, while Mavuno Church had an all-inclusive program. The researcher selected Nairobi County since it is the most cosmopolitan city in Kenya that attracts people from most demographic, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

It is acknowledged that some scholarly studies have been conducted on marriage and family institutions in African Christianity, but with less emphasis on New Religious Movements. The initial studies on this discourse were conducted by Hastings (1973) and Kisembo et.al. 1977. Hastings' *Christian Marriage in Africa 1973* focused on marriage problems within Anglican and Catholic dioceses (Hastings 1973:5), while Kisembo et.al. *African Christian Marriage 1998* analyzed marriages within sixteen Christian denominations sampled from eight African countries. Most of these churches were mainstream denominations, except a few African Instituted Churches (Shorter & Kisembo 1977: 12). This study is rooted in such previous scholarly works and at the same time maintains peculiarity and precision to contemporary marital challenges within New Religious Movements.

1.6. Literature Review

This section examines the general meaning of marriage as well as the traditional African and Christian views on marriage. It further underscores the historical and theological insights into the African Christian marriage and its status in contemporary African Christianity.

1.6.1. Marriage

Marriage is defined by Crane (2006: 221) as a union of one man and one woman who voluntarily come together to live as husband and wife. This view expounds the voluntary nature of marriage, but is limited to monogamy. The validity of marriage depends on its nationalization and legalization through constitutional and cultural provisions. Since African

culture allowed polygamous heterosexual unions, such views should be fairly treated in discussing marriage in an African context. The Kenyan law defines marriage as a voluntary union between a man and a woman, whether polygamous or monogamous and is registered according to the law (The Marriage Act 2014: Part 2).

Although the interrelationship between marriage and religion is indisputable, marriage remains a universal human phenomenon that incorporates other non-Christian religions as well as from the secular world. Wardle (2004: 137) opines that a Christian marriage should be heterosexual, sacred and devoid of any other social entity. This view excludes same sex unions which are contrary to the traditional African and Christian beliefs.

Ronolick (2004:120) views marriage as an institution that is developed by human beings to satisfy their needs. He contradicts the existence of religious marriages and states that Christian, Islamic and Buddhist marriages are vague and unrealistic terminologies. Instead, the parties involved in a marriage contract belong to diverse faiths, but not the marriage. Since no institution can belong to a faith, except the people involved, Ronolick's observation is essential in strengthening people's commitment to their faiths so as to shape and strengthen their families. The family can therefore only remain religious in relation to members' commitment to their faith. African Traditional Religion is one of such faith that has widely shaped Africans' worldview on marriage.

1.6.2. African Traditional Religious Beliefs on Marriage

An African marriage in most cases could be heterosexual, monogamous or polygamous union, which is celebrated and governed by appropriate customs. Mugambi (2004: 238) contends that African marriage is a significant rite of passage which plays a special role in people's lives by transcending them to maturity. The avoidance or disregard of marriage in

traditional African communities was depicted as hindering the flow and continuity of life from one phase to another (Mugambi 2004: 241).

Marriage according to Mbiti (1991: 104), strengthens kinship relationships between extended families and generates a sense of responsibility within the community. In Africa, any issues affecting marriage do not only affect individuals, but the entire community. Since an African Marriage is widely communal, the choice of partners, payment of bride wealth, wedding ceremony as well as family life involves two consanguineous clans (Mbiti 1969:133). He further affirms that initiation into adulthood rituals prepared the youth for marriage (Mbiti 1973:63). But, the strong connection between initiation into adulthood and marriage has become the most weakened principle that cements African marriage today. This declining trend in the practice of African initiation rites in the contemporary society creates the need to investigate their effectiveness and alternative ways of preparing the youth for marriage.

Marriage is not only a sacred institution, but is also a centre of the rhythm of life whose purpose is procreation. It is through this ritual that God collaborates with humanity and ancestors to reproduce life, conquer death and regain the lost immortality (Magesa 1997: 110). This proves why marital issues ought to be handled with a high sense of reverence to God and in the interest of humanity. Kayode (1991: 226) observed that marriage in an African context was not only an event, but also a process through which some cultural themes were exposed. This included selection and agreement of intended spouses. Members from the African communities thoughtfully chose appropriate marriage partners, some of whom were even proposed long before their children were born. If for example, one family had admirable positive traits, then another family could suggest or wish that they bear a daughter or son that could get married to their offspring.

Apart from such arrangements, adolescent children could interact freely and in this process they were able to identify potential spouses by themselves. In cases where a mature girl was ready for marriage without prior identification of a suitable spouse, a mediator or go-between could intervene and roll-out an engagement process. Among the Luo for example, a close female relative could assist a boy in identifying a potential spouse hence commencing marriage engagement. The mediator continued to serve as a lifelong model and mentor to the new couple even after marriage (Mboya 2001: 65). In Africa, most of these cultural guidelines have been affected by modernity. Spousal choice, communal participation, mediation and mentorship are key elements to contemplate on while handling the current marital challenges in society. There is a need to emulate them if need be or offer substitute information in contemporary marriages.

The choice of potential partners is followed by courtship and betrothal culminating in an actual wedding event (Kayode 1991:229). Although there was no specific time frame for courtship in many African communities, thorough investigation was commenced to ascertain that the intended couples were not close relatives. The positive traits of both families such as industriousness, good family name, fame, bravery and wealth were also validated. In addition, negative traits exemplified by laziness and witchcraft could lead to changing spousal choices. The Luo and Luyia communities took keen interest in establishing the girl's family traits in the choice of marital partner because, male children could also inherit traits from their maternal lineages. A girl from a suspicious background could introduce 'bad blood' into the family lineage through marriage (Awuor 1996: 39). In contemporary society, undefined courtship and marriage arrangements have become a private affair comprising mutually agreed upon bride-wealth payment arrangements.

In all African marriages, bride-wealth was a key token of appreciation to the bride's family which was settled through payment of livestock, grains and other food stuff (Kayode 1991:229). In some occasions, a boy could be called upon by the parent's in-law to assist in some manual labour as part of bride-wealth settlement. These reciprocal tasks were performed cheerfully even with the assistance of friends. The courtship period before marriage allowed the two families to negotiate amicably and agree upon bride-wealth terms of payment. A male partner was expected to raise bride-wealth with the help of his extended family. The two families then entered into a mutual agreement on how it could be disbursed in agreeable installments (Ominde 1952:13). In the traditional African context, bride-wealth did not portray a materialistic intention, but it cemented the relationship between two clans. It was also meant to appreciate the bride's parents and mandate responsibility to the groom (Cressman 1964: 24). In the contemporary society, bride-wealth has been commercialized because many families would prefer to receive monetary payments for their daughters as opposed to livestock or other material goods (Bujo 2009:94). The daughters are considered as commercial commodities with a monetary tag on them. This new trend creates the need to explore permanency and stability of the marriage institution.

The settlement of bride wealth was followed by a wedding ceremony, which in some African communities was kept secret from the girl (Kayode 1991:230-231). Among the Kikuyu of central Kenya, wedding was marked by a dramatic event where the groom was accompanied by his friends who literally abducted the bride and took her forcefully to the groom's home (Kenyatta 2000:73). This event was treated as a surprise to the bride rather than a forced marriage. A similar bride snatching event among the Luo was followed by a virginity test which was monitored by elderly women for credibility during the primal sexual intercourse. Higher bride wealth was compensated for a girl whose virginity was ruptured, but the same was reduced for one who wasn't a virgin (Malo & Achieng' 2003:27).

Wedding legally authorizes a couple to consummate their marriage and ushers in new responsibilities of procreation (Wilson 1961:27). A Gikuyu married couple was expected to bear at least two males and two female children. The sons were considered as a replacement of both the maternal and paternal grandfathers; while the daughters substituted their grandmothers respectively (Karanja 1998:72). In the Luo community, an eldest son to the first wife was very significant, because he qualified the couple to build their own homestead – *ligala* (Ominde 1952:13).

The inter connectivity between sex and procreation attests to their sacred nature. African marriages like any other human institutions, were enforced by strict taboos that regulated the practice of this ritual. This is contrary to the current society which has witnessed an increase in premarital and extramarital sex. Taboos associated with marriage defined the responsibility and conduct of the couples towards one another as well as to their in-laws (Malo 2003:25). Marriage was considered a lifelong activity; hence cases of divorce were rare, highly regretted and could only be permitted under uncontrollable circumstances approved by elders from both parties (Aguadze 1990:174).

In order to comprehend the value of contemporary weddings, the systematic and symbolic nature of African bridal ceremonies cannot be ignored. This calls for the need to appreciate the uniqueness of weddings and employ a phenomenological approach to describe the ceremonies from the participant's point of view. Whether intentional or not, contemporary Christian weddings portray some elements of African culture. This concern underscores the changing moral values in the African society and justifies the rediscovery and restoration of some African values which emphasize chastity. The study has utilized a positive interaction between African traditional religion and Christianity to create a base for further inter-religious dialogue.

1.6.3. Christian views on Marriage

The Kenyan Marriage Act 2014 defines Christian marriage as being a heterosexual monogamous union in which one or both parties profess Christianity and is registered under the law. Since the bible is deemed as being an infallible and reliable source of Christian doctrines, a Christian marriage must be defined basing on the law and scriptural truths (Adams 1986:4). The concept of marriage as exemplified in the bible states that:

> "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him…For this reason a man will live his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh" (Genesis 2:18, 24 NIV).

This indicates that marriage is not only initiated by God, but is also revealed to humanity as a solution to loneliness (Kyomo & Selvana 2004:159). It is a sacred means of procreation and remains the primary source of all human institutions from which other institutions derive their existence (Thomas 2000:21). In Christianity, marriage is considered a symbolic union through which the relationship between God and humanity can be comprehended (Porter 2000:33). It is also stated that:

> "In that day, declares the Lord, you will call me my husband. You will no longer call me my master. I will betroth you forever….I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. …I will betroth you in faithfulness and you will acknowledge the Lord" (Hosea 2: 16, 19& 20 NIV).

In the New Testament, Christ is symbolized as the groom, while the Church is his bride (John 3:29, Matthew 25:1-13, Ephesians 5:25-28, Revelation 21:2). These scriptural texts indicate that God is concerned about the relationship with his people. He exhibits true and unfailing love to humanity and expects them to reciprocate the same by observing total obedience and submission. The responsibility of spouses is emphatic that husbands ought to love their wives who should in turn submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22-33, Colossians 3:18-19). God therefore exemplifies a perfect model of marriage relationship showing how he relates with the Church through love, forgiveness, mercy and tolerance.

The Roman Catholic Church tradition expounds that marriage is one of the seven sacraments (Catechism of Roman Catholic Church 1994: 394, 404). The others include; baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick and Holy orders. Marriage is a permanent monogamous union between a baptized male and female faithful hence providing no room for divorce, except a temporary separation to create room for reconciliation. The Roman Catholic Church is steadfast on her anti-divorce stand despite the contemporary forces of social change and modernity. The Roman Catholic faithful do not celebrate marriage outside the scope of Catholicism, thus limiting the union that was given universally to the body of believers and entire humanity.

Marriage as a sacrament must be solemnized in a church wedding, but, in the contemporary society, it has become pompous, materialistic and filled with social class displays negating its sacred meaning (Vahakangas 2004: 29; Waruta & Kinoti 2000:101). Shorter & Kisembo (1977: 72) state that a holy matrimony should only be celebrated in a holy place such as a church, officiated by an ordained Church minister. This was feasible in the early stages of Christianity where parishes were few and scattered in rural areas, hence discouraging many youths from participating in holy matrimony. In the contemporary society, the youth prefer to celebrate their weddings in open air gardens, hotels and public halls with less religious strictness. These concerns call upon the church to re-theologize and generate more articulate meanings of holy weddings considering the modern trends. A church wedding does not necessarily guarantee holy matrimony.

There are numerous couples that have not wedded in church, yet they manage their families on profound Christian values. On the contrary, there exist many couples who have celebrated their weddings in churches, but they are no longer committed Christians. The meaning of

Christian marriage should be pursued beyond just mere Church wedding without discrediting its significance as a special ordinance.

In response to this challenge, Oduyoye & Kanyoro (2005:16) state that a Christian marriage entails participation in the wedding sacrament and the couples' commitment to entire Christian faith. Since nothing Christian can exist devoid of Christian faith, marriage only becomes and remains Christian if the couples are active and committed to their faith. This indicates that the nature, stability and sustainability of a Christian marriage depends on the couples' continual obligation to Christian faith. Church wedding is a path to holy marriage, but it is not the only indicator. The increasing prevalence of marital problems among Christians is a wake-up call for the Church to focus on quality rather than the quantity of their converts.

1.6.4. Quest for an African Christian Marriage

From as early as 1933, it seemed unsuccessful and troublesome to impose Christian marriage upon native Africans (Welch 1933: 17). There was need to incorporate African values such as communalism and strong kinship relations to marital issues in African Christianity rather that contradicting Christian doctrines.

Kisembo et. al (1998) are accredited as pioneer theologians in African Christian Marriage through their research initiated by the Association of Episcopal Conference of East Africa in 1967. The Church in Africa was failing to develop a relevant marriage policy for African Christians. It was through this initiative that a "Church Research on Marriage in Africa" (CROMIA) program was launched to pilot the study.

In their book *African Christian Marriage,* Kisembo et. al. (1998:53) state that marriage is a universal human institution and the Church has no right to undermine it. They proposed that

the Church should cooperate with the African community in strengthening and building the family unit. The authors also suggest that efforts should be made to minimize a distinction between the customary celebration of marriage and its Christian celebration. They conceive the concept of positive dialogue between Christianity and traditional African religion in handling marital issues, a fact that this work builds on.

African culture and Christianity can therefore form a hybrid union that is founded in the light of Christian faith and guided by African values. African Christian marriage is in this context built on both African values and Christian faith. It is a marriage for Africans who embrace Christianity, yet continue to acknowledge the value of their traditional culture in strengthening the unions. It is a Christian marriage by Africans, in Africa and for Africans (Kisembo et. al.1998:56). This is based on the belief that there are certain African cultural values without which marriage cannot be fully understood. But, the bible remains the source of faith, while African culture gives the real ground and context within which Christianity is applied.

African Christian Marriage is featured in historical and theological debates on Africanization of Christianity. Africanization of Christian marriages according to Kaplan (1995:12) should take the toleration model in which western missionaries accepted the continuity of certain African cultural values and customs, while at the same time maintaining that such values were incompatible with Christian faith. In this approach, missionaries believed that the abolition of such customs was impossible and impractical due to the disorders that they could create in society. It was strongly held that continued adoption of Christian faith would make such values disintegrate gradually.

African marriage, especially polygamy, was on the top of the list of toleration approach. Missionaries were opposed to polygamy and at certain points equated it to adultery hence

declined the baptism of polygamous men (Kunhiyop 2008:225). Women who belonged to such marriages were considered as concubines, with the exemption of the first wives, while their children were perceived as illegitimate (Kunhiyop 2008:225). The refusal to baptize all members of polygamous families was a great barrier to evangelization, since majority of Africans were associated directly or indirectly with such families. The literate African converts affirmed from the Bible that Old Testament marriages were predominantly polygamous and therefore similar to African marriages (Kaplan 1995:18).

The dissolution of polygamous families according to missionaries was deemed to be the most appropriate solution to polygamy. But, they were however confronted by the reality that such a step could create a lot of disorder in the society. For instance, the fate of divorced women and their children could make Christianity a source of disorder and suffering instead of the peace, comfort and unity that is propagated in the bible. Missionaries were further faced by the fact that divorce was more proscribed than polygamy. The toleration of polygamous marriages was considered a lesser evil, otherwise the gospel could not be good news to Africans.

Kaplan (1995) made a credible effort in identifying a specific model of contextualizing Christian marriage in Africa. His view is however too general and sympathetic. He perceives polygamy as being the only form of African marriage and fails to acknowledge the existence of marriage values that are compatible to Christianity. This includes the fact many monogamous African marriages existed even before the introduction of Christianity. Since African families upheld African values in both polygamous and monogamous marriages, a successful marriage in Africa cannot be devoid of such values.

The Western missionaries' expectations that toleration of African marital values could lead to their gradual disappearance, is perhaps one of the most unsuccessful ways of Africanizing

Christian marriages. Although polygamy is on the decline, Christianity is not the sole contributor to this. The prevalence of HIV and AIDS and increased cost of living have equally discouraged polygamy in Africa. Besides, families that embrace some African values have the ability to withstand current marital challenges than those that completely ignore them.

1.6.5. Marriage in Contemporary African Christianity

The concept of African Christian marriage has featured in contemporary Christian discussions. For instance, Waruta & Kinoti (2000:100) observe that marriage is perhaps the most troubled institution by contemporary socio-religious forces. As people celebrate missionary Christianity, western education, urbanization, industrialization, and capitalistic mode of production, the old family systems have been drastically and negatively affected (Waruta & Kinoti 2000:100). Getui (1998:73) states that the current moral disorder especially among the youth is a clear symptom of the ailing and broken families they come from. The author further argues that current Christian marriages are failing at an alarming rate leaving victims frustrated in life. This in turn makes many youths avoid marriage leading to increased single-hood which was almost absent in the traditional African society.

These observations point out that Christianity has contributed to the current marital problems, and is partly responsible for marital shakeups. The Church has been accused of preaching a faith that has led to abolition of African values without establishing relevant substitutes (Penelope 2001:151). African initiation rites are gradually disappearing in favour of Christianity, but there are no adequate substitute forums offering marital teachings to the youth as was practiced in traditional African initiation into adulthood ceremonies.

Niko (2008:3) observes that Christianity has made marriage less certain than the African traditional system where it was a mandatory requirement. The author further notes that the current marriage arrangements are reflections of western understanding of Christianity. For her, these western influences are responsible for the decline in marriage rates and increased cases of separation and divorce in Africa.

It is paramount to reconsider the reasons why people marry so as to address marital challenges. This is because, both the meaning and purpose of marriage has been misunderstood and abused in the contemporary society. Contemporary marriages have become more individualized and commercialized focusing on payment of bride-wealth. Such views were totally absent in traditional African cultural contexts.

In pursuit of possible solutions, Waliggo (1998:79) calls for an urgent need for the Church to dialogue with the African community. The Church should adopt certain African values such as communalism and kinship systems in strengthening marriage relationships in Africa. All religions have a role to play in preparing people for marriage, conducting matrimonial rituals and strengthening marriage unions. Loren (2008:85) affirms that common themes should be highlighted from a multi-religious cultural perspective to confront the common problem. An inter-religious approach to contemporary marital problems should be embraced. The Church should not only be engaged in presiding over marriage ceremonies, but also provide long life discipleship, guidance and counselling.

Wambua (2013:152) observes that majority of couples still rely on church ministers for marital counseling because, the church holds a primary role in handling marriage issues. For example, in the Roman Catholic and African Inland Churches in Kenya, pre-marital counseling takes at most three months which is considered sufficient by the clergy, but, the youth perceive the period as being too long. Pre-marital counseling topics like how to choose

a good partner are considered outdated for partners planning for their marriage. Post marital counseling is voluntary, unstructured, while many families ail in silence and remain unattended. The church should go beyond pre and post marital counseling and generate more proactive approaches to marital problems.

The escalating number of New Religious Movements has affected marriage and family units in contemporary Africa. A study on David Owuor's "Repentance and Holiness Ministry" revealed that marriages within the movement are in great danger. The teachings which overemphasize on the rupture and end time easily persuade young people to ignore marriage relationships which are presumed to be of less significance in the next world (Otieno 2012: 151-153). Such observations call for the need not only to study New Religious Movements, but also to reconsider their influence in marriage and family life.

A study conducted on Mavuno Church in Nairobi to establish how the movement responded to concerns of young adults found out that the author symbolically used the names "*Mike*" and "*Makena*" to resonate male and female who could rhyme, interact, socialize and perhaps pair up in marriage (Wambui 2014: 150-152). The New Religious movements create social forums and promote grounds where marriage relationships can be impacted.

1.6.6. Separation and Divorce in Contemporary Society

Separation in marital context refers to a situation where a couple temporarily stays away from each other with the view that they may reconcile and reunite or divorce. Divorce on the other hand refers to the legal termination of marriage. Adams (1986:6-11) notes that up to 1960s, many traditional churches shunned discourses involving separation, divorce and remarriage. They were viewed as temptations that the church should not stumble on. Any discussion on divorce and remarriage was considered as meddling in secular affairs. Such a stand is

perceived as not only being too conservative and rigid, but also an indicator that the church's original intention is to build lasting marriages.

In contemporary society, Clark (2008:430) states that divorce and separation have generally increased, making them universal and cultural phenomena that human societies must tactfully address. Since many cases of separation lead to divorce rather than reunion, Clark (2008:430) emphasizes that both cases ought to be addressed with equal magnitude. Although the study does not make relevant responses to divorce and separation, it acknowledges the problem as both universal and cultural by showing the relevance of a contextual study on marital problems. This justifies the incorporation of Christianity and African traditional Religion in responding to marital problems in an African Christian urban context.

Christian views on divorce and remarriage are often technical discoursed for ordinary believers hence, they should be simplified and contextualized. Gottman (2014: 26) argues that remarriage should be discouraged except in the death of a spouse because, it is one way of transferring marital problems which acts as a scapegoat rather than a solution. Gottman's view provides a justification for a comprehensive response to marital issues in a manner that does not treat the symptoms, but rather underscores the real cause of problems. This pursuit demands for a theoretical framework that underscores the pivotal position of marriage in society without undermining the contemporary forces of social change, which the study discusses in the next section.

1.7. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by two theories, namely: the structural functionalist theory and cyclic theory of social change.

1.7.1. Structural Functionalist Theory

The structural functionalist theory advanced by Jennie McIntyre (1996: 57) emphasizes that human society is viewed as a social body in which families are functional components. This theory interprets how the family and other social institutions function by stating that the nature of human society is similar to that of biological and ecological concepts. The normal state of society is at equilibrium and is kept in that order through the stable and normal functioning of each component. Any dysfunction in any component leads to breakdown, disorder, disruption and social instability to the society as well as its constituent elements.

Functionalists also argue that social institutions operate in two levels: manifest and latent. Manifest functions are apparent and intended, while latent functions are less ostensible, unintended and often unrecognized in social institutions. If each part performs its functions well, a state of balance is realized and the society adjusts to compensate for the forces that might tilt into the path of destruction (McIntyre 1996: 57).

In employing the first assumption of structural functionalism, it is deemed that the society only survives at a given level if certain well-designed requirements are satisfied. Survival of the social institution is considered the greater good in which every actor must survive, endure and persist within the whole. Marriage and family is considered by functionalists as a constituent purposeful element within a complex society which must survive for the greater good of the entire society (McIntyre 1996: 57).

The second assumption of the theory emphasizes the functional subsystem in which every social entity exists basing on the purpose that it is meant to serve. Function, according to McIntyre (1996:58) is the contribution that one makes towards the maintenance, survival and well-being of the whole. The primary purpose of marriage is to perpetuate the society by

replacing dead members hence controlling the world's population. The physical, psychological and material needs are objectified through socializing its new members into the wider society while perpetuating salient values and cultural patterns (McIntyre 1996: 59).

The structures in a family and society are guided by roles in a social system (McIntyre 1996: 60). The third component of the structural functionalist theory emphasizes the existence of an optimal function which increases the degree of functionality of each component. A society corresponds to the human biological system where by any form of dysfunction must be socially diagnosed and corrected so as to save the family and society from collapse (McIntyre 1996: 60).

The structural functionalist theory is relevant in diagnosing specific problems affecting marriages, their consequences and recommending the best solutions. It elucidates the fact that, any problem which upsets marriage also disintegrates the entire society and should be addressed accordingly. This is vital in maintaining equilibrium and interpreting how marriage functions within the communal and religious nexus of the society.

1.7.2. Cyclic Theory of Social Change

The structural functionalist theory explains how marriage operates within the social and religious patterns of society. But, it does not explain the causes of marital disorders that are witnessed in the contemporary society. In order to bridge this gap, the cyclic theory of social change is used to explain the shift from traditional stability to contemporary instability. It explains how New Religious Movements emerge as alternative forms of religiosity to counteract this shift.

Social, technological, ideological, and political adaptations lead to new patterns of social actions and interactions which are manifested in different values, cultural products and symbols. The social change theorists argue that the society is in motion and change is not only normal, but is also inevitable. It is upon the society to adapt itself to social and technical interventions.

Oswald Spengler (1997:98-104) argues that a society goes through a life cycle which is similar to that of a biological organism. The cycle is marked by technological advancement as well as a decline in moral and social order. It transcends from birth, maturity and into old age. Positive growth can only be achieved through rebirth from old age and recovery of some traditional values which could save the society from moral decay or collapse. The study utilized this view to perceive contemporary marital problems as being a normal trend pointing towards a growing and ageing society. The views of Spengler (1997:98-104) justify the need to rediscover the traditional religious values which kept African families stable so as to realize positive growth.

Piritin Sorokin (1962:335-356) views social change as a struggle between two cultural extremes: sensation and ideational. It is not only materialistic, practical and sensual leading to physical pleasure, but is also traditional, religious, faith based and inclined towards the ultimate reality hence being characterized as ideational. The society is in abeyance and strives to remain sensate or ideational. This struggle weakens the social and moral tenets of society leading to long term instability. The solution is to invent a middle way idealistic culture which blends the two extremes. Sorokin (1962:335-356) places New Religious Movements at the centre of this study which perceived mainstream churches as being ideational movements which epitomize extreme religiosity, while the contemporary world is sensational focusing on modernity, secularization and secularism driven by the urge to amass wealth or derive

pleasure. New Religious Movements represent a compromise between the two, and pursue prosperity alongside religiosity. The theory underscores New Religious Movements as products and manifestations of struggles for change and a balance between extreme religiosity and secularization.

1.8. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. African Religious-cultural beliefs are more complementary than contradictory to Christian views on marriage.

2. The challenges affecting contemporary African Christian marriages in Nairobi County are associated with the departure from traditional African religious beliefs.

3. The processes and strategies involved in instituting contemporary African Christian marriages by New Religious Movements in Nairobi County emphasize on the wedding ceremony instead of creating life time marriage relationships.

4. The New Religious Movements in Nairobi County do not offer sufficient responses to challenges facing contemporary marriages and family units.

1.9. Methodology of the Study

This section entails the location of the study, target population, sampling methods, data collection techniques and analysis procedure.

1.9.1. Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in Nairobi County Kenya which was purposely selected because it is a cosmopolitan city which draws its inhabitants from nearly all ethnic communities and religions in the country. It is the most significant centre of all forms of modern technologies

and lifestyles which affect marriages and other social institutions. As the economic, industrial, technological and academic hub in Kenya, Nairobi has increasingly attracted many youths who come to seek for challenging opportunities in life. It is also evident that the majority of New Religious Movements in Kenya originate from this city and spread to other regions (Shorter 2001:7). Nairobi therefore gives the fairest representation of modern marriages from which the rest of the urban populations could be understood and interpreted.

1.9.2. Target Population

The study focused on the following four New Religious Movements in Nairobi: Nairobi Chapel, Mavuno Church, Lighthouse Chapel International and Jubilee Christian Church (See Map in Appendix VIII). The Nairobi Chapel is situated towards the west of Nairobi, off Ngong' road and has a membership of approximately 5000 adults. Mavuno Church has a population of 6000 congregants and is located Southeast of Nairobi, off Mombasa Road at the border of Machakos and Nairobi Counties. Lighthouse Chapel International lies East of Nairobi, off Jogoo road with approximately 3000 congregants. Finally, is the Jubilee Christian Church based in Parklands, with a following of about 6000 adults.

These movements were selected because their ideologies and approaches to Christianity makes them more appealing to the urban youth and young families as opposed to the mainstream churches which are perceived to be rigid, conservative and slow to incorporate modernity. Apart from proclaiming the prosperity gospel, these New Religious Movements have frequent night out dinners, singles' retreats, music and dance concerts. Some of these are conducted outside church compounds and are free from presumed religious strictness. They attempt to reach out to contemporary young adults in a more tactical way as compared to the mainstream and African Instituted Churches.

The selection of these New Religious Movements was also informed by the unique programs that they run to counter emerging marital problems. The Nairobi Chapel empowers men through the "man enough" program where men are trained as family heads to overcome family related problems. Mavuno Church has an all-inclusive approach in which marriage, sex and relationship issues dominates their sermons. The Lighthouse Chapel International has a special marital program that focuses on the youth. This movement runs a 6 months' marriage school that offers 2 hour lessons per week which is mandatory for all youth who intend to marry in the Church. The Jubilee Christian Church is renowned for its women focused programs; "**A Woman Without Limits"** and **"Daughters of Zion"**. The former is a monthly summit, while the latter is a weekly television broadcast. Both programs are aimed at building healthy and stable Christian families through mentoring and empowering women. Although other services such as premarital counseling and pastoral counseling are common, the four movements represent different patterns that focus on women, men, youth and an all-inclusive approach.

1.9.3. Target Sample and Sampling Methods

The study deployed both probability and non-probability sampling methods in deriving the targeted respondents. The four NRMs were selected through purposive sampling since a pilot survey had shown that each of the movements had a unique marital program targeting different groups within their congregations. The study further utilized stratified sampling method to identify the pastors, married members and members who were going through premarital counselling classes. In the married category, the study jointly employed volunteer and stratified sampling methods to identify 20 members who were below 5 years in marriage, 20 who were between 5 to 10 years in marriage, and another 20 who had been married for more than 10 years. This was significant in examining how marriage problems manifested in

different stages of marriage. The pastors were useful in giving background information of the movements, prevalence of marital problems among their members and how they were addressed. The intending marriage partners gave the information on awareness of marital problems, the effectiveness and relevance of pre-marital counseling in addressing such issues.

The study targeted 83 respondents from each of the four movements, totaling to 332 respondents. The respondents included 60 married informants, 20 informants preparing for marriage and 3 pastors per movement. For the married and premarital candidates' categories, the numbers were subjected to Krejcie and Morgan's table to ensure that the selected sample did not fall below the scholars' recommended sample size (Krejcie & Morgan 1970:2). The distribution of the sample is summarized in the table below:

Table 1. 1 Sample Distribution in the four movements

Category of informants	Mavuno Church	Lighthouse Chapel	Nairobi Chapel	Jubilee Christian Church	Total No of respondents
Married informants	60	60	60	60	240
Informants preparing for marriage	20	20	20	20	80
Pastors	3	3	3	3	12
Total	**83**	**83**	**83**	**83**	**332**

1.9.4. Data Collection Techniques

The study utilized both secondary and primary sources of data. Secondary data was obtained from book reviews, academic journals and theses on the topic of study. The researcher visited Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library (JKML), Kenyatta University Post Modern Library (KUPML), Africa Leadership University Library, Catholic University of East Africa's Library and Pan African Christian University Library. The secondary data gathered from these libraries contributed to further literature review on every topic, analyzing and comparing the Christian versus African Traditional views on marriage. A thematic approach from the two religions was employed thereby making it possible to note and compare the similarities and differences in every theme. Particular attention was paid to common themes in Traditional African Religion, but specific examples were drawn from diverse African communities in Kenya.

Questionnaires were useful in gathering primary data from married informants and those preparing for marriage. The question item contents included both closed and open-ended

formats. The closed ended questions were used to gather information which required specific and straight forward answers that were already tabulated in multiple choices. Open ended questions were instrumental in addressing issues that were perceived to be wider in scope and could not be easily presented. In such cases, respondents had the freedom to respond to questions to the best of their opinions in a more articulate and comprehensive manner.

In-depth interviews were conducted to gather information from Church ministers who were deemed to have detailed information on their movements and on the study topic. An interview guide was applied to restrict the prescribed problem, its scope and research. Participatory observations were conducted by the researcher who attended three wedding ceremonies from each selected movement, noting the order of events, symbols used and their meanings. The sermons were also analyzed to deduce their relevance to the identified marital problems and to extract the New Religious Movements' theological views on marriage. Digital audio-visual recording devices were used to augment a detailed analysis and comparison of the events.

The data was collected by the researcher with assistance of four trained research assistants, one for every congregation. They assisted in administering questionnaires and in recording events during the wedding ceremonies. This helped the researcher to access information from events that ran concurrently in various congregations.

1.9.5. Data Analysis Techniques

The researcher revisited the objectives of the study in order to reaffirm the relevance of the data collected and identify the gaps. The digital recorded data was transcribed, while those collected through questionnaires and interviews were edited for accuracy and completeness. In the process, those with major response errors were discarded and the remaining ones were

serialized for further scrutiny. The data was coded into specific categories, hence reducing the bulk of data into a manageable summary. Thematic and contextual analysis on qualitative primary data was then conducted before integrating and augmenting the information with the secondary data gathered through literature search. The information was then sorted in response to the research questions and objectives. The emerging themes in the findings were interpreted and presented under the stipulated chapters. The researcher finally drew conclusions from the findings and made recommendations for further studies.

1.10. Ethical Implications

Marital issues are considered to be very sensitive and confidential therefore a study of such nature merits strict adherence to research ethical codes that enhance access to such crucial data without jeopardizing or betraying the informants' confidentiality. To counter this challenge, the researcher gained informants' confidence by seeking consent from leaders of the four New Religious Movements studied. It was noted that most congregants had a high level of trust in their pastors therefore a consent from the spiritual leaders motivated the informants to fearlessly participate in the study.

Before any session of data collection, the researcher took ample time to explain the purpose and benefits of the study to all targeted participants. Despite the fear of exposing confidential relationship issues, the researcher emphasized to the informants the long-term benefits of the study, which by far, outweighed the risks involved. The informants were therefore convinced to volunteer information for the general good of the society. The researcher voluntarily permitted informants to participate in the study and were also convinced that information given shall be treated with absolute confidentiality and utilized only for the purpose of the study without any personal victimization. To achieve this, the researcher administered questionnaires and interviews that did not require informants to reveal personal identification.

As a result, the information gathered was believed to be valid and honest, but also did not expose informants negatively.

1.11. Chapter's Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the study by describing its historical background, identifying the problem and stating the specific objectives. The chapter has stated the scope, limitations of the study by sticking to religious responses to marital problems as a point of emphasis. It has also limited the study to Nairobi County which has the most cosmopolitan population in Kenya and emphasized on New Religious Movements to combat the contemporary social cultural challenges. The chapter has further reviewed relevant scholarly literature which focused on the general meaning of marriage, African views about marriage, Christian views on marriage and historical pursuit for an African interpretation and practice of Christian marriage. This has made the work grounded on other previous academic researches and publications and also reveals certain knowledge gaps that this study attempts to address. The chapter has explained the theoretical frameworks that have been adopted for the study anchoring on structural functionalism theory and cyclic theory of social change. The first theory highlights how marriage functions as a basic unit within the complex social system, while the second theory attributes marital challenges to dynamics of social change that require reinvention of traditional socio-religious values. The chapter then lists anticipated hypotheses that the findings intended to test. It has also discussed the methodology by identifying the population, the sample, sampling methods, data collection and analysis procedures. These have laid the foundation for the study which creates a prelude for discussion of African Religious-cultural beliefs and Christian views on marriage in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

AFRICAN RELIGIOUS-CULTURAL BELIEFS AND CHRISTIAN VIEWS ON MARRIAGE

2.1. Introduction

The modern European missionary Christianity is barely two centuries old in Africa, yet African traditional religion is as old as the African communities. African cultural and religious beliefs and practices have been greatly affected by foreign religions hence ignoring their existence and influence is both unfair and unrealistic. African culture should provide a fertile environment within which the Christian faith is planted (Magesa 2004:13). This creates the need for Christianity to borrow from African religion and vice versa as logically as possible. It is within this framework that a comparison between the two religions with specific reference to marriage is necessary. The chapter describes how Christianity has affected African traditional views on marriage and family, thus paving the way for interpretation of the root causes of contemporary marital challenges. It reveals certain positive elements from traditional African family values that are compatible with Christian teachings. This lays a foundation for building a contemporary African Christian marriage that is true to the Christian faith, which is attainable in an African context and is also sensitive to contemporary challenges.

2.2. African Traditional Marriage

In African traditional religion, marriage was a rite of passage which was sanctioned after initiation into adulthood (Mugambi 2004:238). Any form of aversion could create a disconnection in the divine order and flow of life. It was a sacred institution that was endowed with the gift of procreation through which life's vital force was transmitted, guided

by the fear of God and ancestral spirits (Magesa 1997:110). Marriage was also an inter-communal covenant and a compulsory duty in which everyone voluntarily participated in initiating new marriages and strengthening the existing ones (Mbiti 1969:133, Mbiti 1973:63).

Any individual who misused or abused marriage deserved punishment, while for a man of marriageable age who died as a bachelor, no child could be named after him. Such a man was seen as a cause or disgrace to the community and was granted a shorter mourning period as compared to married people who had offspring (Akaranga & Ongong'a, 2018:36). In some communities, the punishment included whipping the deceased's body with thorns before burial. The intention was to expel the curse and never let it to be manifested in the lives of the younger generation (Mbiti 1991:106). Traditional African marriages also existed in different forms as discussed in the next section.

2.2.1. Types of Marriages in Traditional African Society

Monogamy was practiced in Africa, although no community had ethical or legal reasons to discourage it. Those who opted for this form of marriage were treated with respect, but considered as being poor and lacked generosity (Kasenene 1998:143). Polygamy on the other hand was highly regarded as the most common and accepted form of marriage than monogamy (Kiongo et.al. 1972:47). It could either be simultaneous or successive. Simultaneous polygamy was practiced in circumstances where a man was formally married to several wives at the same time, while successive polygamy occurred if a man married another wife or wives after divorce, separation or death of a partner.

In the traditional African cultural context, polygamy was a source of labour, sign of prestige and wealth (Hillman 1975:26). If a man had many wives, he increased the chances of having

many children who were counted as heirs to his property and could boost his human labour force, hence creating more wealth. Polygamy was a proactive way of countering the pain and loss of a wife after death. If a woman died from a polygamous home, there were other wives who could take care of the man and his children.

Polygamy was also one way of spacing child birth in many African communities whereby a lactating mother shunned sexual intercourse (Kunhiyop 2008:224). This provided her enough time to breastfeed the baby and heal before conceiving again. During this period, the husband turned to his other wives for sexual fulfillment (Kasenene 1998:141). Marriage of multiple wives was permitted so that a widow could be easily inherited within the husband's clan, hence giving her support, comfort and protection from prostitution or adultery (Kasenene 1998:142). Polygamy also increased the chances of every woman getting married since no woman had a justified reason to remain single (Hillman 1975: 33). Multiple marriages were practiced so as to absorb excess unmarried women and also check on demographic gender imbalance.

Although many communities had no restrictions regarding the number of wives that could be married to one man, the Abagusii preferred an even as opposed to an odd number of wives (Levine 1996:68). An odd number of wives was seen as troublesome, incomplete and could create a possibility of some women ganging up against the minority in case of a family conflict or domestic disagreement.

Woman to woman marriage was permitted for example among the Abagusii, Akamba, Kikuyu and Nandi. This was observed among elderly childless couples whose objective was to cope with the stigma of barrenness. A barren woman brought in a younger prolific girl to sire children on her behalf. She was permitted to engage in sexual intercourse relationship

with a younger nephew to the old couple and bear children for them. Children who were born in this kind of relationship were adopted by the elderly couple (Bahemuka 1982:94).

Ghost marriage was practiced among the Luo and Luyia in case a young single man who had attained the age of marriage died before procreating any offspring. In this case, his parents sought for a girl, paid bride-wealth and ritually married her to their deceased son. A close cousin to the deceased was then culturally permitted to have sexual intercourse with the woman and bear children on behalf of the deceased. The children who were born into this relationship kept alive the deceased's lineage in the community (Ingoildsby & Smith 2006:256).

Child marriage is another form of traditional African marriage that was witnessed among the Kikuyu, Kuria and Luo (Isokun 1992:137). It was conducted if for instance, a couple sired only one son or had their first son at an old age and yet desired to see and bless their grandchildren before their death. In such cases, a girl was sought and ritually married to the young boy. A mature male cousin of good character was sought to engage in sexual relationships with her. Children born out of such an arrangement belonged to the young boy who was later on made responsible for their upkeep when he grew up. Child marriage was also permitted if two friends or families had struck a deal to have their children married to each other. Such parents could facilitate marriage between their children at least before they died even if their offspring were still young.

2.2.2. Functions of Marriage in Traditional African Society

Marriage completed the cycle of life which was an endless rhythm that begun at conception, proceeded to delivery, death and again back to conception (Magesa 1997:110). Most African myths state that human life begun from a husband-and-wife sexual relationship, thus granting

a sacred role to procreation (Mair 2013:3). The birth of children to a couple sealed their marriage, while the failure to sire could annul it. It is through marriage that the departed were reincarnated so as to maintain the unbroken rhythm of life cycle and restore the lost immortality (Magesa 1997:112). African marriage was a means of extending kinship relationships which strengthened the union between two clans that were related before, or initiated a new kinship relationship (Mbiti 1969:134). The presence of many relatives was a sign of social security which through marriage, added a whole new clan into the already existing endless chain of relatives. In most communities, chastity before marriage was emphasized, whereby a girl was expected to guard her virginity which was to be ruptured and verified on the first wedding night when she had intercourse with her spouse (Mair 2013:7).

An African marriage grants a couple true and lasting identity (Aguedze 1990: 173). Among the Luo, a newly married woman left her parents' home and joined the new home of her husband where she was expected to stay till her death. She was said to have finally gotten a permanent home, a place to cook, own a house, give birth and finally a place to be buried. A new bride was expected to adopt and maintain her marital clan as part of her identity, while a man maintained his identity from the clan he was born. If several men shared similar names, then their mothers' clans differentiated them from each other.

Marriage among the Agikuyu was a crucial pre-qualification for elder-ship. It enabled a man to attain a higher status in community and could be entrusted with responsibilities (Wachege 1992 b:23). Married men acquired tolerance, patience and understanding which served as significant traits in elder-ship. A man's family name and lineage was propagated through his children and descendants even after his death (Mair 2013:10). An unmarried individual was not only incomplete, but quickly vanished from memory because people could not remember one's name and achievements (Aguedze 1990:176). Marriage enabled a couple to build their

homestead and to take up responsibilities over each other and their offspring. It also established a clear guide to inheritance of property which prohibited sons born outside wedlock from inheriting the ancestral clan land (Kayeli 2012:82).

African rulers married wives from neighbouring communities to enhance inter-communal security and diplomatic relations (Achar & Otieno 2017:53). In cases of war or threats from adjacent communities, the members would hesitate fighting the one where their daughter was married. This reduced protracted warfare between in-laws because, the married daughter served as a conciliatory diplomat.

2.2.3. The Process and Practice of Marriage

In Africa, marriage was not an event, but a process which varied from one community to the other. It involved laid down procedures on courtship, bride-wealth payment culminating in a wedding ceremony thus fulfilling observance of certain community rules and taboos (Mair 2013:6).

2.2.3.1. Preparation for Marriage

African children were nurtured and prepared for future roles as husbands and wives; fathers and mothers respectively (Mbiti 1991:108). Boys learned masculine roles like building huts, taking care of animals, hunting and how to plough land. They also acquired special skills in traditional herbal medicine healing and rain making. Girls gained practical skills in cookery, fetching firewood, water and nursing young babies (Akaranga 1986:67). They were mentored by elderly women or grandmothers who were mature, responsible and reputable ladies, more often beyond the child bearing age. They taught and trained adolescent girls in the evenings from their sleeping huts on sexuality and healthy boy to girl relationships until they got married (Kayeli 2012:85).

2.2.3.2. Initiation into Adulthood and Marriage

The initiation rite was not only a transition into adulthood, but a preparatory stage for marriage (Mbiti 1973: 94). It was conducted at puberty when the youth were sexually mature and varied from one community to the other. Majority of Bantu and some Nilotic speaking communities in Kenya practiced male circumcision and female genital mutilation (Mbiti 1975:102). The Luo adult initiation ritual involved the extraction of six lower jaw teeth (Mboya 2001:65). After the initiation rite, the youth were taken into seclusion away from their parental homesteads to heal. During this period, they were taught marital and adult life skills. Upon completion, they were officially commissioned by the elders to identify suitable partners and get married.

2.2.3.3. Identification of Spouses

The process of identifying a spouse in most African communities was both a personal and communal exercise. In some instances, the procedure commenced early, even before the birth of intended couples. Among the Luo, if two individuals were close friends, it was believed that their blood bond could easily connect and therefore they were predestined to be relatives (Malo & Achieng' 2003:36). This pledge could be honoured later in life when their children were mature and ready for marriage. The in-laws could intentionally organize visits by girls from their maternal homes thereby providing opportunities for unmarried boys to interact with them. This provided an opportunity of identifying potential suitors. Boys and girls were left to play freely and responsibly with each other, but with some restrictions among the Kikuyu offering them an opportunity to identify future mates (Kenyatta 2000:161).

Among the Luo, a mediator or go-between *Jagam* volunteered to act as a spokesperson for the intended partners. The mediator arranged for premarital visits, participated in bride-

wealth negotiations and remained a marriage model who maintained contact with the couple in their marital life (Mboya 2001:65). A token of appreciation such as a blanket, a goat or a chicken was welcomed after a successful marriage union. In most African communities, spousal identification was followed by an official proposal visitation, parental consent which endorsed courtship.

2.2.3.4. Courtship

After identifying a suitable partner, a boy could now propose marriage using appropriate strategies depending on his ethnicity. Among the Maasai, a boy betrothed a girl by offering a special embroidered necklace which barred the girl from any other proposals (Sankan 1979: 45). Among the Logooli, a boy visited the girlfriend's home and handed her a wooden engagement club *kigulumi* or special stick *imbimbu* which could be returned in case her family declined (Kayeli 2012:77).

After consenting, the two were subjected to a courtship period which provided an opportunity to scrutinize the background and character of intended in-laws. This was done with the help of elders who were well acquainted with the family and clan lineage history (Mair 2013:11). Positive traits such as industriousness, fame, wealth of both families were highly regarded. If it was discovered that the two families were related, the agreement was terminated immediately. Several visits were made by both families to allow in-laws familiarize themselves with each other and to examine if the boy's family could afford paying bride-wealth. These occasions were marked with feasting, drinking traditional brew and merry making (Kenyatta 2000:163). The groom also utilized this time to build a hut and acquire basic essentials for marriage, while his family raised the bride-wealth (Mboya 2001:67).

2.2.3.5. Bride-wealth

The payment of bride-wealth began gradually during engagement and continued even after marriage. The two families mutually agreed on the mode of payment and an acceptable initial installment that had to be raised before sanctioning the wedding. Bride-wealth was offered in appreciation of the girl's family for raising her well and cementing the marriage covenant. This ensured that a married woman legally belonged to the man and entire clan (Mbiti 1991:109). Bride-wealth proved the groom's family responsibility and economic capability to take care of a wife. Failure to settle bride-wealth was not only shameful, but was avoided by all means. Further details regarding quantity and quality of bride-wealth settlement items was paid in form of livestock, honey and grains. This was kept to memory with the help of witnesses from both clans. This could be partially refunded in case of marital disagreement (Mbiti 1991:111). After settling the negotiated bride-wealth installment, the two families were now ready for the wedding ceremony.

2.2.3.6. The Wedding Ceremony

In most African communities, the wedding ceremony was a dramatic event whose details were kept secret from the bride. Once the preparations had been made, the groom's friends could even plan to abduct the bride. Among the Kikuyu, this could be done in the evening when the girl went out to fetch water or firewood (Kenyatta 2000:164). The Luo could conduct the event at dawn when she was still asleep, but with prior knowledge of a go-between *Jagam* and the girl's parents (Kenyatta 2000:166, Mboya 2001:68-69). A mock dramatic fight could ensue between the alleged abductors and young men from the bride's family. The bride could even pretend to decline going with the strangers.

The bride's dramatic abduction was then followed by a wedding ceremony which lasted between three days to one week. The Kikuyu bride was taken, first to her mother in-law's hut where rituals were performed to incorporate her into the family (Kenyatta 2000:166). In some African communities, the bride was taken to the groom's hut where she had her first sexual intercourse with the groom. A virginity test was conducted the following day by elderly women who scrutinized the bedding she had slept on for any blood stains to establish rupture of the hymen. Women among the Logooli interrogated a bride about her virginity before she left her parental home (Kagoni 1988:18). They did this by spreading a female goat's hide outside her father's hut and asked her to stand upright on it if indeed she was a virgin. It was believed that any form of cheating could result into barrenness, a parental curse or even her sudden death. If indeed she was a virgin, her head was anointed with cow ghee by her father or paternal uncle (Kagoni 1988:18).

Among the Luo, the newly wed couple had their first coitus on a bed, spread with clean white linen. This was scrutinized the following day in the morning of any blood stains by elderly women to establish if the bride's hymen had been ruptured during the first intercourse with the groom. A report was then submitted to the girl's aunts. A positive account was celebrated whereby an additional white or brown heifer was presented to her parents in appreciation of the girl's purity. A negative report was regretted and could lead to a little reduction in bride wealth (Mboya 2001:69).

The last event in the wedding ceremony among the Akamba was marked by both joy and sorrow. A mock weeping ceremony *maio* was conducted by young girls from the bride's home who followed her into the groom's home wailing and threatening to destroy the groom's property. But, they were calmed by the groom's relatives who presented gifts to the new couple thereby ceremoniously releasing the bride from maidenhood to womanhood

(Bahemuka 1982:95-98). Although they expressed the painful loss of a family member from their home, they also rejoiced that she had found a new home elsewhere through marriage.

It was a serious offence for a girl to just elope and get married before the official wedding ceremony was conducted (Mboya 2001:65). Such a girl was not fully respected because, she had escaped or failed to undergo the virginity test. She also denied the family the right to participate and enjoy in her elaborate wedding ritual. Such a marriage was however not terminated because, special arrangements were later made to legitimize it through relevant rituals and ceremonies. A properly sanctioned marriage was therefore regulated by strict communal taboos.

2.2.4. Marital Taboos

In traditional African society, marriage was an all-inclusive relationship which incorporated the living and the unborn members to God and the ancestral sprits. There existed taboos that guided how couples could relate with each other, their offspring, in-laws as well as the spirit world. These taboos instilled order, defined duties, rights and enhanced moral discipline in marriage. They defined who to marry or get married to, the conduct of wedding ceremony, practice of sex and general socio-cultural relations within the two extended families.

In most African communities, it was taboo to marry a close blood relative. This was deemed to be some form of in-breeding that could possibly result into a curse which could be manifested in childlessness, premature births, delivery of children with deformities or mysterious death of offspring (Kisembo et.al.1998:105).

The Luo prohibited payment of bride-wealth for a younger son before an elder one. The same applied to receiving bride-wealth for a younger daughter before the elder one. This was observed to ensure that God's order of creation as revealed in the order of birth was not

violated. But any case of violation could be perceived as shortchanging the blessings of a firstborn or an elder child (Awuor 1996:141).

It was a taboo among the Logooli to engage in sexual relationships in a bush (Akaranga 1996:92). This did not only restrict the sexual conduct of married couples, but also ensured its safe practice. Sex outside the hut could endanger the couple by exposing them to snakebites or thorn pricking. Couples were expected to sleep facing each other while in bed as a sign of love and unity (Akaranga 1996:93). An adulterous man or woman was prohibited from mingling with others, associating with the initiates or even holding infants as this could contaminate them with the evil spirit of unfaithfulness (Akaranga 1996:94).

A man was prohibited from performing feminine duties such as smearing or sweeping his hut. Likewise, a woman was forbidden from engaging in masculine duties such as thatching the roof of a house or granary. Any violation of gender roles indicated one's intention for either divorce or wished the early death of the partner. The purpose of such a regulation was to enhance clear division of labour and promote responsibility over one's own duties. Taboos also protected personal interests and property (Kunhiyop 2008:9). It was for instance erroneous for a woman to sit on the husband's traditional stool. Such violation meant claiming or dishonoring his authority, or encroaching into his personal rights (Akaranga 1996:91).

It was a taboo among the Luo for a man to greet the mother in-law by shaking her hand or even to speak to her directly (Awuor 1996:143). He could only interact with her through a spokesman or after turning his back to her. A married man could only attend the funeral of his mother in-law after completion of the burial ceremony rituals. In some cases, his attendance was only permitted after the grave soil had dried up and was covered with a blanket to ironically cover her nudity. Such guidelines minimized direct confrontation

between spouses and their in-laws thereby avoiding exposure of their weaknesses (Magesa 1997: 142). Strict adherence to taboos enhanced marital stability and protected the relationship from possible causes of divorce.

2.2.5. Divorce, Separation and Remarriage in African Community

Divorce was a rare phenomenon in African communities because, there were strict ethical codes of conduct that governed matrimony. It was however acknowledged that sometimes challenges could emerge which threatened the continuity of a marriage. In such cases, reconciliation was sought at all possible costs. For instance, among the Maasai, a woman who intended to separate or institute divorce without proper reasons could be repatriated to her husband by elders (Sankan, 1979:47). If she finally departed and got married elsewhere to another spouse, the children who were born into that relationship and their mother rightfully belonged to the first husband.

Despite the intended permanency and continuity of marriage in the African context, certain circumstances could warrant divorce. If for instance, it was discovered that a couple had blood relations that could hinder their marriage, the situation was regretted and the union was dissolved (Sankan, 1979:49). The significance attached to children also implicated permanent inability to give birth as a major condition that could warrant divorce if other alternatives were unfruitful (Malo & Achieng' 2003:40). Any violation of taboos could also result into divorce because, it was a serious crime among the Luo for a man for instance to serve himself with food from the pot or pour milk from a gourd. If this occurred, the wife could protest and divorce her husband (Mboya 2001:65). Other conditions included irreconcilable and intolerable traits such as witchcraft, excessive laziness, unbearable irresponsibility and uncontrollable drunkenness (Sankan, 1979:52).

The approval by elders from both sides for dissolution of marriage was obligatory to justify a divorce. Appropriate negotiations were made on such occasions regarding how much bride wealth could be retained or refunded. The conditions to consider in bride-wealth refund included; the virginity status of the bride on wedding night, the number and gender of children born into the marriage, quantity of food and drinks consumed during the wedding ceremony or the number of animals reported as dead or stolen after being paid as bride wealth (Watson 2000:46). A woman was only set free from the marriage covenant, if the negotiated refund deal had been vetted and arrived at amicably.

A divorced man could easily remarry if the former wife was blamed for misdemeanor resulting into the divorce. But, if a man was responsible for termination of the relationship, the negative testimony could make women fear remarrying him. There were no laid down ethical prohibitions for remarriage, except the need for one to reform his or her wanting character beforehand. Divorced women could only be remarried to old men or widowers as second wives and with a lower bride wealth payment. In some communities, a divorced woman could not be married as a first wife (Watson 2000:50).

2.3. Christian Marriage

The Christian meaning of marriage acknowledges matrimony as a universal human institution that was created by God. It is driven by the fact that religion plays a special role in governing, regulating, celebrating and validating marriage. A Christian marriage is governed by clear teachings as recorded in the scriptures and denominational doctrines or traditions. Arguments regarding what really makes a marriage Christian are diverse. There are however certain thresholds that are universally agreed upon by a majority of Christian denominations (Kisembo et.al. 1998:25).

A Christian marriage should be a heterosexual and monogamous union (Kyomo & Selvana 2004:13). Although the contemporary society has witnessed same sex marriages, heterosexual union still remains the orthodox form of marriage. Same sex marriages are treated by majority of Christian denominations as departure from God's ordained order. In the Old Testament, polygamy was a common phenomenon which is treated as man's invention in his fallen state and should not be taken by Christians as a marriage model (Hillman 1975:5). Since no institution can be Christian without the practical commitment of its members to Christian faith, a marriage can only become Christian, if the couples are committed followers of Christ (Oduyoye & Kanyoro 2005:23). This view was supported by Kiuna who stated that:

> ''Christian marriage is not a union of two, but of three. The third party is not another wife, but Christ Himself. He is not at the periphery to watch the two, but right in their hearts, between and around them. He is at the centre to initiate, join and sustain the union. It is Christ who gives marriage its divine nature and without him, the union loses grip and the two fall apart'' (Informant I, Interview: 21.5.2017).

The evangelicals hold that being a Christian means having a personal relationship with Jesus as saviour, while the Roman Catholic Church teaches that salvation is attained through a member's participation in the church's well-established sacraments (Wachege: 2000:3).

Participation in a Christian wedding ceremony also qualifies such a union to be a Christian marriage. Holy matrimony is one of the seven holy orders in the Roman Catholic Church which is sanctioned between two confirmed Roman Catholic converts. The concept defines both the marriage union as well as the process of constituting it. Despite the acknowledgment of their existence in Christianity, the Roman Catholic Church has reservations with regard to uniting a Catholic and non-Catholic in a matrimony (Vahakangas 2004: 30).

2.3.1. Biblical Perspectives on Marriage

The concept of marriage has both literal and metaphorical meanings. In its literal sense, it refers to a physical union between a man and woman who mutually consent to live together as husband and wife. The metaphorical meaning refers to certain spiritual analogies which indicate that God's relationship with humanity is symbolized by natural human marriage relationships.

The story of creation shows that marriage is God's invention (Layman 1991: 5-6). It is stated in Genesis 1:27 that:

> "So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him; male and female he created them."

This implies that both sex and marriage were God's creative ideas. He made both sexes for one another and consummation can only be attained through the marital bond. Neither man nor woman had an idea of what it meant to live with each other. It is God who instituted marriage and handed it over to humanity to celebrate and experience it.

Marriage according to Layman (1991: 6) is a spiritual mystery which is manifested in a physical union in which God brings a wife into the man's world as a different personality that had never been part of his natural life. As a reunion, the woman had been part of man since creation when God created her through removal of one of the man's ribs. It therefore makes two different people who had been made of one flesh to be reunited into the originally intended oneness. The mysterious nature of marriage is explicated by how God created Eve from Adam without his awareness and involvement (Genesis 2:21).

Marriage was endowed with the gift of fruitfulness hence, it became the genesis of all human institutions, races, nations, and churches. After the union between Adam and Eve, God does not directly create other humans. He instead partners with humanity through procreation to continue his creative work. Pharisees often challenged Jesus on the permanency of marriage,

but Jesus asserted that marriage is indissoluble and that divorce was never intended from creation (Matthew 19:1-12 & Mark 10:3-12). He thus insisted on the covenant nature of marriage and declared that: "what God has joined together, let no man separate" (Mark 10:9). God is the initiator and joiner of the marriage covenant as recorded in Genesis 2: 24 and remains a party to it. He wills that marriage remains a permanent covenant that no one should seek to dissolve.

The authority of man and submission of a woman is given as the divine order of governance in a Christian marriage. The creation order that placed man first and woman next is a divine plan to institute authority at the most basic level of human institutions (Genesis 2:21-22). A woman is instructed to be submissive to the husband and should remain an equal partner in marriage, grow and actualize her mandate as God's creature (Ephesians 5:22-33). This was not meant to punish or demean her, but to show that a woman could perform her role as a wife only under the authority of her husband (Genesis 3:16).

> St. Paul's teaching on moral order in a Christian family emphasizes that:
>
> "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord… Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her." (Ephesians 5:22, 25).

In the above biblical reference, St. Paul affirms the authority of a husband over his wife as an ordained order of creation. He further reveals that this order can only function if a husband embraces the rule of love and a wife voluntarily submits to her husband. The rule of love and submission has however been misconstrued in various contexts. The nature of submission between Christ and the Church is too perfect to be attained in a human relationship which makes a Christian marriage more admirable but not practical (Adams 1986:144). Hagin (2006: 27) believes that the full surrender to Christ and the Holy Spirit could help a husband to love the wife in the same way that Jesus loved the church and likewise a wife has to submit to the husband as the Church submits to Christ (Ephesians 5:22-26). The bible also teaches

that a Christian marriage exists to serve certain purposes that cannot be legitimately performed by any other human institutions.

2.3.2. Purpose of a Christian Marriage

In Christianity, sexual fulfillment is one of the primary roles of marriage which is granted as an ethical escape to the tempting snare of unlawful sex. In both the Old and New Testaments, premarital and extramarital sex is condemned as sinful, body defilement, hence making marriage the only legal license to sex (Exodus 20: 14, 1Corinthians 6:9,18; Revelation 21:8).

For Hervey (1974: 80), sex is a sacrament of marriage that should be shared, celebrated and enjoyed by a couple. It is a commemoration and reaffirmation of marriage vows that keeps the relationship alive and enables the couple to reiterate their sense of belonging to each other. St. Paul teaches that the wife's body belongs to the husband and likewise that of the husband belongs to the wife (1Corinthians 7:4). Sex is the practical space where this sense of belonging is realized.

Sex is a form of fellowship, duty and a right in a marriage affiliation that a marriage partner should not deny the other (1 Corinthians 7:5). Any aspect of abstinence must be done with consensus from both parties, lest the couple is tempted into immorality. St. Paul teaches that "he who unites himself to a harlot becomes one flesh with the harlot" (1 Corinthians 6: 16). This analogy is not only applicable to unlawful sex, but also the rightful use of sex. It is inevitable that a person becomes one flesh with a spouse through sexual intercourse. This intimacy is further exemplified in the scripture to symbolize the oneness that ought to exist between the believer and Christ. As the husband and wife become one flesh, the believer and Christ should also become one in spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17). Kirkendall & Rubin (1968:52)

warns that sexual urge may be weakened or incapacitated by age or illness, but a Christian marriage still remains valid and functional.

Procreation and parental roles of marriage were given to humanity, soon after the creation of both sexes when God commands in Genesis 1:28: "be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth" (Psalms 127:3, Beach 1978:390). In the Jewish context, children were considered as blessings from God. The inability to bear children was perceived as a failure, curse and source of shame. Conception of women who were at one point considered barren such as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Hannah and Elizabeth were seen as a miraculous intervention of God (Genesis 15:2, 25:21, 29:30, 1Samwel 1:1-20, Luke 1:5-22).

Parenting is best performed in marriage context where both parents serve as exemplary models to their children. In families where both parents are present but lack good values, their children may be wrongly shaped in life. In the Old and New Testaments, parents are mandated to play irreplaceable roles of teaching and socializing their children about their history, culture and faith (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, Ephesians 6:1-2). Marriage is therefore an institution where children's worldviews are shaped before they acquire other world ideologies. Despite the centrality of procreation and parenting, a Christian marriage should remain valid with or without children (Grenz 1997:68). There comes a point in life when children are fully grown up and live outside their parents' homesteads. In such a case, should couples continue in marriage despite having accomplished their parenting role!

Companionship is according to Baumann (1988:148) the primary role of marriage without which a marriage cannot survive. The concept of a "helpmate" or "suitable helper" as described in Genesis 2:18 -20 is more of companionship than that of a sexual partner or co-parent. Marriage originates from God's concern and compassion for man's loneliness hence the need to select a suitable helpmate. Marriage answers to humanity's psycho-social need

before any other role is assigned to it. This is further exemplified in Adam's poetic response to Eve when he called her: "Bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh." (Genesis 2:23). Grenz (1997 a: 69) asserts that some of the Old Testament couples like Sara and Abraham, Rebecca and Isaac, Jacob and Rachel, Ruth and Boaz qualified to be model marriages built on the principle of companionship. He also notes that the rule of love and submission as taught by Paul in Ephesians 5:21-23 is only attainable in a relationship of companionship coupled with mutual friendship. Garland & Garland (1986:97) however, critiqued the contemporary western models of companionship. In their book titled *Beyond Companionship,* they regret that the western models of companionship have turned marriage into a self-centred and individualistic union. A marriage union should exist for the good of the community and serve God's will on earth through the church and the community.

The purpose of marriage in the early Church was to build Christian communities. It is noted in 1Peter 3:1-2 that anyone whose spouse is not a believer should not quit the marriage. The believing spouse should instead seize the opportunity to convert an unbelieving partner. Some families in the early church played a key role in promoting the gospel. It is noted that the early Christian church met in households with the support of Christian families such as Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:2-3). Phillip the evangelist had four virgin daughters who were believers and prophetesses in their local church (Acts 21:9). Timothy acquired foundational elements of Christianity from his family through his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2Timothy 1:5).

After the fall of man, God assigned the prophetic, restorative and redemptive role to marriage. The decree that the seed of woman would crush the serpent's head makes the marriage institution an active participant in God's salvation plan (Genesis 3:15). This

exhortation finds its fulfillment in the New Testament through the coming of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, born of a woman in the family of Joseph and the virgin Mary (Luke 1:35).

2.3.3. The Metaphor of Marriage Relationship

The marriage bond is symbolically used to depict certain aspects of the relationship between God and humanity. First, the marriage relationship symbolizes the intended lasting covenant union between God and his people (Grenz 1997:62). The scripture records:

> "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, I remember the devotion of your youth, and how as a bride, you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown" (Jeremiah 2:2).

In this context, Israel is perceived as God's bride that he has betrothed. Just as in a natural marriage, the symbolism is used to communicate intended permanency of the relationship between God and his people. It further demonstrates the bond of love between God and his people, man's commitment, willingness and faithfulness in following God. It is further pointed out in Isaiah 62:5 that the bride (Israel) would only live in joy and God would delight in them if they willingly and faithfully followed him.

The second sense shows the unfaithful nature of man in his relationship with God (Thatcher 1999:126). It is stated that:

> "Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up of every high hill and under very spreading tree and has committed adultery there… Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear, she also went out and committed adultery" (Jeremiah 3:6-8).

In this context, the unfaithful nature of Israel and Judah is represented by an unfaithful wife who commits adultery in public, and eventually divorces the husband. It shows that despite God's exceeding, unfailing and unconditional love, man's unfaithfulness would warrant neglect by God. God's perfect love could not be used as a scapegoat for man's failure to

fulfill his responsibility. This is affirmed by the statement that Israel would no longer be a bride to God, and God would no longer be her husband (Hosea 2:2, 4 &5).

Marriage relationship depicts the faithfulness of God and his willingness to accept, restore and accommodate humanity if they repent and return to him (Thomas 2000: 129). The scripture states that:

> "I will show my love to the one I called, "not my loved one". I will say to those called "not my people" and I will say to them, "you are my people", and they will say, "You are my God" (Hosea 2:23).

The symbolism presented here communicates the faithfulness of God to an unfaithful Israel. Although Israel had been exiled because of her sin, God would forgive, restore and accept them. This would once again lead to a perfect union of love just as if they had never been divorced before. This analogy was used to demonstrate God's willingness to restore Israel and remains relevant in communicating God's faithfulness and willingness to forgive and save the fallen humanity.

Marriage illustrates the relationship between Jesus and the Church (Adams 1986: 37). In Ephesians 5:22-30, St. Paul states that husbands ought to love their wives as Christ loves the Church. Likewise, wives should submit to their husbands as the Church submits to Christ. This analogy is applicable in teaching Christians both the literal marital relationship between husbands and wives as well as the symbolic relationship between Christ and the believers.

In the Gospel of Matthew 25:1-13, the parable of ten virgins who were preparing for a wedding ceremony communicates the need for believers to prepare for the rupture that will occur unexpectedly. In the book of Revelation, the apocalyptic writer refers to Christ as the groom, the Church as bride, the rupture as the wedding ceremony emphasizing the preparedness and purity of the Church (Revelation 19: 7, 21:9 & 21:2).

Marriage union symbolizes the Trinitarian harmony as three different entities yet conjoined and inseparable in nature (Ruecher 1989:76). In marriage, a man and woman ought to emulate this divine attribute when they are joined together and appreciate the fact that they are different, but with unique personalities.

2.3.4. The Christian Wedding as a Church Ordinance

The Old Testament gives some examples of marriage ceremonies from which the current practice of Christian weddings is drawn (Gesterberger 1980:146). The identification of a marriage partner was done by the groom, or was sometimes assisted by his closer family members. In the Old Testament, Rebekah was identified as a potential spouse to Isaac by a family confidant (Genesis 24). Jacob negotiated his own marriages with his uncle and father in-law (Genesis 29:15-30). Likewise, Samson found out for himself a wife from the Philistine neighbours (Judges 14). The payment of bride wealth was a common practice in Jewish traditional marriages which was often paid in form of livestock or other valuables like gold and silver (Horner 1974: 18-23). The wedding ceremony was a long communal feast which lasted a week or more culminating in sexual consummation (Judges 12:12; Genesis 29:28).

The first sexual encounter was allowed between the newlyweds on a white garment. The presence of blood stains after coitus proved that the bride had preserved her virginity and was highly regarded (Smedes 1976:80). This evidence was presented to the parents for verification (Deuteronomy 22:13-21). Contemporary Christianity supports the view that unmarried people should abstain from sexual encounters before marriage, this is one of the most compromised virtues where one of the pastors who was interviewed during the study lamented that:

> ''It is regrettable to have our girls dress in white gowns during their weddings as if they were holy virgins yet most of them are actually not. We therefore resort to the

idea of secondary virginity as a way of showing commitment to Christian chastity even if one had fallen into sexual sin'' (Informant X, Interview: 3.8.2017).

This observation indicates that the church believes in the biblical teaching on chastity, but at the same time acknowledges that majority of new partners have failed to attain this standard. In the New Testament, neither Jesus nor the Apostles taught about wedding ceremony, although it is recorded that Jesus attended one in Cana and performed his first miracle there (John 2:1-11). This confirms that Jesus had special regard for marriage (Smedes 1988: 80). The parable of ten virgins waiting for the bride at a wedding night as recorded in the Matthew 25:1-13 explains how a wedding ceremony was conducted during Jesus' time (Mackin 1989:88). A virgin who had been betrothed to a man was expected to prepare for her wedding, although the wedding date was kept secret from her. The groom was expected to make a surprise appearance to take away the bride on a pre-arranged wedding feast. Betrothal was furthermore treated with seriousness just as the marriage itself. This explains why Joseph's contemplation to terminate his relationship with the Virgin Mary upon noticing her pregnancy is termed as intention to divorce her (Matthew 1:19).

The biblical cultural background could be different from the contemporary Christian context, but there are certain trends from Jewish traditional weddings that influence the practice of Christian weddings today (Marrison 1977:438-445). First, is the commitment and consent to marriage which is an individual's free and personal choice. A Christian wedding provides a forum at which this choice and commitment is publicly affirmed. Second, it is a public ceremony that is witnessed by the community comprising relatives, friends and fellow congregants. The presence of the clergy to preside over a marriage ceremony symbolizes God's presence in endorsing the union. Last is the official consummation of marriage through sex.

2.3.5. Civil and Ecclesial Partnership in Christian Marriage

In contemporary society, Christian marriage celebrations are regulated by the Church and state (Baumann 1988:146). The nature of partnership between the Church and the state is however unique to individual nations depending on their legislative provisions. In many cases, the Church minister assumes the position of a marriage officer. This further demands that a couple has to fulfill both legal and Church requirements to validate the ceremony. In Kenya, an authorized Church minister issues a government marriage certificate to a married couple and further forwards a copy to the government marriage registry. A couple is required to pay certain fees to both the state agency and the Church. This partnership between the Church and state emphasizes the spiritual and legal aspects of marriage.

2.3.6. Christian view of Celibacy

All human cultures have a preference for marriage as the most acceptable human status. Christianity however provides some exceptions from the scripture which tend to suggest that the decision to either get married or to live a celibate life is a deliberate choice that is biblically acceptable. In Genesis 2:18, God stated that "it is not good for man to be alone". This suggests that marriage is God's primary intention and plan for humanity. But, in 1 Corinthians 7: 1, it is stated that; "it is good for a man not to touch a woman", hence giving a rationale for celibacy.

The two examples justify situations in which celibacy views are applied. Marriage was created by God and remains the most common and authentic human status. The exception is however admonished for those who intend to pursue Christian ministry and are convinced that their effectiveness can only be achieved outside their marital circles. The scripture is clear that the discretion of getting married or practicing celibacy is the prerogative of the

church minister. It does not however condemn anyone for not getting married except in one incident where it is noted that:

> ''The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth.'' (1Tim. 4:1-3 NIV).

In this text, abstention from marriage is listed as one of the elements of false, adulterated and demonic doctrines that could signify the end times. Apart from such cases, celibacy could also be pursued by non-church ministers as an alternative choice of life hence it cannot be generally condemned as being sinful.

Jesus gave certain instances where celibacy could be legitimized among the laity when he recommended that eunuchs should voluntarily excuse themselves from marriage (Matthew 19:12). This suggests that sex is one of the key indicators of a functional and healthy marriage hence, a permanent sexual incapacitation can justify celibacy.

Single-hood and marriage among widows and widowers is emphasized by St. Paul in his letter to Corinthians when he encouraged older widows to remain single in life (1Corinthians 7:39-40). He however warned young widows against being entangled in sexual sin, and instructed them to remarry (1 Tim 5:11). The Roman Catholic Church's tradition makes celibacy an obligatory status for priests and nuns which is considered a special gift of God, and also a way of accepting the special call to serve God in the Church. This enhances their full commitment and undivided devotion to the church's vocation. The perception here is that marriage is very involving, whose avoidance for God's sake would make one more effective in ministry. Cahill (1996:169-70) affirms that celibacy is a sacred marriage to the Lord in his service.

The Christian tradition of celibacy is rooted in some biblical personalities like Elijah, John the Baptist, Jesus and St. Paul who abstained from marriage as a way of showing receptiveness to the Holy Spirit (Ricoeur 1992:168). The tradition also borrows from the 3rd and 4th century Christian monks who abandoned their homes and normal family ties to practice spiritual devotion (Brakke 2006:23). Family responsibilities were seen as "entanglement with civilian affairs" (2 Timothy 2:4). The early Church Fathers like Origen and Tertullian became celibate role models to the Catholic order of ministry. Origen castrated himself, while Tertullian denounced marriage and sex, arguing that it is demeaning and impure for God's chosen vessel (Cahill 1994:153). Celibacy was thus instituted as a compulsory status for Roman Catholic Church's priests and nuns in 12th century and has persisted to date. In 1967, Pope Paul VI upheld this status, arguing that it is a way of helping a minister in his total, complete and undivided commitment to serve (Frazee 1988: 108).

The practice of celibacy among the evangelicals is a deliberate choice whether one is called into Christian service or not (Grenz 1997 b: 181). Some denominations insist that the clergy must pursue marriage and become role models for their flock. The latter argue in support of St. Paul's instruction that Church leaders must be husbands of one wife and good managers of their homes, making monogamous marriage a mandatory requirement for church ministry (Titus 1:6 & 1Timothy 3:1-12).

Irrespective of whatever tradition one subscribes to, increase in celibacy among the laity in contemporary society is worrying (Kunhiyop 2008:285). Since Christianity gives celibacy a window of legality, the Church must come out strong to defend her status by upholding the authentic position of marriage in the society. This calls for the need to investigate why many lay people shun from marriage today.

2.3.7. The Christian view on Divorce and Remarriage

The scripture asserts that marriage is indissoluble, but the prevalence of divorce is widespread in contemporary society and is acceptable in certain instances. This calls for a concerted discussion on the justification of divorce and remarriage in Christianity.

Grenz (1997a: 123) noted that the scriptural view regarding the dissolution or indissolubility of marriage presents a Christian marriage as being either ideal or practical. The model status is documented in the Genesis story before the fall of man in which humanity had a perfect relationship with God, a fact that transcended to his relationship with the spouse. The product of this was a perfect marriage without infidelity.

After the fall, human communion with God was distorted, resulting into disorder in marriage and the family. It was in humanity's fallen nature that God, through Moses, gave grounds in which divorce for instance due to indecent and unpleasant acts could be granted. In such cases, it was only a man who could separate himself from his wife by issuing her a certificate of divorce. Women were neither expected nor permitted by the Mosaic Law to initiate any divorce process at all (Deuteronomy 24:1-4).

Jesus' teaching ministry was also confronted by the same question in a debate between Jesus and a Pharisee when he was asked whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any other reason (Matthew 19:3-10). The Pharisees had a pre-informed mind about legality of divorce and only sought for Jesus' legal interpretation on "indecent" and "unpleasant" deeds that could warrant divorce. Jesus not only affirmed God's intended permanency of marriage, but also showed that it was only marital infidelity that could warrant divorce. In Mark 10: 1-12, Jesus pointed out that unlike the law which only provides for a husband to initiate

divorce, a wife could have the same right if her husband committed adultery. He also taught that remarriage after divorce was equivalent to adultery.

St. Paul insists that marriage is permanent, but divorce could be granted in case of religious differences. If a believer is for example married to a nonbeliever, divorce could be granted on condition that the unbeliever voluntarily quits the marriage (Matthew 19:3-10). This implies that Christians should maintain marital perpetuity whether spouses are believers or not.

The Biblical stand on remarriage after divorce is quite uncertain. In 1Corinthians 7:15, Paul states that if an unbeliever quits a marriage, let him do so, and a believer will not be bound in such circumstances, since God has called upon us to live in peace. Despite Jesus' statement that remarriage after divorce equals to adultery, Paul's teaching has been used to justify remarriage especially if the divorce was as a result of moral departure of an unbelieving spouse. In this case, one who has been left is set free. Biblical interpreters however differ on the rightful application of this concept of "freedom." Hetherington (2009:6) believes that this freedom permits one to remarry while Instone (2002:1) insists that one can only remarry if the former spouse is dead. Gotmann (2014:53) believes that remarrying a divorcee transfers marital problems into another marriage rather than solving them. House & Laney (1990:39) states that a divorcee has the freedom of choice either to marry or remain single as long as that choice gives him or her status of peace.

This study observed that in contemporary Christianity, teachings on divorce and remarriage have remained a theological discourse confined among pastors and theologians and rarely taught to the congregants. One of the pastors interviewed stated that:

> ''Marriage ought to be entered into in faith and that it will work therefore teaching people about divorce and remarriage is a negative imagination that would give them a leeway for breakup when storms strike'' (Informant VI, Interview: 20.6.2018).

The above statement represents the view that teachings on divorce and remarriage should be discouraged so as not to provoke people into the vices. This view is however insensitive to the fact that the current generation has access to various sources of information even on theological matters. It is the knowledge of God's word that actually sets people free (John 8: 32). The clergy are therefore justified to teach their flock about all truth, including on matters of divorce and remarriage.

2.4. Some emerging themes on Traditional African Religious and Christian views on Marriage

In both traditional African religion and Christianity, marriage is a sacred gift to humanity from God. In Christianity, marriage was initiated by God as an answer to man's psycho-social need of loneliness and also to facilitate procreation. Marriage for the Africans is sacred, transmits life, incarnates it, and is a strategy to conquer death and attain immortality here on earth. The African scope of sacredness thus incorporates God, Spirits and the unborn. Both cases also embrace some aspects of communal participation. Mutual awareness is useful in drawing the boundaries between "marriageable" and "non-marriageable" individuals. In equal cases, marriage between close relatives is not permitted. The communal concept in traditional Africans society refers to the extended family and all relatives that fall within a person's kinship ties. In Christianity, the nuclear family is often not ignored, but emphasis is laid on the Church as the community of believers.

In both traditional African religion and Christianity, marriage is not only an indissoluble permanent covenant, but is also subjected to personal consent. Traditional Africans however believed that such consent could sometimes be sanctioned by parents on behalf of their children (Mbiti 1991:107). The perception here was not to initiate a forced marriage, but to give elders a chance to execute their wisdom and good will so as to make choices on behalf

of their offspring. When children grew up, their personal interests were respected (Kenyatta 2000:128). In both cases, a commitment to the covenant is proved through oath taking. In Christianity, the oath binds the husband and wife, while in African traditional setting, the oath included both clans. In African context, the covenant was sealed through bride-wealth, sacrifices and libation to ancestors (Mbiti 1991: 108). Christianity teaches that God is the initiator of marriage and it should not be terminated except at the death of a spouse (Matthew 9:6). In some African marriages, death does not warrant any termination because, if a spouse dies, another man or woman from the deceased's family assumes the role of a husband or wife respectively (Mbiti 1991: 108). A widow was married to the deceased clan's spouse, to perpetuate marital responsibility.

Certain human weaknesses can lead to termination of the marriage covenant (Kenyatta 2000:74). In traditional African communities, intolerable behaviour such as witchcraft could result into divorce. In Christianity, divorce can be permitted in cases of religious conflict between a believer and a non-believing spouse (Corinthians 7:15).) Christianity also teaches that it is only a non-believer who can initiate a divorce, while a believer is expected to endure (1Corinthians 7:8). Whereas Christianity does not provide clear guidance on the divorce process, African communities had certain laid regulations that were enforced by the elders. They ensured equitable compensation of bride-wealth and protected children from malicious family members.

Chastity is a very important virtue in both African and Christian views of marriage which prohibits sex before marriage and restricts sexual intercourse to marital relationship only (Kunhiyop 2008:270). Some African communities demanded the bride's virginity confirmation on the wedding night (Mbiti 1991:109). This cultural practice promoted unequal

and unfair treatment against women because there was no proof of chastity for the groom. The observance of chastity before marriage is taught in Christianity, but the proof for virginity on the wedding night is not emphasized (Kunhiyop 2008:271). Some African communities did not insist on preservation of virginity and even endorsed premarital sex (Mbiti 1973:68). The Maasai and Kuria also tolerated sharing of wives among peers of the same age group (Bujo 2009:145).

In both Christianity and African traditional religion, a husband is acknowledged as a leader vested with authority in a family. The authority of a husband over the wife in an African context was delegated by the community. This position was not exploitative, but was based on the spirit of care, provision and protection. In Christianity, this mandate is given by Christ who is head of the Church (Ephesians 5: 25). This qualifies the assertion that a husband should love his wife just as Christ loved the church. Whereas Christianity acknowledges monogamy as the only orthodox form of sanctioned marriage, indigenous Africans accepted other types of marriages such as polygamy, ghost marriages, woman to woman marriages and child marriages.

Monogamy was practiced in Africa, but, polygamy was most preferred due to its presumed status of prestige and wealth (Kunhiyop 2008: 224). In both African traditional religion and Christianity, marriage is meant for procreation, sexual satisfaction and companionship. In Christianity, marriage extends God's kingdom on earth through service and support to the church symbolizing the union between God and man.

Monogamy was practiced in Africa, but, polygamy was most preferred due to its presumed status of prestige and wealth (Kunhiyop 2008: 224). In both African traditional religion and

Christianity, marriage is meant for procreation, sexual satisfaction and companionship. In Christianity, marriage extends God's kingdom on earth through service and support to the church. symbolizing the union between God and man. In both African Traditional Religion and Christianity, marriage has an eschatological implication. In Christianity, God is seen as a Father to the Jewish community in the Old Testament and to the Church in the New Testament. Christ is perceived as the master and groom of the Church and the rupture is the expected marriage feast where the two will be eternally joined together. In African context, the eschatological implication of marriage is seen in its ability to reincarnate the departed ancestors into the newborns. It is also through posterity that marriage generates a sense of eternity of human existence here on earth.

2.5. Chapter's Summary

The traditional African society had very strong religious and cultural views that governed marriage and family life. These cultural provisions have however been widely changed. Christianity is one of the strongest foreign forces that has affected African marital values. The African mode of polygamy has been condemned in favour of Christian marriage, which is purely monogamous. Taboos in the African context have lost their relevance because, people have neglected some traditional African beliefs and adopted modern European values and secularization. Traditional African wedding ceremonies are almost extinct. Instead, contemporary Christian weddings are interspersed with traditional attire, songs and dances during the reception parties. The communal nature of marriage is also either demeaned or shifted. Many Christians consider marriage as a private entity and the concept of community is shifting from the extended family to the wider community of faith. The commercialized African concept of bride wealth is often misinterpreted to imply buying off the brides. Despite the presumed negative view that Christian missionaries attached to African values, a comparison of the two religions revealed that there are certain commonalities which the two

religions can dialogue on and pursue solutions to modern marital challenges. This calls for the need to investigate how marital experiences pose challenges in an urban environment where traditional African religious values have been abandoned or neglected in favour of Christianity and presents mixed values. This background information prepares a ground for a constructive inter-religious dialogue in addressing the challenges facing contemporary African Christian marriages which are examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CHALLENGES OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN CHRISTIAN MARRIAGES IN NAIROBI COUNTY

3.1. Introduction

Foreign cultures, religions, modernity, secularization, urbanization, capitalism and globalization are contemporary forces which are reshaping the African worldview. The indigenous African society which was predominantly rural is increasingly getting urbanized. Many young people seek for new settlements in urban centres as they pursue better social and economic opportunities (Shorter & Njiru 2001:37). Welch (1933:46) predicted that Christianity would become as popular as African religion was to our fore fathers. Such changes are not only generating a new understanding regarding marriage, sex and family life, but also exposing marriages to innumerable challenges. Marriage is no longer a covenant between clans, but individuals, hence making it a private affair. The role of the extended family has often been ignored or replaced with new religious communities. The expression of virtues such as love and submission have taken different forms. Whereas the increase in marital problems is notable among wedded couples, many Christians are still ignorant of the causes of such problems, let alone their biblical responses (Hastings 1973: 126). This chapter responds to this discourse by examining the challenges affecting contemporary African Christian marriages in an African urban setting.

3.2. Choice of a Spouse

Whereas the traditional African community believed that one had to identify a potential spouse with the help of elderly relatives, the current society does not present clear guidelines on how to choose a potential marital partner. It is a person's wish to have a suitable mate, but how and from where remains a puzzle. This study established that majority of young people

today do not engage their parents, guardians or even elders in choosing their probable spouses. The study noted that few parents still guide their children in making marital choices, but they lack clear strategies to implement their wishes to fulfilment. For instance, an informant regretted that the youth make marriage choices while they are far away from their homes and only involve their parents in wedding arrangements, which is often too late to influence or change their choices (Informant X, Interview: 30.8.2017).

The study noted that majority of young people rely on social institutions such as colleges, universities, work places or even social media to connect with future spouses. Malo & Achieng' (2003:34) observed that these youths have little regard for character modeling and are easily attracted by the education level, financial ability and physical beauty traits. Personal character scrutiny and family backgrounds remain secondary characteristics to them. The study found out that young people have the freedom to choose spouses for themselves and even promise to take personal responsibility in case of marital failure (Informant X, Interview: 30.8.2018)).

If an engagement collapses, the partners often feel cheated, betrayed, mistreated and are often heartbroken. If by good luck one succeeds in another engagement deal that matures to marriage, the person could still experience a feeling of mistrust and fear that the partner could be exposed to similar heartbreaking experiences. Any spouse that has experienced such a broken relationship feels emotionally challenged and is easily disturbed by any minimal issues in marriage. This person often lives in fear that the current spouse could behave like the former, leading to marital breakup (Informant X, Interview: 30.8.2018).

This study further discovered that some spouses have been previously involved in premarital sexual intimacy and, in some cases, children have been born out of these relations. These offspring often remind a spouse of a close relationship with someone else other than the

marriage partner. It is also a legal requirement in Kenya for biological parents to care for their offspring whether they were married or not. Article 53 of Kenyan constitution 2010, spells out that every child has a right to parental care from both parents whether or not the parents are married to each other. The need to co-parent a child or children with a former partner requires consistent communication and partnership. This further creates insecurity in an existing marriage. Even where no offspring are born, disconnecting from a former partner is often a process rather than an event. Some could still meet in church gatherings, work places or through social media. If such interactions are not well handled, the memory of experiences in previous relationships could persist and negatively affect an existing marriage. Comparison between a current spouse and the former engagement partner is another attitude that could likely recur in such relationships. Gottman (2014: 36) states that engagements often take place at a "love map" relationship stage where conflicts are rare. But, when people get married, they are exposed to each other's weaknesses, sparking frequent skirmishes. If a conflict arises in a marital relationship where a partner had been in a wrecked engagement, one could be tempted to compare the current spouse to a former one. The feeling that a former partner could have treated one better than the current often incapacitates or limits one's ability to contribute positively towards constructive conflict resolution in a marriage (Informant V, Interview: 26.6.2018).

3.3. Cultural Conflicts

In contemporary society, many marital partners hail from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, hence all marriages must be prepared to handle these differences. In traditional African society, most marriages were celebrated between members of the same ethnic community with rare occurrences of inter-ethnic marriages (Mbiti, 1973:57). In some instances, the bride was taken through requisite rituals to incorporate her into the new

community. She was thereafter, expected to abandon any paternal traditional experiences that clashed with her new community. The change of physical location and frequent interactions with the husband's family members facilitated quick learning of new cultural norms.

In the contrary, this study noted that inter-ethnic marriages are on the increase in Nairobi County. Whereas all the four movements studied: Nairobi Chapel, Mavuno Church, Lighthouse Chapel International and Jubilee Christian Church demonstrated some commendable efforts to impart Christian values such as love, tolerance, humility, forgiveness and faithfulness, such values are nonetheless interpreted and applied in one's own culture. Cultural phenomena principles such as language and eating habits widely dominate one's ethnic orientation.

In Nairobi today, many couples speak either English language or Kiswahili language or both in their homes, work places or in social gatherings. The urge to speak in mother tongue arises only during certain social gatherings which creates a language barrier to the non interlocutors. This is evident when one interacts with friends or relatives from his/her ethnic community in the presence of the spouse. If one speaks in English or Kiswahili, this implies disowning a linguistic and cultural identity in favour of a spouse. On the other hand, if the conversation is in mother tongue, it automatically locks out a spouse from their communication. A linguistic difference between couples could mean that certain idioms or symbols may lose meaning or create different meanings if expressed in another language. The process of learning another mother tongue is very complicated in an urban cosmopolitan structure. There is need therefore to practice and internalize the language in everyday discourses which is best achieved in a rural background (Informant V, Interview: 30.8.2018).

The children who are born in such mixed marriage relationships escalate linguistic problems. If for example, one spouse attempts to speak to children in one's mother tongue, the other

spouse may feel offended. This makes many children from such families to end up missing an opportunity to learn and speak their native languages, which is a very significant African identity cultural component. The inability to speak in vernacular may limit the level of interaction between children and their rural relatives. This could make them to be perceived as strangers in their extended families.

Cultural conflicts could also be manifested in lifestyle differences involving eating habits, dressing styles and gender roles which vary from one community to the other. An identity crisis could also arise if a woman is expected to instantly adapt to her new matrimonial home and abandon her paternal or ethnic cultural norms. This challenge is notable among women in inter-ethnic marriages. They are by nature of their marriage expected to create new friends and peers in a different culture. In certain instances, some women were not willing to drop even their maiden names in favour of their husbands' names because, such a name was not common in their culture. In such unions, women are bound to question their identity, role and acceptance into the new family (Informant XI, Interview: 30.8.2017).

In Kenya, political loyalty and rivalry is in most cases manifested in some intercultural marriages which are shaped by ethnic affiliations in support of certain political parties or preferred candidates from their own ethnic communities. Such a marriage can divide political allegiance in a family leading to unwarranted struggles, separation or even divorce (Informant XI, Interview: 30.8.2017).

3.4. African Traditional Family Roles

An elaborate system of division of labour and roles was observed in the traditional African family whereby men owned land which was the main asset for wealth creation. They performed other duties such as building houses, grazing domestic animals, ploughing land

and hunting animals for food. Women worked in their husbands' farms alongside other household duties like cooking, nursing babies, fetching firewood and water (Aguedze 1990:113). This traditional norm has greatly changed in the contemporary society. Today, both men and women seek for formal professional employment or business opportunities in rural and urban centres. Unlike many rural families which still depend on farming as their mode of production; many urban families pursue businesses away from their homes which expose them to marital challenges (Mills 2007:144).

In the majority of contemporary urban families, both spouses participate in an income generating activity and engage house helpers to manage their domestic chores. Most of them are strangers sourced from employment bureaus. They are expected to perform house duties and nurse babies. This working experience often exposes them to the family's sensitive internal affairs which in the long run weakens the family bond (Mills, 2007:146). The husband or wife ends up getting closer to the house maid than the spouse, resulting into suspected or confirmed sexual encounters. Many parents leave their houses very early in the morning and return late in the evening, only to find their children already asleep. They often miss parental love and guidance resulting into juvenile delinquency (Mullens 2004:1).

In cases where a man is the sole breadwinner while the wife is a mere housewife, it is challenging for the man to meet the financial obligations single handed. This could sometimes demean a woman's role in the family. The attachment of financial obligations to a wife could also result into lack of respect from her spouse (Burkett 1977:83). The situation is equally complex if a woman is employed and the husband is not. It is challenging for a man to stay at home and perform household chores. An employed woman can dominate over the husband, neglect her primary domestic duties, and subdue his influence and authority in making decisions on family matters and resources (Sasse 1977:573). The husband may

abdicate his leadership role in the family in fear of losing financial support from his wife. This could demean his role as a husband in marriage more often leading to frequent struggles (Blood 1969:243).

The Christian meaning of love interferes with the subjective roles of wives to their husbands in an African context (Haselbarth 1989:71). Christianity maintains that a man should lead and serve the family, asserting that the leader should serve the subject, and not vice versa. Many women misinterpret this view and expect husbands to serve their families by performing feminine household chores. This contradicts the traditional African position which stipulates that women should persistently perform their household roles of cooking, laundry and nursing babies irrespective of their financial influence.

3.5. Materialism

The need to generate income in a capitalistic society affects almost all spheres of life. The current economic pressure forces couples to enter into marriage ties just for material gains. Such people perceive marriage as a way of benefiting from a wealthy spouse. In this case, the value of a spouse was attached to the spouse's financial capacity. But, when the financial benefit declines, the stability of the relationship is threatened (Informant III, Interview: 12.5.2017).

In the traditional African society, men were the sole owners of assets, while women were mere stewards (Bujo 2009: 69). This is different in contemporary society where both men and women have equal rights and opportunities to own land, houses and any other property (Kunhiyop 2008: 354). Whereas some women in the study believed that their husbands had no right to exercise control over their personal property, certain men still held to the view that women could not hold such rights. Such men argued that any property acquired by women

must be registered in their husbands' names. This resulted into unnecessary struggles and conflicts over property ownership.

This study disclosed that some income earning women were unwilling to spend their resources on family needs. They believed that the husband's property belong to the family, while the wife's property belong to her alone. This perception was reported as a challenge to some families where both a husband and wife were stable income earners (Informant I, Interview: 12.5.2017). This reaction demeaned the spirit of mutual partnership which is realized if resources are shared equitably and transparently. The study established that financial disagreements are among the leading causes of marriage breakups in most families. Several people get into a marriage relationship just to gain from a wealthier partner. The loss of a job, decline in business or end of a contract for one partner therefore incapacitates the family's relationship. A spouse that was attracted to marriage by wealth and material gains could easily walk away from such a union. While, some greedy spouses could also be motivated to file a divorce case so as to claim a share of property from an estranged wealthy partner (Informant VIII, Interview: 21.7.2018).

3.6. Sexuality and Marriage

The climax of marriage culminates in sexual consummation which provides an avenue of an emotional and physical bond (Rodgers 2016:1). A healthy sexual encounter improves self-esteem, elevates marital commitment, strengthens emotional connectivity, calms and relaxes persons, making them to feel rejuvenated (Rodgers 2016:4). Its absence causes unnecessary sexual cravings for non-marital partners, hampers communication and leads to mistrust between married couples. Schaffer (2016:58) states that sexual desire in marriage should be fulfilled in a timely and rightful manner, otherwise it could be dangerous and displeasing.

Sexual intercourse could only be prohibited during menstruation, incapacitation, physical ageing and illness (Leviticus 20:18).

Marriage based on romance is a contemporary American or European phenomenon rather than an African experience. Spainer (1972:481) and Dixon (2017: 3) affirm that American couples are more concerned about sex than their African counterparts. This has gained profound impact in the contemporary African culture and marriages where couples are seen holding hands and kissing each other openly in public aping foreign influence (Spainer 1972:483). On the contrary, Farley (2006:82) states that traditional Africans valued sex between married partners, but had reservations regarding public romantic expressions because, sex was believed to be sacred and secretive. Any public expressions of sexual arousal was a taboo in many African communities.

This study noted that several marriages in the contemporary society are built on sexual attraction replacing religious and cultural values. It was evident that several couples consented to marriage for sexual fulfillment, but deliberately declined to procreate. Numerous people also cohabited with partners for sexual gratification without making a lifelong marital commitment (Informant V, Interview: 30.8.2018). The study observed that the influence of romance in the contemporary society is on the increase and that certain people dress in a manner that exposes some sensitive parts of their bodies during wedding ceremonies hence portraying romantic expressions. The tight and short emotive garments which are often discouraged in ordinary church services are commonly worn during wedding occasions.

Many youths chose marriage partners with the view of who can make a good sexual partner while disregarding personal traits and family background. Once married, such couples were often faced with certain realities that make their romantic expectations difficult to fulfill. As

soon as children are born, emotional attention is divided between the spouse and offspring, hence creating limited room for one another. Besides this, the busy work schedules keep couples far away from each other throughout the day. They arrive home very late in the evening and are physically exhausted hence minimizing sexual activeness. Unfulfilled sexual urges may further lead to infidelity, misunderstanding and often cases of physical violence (Spainer 1972: 481-487).

3.7. Marriage and Media

The pornographic videos and music that are frequently displayed and played in public vehicles feature sexual violence and marital failures that can create a negative impact on marriage (Anderson 2005:125). The watching and addiction to social media has negative effects on marriages and could lead to sexual dissatisfaction in marriage. This is evident in cases where some spouses rely on pornography for developing insatiable sexual arousal. Some male partners may hurry or force their partners into sexual intercourse or lose sexual attraction towards their spouses (Kutchinsky 1973:163).

People who are fond of watching or reading information related to sexual violence are likely to imitate such behaviour in their marriage lives (Scott & Schwalm 1988:240). The media often emphasizes negative stories about marriage and ignores positive family models. Such stories include gender violence, murder of spouse or defilement of offspring. This often creates a negative impact on some people who could avoid marriage for fear of such occurrence (Kimberley 1997:104). Some spouses imitate these practices in their own families, arguing that they have become normal occurrences (Scott 1986:196). This study further noted that frequent media reports on marital failures without offering solutions bred or intensified failures in marriages. Although some people may positively learn from failing

marriages, others ended up copying such discordant behaviour in their own relationships (Informant IV, Interview: 4.7.2018).

Improper and uncontrolled use of social media often leads to infidelity when a person is emotionally attached to another person of the opposite sex rather than the spouse. The sharing of deep feelings in such fora results into sexual interactions. The study affirmed that "cyber-affairs" was on the increase in some urban couples where some spouses had been accused of exchanging nude photographs with strangers through social media.

The research affirmed that sex related information is dominant in many popular radio broadcasts. Several public service vehicles transporting majority of Nairobi residents to their work places often tune into channels that report on marital discrepancies. The presenters sometimes tend to reconcile separated or conflicting partners through live radio broadcasts and mobile phone conversations. However, the fact that those dialogues are relayed live on radio expose the couples' identity and prohibit the intended reconciliation. Apart from entertaining the listeners, such discourses are questionable and the media rarely makes follow-ups to ensure sustainability of such unions.

3.8. Marital Infidelity

Men and women have unique needs in marriage which they intend to be fulfilled (Harvey 2013:36). The top priority needs for men in marriage are respect, sex, recreational companionship, domestic support and attractiveness. Women's top priority desires in marriage include affection, conversation, honesty, material support and commitment. A partner could have most needs met in marriage, but if there was no self-control, sexual infidelity still arose. This occurred when a dissatisfied person expresses his or her personal behaviour while the other gives in, hoping to have certain needs met (Shakelford, Besser &

Goetz 2008:13-25). Couples who fall into this snare have a personality trait which prompted them to show or communicate a desire for sex with anyone they admired.

Infidelity could be a character issue or arises from parents, guardians or other senior members of the society. Children who are raised by unfaithful parents are likely to emulate the same in their own marriages. Infidelity could also be attributed to negative peer influence at work places tempting them into extramarital affairs. Involvement in premarital sexual encounters even with a person that one intends to marry increases the chance of marital infidelity. Premarital sex also creates uncontrolled desire for multiple sexual partners (Eaker 1994:9-12).

The research found out that marital infidelity was prevalent in many contemporary marriages in Nairobi. Out of the couples interviewed, at least 45% had conflict experiences related to infidelity. The study also noted that more men than women were accused of infidelity in marriage because, some men were still influenced by the African practice that "an African man is naturally polygamous" (Hillman 1975:76). The most common causes of unfaithfulness in women included; unfulfilled marital needs; revenge towards unfaithful husbands, or for materialistic gain. This study further affirmed that infidelity is a fundamental cause of physical violence (Greeley 1994:10). Since both Christianity and African traditional religion uphold that sex should be limited within marriage, a violation of this rule is perceived as the most serious level of unfaithfulness.

Emotional infidelity is experienced when a couple is perceived to be passionately closer to a person of the opposite gender, rather than the spouse. This often results into suspicion of sexual infidelity and could easily lead to the real act hence creating fear and insecurity in marital relationships.

3.9. Unhealthy Competition

Competition is a natural human psycho-social trait which can result into unwanted dangers in marriages if couples strive to outshine each other basing on career achievements, economic capacity, physical fitness, and social status. This study observed that some partners competed for children's response to a spouse. In cases where one parent attracted a warmer and closer relationship with their children, the other parent was likely to feel scared and insecure even as children grew up to maturity (Informant VII, Interview: 21.7.2018).

The study noted that extramarital competition was rampant among some couples belonging to the same peer groups who often compared themselves on the basis of education, place of residence, car models and the number of children in the family. If a partner feels that another person other than the spouse could have made a better partner, then his or her self-esteem could be demeaned. This often creates a sense of insecurity that often results into infidelity. In some cases, negative comments by a spouse on a couple's behaviour often caused conflicts in marriage (Informant V, Sermon: 21.5.2018).

Competition in marriage can make one to celebrate the downfall of the partner and hinder the common good of the family instead of complementing each other to improve their relationship. This also hinders the support that one could enjoy from another spouse so as to improve their lives. Such a situation demoralizes a partner leading to disrespect, unwanted losses, complaints, jealousy and blame rather than correcting their efforts (Informant V, Sermon: 21.5.2018).

3.10. Negative Marriage Models

Marriage and gender roles are some of the virtues that African children learnt from their parents. In a traditional African family setup, a father mentored his sons into future

responsible husbands, while a mother taught her daughters to be responsible wives in future. In the contemporary society, many marriages are troubled because of lack of exemplary role models. Dykstra (1998:77) argues that marital disorder between parents apparently results into similar or even worse disorders in their children's marriages. Children who are raised by divorced parents have a higher possibility of divorcing their spouses, than those brought up in a stable marriage relationship (Dykstra 1998:77). This suggests that marital problems can be transmitted from parents to their offspring. Children who hail from families with marital dysfunctions perceive marital failures as common disagreements hence employ little efforts in resolving them. Other traits such as wife beating, excessive drinking and unfaithfulness are easily emulated by children in their marital lives.

Stevenson & Wolfers (2007:1) affirms that dysfunction in parents' marriage could affect their children's marriage depending on the children's attitude and ability to emulate. Some children from troubled family backgrounds are likely to select their marital partners keenly and handle their marital issues carefully to avoid their parents' misdemeanors. While others from distressed families are likely to imitate their parents' behaviour hence manifesting similar problems in their relationships. The children who are brought up from stable families have a higher possibility of building stable marriages (Cherlin 1981:72). Those who are advantaged often take marriage seriously, seeking for parental counsel and make efforts to live peacefully as their parents. Others assume that marriage is simple and hence enter into it hurriedly without taking necessary precautions. Most of them end up in wrong relationships leading to marital failures that were never inherited from their parents.

3.11. Distance Marriage Relationships

In the traditional African society, a married woman was required to leave her maternal home and join her new husband's home. This is similar to the bible statement that a man has to

leave the parents in order to cleave to his wife so that the two can become one (Genesis 2:24). A marriage union works best if partners live together geographically, physically and emotionally. This enables them to fulfil their dreams, goals and ambitions (Olson & De-Frain 2003:11). The contemporary society however, exposes some couples to situations that demand them to stay away from each other due to the need to pursue lucrative careers, education and business opportunities. Such arrangements are often acceptable as a way of enhancing the family's economic affluence, but expose them to numerous challenges (Informant XIV, Interview: 21.7.2018).

The study found that nearly all distant marriages have some challenges of loneliness to cope with. The need for married couples to live together emotionally bound them together as opposed to spouses who were separated by their occupations and lived away from their partners. Communication challenges were reported among spouses who lived abroad and did not communicate frequently because of the high cost of international calls. Time lapses could also create difference in days' schedules hence minimizing the opportunity to converse. In contemporary society, the communication has improved through numerous social media platforms such as Youtube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter which do not however express tones, moods and feelings of a distant partner (Informant XII, Interview: 21.7.2018).

The Long distance relationships exacerbate financial challenges because a spouse has to travel frequently to meet his or her partner. The cost of running two homes is often higher than if the family stayed together. There is also a possibility of some parents ignoring their children, obligating parenting to a single partner. The distant physical separation in married couples denies them the opportunity to fulfill their healthy conjugal rights, increasing the

temptations of infidelity (Hough 1994:76). This affirms the observation that unfulfilled sexual need is one of the leading causes of marital infidelity (Harvey 2013:10).

The manifestation of distant marriage separations in early marriage before a couple sires the desired number of children inhibits responsible family planning. In case separation occurred when children are already born, the offspring could lack a role model to emulate resulting into indiscipline and psychological depression (Hunger 2000:39).

3.12. Parenting Problems

In traditional African society, child nurturing was a communal responsibility for every member of the extended family. The society played an active role in upbringing, supporting, mentoring and disciplining children (Mbiti 1991:96). In the current society, parents bear the responsibility on their own with less support from other relatives. Children who are born and raised in urban centres far away from their rural homes rarely enjoy the support and presence of rural family members other than their parents (Mills 2007:141).

The study observed that majority of families still view children as a blessing, but insisted that few children reduce the upkeep expenses. A few others however are in marriage but, not ready to sire any children at all. Besides the fear of economic burden associated with parenting, some couples fear that the woman could lose her natural body shape through childbirths. Other married couples consider parenting as interference with their careers. Some women also wish to remain childless to avoid interruptions caused by gestation and lactation periods which are considered a waste of time at the expense of enhancing their career progression (Informant XII, Interview: 21.7.2018).

In African traditional society, family planning was not meant to control the number of children to be born, but to create healthy child spacing. African women were prolific and

desired to beget many children before they attained menopause (Mbugua 2014:11). Multiple births were encouraged to increase chances of survival arising from high infant mortality rates. Birth control was however observed to allow the mother heal before conceiving the next baby. Polygamy was therefore practiced so that a pregnant or lactating mother could abstain from sex for some time while the husband derived sexual satisfaction from other wives (Mbugua 2014:14).

In contemporary families, birth control targets both the number and the age gap between children. Modern medical technology has increased the chances of infant survival, while economic pressure demands that couples only raise a few children whose needs they can meet with relative comfort. Although, nearly all families today agree on the need for birth control, the study discovered that some couples disagree on the number of children, age gap between them and the methodology for birth control. This affirms Haselbarth's (1989:91) observation that couples who practice family planning often disagree on the methodologies to employ. The majority of men reject employing permanent family planning methods like vasectomy, arguing that life is unpredictable, hence the need to replace dead children. In certain cases, some couples even disagree on barrier methods like the use of condoms, arguing that such methods create a physical disconnect during intercourse, hindering the intended intimacy and sexual enjoyment (Mills, 2007:143).

Most spouses who reside in urban areas are engaged in gainful careers and hire house helpers to nurture their children. They delegate parenting to strangers, some of whom are incompetent. The frequent turnover of domestic workers often exposes children to abuse from multiple strangers at very tender ages resulting into improper or ungrounded moral values.

Women empowerment is celebrated in Africa, but its effects on the family should be evaluated. Afisi (2010:229) notes that the conundrum of assigning women to manage household affairs in traditional African context was not meant to exploit them. It was instead geared to enabling them concentrate on nurturing and educating children on moral and social values.

Childlessness or late parenting was also observed as a problem affecting some families. Some partners deliberately chose not to have children, while others believed that children were a blessing from God. Those families that had not sired a child or taken too long to have a child often experienced challenges in their marital lives. A childless woman was often subjected to prejudice, insult or physical violence from her husband (Informant X, Interview: 28.8.2018). She also felt insecure that her husband could resort into marrying another wife or engage in extramarital affairs in order to beget children. In some cases, incompleteness or insecurity in marriages could be attributed to masculine sterility resulting into low self-esteem (Bujo, 2009:134).

The study also noted that some couples who gave birth to children of the same gender were stigmatized because, they were influenced by the African traditional belief that children are born so as to replace ageing parents. The concern was aggravated when a couple did not have a male child. They were influenced by the belief that it is only male offspring who can propagate their family lineage and inherit land in their African cultural contexts (Informant X, Interview: 28.8.2018).

3.13. Miscommunication

Communication is a two-way traffic that can only be complete and effective if the receiver understands, interprets and acts on the message as rightfully intended by the sender (Parikh

2000:186). Effective communication leads to gainful expression of ideas, thoughts, feelings and intentions. The lack of communication occurs if the receiver fails to get the intended meaning, but continues to respond or act based on the wrongly created impression. It also arises if the sender fails to pass the intended message effectively.

The lack of communication according to Butts (2009:1) escalates small issues into major concerns leading to separation and divorce. It leads to unfulfilled expectations causing frustrations in relationships. If one's message is not well understood, it is obvious that it will not be implemented and marital expectations will not be met. Misunderstandings among spouses caused frequent complaints, conflicts, fear, and anxiety thus hindering physical and emotional intimacy.

Effective communication improves intimacy, creates a sense of respect and worth in marriage (Robinson & Blanton 1993:41). But, the lack of communication in many urban marriages was reported to be more often among younger couples than the older ones. This was because older couples had longer time experiences with each other and had acquired effective and relevant communication skills. The study also noted that the nature of miscommunication varied from one family to another. Some informants complained that their spouses failed to converse effectively. Others reported poor interactive channels accusing their partners of divulging sensitive family matters through mobile phones and other social media chats instead of engaging in face-to-face dialogues (Informant IV, Interview: 4.7.2018). Such untimely communication was also reported among some people who engaged in conversations with their spouses in serious discussions when they were exhausted or in the presence of their children or strangers. Other informants further stated that their spouses were hardliners and unwilling to compromise their stand in order to accommodate their spouses'

opinions. Some of them reported cases of over-reaction; contempt and threats of physical violence or talking too much without the willingness to listen.

3.14. Relationship with In-Laws

In the traditional African society, a girl was married into the community. A spouse was only a custodian of the marital covenant on behalf of the extended family. Good relationships with in-laws was one of the ways of maintaining communal cohesion, respect and sustainability of the marriage bond. The building of good relationships with in-laws was procedural and ritualistic. It involved premarital visits in which future partners learnt to interact with each other and their families before and after marriage (Kenyatta, 2000:107). Before marriage, the bride underwent special rituals which were meant to embrace the bride into the new family and to cast out bad spirits that could create bad blood between the two families. Any occurrence of a strained relationship in marriage was harmoniously mediated by elders to restore peace and order.

The study showed that premarital visits are still practiced by majority of couples to their in-laws, lasting one day or a few hours. The scope and objectives of these visits were at times unclear even to intended couples. In most cases, the attention was directed towards visiting the bride's home for bride-wealth negotiation and payment. Where parents from either or both parties resided within the city, some preferred to visit them within the city excluding other closer family members (Informant II, Interview: 12.5.2017).

The reality regarding the communal nature of marriage is the couples' duty. Christian marriage is grounded on the principle of one leaving his maternal family and cleaving to the spouse which is a total disconnect and departure from one's own family members. The influence of one's parents and siblings is felt in the family even after marriage. Since many

contemporary marriages do not have proper communal grounding, the subsequent relationship with the in-laws is sometimes strenuous and troublesome to young families (Informant II, Interview: 12.5.2017).

The study observed that approximately half of the families have unresolved issues with their in-laws. More married women have unsettled issues with their husbands' families than those between men and their wives' families. This is because the nature of African families encourage frequent exposure and interactions between women and their husbands' families. In traditional African context, a man was expected to distance himself from his mother in-law and to avoid any confrontation with her. Some few conflicts between men and parents' in-laws were however noted, regarding unpaid bride-wealth and control over the woman's wealth (Informant II, Interview: 12.5.2017).

Women who had strained relationships with their in-laws cited issues like overuse and diversion of man's resources towards the support of his parents and siblings. Others cited frequent visits by the in-laws as a source of interference and encroachment into the spouse's private family lives. Other women complained of exclusivity in family decisions arguing that their husbands consulted widely with their parents and siblings over crucial decisions as opposed to their wives (Informant IV, Interview, 3.5.2018).

Conflicts with the in-laws could be disastrous to a marriage if they are not properly managed. They could result into lack of respect between a husband and a wife because many people still believe that respect to a spouse must be reciprocated to their parents too. Persistent conflicts with in-laws can also cause parents to disown their offspring's spouse. The fear of conflict with a spouse over their parents can equally make one abandon and neglect his/her own parents. Such partners can easily imagine that ignoring their parents can make their spouses happy and peaceful. It should however be noted that it is more fruitful and noble to

handle conflicts rather than ignoring one's own relatives. Since both Christianity and African traditional religion grant that people should take responsibility over their ageing parents, any form of disrespect and neglect of parents or in-laws is contrary to Christianity and African cultural norms. Christianity for instance advocates that a person who neglects his or her own family is worse than a non-believer (1 Timothy 5:8).

3.15. Lack of Commitment in Marriage

The privation of marital commitment can be defined at two levels. First, it refers to the inability to make a marital relationship better. It could also refer to the inability to endure challenges that emerge in the relationship and failure to devise alternative ways of solving existing challenges that threaten the stability and sustainability of marriage (Karney & Bradbury 2005:171). Commitment in marriage means enjoying all its benefits and enduring all challenges in matrimony. Efforts must be made to sustain or improve the privileges of a marriage and work towards resolving the threatening issues. A marriage is said to suffer from lack of obligation, if such effort is missing or dismal.

Schapper (1983:103) observed that marriage is a form of self-sacrifice that cannot stand without personal commitment from both parties. A partner has to lay down his or her selfish motives, interest, desires and motivations for the good of the marital union. His or her personal interests must be subdued in favour of family interests. Evdokimov (1985:89) considers marriage as a more challenging call than celibacy. Unlike the celibate clergy who commit their lives to a faithful and all-powerful God, the married couples are expected to commit themselves to a human relationship where both parties are mere human creatures who have their own weaknesses. Guroian (1994:323) affirms that the stability of a marriage is automatically threatened if there is lack of obligation from either or both parties.

The research found out that many couples are dissatisfied by the attention that their spouses give to their marriages. However, levels of commitment were evident in newer marriages, but reduced at middle age and improved again in old age. This is because young couples are always excited on how to make each other feel happy. But, as marriages matures, children were born and attention is shifted and divided between the spouse and the offspring. The fixed work schedules also results into physical exhaustion in both men and women, denying the couple ample resting time and reducing stamina for successful conjugal relations. Some couples felt that their spouses were more concerned about work than family affairs (Informant X, Interview: 30.8.2018).

The study also showed that married men were often accused of lack of commitment than women because they shift their attention from marital to material or industrial achievements. Men often take over the bulk of families' burden and work extra hard in order to meet their family needs and have limited time for their families. Birthday parties, flower gifts, valentine celebrations or going out for coffee may seem to be petty expressions of love for men, but of great value to women (Informant X, Interview: 30.8.2018).

The lack of assurance, whether actual or by mere perception affects a couple's ability to address their differences in marriage. One is always preoccupied with the negative perception about each other and may not be willing to forgive, learn, or change for the better of the family. This also creates a sense of insecurity and mistrust. If one partner does not cooperate with the other in building the relationship, even minor disagreements and challenges can escalate into separation or divorce (Informant XI, Interview: 30.8.2017).

3.16. Alcohol and Drug Addiction

The study established that excessive alcohol consumption and abuse of bhang, *miraa,* cocaine among others resulted into marital dysfunction. Consumption of such drugs affect a person's physiological and psychological functioning resulting into imbalance of normal human operations (Bachman, J.G. et al 1997:124). This hinders marital commitment, leading to diversion of resources at the expense of family obligations and sometimes resulted into domestic violence.

It was further noted that perennial alcohol intake and drug addiction make some spouses to spend less time with their families during the holidays and weekends. They delay in social gatherings and come back home very late in the night when the spouse and children are already asleep (Stanton & Todd 1982: 12).

Emotional infidelity and mistrust was reported in incidences where one or both partners are addicts. Some spouses share sensitive family information with outsiders hence betraying, exposing or shaming the other partner. Sexual dysfunction and low libido among married men and women are affected by excessive alcohol intake and drug abuse (Taylor et al. 1966:585).

The use of drugs affect parenting because, parents who are involved in alcohol consumption and drug abuse could give birth to children with health complications. Children whose parents are drug addicts are also exposed to this negative trait and could imitate their parents' behaviour when they eventually grew up (Taylor et al. 1966: 589).

3.17. Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is one of the top global public health challenges or negative behaviour by a spouse or family member which results into threats, physical, emotional or sexual injury (W.H.O 2017:1). Forceful entry or destruction of a spouse's or offspring's private residence

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is one of the common forms of domestic violence, in addition to physical, sexual, child, economic and verbal abuses (Protection Against Domestic Violence Act 2015:18-19). Women and children are the most vulnerable culprits to domestic violence, although some men have fallen victims to this vice. Out of the marriages studied, the study showed that at least 40% of the families have experienced some form of domestic violence which include verbal, physical or sexual abuse. The study further observed that most of the women who suffered from physical violence were housewives who depend on their husbands for material upkeep. In such situations, women are perceived by their husbands as a burden, yet it is their unemployment status which forces them to stay in such marriages to benefit from economic support (World Health Organization 2017:1).

Conflicts are generally perceived as a common phenomenon in any human relationship, but the inability to resolve them amicably often results into violence. In the traditional African setup, marital conflicts were amicably resolved by peers or elders from the extended family. While today, families lack sufficient avenues to address their marital grievances which are deemed to be delicate and confidential which over time leads to violence (Conway 1998:76). Majority of contemporary urban families live far away from their parents, guardians or elders. The closer neighbours and friends often intervene in settling confidential marital issues of the aggrieved spouses. The services of commercial marital counsellors are also sort in moments of disputes (Informant III, Interview: 12.5.2017).

Domestic violence could be imitated from parents who take pleasure in battering their spouses in the presence of their children (Sherman et. al. 1992:1). A child or children who are raised in such a violent family will perceive domestic violence as a normal occurrence. A financially constrained couple perceives each other as a burden hence escalating violence. Some victims are forced to endure because they lack alternative means of survival.

In a few instances, men are molested by their wives, but they shun to report or share the issue which is tantamount to demeaning their status in society. Some women are also afraid to quit violent relationships since the society may consider them as failures in life.

Domestic violence can also emanate from negative characters like uncontrolled temper, addiction to drugs or uncontrolled sexual desires which have both long and short-term consequences (World Health Organization 2013:1). It can result into physical injuries, health complications, and emotional disorders such as low self-esteem, depression and mistrust. When one suffers from such forms of abuses from a spouse or parent, he or she can develop a negative attitude towards other authorities or seniors outside the family cycles. Children who hail from such violent marriages can develop poor social skills and exhibit extreme aggressive and ruthless traits thereby lacking the sense of empathy in dealing with others (World Health Organization 2014:1). When such children grow up, they may expose their families to similar or more serious forms of violence (World Health Organization 2017:1).

Criminal acts such as suicide, murder or sexual abuse of offspring emanate from domestic violence. The culprits who are convicted in courts of law serve long jail sentences which expose them and their surviving family members to more mental, social and economic problems (W.H.O 2001:1). Domestic violence may lead to divorce and separation resulting into some children opting to stay with other relatives instead of their parents (World Health Organization.2017:1).

3.18. Mid-life Crisis

The concept of mid-life crisis was developed in 1965 by Elliot Jacques, a Canadian psychologist who defined it as a stage caused by a set of psychological changes and experiences that occur when people transit from young adulthood into old age (Jacques,

1965:13). The stage occurs between mid-40s to late 50s, but can sometimes begin earlier. During this stage in life, people are faced with the reality of living in the last cycle of their life span. They become more concerned about their achievements, preparation for retirement or fear of death (Jacques 1965: 502). This crisis is common to both genders, but takes different forms. The middle-aged men are more concerned about their achievements and ability to prove to be most successful among their peers. Women on the other hand would like to maintain their physical appearances and sexual attractions (Jacques 1965: 504).

The transition to middle age is positive and exciting because people possess and teach others facts of life (Setiya 2014:3). Most of them could be retrogressive resulting into regret, dissatisfaction or depression. Mid-life crisis is also characterized by low libido, attainment of menopause, dropping old friends in favour of new ones and abnormal sleep cycles (Setiya 2014: 26). In the study, some couples in the middle age bracket felt dissatisfied by their marital achievements hence regretted their marriage choices. They imagined that their lives would have been better if they could have made different marriage choices and blamed their spouses for their personal failures hence felt wasted, abused and misused by their partners.

Such families also recorded more frequent conflicts than those that were satisfied by their achievements. It was also noted that in the current society, many people take a long time to study or seek for jobs before they stabilize in marriage. Some partners got married in middle age and were affected when their marriages were still tender and were not strong enough to cope up or overcome such challenges.

3.19. Chapter's Summary

Since no human relationship is ideal, no marriage is perfect. Marriage problems have been in existence throughout history. Contemporary urban families experience marital challenges of

different nature and magnitudes. This is due to social, economic and cultural tensions caused by contemporary forces such as the wave of social change, foreign influence, and new technology, disconnect from traditional values, new modes of production and thrust for materialism. Some problems such as handling in-laws persist from the traditional societies, but the current society lacks proper mechanisms to cope with them. Other issues such as unguided spousal choice, materialism and change of family roles are however peculiar to contemporary society.

It was also notable that marital problems take different forms at various stages of life. For instance, frequent misunderstandings and miscommunication were often witnessed during the early stages of marriage. These were however viewed as profound problems that emerged as the new-weds learned how to cope up with each other. Parenting and mid-life challenges emerged as the relationship matured. Marital challenges may decrease, but become intense. A higher possibility of marital breakup was reported during middle age as opposed to very early or late stages of marriage.

The sustainability of marriage at any stage depended on the couples' endurance and co-operation with each other in pursuit of a solution. In this process, personal interests should never precede those of the family. The intimate nature of marriage relationship further demands that solutions to marital problems is the responsibility of couples themselves. Social and communal interests in marriage give room for mediation. It is noteworthy that marital problems are very complex, confidential, interrelated and demand that only a few trusted and qualified experts can mediate in these conflicts. The interconnected nature of marital problems further imply that solutions can only be arrived at through proper diagnosis without ignoring the genesis of the problem. After examining the challenges facing contemporary African Christian marriages, the study now assesses the nature and procedures of instituting

contemporary African Christian marriages in the selected New Religious Movements in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN CHRISTIAN MARRIAGES IN SELECTED NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN NAIROBI COUNTY

4.1. Introduction

New Religious Movements (NRMs) have become a global phenomenon in Christianity since the 1960s. The current trend in Christianity shows that these movements have turned out to be more attractive to urban youth as opposed to mainstream churches (Shorter & Njiru 2001:38). Kagema & Maina (2014:35) identified certain factors that make New Religious Movements more appealing to the urban youth in Nairobi. Their study revealed that city youths had been uprooted from their rural, social, cultural and religious backgrounds in pursuit of new identities. The New Religious Movements have become a home away from mainstream churches and they have propagated a kind of preaching which tends to address contemporary problems like unemployment, financial distress, HIV and AIDS, homelessness, discouragement, sexuality and relationships. These NRMs are headed by charismatic leaders whose followers believe that they possess divine gifts or profound powers which are useful in unfolding the causes and solutions to their problems. A study by Foster (2010:34) also showed the high level of trust that followers of New Religious Movements bestow on the founders. This has sometimes negated positive efforts towards reconstructing marriage and family values to address sensitive contemporary problems (Murtala 2013:181). This creates the urge to assess the nature and strategies of procedures employed by such NRMs in establishing contemporary African Christian marriages, which is the focus of this chapter.

4.2. Nairobi Chapel's Marriage Policy

Nairobi Chapel believed that a Christian marriage is a spiritual union that can only stand if both the husband and wife are believers (Informant X, Interview: 30.8.2017). The movement

does not sanction any wedding in which either or both proposing persons have not professed Christ as their personal saviour. The Nairobi Chapel further asserted that every Christian, whether married or not should have an adequate knowledge regarding healthy family life. Since every one interacts with a family at one level or another, the movement taught that knowledge about healthy marriage is necessary in building a vibrant church and society. The Nairobi Chapel followers acknowledged teachings on sexuality, marriage and family as necessary church tenets.

4.2.1. Pre-Marital Counseling Class

The study observed that Nairobi Chapel ran three pre-marital counselling class (PMCC) sessions annually for courting partners who intended to wed in the church. The program was interdenominational and invited participants beyond the Nairobi Chapel's congregation. The classes comprised a two-hour weekly session that lasted from 6.30 am to 8.30 am every Saturday morning which had an enrolment of between 30-40 pairs of courting partners. The first class ran from February to April, the second from May to July and the last session from September to November.

The candidates appeared in person and were interviewed to establish their pre-marital status before enrolment into the class. If it was discovered that either one partner or both of them had previously been separated, divorced or were cohabiting, their request for admission was turned down. Those who were separated were advised to pursue reconciliation, while divorcees were enrolled into a "Divorce Care" class where they were taken through a healing and recovery process. Those who were cohabiting were advised to enroll into the "Couples Affirmation Class" (CAC). The interview was meant to affirm if both parties were believers. If it was established that one or both of them did not profess Christianity that is in line with the movement's tradition, they were enrolled into the class, but warned that the movement

would not solemnize their wedding unless they got converted. The intending partners were further advised to either get converted or search for an alternative church minister outside Nairobi Chapel to solemnize their marriage (Informant XII, Interview: 2.9.2019).

The marital candidates were instructed to avoid sexual intimacy until they were officially wedded. In case the two had engaged in sexual intercourse with each other or any other person apart from the intended spouse, they were enrolled into the pre-marital counselling class, but were urged to seek God's forgiveness and to practice secondary virginity thereafter. Upon passing the oral interview, they joined other approved candidates to form a class (Informant XII, Interview: 2.9.2019).

A special day was set aside for the official launch of the class during which candidates were exposed to the objectives, rules and regulations and the summary of the course content. The Pre-marital counseling class was overseen by a pastor who worked with other professional counselors from the movement that were experts in various areas of their expertise. Each trainer was assigned a topic to cover and a date was set for the lesson. The trainers were expected to conduct the sessions in company of their spouses to encourage the family spirit that the trainees were expected to emulate. The trainers were usually couples who had been married for more than 5 years and were good marriage role models. This practice complied with Siliman & Schumm (1999:23) observation that the effectiveness of premarital counseling goes beyond the course content and includes the qualities of facilitators.

Apart from the pastor who was a paid-up employee of the movement, other facilitators offered their services voluntarily basis and were encouraged to do so in support of the movement and the society. Most trainers were professional counselors, graduates or postgraduate specialists in medicine, sociology, finance and other disciplines that were applicable in marriage life. They were expected to offer both practical and professional

experiences on marriage and family issues. Theological and spiritual matters were however handled by the Pastor in charge.

The main objective of Pre-marital Counseling Classes was to equip marital candidates with knowledge on the biblical view about marriage and gain practical skills on how to apply that knowledge in varying family contexts (Informant X, Interview: 30.8.2017). This would enable them to build fruitful Christian marriages. Biblical experiences and references were quoted in addition to practical reflections with research-based knowledge.

Some of the topics handled included the biblical meaning of marriage, roles of husband and wife, conflict management and marital communication skills. The candidates were taught on the 'fair fight" principle in marriage which implied that a partner has to first fight for the interest of the family before engaging in personal interests (Informant X, Interview: 30.8.2017). The courting partners were advised to sacrifice or compromise their own interests for the sake of their spouses. The topic on how to manage in-laws who were third parties to a marriage was also handled. The courting partners were warned of dangers involved in opening up their relationship to them and were instead encouraged to keep their affairs to themselves. Some allowance was however created for one to offer sustainable financial support to his or her parents, but remain cautious in dealing with other relatives. Such support was done with the full knowledge and blessings from both partners.

The issues related to sexuality and intimacy were also taught where couples were encouraged to keep the relationship as romantic as possible, and to bear with one another whenever situations challenge sexual intimacy. Apart from faithfulness in marriage, family planning issues were handled by medical experts from within the movement. The candidates were further advised to seek for more specialized and private medical advice in their marital lives. They were taught financial management and investment and warned of the difficulty in

building a sustainable marriage in contemporary society without money. The intending couples were encouraged to work hard and smart in order to create wealth and invest in life. Women were encouraged to practice financial autonomy and never to over-rely on their husbands for support (Informant XII, Interview: 2.9.2019).

The pre-marital candidates were sensitized on how to continue supporting the movement through tithes, offerings and other generous donations. This was perceived to be the source of God's blessings and appreciation to the church. During the counseling sessions, small discussion groups were created and assigned simple lessons with reading notes which were submitted online before the next class (Informant XII, Interview: 2.9.2019).

At the end of the ten weeks' period, candidates were taken out to a one-day retreat session outside the church compound to have fun, play games and to bond with other members of the class. The objective of the retreat was to create future family friends with whom a couple could share experiences and challenges while in marriage.

The class also formed a marital age group and appointed their own leaders who were expected to maintain fellowship and mentor other younger couples. A graduation service was conducted during one Sunday worship service which marked completion of the course thereby commissioning the candidates to officially proceed on with marriage arrangements (Informant XII, Interview: 2.9.2019). The movement's wedding policy was also made clearer to them.

The study affirmed that approximately 100 couples attended Nairobi Chapel's Pre-marital Counseling Class (PMCC) every year. The decisions taken by the candidates upon completion of the class are summarized in the table below:

Table 4.1 Nairobi Chapel's PMCC's candidates' marital decisions

Wedded in Nairobi Chapel	Wedded in another church	Broken courtships	Total	Percentage (%)
50 couples	30 couples	20 couples	100 couples	100%

Out of the 100 couples that attended the PMCC annually, it was noted that approximately 50 couples (50%) successfully wedded within the movement, 30 couples (30%) wedded in other churches while 20 couples (20%) broke their engagements during or after the class. Those who terminated their relationships were couples who discovered through the Pre-Marital Counseling Class that marriage was not as easy as they anticipated. Some of them ended up forfeiting the vision to get married, while others sought for alternative spouses (Informant XII, Interview: 2.9.2019).

The study acknowledged that there were numerous couples in Nairobi Chapel who stayed together in marriage like relationships, yet they were not officially married (Informant XII, Interview: 30.8.2017). Some had observed traditional African cultural marriages and were now showing interest in seeking for God's blessings through an official church wedding. Such couples were enrolled in the Couples' Affirmation Classes (CAC) where they were taught marital life obligations, but they were not encouraged to dissolve their unions. The argument was that these people were Christians, yet, they were in non-Christian unions (Informant XI, Interview: 2.9.2019). They were trained on how to improve their relationships and as a prelude to pursuit of a church wedding. The Couples Affirmation Class was similar to the Pre-marital Counseling Class and lasted ten weeks too. The successful completion of training was followed by a church wedding. The pre-marital Counselling Classes were at times conducted concurrently with Couples' Affirmation Classes, but in different contexts.

4.2.2. Marriage beyond the Altar

Whereas a Christian wedding is an event that is conducted at the altar, marriage goes beyond it. The success of any marriage is inclined to the quality and care of a relationship after the wedding ceremony which requires a couple's commitment and spiritual nurture. At Nairobi Chapel, the most profound programs aimed at nurturing and enriching marriages include "*Jabali*" or "Man enough" program, "*Binti*" Ministry and family enrichment programs (Informant XI, Interview: 2.9.2017).

The Kiswahili word *Jabali* - brave is derived from the Arabic root "*Jabbar*" meaning ruler. This program was aimed at establishing and empowering men to assume the status of strength and leadership in a family, community, Church and nation. This was commensurate with the movement's observation that current family and societal failures were attributed to men's weaknesses (Informant XII, Interview: 2.9.2017). The Man enough *Jabali* program held monthly breakfast meetings which were branded "Kings Gathering" whose aim was to create an environment where men had fellowship, inspired each another and discussed pertinent issues in life. They deliberated on problems facing families, the Church, community and the entire nation. Men were organized into small groups of three individuals, basing on the biblical Trinitarian analogy and from the story of Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego, who stood with each other and survived a furnace of fire (Daniel 3:1-30). It was believed that the small groups could enhance commitment to faith and build strong bonds of unity hence warranting the intervention of Jesus in their daily challenges (Informant XII, Interview: 2.9.2017).

The study also noted that the program enriched self-discovery and identity of men. The movement made references to Tome (2016:83-104), who identified five characteristics that distinguish manhood from boyhood. The author argues that actualization of these features

enables a man to be regarded mature even at a tender age, while their absence could characterize an adult man as being a boy regardless of his advanced age. These traits include clarity of vision, firmness in decision making, being a team player, industriousness and ability to protect the family, community, church and the nation (Tome 2016:83). These five attributes of a man formed the core pillars of Nairobi Chapel's "man enough" program.

The study also identified the role of *"Binti"* program for women which sought to empower women to overcome their challenges in the family, community and church. The Kiswahili word *"Binti"* meaning daughter was meant to inspire women to establish authentic relationships amongst themselves and to identify their personal potentialities. This program was in its formative stage and ran monthly meetings capitalizing on women's ability to make emotional connections, and create such fora in the church context. The women learned how to mentor, support, and challenge one another in matters related to marriage, faith and other spheres of life (Informant XI, Interview: 30.8.2017).

Apart from the *Jabali* and *Binti* programs, Nairobi Chapel brought together couples that went through the same Pre-marital Counseling Class into a family enrichment program which was meant to create a network between couples which enabled them to share their ideas and challenges. Younger couples were connected to senior couples for mentorship in various marital issues. Each group was led by their own leaders, who were most often the ones who had led them during the Pre-marital Counseling Class sessions. They were answerable to the pastor in charge of families and were charged with the duty of organizing and coordinating the groups' activities in conjunction with their mentors. They organized retreats, seminars and visits to each other's families which were geared towards enhancing sound and enduring marriages.

4.2.3. Nairobi Chapel's Policy on Separation, Divorce and Remarriage

Nairobi Chapel acknowledged that debates regarding separation, divorce and remarriage were controversial issues in Christianity whose reality of existence among married couples compelled the movement to establish a policy that could guide its adherents (Informant X, Interview: 30.8.2017). The Nairobi Chapel's policy on separation, divorce and remarriage acknowledged that marriage life could at times be very turbulent and unbearable hence making its termination a reality. Separation, divorce and remarriage were however considered to be consequences of human stubbornness and cruelty of hearts towards one another and God. The policy asserted that if divorce occurred, the two should remain loyal to the primary marital bond through reconciliation or remain single in life.

The movement gave exceptions where separation, divorce and remarriage could be permissible by citing Matthew 5:32 where Jesus permitted divorce on the grounds of adultery and further stated that sanctioning of divorce on such reasons grants an aggrieved partner the requisite freedom to remarry (Informant XI, Interview: 30.8.2017). The movement however warned against dangers of using every case of adultery as a mere justification for divorce and remarriage. The Pastor in charge of marriage affirmed that couples sometimes committed more severe offenses than adultery, but were encouraged to forgive each other and move on (Informant X, Interview: 30.8.2017). God forgives and restores a marriage as exemplified from the analogy in (Ezekiel 16:60-62) when he forgave, tolerated and reconciled to his unfaithful wife (Israel) after multiple cases of unfaithfulness (adultery).

Nairobi Chapel's policy qualified that adultery must have been committed leading to separation and divorce especially if the offender had departed from Christian faith's teachings and that efforts to reconcile the two were futile. In such a case, the couple was required to remain separated for at least 7 years so as to give more time for reconciliation. But, if the

period expired without the offender's positive response, the aggrieved party was at liberty to pursue divorce following a due legal process. It was only after one attained a legal divorce certificate that the church conducted a service to dissolve the marriage bond. The dissolution service was conducted and witnessed by the former spouse, their children if any and extended family members. After the legal and spiritual dissolution had been sanctioned, estranged partners were considered officially divorced and had the liberty to remarry or get married. The offended partner were supposed to forgive the former spouse, go through a healing process to set him or her free to choose another spouse and solemnize the marriage in a church wedding (Informant XI, Interview: 30.8.2017).

After discussing Nairobi Chapel's response to marital challenges, the study also considered alternative approaches offered by Mavuno Church.

4.3. Mavuno Church's Marriage Policy

During this study, Mavuno Church acknowledged that majority of their congregants joined the movement at a time when they were either seeking for a marital relationship, in courtship or very young in marriage. Topics related to sexuality and marriage were dominant at the pulpit. A series of homilies on relationships and marriage were evident in Sunday worship services which ran for a period of between four to six weeks annually. Mavuno Church did not have official relationship regulations on single adults. The congregants were therefore at liberty to interact and identify a potential soul mate. Deliberate efforts were made to create room for such interactions through singles' night outs, retreats and dinners. The movement further encouraged members to seek for spouses from within the congregation. Since courtship and marriage was desired by many adherents, those who were lucky to identify a fellow church mate considered it a miraculous adventure (Informant VI, Interview: 20.6.2018).

Church leaders were cautioned against initiating or showing sexual or marital interests towards new church followers. Since majority of new recruits were not yet converted, the movement anticipated that they may not take sexual or marital interests at that early stage positively. It was further advised that leaders could only show their marital interest after taking their followers through the required ten weeks' membership course. If the interest was viewed as genuine, then they were encouraged to make proposals with the permission of at least a pastor (Informant VI, Interview: 20.6.2018). This policy was meant to safeguard new members and control young leaders who may have used ministry opportunities to exploit the naive followers. It was perceived that leaders who approached new members for relationships could cause fear among such members, create unnecessary competition or taint the name of the movement before the outsiders.

Despite the movement's openness and tolerance to unbelievers, pastors were prohibited from officiating a wedding between unbelievers (Informant VI, Interview: 20.6.2018). It was acknowledged that a Christian marriage is impossible to achieve without personal commitment to Christian faith. Since the Movement's target was non-church goers, the founding Pastor lamented that many of these members made easy verbal confessions as licenses for weddings without experiencing real conversion of the heart (Informant IV, Interview: 20.6.2018).

The research noted that the movement's marriage policy was silent on cultural obligations. All the Pastors interviewed stated that these were private affairs that should be handled outside the Church. They indicated that the Church was a spiritual institution and was not indebted to promote cultural traditions. It could only intervene and mediate if invited by the hosts to settle cultural differences which threatened their intention to get married. An informant pointed out that a mediation mission headed by a pastor amicably resolved cases

where parents declined their daughter's intention to marry outside her ethnic community (Informant IV, Interview: 20.6.2018). Mavuno Church acknowledged that similar clashes were numerous, but it had not developed clear guidelines to ameliorate such cultural issues. The directives remained verbal and discretionary. The *Ndoa* or marriage Ministry was also evident in the Mavuno church to support married couples.

4.3.1. "Ndoa" Ministry

In Kiswahili, "Ndoa" means marriage. In Mavuno Church, the *Ndoa* program was aimed at building stable and lasting marriages by enrolling partners who intended to learn about marriage and family life. They were taken through group counseling sessions which were very interactive. The classes were held on Sunday mornings between 7.30am to 9.30 am before candidates joined the normal worship services. Alternative sessions were also offered in the afternoon after worship services. The couples had a choice to attend either the morning or afternoon classes at their convenience.

The "*Ndoa*" program consisted of two streams, each targeting different categories of people. The first stream "*Ndoa Equip*" enrolled future partners who were making their first attempt to enter into marriage. This premarital counseling class gave candidates a proactive approach to marital issues. The second stream "*Ndoa Enrich*." targeted those who were either cohabiting or got married outside the church and would like to improve their unions by acquiring and applying Christian principles. This program enabled them to solemnize marriages through church weddings after the training. *Ndoa Enrich* helped couples to handle marital challenges when they were already in a marital relationship.

The two programs had similar curricula which handled topics on communication, sexuality, financial management, roles of husband and wife, conflict resolution, parenting and family

planning. The learning program was enhanced through distribution of a printed manual at an affordable cost. The manuals comprised discussion questions for easier comprehension to intended spouses. This was augmented with face-to-face contact lessons from a team of pastors who interchangeably handled different marital topics. Apart from the *Ndoa* ministry which targeted special segments of the congregation, Mavuno Church ran a series of sermons on love, sex and marriage that focused on the entire congregation.

4.3.2. Sermons on Love, Sex and Marriage

In Mavuno Church, marital failures were directly attributed to the observation that churches have often kept silent on love, sex and marriage matters (Informant IV, Interview: 20.6.2018)). To counter this, the movement devoted a series of sermons that ran for at least one month annually where pastors preached about matters related to love, sex and marriage. These sermons were delivered at the pulpit during normal Sunday services. This study analyzed the series of sermons on love, sex and marriage taught between the years 2016, 2017 and 2018.

In the sermon series titled "Falling and Staying in Love", a Mavuno Church pastor argued that, "it was easier to fall, than to stay in love". The pastor identified certain factors that made it difficult for current couples to maintain their love relationships. These included; experience, hunger and culture which resulted in relationship breakups. It was argued that many people hailed from backgrounds with negative and unhealthy family experiences such as broken homes, abandonment, violence, divorce and separation which increased chances of imitating emergent issues and incapacitated one's ability to counteract them (Informant V, Sermon: 30.9.2017).

The second factor that made it difficult to maintain relationships according to the pastor was "love hunger" (Informant V, Sermon 30.09.2017). It was explained that partners who hailed from unsound romantic experiences and backgrounds had deep craving for a perfect love, yet it was not possible to achieve it. This is the reason why people entered into passionate relationships in pursuit of perfect love which entailed perfect comfort, acceptance, recognition, approval, appreciation, respect, security, affection and other unrealistic desires. This scenario created an imbalance whereby those who had suffered from love undernourishment expected its abundance in their own relationships.

The third factor is what another Mavuno Church pastor termed as "culture" where the current generation had situations where people could easily endure various forms of hardships in career, jobs and health, but not in marriage. Many relationships were governed by familiar sayings such as; "do to others as they deserve", "dump before you are dumped", and "do to others according to your feelings". Such perceptions contradicted Christian virtues of love, forgiveness, tolerance, patience and endurance which hindered people's capacity to build healthy marital relationships (Informant IV, Sermon: 20.6.2018).

The pastor asserted that true love could only be realized and maintained if a couple practiced Jesus' teaching on love. In his sermon "New Command", he drew an analogy from John 13:34 where Jesus stated that: "A new command I give you, love one another. As I loved you, so you must love one another." In this homily, the pastor illustrated that true love was neither based on experience nor feelings, but was a duty and command. He challenged individuals not to consider love as being mere feelings of affection, pleasure or interest, but rather as a command and a duty to be conducted. The duty to love preceded the feeling of love where some practical steps such as putting mobile phone reminders to hug and kiss a spouse at least

once every day as a way of practicing marital love were recommended (Informant IV, Sermon: 30.9.2017).

In another sermon titled "What is inside", one pastor argued that a marriage can only improve if each couple addressed the inner spiritual and character aspects. It was illustrated that the concerns that troubled marriages most were "the enemies within" and not external forces. The pastor invited individuals to examine their own spiritual, emotional and character weaknesses as opposed to waiting until their spouses complained about them. It was further alluded that increased self-awareness, willingness to learn, positive responses to correction and regular invitation of God's intervention into one's personal weaknesses improved the relationship (Informant VI, Sermon: 20.7.2016).

The pastor also taught that real love cannot be realized if a couple harboured unrealistic expectations. In the sermon: "What will you put in the gap?" It was stated that current families suffered due to the wide gap that existed between what a person expected and what one received from a partner. In response to this, the pastor advised couples to embrace the principle of "believing the best and not assuming the worst." by creating a positive faith even if a partner demonstrated the worst trait. A positive faith creates a positive spiral of love and enhances positive change in the spouse's character (Informant VI, Sermon: 12.7.2016). Whereas the Mavuno Church's Ndoa Ministry and Pulpit sermons were highlighted as most elaborate and unique responses to marital issues, Jubilee Christian Church offered an alternative model that is presented in the next section.

4.4. Jubilee Christian Church's Marriage Policy

Jubilee Christian Church's marriage policy is coined around the four principles of Christian marriage documented in a book co-authored by the founding couple (Kiuna & Kiuna

2012:13) titled, *Marriage Works*. The first principle stated that marriage is an institution authored by God and must be fruitfully lived. It is a union of three comprising the couple and God. The second principle stated that marriage is permanent and should not be entered into hastily. One has to consider the consequences of marrying someone else before making a life commitment. Although marital challenges were considered usual incidences, couples need to affirm permanency and make every effort to save the marriage rather than walking out (Kiuna & Kiuna 2012:13).

The third principle stated that marriage is a selfless union where individuals should not enter into with the view of gaining from it, but giving into it. The urge to give must supersede the urge to gain. This calls for couples to commit themselves selflessly and fulfil their obligations. In the last principle, Kiuna & Kiuna (2012:114) argued that marriage must be lived as a calling for God's purpose. They stated that matrimony and God's purpose are inseparable. It should be perceived as a means of ferrying people to their Godly ordained destinies (Kiuna & Kiuna 2012:14). Jubilee Christian Church also responded to marital issues through special premarital counselling programs.

4.4.1. Premarital Counseling

Jubilee Christian Church conducted an eight-week premarital counseling class on Saturday afternoons which was offered at a fee and was only open to cases where at least one of the intended couple was a member of the church. This program was headed by a pastor who was selected by the senior pastor. The movement however did not permit non-clergy to facilitate sessions in the programs. Candidates were taken through group counseling sessions, but those who had special relationship needs were advised to consult the pastor privately. As the wedding day approached, the intending couple was requested to meet the pastor away from the rest of the class. The session was meant to clarify some pertinent issues that could have

not been clearly covered during group sessions as they were oriented towards the wedding ceremony. A mock ceremony was conducted in the pastoral office involving intended couples and the officiating minister. During this session, each partner was informed of his or her duty and the order of events. The wedding vows were read and conceptualized by the candidates. Apart from the premarital class, two feminine counseling programs were practiced in Jubilee Christian Church' namely: "Daughters of Zion" and "Women School of Mentorship" (Informant I, Interview 21.5.2017)

4.4.2. Daughters of Zion

The Daughters of Zion (DOZ) program was initiated in 2001 by Rev. Kathy Kiuna, to address women's issues in Jubilee Christian Church so as to strengthen their marriages. It offered holistic mentorship from a contemporary Christian perspective. The "Daughters of Zion" held monthly meetings, on every first Saturday of each month at JCC Parklands which was attended by delegates from all church branches and also welcomed women from other denominations.

This program was based on the pastor's observation that African women are confronted by intense criticism and ridicule from the society. It was observed that women had been despised in the Church, yet they played an outstanding role in society. To counter the problem, she believed that a solution must start from among women themselves as they embark to revolutionize and change their mindsets and attitudes. If this is achieved, women will no longer perceive themselves as secondary creatures and backbenchers, but as significant beings and standard raisers. It was further noted that women's perception about themselves is instrumental for their own liberation. They must be positive and significant in their own sights before the same was reflected to the society (Informant I, Interview: 21.5.2017).

The pastor contemplated that women face challenges at three levels namely: in the family, church and businesses. Some fundamental pillars were devised in addressing feminine issues socially at the family level, religiously at church level and professionally at business level. Since these pillars are intertwined, they cannot be separated from each other. The church minister believed that women should attain this equilibrium in the family, church and at work places. This could in turn empower them socially, spiritually and economically. This holistic approach should be directed towards transforming women into strong vessels of building their homes, the church and global economy (Informant I, Interview: 21.5.2017)

The pastor drew examples from Ecclesiastes 7:1 and Proverbs 22:1 and taught women not pursue dishonest gains to counter the increasing economic and social pressure. They should instead uphold their integrity by emphasizing on building a good name rather than riches and perfumes. Since women were the majority, they had a greater opportunity to instill integrity and honesty in the church and society at large. It was asserted that if women espoused honesty, men will be equally challenged to emulate them. This will in turn result into peace in the family, sanctity in the church and fairness in businesses (Informant I, Sermon: 28.5.2017)

The Daughters of Zion program drew an example of industriousness from the creation story in Genesis chapter one in which God is revealed as a worker. This analogy was used to teach that man and woman were both created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). It therefore follows that both men and women should emulate God's image by working and creating wealth. Another analogy was drawn from II Corinthians 9:10, where Paul stated that it is God who gives seed to the gardener. Here, women were taught not to expect ready-made handouts from their husbands, but they should instead utilize their unique seeds manifested through their talents, skills and gifts into income generating initiatives. The pastor motivated congregants that even those who lacked formal education or wealth had a seed that could be

nurtured to create wealth. Although the theology on work was initially designed for women, it had attracted followers beyond the primary target. The monthly business forums that were held every first Saturdays of the month were well attended by both men and women from diverse backgrounds and interests. They yearned for the latest business tips and interconnections with other commercial partners. The main objective of pastor was geared at transforming the nation and the world by empowering and transforming Christians from being mere churchgoers into business minded persons (Informant I, Interview: 21.5.2017).

Women were warned to shun unnecessary luxury and unplanned expenditures, but position themselves well. They were encouraged to be contented with whatever they had or owned. Women were encouraged to be good stewards of their family resources and shrewd planners for the future as exemplified in Proverbs 21:5 that: "The plans of the diligent lead to profit, as surely as haste leads to poverty." The congregants were taught that God only blesses people if they are in the right place while doing the right thing. The church minister advised single women who were seeking for spouses to migrate from low class estates and rent servant quarters in upper class estates. In doing so, they could attract rich men who were likely to marry them. This was further supported by the biblical story of Ruth who left Moab as a poor widow, but later got married to Boaz, by simply gleaning in the rich man's field (Ruth 2 and 3).

Daughters of Zion program was also based on the principle of creativity and excellence cited from Proverbs 22:29, which states that: "Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings. He will not serve before obscure men." Kiuna & Kiuna (2012:46) used this analogy to inform their followers of the competitive and chauvinistic nature of the world. It was argued that whatever one aspired to do, several others had already done. Women were taught to be on the cutting age of the market by demonstrating excellence in skills, character,

beauty and related products. They were taught that the fairest way to compete in the market was to raise their standards higher. Women were warned against being poor performers while expecting the society to sympathize with them based on their gender. Women were advised to style up their performance, and they were no longer required sympathy to grow and realize their life goals.

The Daughters of Zion program was emphatic on rest and recreation. The pastor taught women that too much work could make them unhealthy and hinder their performance in marriage, church and businesses. This was contrary to the role of women in traditional African society who were expected to work tirelessly until they lacked time to refresh and rejuvenate themselves. They were instructed to keep fit by engaging in physical exercises, healthy eating and having sufficient rest after work. Kiuna & Kiuna (2012:51) also encouraged women to occasionally retreat outside their homes in the company of their husbands to create an avenue for refreshing their romance, strengthening marital friendship and creating an amicable forum for solving family issues. The Daughters of Zion program also hosted a weekly television program on Nation Television Channel titled "*A Woman Without Limits"* and a monthly business summit, which attracted even male attendance.

4.4.3. Women School of Mentorship

Rev. Kathy Kiuna ran a *Women School of Mentorship* program under the auspices of Daughters of Zion. Whereas the Daughters of Zion program was open to all kinds of women, the mentorship program focused on women preparing for marriage or are young in marriage. The classes were formed spontaneously from several groups of women who visited their pastor's office for mentorship and counseling. Due to the overwhelming number, the church minister decided to enroll them into a class for interactive sessions. These women viewed the pastor as their marriage model and often referred to her as "Mom." At the time of conducting

this research, the program hosted three classes per week with each class comprising between 20-30 women. In this program, women were taught on how to win men's hearts into marriage, submit themselves to their husbands and observe feminine roles in a Christian home. They also learnt how to remain sexually active in marriage. During these classes, the mentor paid special attention to her mentees' special needs and backgrounds and also gave personal illustrations on marriage experiences which were not possibly shared in the Daughters of Zion's public sessions.

4.5. Lighthouse Chapel International Marriage Policy

The Lighthouse Chapel International marriage policy acknowledged marriage as a legal, cultural and spiritual institution. As a legal institution, the movement insisted on strict adherence of marriage vows to the civil regulations as stipulated by particular states. Lighthouse Chapel International advocated for the adherence to traditional cultural obligations as provided for by a person's community and family. Married couples were warned not to consider themselves as merely fulfilling the cultural and civil requirements, but they should rather wed in church because, the spiritual nature of marriage superseded its cultural and civil nature. Although the state and community permitted couples to stay together soon after meeting their marital expectations, the movement warned its members against it. The Lighthouse Chapel International upheld that, there was no Christian marriage without Christian matrimony. The legal and cultural steps should be followed as part of an engagement process to avoid controversies with the state and community, but they did not necessarily constitute a Christian marriage. Lighthouse Chapel International permitted couples to seek marriage certificates directly from the government agencies. But, they should pursue parental consent and blessings, participate in cultural wedding ceremonies, and insist in conducting a church wedding. The Lighthouse Chapel International, affirmed that a

Christian marriage was only solemnized in the church in order to warrant blessings. In case a couple stayed together without a church wedding, they were warned that such a union could potentially remain polygamous. They were therefore advised to pursue church weddings to seal the monogamous unions (Informant IX, Interview: 21.7.2018).

In order to qualify for a church wedding within Lighthouse Chapel International, both partners were expected to be born again Christians and be fully committed to the movement. This was to be approved in writing by a pastor or an elder. But, if a believer requested to marry a partner from outside the movement, the church must subscribe to the common principles as propagated by Lighthouse Chapel International and needed to be committed to that church. Marital candidates underwent a six month's marriage school program that was offered by the movement. Upon completion, they attended at least four premarital counseling sessions which were conducted by a pastor or an elder. They were also expected to provide the church with a six months' notice prior to their intended wedding date (Informant IX, Interview: 21.7.2018).

4.5.1. School of Marriage

The school of marriage was an elaborate family program which was found in all church branches that lasted six months. In this course, candidates were subjected to 2-hours lesson sessions every Sunday afternoon, normally after the normal worship service. Unlike premarital counseling, that only enrolled engaged candidates, the school registered all youth who had attained the age of marriage whether they were engaged or not. It also constituted those who got married outside the church, but were now interested in improving their unions by acquiring relevant knowledge and would like to pursue a church wedding. The movement believed that everyone, whether they were to get married or not, must interact with marriage at one point of life. This was the reason why all partners were expected to gain biblical

knowledge on marriage and family life. The school was however compulsory to those who intended to wed within this movement. The engaged partners were closely attended to and their record was kept in a special register for consistent follow-up encounters.

Dag Heward Mills' medical knowledge was exemplified in "*Model Marriage: A Marriage Counseling Handbook (2007)*" in which he gave deep insights about marriage from both a pastoral and medical practitioner's perspective. The manual formed the main guide to the curriculum. The school was headed by a pastor who offered lessons personally or sometimes delegated the role to other pastors or elders. The course was offered free of charge and a certificate was finally awarded to those who completed the curriculum successfully.

In the school of marriage program, potential spouses were taught the biblical meaning and purpose of marriage as a covenant relationship that brought together a husband and a wife for companionship, sexual fulfillment and procreation (Mills 2007:15). The students were not only guided on what to consider while choosing a potential spouse, but were also advised to consider personal traits as opposed to family background. It was emphasized that good parents did not necessarily beget good offspring. They were also informed that marital decisions must be personal, and free from parental or peer influence (Mills 2007:3).

Students were warned against engaging in early marriages and were encouraged to enjoy their youthful life and freedom before committing themselves to a lasting marriage relationship. There was no specific age limit to marriage as long as one had attained 18 years, which is the legal threshold for adulthood in Kenya. The Lighthouse Chapel International adherents believed that if one got married before exhausting youthful desires and freedom, such a person could manifest deviance while in marriage and ruin the relationship (Mills 2007:6). The financial status and level of education of courting couples was considered so as to sustain stable marriages (Mills 2007:58). Both men and women were exhorted to pursue

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certain levels of financial stability before getting married. Disparity in education was discouraged because it created disharmony in reasoning and lifestyle. Students were also taught on how to conduct themselves while in engagement. They were advised to avoid sexual intercourse or any other act that could provoke sexual feelings such as deep kissing or exposing their erotic body parts.

The school of marriage program also taught the roles of husbands and wives (Mills 2007:43-48). Men as heads of their families were expected to portray leadership skills, take up responsibilities and exercise authority over their wives and children, but with courtesy. Scriptural references were quoted from 1Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23, which assert that a husband must remain above his wife, just as Christ is the head of the church. Men were taught to love, respect, and protect their wives. The love should be selfless, unconditional and sacrificial. Men were encouraged to make their wives happy by providing basic needs in addition to sexual, material and emotional needs (Informant VII, Interview: 21.7.2018).

Women were warned against being married to men on any other ground other than genuine love (Mills 2007:48). They were instructed not to give in to marriage for reasons of desperation, ageing, wealth or pregnancy. Women were taught to submit and love their husbands as documented in Ephesians 5:22 and 1 Peter 3:1-3. They were expected to keep their homes and houses clean, cook regularly and remain romantic towards their husbands. Women were warned against posing their romance and beauty towards the outsiders. Lighthouse Chapel International emphasized on the virtuous qualities of women and warned them against greed, idleness, carelessness, extravagance, laziness and unfaithfulness. An example was drawn from Proverbs 31:10-31 on virtuous women who were encouraged to be hard working, modest, generous, prayerful, kind, wise and faithful. They were expected to be good companions, advisers and supporters of their own husbands. Housemaids are employed

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to assist the dual career families to manage homes and take care of their children while they were both at work. But, women were warned against the dangers of letting female housemaids manage their houses. Their domestic roles must be well defined and restricted so as not to usurp the woman's role in a family set up because, the exposure of maids to husbands posed the risk of likely infidelity and the same applied to wives if male house helps were employed. Men were easily attracted by the service accorded to them and readily won their hearts (Informant VIII: Interview 21.7.2018).

Lighthouse Chapel International taught its followers good financial management practices by emphasizing that money could either ruin or build a family, depending on how the couple managed it (Mills 2007:58). The positive side of money was drawn from Haggai 2:8 which states, "Silver and gold belongs to God", while Ecclesiastes 10:19 states "money answers to all things". Couples were encouraged to work hard and create some wealth. Although St. Paul teaches that "For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from their faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1Timothy 6:10). Couples were further warned that improper financial management can ruin a marriage (Informant VII, Interview: 21.7.2018).

The sovereignty of a husband must be extended to controlling financial matters even if the wife earned more than him. Men were expected to be responsible, accountable, avoid stinginess and irresponsibility towards their family's needs. Women were also taught to be contented with their families' resources, shun overspending, inaffordable lifestyles and unnecessary comparisons with other successful families. The couple was exhorted to understand and cope with each other during moments of financial challenges (Mills 2007: 78).

Lighthouse Chapel International also taught its followers on different personalities, temperaments and how to handle them in marriage. Mills (2007:63) noted that many couples disagreed in marriage because, they lacked basic skills on how to deal with each other's characters. It was argued that every person was unique and created with inbuilt emotional traits, which cannot be altered. Individuals were therefore expected to know the emotional inbuilt features of their spouses, cope with their weaknesses and appreciate their strengths. This process should begin as soon as the individuals were engaged or even before hand and should continue throughout the marriage life.

The relationship with in-laws was taken with great concern in this movement (Mills 2007, 93). It was taught in the school of marriage that in-laws should be accepted as second parties to the union. Partners were encouraged to learn the spouse's family background and relatives. The couples should shun from sharing negative comments and information about one spouse with parents who could obviously gang up and support their offspring against the opposite spouse and hence ruin the relationship. Young couples were advised to build their homes away from their physical parents' homes, but continue to support them by responding to their most essential needs (Informant IX, Interview: 21.7.2018).

Issues related to sexuality were well handled in the Lighthouse Chapel International's school of marriage. Mills (2007:113-117) discusses the human genital system in a scientific manner, but uses illustrations which are comprehended by lay people. Both men and women were taught on how to remain romantic and attractive to their spouses. Couples were also encouraged to have frequent sexual intercourse in marriage and minimize excuses against coition. It was argued that a spouse who is sexually satisfied in his or her marriage will have little or no interest in other men or women. This was suggested as being the best way of curbing infidelity in marriage. Frequent sexual intercourse is a sign of a happy, harmonious

and loving relationship, while infrequent or rare practice of coitus depicts lack of interest for a partner and often results into adultery. Sex in marriage should be interesting, creative and enjoyable at any moment. It is practiced for procreation, enjoyment, duty and as a way of enhancing emotional and physical bonding (Mills 2007:115). Despite its articulate, sound and valid content, teachings on sex can be critiqued based on timing. Wambua (2013:74) warns against the danger of teaching youth on deep issues of lovemaking. He states that the youth might desire to experiment on sexual intercourse thereby increasing chances of premarital sex. Issues related to sexuality should be reserved until youth are ready to enter into marital relationships.

Parenting and family planning was taught in the school to students by sensitizing them on the need to give birth only in marriage (Mills 2007:117-129). The youth were warned against bearing children whom they could not effectively nurture. Lighthouse Chapel International encouraged family planning once a couple had begotten children to their satisfaction. Mills (2007:120-126) utilized his medical knowledge to expound on various methods of birth control, showing their merits and demerits. The author failed to recommend an appropriate method for family planning, but rather subjects readers to acquire knowledge and decide for themselves. Mills discouraged permanent methods like vasectomy and tubal ligation arguing that in case one loses a couple, he or she may still get married and beget children. The challenges associated with pregnancy and childbirth and how to overcome them are further expounded. Upon completion of the marriage school, those who were dating and were now ready for marriage underwent a premarital counseling session.

4.5.2. Premarital Counseling

In the marriage school, Lighthouse Chapel International pastors identified those who were already engaged and were planning for a church wedding. Their details were kept in a special

register for appropriate follow-ups. After completing the marriage school's curriculum, premarital candidates were taken through a minimum of four counseling sessions which were facilitated by a pastor or an elder with an exemplary marriage record. The facilitator attended the sessions in company of his or her spouse. Unlike other movements already discussed in this study that conducted group counseling, the Lighthouse Chapel International handled each case separately.

Since much of the necessary knowledge about marriage had been handled in the marriage school, premarital counseling reemphasized the content taught, paying attention to special issues relating to the couple that could not be tackled at the school. They were taught on how to conduct themselves during the engagement, instill discipline and prevented them from falling into sexual deviance before marriage (Informant IX, Interview 21.7.2018). The couples were also taken through HIV/AIDS and sickle cell tests and the results were shared with the counselor. The sickle cell test was run because an offspring could inherit the condition from a carrier parent. If one tested positive and the partner was negative, they were encouraged to terminate the relationship because it would impose medical complications in marriage. But, if they insisted on getting married, they were allowed to proceed in cognizance of the dangers that were well known to them. If both of them tested HIV/AIDS positive, they were advised on how to live positively with their conditions in a marital context. If they both tested positive for sickle cell, they were warned of the potential complications for their children and were advised to terminate their relationship. But, if they persisted, they were permitted to marry despite the forewarned challenges (Informant VIII, Interview: 21.7.2018).

The intended couples were also inducted on how to prepare for a wedding and were encouraged to finalize parental visits and cultural obligations before their wedding bans were officially announced in church. In case of any complications from either family, a visit was

arranged in company of the pastor or elder and mediation talks to settle the differences. The couple was also expected to identify those who would play the role of best man and best maid in their marriage. These preparations culminated into a wedding ceremony and couples were expected to live together for the rest of their lives. The movement however noted that divorce and remarriage were possible realities in Christianity, hence the need for a policy to govern congregants in such regrettable instances (Informant VIII, Interview: 21.7.2018).

4.5.3. The Lighthouse Chapel's Policy on Divorce and Remarriage

The Lighthouse Chapel International viewed divorce as a permanent defection from marriage, while separation was considered a temporal termination of commitment (Informant VII, Interview 21.7.2018). Every couple should be made conversant of the regrettable consequences of divorce and necessary effort should be made to avoid it. Couples were encouraged to make lasting commitments to their marriages no matter the difficulties encountered. The movement taught that when divorce occurs, God is affected because he hates the breakup of relationships and subsequent consequences that could destroy human happiness, cause bitterness, distress and suffering to the innocent children. It was further asserted that man was the symbol of God's authority in marriage hence he should take responsibility when marriage fails irrespective of who caused the fault. In this analogy, reference was drawn from Genesis 2:24 where God commands man to leave his parents and cleave to his wife in order to become one flesh with her. It was therefore expected that a husband should hold the marriage bond tightly and not let his wife depart from him. Although it was Eve who violated God's command and ate the forbidden fruit first causing the fall of the entire humanity, Lighthouse Chapel International argued that this was only possible because Adam was away. Despite the fact that the woman caused the fall, God still calls upon man to be responsible (Mills 2007: 99).

The movement recommended reconciliation in case of separation, grants divorce basing on legal evidence, but discouraged remarriages. It was argued that remarriage transferred the problems of a past marriage into another relationship. Since the pain, bitterness and resentments associated with divorce did not easily vanish, remarriage was likely to afflict another marriage adversely. Lighthouse Chapel International concluded that permitting remarriage could increase divorce rates, because couples could simply quit their relationships to form new ones instead of working relentlessly on their marital challenges (Mills 2007:101).

4.6. The Wedding Ceremony in New Religious Movements

The study noted that contemporary Christian weddings in New Religious Movements took between three to six months' preparation. This duration was often determined by the complexities involved in bringing the two together, church procedures, legal processes and the financial capacity of a courting couple. Most couples started preparing for their weddings while undergoing premarital counseling, while others waited until the end of the sessions. The study noted that all movements that were investigated preferred their young people to make wedding arrangements outside the church with the help of friends and family members. This was based on the perception that running wedding planning committees within the church imposed financial burdens to the congregants. All available means were undertaken to rally friends to support the wedding which was expected to be conducted within established legal and ecclesiastical frameworks. The weddings were planned by committees which were dominated by the couple's friends, workmates, colleagues, former college mates and a few relatives who resided within the city during weekdays away from the church. It was noted that new cycles of friendship emerged replacing the traditional role of extended family members in wedding arrangements. WhatsApp groups and Facebook pages were also created

to solicit funds for the wedding. The main mandate of committees was to help the couple fund-raise and source service providers. The minimum cost for a wedding was pegged at Kenya shillings.500,000, while the upper margin could even exceed one million shillings with the host contributing the greatest share (Informant, Interview: 21.7.2018).

4.6.1. Legal and Ecclesiastical Partnership of Marriage

The couple was legally required to appear before the marriage registrar at the attorney general's office at least six weeks before the wedding date and produce their national identification documents and a copy of registration license of the church minister who intends to officiate their wedding. The officer also asked for the parents' or guardians' consent to the intended couple. If such consent was absent, the registrar granted a permit to plan the ceremony grounded on their own consent as adults. The legal documents were verified and relevant statutory forms were completed. The couple was then issued with a certificate proving their intention to marry which authorized the church to read their wedding bans for at least three consecutive weeks prior to the wedding day (Informant X, Interview: 30.8.2017).

4.6.2. Arrangement of Wedding Site

The study observed that only a few weddings surveyed were conducted within the church compounds. Most of them were celebrated in hotels, gardens or recreational parks. The reason for this was that churches charged their followers who intended to wed in their sanctuaries higher fees, yet they lacked certain facilities that were deemed essential to the couples. These included spacious parking, beautiful flower gardens, and swimming pools which were hired outside the church, and were convenient for their invited guests.

On the wedding day, parents and relatives travelled from their rural homes to witness their children's weddings which were held preferably on Saturdays. Those who came from far

places often travelled a day or two before the actual wedding, while those who lived closer arrived timely for the event. The invited guests were expected to be seated from 9 am, but late comers continued to throng the occasion until afternoon. The sitting arrangement was orderly and symbolic with special seats set aside for parents and relatives from both sides who sat in two separate rows, but opposite to each other. This arrangement symbolized the different units of people who were yet to be joined in a covenant. The clergy occupied a separate tent in front of the other two depicting the higher place of God in uniting the two parties together in a matrimony. In some instances, friends and church members distributed themselves on either sides. In other cases; a special tent was reserved for them. A similar arrangement was also observed in a church setup. The tents or the sanctuary was decorated with a variety of flowers and ambience showing freshness of life, joy and celebration. The seated guests were also entertained with recorded contemporary Christian music as they enthusiastically awaited the wedding procession.

4.6.3. Wedding Procession

As the procession began, most events had the music tuned to western styles. The groomsmen arrived first, led by a few young boys, followed by a procession of either six to twelve young men dressed in matching suits while dancing to the western Christian music. At the back, the groom arrived escorted by his best man. The groom's arrival ahead of the bride symbolized the position of leadership indicating that he was the initiator of the relationship. The groom's procession was then followed by the bridal procession that was often led by two young girls (flower girls) dressed in white, followed by young ladies who by age, seemed to be approaching or had attained the age of marriage. An alternative order of procession was also observed where the groomsmen and bridesmaids arrived while holding hands and dancing in

pairs. This was seen as a way of provoking and initiating possible similar relationships that could lead to potential marriages (Informant VII, Interview: 21.7.2018).

In both cases, the bride was the last to arrive and was welcomed with great ovation from the congregation. Special music was played conveying love messages to welcome her at the venue in a flamboyantly decorated car as she matched into the tent or sanctuary. She was escorted by her parents who held her hands on both sides while the best woman walked behind her holding the tail end of the wedding gown. Her arrival was celebrated in ululations of joy, orchestrated dances and whistling. The clergy called the house or church to order, followed by an opening prayer which was said before the bride was ushered to a reserved seat in front of the parents' row as the groom sat in the opposite row in front of his parents. The end of the first procession led to the beginning of the divine service where the minister summoned the parents from both sides to present their son and daughter for marriage respectively. This symbolically meant that parents who had been the custodians over their children, now gave them over to each other to begin a new home and relationship. It was also a sign of acceptance, authenticity and blessings of their children's choice of a partner. After the presentation, the clergy requested their parents to hold hands together and offered a prayer imploring God to accept the union of the two families, to accord them harmony, love and peace for the good of their children. In some cases, this prayer was skipped and parents were just requested to resume their seats. This was followed immediately by the last reading of the marriage ban and ceremonious unveiling of the bride.

4.6.4. Unveiling the Bride

After this introductory session, the clergy read out the last ban and implored the congregation to interject if there was any one with a genuine reason opposing or objecting the two from being united in holy matrimony. After affirming that none was present, he or she proceeded

to request the groom to unveil the bride. This practice was borrowed from the Jewish tradition where virgins were veiled on the wedding night (Informant IV, Interview: 20.6.2018). Unlike the Jewish practice where the bride was unveiled after the wedding, the current order had the veil uncovered before the wedding vows were taken. This analogy is borrowed from the biblical story of Jacob who was tricked by his uncle Laban to marry a different spouse (Genesis 29:15-23). The unveiling of the bride before taking vows permitted the groom to symbolically affirm the bride's identity. The veiling of the bride up to the wedding time meant that intimacy was not permitted before official sanctioning during the wedding (Informant VI, Sermon: 14.4.2018). The white colour of her gown symbolized purity, royalty and reverence. A similar symbolism was seen in Revelation 19:7-8, where Christ (groom) adorns the Church (bride) in white fine linen, symbolizing her righteousness. After this brief marching, the candidates were now ready to take marriage vows.

4.6.5. Marriage Vows

After unveiling the bride, the minister requested the bride and groom to hold each other's right hand which had a symbolic Christian and African meaning. The Christian perspective symbolized extension of fellowship, acceptance and honour while in the traditional African set up, two parties were brought together in a covenant relationship by making a slight cut in their palm or finger. The fresh blood was left to ooze out from their severed wounds and mixed ceremoniously, joining the two parties into one through their own blood sanctioned oath (Bujo, 2009:94).

The most spiritual, solemn and liturgical part of Christian wedding culminated in taking marital vows when the minister quoted from a written liturgical guide which stated that:

> "Now marriage, being a permanent covenant, initiated by God almighty at the Garden of Eden, the most intimate of all human relationships, ought to be entered into

carefully, on a person's own volition, and without hurry. I therefore ask: is there any reason why you should not be joined to this woman/man in a holy matrimony?" (Wright, 2005: 21).

The two were now offered a chance to respond separately and acclaim: None. After this, the minister led them through the vows, asking each of them to recite or to read it from a written text. The wordings of the vow were:

> "I, (Name), take you, (Name of spouse), to be my lawfully wedded wife/husband, to have and to hold you, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health; to love and to cherish, till death do us part, according to the Holy word of God. In the presence of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, I make this vow. Amen." (Wright, 2005: 21).

In some cases, the woman's vow was adjusted by adding the concept of submission, so that it stated, "to love, to cherish and to submit." Majority of partners however recited the same set of vows. The vow revealed the depth of marriage covenant, couple's commitment and intended permanence. It also showed that each party had a role to play in the covenant, but also acknowledged human weakness while invoking the divine presence of God to help them play their parts. The process was then followed by the exchange of marital rings.

4.6.6. Exchange of Rings

After exchanging their marital vows, the minister inquired if the intending couple had any sign of sealing their love. It is at this moment that a set of rings were brought to the minister who then offered a prayer of dedication. The groom inserted the ring on the bride's second last finger of the left hand ahead of the bride to affirm a husband's leadership position and to portray that men were often the first to express marital interests to the women. The following words were recited during the exercise:

> "I (name) give you (spouse) this ring to be a reminder to you, of the vow I have made to you today, and the sign of love I have for you, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." (Wright, 2005: 21).

The wedding rings were often engraved from precious metals like gold and silver which communicated to the couple that their marriage was precious and should remain so in their own eyes. The round shape of the ring interpreted the continuity and endless nature of marital love (Informant V, Sermon: 30.9.2017). In the Old Testament times, a signet ring was a sign of legal authority which symbolized that the parties had conferred to each other the legal authority and the right to operate as a wife and husband. A ring was a sign of acceptance as exemplified from the story of the lost prodigal son in which the father showed him acceptance into the home by having him wear a ring (Luke 15:11-32). In the same manner, a ring depicts acceptance into the heart, the life and the home of each other as partners. A ring was also worn as an aesthetic ornament on a lover's finger to portray one's acknowledgement of the partner's beauty (Informant VII, Sermon 23.9.2017). The sealing of the covenant was then climaxed through signing of marriage certificates in the next phase.

4.6.7. Signing the Marriage Certificate and Blessing New Weds

After exchanging rings, the couple proceeded to sign the legal marriage certificate in triplicate. The original belonged to the couple, the duplicate was for church records, while the triplicate was forwarded to the government marriage registrar's office. The wedded couple signed the certificate in the presence of a presiding minister and was witnessed by the best couple. This was then followed by the blessing prayer for the couple. All pastors and parents were summoned forward, as the couple knelt while hands were laid on them invoking blessings upon them. Pastors and parents petitioned God to bless them with abundant offspring, prosperity, peace, sound and long life. This practice of laying of hands had both biblical and African roots since priests or parents laid hands on people as a gesture of blessings from God over their lives. The session ended when the presiding minister introduced the new couple as Mr. and Mrs. so and so. The attentive congregation which was

all along in a somber mood watched the unveiling of events while listening to charming music from the background and suddenly burst out into joyous celebration. This occasion was marked by aspersion of rice-like crystals and blasting balloons in the air as a gesture of blessings and fruitfulness. It was at this juncture that the officiator gave a sermon or invited another minister to deliver it.

4.6.8. The Sermons

The wedding sermons were brief but significant in addressing the newly-weds and the congregation on pertinent marital issues. In all observed cases, the scripture was elevated as the primary guide to their marital lives. It was the living manual in managing the marriage institution (Informant I. Sermon: 28.8.2017). Most of the sermons analyzed were drawn from texts with similar meanings, especially from Genesis 2:17-25 which explain the biblical origin of marriage and Ephesians 5:22-33 which outlines the Christian rule of love and submission as the divinely established order in managing a Christian home.

In one of the weddings conducted by Nairobi Chapel, the pastor taught that marriage was essentially a mystery in response to certain needs towards God, humanity and nature. God needed a co-creator (Genesis 1:28), man needed a companion (Genesis 2:18), while nature needed a caretaker (Genesis 2:15), and all were provided through marriage. Man was aware of his loneliness, but not of the solution, hence God created for him a suitable companion. Marriage cannot be successful outside God's divine revelation. The sermon was concluded by imploring a partner not to marry a person that he or she can do well with, but one that he or she cannot do without (Informant XI, Sermon: 8.4.2017).

Another sermon from Mavuno Church revealed that marriage was relational (Informant IV, Sermon: 14.8.2018). Since a woman was created out of man's rib, the two were predestined

to be relatives (Genesis 2:21-22). Marriage was both a union and reunion. It was a union since these two individuals were different entities who had not been together in the natural sense before. It was a reunion since a woman was created out of a man hence was primarily part of him and in him from creation. Couples were invited to consider themselves as part of each other and at the same time as different individuals.

The religious belief that a woman was made out of a man's rib was firmly asserted, but with various interpretations (Genesis 2:21-22). At Jubilee Christian Church, it was taught that a rib was a strategic and central part of the body which was closer to the heart. As a result, a wife ought to be a close confidant and intimate friend to the husband (Informant I, Sermon: 26.8.2017). The Lighthouse Chapel International teachings explained "a wife was neither extracted from the front so that she could lead, nor from the back so that she could be left behind. She was neither made from the head so as to think for the man, nor from the foot so as to be trampled on". It was taught that the *rib mate* should be treated as a co-partner, co-parent, co-investor, co-worker and a co-minister with the husband (Informant VIII, Sermon: 15.4.2017).

At Jubilee Christian Church, it was taught that marriage was a partnership of friends (Informant I, Sermon: 8.4.2017). The minster warned against marriages established between people who were not friends. Friendship could lead to marriage, but marriage may not automatically lead to friendship. It was asserted that a bridge in the friendship gap created room for the devil to work through other agents to attack the marriage. An analogy was drawn from the story of Adam and Eve, where a serpent cheated the woman only when the man was far away from her (Genesis 3:1-6). In conclusion, nurturing the spirit of partnership, fellowship and friendship between couples was the only way to keep the cheating adversaries away from marriage.

At Mavuno Church, the notion of friendship was taught, but a warning was recorded that marriage was not immune from shakeups, conflicts and problems. The minister stated that marriage was like an alloy (mixture of two different metals) hence if subjected to heating (challenges), the product should be a better and stronger union (Informant IV, Sermon: 28.8.2017). The challenges should therefore be seen as avenues of strengthening as opposed to weakening the union. At Nairobi Chapel, it was asserted that the partnership could be sustained if the principle of transparency and openness was embraced. An illustration from (Genesis 2:25), states that Adam and Eve were naked, but they were not ashamed of themselves. This encouraged couples to remain transparent, trustworthy and intimate to each other throughout their marriage lives. The sermon culminated in the second session of a reception party.

4.6.9. Reception Party

After the divine service, the newly-wed posed for photographs with selected persons who included parents, in-laws, workmates and pastors. This short session lasted a few minutes before they were driven away to a reserved venue for more elaborate photography sessions with the groom's men and bride's maids. This session could last about one to two hours, during which guests were served a meal by professional outside catering services at moderately agreed upon charges. Their return marked the beginning of another session known as "the reception party", which was lively and full of celebration. It recorded higher attendance than the church service. Many members of the clergy however excused themselves from this session, except the pastors who had accompanied parents from their rural homes. The session was often facilitated by a non-clergy master of ceremony at a fee.

Christian music played to African tune dominated the occasion, while guests were entertained with African traditional dances. This was contrary to the church service that was dominated by Christian music played in western styles. In some cases, the bride was carried shoulder high by the groom's men, emulating the dramatic abduction by the groom's peers in traditional African community. The groomsmen would also carry the groom shoulder high as they celebrated his heroic achievement. After several minutes of dancing and celebration, the bridal team settled down and feasted at a high table. Congratulatory speeches were delivered by invited guests followed by a gift presentation session to the new couple. The speeches were dominated by welcoming messages and verbal advice to the couple. Cash gifts were presented in sealed envelopes, while kitchen ware, household goods, accessories and furniture were wrapped in cartons with beautiful coloured foils draped with cloth ribbons.

The last session of this ceremony was marked by cake cutting and sharing. A senior woman, known as the cake matron came to the front and explained the features, shape and ingredients of the special wedding cake. She then offered a prayer, and dedicated the cake in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit before inviting the newly wedded couple to the ceremonial cake cutting ritual. The couple held the knife together, cut the cake, fed each other in turns and sipped a mouthful of red wine or soft drink. The new couple then proceeded to distribute the cake slices to their parents, best couples and the pastors' representatives who sent it to the pastors. The cake slices were further distributed to invited guests with the help of bridesmaids.

The study noted that the cake cutting and sharing moment was not an ordinary event, but was ritualistic and symbolic in nature. The cakes were designed in various shapes, sometimes in form of the Christian bible, with phrases of love inscribed from the book of Songs of Solomon with coloured sugar icing on the face of the cake. This symbolized that the word of

God should continue to guide their marriage and flavour their love. Other cakes were designed in a heart shape, emulating the couple's continued love for one another from their hearts. Some cakes were designed to symbolize traditional African images like an African hut or pot. The hut signified the beauty of an African home instituted through marriage. The pot on the other hand represented abundance of food (Informant I, Sermon: 14.5.2018). The cakes' ingredients were also symbolic expressing the beauty and various attributes of marriage life. Some cakes comprised fruits, cream, and honey in addition to preservatives. Fruits symbolized posterity and fruitfulness in marriage, while honey and cream showed the Canaan like prosperity that God had promised Israel. The cake preservatives showed the intended endurance of marriage (Informant XII, Sermon: 12.12.2019).

The joint cake slicing ritually symbolized consummation of marriage through sexual intercourse (Informant XII, Sermon: 12.12.2019). The couple was now officially permitted not only to share the sweetness of the cake, but also enjoy sex. The gesture of sharing the cake before their parents demonstrated that sex was endorsed by parents and religious authority. It also meant that the couple had a prime duty to feed and take care for their ageing parents. The new couple shared the cake with the pastor or his representative and the best couple in appreciation of their presence and continued role in guiding and counseling the couple. The sharing of the cake with the invited guests was a sign of courtesy and generosity to the relatives and the entire community.

4.7. Chapter's Summary

In this chapter, it is concluded that premarital counseling was the most basic procedure through which New Religious Movements institute contemporary African Christian marriages. No movement recorded any earlier preparations for marriage, except Lighthouse Chapel International, which held a school of marriage for its youth. It was also noted that no

movement ran an official post marital counseling for their couples, except those who showed up for pastoral counseling over specific issues. It was further noted that New Religious Movements had specific programs which targeted separate groups within which family enrichment sessions were sandwiched. It was noted that wedding ceremonies in New Religious Movements had nearly similar trends and procedures. The wedding arrangements were dominated by friends as opposed to extended family members and relatives. The actual wedding comprised three major parts; the procession, divine service that incorporates legal certification, and reception party. It was further recorded that the procession had western oriented procedures that were enjoyed by urban peers, as most of the rural relatives remained mere spectators. The taking of vows was the most revered session at the divine service, while the sermons barely lasted half an hour. The reception party, which incorporated feasting, singing, dancing, presentation of gifts, speeches and cake cutting, was the longest, but liveliest part of the ceremony. This was attributed to the incorporation of African music, dances, symbolism and idioms which interlaced the Christian wedding ceremony. The detailed assessment of the nature and procedures of instituting African Christian marriages by the New Religious Movements now sets the pace for evaluation of their responses to the challenges facing such marriages in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

AN EVALUATION OF SELECTED NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS' RESPONSES TO MARITAL CHALLENGES IN NAIROBI COUNTY

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter assessed the nature and procedures laid down by New Religious Movements in instituting contemporary African Christian marriages, while this chapter evaluates their responses to marital problems. It begins by examining the members' perception on Christian marriage, early preparation for marriage and the conduct of church wedding. It further scrutinizes various topics that were handled during pre-marital counseling classes and their levels of effectiveness. The chapter also shows the rate of marital satisfaction on various dimensions of marriage, thereby showing the nature and stability of marriages in the four New Religious Movements.

5.2. New Religious Movements' Notion about Christian Marriage

The study found out that the concept of marriage as a spiritual covenant and the irreplaceable mandate of the Church in shaping marriages was well understood among members of the New Religious Movements examined. The study however noted the existence of several anomalies regarding the characteristics of Christian marriage. All the interviewed pastors agreed that only believers who professed Christ as their personal Lord and saviour should be joined in matrimony. In contrast to this opinion, some premarital candidates did not agree with such a restriction. For them, those who were committed to church and did not officially subscribe to other non-Christian religions qualify to be Christians and therefore can be joined in matrimony. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church which restricts the Holy Matrimony to her members, New Religious Movements permitted inter-church marriages, but rejected inter-religious marriages (Informant I, Interview: 21.5.2017; Informant IV, Interview: 20.6.2018,

Informant VII, Interview 21.7.2018, Informant X, Interview: 30.8.2017). It was noted that many of their members were unaware of what made one a true believer, hence exposing couples to the danger of religious conflicts once in marriage.

The study further noted that nearly all female respondents preferred Christian marriages to remain monogamous. Although majority of men also desired monogamy stating that it was the order authenticated in the scripture, some few Christian men argued that polygamy should be permitted to cater for anomalies such as barrenness and illness of a wife.

In regard to church wedding in comparison to civil or customary marriages, the premarital candidates' preferences were summarized in the table below:

Table 5.1 Pre-marital candidates' preferences for marriage

Candidates' Preference	Church Wedding	Civil marriage	Customary Marriage	Total
Number of informants	42	25	13	80
Percentage	52%	31%	17%	100%

The information from the table above asserts that 42 premarital candidates (52%) preferred church wedding as compared to civil or customary marriages. On the contrary, 25 candidates (31%) preferred civil marriage while 13 candidates (17%) preferred customary marriage. Those who preferred church weddings argued that it was more ceremonious, spiritual and made marriage more binding. Those who were opposed to it cited the cost and strict church regulations as the main hindrances.

The study also noted that there was a gap between what the pastors believed and what their followers comprehended regarding the purpose for marriage. For instance, majority of married respondents surveyed cited sexual satisfaction, parenting or companionship as the key motivators for marriage. The pastors however asserted the sacredness of marriage and the command to obey God, the initiator of marriage. In an interview with one of the pastors at Nairobi Chapel, it was asserted that the need to obey God should supersede any other function in marriage, without disregarding other functions (Informant X, Interview: 30.8.2018). Mills, the founder of Lighthouse Chapel International affirmed this stand by stating that obedience surpasses the benefits of marriage. He taught that marriage should be embraced as an act of obedience to God and acceptance to his divine response to man's social, spiritual and psychological needs. Other benefits like sex, companionship and parenting come after obedience and acceptance therefore can neither validate nor invalidate marriage (Mills 2007:15). It is however notable that many marriages were built on the need to satisfy personal gains rather than obeying and accepting God's divine order. It therefore followed that failure to meet these expectations and drives caused disagreements and instability in marriage.

5.3. Early Preparations for Marriage

The study noted that none of the four New Religious Movements studied had official forums where children were taught about marriage and family values. In all the movements, official teachings about marriage began when one joined the youth ministry and was intensified during premarital classes. Although the Mavuno Church was noted to have several series of sermons on marriage annually, the researcher observed that such forums were not favourable for young people to learn about marriage. The sermons were dominated by topics and illustrations that were geared towards enriching existing marriages rather than laying a

foundation for the young people who were further locked out from such teachings since the movement's services ran concurrently with the youth and children's services.

The research further established that the youth ministries in Nairobi Chapel, Lighthouse Chapel International, and Jubilee Christian Church had some positive impact on marriages. Most of the informants from the three churches acknowledged that they had belonged to youth ministries where they were taught responsible sexuality, how to present a proposal to a potential partner and how to gauge a healthy or unhealthy relationship. Mavuno Church was challenged in this area since their main targets were young adults, most of whom were college graduates who seemed to have outgrown the youth ministry. As a result, only a few of their premarital candidates had gone through the youth ministry and recorded a similar impact. The rest came from other churches or did not belong to any church during their youthful stage.

It was also realized that parents played a key role in teaching their children about marriage. The trend was however noted to decline with time. It was recorded that nearly 68% (164) of married informants had some useful information about marriage from their parents. The rest (32%) (76 respondents) regretted that they lacked such opportunity. Married informants who had acquired some positive knowledge from parents had their age in marriage distributed as in the table below:

Table 5.2 Age bracket of marriages with positive parental influence

Age bracket in marriage	10 Years and above	5-10 Years	Below 5 years	Total
Number of informants	73	51	40	164
Percentage	45%	31%	24%	100%

The information from the table shows that 45% (73 respondents) who had some positive parental influence in marriage were ten years and above in marriage, 31 % (51 respondents) were between five and ten years while 24 % (40 respondents) were less than 5 years in marriage. This trend indicated that the contemporary society was rapidly losing the parental guidance in marital matters.

Mulvihill (2017:1) states that children should be taught about marriage throughout their childhood. They should grow as they learn various aspects about the gift of family. He further states that everyone that plays a role in nurturing children has a responsibility in this process. Butterfield (2015:1) observed that lesson guides for teaching children about marriage are very scarce, but the responsibility should not be neglected. He recommends certain aspects that children can learn in the simplest terms possible. He states that a child needs to know that both their mother and father are different, yet they are special and reflect the perfect image and will of God (Butterfield 2015:1). They are prepared to accept and appreciate their gender differences and also learn their responsibilities as future wives and husbands. Johnston (2015:6) also explains the marital truths that people can easily embrace during their childhood. Children who are properly orientated about marriage will appreciate that marital

life is not a burden, but a gift of unity from God between two autonomous individuals who complement and improve each other instead of competing and striving to change one another. They are meant to understand that marriage is not about standing away from each other, but leaning towards one another, and that it is not about receiving, but giving. If the family, school and the church do not teach children about such marriage values, someone else will inform them. Becca (2018: 18) notes that the media influences children's perception on marriage, but regrets that much of the information presented by the media is negative and distorted.

5.4. Courtship

The research noted that sufficient guidelines regarding choice of marital partners was not well presented to the followers of the New Religious Movements. They only warned against a believer being married to a nonbeliever, but left the other factors to their own discretion. Lighthouse Chapel International gave further guidelines on the age, level of education, health and cultural diversities of the spouses. They discouraged, but did not condemn unions between partners from diverse cultural backgrounds, disparity in age and education levels (Mills 2007:6). The movement also warned against dating a person with terminal illnesses, unless one was fully aware and prepared to cope with the complications involved (Informant VIII, Interview 21.7.2018). Unlike the Traditional African community where elders played significant roles in sourcing suitable spouses for young people and investigating their character and family background, the current society lacks such mechanisms. Many young Christians are ignorant of what makes a suitable partner even within the Christian domain. As a result, many still end up in mismatched and regrettable choices.

Brown (2005:3) identifies five most important aspects that a Christian ought to consider in choosing a potential mate. These include; salvation status, spiritual maturity, denominational

orientation, and character traits, physical and social preferences. The scripture declares the relationship between a believer and unbeliever as a union between light and darkness, or God's temple and that of idols, a scenario that the author terms (II Corinthians 6:14-16) as tragic. Christians who are committed to their faith should shun away from other believers that are not committed to obeying the whole biblical truth (II Thessalonians 3:6). Cantrell (2007:2) agrees with Brown's argument that denominational background is significant in choosing a marriage partner. He states that it is safer to date someone from the same or closely related denominations because denominational differences can easily cause conflicts.

The character of an individual is based on religious devotion, cultural orientation and personal discipline. Young people are invited to consider character, which is spiritual beauty rather than physical beauty in spousal choice (Schwertley 1998:22, 1 Samuel 15:7). A checklist on what one considers in selecting a suitable mate should be utilized in addition to religious and character traits (Schwertley 1998:24).

The study noted that majority of people who wedded in the New Religious Movements met their spouses either in church or in institutions of higher learning. The spouses' meeting points was analyzed as shown in the table below:

Table 5.3 Spouses first meeting points

Meeting place	Church	Higher learning institutions	Others	Total
Number of spouses	47	46	27	120
Percentage	39%	38%	23%	100%

It was noted from the above table that 39% (47) of married couples met in higher learning institutions, 38% (47) met in church while the rest 23% (36) met in other social fora like work places, social media and other social gatherings. This affirmed that the New Religious Movements and institutions of higher learning had a pertinent role to play in creating conducive environments where young people could meet their potential spouses.

Dating and courtship were closely related and were at times interchangeably used. Dating referred to the period and events that unfolded from the time one conceived and expressed the interest of entering into an agreement that could lead to marriage while courtship (betrothal) began when such a proposal was officially accepted by both parties and communicated to relevant persons such as parents or religious leaders (Wette & Kingdom 2005: 24). The time between this official acceptance and the actual marriage was courtship period. Although the scripture is not certain regarding its duration, most marriage and relationship scholars recommend a period of between 2 to 3 years. A period of less than two years was regarded as being too short, while more than 4 years was regarded as too long to wait (Wette & Kingdom 2005: 113). The study noted that married couples went through diversified courtship periods as illustrated in the table:

Table 5. 4 Courtship duration of couples in New Religious Movements

Courtship duration	2 Years and below	2-3 Years	3 Years and above	Total
Number of couples	29	59	32	120
Percentage	24%	49%	27%	100%

The information from the table portrays that 49% of married couples reported that they had courted for between 2 to 3 years hence rated as sufficient. Twenty four percent (24%) courted for less than 2 years, while 27% courted for more than 4 years. It was thus evident that nearly half of married couples underwent sufficient courtship period. The rest had either too short or too long courtship.

Although courtship activities can be as diverse as the parties involved, the study recognized that visits to friends, hiking, partying and travelling were the main activities during courtship. Cherreguine (2005:2) stipulated that successful courtship is significant for the intended couples to reaffirm their choice for one another, learn each other's social skills, have fun, plan for their wedding as well as their marriage. This was contrary to the observation made from the study, which indicated that many couples emphasized on fun and leisure. The study however observed that premarital parental visits were a common practice in all the four New Religious Movements and the trend was recorded in the table as follows:

Table 5.5 Trend of premarital parental visits among couples in the four New Religious Movements

Denomination al Affiliation	Nairobi Chapel	Mavuno Church	Jubilee Christian Church	Lighthouse Chapel International	Total
Visited	47	42	34	58	182
Not Visited	13	18	26	2	58
Total	60	60	60	60	240

The study noted that 75% of married people (182 informants) made at least one visit to their parents before marriage. The other 25% (58 informants) did not make any premarital visits to their parents. In the category that visited, 32% (58 informants) come from Lighthouse Chapel International, 26 % (47 informants) from Nairobi Chapel, 23% (42 informants) from Mavuno Church and 19% (34 informants) from Jubilee Christian Church. Lighthouse Chapel International ranked highest because they had a policy which encouraged premarital candidates to visit parents from both sides in company of a church elder who reported to the Senior Pastor before a wedding was solemnized. The other movements left the decision to the discretion of the intended couple. Jubilee Christian Church recorded the least number of premarital visits due to the influence from the movement's founders who often asserted that in-laws and other distant relatives were strangers and should be avoided in marital relationships. All the married and courting partners who visited each other's parents indicated that familiarization with the in-laws; negotiations and payment of bride-wealth dominated the agenda. Some few married and courting respondents however cited participation in traditional cleansing and incorporation rituals. Many pastors had no objection to bride-wealth payment

and familiarization with the in-laws although they opposed participation in traditional marriage rituals. They discouraged their followers from participating in them. It was therefore affirmed that participation in traditional rituals during courtship was on the decline.

5.5. Premarital Counseling

Wambua (2013:31) views premarital counseling as a pivotal proactive response to marital problems. Effective premarital counseling creates awareness of marital challenges and equips candidates with appropriate skills to counter them while in marriage. He further observes that this is where many marriages fail. They fall from the foundation. Lack of proper premarital counseling makes people prone to improper relationships resulting from unsound reasons such as physical attraction, pressure from the society and threat of ageing.

Several authors on premarital counseling argue that Christian premarital counseling is unique in approach, objective and methodology. Adams (1973: 146) states that the scripture gives Christian premarital counseling its unique nature. The author asserts that the bible must remain the supreme source of authority and divine guidance on all matters. Crabb (1975:33) observes that Christian premarital counseling enhances spiritual growth, instills Christian values and equips candidates with necessary skills to enrich their own families. The objective is to build healthy Christian families that will effectively serve God's purpose in and through the Church. Brogger (1993: 58) argues that since the approach is devotional, both the teacher and the learner must share the same faith. All other ideologies that seem to contradict the shared faith are viewed as heretical, immoral and inconsistent. The study analyzed premarital programs from the four New Religious Movements with the view of showing their content and relevance in addressing marital problems.

The study noted that all the four New Religious Movements conducted pre-marital counseling, but with different approaches. Nairobi Chapel held premarital counseling sessions every Saturday between 6am-8am. These two-hour sessions ran for ten weeks. Mavuno Church similarly held two hours' sessions per week for ten weeks. These sessions were held on Sundays, either before or after the normal worship service, depending on the candidates' availability. Lighthouse Chapel International ran a four months' compulsory marriage school for all youth, followed by one-month premarital counseling for those who were set to get married. The school ran two-hour sessions every Sunday after the worship service, while Pre-marital Counseling ran for the last month prior to wedding. Jubilee Christian Church ran Premarital Counseling program that met on Saturday afternoons for two months. At Nairobi Chapel, Mavuno Church and Jubilee Christian Church, the Premarital Counseling services were charged while at Lighthouse Chapel International, the services were offered freely to the members. All the programs were group counseling except LCI's counseling sessions, which came after the completion of the school of marriage. At Nairobi Chapel and Mavuno Church, Pre-marital Counseling Class were interdenominational and enrolled members beyond their denominations. It was only Nairobi Chapel which interviewed new applicants before enrolment. For the other New Religious Movements, proof of membership to the movement, or any other Christian denomination with similar beliefs, was sufficient qualification for enrolment into the class.

The assessment of premarital candidates' satisfaction with the Premarital Counseling programs in the four NRMs revealed that majority of candidates registered high levels of satisfaction as shown in the table below:

*Table 5. 6 **Premarital candidates' satisfaction with premarital counselling programs***

Denominational affiliation	Nairobi Chapel		Mavuno Church		Jubilee Christian Church		Light house Chapel International	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Satisfied	13	65%	17	85%	14	70%	16	80%
Not satisfied	7	35%	3	15%	6	30%	4	20%
Total	20	100%	20	100%	20	100%	20	100%

Responses from Nairobi Chapel showed that 65 % of the candidates were satisfied with the duration and timing. They cited preference for early Saturday morning sessions because it allowed them to attend to other weekend activities later in the day. Thirty-five (35%) of premarital candidates in the movement complained that the early morning meetings interfered with their weekend schedules and that ten weeks was too long for the program.

At Mavuno Church, 85% of the premarital candidates were satisfied with the timing of the program where they attended the sessions alongside normal worship services hence saved time and cost of travelling. Others (15%) who were dissatisfied with the timing argued that attending Premarital Counseling Class sessions just before or after a church service affected their concentration. The consenting candidates with the premarital program at Mavuno Church also cited that the ten weeks' period was sufficient, while the dissenting ones complained that this period was too long.

At Lighthouse Chapel International, 80% of premarital candidates were satisfied with the arrangements, while 20% of the candidates were opposed to the duration, stating that 4 months was too long for the school. Those with dissenting opinions also argued that the last month to the wedding should be left for the couple to arrange for their wedding. At Jubilee Christian Church, 70% of premarital candidates were satisfied with the Saturday afternoon sessions. Thirty percent (30%) argued that it interfered with their weekend schedules and therefore proposed for a Sunday which was often scheduled for such church activities.

Apart from Lighthouse Chapel International, the rest of the movements ran group based premarital counseling. An assessment of the other three movements revealed that barely half of the respondents were satisfied with the group counseling. They argued that the approach saved time and was suitable for large congregations. The other half argued that the approach hindered them from sharing some confidential issues regarding their relationships. They recommended personal counseling sessions to supplement the group sessions. Lighthouse Chapel International's approach that complements group counseling with personal counseling was however commended by all their candidates. The research further established that the premarital counseling sessions in the four New Religious Movements had similar content. The topics covered included; roles of husband and wife, relating with in-laws, managing finances, conflict resolution, parenting, family planning, sexuality and wedding ceremony. Lighthouse Chapel International however had a more elaborate content that incorporated understanding personality differences, divorce and separation and family health. The movements' effectiveness in handling various topics was summarized in the tables below:

Table 5.7 Nairobi Chapel's effectiveness in handling premarital counseling topics

Topics Covered	Level of effectiveness									
	Very effective		Effective		Not effective		Not covered		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Roles of husband/wife	7	35%	9	45%	4	20%	0	0	20	100%
Relating with in-laws	6	30%	10	50%	4	20%	0	0	20	100%
Managing money	11	55%	7	35%	2	10%	0	0	20	100%
Communication	13	65%	6	30%	1	5%	0	0	20	100%
Conflict resolution	11	55%	8	40%	1	5%	0	0	20	100%
Family planning	12	60%	5	25%	3	15%	0	0	20	100%
Parenting	8	40%	10	50%	2	10%	0	0	20	100%
Sexuality	6	30%	8	40%	6	30%	0	0	20	100%
Separation & divorce	2	10%	6	30%	12	60%	0	0	20	100%
Personality differences	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	100%	20	100%
Family health	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	100%	20	100%

The information from the table above reveals that, the Nairobi Chapel was very effective in handling communication, family planning, conflict resolution and management of resources. They were however effective in handling roles of husband and wife, relationship with the in-laws, parenting and sexuality. They were less effective in handling separation and divorce issues while personality differences and family health were not handled at all. The ability to tackle technical issues such as communication, family planning and conflict resolution was

improved by the fact that they incorporated specialized professionals to handle such topics. This affirmed the argument that the effectiveness of premarital counseling program could only be as good as the qualification of the facilitators (Bagarozzi & Rauen 1981:1). The incorporation of non-clergy specialists alongside the trained clergy gave more value to the Premarital Counseling at Nairobi Chapel in contrary to other popular practices where premarital programs were entirely offered by the clergy who were not experts in certain technical areas.

Table 5.8 Jubilee Christian Church's effectiveness in handling premarital counseling topics

Topics Covered	Level of effectiveness									
	Very effective		Effective		Not effective		Not covered		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Roles of husband/wife	11	55%	9	45%	0	0	0	0	20	100%
Relating with in-laws	2	10%	6	30%	12	60%	0	0	20	100%
Managing money	13	65%	7	35%	0	0	0	0	20	100%
Communication	3	15%	6	30%	11	55%	0	0	20	100%
Conflict resolution	4	20%	8	40%	8	40%	0	0	20	100%
Family planning	3	15%	9	40%	8	45%	0	0	20	100%
Parenting	3	15%	9	45%	8	40%	0	0	20	100%
Sexuality	6	30%	10	50%	4	20%	0	0	20	100%
Separation & divorce	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	100%	20	100%
Family health	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	100%	20	100%
Personality differences	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	100%	20	100%

The table above illustrates that the roles of husband and wife, and managing resources were handled very effectively by Jubilee Christian Church. Sexuality and parenting were handled well while the relationship with in-laws, communication and family planning were not effectively taught. Divorce and separation, family health and personality differences were not tackled at all. The movement's dismal performance in teaching technical matters such as family planning and communication could be attributed to the fact that only pastors handled premarital counseling and could at times lack sufficient skills in such technical areas. Their high score in understanding financial matters was linked to the movements' emphasis in material prosperity, a theme that dominated all their programs. The success in teaching on roles of husband and wife was further attributed to the fact that the movement was led by a couple who consistently posed as model husband and wife. This family image had a positive impact on the members' understanding of their future roles as husbands and wives.

Table 5.9 Mavuno Church's effectiveness in handling premarital counseling topics

Topics Covered	Level of effectiveness									
	Very effective		Effective		Not effective		Not covered		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No	%	No.	%
Roles of husband/wife	6	30%	7	35%	7	35%	0	0	20	100%
Relating with in-laws	3	15%	6	30%	11	55%	0	0	20	100%
Managing money	11	55%	4	20%	5	25%	0	0	20	100%
Communication	8	40%	8	45%	4	20%	0	0	20	100%
Conflict resolution	10	50%	8	40%	2	10%	0	0	20	100%
Family planning	2	10%	8	40%	10	50%	0	0	20	100%
Parenting	4	20%	12	60%	4	20%	0	0	20	100%
Sexuality	5	25%	12	60%	03	15%	0	0	20	100%
Separation & divorce	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	100%	20	100%
Family health	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	100%	20	100%
Personality differences	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	100%	20	100%

The report from Mavuno Church showed that the movement was very effective in teaching financial management and conflict resolution, effective in handling sexuality, parenting and communication. There was less emphasis in handling family planning and the relationship with in-laws. The movement scored average in tackling roles of husband and wife, while separation and divorce, family health and understanding personality were not taught at all. The high score in financial management and conflict resolution emanated from the fact that the two topics were also very dominant in their sermons series about marriage, hence a reflection of combined effort from the two programs. The movement however lacked a clear

policy towards relationships with in-laws and did not incorporate non-pastoral experts to teach other areas of marriage. This was reflected in minimal scores in the areas of family planning and relationships with in-laws.

Table 5.10 Lighthouse Chapel International's effectiveness in handling premarital counseling topics

Topics Covered	Level of effectiveness									
	Very effective		Effective		Not effective		Not covered		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Roles of husband/wife	8	40%	7	35%	5	25%	0	0	20	100%
Relating with in-laws	10	50%	6	30%	4	20%	0	0	20	100%
Managing money	8	40%	9	45%	3	15%	0	0	20	100%
Communication	7	35%	8	40%	5	24%	0	0	20	100%
Conflict resolution	8	40%	10	50%	2	10%	0	0 0	20	100%
Family planning	15	75%	5	25%	0	0	0	0	20	100%
Parenting	11	55%	8	40%	1	5%	0	0	20	100%
Sexuality	13	65%	6	30%	1	5%	0	0	20	100%
Separation & divorce	8	40%	8	40%	4	20%	0	0	20	100%
Family health	9	45%	11	55%	0	0	0	0	20	100%
Personality differences	10	50%	10	50%	0	0	0	0	20	100%

The findings in the table above demonstrated that Lighthouse Chapel International had the most comprehensive premarital counseling program. The most effectively tackled topics

included family planning, sexuality, personality differences, parenting and relating with the in-laws. The topics that were well handled included conflict resolution, family health and management of resources. The findings also showed that the movement was very proficient in health-related topics such as family planning, family health, sexuality and parenting. This related to the fact that the movement enjoyed the advantage of being founded by a medical doctor. Dr. Dag Heward Mills' premarital counseling guide presented marital issues from both medical and theological perspectives. The guide, which had been simplified and enriched with pictorial illustrations, was seen as an affective counseling and teaching aid on marital matters. Lighthouse Chapel International also scored highest in tackling relationship with the in-laws. This was attributed to the policy that demanded a couple to visit parents from both sides in company of a church elder. This encouraged many candidates to cultivate harmonious relationships with the in-laws before marriage.

5.6. The Church Wedding

Kourtney (2018:1) identified important aspects that qualify a successful wedding ceremony. It was opined that a good wedding ceremony must adhere to religious traditions, civil regulations, cultural traditions and personal interests. This study affirmed that all the four indicators were evident in weddings in New Religious Movements. Adherence to religious traditions was witnessed in couples' commitment to participate in church marital programs, especially premarital counseling. Since all the movements surveyed had made premarital counseling programs mandatory for those who wanted to pursue church weddings, nearly all marriages conducted in movements had some basic information regarding Christian marriage and family life. The study further observed that ecclesiastical and civil partnership in church weddings was a mandatory requirement in Kenya. This is the reason why weddings surveyed had successfully fulfilled the legal marriage threshold.

The study observed that majority of church leaders still held a negative view regarding the usefulness and relevance of African cultural traditions in celebrating and living a Christian marriage. In all the four movements studied, it was only Lighthouse Chapel International which had a policy that made it compulsory for premarital candidates to visit parents and seek for cultural blessings. It was however warned that such cultural involvements must not incorporate elements that were inconsistent with the Christian doctrine such as taking traditional brew or partaking the rituals that involve invocation of ancestral spirits. The other New Religious Movements left cultural issues at the discretion of the couple. The study further noted that in some incidences, involvement in African cultural practices were discouraged. A pastor at Jubilee Christian Church termed it as an entanglement with the world and bowing to two altars (Informant III, Interview: 14th May 2018). A similar view was held by the early European missionaries' who termed African values and practices as mere forms of idolatry. Some practices like payment of bride wealth and parental blessings had both African and Christian grounds, although their African rationale was scarcely asserted.

The study further noted that the contemporary Christian wedding ceremonies had remained valid grounds for interaction between Christianity and traditional African culture. It was observed that the wedding ceremony comprised three sessions: the procession, church service and reception party. The church service was conducted by a Christian minister who gave a sermon, the couple was joined, the marriage certificate was signed and the couple was officially declared husband and wife. The reception that followed was rarely attended by pastors. It had no scriptural readings, except some oral quotations during speeches. It was characterized by African idioms and Christian songs which were sang to the African tunes, sometimes accompanied by vigorous and lively African traditional dances. Unlike the first service that was full of liturgical orders guided by a pastor, the reception was free from such

and welcomed speeches from parents, elders and friends. At this reception, gifts were offered to the newly wed couples. The climax of the feast was marked when the wedding cake was cut and distributed to all visitors present as an expression of African courtesy and generosity. All the invited visitors were welcomed to partake the communal wedding. The African element of communal participation and sharing made the reception lively and registered higher attendance of visitors than the church service.

Personal preferences were also richly displayed in wedding ceremonies which varied from the colour of garments and ambiances, choice of songs, dancing styles, and meals served, choice of best couples, maidens and grooms' men. All these reflected the couples' creativity and ability and were tailor made to suit their choices. The ceremony remained up to date an avenue for the couple to discuss, consult and concur in their choices. It was a prelude to the future consultative decision-making process in marriage.

The study further observed that contemporary Christian weddings had been highly secularized and commercialized. The high charges that the churches levied on premarital counseling programs and officiating fees were contrary to the Christ's teaching that stated "freely you have received, freely shall you give" (Matthew 10:8). The need to meet administrative costs was justifiable, but some charges were a deep reflection of materialism in the church. In some instances, a couple could be fined for late arrival at the wedding venue. Unlike the normal worship services that were held in church buildings for free, couples had to pay a certain fee before they were permitted to have their weddings performed in the church. The contemporary couples had also made wedding ceremonies a show of material wealth opulence and display of splendor which often left the couples in financial debts. Church members, friends and relatives had at times been worked up with frequent fund raising in aid of weddings in addition to the high bride-wealth demands which further drained

the young couples. The newly wed ended up taking heavy loans to facilitate their weddings and struggled to pay during the first few years of marriage instead of stabilizing themselves. This observation affirms Long's (2016:172) view that many contemporary Christians had prioritized materialism over spirituality in celebration of Christian weddings. Long further states that the shepherds were equally lost and confused over their role and were instead turning the sacred ordinances into materialistic enterprises.

5.7. Marriage beyond the Altar

Marriage begins soon after the administration of marriage oath and official declaration of the parties as husband and wife by the presiding minister. The success of such a marriage can therefore not be judged on just the mere conduct of the wedding ceremony, but on the marriage life itself. The need to build stable, happy and functional Christian marriages requires continued processes after the wedding. The study noted that none of the four New Religious Movements had official post marital counseling sessions for couples. It was only those who had specific problems that were expected to show up for pastoral guidance.

Guldner (1971:1) observed that official post-marital counseling is a very rare practice, yet very necessary in the church context. Sawyer (2016:3) emphasized that post marital counseling is essential in addressing issues that could have been unforeseen during premarital counseling. It provides a better avenue to counteract some early marital issues before they escalate into bigger conflicts. Standish (1976:11) also justifies the need for post marital counseling on the basis that some topics tackled during premarital counseling such as the true meaning of love and parenting become more actualized in marriage, voluntary pastoral marital counseling should therefore not substitute official post marital counseling. Since some couples often shy away from sharing their challenges until they are very serious. Voluntary

pastoral counseling may only remain a response to the already exploded marital issues (Kistnasamy 2016:1).

The study affirmed that Nairobi Chapel, Jubilee Christian Church, and Mavuno Church had some official strategies aimed at enriching marriages after wedding. Each of these programs was noted to have different levels of impact on participants. Nairobi Chapel's *Man Enough* program was noted to have some positive effects on marriages. The program that held monthly fellowships and organized men into small prayer groups was generally rated as effective in handling men related issues. The participants stated that they had learnt basic principles of leadership, which were useful at the family level. They stated that it was through the program that they had acquired skills which helped them to be good decision makers, firm disciplinarians and industrious investors. The pastor in charge of the program further noted that the group was undergoing training on how to remain committed to their families irrespective of other oppressing corporate commitments.

The research however noted that the Nairobi Chapel was not very effective in mobilizing all men into the program. The study noted that only a few of the married male informants participated in the program. The survey further noted that membership into the program was dominated by those who had been in marriage for over five years. It was further noted that the program had less impact on younger husbands. The pastor in charge of the program stated that the attendance had remained relatively low, lamenting that men often claimed to be too busy to attend to such programs. The inability of some younger husbands to meet the costs of retreats and breakfasts was also noted as a hindrance to participation.

The study noted that the family enrichment program that brought together couples who went through Pre-marital Counseling Class together, remained vibrant during the first months of

marriage, but depreciated after some time. The groups no longer held official fellowships, but only met during bereavement, birthday parties or celebrations of new births. Many members also feared confiding in peers or being accountable to elderly couples. The study noted that the feeling of insecurity and loneliness even within the fellowship limited the vision and hindered the purpose of the family enrichment program.

At Jubilee Christian Church, nearly all women mentioned the Daughters of Zion and Women School of Mentorship programmes as being very effective in shaping their response to certain issues in marriage. Specific areas where effectiveness was recorded included understanding the role of a woman in a Christian home, sexuality and economic empowerment. In the program, mentorship role played by Rev. Kathy Kiuna was noted to be exemplary. The attendance of the weekly and monthly meetings was also reported to be relatively high. Small groups were noted to be useful in sharing ideas, experiences among women while personal contacts between the mentor, and the mentees was seen as conducive for handling confidential matters.

It was however noted that the Rev. Kathy Kiuna had not successfully trained other mentors to facilitate the programs in her absence. As a result, several sessions were not held when the pastor was not available. It had become challenging to balance between the program and tight international mission trips. Other women also observed that the teachings overemphasized on money, beauty and sex. The pastor exhorted women not to tolerate struggling and jobless husbands and discouraged women from hosting relatives in their houses. This contradicted the African family spirit and Christian virtue of courtesy and hospitality. The notion further weakened the relationship between a couple and their in-laws who were often perceived as strangers.

The study noted that pulpit sermons at Mavuno Church were significant in imparting some knowledge to families. The most articulated topics included communication, family investment, parenting and the principles of love and submission. Most married couples exclaimed that the sermons were lively, relevant and informative. It was however noted that the sermons alone were limited in the sense that the sessions were non-interactive hence, they could not address confidential and personal matters effectively. Sexuality and lovemaking matters cannot be taught effectively through public sermons. The sessions also brought together all congregants, irrespective of their age and marital status, which rendered the sessions irrelevant to some listeners.

5.8. Marital Satisfaction

Lewis & Spainer (1979: 49-51) suggested that the quality of a marriage could be determined by the couples' level of satisfaction and their relationships' challenges in various dimensions. They further noted that these dimensions included, but, were not limited to sexual intimacy, communication, conflict resolution, managing resources, relationship with the in-laws, roles fulfillment, parenting, family planning and commitment to marriage. Positive response in most of these dimensions indicated that the relationship was of good quality and functional. The areas where a relationship dragged behind could be attributed to normal human weaknesses. Glenn & Kramer (1987: 813) further observed that marital dimensions are very interrelated since a good score in one area could easily affect functionality in other areas. Good communication had positive effects on sexual intimacy, conflict resolution and resource management. A negative score in one area should not be ignored since it was likely to affect other dimensions of the relationship. The study utilized this perception to gauge the general quality of marriages in the New Religious Movements by rating the couples' satisfaction levels in various dimensions.

5.8.1. Marital Satisfaction of Married Informants at Nairobi Chapel

The marital satisfaction at Nairobi Chapel was summarized in the table below:

Table 5.11 Marital satisfaction of married informants at Nairobi Chapel

Dimensions of Marital Relationship	Level of Satisfaction									
	Very Satisfied		Satisfied		Less Satisfied		Not Satisfied		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sexual Intimacy	12	20%	18	30%	21	35%	9	15%	60	100%
Communication	22	37%	16	27%	14	23%	8	13%	60	100%
Conflict Resolution	19	32%	23	38%	11	18%	7	12%	60	100%
Managing Finances	18	30%	19	32%	9	15%	14	23%	60	100%
Relating with In-Laws	11	18%	13	22%	21	35%	15	25%	60	100%
Roles Fulfillment	13	22%	15	25%	19	32%	13	22%	60	100%
Parenting	17	28%	19	32%	11	18%	13	22%	60	100%
Family Planning	16	27%	21	35%	11	18%	12	20%	60	100%
Commitment to Marriage	12	20%	24	40%	11	18%	13	22%	60	100%

The findings in the table indicate that most of the families at Nairobi Chapel could effectively manage their conflicts. Seventy percent (70%) of married informants were either very

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satisfied or satisfied with their conflict management skills. The findings further show that communication was the second area of marital strength in Nairobi Chapel. Sixty-four percent (64%) of married informants were either very satisfied or satisfied with their marital communication skills. This affirmed the argument by Greeff & Bruyne (2011:321) that good communication skills improve collaborative conflict management in marriage. This further emanated from the fact that this movement was effective in handling the two subjects during their Premarital Counseling Class (PMCC). The report also revealed that marriages in Nairobi Chapel had a good level of satisfaction in handling finances, family planning, parenting and general commitment to marriage. Sexual satisfaction however remained average with 50% falling above the basic satisfaction level as the other 50% fell below the satisfaction level. The movement registered a relatively low score in matters relating to the in-laws and roles fulfillment. Sixty percent (60%) of the married informants were not satisfied by their relationships with the in-laws while 54% registered dissatisfaction in role fulfillment. This trend was contrary to the report obtained from the movement's premarital candidates, which indicated that 80% of the candidates rated the topics as having been effectively covered. The contrast therefore raised a question regarding the content, relevance and applicability of their PMCC's curriculum in these two areas. This further proved that matters such as role fulfillment and relationships with in-laws could not be comprehensively handled by premarital counseling alone. Post marital counseling was necessary in enabling the couples to understand these topics in a more practical way when they were in a marriage.

5.8.2. Marital Satisfaction in Mavuno Church

The marital satisfaction among couples at Mavuno Church was illustrated in the table below:

Table 5.12Marital satisfaction of married informants at Mavuno Church

Dimensions of Marital Relationship	Level of Satisfaction									
	Very Satisfied		Satisfied		Less Satisfied		Not Satisfied		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sexual Intimacy	19	15%	22	37%	12	20%	7	12%	60	100%
Communication	11	18%	18	30%	16	27%	15	25%	60	100%
Conflict Resolution	8	13%	17	28%	19	32%	16	27%	60	100%
Managing Finances	16	27%	18	30%	12	20%	14	23%	60	100%
Relating With In-Laws	9	15%	14	23%	20	33%	17	28%	60	100%
Roles Fulfillment	13	22%	16	27%	16	27%	15	25%	60	100%
Parenting	11	18%	18	30%	20	33%	11	18%	60	100%
Family Planning	13	22%	21	35%	12	20%	14	23%	60	100%
Commitment To Marriage	11	18%	17	28%	16	27%	16	27%	60	100%

The above table represented the findings from Mavuno Church which indicated that 57% of married informants fell above the satisfaction index in financial management, 55% in family planning and 52% in sexuality. The results also showed that only 48% of couples fell above the satisfaction index in communication, 49% in role fulfillment, 48% in parenting, 46% in commitment and 41% in conflict resolution. It was further noted that relationship with the in-laws scored lowest with only 38% falling above the satisfaction index. The relationship

between the status of marriages to premarital counseling programs in the movement showed that there was very little correlation between the two. Their premarital candidates stated high levels of effectiveness in learning conflict resolution, communication and parenting, but marital satisfaction in these areas remained significantly low. Whereas the average score in dealing with sexuality, management of finances and family planning was attributed to premarital counseling and frequent pulpit sermons, their dismal scores in other numerous dimensions could be attributed to other factors other than premarital counseling. The movement targeted the non-churched population, some of whom got married before being properly grounded in faith. The status of their marriages could thus be a reflection of their level of maturity in faith.

5.8.3. Marital Satisfaction of married informants at Lighthouse Chapel International

The table shows the marital satisfaction among couples in Lighthouse Chapel International:

Table 5.13 Marital satisfaction of married informants at Lighthouse Chapel International

Dimensions of Marital Relationship	Level of Satisfaction									
	Very Satisfied		Satisfied		Less Satisfied		Not Satisfied		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sexual Intimacy	23	38%	24	40%	9	15%	4	07%	60	100%
Communication	17	28%	21	35%	13	22%	9	15%	60	100%
Conflict Resolution	16	27%	22	37%	14	23%	8	13%	60	100%
Managing Finances	11	18%	19	32%	16	27%	14	23%	60	100%
Relating With In-Laws	17	28%	19	32%	13	22%	11	18%	60	100%
Roles Fulfillment	15	25%	17	28%	17	28%	11	18%	60	100%
Parenting	15	25%	20	33%	13	22%	12	20%	60	100%
Family Planning	22	37%	26	43%	10	17%	2	3%	60	100%
Commitment to Marriage	11	18%	15	25%	18	30%	16	27%	60	100%

The information presented in the table on the Lighthouse Chapel International recorded high satisfaction in health-related topics such as sexuality, family planning and parenting. Eighty percent (80%) of the married respondents fell above the effective index in family planning, 78% in sexuality and 58% in parenting. This was attributed to the fact that the medical background of the founder provided a relevant guide on such matters. The result showed that 63% of married individuals fell above satisfaction index in communication, while in conflict

resolution the figure was 64%. Marriages in the movement also recorded better relationships with their in-laws as compared to other three New Religious Movements surveyed. These positive trends were attributed to the movement's policy which encouraged involvement of in-laws in marital arrangements which seemed to lay a good foundation for future relationship with relatives. Lighthouse Chapel International also had the widest scope of pre-marital counseling that incorporated other topics such as personality differences. These had been commended by Kromker (1994:113) who documents that understanding personality is paramount in a healthy marital relationship. The author however warns against tagging people as melancholic, choleric or sanguine, arguing that such terms often lead to judgmental attitudes which could destroy relationships. It is emphasized that personal traits should be understood as a way of learning how to relate well with a spouse. Lighthouse Chapel International's good score in communication skills and conflict resolution were therefore attributed to the fact that majority of the informants had rightful understanding of spouses' personalities.

5.8.4. Marital Satisfaction of Married Informants at Jubilee Christian Church

The table below illustrates marital satisfaction among couples at Jubilee Christian Church.

Table 5.14 Marital satisfaction of married informants at Jubilee Christian Church

Dimensions of Marital Relationship	Level of Satisfaction									
	Very Satisfied		Satisfied		Less Satisfied		Not Satisfied		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sexual Intimacy	19	32%	17	28%	10	17%	14	23%	60	100%
Communication	14	23%	17	28%	21	35%	8	13%	60	100%
Conflict Resolution	11	18%	13	22%	19	32%	17	28%	60	100%
Managing Finances	15	25%	16	27%	15	25%	14	23%	60	100%
Relating with In-Laws	6	10%	14	23%	22	37%	18	30%	60	100%
Roles Fulfillment	21	35%	16	27%	17	28%	6	10%	60	100%
Parenting	8	13%	19	32%	21	35%	12	20%	60	100%
Family Planning	15	25%	18	30%	19	32%	8	13%	60	100%
Commitment to Marriage	12	20%	16	27%	18	30%	14	23%	60	100%

The findings from the table reveal that marriages in the movement scored high in sexuality and roles fulfillment, average in communication, managing finances and family planning and relatively low in conflict resolution, relationship with in-laws and commitment. The table shows that 60% of married informants fell above the satisfaction index in sexuality, 62% in roles fulfillment, 55% in family planning, 52% in managing finances and 51% in communication. It further shows that 60% of the informants fell below satisfaction index in

conflict resolution, 67% in managing in-laws, 55% in parenting and 57% in commitment. The positive trend realized in areas of sexuality and roles fulfillment could be attributed to the founding couple (Kiuna and Kathy), who as marriage mentors consistently presented their family image and exhorted members to keep their relationships romantic and fulfill their marital duties. Despite the observation that the movement ran a marriage mentorship school for women, it was notable that there were no similar programs targeting men. The majority of women in the movement were dissatisfied with their husbands' commitment to marriage. The movement's individualistic perception tended to alienate couples from their families resulting into a low score in relationship with in-laws.

5.8.5. General Marital Satisfaction of married informants from the Four New Religious Movements

This chapter sought to analyze the New Religious Movements' responses to marital problems in Nairobi County by cumulatively viewing all the selected marriages from the four New Religious Movements surveyed. The findings were thus summarized as follows in the table below:

Table 5.15 General marital satisfaction of married informants in the four New Religious Movements

Dimensions of Marital Relationship	Level of Satisfaction									
	Very Satisfied		Satisfied		Less Satisfied		Not Satisfied		Total	
	No	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sexual Intimacy	73	30%	81	34%	52	22%	34	14%	240	100%
Communication	64	27%	72	30%	64	64%	40	17%	240	100%
Conflict Resolution	54	23%	75	31%	63	26%	48	20%	240	100%
Managing Finances	60	25%	72	30%	52	22%	56	23%	240	100%
Relating With In-Laws	43	18%	60	25%	76	32%	61	25%	240	100%
Roles Fulfillment	60	25%	62	26%	69	29%	49	20%	240	100%
Parenting	51	21%	76	32%	65	27%	48	20%	240	100%
Family Planning	66	28%	86	36%	52	22%	36	15%	240	100%
Commitment to Marriage	46	19%	72	30%	63	26%	59	25%	240	100%

The findings showed that 64% of married individuals in New Religious Movements in Nairobi were satisfied with their sexual intimacy, while the rest (46%) registered either little or no satisfaction. Donnelly (1993:56) identified the presence of a new-born baby, poor health and duration of the marriage as some of the factors that limited sexual satisfaction. The author further identified sexual dissatisfaction as a major cause of marital dissatisfaction and a probable basis for separation. In order to counter the challenge, Gardner (2002:74) recommended that marriage partners should bear with their spouses during such times when

the practice of sex was not practically possible, but maximize the time when it was possible. The author further warned against unwarranted excuses for irregular and unsatisfactory sex.

The report also showed that 64% of the married individuals were capable of managing family planning matters effectively as 46% demonstrate less or no capability. Some of the factors that hindered couples' effectiveness in handling family planning include: inaccessibly to right information, disagreement with the spouse over the method to employ, the cost and side effects associated to modern family planning methods. Mills (2007: 116-124) responded to this problem by inviting people to understand the nature and operation of human anatomy. The author uses simple pictorials to illustrate salient points and further advised couples to employ natural family planning methods like breastfeeding and calculation of safe days. Mills (2007: 116-124) points out that these natural ways of family planning are simple, cheap and have no side effects. Couples were recommended to use condoms in case they were not able to discipline themselves and calculate the non-fertility days and only encouraged the use of oral pills and injections if a couple could not effectively utilize the natural and barrier methods. Mills (2007: 116-124) states that pills and injections should only be adopted after thorough medical check up to affirm a person's hormonal status, and to create awareness of possible side effects. The writer discourages permanent family planning methods, stating that in case of death, one may need remarriage hence desire to beget more children.

It was also noted that 57% of married individuals had effective marital communication skills, while 43% lacked proper communication skills. Conway & Conway (1991:75) state that ineffective communication could affect other areas of marriage negatively. The authors prescribed the keys to effective marital communication to include adoption of the culture of dialogue as opposed to monologue, self-disclosure, appropriate timing and duration for conversation, the principle of courtesy and inclusion of body language. They further states

that healthy communication could promote positive regard towards each other as opposed to ridicule and condemnation.

The study noted that 55% of married individuals could manage financial matters well while 45% were challenged. Increased costs of living, strife over control of family resources, misunderstanding over expenditure, unrealistic financial demands and comparisons with other families were perceived to be major causes of financial conflicts. Blood (1969:241) asserts that a husband should control family finances whether one earned more or less than the wife, and adds that such authority must be executed with wisdom, fairness, trustworthiness, honesty, accountability while staying focused to the family vision and sensitive to the needs of other family members. Some practical skills that have been proposed in managing family finances include; drafting a family budget, avoiding unreasonable demands, unnecessary debts and misspending (Reed 1995:91). Larry (1977:83) calls for couples to accept their financial realities, bear with one another and shun from comparing themselves with others.

The study further showed that 54% of married individuals could manage marital conflicts amicably whereas 46% could not. Worthington (1993:26) states that every couple should view marital conflicts as both expected and necessary phenomena. Since marital conflicts were inevitable, couples had to grow and learn positively from such circumstances. Gushee (2004:147) suggests that growth in marriage can be attained if couples learnt conflict resolution skills and demonstrate personal commitment and sacrifice to overcome them. The study also noted that 51% of married couples understood and fulfilled their family roles effectively. Forty-nine percent (49%) either did not know their roles or were challenged in fulfilling them. The scripture summarizes the responsibilities of a husband and wife to love and submit to each other respectively. It therefore implied that those who couldn't interpret

and apply what love and submission meant in their marital contexts were not likely to fulfill their roles. The wave of social change, which altered traditional roles in contemporary families, further complicated the matter. In all circumstances, husbands as the heads of their families, need to execute their authority, leadership and responsibility (Packer 2003:67). They should remain the spiritual, social and financial heads of their homes (Dillow 1986:49). This situation was however challenged if one was married to a wife whose interest was only focused on enjoying the husband's responsibility without willingly submitting to his authority (Mills 2007:46). Jakes (2000:57) interprets wives' submissive roles to mean helping, protecting and motivating their husbands and asserts that wives need to understand that home keeping is their primary role. The couple should both aspire to satisfy each other sexually, remain attractive and friendly to their partners at all times.

It was noted that only 49% of individuals were satisfied with their spouses' commitment to marriage. Fifty-one percent (51%) registered dissatisfaction. This trend was viewed as very pathetic with regard to the reality that strong marriages are not built on pleasure alone, but commitment. Conway & Conway (1991:54) suggest some practices that could improve marital commitment. They recommend that couples should embrace practical trust, endurance and a relentless choice to care for the marriage as well as the partner. One should develop himself or herself for the sake of the family and sacrifice personal interests for the good of the family.

Only forty-three percent (43%) of the married couples showed the existence of good relationships with their in-laws. Fifty-seven percent (57%) recorded some challenges in relating with extended relatives. It was established that failure to incorporate in-laws in marriage relationships in preliminary stages, and failure by the church to teach premarital candidates on how to relate with the relatives had a negative impact on couples' relationships

with their in-laws. This challenge made the extended relatives to be continually viewed as strangers in marital relationships. Some couples often perceived that in-laws were malicious and jealous people who worked for their downfall. The existence of such opinions cannot be underplayed, neither can they replace the existence of good relatives and the role they play in a marriage. Mbunga (2010:138) also notes that unwarranted financial demands that parents impose on young men intending to marry off their daughters also damage the relationship with their in-laws. The young men could fulfill the demands, but later on perceived their in-laws as mere exploiters rather than step parents.

5.9. Divorce Care in New Religious Movements

The study noted that Nairobi Chapel had the most refined and documented policy on divorce which stated that divorce was not permitted except in cases of infidelity and conflict of faith. It further stated that the two cases could only warrant divorce if the offender, who was quitting the union, was either not a believer, or had fallen from faith and was unwilling to be reinstated. The Movement also taught that the church should play a mediation role and give a grace window of seven years before granting divorce. The movement insisted in enrolling the divorcees in divorce care class, and then organized a dissolution service, before they were permitted to remarry.

The study revealed that despite the strict policy, some divorce cases were not caused by either infidelity or conflict of faith. A pastor from the movement reported several occasions where divorcees quit marriage because of physical violence, expressing that divorce was the only option because her existence had been threatened. Some divorced couples were also reported to be impatient and could not wait for the seven-year duration that one had to observe before making a decision for remarriage. The dissolution service also lacked scriptural basis and

could expose divorced partner to more reproach. Those who opted for remarriage preferred a civil or customary marriage as opposed to a church wedding.

Lighthouse Chapel International also had a policy on divorce which asserted marital permanency and only permitted divorce basing only on infidelity or conflict of faith. Unlike Nairobi Chapel, Lighthouse Chapel International left the nature of infidelity and conflict of faith to the congregant's discretion. The policy further emphasized on the responsibility on men than women on divorce and other marital failures. It permitted, but discouraged remarriage because such relationships transferred marital problems into other unions. The study noted that the movement had no special programs targeting divorced persons except pastoral counseling which was offered to individuals who sought for the service.

Jubilee Christian Church and Mavuno Church had no written policy documents on divorce, except verbal statements given in sermons and premarital counseling sessions. In their statements, the pastors reiterated that marriage was permanent and only granted permission for divorce on grounds of unfaithfulness or conflict of faith. The movements also lacked any official fellowship for divorcees. When interviewed on the matter, a pastor from Jubilee Christian Church argued that the divorced partners often changed their church affiliations after their separation hence making it difficult to reach out to them. He further lamented that:

"Since they like taking hostage in new environments where little is known about their marital status, it is difficult to gather them and reach out to them. The sensitive nature of their problem only makes it possible to talk to those who show up for counseling". (Informant III, Interview: 22.4.1018).

A similar scenario was reported at Mavuno Church where one of the pastors in charge of marriage and family affairs reported that the divorced couples were mere introverts and could always exclude themselves from any show that tended to unveil their statuses (Informant V,

Interview: 20.6.2018). The study also revealed that Jubilee Christian Church and Mavuno Church lacked a strategy to reach out to the divorced partners as people who required special spiritual and social care.

5.10. Chapter's Summary

The study established that New Religious Movements were not effective in teaching marriage matters to their young followers. Premarital counseling remained the most formal and thorough response to marital problems, but the program came when it was too late to guide the candidates on certain issues especially on the choice of a partner. An evaluation on the effectiveness of premarital counseling class programs facilitated by the four New Religious Movements showed that Nairobi Chapel ranked high in handling communication and conflict resolution, Mavuno Church was effective in handling conflict resolution and financial related matters, Jubilee Christian Church was effective in handling the roles of husband and wife and sexuality while Lighthouse Chapel International was effective in handling health related issues, sexuality and family planning. Formal post marital counseling was however reported as missing in all the movements. The Nairobi Chapel was effective in empowering men and JCC was well rated in empowering women. The focus on only one gender was insufficient in responding to couples' marital problems holistically. Mavuno Church's pulpit sermons were also reported as useful in equipping members with essential information regarding communication and conflict management skills. The strategy was however viewed as being inadequate in addressing deeper and more confidential issues such as sex and family planning in marriage. The study further affirmed that divorce care was still underrated and needs a lot of improvement. It was noted that only Nairobi Chapel had an official divorce care program, while the rest of the movements considered divorce as being complicated and an intra-personal issue. This was a very regrettable status because divorce often left a couple

wounded, discouraged, isolated and disappointed and in need of more pastoral care. Having comprehensively evaluated the selected New Religious Movements responses to marital problems, the study summarizes, makes conclusions and recommends areas for further research in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the contemporary African Christian marriage challenges and responses from selected New Religious Movements in Nairobi County. The study was guided by the following specific objectives: to compare and contrast the African Religious-cultural beliefs and Christian views on marriage; to examine the challenges facing contemporary African Christian marriages in Nairobi County; to assess the nature and procedures employed by selected New Religious Movements in instituting marriages in Nairobi County and to evaluate the New Religious Movements responses to marital problems. The study was anchored on structural functionalist theory by McIntyre (1996:57) and cyclic theory of social change by Spengler (1997:98-104) and Sorokin (1962:335-356). The study also set out to test four hypotheses in line with each of the objectives namely: African Religio-cultural beliefs are more complementary than contradictory to Christian views on marriage; the challenges affecting contemporary African Christian marriages in Nairobi County are associated with the departure from traditional African religious beliefs; the processes and strategies involved in instituting African Christian marriages by New Religious Movements in Nairobi County emphasize on the wedding ceremony instead of creating life time marriage relationships; and lastly, New Religious Movements in Nairobi County do not offer sufficient response to challenges facing contemporary marriages and family units. The findings, based on each objective are presented in chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5. This last chapter provides a summary, conclusions and recommendations drawn from these chapters.

6.2. Summary of Findings

In comparing African Religio-cultural beliefs and Christian views on marriage, the study affirmed that traditional African elements were more complementary than contradictory to Christian teachings. In both cases, the study noticed that marriage was a sacred institution, founded by God the creator and endowed with the sacred gift of procreation. Its perpetuity was intended to remain non-violated, although it could be interrupted by violations of taboos, irreconcilable character traits such as witchcraft and extreme laziness in the Traditional African community (Malo & Achieng' 2003:40; Mboya 2001:65). In Christianity, conflict of faith and infidelity could warrant divorce on condition that the willingness to quit emanates from the unbelieving partner (Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Matthew 19:3-10; I Corinthians 7:15). The process of divorce was clearly defined in most traditional African communities. This was granted by observing ritual cleansing, bride-wealth refund and deliberations over children's welfare. In Christianity, the process was noted to be arbitrary and often cedes cases to judicial proceedings (Watson 2000: 46).

Premarital sexual encounters were validated by a bride's virginity test which was ascertained on the wedding night in African Traditional Religion. A nubile girl whose virginity had been ruptured before marriage reduced her bride-wealth and she could even be married to an older man as a second or third wife. Christianity on the other hand does not require a virginity test. It teaches forgiveness to those who had fallen into sexual sin, followed by a commitment to secondary virginity. The secondary virginity anchors on the teaching which emphasizes that one's sexual purity is restored after salvation, despite previous involvement into premarital sex. In both cases, married couples were advised to be faithful to each other.

The African society permitted both monogamy and polygamy, heterosexual unions but with more emphasis on the later. Monogamy is the authentic form of marriage in Christianity,

while polygamy is treated as humanity's invention and interpretation of marriage in their fallen status. It does not legitimize it, but tolerates such unions, especially if one is converted while in an existing polygamous marriage. The study also noted that some African communities permitted woman-to-woman relationships under special circumstances when a man from the same family was permitted to fulfill the woman's conjugal rights and bear children.

The authority of the husband and submission of the wife as a divinely established order is affirmed. In African Traditional Religion, marriage offers companionship, sexual fulfillment and validates it through procreation of offspring.

Marriage in Christianity, is a metaphorical union through which the relationship between God and his people, Jesus and the Church is comprehended. The Christian wedding ceremony points to the rupture of the Church during which Christ who is the groom, enters into eternal union with the Church who is the bride. In the African context, marriage is a divine weapon to conquer death through procreation in which the dead are replaced, granting eternity to the human race on earth.

Marriage in Christianity commences with an individual's spousal choice which is celebrated in a church wedding. In traditional African communities, marriage was a communal compulsory duty where parents, relatives and the entire clan took part in selecting marriage partners for their children. The entire kinship system thereafter participated in the wedding ceremony and marriage life thereafter.

In examining the challenges facing contemporary African Christian marriages, the study established that many marriages are failing due to departure from traditional religious values. It was discovered that many people chose their spouses without proper guidance from parents or elders. Some of them admitted that they entered into marriage with incompatible partners

and regretted their choices later in their marriage lives. It was also observed that the Church has not offered a proper substitute to traditional African values regarding marriage and family life. Some youth choose spouses without parental guidance and have less regard for character and family background. They were easily swayed by the education level, financial ability and physical beauty of their suitors. Although such traits were viewed as important, the researcher considered them secondary and could not substitute the central replace of commitment to faith and good character.

Most African traditional marriages were intra-ethnic, but in the contemporary society, inter-ethnic marriages were reported to be on the increase. Many couples were however not adequately prepared to manage their cultural differences resulting into language communication barriers, lifestyle, and political differences in marriages. It was also observed that couples were isolated from their extended families and suffer in silence without credible individuals who could help them address their relationship problems. Credible and trusted relationships between older and younger couples were also rare in the New Religious Movements.

The change in traditional roles in the family was identified as a great threat to the stability of contemporary families. In African traditional families, women stayed in the homesteads attending to domestic chores, while in contemporary families both husbands and wives are encouraged to pursue income-generating careers which in turn keep them away from their homes. Most household duties have been delegated to commercial housemaids in contemporary families in towns. Such arrangements expose sensitive family affairs to strangers hence weakening the marital bond. The study further noted that some dual career families compete among themselves or with other couples because of wealth, level of education, exposure, job group, attention from children and social fame.

It was also noted that several marriages were based on romantic feelings or material gains as opposed to religious values. If such expectations were not met, the individuals lost value and respect for their mates leading to infidelity, misunderstandings and gender violence. The study established that the marital instability of parents affected their offspring's marriages. In some cases, people who exposed their spouses to physical violence, separation, neglect and infidelity hailed from unhealthy families where such acts were rampant. Some marriages therefore suffered from problems associated with negative modeling. Despite the general perception that marriage is at risk, several couples still registered dissatisfaction with their spouses' commitments in addressing their marriage problems.

In assessing the nature and procedures of instituting contemporary African Christian marriages in New Religious Movements, the study noted that pre-marital counselling is their major focus. This affirmed the study's hypothesis that the movements emphasize on the Christian wedding ceremony as opposed to life time marriage relationship. The study found out that Nairobi Chapel ran a ten weeks Pre-marital Counseling Class interdenominational program aimed at preparing intended couples for marriage life. The Couples Affirmation Class on the other hand targeted those who were already staying together as husband and wife, yet they had not solemnized their wedding in church. The "*man enough*" that was aimed at empowering men as the heads of families teaches men to be firm decision makers, responsible leaders and industrious investors. It also trained them on how to excel in their careers without neglecting their families. The program mobilized men to form prayer and fellowship groups in which they were encouraged to share their problems with each other and seek for amicable solutions. At the time of the study, the movement was in the process of establishing a similar program for women. Nairobi Chapel had also a network of fellowships between younger and senior couples where the latter were expected to mentor, nurture and facilitate the growth of young families.

The study noted that ten weeks *Ndoa Equip* and *Ndoa Quest* were practiced in Mavuno Church to prepare young people for marriage. *Ndoa Equip* targeted young people who were preparing for marriage, while *Ndoa Quest* targeted those who were already living together, but had not formalized their marriage in church. The study also examined the movement's frequent sermons from the pulpit which identified causes of marital discrepancies and taught their congregants how to counter them. The movement perceived that many contemporary couples hailed from broken or unstable relationships which in turn incapacitated their ability and commitment to address relationship discrepancies. The founding pastors of Mavuno Church further asserted that contemporary marriages suffered from love deficiency because, some married partners expressed certain expectations which could not be met by their partners. They also argued that many marriages failed because of a culture whereby couples were willing and able to persevere hardships in business, education and career, but not in marriage. They recommended principles of "loving as Jesus loved", improving spiritual commitment and character and "assuming the best" as some of the ways towards improving marital relationships.

The study observed that in Jubilee Christian Church, premarital candidates underwent an eight weeks mandatory premarital counseling session. It was further noted that the Daughters of Zion (DOZ) and Women School of Mentorship programs were instrumental women programs under the auspices of Kathy Kiuna whose objective was to address the many economic, social and ecclesiastical challenges facing women in Africa. These programs were meant to liberate women and enhance virtues of industriousness, excellence, independence, modesty, skillfulness and recreation, while raising their economical and sexual worthiness in their families.

Lighthouse Chapel International had the most proactive approach to marital problems because they subjected the youth to a compulsory premarital school which guided them in selecting marriage partners, successful courtship, wedding ceremony and marriage life. During the course, the learners were taken through a "marriage model" detailed course content which was well handled by medical practitioners and theologians. Upon successful completion, those who were in serious courtship were identified and taken through premarital counseling. Unlike other movements which subject their members to group counseling, Lighthouse Chapel International's premarital counseling program was conducted privately, where each couple was counseled by a pastor or an elder away from other couples.

The study also observed that wedding ceremonies in New Religious Movements were avenues for positive interactions between African cultural beliefs and Christianity values. But, the high costs associated with Christian weddings discouraged many young people from participating in the ordinance. The New Religious Movements furthermore performed dismally in nurturing marriages beyond the wedding ceremony. This was due to lack of official post marital counseling programs. The study discovered that many families in New Religious Movements scored high in financial management and family planning, averagely in communication, sexual intimacy and conflict management and below average in commitment, parenting and relationship with in-laws.

An evaluation of New Religious Movements responses to marital challenges affirmed that the movements demonstrated some awareness regarding marital problems, but lacked proper proactive and comprehensive mitigation to these problems. It was noted that official preparation for marriage begun during premarital counseling when some young people had already made marital choices that were difficult to change or influence. The study however acknowledged the positive impact of premarital counseling programs whose success

depended on the content, duration and credibility of the facilitators. The incorporation of non-pastoral counselors with special professional qualifications yielded better results in premarital counseling. The study took positive note of the New Religious Movements special marital programs that targeted specific groups within their congregations. Nairobi Chapel's *Man Enough* program, Lighthouse Chapel International's School of Marriage and Jubilee Christian Church's *Daughters of Zion* indeed demonstrated some empowering and enriching effects on men, youth and women respectively. The end result of each program however could only empower one member of a family hence could create an imbalance in managing marital problems.

6.3. Conclusion

The study has examined the problems of contemporary African Christian marriages and evaluated New Religious Movements' responses to them in Nairobi County. The study concludes that African traditional religion has very salient values which can enrich and strengthen contemporary African Christian marriages. It lays emphasis on aspects of commonalities thus enhancing positive dialogue towards building stable marriages. Although the study was limited to marital problems, dialogue between Christianity and African religion should be encouraged in pursuit of solutions to other diversified contemporary problems. In doing so, African Christianity will remain relevant to its adherents and even add more value to the universal Church.

This study has elaborated on various approaches that can be applied to enhance marital stability among Christians because, marriage is the basic spiritual unit of the Church which originates from God and cannot be properly lived outside God's word and will. This institution demands couples' total commitment to themselves and Christ by faith, character, conduct and lifestyle. This is paramount in building a Christian marriage through scriptural

analogies and theological affirmations. This enriches believers' understanding on marriage and equips them with relevant skills to overcome marital challenges. In doing so, the Church is likely to encourage healthy marriages among its committed believers.

The study also draws analogies from the scriptural symbolism of marriage from Old Testament teachings which compare the marital covenant to the relationship between God and his people- Israel. This is reiterated in the New Testament where Jesus is perceived as the groom while the Church is his bride. These correlations allow believers to draw examples from their own human relationships in order to understand and strengthen their marriage union and also maintain a spiritual communion with God.

The discussion on interaction between Christianity and African culture has persisted since the 19th century when European missionaries first came to Africa. This study noted that contemporary Christians still struggle to synchronize what is Christian, western, secular or African. African values have continued to be neglected or ridiculed despite the fact that some of the ideals are consistent with Christian teachings. This study has underscored positive African cultural values which govern marriage and family life. It is emphatic that their proper emulation could inform Christians about their rich past showing the usefulness of neglected African traditional values in solving current marital issues. This could further inculcate their faith with African idioms which are more spiritual, realistic, contextual and ritualistic. Modern Christianity will become richer in responding to experiential problems while evaluating the western influence which derails their spirituality.

The study has also asserted that Church ministers play a significant role in preparing the youth for marriage by providing useful guides to pre-marital and post-marital counseling. The clergy will benefit from this study by comprehending the content and purpose of premarital counseling programs and apply it in addressing contemporary marital problems. The clergy

will then be able to offer a proactive approach to marital challenges instead of waiting to tackle them in future. The study also provides purposeful motivation on early marriage preparation programs thereby shaping young people to observe good moral values that could make them exemplary husbands and wives. Parents, teachers and caregivers are also called upon to nurture young people to comprehend their adult roles both in word and deed.

6.4. Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby stipulated for consideration:

6.4.1. Saving future Marriages

This study has shown that several unhealthy marriages are initiated by individuals who hail from unhealthy or separated families. McLanahan & Sandefur (1994:67) observe that children's moral values are likely to decline if their parents' marriage suddenly became stormy. The declining trend in contemporary marital stability affects future marriages hence calling for a more proactive approach to future marital problems. Parents should teach their children from formative stages of life thereby affirming the scriptural reference that: *"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (*Proverbs 22:6). It is further emphasized in Deuteronomy 6:8-9, & 11:18-20, that they should:

> "Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates." …. Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates"

The scripture asserts that parents must be good role models to their children. They should talk to them positively about family life and inculcate a culture that appreciates the gift of marriage.

6.4.2. Rebuilding the Old Age Foundation

The warning against forsaking old religious foundations in favour of the new world order is ridiculed in Jeremiah 2:13, when he states:

> "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water"

This reflects the position of many current marriages which depart from traditional religious orders and replaces them with a new world order which is disastrous to the family unit. This study recommends the rediscovery of some traditional African values that are consistent with Christian faith and useful in addressing current marital problems. Marriage as a sacred institution, should be entered into with absolute fear for God who initiated it. Relationships which are based on financial or romantic benefits alone are discouraged.

The communal aspect of marriage is emphasized in the traditional African context and in Christianity. The church as a community of faith has however failed to create strong family bonds among its members. This is why several families are in large Christian fellowships, yet in their homes, their marriages are alienated and lonely. The clergy are overwhelmed by large congregations calling the need to create manageable fellowships of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in which for example, members can confide in for easy follow up and accountability. Leaders of such groups can then be empowered and equipped to tackle marital problems. Although several mega churches have utilized this ideology to decentralize pastoral and administrative duties, little has been done regarding marriage. The Mavuno Church and Nairobi Chapel have Small Christian Communities, but their focus is on prayer and discipleship, rather than on marriage nourishment. Similar programs that target on marriage are therefore proposed. Obondi (2018:37) notes that SCCs promote good neighbourliness, unity among members and create avenues for believers to motivate themselves to overcome various challenges in life. The writer recommends that Small

Christian Communities are good avenues for conflict resolution since the leaders often offer fast mediation and conciliatory support to their members.

Small Christian Communities are easier to form and manage in an African context than in other parts within Christendom because Africans have a cultural background where family spirit is easily embraced and appreciated (Healey 2009:85). The need to intertwine the concept of SCCs and the African age-grade system can accentuate family care in lasting bonds of fellowship and partnership in various issues of life. The married young couples could be connected to senior model families for mentorship jus as young families were mentored by elderly relatives or intercessors in the African traditional community. This could help resolve the problems that are manifested at various stages of marriage.

6.4.3. Re-defining the Christian Wedding

Hurst (2011:1) argues that wedding ceremonies could only survive in the contemporary context if they adopt current tastes, standards and lifestyles. Such a stand is indisputable and caution needs to be taken to maintain the ceremony's spiritual value to make it more sustainable and affordable to the communicants. This study however showed that contemporary Christian weddings are dominated by materialistic drives which overshadow their spiritual value. Parents are warned against demanding too much bride-wealth from their sons-in-law. The church is likewise advised to avoid unnecessary charges which can discourage young people from celebrating Holy Matrimony. A Christian wedding should remain simple and manageable to any believer just like Christian baptism and confirmation ordinances. Young couples should not spend extravagantly on wedding events at the expense of their marriage life. The success of a marriage should not be judged by the wedding, but rather on its stability, peace and prosperity. The study has appreciated concerted efforts made to incorporate African attires, music, dances and idioms in contemporary Christian weddings.

Church ministers should be encouraged to attend the reception parties and extend more blessings to the wedding couple. A Christian marriage cannot be celebrated in a cultural vacuum because African culture has a significant role to play in creating a fertile ground where Christian families can flourish. This spirit of dialogue should be embraced as individuals grow up in faith, participate in a wedding ceremony, and throughout the marriage life.

6.4.4. Discipling Marriages

Many marriage related programs are only active up to the wedding day because, the church lays more emphasis on preparing partners for the wedding rather than for the married life. The church has made premarital counseling a mandatory requirement, yet it lacks official post marital counseling programs. This is contrary to Jesus' commission to the church to "make disciples of all nations…., and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19). Unlike other forms of teaching and learning, discipleship permits a strong and lasting bond between a disciple and the teacher. It is not only foundational and continuous, but also aims at making the disciple to believe, belong and become. The end result is to make one believe in the full truth of Christian faith, belong to the body of Christ and become like Christ (Luter 1980:296). This calls upon the Church to enhance post marital counseling programs. The fellowship between a minister and families should persist in marriage. Apart from teaching relevant marital topics, families should voluntarily open up to each other and learn from peers, seniors and mentors.

The study recognized the role played by some family enrichment programs like Nairobi Chapel's "Man Enough" and Jubilee Christian Church's "Women School of Mentorship", but it was regrettable that such programs only focused on one party. Long life marital programs need to be holistic and inclusive without ignoring the special needs of one party.

6.4.5. Building Quality of Faith

The current Christian marital shakeup is an indication that believers' quality and commitment to Christian faith is still inevitable. Christians' relationship with the Lord should be reflected in their relationship with the spouses. Oduyoye & Kanyoro (2005:127) note that anything, whether personal or institutional, could only become Christian to the extent that its members are committed to Christianity.

This study recommends that the Church should enhance healthy family relationships by building strong relationships between believers and Christ. A marriage cannot remain stronger without the hosts' commitment to faith. The church should promote commitment to marriage by propagating true commitment to faith in Christ. Christianity concurs with African Traditional Religion that marriage is a spiritual union that emanates from a spirit being. It is only those who are spiritually strong, healthy and sound that can build a lasting marriage. This recommendation resonates with Conway and Conway's (1991:84) observation that commitment to faith makes a couple to consider God as a friend, a father, a caretaker and a partner to their marriage. It also gives them divine strength and zeal to overcome marital challenges in life.

Roseberg & Roseberg (2002:253) also identify some benefits that a couple which is committed to Christian faith is likely to enjoy. The commitment to one's faith inculcates the commitment to intimate fellowship, frequent and sincere communication, trust, obedience, resilient love, openness, faithfulness, humility, patience and daily learning from the scripture. If one cultivates these virtues in relationship with God, it is easier to apply them in relationships with a spouse. Commitment to faith also demands that one remains strongly connected to other members as the body of Christ. It is through such connections that a

family spirit is instilled, while marital issues can be addressed with the help of fellow believers within the fellowship group.

6.4.6. Loving the Unlovable

Falling in love is the most exciting experience which makes one to feel valued, accepted, affirmed, useful and relevant. On the contrary, falling out of love is regrettable, makes one feel rejected, isolated, wasted, betrayed and disappointed. It brings people to a place they never hoped for and creates a sense of hopelessness.

One good example according to House (1990:54) is that:

> "Divorce is like a cyclone, ripping through your life, threatening to destroy everything in its path. The emotional whirlwinds bring fear, confusion and despair, affecting you, your family, children and friends. …it is easier to clear up the physical damage by cyclone than emotional damage caused by divorce."

If divorce occurs, the sufferers are often confused, socially uprooted, tossed in abeyance and are in need of a landing ground (Adams 1986:13). It is paramount for the Church to minister to divorcees by supporting them wisely with tender love. It was however observed in this study that some churches are hesitant to start divorce care programs despite its prevalence. This is because, it is a sensitive ministry comprising lonely and rejected persons who need love, fellowship and acceptance into the society. Out of the four New Religious Movements that were studied, it was only Nairobi Chapel that had a divorce care program for its congregants.

Since the scripture exhorts permanency of marriage and promotes reconciliation in cases of separation, scriptural justification of divorce care seems to be limited. This study however gives certain scriptural grounds to exemplify that divorce care cannot be eluded. A good example is John 3:16 that exhorts God's universal love for all humanity. Malachi 2:16 states that God hates divorce. But, the hatred should be towards the act and not the individuals

involved in the act. God loves divorcees and wants them to experience abundance of life irrespective of their discrepancies in relationships. The Church should act as an agent of God's love to those who have fallen off from the marriage love. The Church should offer a healing and conciliatory mission to the broken heart to enable even divorcees become very powerful "wounded healers" (Lewis 2001:3). This will enable many families learn from the experiences of divorcees and avoid similar ways of life in their own marriages. The recovered divorcees can reciprocate by ministering to other fellow divorcees, widows and even single parents.

6.5. Suggestions for further Research

This study was limited to New Religious Movements in Nairobi County, but, it does not imply that other Christian movements have not shown any responses to marital problems. Similar studies could be done in mainstream churches which are older and have more stable structures. Despite the fact that many urban youths show preference for New Religious Movements, mainstream churches still attract a commendable number of followers whose marital stability and satisfaction is worth studying. Such a study could also be done in other urban contexts other than Nairobi. Further researches are therefore necessary to establish the statuses of marriages in African Instituted Churches that have more positive views towards African values than other Christian churches. A study could also be conducted in rural settlements where African Instituted Churches are also popular.

The daily newspapers report influencing cases of marital and relationship discrepancies, while some radio stations often purport to air conversations of reconciling separated families during their live broadcasts. The impact of such chats was however not discussed in this study. Many studies conducted on New Religious Movements have focused mainly on their

history, doctrines and membership. There is need to study their involvement in social welfare, entrepreneurship, economic empowerment, women empowerment and national development.

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APPENDIX I

LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

Name	Church Affiliation	Date of Interview	Place of Interview
Informant I	JCC	21.5.2017	JCC Parklands
Informant II	JCC	12.5.2017	JCC Parklands
Informant III	JCC	12.5.2017	JCC Parklands
Informant IV	MC	20.06.2018	Mavuno Hill City
Informant V	MC	20.6.2018	Mavuno Hill City
Informant VI	MC	20.6.2018	Mavuno Hill City
Informant VII	LCI	21.7.2018	LCI Jogoo Road
Informant VIII	LCI	21.7.2018	LCI Jogoo Road
Informant IX	LCI	21.7.2018	LCI Jogoo Road
Informant X	NC	30.8.2017	NC Jamhuri
Informant XI	NC	30.8.2017	NC Jamhuri
Informant XII	NC	2.9.2017	NC Jamhuri

APPENDIX II

INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO RESPONDENTS

Dear Respondent,

My name is Ishmael Otieno, a PhD candidate in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies in the University of Nairobi. I am conducting a research on: "**Contemporary African Christian Marriage challenges and responses in selected New Religious Movements in Nairobi County.**" The questionnaire attached is meant to facilitate data collection for this study. I therefore kindly request you to answer the questions in the questionnaire to the best of your knowledge by ticking (√) the appropriate alternative, or writing the answers in the spaces provided. Note that you are not required to indicate your name. The information given will be solely used for the purpose of the study and will be treated with absolute confidentiality.

Your honest response and participation will be highly appreciated.

Ishmael O. Otieno.

30/08/2017.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PASTORS OF THE SELECTED NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

1. Give a brief history of your church.

2. Who are your target members?

3. How do you define a Christian marriage?

4. At what stage of life do you begin to prepare people for marriage?

5. What is involved at every stage identified in 4 above?

6. Are there any cultural obligations you require young people to fulfill before joining them in marriage?

7. What makes a good husband or wife?

8. Outline the procedures involved in conducting a wedding in your church?

9. Give the significance of each step identified in 8 above?

10. What are the most featuring marital challenges from your pastoral counseling sessions?

11. How does your church address the challenges identified in 10 above?

12. Why do certain youth today avoid marriage?

13. How could the problems identified in 12 above be addressed?

14. Why is separation and divorce becoming prevalent even among Christians today?

15. How is your church responding to the problem of separation and divorce?

16. As a pastor, do you find any relevance of African values in addressing marital issues?

17. What specific African values would you recommend to young married couples and those preparing to marry for emulation?

18. In your opinion, how can the marriage institutions be strengthened?

APPENDIX IV

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COUPLES PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE

1. Indicate by ticking (√) and answering where appropriate.

   I.   Sex: Male ( )   Female ( )

   II.   Age ……………………………………

   III.   Date intended to marry…………………

   IV.   Church affiliation……………………….

   V.   Highest level of education……………...

   VI.   Occupation ……………………………..

2. Are you intending to wed in church?   Yes ( )   No ( )

3. If your answer in (2) is (No), then what kind of marriage will you opt for?

    Customary ( )   Civil ( )

4.   What   factors   motivate   you   to marry?..

5. When and where did you meet your partner for the first time?

…………………………………………………………………………………..……………

6.   For   how   long   have   you   been   in courtship?...

7.   What   factors   attracted   you   to   your partner?..

8. Have you had any visits to your native homes?   Yes ( )   No ( )

9. If   Yes,   state   how   many   visits   and   the   purpose   for   each visit…………………..………………

10. Do you have any relatives participating in your marriage arrangements?

        Yes ( )   No ( )

11. If your answer in (10) is (No), then who participates in your marriage arrangements and what roles do they play?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

12. If your answer in (10) is (Yes), specify which relatives and the specific roles they play…………………………………………………………………………………………..

13. Are you going through premarital counseling?   Yes ( )   No ( )

14. If (Yes) , who conducts the premarital counseling? ....

Pastor   ( )   Professional   Counselor   ( )   Parent   ( )   Any   other,

specify…………………………………………………………………………………………..

15. Assess the effectiveness of your premarital counseling on the following areas

Categories of roles	Very effective	Effective	Not effective	Not covered
Roles of husband/wife				
Relating with in-laws				
Managing money				
Communication				
Conflict resolution				
Family planning				
Parenting				
Sexuality				
Separation and divorce				

16. What is your opinion on the duration of the premarital counseling?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

17. Comment on the general effectiveness of the premarital counseling.

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

18. Apart from counseling, are there any other ways the church prepares you for marriage?

Yes ( )   No ( )

If (Yes) specify……………………………………………………………………………….

19.   How   effective   are   the   ways   identified

above?...

20 a. Apart from the church, do you have any other sources of relevant information on

marriage? Yes ( )   No ( )

b.   If   (Yes),

specify……………………………………………………………………….

21. Do you have a best man/lady for your marriage?   Yes ( )   No ( )

22.   If   (Yes),   state   his/her/marital

status?...

23. If your best couple are married, then for how long?

....

....

24. If your answer in (21) is (No), then who is mentoring you into marriage and what is

his/her marital status?

....

....

25. What challenges do you anticipate in your future marriage?

....

....

....

26. How do you plan to cope with the challenges listed above?

....

....

....

27. What is your comment on the following?

    a. Separation

       ……………………………………………………………………………………………

       ……………………………………………………………………………………………

    b. Divorce…………………………………………………………………………………

       ……………………………………………………………………………………………

    c. Remarriage………………………………………………………………………………

       ……………………………………………………………………………………………

    d. Polygamy…………………………………………………………………………………

       ……………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you for having taken time to respond to the above questions.

APPENDIX V

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MARRIED COUPLES

1. Indicate by ticking (√) and answering appropriately about yourself.

    a) Gender: Male ( )   Female   ( )

    b) Age …………………………………..

    c) Year of marriage……………………….

    d) Number of children…………………….

    e) Church affiliation………………………

    f) Highest level of education…………….

    g) Occupation ……………………………

2. Did you wed in church?   Yes ( )   No ( )

3. If not wedded in church, state type of marriage.

        Customary Marriage (   )   Civil Marriage ( )

4. In which marital relationship are you?

Monogamous marriage ( )   Polygamous marriage   ( )

5.   When   and   where   did   you   meet   your

spouse?..

 6.   How   long   was   your   courtship

period?...

7. Did you involve your relatives in your marriage arrangements? Yes ( )   No ( )

8.   If   (Yes),   specify   which   relatives   and   their   respective

roles…………………………………

9. If (No), identify who participated in your marriage arrangements and their respective roles……………………………………………………..………………………………………

10. Did you go through any cultural obligations before marriage? Yes ( )   No ( )

11. If (Yes), specify which one and explain their significance to your marriage…………………………………………………………………………………………

12. Did you make any premarital visits to your native homes?   Yes ( )   No ( )

13. If (Yes), state the number of visits and the purpose for each visit…………………………………………………………………………………………

14. Give the reasons which motivated you to give yourself in marriage…………………………………………………………………………………………

15. Did you go through pre-marital counseling?   Yes ( )   No ( )

16. If (Yes), by whom?   Pastor ( ) Professional Counselor ( )   Parent ( ) Best couples ( )

Any   Other (Specify)……………………………………………………………………..………

17. What was the scope of pre-marital counseling you received?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

18. How effective was the counseling you received?

     Very effective   ( )   Effective ( )   Less effective ( )   Not effective ( )

19.What is/was the marital status of your parents?

     Married ( )   Separated ( )   Divorced ( )   Single parent ( )

20. If married, comment on the position of their marriage

     Very Happy ( )   Happy ( )   Unhappy ( )   Very Unhappy ( )

21. List the personal qualities of your spouse that you appreciate.

……

……...

22. List any behaviour of your spouse which you do not appreciate.

……

…………………………………………………………...………………….....................................

23. Do you have any challenges in raising children?   Yes ( )   No ( )   Not Sure ( )

24. If (Yes), list the challenges.

……

……

25. To what extent do you have conflicts or disagreements with your spouse?

        Very Often ( )   Often ( )   Sometimes ( )   Rarely ( )   Never ( )

26. List the areas of conflicts or disagreements in your marriage.

……

……

27. From the conflicts cited above, which ones mostly reoccur?

……

28. How would you rate the effectiveness of your family in handling the following?

Different roles	Very effective	Effective	Not effective	Not covered
Roles of husband/wife				
Relating with in-laws				
Managing money				
Communication				
Conflict resolution				
Family				

planning

Parenting

Sexuality

29. Did you have best couples in your marriage arrangements?   Yes ( )   No ( )

30. If (Yeas), what was their role?

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

31. If (No), state who mentored you into marriage and identify his/her role.

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

32. List any three marital goals you and your spouse have set for the next two years.

………...…………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

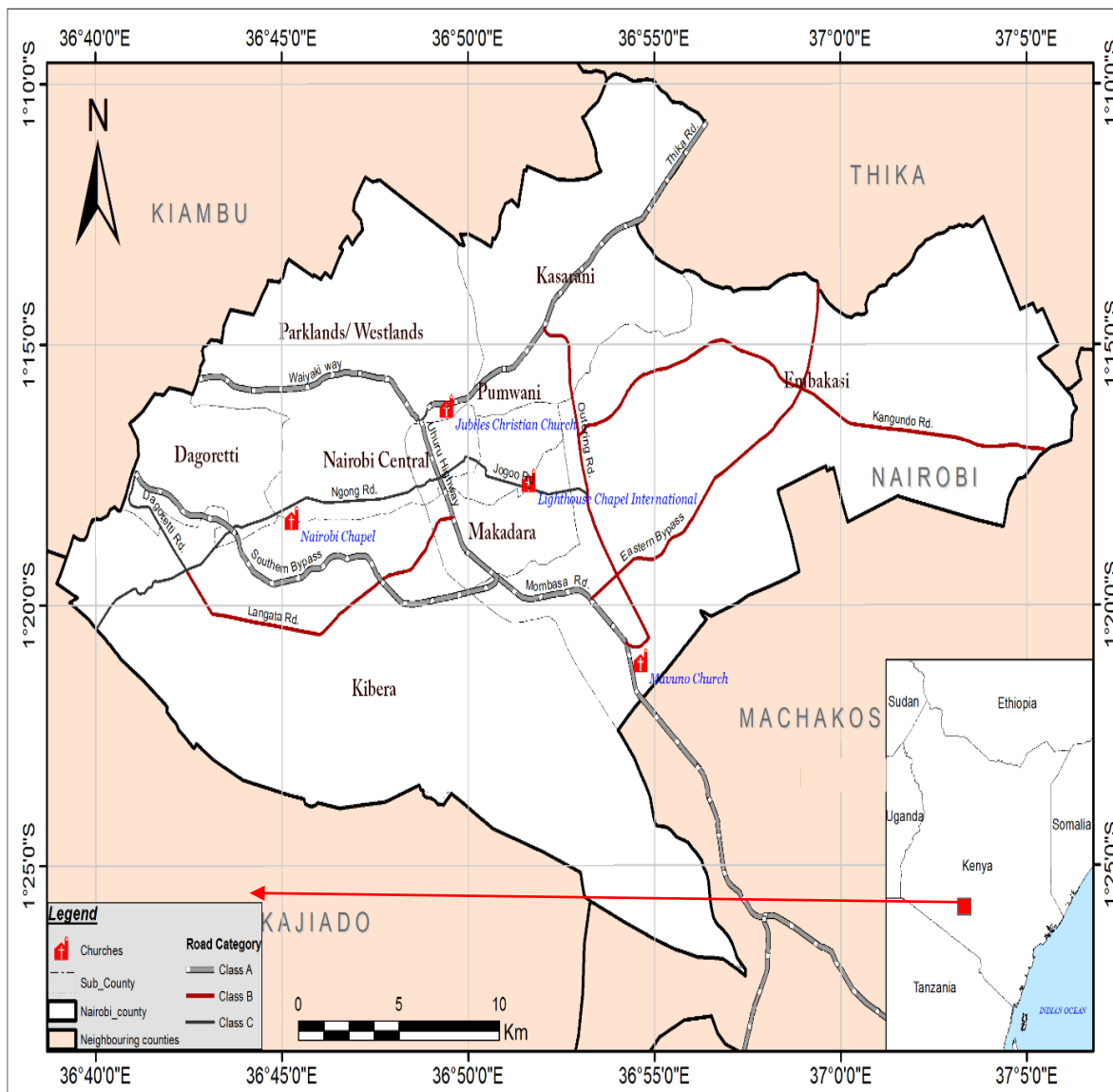**Thank you for having taken time to respond to the above questions**

APPENDIX VI

MAP OF KENYA SHOWING THE LOCATION OF NAIROBI COUNTY
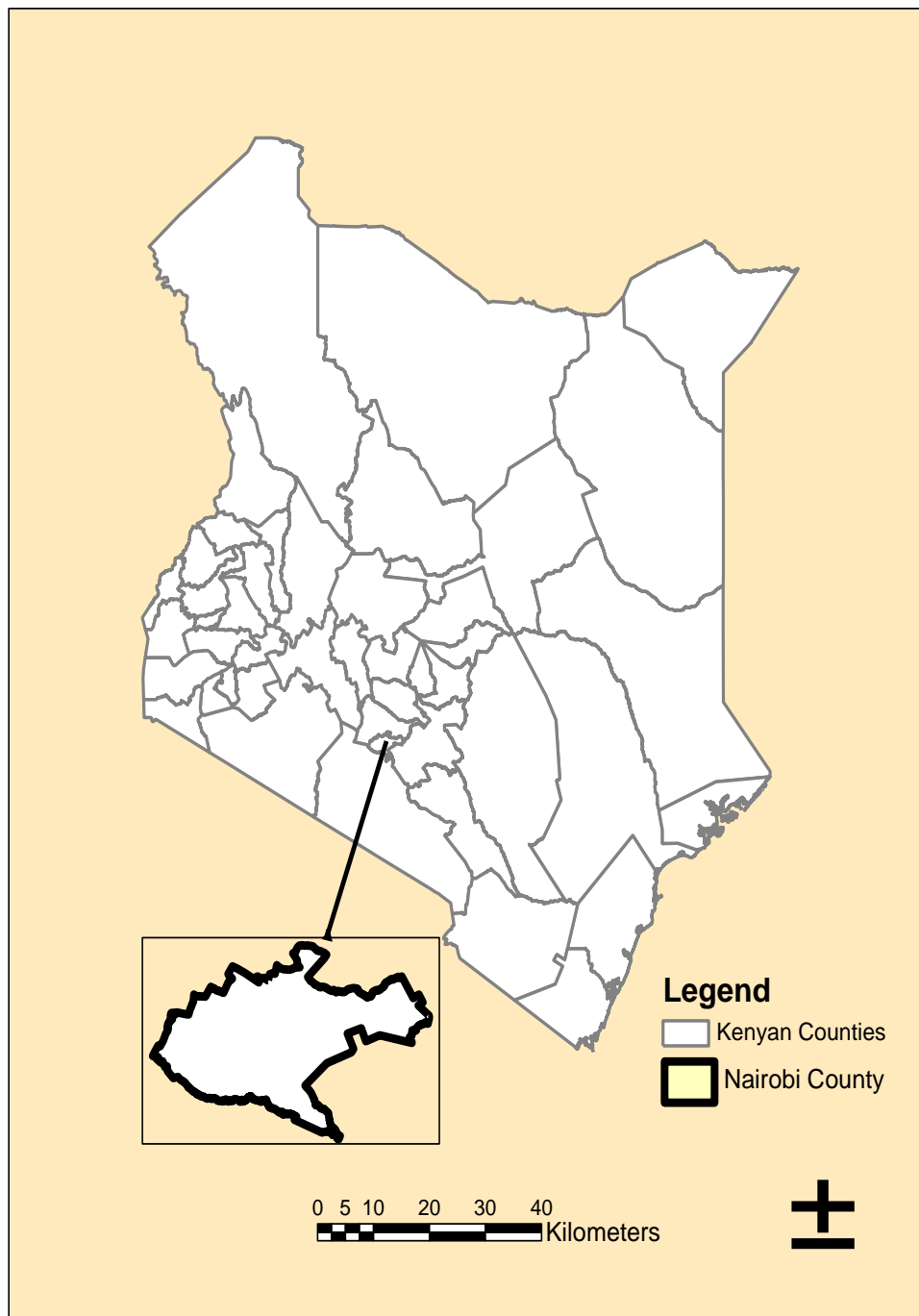
Data Source: Kenya National Bureau of Standards (KNBS) census map of 2019

APPENDIX VII

MAP OF NAIROBI COUNTY SHOWING LOCATION OF THE SELECTED

NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

Source: University of Nairobi, Department of Geography and Environmental Science Library.