

**ROLE OF PREMARITAL PREPARATION IN THE FIRST TEN YEARS OF
MARRIAGE AMONG MARRIED COUPLES IN KANYANGI PARISH,
CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF KITUI, KENYA**

Catherine Kavuli Nyamai

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Institute of Youth Studies

Tangaza University College

Catholic University of Eastern Africa

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Declaration

I, Catherine Kavuli Nyamai, declare that this thesis report is my original work. It has not been previously submitted to any other institution of learning for the award of a degree. All sources have been appropriately cited and acknowledged.

I agree that this thesis may be available at the university library for reference.

Signature of student _____

Name of student: Catherine Kavuli Nyamai

Date: _____

This document has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.

Signature of Supervisor 1 _____

Name of supervisor 1: Dr. Josephine Muthami

Date: _____

Signature of Supervisor 2 _____

Name of supervisor 2: Rev. Dr. Henry Tucholski

Date: _____

Dedication Statement

This thesis is dedicated to my family: My husband Stanslaus Musyoka and our children Charles Ndolo, Dennis Mandela, and Mercy Mawia.

Acknowledgement

Let me take this opportunity first to thank the Almighty God for giving me the grace of good health during the entire period of this program which ensured there was no disruption. A lot of gratitude goes to my entire family for their generous support both in kind and in prayer. I want to most sincerely acknowledge the support, advice, constructive criticism and guidance of my supervisors, Dr. Muthami and Rev. Dr. Tucholski for tirelessly extending their time, energy, wisdom and knowledge during the entire period when I was developing the research proposal and again during the writing of this report. May God reward you abundantly for your generosity. I wish to extend my special appreciation to the MA program leader of the Institute of Youth Studies, Lucy Njiru for her continuous encouragement during the entire process. I am also grateful to my colleagues for their informed input at all the stages of this study. Lastly but not least, I am highly indebted to Fr. Emmanuel of Kanyangi Catholic parish, for his unreserved cooperation and giving me access to the parish marriage documents, and the participants who volunteered to give information that made this study a success, may they be blessed and compensated for their kindness and generosity.

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Abbreviations /Acronyms

AAMF	-	American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
APA	-	American Psychological Association
CARE	-	Couple and Relationship Education
CDR	-	Crude Annual Divorce Rate
DHS	-	Demographic and Health Survey
DVD	-	Digital Video Disc
FOCCUS	-	Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study
GoK	-	Government of Kenya
NACOSTI	-	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
PREP	-	Pre-marital Education Programs
PREPARE	-	Premarital Preparation and Relationship Enhancement
RELATE	-	Relationship Evaluation

Abstract

Existing literature indicates a wealth of empirical research has been conducted in the field of premarital preparation. These studies show that premarital preparation enhances marital quality within the first years of marriage. However, many of these studies have been undertaken with Western populations of young Euro American participants and very limited research has been done in the Kenyan context. To address this gap in knowledge, a study was carried out using a phenomenological research design to explore the role of premarital preparation in the first ten years of a marriage among married couples in Kanyangi parish of the Catholic Diocese of Kitui, Kenya. The study embraced a purposive sampling technique in identifying the churches and the participants. A sample population of 12 couples (24 participants) aged 20-45 years and who had been married for one year to ten years participated in the study. Data was collected using an interview guide and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns in the emerging themes related to the study objectives. Nine major themes emerged from the data analysis and these include: Informal premarital preparation, skills acquisition, assessment for marriage preparation, enriching marriage preparation, value addition, marital quality, Christian model, the Kamba traditional model, and integrated approach model. The findings indicated that premarital preparation in the first ten years of marriage is an effective way of preventing marital distress, separation and divorce. This data has enriched the existing data base on premarital preparation. It is recommended that a quantitative study be undertaken in future to ensure that the results can be generalized to other parts of Kenya.

Definition of Operational Terms

Marriage. This is a lifelong union between two heterosexual people which is formally recognized and respected by the society.

Premarital preparation. This refers to formal guidelines or informal piece of advice provided to people who are preparing to marry by either a professional family therapist, clergy or selected persons in society or acquired through personalized learning before the marriage takes place.

Skills-based marriage preparation. This is an approach which has a formal curriculum for educating couples on skills relevant for living a satisfactory marriage relationship.

Marital distress. This refers to common occurrences of verbal or physical conflict, emotional or psychological disturbances, and unhappiness in a marriage relationship.

Divorce. This is a legal termination of the marriage union.

Separation. This is a state where partners in a marriage relationship cease to live together.

Lay. These are members of the church who have not taken any vows in life to serve the church in any religious order.

Religious. These are persons who have devoted their lives to serve the church through taking binding vows and belong to religious orders.

Secular premarital preparation. This is premarital preparation carried out by professional family therapists and is based on Western theoretical backgrounds.

Christian premarital preparation. This is premarital education which is faith based and which is facilitated by the clergy. It may or may not borrow knowledge from the secular premarital preparation.

Marital conflicts. These are serious disagreements between husband and wife which arise from differences in opinion, values, belief or due to unmet needs.

Premarital inventories. These are systematically developed tools that portray a comprehensive picture of a couple's relationship needs and which are administered by trained professionals.

Value addition of premarital preparation. This is the transformation from the original state which occurs to the welfare of the spouse, couple and the marriage relationship due to the premarital education program.

Convalidation. This is a ceremony through which civil and traditional marriages are made recognizable and acceptable to the church.

The meaning of these operational terms has not been adopted from literature. They have been defined according to how they have been used in the present study.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions and significance of the study, scope of the study, assumptions, as well as limitations and delimitations.

1.1 Background to the Study

Marriage has been in existence for as long as mankind and has endured and overcome all storms showing minimal signs of extinction. This has been necessitated by the fact that man is by nature a social being who cannot live in isolation and hence the need to create the institution of marriage and family so as to develop identity (Jack-Jackson, 2015). According to Wimalasena (2016), the institution of marriage is the basis for family and community and forms the foundation blocks for society to grow. Naturally, through marriage a suitable home environment is created which provides propagation of species, rearing of offspring, emotional reassurance, and the teaching of moral values upon which society is build. Thus, given the distinctive role played by marriage to individuals, family and society, it is only logical that it should be carefully watched, safeguarded and strengthened (Abanyan, Lumun, & Yandev, 2014).

Studies show that, many young people anticipate marriage at some point in their lifetime and maintain a lasting healthy relationship despite the many changes that have occurred in the family structure and the challenges that have faced marriages in the last five decades (Waite, Luo, & Lewin, 2009). For instance, a study carried out by Bibby (2009) of

five thousand Canadian youth indicates that 90% of them expected to marry and maintain their partner for life. However, within 40 years after the union, 67% of these first time marriages will have been dissolved perpetuating physical, psychological and economical difficulties for those involved (Sbarra, Law, & Portley, 2011).

Amato (2010) in his study indicates that divorce rates are as high as 50% in the United States while 33% of the remaining couples are unhappily married (Whisman, Beach, & Snyder, 2008). Meanwhile, the crude annual divorce rate (CDR) per one thousand marriages, indicate considerable differences across continents and specific countries (Anukriti & Dasgupta, 2015). Nevertheless, studies show that 40% of first time marriages end in divorce, one-fifth of these marriages dissolving within 5 years, and one-third ending within 10 years (Mackintosh, 2012). Naturally, young couples have been shown to exhibit regular higher rates of marital distress and divorce. This has been explained by their low psychological and socioeconomic maturity, potentially unrealistic expectations, and a shorter period of courtship leading to incompatible and unstable match (Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010).

Studies indicate that, a few marriages disintegrate immediately after the wedding, but that the likelihood of marital distress and divorce increases through the first years and the highest risk of divorce is witnessed between the fourth and the seventh year after marriage (Härkönen, 2013). After the first seven years are over, chances of divorce begin to gradually decrease as couples gather wealth and investments in their marriage which increases the barriers for walking out of the relationship (Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010).

In sub-Saharan Africa countries, divorce is a common practice with 25% of marriages ending in divorce less than twenty years after union (Clark & Brauner-Otto,

2015). For instance, Tembe (2010) argues that one marriage in every thirteen marriages in South Africa ends up in dissolution and 35.6% of these are from the African black population group (John, 2010). In addition, Bogale (2008) indicates that 45% of first marriages in Ethiopia end up in divorce within 30 years. Moreover, these statistics may be low given that many marriages in sub-Saharan Africa are generally informal and fluid, and that accurate African data on marriage breakdown is neither systematic nor easily forthcoming (Anukriti & Dasgupta, 2015). Despite divorce and marital distress being evident outcomes of marital instability, there is very little research and analysis of these trends in the African continent (Clark & Brauner-Otto, 2012). Nevertheless, there is in the social media, newspapers, court proceedings, academic researchers and public opinion that marriage distress and divorce are on the rise in the African societies (Clark & Brauner-Otto, 2015; All Ghana News, 2014).

In Kenya, the 2008-2009 census and demographic and health survey (DHS) indicated a divorce rate of 15.2% after twenty years in marriage. However, if the reports in the social media are anything to go by, the marriage institution in Kenya is under threat. The situation may be more serious than is captured by studies which are rare, and definitely the monetary aspect of legalizing divorce prevents most couples from going to court and therefore opt to settle the issues informally.

Marital instability in Kenya cuts across both rural and urban areas. Rarely a day passes by without a homicide case being reported in the Kenyan media which is an indication of how vulnerable and volatile the marriage institution is today. Mukinda and Mutambo argued in their article in the Daily Nation (2013, December 24) that the Kenyan family is at the verge of falling apart because it is gradually shifting from being the locus of

love and nurturing to a hot bed of greed and violence. There are many factors contributing to this scenario including cultural inclination, materialism, individualism, unemployment, advancement in technology, convenience marriages, inadequate premarital preparation, and abandonment of the African family values among many others (Mobegi, Mokoro, & Kears, 2016; Tembe, 2010). However, lack of premarital preparation plays a significant role in the malfunctions that are being witnessed in the marriage institution as compared to the other factors.

The Catholic Diocese of Kitui has not been an exception to the trends of marital distress and divorce and the causes mirror those identified by Mobegi et al (2016). A study by Kyalo (2011) in Kitui county (Catholic Diocese of Kitui covers the whole county) with 210 participants identified marital distress as rampant and as mainly being caused by: in-law interference (5%), lack of love, cooperation and respect (4.2%), drug abuse (17.5%), infidelity, polygamy and prostitution (13.3%), economic factors (16%), frequent quarrels, fights and misunderstanding (20.6%) and lack of premarital preparation (23.3%). In this same study, Kyalo also found out that, couples in Catholic Diocese of Kitui who have been in marriage for 1- 9 years have 11.1 % probability of divorce and 33.3 % chance of separation. These statistics correlates with what other researchers have found out that inadequate premarital preparation is a prerequisite for marital distress and divorce and that marital distress is higher among first time marriages (Bogale, 2008; Sbarra et al., 2011). Undeniably, lack of premarital preparation for the young generation in the contemporary society leaves them predisposed to marital dysfunctions. Therefore, the present study aimed at exploring what role premarital preparation plays in the first ten years of marriage for married couples in an effort to develop effective preventive interventions.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

For marriage relationships to be satisfactory and stable, adequate preparation is necessary before the union is formed or immediately after. However, present day marriages are no longer based on any formal or social preparation but occur by free choice of the partners who desire to share their lives. This has escalated the level of marital distress among couples in their first ten years of marriage (Mackintosh, 2012; Härkönen, 2013).

In Kenya, just like any other society in the world, the problem of marital distress cannot be overemphasized. According to Onyango (2013), many marriages in Kenya are just bearable, tolerable, endurable, unhappy or broken. Kanyangi parish in the Catholic Diocese of Kitui is already experiencing the effects of this trend. Kyalo (2011) in his study indicated that inadequate premarital preparation was the main contributor of marital distress in the Catholic Diocese of Kitui. Indeed, as Amada (2015) in her study indicated, the initial stages of a marriage are predominantly significant in developing a sense of partnership and defining the path that the relationship will take. It is therefore unquestionable that marriages that start on the right footing usually exhibit a higher probability of retaining a stable marital status and are happy as compared to those which start unprepared.

However, in the contemporary African context, preparation before marriage seems to be presumed reality. There is little informed understanding of premarital preparation. If this situation is left unattended, the marriage institution might continue to deteriorate. Knowledge in this area could lead to reducing divorces and separations. To bridge this gap in knowledge, the present study therefore sought to explore the role of premarital preparation in the first ten years of marriage among married couples of Kanyangi Catholic parish, Catholic Diocese of Kitui.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Marital distress, separation and divorce have become significant issues that are causing great suffering to both adults and children in our society today. These disturbing issues can be minimized from occurring if effective preventive measures are put in place before or at the initial stages of marriage. The purpose of this study therefore was to explore the role of premarital preparation in the first ten years of marriage among married couples.

1.4 Research Objectives

This study was guided by one major objective and four specific objectives.

1.4.1 General Objective. To explore the role of premarital preparation in the first ten years of marriage among married couples of Kanyangi parish, Catholic Diocese of Kitui.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives of the Study

1. To establish the form of premarital preparation program utilized in Kanyangi parish.
2. To investigate the need to incorporate premarital inventories in determining the needs of the couples preparing for marriage.
3. To explore how the married couples perceive premarital preparation in relation to value added to individual, couple and marriage relationship.
4. To examine the dimensions in the secular, Christian and traditional pre-marital preparation models that are practiced within Kanyangi parish and how these can be integrated to enrich marital preparation.

1.5 Research Questions

In order to achieve the goal of the study, data collection was based on four major questions:

1. What form of pre-marital preparation program exists for couples in Kanyangi parish?
2. To what extent can premarital inventories be incorporated in the needs assessment for couples preparing for marriage?
3. What are the perceptions of married couples regarding the value of pre-marital preparation to individual, couple and marriage relationship?
4. How can dimensions in the secular, Christian and Kamba traditional premarital preparation models practiced in Kanyangi parish be integrated to enhance marriage preparation?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study envisaged that it would identify gaps in the role of pre-marital preparation in the first ten years of marriage among married couples in Kanyangi parish of the Catholic Diocese of Kitui and how these may be contributory factors to marital dissatisfaction and dissolution. Given that there is very limited research in this field in the Kenyan context, the main focus of the study was to provide new information that would build on existing knowledge in premarital preparation and aid in designing integrated couple centered interventions that would promote marriage quality and stability. The results of the present study are expected to stimulate insight to the clergy and other family professionals to improve their practice by evaluating their models, content, delivery procedures and competence in implementing the programs in order to benefit couples in courtship or those

in their early years in marriage. These findings can be used as a resource material by these institutions to check the effectiveness of their premarital education programs.

The results of the study can also contribute in helping unmarried individuals who have an intention to marry by providing insight and guidance on how to built, nurture and maintain a healthy marriage relationship. What's more, the institutions responsible for policy formulation regarding marriage such as the government and religious organizations can use the findings of this study to formulate guidelines and policies for premarital couples. These institutions can make premarital preparation a prerequisite for marriage in an effort to improve marital relationships.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study focused on premarital preparation as a preventive measure of marital distress in Kanyangi parish, Catholic Diocese of Kitui. However, at this point, the study could not investigate all causes of marital distress and therefore only concentrated on the role of premarital preparation in the first ten years of marriage among married couples. The study was guided by the four objectives mentioned in section 1.4.2 (p. 6).

1.8 Assumptions

The researcher assumed that:

- That the participants would be cooperative and honest to provide accurate and reliable information.
- That all the participants in the study had undergone some form of premarital preparation.

1.9 Limitations and Delimitation

This study was restricted to a specific area and to a certain category of participants and had its own shortcomings.

1.9.1 Delimitation. The study was conducted in Kanyangi parish of the Catholic Diocese of Kitui and only covered Catholic churches. The sample of the study was restricted to only 24 participants i:e 12 Catholic married couples of the age bracket of 20-45 years and with a marriage experience of 1-10 years. The geographical area of the study was purely rural and therefore the results cannot be transferable to urban settings. In addition, the study was guided by one theory i:e the prevention theory, and the data analysis was done through thematic analysis only.

1.9.2 Limitations. Among the limitations of this study was the small sample size of 24 participants. However, for a phenomenological study design of a qualitative study, this sample size was in fact moderate (Selvam & Mwangi, 2014). Besides, the rigor and transparency of the data collection and analysis procedures ensured trustworthy results were realized. The qualitative design was also by itself a limitation as transferability of the findings could not be done and therefore a quantitative design is recommended in future studies.

The fact that the researcher was a key instrument in data collection might have been itself a limitation. This might have brought about response bias from the participants by filtering information to give what they thought the researcher wanted to hear. To reduce this effect, the researcher built a strong rapport with the participants, and guaranteed

confidentiality and anonymity at the beginning. In addition, the researcher's expectations, biases, values could also have significantly influenced the interpretation of the results but this was overcome by the researcher being constantly aware of it and keeping a journal of daily experiences. On the other hand, the instrument of data collection (interview guide) provided indirect information which had been filtered through the views of the interviewed participant and this could be a limitation to getting trustworthy data. However, applying this instrument to larger number of participants neutralized this effect. Audi-taping was also another format of data collection which some participants were uncomfortable with but again each participant's consent was sought before taping the conversation.

1.10 Summary

This background information has shown marriage is a very important requirement for the sustainability of a stable society and hence it should be preserved. Although many young people yearn for happy marriages, marital distress has become an increasing hindrance to achieving this dream. Existing literature shows that one fourth of first time marriages do not last beyond ten years, and that there is unhappiness for those who remain in dissatisfactory unions. It is therefore imperative that preventive measures be put in place in the early years of marriage to prevent marital distress. Many factors have been proposed to contribute to marital distress in Kanyangi parish, but inadequate premarital preparation has been singled out as the major contributor. Yet, no studies have been undertaken to provide a solution. And this study has been initiated to fill this gap.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter starts by discussing the theoretical framework that informs the study and the conceptual framework that operationalizes the theory. A critique of existing literature that is related to the problem under study is then provided. This detailed analysis starts by reviewing literature that is related to the study variables, and secondly it examines literature which is related to the research objectives.

2.1 Review of Theories

There are quite a number of theories that have been employed in explaining success in marital relationships such as solution focused theory (O'Connell, 1998), social exchange theory (Thibaut & Kelly, 1959) and the prevention theory (Coie et al., 1993). The solution focused theory mainly focuses on guiding couples to develop solutions that will help them adjust comfortably to marriage life and establish a functional, satisfying and stable relationship. This theory is concerned about the current situation and not the future. The social exchange theory on the other hand provides an explanation as to why married people stay together or dissolve a relationship. According the social exchange theory, couples rely on the rewards and costs drawn from the relationship for its survival. On the contrary, the prevention theory involves employing preventive interventions to stop problems before they occur in the marriage. This theory was therefore used to inform the present study as indicated in the subsequent paragraphs.

The concept of prevention has its origin from the public health sector in the 1970's. The proponents of the theory of prevention were concerned with arresting health and social issues early enough before they could develop and become entrenched into society as opposed to treatment or coping with the consequences once the problem has occurred (Allen, 2011). The main focus of prevention science is to examine and identify risk factors and to reinforce protective factors for disorders through provision of knowledge and development of intervention strategies in order to disrupt processes that contribute to the disorder (Coie et al., 1993; Schick & Cierpka, 2016).

Pre-marital preparation is a preventive strategy aimed at removing factors that enhance marital unhappiness, and consequently predisposing the relationship to dissolution. Preventive strategies can be applicable at three stages: The primary stage, the secondary stage and the tertiary stage (Coote, 2012). Primary prevention strategies involve identifying the underlying risk and protective factors and intervening before problems and issues can emerge in the relationship (Harvey, Moreno, & Butchart, 2007). This corresponds well with the goal of the present study which is to explore the role of premarital preparation in the first ten years of marriage. On the other hand, secondary prevention occurs after the problem has already started. It attempts to mitigate effects of harm that has already occurred (Coote, 2012) and the loss of desirable relationship characteristics with at-risk couples who are experiencing some difficulty and dissatisfaction. Thus, secondary prevention focuses on early identification and intervention in order to avert more serious breakdown and to re-establish healthy functioning in the marriage. Finally, tertiary prevention involves treatment of couples already affected by marital distress and seeks to keep serious couple problems

from damaging the marital relationship (Coote, 2012). This preventive strategy addresses consistently recurring issues that threaten to drive married couples toward divorce.

Marital distress has been identified as a generic risk factor which contributes significantly to depression in adults and conduct disorders in children (Amato, 2010). On the other hand, a healthy marriage is viewed as one of the common and generic protective factors against a considerable number of dysfunctions (Moen, 2011). Examination of research literature relating to premarital preparation reveals that, this preventive strategy decreases the destructive effects of the generic risk factors to manageable levels (Bath, 2010; Halford, 2011), and consequently shields the society from unnecessary expenditure. An effective pre-marital preparation will counteract risk factors that are associated with increased risk to marital distress and divorce while at the same time reinforcing protective factors that enhance good marital relationship. Just as prevention efforts in public health issues have improved individual's physical health and enhanced life expectancy across the globe, premarital preparation programs bestow similar relationship 'immunity' for engaged couples (Greens & Miller, 2013).

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The outline below depicts the overall picture of how this study was conceptualized.

Independent variable

Dependent variable

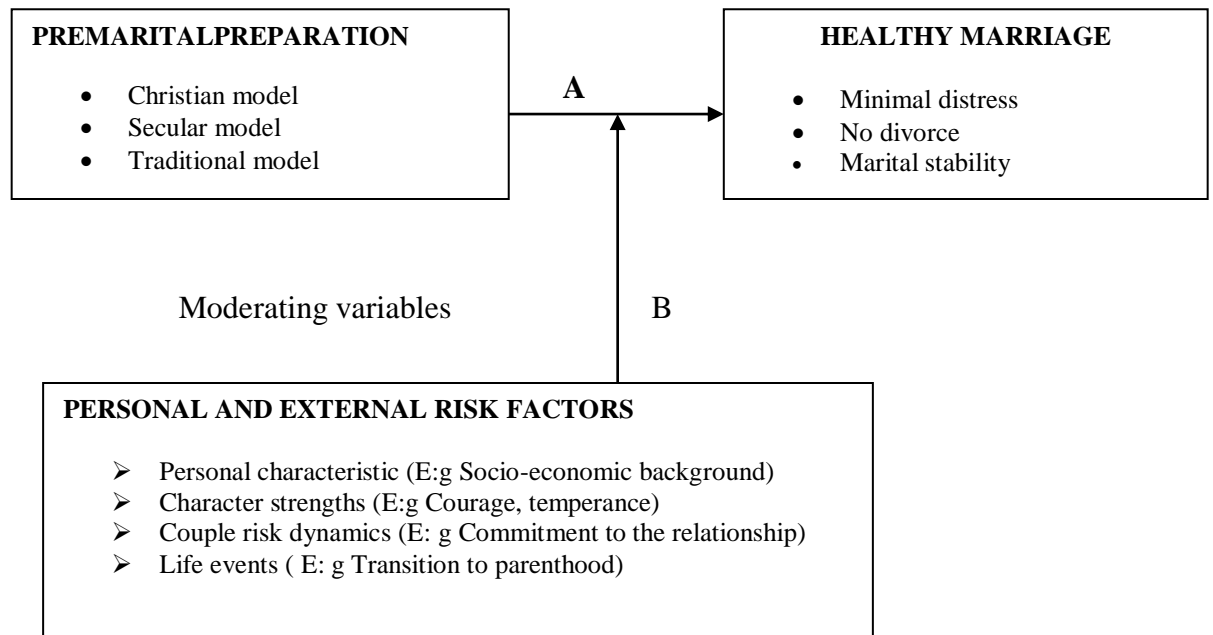


Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework

It is conceptualized in the present study that premarital preparation (A) decreases the risk of marital distress, instability and divorce to low levels and hence enhances a healthy marriage. However, the effect of premarital preparation on healthy marriage can be moderated by a variety of intrapersonal and contextual risk variables (Johnson & Bradbury, 2015) including the personal characteristics, character strengths, couple risk dynamics and the external context (Halford, 2011). Moderator variables are variables that “interfere” in the relationship between an independent variable and its corresponding dependent variable (Awang, 2014). In the event that either the couple or one spouse has high risk for marital distress, then chances are that this risk factor may moderate the effectiveness of premarital preparation (Wadsworth & Markman, 2012). Nevertheless, if premarital preparation can modify the factors putting the couple at high risk for marital distress, then it is an effective

intervention. But, if premarital preparation is unable to modify these factors putting couples at high risk for marital distress it may be less effective (Halford & Bodenmann, 2013).

According to Wood, Moore, Clarkwest, Killewald, and Monahan (2012), high rates of economic disadvantage play a salient role in diminishing the effectiveness of premarital education. Indeed, low income couples receiving premarital preparation are no better in maintaining marriage quality than those who do not participate in the intervention (Lindquist et al., 2014) despite the program having a statistically significant positive effect on couples' marital quality. On the other hand, due to their low income levels, couples are more likely not to participate fully in premarital programs and put the newly acquired skills and knowledge into use (Wood et al., 2012). In addition, character strengths are an important predictor of effective communication in marital relationships and hence can positively or negatively influence the outcome of premarital preparation (Amanda, Bradford, & Vail, 2010). All these variables can either enhance the influence of premarital education on a healthy marriage or hinder it. Moreover, low levels of relationship commitment also increase couples probability of being at high risk for relationship problems in addition to it being associated with low levels of engagement with relationship education (Halford & Bodenmann, 2013). Again, couples transiting to parenthood are more likely to suffer a decline in relationship satisfaction especially after the arrival of the first child leading to marital distress (Parker & Hunter, 2011). These couples are not likely to attend premarital education programs.

2.3 Review of Literature Related to the Study Variables

The consequences of marital instability and divorce have far reaching effects throughout society, leaving in its wake increased risk of disorders for vulnerable members. Such disorders may include depression, hypertension and anxiety for women and, behavioral and emotional problems, delayed cognitive development, delayed school entry, limited academic advancement, insufficient social skills, and poor health for children (Amato 2010; Thiombiano, LeGrant, & Kobiane, 2013). There is also compromised physical and mental health for couples who choose to remain in conflicted marriages as they continue to be stigmatized and even violently abused (Anukriti & Dasgupta, 2015).

The proponents of prevention work in the marital field suggest that marital problems that lead to distress and divorce arise through a developmental process over time. Existing studies indicate that divorce is largely related to premarital factors, such as socio-demographic characteristics, communication skills, conflict resolution skills, and family-of-origin factors (Fabrizio & Juan-Ignacio, 2011; Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010). Besides, researchers also agree that there is complicated interconnection of factors that contributes to the development of marital distress and hence the need for early prevention to arrest the problem.

The frequent reports of marital disharmony, domestic violence, and rising rates of divorce among first-time marriages have raised concerns among religious leaders, policy makers and family life professionals (Tembe, 2010). These serious effects of marital distress and divorce have called for attention to be focused on the need for preventive strategies such as premarital preparation to improve marital quality and reduce the current rates of marital distress and divorce (Green & Miller, 2013).

According to Bath (2010) marriage has greatly changed over the last five decades. A good number of the young people in contemporary society are ill-prepared and idealistic about marriage, and therefore are more vulnerable to marital failure compared to previous generations (Vail, 2012; Mackintosh, 2012). With the decline in traditional methods of marital preparation in the African continent due to adaptation of Western life-style, many young people in Kenya get to marriage unprepared. Consequently, when conflict and dissatisfaction occur, dissolution of the union is likely to be the outcome.

Marriage involves moving from one life cycle to another (e.g. unattached to married life). Certainly, it is at this transition point where rigorous preventive intervention and mentoring strategies are required to provide insights into the dynamics of marital life (Mackintosh, 2012). Premarital education programs are mainly devised to provide couples with the opportunity to build and maintain a strong partnership (Halford, 2011). The main focus of preparing young people for marriage is to promote their skills and knowledge, improve their attitudes, and enhance personal characteristics that are essential for venturing into the journey of a healthy and long lasting marriage relationship (Weiss, 2014; Kruegel-Farr et al., 2013). Carroll et al., (2009) suggested that young adults desiring to marry need to be well adjusted in their attitudes and feelings in regard to marriage. Equally important, they also need to improve their communication and conflict resolution skills, and increase their commitment to the relationship (Burgoye, Reibstein, Edmunds & Routh, 2010).

Indeed, the role of preventive measures in ensuring functionality in marriages and promoting marital quality is unquestionable. Premarital preparation significantly increases the levels of marital satisfaction, reduces damaging conflicts and divorce, and enhances

levels of interpersonal commitment to spouses (Engidawork, 2015; Vail, 2012; Yilmaz & Kalkan, 2010). Couples who participate in premarital education acquire life skills to identify marital problems before they arise and develop coping mechanisms to handle these problems.

Currently, there is evidence from research showing that many of the problems experienced in marriage occur in the initial years of marriage (Mackintosh, 2012; Sbarra et al., 2011). Consequently, if early intervention is carried out by building the capacity of the couple prior to marriage, then an enduring and satisfying marriage relationship may be ensured. Nevertheless, so much attention, effort and resources have continued to be devoted to counseling the couple after the development of the marital distress and divorce. Unfortunately at this point it may be too late to eradicate the learnt maladaptive behavior and its consequences, and therefore consistent marital problems continue to be witnessed in the relationship.

On the other hand, studies on premarital preparation in the Church have revealed that most of the marriage preparation programs carried out is insufficient (Poley, 2011). According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2008), premarital preparation should take at least six months. On the contrary, Wilmoth and Smyser (2012) found out that the clergy provide on average approximately four 1- hour session of marriage preparation as opposed to the five to seven 1- hour sessions that are recommended for premarital education to be effective. Again, Coleman (2012) in his review of marital preparation in the Catholic Church found that the programs did not have standardized content; the program was taught in one day, and two percent of the providers had no training at all in premarital counseling.

Besides, studies indicate that only 25% of the clergy use the skills-based program for marriage preparation (Wilmoth & Smyser, 2012). Furthermore, very little information exists regarding the use of assessment tools by clergy to ascertain the needs of the couple that require enhancement (Wilmoth & Smyser, 2010). Surprisingly, while research indicates premarital education is useful, only about 30% of couples preparing for marriage participate in professional couple relationship preparation (Tambling & Glebova, 2013; Poley, 2011)) thus bringing to question the perception of couples on premarital preparation.

In the Kenyan context the main institution currently responsible for premarital preparation is the church (Mbunga, 2010). Many societies have abandoned the traditional African marital preparation in adaptation for the Western life-style. In addition, very little research has been conducted in the Kenyan context regarding pre-marital preparation (Mobegi, et al., 2016). This leaves many of the couples desiring to marry mainly relying on the church pre-marital education or none at all and thus predisposing them to inadequate preparation leading to marital distress and divorce. However, the three main choices of pre-marital preparation available to Kenyan couples are: the African traditional model, the secular counseling model and the Christian premarital counseling model (Mbunga, 2010).

Naturally, the benefits accrued from premarital preparation tend to fade with time (Markman, Rhoades, Stanley, Ragan, & Whitton, 2010), thus calling for timely follow ups to replenish it. These follow up sessions after marriage are necessary to enable the couple to review what they learnt in premarital sessions and to point out problems that may be creeping in their relationship.

2.3.1 Historical Overview - Western Perspective. The practice of formal premarital preparation programs started in the 1930's with the first such program being developed by Merrill Palmer Institute in 1932 (Amanda, 2015). Later in 1941, The Philadelphia Marriage Council established a standardized program to help young couples understand the dynamics of married life (Duncan, Childs, & Larson, 2010). However, it was not until the 1970's that premarital counseling was given much attention and applied to prevent marital challenges (Amanda, 2015). The main focus of prevention programs involves identifying and reducing forerunners to distress, minimizing the undesired outcomes of distress, and preventing distress from escalating to uncontrollable levels.

2.3.2 Historical Overview - African Traditional Perspective. Premarital preparation in the African continent has been part of life for all cultures. The African premarital preparation model consisted of unstructured everyday life instructions (Rotich & Starcher, 2016) which emphasized more on the prevention aspects to prepare the couple before crisis occurs. This called on parents, close relatives in the family and the larger community to teach premarital couples on matters pertaining to life including marriage and family, communication and conflict resolution, work, and service to others, roles and responsibilities to their immediate families and the community at large. Premarital Counseling was achieved through oral literature such as proverbs and folktales (Ndlovu & Hove, 2015).

In the Akamba society for instance, marriage was a very important ritual which brought together not only the couple but also the two families and the entire clan (Mbiti, 1969) and therefore preparation for marriage was given serious attention. The process of

marriage preparation started from a tender age and involved initiation rites, betrothal, payment of bride price and culminated in the wedding ceremony (Kyalo, 2011). Each of these stages was marked by a ritual thus making the entire process religiously oriented and binding. During the courtship and betrothal period, the two families selected respected elderly members from within to educate the premarital couple in matters pertaining to character formation, communication, finances and how to be emotionally mature. To the Akamba society, character of the spouses was of great value to the two families getting united and so it was given the seriousness it deserved to ensure the marriage and hence the two families were not plugged into problems in future (Kyalo, 2011).

2.3.3 Professional Premarital Preparation. The term pre-marital preparation is used differently in different circles of research. The terms pre-marital counseling and pre-marital education are also used to denote pre-marital preparation for marriage and in fact these terms are used interchangeably in research (Hunter & Commerford, 2015). According to the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy [AAMF] (2014), premarital counseling is a process that helps couples anticipating marriage to enhance and enrich their premarital relationships in order to promote satisfactory and stable marriages. It is suggestive from this definition that marriage preparation gives the couples the opportunity to carefully scrutinize important aspects of their relationship and to develop skills necessary for working through problematic areas in order to maintain a relatively high level of functioning. This is also in line with the definition provided by Markman and Rhoades (2012) who defined premarital education as an effort to provide knowledge and skills-based

training to couples with an aim of building a healthy and sustainable relationship once they are married.

Undeniably, marital conflicts occur in every marital relationship. It is therefore imperative that every couple that intends to enjoy a healthy relationship engage in preventive measures before union (Curran, Ogolsky, Hazen, & Bosch, 2011). Furthermore, the effectiveness of premarital preparation as a preventive strategy has been well supported in research (Carlson, Daire, Munyon, & Young, 2012; Duncan et al, 2010).

On the other hand, various research studies have indicated that premarital education is a key strategy in reducing marital distress and divorce. Firstly, it gives the couple a chance to reflect on the relationship so that they can evaluate it from a more realistic approach (Yilmaz & Kalkan, 2010). This preparation helps the couple to discover dynamics in the areas of growth and weaknesses that may cause relationship dysfunction and divorce in future, and they either work on them or discontinue the relationship (Mackintosh, 2012). Secondly, through premarital preparation the couple becomes aware that marriage is an important lifetime venture that requires attention, nurturing and commitment. Thirdly, couples become aware of the existence of professional help that is available to them in the event of difficulties later on in life (Williamson et al., 2014). Lastly, couples who have undertaken premarital education have better chances of maintaining serenity in marriage by: increasing and improving their communication patterns, decreasing the negative attitudes that affect happiness, better understanding their partner, and being able to discuss issues in a healthier way (Yilmaz & Kalkan, 2010). Accordingly, marriage preparation is an important tool in improving the couple's overall relationship quality, averting divorce and making the couple happier (Weiss, 2014; Lundquist et al., 2014).

Besides, marriage preparation is cost effective and produces significant long lasting results in relationship functioning. For instance, according to Schofield et al., (in press), participants who attend relationship education communicate better, manage their finances effectively and are self-motivated as compared to those who attend therapy after problems have manifested. On the whole, Ambert (2009, p.24) suggests “one third of the marital relationships that are dissolved are actually average to good marriages” that could have actually been prevented if the couple’s competence could have been enhanced.

2.3.4 The Modern African Traditional Counseling Model. Marriage counseling has been a component of African society way of life all along and thus it is not a new phenomenon. However, currently it has been overshadowed by the formalized, strategized and skills-based Western therapies (Ndlovu & Hove, 2015). The African premarital counseling emphasizes more on the prevention aspects to prepare the couple before crisis occurs as opposed to the correctional Western form of intervention. According to Rotich and Starcher (2016), the African pre-marital preparation model consists of unstructured everyday life instructions. This calls on parents, close relatives in the family and the larger community to teach premarital couples on matters pertaining to life including marriage and family, communication and conflict resolution skills, child bearing and upbringing, work, service to others, and roles and responsibilities to their immediate families and the community at large. Counseling was achieved through oral literature such as proverbs and folktales (Ndlovu & Hove, 2015). However, the African family value system has changed substantially due to modernization and therefore it is no longer feasible for family members to be responsible for premarital preparations of the young adults. Thus, for couples who are

not Christians and cannot afford the secular premarital education, they enter into marriage completely unprepared.

2.3.5 The Christian Counseling Model. The Christian and secular premarital program models have stepped in to fill the gap after the collapse of the African family counseling. The Christian family counseling in Africa is informed by missionary practice and is basically anchored on the moral principles and ideals of the word of God (Mbunga, 2010). The Christian counseling mainly emphasis on marital spirituality, Christian life and service as a couple, the rite of marriage and the marriage vows, and gives limited attention and concern to relational dimensions (Knieps-Port le Roi, 2012). In fact, according to a study by Wilmoth and Smyser (2012), the clergy indicated that the topics which they cover effectively are the wedding ceremony, relationship to God and communication respectively.

Furthermore, studies indicate that although some denominations have laid down instructions for premarital preparation, there are no detailed steps to follow in implementing the program (Mbunga, 2010). For instance, churches lack formal programs specifically designed to educate couples on risk and protective factors. In fact, little is known about the content and other requirements of marriage preparation provided by the clergy (Vail, 2012). Consequently, the Christian model is devoid of a standardized curriculum resulting in inconsistent, inadequate and ineffective premarital preparation (Mbunga, 2010; Poley, 2011). Besides, many of the clergy have overwhelming responsibilities as church managers such that they cannot find sufficient time to prepare the couple thoroughly.

2.3.6 The Secular Counseling Model. The secular premarital model is practiced by professional family counselors and is informed by Western culture and theories of family systems. It is a skills preventive strategy which provides information to couples on techniques to support and enhance their relationship in the entire marriage period (Yilmaz & Kalkan, 2010). It is based on certain procedure including timing and dosage, format, assessment, content, follow ups after wedding. For any behavioral change to be witnessed, the length and intensity of marriage preparation needs to be given considerable attention (Wilmoth & Smyser 2012). Programs with moderate dosage of instructional time in marital preparation have been proven to produce stronger outcomes as compared to those with low or high dosages (Hawkins, Blanchard, Baldwin, & Fawcett, 2008). The African system of premarital education remains largely unexplored in many Kenyan cultures and therefore the secular counseling model has not largely integrated it into its curriculum (Rotich & Stercher, 2016). Besides, secular premarital counseling is too expensive for the ordinary couples and therefore Kenyan couples anticipating marriage rely heavily on the Christian premarital preparation or get into marriage completely unprepared.

Consequently, there is need for integration of the relational segments enshrined in both the African traditional model and the secular model, and the Christian model in order to provide a holistic premarital preparation for couples of the contemporary society seeking a stable and satisfactory marriage.

2. 4 Review of Literature Related to Study Objectives

This section reviewed literature that was specifically related to the objectives of the present study.

2.4.1 Forms of Premarital Preparation. Marital preparation is utilized in two forms. Formal marriage preparation involves face-to-face counseling or skills training through attending seminars, classes or conferences. On the other hand, informal marriage preparation is a self-directed preparation achieved through family socialization, modeling, reading marriage materials in books, articles in internet resources or by participating in self-directed marriage questionnaire (Weiss, 2014). According to Wadsworth and Markman (2010), many of the marital problems that occur in marriage present themselves early in the premarital stage interactions. Hence, this is why couples who take part in premarital preparation report higher relationship satisfaction and commitment, are better prepared for marriage, have increased awareness of individual and couple strengths and risk factors and show improved couple communication (Amanda, 2015). A number of formal premarital education programs have been found to be useful in raising awareness about marital relationship, giving feedback, enhancing cognitive change, and offering relationship skills training (Halford, 2011).

Currently formal premarital preparation programs involve attending sessions facilitated by the clergy or by a range of professionals and mainly focus on skills acquisition and instruction on the dynamics of marriage (Duncan et al., 2010). However, many couples anticipating marriage rarely use the formal premarital preparation, but instead are increasingly engaging in informal forms of premarital preparation if by any chance they take part in premarital education at all (Duncan et al., 2010).

The informal self-directed procedures involve socialization from parents and friends about what it takes to be married. In fact, the first instructors about marriage preparation are parents where children observe parents' relationship and take advice from them. The

perceptions which these children build and accumulate become a learning point about marital relationships. Reading books, online courses, internet sites and inventories are other sources of informal marital information (Duncan et al., 2010). For instance, couple CARE (Couple and Relationship Education) is one of the self-directed couple educational programs which couples use with minimal facilitation. It involves watching skills-based DVD, using a manual to understand, and discussing them as a couple, with support through phone calls from an independent learning facilitator (Zemp et al., 2017). Use of informal marital preparation resources makes marital education more readily available and this increases uptake.

However, there is increasing evidence from literature indicating that blended programs from the formal and informal forms of marital preparation are more effective in enhancing marital satisfaction than either the face-to-face or the self-directed programs alone (Halford et al., 2010; McAllister, Duncan, & Hawkins, 2012).

2.4.2 Premarital Needs Assessment. A needs assessment can either be formal or informal, but it should ultimately address couple dynamics that predict marital outcomes and yield behavioral change. According to Wilmoth and Smyser (2012), premarital needs assessment is a significant component of premarital preparation programs. These assessment tools are specifically designed to collect data necessary in order to fulfill the following needs: to avail information about the strengths and growth areas in a couple's relationship; to give feedback to couples relating to their partnership, and to make it possible for couples to discuss the outcome of their assessment. It is also through assessment that at

high risk couples are identified and specific interventions implemented to help them overcome them (Williamson, Rogges, Cobb, Johnson, Lawrence, & Bradbury, 2015).

Currently, the commonly utilized formal premarital preparation inventories include: Premarital Preparation and Relationship Enhancement [PREPARE], Relationship Evaluation [RELATE] and Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study [FOCCUS] (Halford, 2011). These tools empower the couples with knowledge and insight to identify their strengths and growth areas that require enhancement and which are addressed in premarital preparation sessions. They also enable the professional facilitator to tailor the sessions to the needs of the couples. Longitudinal studies on PREPARE found that couples who take part in these education programs before marriage showed various benefits: exhibit enhanced positive interactions and fewer negative interactions, portray decreased rates of relationship hostility, lesser chances of separation or divorce and enjoy an advanced relationship stability up to five years after participation (Futris et al., 2011).

2.4.3 Perceptions on Premarital Preparation. Research studies show that, couples who have received premarital preparation perceive it positively. These couples report that the program has improved the individual self, the partner and the marital relationship in its entirety (Coleman, 2012). Participants who undergo premarital preparation are generally satisfied in their marriages and they would recommend it to other people considering marriage (Vail, 2012). These couples are now able to appraise marriage from a more realistic approach because they have acquired skills to communicate better, decrease negative attitudes and have a better understanding of their partner (Yilmaz & Kalkan, 2010).

Value of Premarital Education. Premarital preparation has progressive benefits. Couples enter into marriage with a stronger foundation, less risk of marital instability and even at-risk couples improve after participation (Mackintosh, 2012). Couples who undergo premarital preparation promote their communication, conflict resolution, finance management and parenting competencies while at the same time improving their understanding of marital expectations, personality traits, sexuality, leisure, in-laws and religion, all of which enhance marital relationship (Weiss, 2014). Besides, research indicates that premarital preparation may enhance relationship satisfaction either immediately after the intervention or in the long run (Carlson et al., 2012). Indeed, couples who participate in premarital education are 79% better in their marriage experiences (Duncan et al., 2010) and exhibit a 39% decreased chance of divorce over five years (Maybruch, 2012; Vail, 2012) than those who do not attend. Furthermore, couples who attend premarital preparation are highly likely to participate in couple counseling when faced with difficulties later in marriage (Williamson et al., 2014).

However, the change brought about by premarital preparation diminishes with time and therefore follow up sessions should be organized and carried out periodically to replenish it (Coleman, 2012; Markman et al., 2010).

2.4.4 Content of Premarital Preparation. The area of content of premarital education has been abundantly researched. Most researchers agree that the fields of communication, conflict resolution, marital expectations, personality, role differences, sexuality, finances, parenting, in-laws, leisure and religion require a lot of attention to ensure marital satisfaction (Blair & Cordova, 2009). When couples explore these areas together,

they are able to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and areas of growth and plan on how to enrich their relationship. Still, not all couples will experience the same issues and therefore flexibility should always be exercised to cater for the different needs of couples.

Communication. Communication is the process through which information, ideas, and feelings are conveyed and transmitted from one couple to another. It is one of the integral ingredients in a good marriage relationship (Epstein et al., 2013) and lack of it is identified as number one cause of marital dissatisfaction and divorce (Carroll et al., 2009). When there is effective communication in a marriage relationship, it is easy to identify and solve issues before and during marriage (Weiss, 2014). Furthermore, studies indicate that premarital negative communication patterns are a prerequisite for marital dissatisfaction and divorce (Markman et al., 2010).

Financial Issues. Money is a major contributory factor to many marital challenges including disagreements and divorce (Dew, 2011). In many marriages, financial issues arise when one spouse has unrealistic attitudes and expectations on how the family finances are earned, saved, and spend, hence it is important for couples to have similar views and goals about their finances (Archuleta, 2013). In fact, financial conflicts tend to be more abundant than any other type of dispute and are ranked third among the top ten sources of conflict in marriage (Dew, Britt, & Huston, 2012). At times, the spouse who earns the money may use it as an emotional weapon to control, manage, or manipulate the other spouse's lifestyle or to punish him or her thus enhancing the dissatisfaction in the relationship. On the other hand, lack of money and therefore inability to cater for a family's needs may jeopardize a marital relationship (Arugu, 2014). Therefore acquiring skills in financial management is essential to avoid marital conflicts.

Marital Conflict. Unlike in the traditional marriages where the married couple shared a closely knit relationship with clearly marked gender-determined roles, today's marriages are typical of two independent people with recognizably separate individual goals, lifestyles and personalities. Destructive marital conflicts arise from differences in opinions, beliefs, values, desires, interests, habits; unrealistic expectations; ineffective communication and competition between the partners (Onsy & Amer, 2013). Unquestionably, couples who engage in negative interactions will experience decreased levels of marital satisfaction compared to those engaging in positive interactions (Sullivan, Pasch, Johnson, & Bradbury, 2010). Hence, knowledge on the nemesis of marital conflicts and how to handle them when they arise in a relationship is necessary to limit destructive exchanges in marriage.

In-laws. In all cultures of the world, the issue of adjustment with in-laws has been a challenge. Disagreements with in-laws are bound to occur in instances where triangulation has taken root or when one of the spouses is emotionally undifferentiated from his or her family of origin (Riordan, 2016). In the African society for instance, in-laws are viewed as part of the family and therefore if the married couple do not set boundaries and live as an independent family, then in-laws can significantly influence their transition to marriage (Oforchukwu, 2010).

Marriage Expectations. Understanding marital expectations is crucial in developing a healthy and satisfying marriage (Weiss, 2014). Marital expectations are present at the social-cultural level and can either be positive or negative expectations (Ngazimbi, Daire, Soto, & Munyon, 2013). Positive expectations can act as a motivation for relationship satisfaction and success, whereas negative expectations may bring about unrealistic beliefs about the marriage thus causing a decline in marital satisfaction (Johnson, 2015).

Religion. Religious practices are considered as salient factors in enhancing marital satisfaction and stability (Khodayarifard, Shahabi, & Akbari-Zardkhaneh, 2013). Studies have shown that religion has a positive effect on marital quality and stability (Mahoney, 2010) and that couples who have a sense of religiosity in marriage exhibit higher levels of marital satisfaction (Onsy & Amer, 2014). Religion promotes relationship-related values, norms and social support which in turn enhances a moderating effect on marital adjustment and reduces behaviors that can harm the marriage (Mullins, 2016). Lopez et al., (2011) argued that couples who share strong similar religious beliefs and attend church regularly tend to share a similar worldview, commitment, have minimal disagreements, remain married for longer periods, and have a more satisfying marriage. In fact, lower rates of divorce are reported where couples share similar religious faith as compared to couples where only one partner practices religiosity (Mahoney, 2010). These couples identify their faith as a major contributing factor to their marital stability and longevity (Philip, Wilmoth, & Marks, 2012). What's more, religious beliefs and practices indirectly influence marriages by promoting psychological well-being and trust generating behaviors such as sexual fidelity and temperance (Fincham, Ajayi, & Beach, 2011).

Responsibilities / Roles. Couples need to understand their roles before marriage. Through premarital preparation, couples come to understand which view of marriage they are adapting: the traditional view or the egalitarian view. The traditional perspective looks at the husband as more educated and as the breadwinner of the family while that of the wife as less educated and purely as home maker (Desai, Chugh, & Brief, 2014). In contrast, the egalitarian perspective believes that husbands and wives have equal labor duties, where both can be employed, earner salaries and share financial responsibility for the family's well-fare

(Akotian & Anum, 2012; Desai et al., 2014). It is important to understand what role each partner will be playing at the premarital stage to avoid misunderstanding and disagreements during marriage.

Leisure. Studies suggest that a repetition of everyday positive interactions and routine involvement in joint activities enhances understanding and attachment between the spouses thus producing an increase in marital satisfaction and adjustment (Phillips et al., 2009). Couples who engage in joint leisure activities and spent more time together have a healthier and satisfying relationship (Chavez, 2015) compared to those who do not share time together.

Sexuality. Sexual satisfaction in marriage is a key pillar in marriage stability. Unquestionably, sexual satisfaction is positively correlated with overall relationship satisfaction. Ramezani, Keramat, Motaghi, Pur, and Khosravi, (2015) in their study with pregnant women identified violence to be brought about by unsatisfactory sexual intercourse in the marriage. Sexual dissatisfaction among married couples has been identified as a major contributory factor to extra-marital affairs (Mugweni, Pearson, & Omar, 2015), marital distress and divorce. It is therefore important for couples to undergo marriage preparation to understand the dynamics of sexuality so that they can build a satisfactory sexual life and maintain their marital relationship (Ashdown, Hackathorn, & Clark, 2011).

Parenting. All marriages achieve a sense of fulfillment when they are blessed with children. However, the transition to parenthood if not properly negotiated is likely to interfere with the spousal subsystem and thus bring about negative effects on marital satisfaction (Kwok, Cheng, Chow, & Ling, 2015). Thus, couples should cultivate a positive atmosphere in the parental subsystem to ensure that marital satisfaction is maintained.

Personality. Every individual has his or her own unique personality traits. These factors include extraversion, openness to experience, neuroticism, conscientiousness and agreeableness. Each of these factor traits affects the individual's behavior to a certain degree and in extension also influences the quality of the marriage relationship (Najarpourian, 2012). It is therefore important for couples to strive to understand the personality traits of their partners in order to assess their compatibility. Whereas, some of these traits like openness to experience and extraversion are associated with positive interactions leading to increased marital quality (Vater & Schroder- Abe, 2015; Rosowsky, King, Coolidge, Roades, & Segal, 2012), others like neuroticism predict less adaptive and more problematic behaviors' leading to increased marital discord and negative marital quality (Cirhinlioglu, Tepe, & Cirhinlioglu, 2016). Through premarital preparation, couples can gain skills on how to deal with their character defects and hence improve their marriage relationship.

2.5.5 Mode of Delivery. The formal premarital preparation utilizes the format of programmed lessons or sessions with either clergy or a professional family counselor to guide or teach couples about the various skills necessary for marriage enrichment (Gray, Perl & Bruce, 2007). The preparation is valued more when presented by a team comprising clergy and professional counselors (Coleman, 2012). Informal premarital preparation on the other hand involves self-directed procedures such as reading books, internet classes or online articles regarding marriage (Weiss, 2014).

2.5.6 Method of Delivery. Premarital preparation can either be done in group or individual sessions and either way, positive results are realized (Futris, Barton, Aholou, & Seponski, 2011; Owen et al., 2012). The method of delivery mainly involves group presentations and discussions, structured and unstructured group and individual couple experiences, or a combination of both presentation and experiential method (Marcotte, 2015). However, group sessions are generally more cost effective in terms of time and resources than individual couple counseling (Futris et al., 2011). Marriage preparation should take at least six months intensive preparation before the marriage is officiated (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2008). Nevertheless, studies show that most premarital preparations take several nights, a weekend, one day or just a meeting with a mentor couple before the wedding (Coleman, 2012). Hawkins et al., (2008) in their meta-analysis found out that premarital programs that were of medium intensity were more effective than shorter or lengthier ones. Coleman (2012) in his review on premarital preparation in the Catholic Church indicated that couples who took the premarital course three months prior to their marriage had a more positive experience in their marriage than those who took the course less than three months to their marriage.

2.6 Summary

This literature review indicates that, early prevention through premarital preparation is integral in ensuring a healthy and successful marriage relationship in the initial stages of marriage. The concept of premarital preparation is based on the preventive theory whose primary goal is to identify underlying risk factors that can interfere with the stability of a marital relationship and intervene before problems can crop up thus promoting relationship

immunity to the engaged or married couple. However, the effectiveness of premarital preparation can also be moderated by a variety of interpersonal and contextual variables which may require intervention so that premarital preparation achieves its intended goal. Both formal and informal modes of preparation contribute significantly to gaining of skills and knowledge that are necessary for handling problematic situations before and after marriage. Various premarital dimensions including content, delivery mechanisms, methods and needs assessment require attention for this to be achieved.

The church has been identified as the largest provider of premarital education because of its vantage positioning with people. However, literature also reveals that the church premarital programs are insufficient because of their lack of a standardized content, the inconsistency in its duration and number of sessions, failure to conduct needs assessment and its lack of follow ups. This literature review also suggests that premarital preparation is perceived positively by those who participate in it and they rate it as valuable to the individual, couple and their relationship.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the epistemology, research design that was applicable to the study, the site where the study took place, the target population, sample and sampling design, research instrument, pilot study, data collection techniques, data analysis and the logistical and ethical considerations.

3.1 Epistemology

This is the theory of knowledge, the philosophical study of nature, origin, and the scope of knowledge (Moser, 2010). It involves making assumptions about the base of knowledge, its nature and form, and how it is acquired and communicated to other people (Al-Saadi, 2014). The research design and data collection methods of this study were based on social constructivism, a type of epistemology which seeks to explore and understand the social world of the people being studied by focusing on their meaning and interpretation of their context. Premarital preparation, the phenomenon being explored in this study is a social construct. The participants experiencing it therefore assign meaning to it through social interaction and this provides a progressive revision of interpretation of this phenomenon (Al-Saadi, 2014). The study aimed at getting the meaning designated to this construct through the words of the participants.

3.2 Research Design

According to Creswell (2012), a research design is a systematic, detailed plan or sketch that explains how the study will be carried out: data collection, data analysis, and reporting of the findings. This study employed a phenomenological research design to describe the phenomenon. “A phenomenological research design is a study that attempts to understand people’s perceptions, perspectives and understanding of a particular phenomenon” (Pathak, 2017, p.1719). This is a design of inquiry in which the researcher gives a detailed account of the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as depicted by participants (Creswell, 2014). This research design was chosen because there is inadequate information regarding the issue under study in the Kenyan context and therefore lack of understanding about it. Hence, the researcher intended to explore the phenomenon more to raise awareness, increase insight, and provide a greater understanding of it (Astalin, 2013). It involved interviewing and listening to knowledgeable married couples describing their perceptions and experiences in relation to the phenomenon, and audio recording the narratives.

3.3 Location of the Study

The Catholic Diocese of Kitui is in Kitui County and covers the entire county. Kitui County is part of the Eastern region of Kenya bordering Garisa County to the north, Tana River County to the south east and Machakos and Makueni Counties to the West. The Diocesan offices are located in Kitui town which is 100 km from Nairobi and also the County government headquarters. Kanyangi parish is one of the twenty seven parishes of the Catholic Diocese of Kitui located at the western part of the diocese and bordering

Machakos diocese (Appendix D). The main inhabitants of the parish are Kambas whose main occupation is subsistence farming but with a substantial number of people engaged in formal employment. The weather is mainly dry in most months of the year making the study site a semi-arid area.

3.4 Target Population

Target population refers to an entire group of persons or elements that meet the particular designed criteria specified for a research investigation (Alvi, 2016). The target population for this research study was 78 catholic married couples who were 20 - 45 years of age and who had been in the marriage relationship for one year to ten years. This age group was chosen because it is the most likely to engage in destructive marital conflicts due to their low psychological and socioeconomic maturity, and potentially unrealistic expectations (Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010). In contrast, couples who have been married for longer own joint investments and have developed coping mechanisms to deal with their problems when they arise and therefore exhibit lesser destructive conflicts and lower chances of dissolving their union (Kyalo, 2011).

Kanyangi parish consists of twenty six out station churches. The eligible target population was dispersed across these churches. However, it was not realistic to work with the entire target population in this case, and therefore an accessible population which was representative of the target group was chosen as the study population. The accessible population for this study was those catholic married couples in four representative churches in Kanyangi parish – Mukameni, Kavoo, Kisayani and Kanyangi who were in the age bracket of 20- 45 years and who had been in marriage for one year to ten years.

3.5 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A non-probability sampling technique was adopted in identifying the churches and the participants this study because of its qualitative nature.

3.5.1 Sampling Technique. The study used a purposive sampling technique to identify the four churches (Kanyangi, Kavoo, Kisayani & Mukameni) and the 24 participants (12 married couples) to participate in the study. Purposive sampling involves intentionally choosing sites or individuals that are “information rich” and who can help in learning and understanding the phenomenon better (Creswell, 2012). The twenty four participants who were chosen to participate in the study had their ages ranging between 23-43 years and had marriage experiences between 1-10 years.

3.5.2 Sample Size. Sampling refers to the selection of study individuals from a defined accessible population that would produce the characteristics of the population as closely as possible and hence be an example of the target population of the study (Singh & Masuku, 2014). Out of the accessible population in the four churches in Kanyangi parish, a sample population of 24 participants (12 married couples) aged 20-45 years and who had marriage experience of 1-10 years was purposefully selected to participate in the study. This sample was divided into two categories: those who received premarital preparation before marriage (2 participants) and those who got married without premarital education and later convalidated their marriage in church (22 participants).

3.6 Research Instruments

Creswell (2012, p.9) defines data collection as “identifying and selecting individuals for a study, obtaining their permission to study them, and gathering information by asking people questions or observing their behavior.” The present study utilized an interview guide as the instrument of data collection. However, the researcher was also a key instrument in the data collection in that she did not rely on questionnaires developed by others to obtain the information from participants, but instead conducted the interview herself (Creswell, 2013). An interview is an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, by administering a questionnaire or an interview guide in a face-to-face encounter with the participant in their natural setting (Creswell, 2014). A prepared interview guide of open-ended questions (Appendix B) guided the face-to-face conversation. Probing questions were used to help obtain further information, elaboration, or clarify responses in an effort to explore the problem in-depth. The use of an interview guide ensured that the questioning was focused and the same general areas of information were collected from each interviewee (McNamara, 2009). Audio-tape recording of the conversation was done in order to thoroughly capture and report the views of the informants.

3.7 Pilot Study

A pilot study is a small scale version of a study done to try out the research instrument in preparation for the main study (Simon, 2011). Before collecting data, a pilot study was undertaken with 4 participants (two couples) from Kavisuni parish. This sample for the pilot study represents 16.6% of the sample population (24 participants) for the actual study and although it was small it had characteristics fully representative of the target

population. Using convenient sampling the 4 participants (2 couples) were identified and after explaining the purpose and requirements of the study, consent was obtained from each one of them. Using the interview guide, data was collected from them by having a one-on-one conversation with each participant and audio recording it.

Table 3.1: *Demographic information of participants of the pilot study*

NO.	Pseudonym	Age	Years in marriage
1	Hosho	30	6
2	Nina	27	6
3	Peter	35	8
4	Marita	32	8

This pre-testing of the instrument was aimed at: (1) checking if the instructions in the instrument were comprehensible and whether the questions in the instrument were capturing the expected information and (2) to examine the reliability and the validity of the findings. The conversations were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. A thematic analysis was carried out with this data and the findings indicated that the tool was trustworthy and dependable. In addition, the participants were able to understand and answer the items in the tool correctly, and the desired information was collected which indicated that the tool was well constructed and there was no need to make corrections to it.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, validity and reliability are addressed in the findings rather than in the instrument as is the case in quantitative research. Ensuring that the results of a

qualitative study are accurate and can be depended upon by other researchers address the issues of validity and reliability respectively in a qualitative study.

3.8.1 Validity. In qualitative research, validity simply means the credibility of the research findings (Creswell, 2014). In an effort to ensure the findings of this study were credible, the instrument used in data collection was subjected to the following procedures: First, the researcher sought informed input from colleagues. Secondly, an expert review of the instrument was carried out with the research supervisors to critically evaluate if the instrument would collect the data that answers the research questions.

Again as already indicated, validity in qualitative studies is mainly an inference of the findings (Maxwell, 2013). To this effect, the researcher employed descriptive validity to the study to bring out the facts of the data collected from the participants. Descriptive validity involves describing the accurate factual account of what one observed and heard from the participants (Kihlgren, 2016). This was achieved by audio taping the conversations, transcribing the recorded interview in the participants own words, and providing verbatim quotations from participants. These processes were geared towards ensuring that the conclusions of the findings were valid (Maxwell, 2013).

In this study, validity threats such as researcher subjectivity and reflexivity were also identified and appropriately addressed in an effort to enhance the integrity of the findings. Researcher subjectivity included the researcher values, beliefs and expectations which were likely to influence the interpretation of the study negatively. Reflexivity on the other hand, involves the person of the researcher power influence on the participants such that they give their responses from the perspective of what they think the researcher needs to hear. The

researcher was throughout the study self-aware of these influences and how they can affect the credibility of the outcome of the study (Maxwell, 2013).

To overcome these validity threats, the researcher utilized the strategy of ‘rich data’ where intensive interviews with different participants were conducted and the conversations audio taped to collect in depth and varied information and then verbatim transcription of the interviews were done. The respondent validation strategy was also applied to solicit feedback from the participants in relation to the transcribed data. This participant check was aimed at ruling out any misinterpretation of the meaning of the data collected, and to identify and eliminate any researcher biases that may have been reflected in the findings (Birt, Scotts, Cavers, & Walter, 2016)). Equally important, diverse perspectives of the themes were provided to enrich and make the findings more authentic. Further, the researcher spent a prolonged amount of time in the field doing face-to-face conversations with participants. This helped the researcher to develop an in depth understanding of the phenomenon under study thus increasing the accuracy of the findings.

3.8.2 Reliability. Reliability is defined as the consistency with which an instrument measures the attribute it was designed to measure (Creswell, 2012). Reliability in qualitative research is an indication of how dependable a particular approach is across different researchers and different projects. To ensure reliability of the instrument in this study, a pilot study was conducted with four participants (2 couples) from a different locality and with similar characteristics as the sample population before the start of data collection. This was aimed at ensuring that the instrument was well constructed and that the participants understood and answered the questions being asked in line with the intended outcome of the

study. The results of the pilot study indicated the instrument could be depended upon to collect data. In addition, after transcription of the data, member checks were done by providing a copy of the transcribed notes of the audio recording to a few participants for verification of accuracy of the results (Creswell, 2012) and they confirmed that the transcribed notes were a reflection of what they had said.

3.9 Data Collection

Before proceeding to the field to collect data, certain provisions were to be adhered to. First, the researcher sought clearance from Tangaza University Ethics Review Committee indicating that she had successfully certified their requirements (Appendix D). Next, the researcher sought permission from the National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation, the body charged with regulating research in the country [NACOSTI] (Appendix H). After acquiring a permit from NACOSTI to undertake research, the researcher proceeded to the relevant bodies in Kitui County i: e County Commissioner Kitui County (Appendix F), County Director of Education Kitui County (Appendix G) and Sub-County Director of Education Lower Yatta Sub-County (Appendix E) to seek permission to carry out research in their areas of jurisdiction.

After securing permission from the relevant bodies, the researcher proceeded to Kanyangi parish and met with the Father in charge. The researcher explained the purpose and the nature of the study and then requested the priest to permit her to use the church marriage register to identify the participants. This was granted and 28 eligible participants for the study were recruited by examining the parish marriage records. Some of the records such as phone numbers were missing and the researcher had to make further contacts to fill this gap.

After the researcher was equipped with the relevant data, calls were made to the participants and appointments booked with them depending on the days and time that were convenient to them. Twenty four participants were voluntarily willing to be interviewed. One couple had already separated while another was not willing to participate. Data was gathered by going to the 24 participants in their natural settings and engaging in a 1 hour 30 minutes direct face-to-face conversation with each individual spouse separately. First, on getting to the meeting place, the researcher greeted the participants. This was followed by introductions and building of rapport. The purpose and nature of the study was then fully explained to the participant(s) and confidentiality assured. Again, the participants were informed that the conversation will be audio-taped. The freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason was also explained. Then, participants were given an opportunity to voluntarily choose to participate or to decline.

Informed consent was then obtained from those participants who chose to participate in the study by having them sign the participants consent form (Appendix A). Again, the participants filled their demographic details after consenting to participate in the study (Appendix B). Using the interview guide (Appendix B), the researcher led the conversation by asking the main question and giving the participant time to respond. After the participant's response, probing was done to get in-depth information. Audio taping of the interview was done simultaneously with the consent of the participants (Appendix A) in order to capture first hand information from the participants to avoid losing focus and wastage of time. At the end of the interview the participants were thanked for their cooperation and participation. After each interview, the information was transcribed

verbatim. Member checks with a few participants were done with the transcribed data to ensure that what the participants said is what was captured and to minimize researcher bias.

3.10 Data Analysis

The data collected from the participants was analyzed through a thematic analysis approach which involves identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns in qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2013). It involved a simultaneous process where data collection and analysis occurred concurrently. It was an inductive procedure where data analysis started from the specific to the general search for themes that emerged as being important in the description of the problem (Creswell, 2012). This thematic data analysis was also cyclic, involving regularly and repeatedly juggling between data collection and analysis. Finally, data “winnowing” was done in order to focus on some of the data and disregard the other. Analysis was achieved by following three steps:

Step one (Open coding): After completion of an interview with a participant, the information contained in the tape recorder was transcribed verbatim. This was aimed at presenting the subjective experiences of the participants in their own words thus reducing researcher bias. Next, the researcher familiarized self with the data by reading and re-reading through the transcribed data several times, each time carrying out an analysis and writing notes at the margins. This gave a deeper understanding of the data from the participants, provided a general impression of the information, and presented an opportunity to reflect on the overall meaning of the data gathered. At this initial stage, the focus was to identify and highlight sentences, ideas, phrases or opinions that corresponded with the research questions (Creswell, 2012). This involved taking text data gathered during data

collection or segmenting sentences into categories and assigning them codes based on the actual language of the participant or on existing literature (Rossman & Rallis, 2012) (Appendix C). This information was then summarized and arranged into meaningful and systematic units that would be analyzed further at a later step.

Step two (Axial coding): Using the general list of codes, the emerging categories were enriched with additional information to make them more relevant and meaningful. These were then linked to comparable sub-categories and assigned codes according to their similarities and differences (Creswell, 2012).

Step three (Thematic identification): Finally, the different categories emerging from the information were constantly and repeatedly compared with each other with an aim to shorten the categories into broad coherent and meaningful themes that were relevant to the research questions (Clarke & Braun, 2013). The study then focused mainly on the nine most important themes that provided significant answers to the study questions (Appendix C).

3. 11 Data Management

Data management is a general term used to refer to organizing, structuring, storing and caring for information generated during a research project (Johnson & Ahlfeldt, 2015). In this study, data was collected by having a face-to-face conversation with the participants and audio recording the conversations. To safeguard the privacy of the participants, their names and phone numbers were saved in a phone which only the researcher had access to and with a secret password. The audio tape recorder was kept locked up in a safe place where only the researcher had access to until it was transferred to a hard drive. Once data had been collected, stringent measures were put in place to ensure that it was safe from

unwarranted exposure. To protect the data, the information collected was stored safely in a text format in hard drive and a secret password only known by the researcher was used (APA, 2010). Participants were given pseudonyms in order to protect their identity (Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2015). Transcribing was also done manually and the note book containing the information was always under key and lock and the key always in the possession of the researcher. Honesty was upheld when reporting the findings to avoid altering the original meaning from participants, and the data was also used explicitly for the purpose for which it was intended. This data will be destroyed five years after the research.

3.12 Logistical and Ethical Considerations

The study complied with all the logistical and ethical guidelines as required by the relevant institutions. First, an approval was sought from the Ethics Review Committee of Tangaza University College where the student is undertaking her Master's program (Appendix H). Afterwards, approval was sought from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation [NACOSTI] to proceed with the research (Appendix H). In the field, respect for the site and participants where the research took place was observed by: gaining permission from relevant authorities before entry to the site (Appendices E, F, G); minimizing disturbance to the participants daily routines by seeking their approval before scheduling a meeting; always maintaining a "guest" status at the place of study (Creswell, 2012), and respecting the indigenous cultural norms of the participants where it was applicable (Lincoln, 2009).

Informed consent was obtained from the participants after informing them the following: "Purpose of the study, expected period, and procedures; their right to decline to

participate and to withdraw; the foreseeable consequences of withdrawing and limits of confidentiality” (American Psychological Association [APA], 2017, p.11). In addition, a thorough discussion about reciprocity, the recording of data, its storage, usage and disposal was also done with the participants and a clear agreement was reached before starting the study. This provision of adequate information and discussions was to guarantee the voluntary participation in the study. The study participants were also observed for cognitive competence to understand the information and if they were fully aware of the consequences for their consent (European Commission (2010). Consent letters (Appendix A) were then signed after provision of adequate information about the study.

The participants were not paid for participating in the study and this information was given at the initial stages before the study began. This was to avoid intimidating and pressuring participants to involuntarily take part in the study. Care was taken to ensure that no deception occurred by collecting data without the knowledge of the participants or by causing emotional distress to the participants. However, in the initial stages of participant identification, their names and phone numbers were obtained to make accessibility easier. Protection from harm was guaranteed by ensuring that these details were closely safeguarded by saving them in a phone only available to the researcher alone so that privacy of the participant’s personal information remained confidential. In instances where any participant was vulnerable, then, debriefing was provided to correct any mistaken ideas that the participant may have had about the nature, outcome and conclusions of the study (APA, 2017). Confidentiality and anonymity was maintained throughout the data collection exercise and during reporting. The data collected was protected by storing it safely in a text format in hard drive and using a secret password known only by the researcher used (APA,

2010). In addition, participants were given pseudonyms in an effort to protect their identity (Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2015). This was especially useful when doing member checks after transcription of the information from the participants to ensure that the data was reported as it originated from them and to check researcher bias. Finally, honesty was upheld when reporting the findings to avoid altering the original meaning of the information from participants, and the data was also used explicitly for the purpose for which it was intended.

3.13 Summary

This methods chapter has outlined what happened, how it happened and who participated. This gives a glimpse of how the study was actualized. The study was carried out using a phenomenological research design to help understand couples premarital preparation experiences and how they interpreted it. A sample population of 24 participants (12 couples) was purposively chosen and data collected using an interview guide, the conversations were audio recorded and data transcribed verbatim. Contacting a pilot study confirmed the data collection instrument was both trustworthy and dependable and there was no need to make corrections to it before the actual study was carried out. Analyzing the data thematically brought out nine main themes which form the basis of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter reports on what was found out during the study and goes ahead to discuss the finding in relation to literature. The results section reports on the demographic information of participants and data collection, stating the emerging themes and providing verbatim expressions from participants. Nine themes emerged from the data as indicated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: *Common themes from the data*

Theme	Objective
1. Informal preparation	1
2. Skills acquisition	1
3. Assessment for marriage preparation	2
4. Enriching marriage preparation	2
5. Value addition	3
6. Marital quality	3
7. Christian premarital model	4
8. Kamba traditional model	4
9. Integrated approach	4

The discussion section on the other hand argues on how the findings are interacting with the existing literature, provide divergent views and show how these findings fit in the theory of prevention. The findings are presented according to the specific study objectives and a discussion for the specific themes that emerge in this section follows immediately after.

4.1 Demographic Information of the Participants

The participants in this study were couples with marriage experience ranging from 1-10 years. The oldest participant was 43 years while the youngest was 23 years. The mean age for the participants was 35 years and the average number of years in the marriage relationship was 7.5 years.

Table 4.2: Description of the participants

Pseudonym	Age	Years in marriage	Pseudonym	Age	Years in marriage
1. Jose	34	9	13. Linda	32	9
2. Zawadi	36	9	14. Baraka	40	9
3. Bahati	36	10	15. Kazi	42	10
4. Rehema	41	10	16. Susan	33	10
5. Fadhili	42	9	17. Mavuno	32	3
6. Muoti	39	9	18. Nora	29	3
7. Baraza	41	8	19. Purity	36	10
8. Tunda	34	8	20. Ushindi	43	10
9. Zed	33	7	21. Taji	30	1
10. Furaha	30	7	22. Flora	23	1
11. Uduma	35	7	23. Maria	32	8
12. Liz	30	7	24. Simba	37	8

4.2 Forms of Premarital Preparation Programs

This study sought to identify the form of premarital preparation that is used in Kanyangi parish and how this has contributed to marital quality in the first ten years of marriage among married couples. Two themes emerged namely informal preparation and skills acquisition.

4.2.1 Informal Premarital Preparation. A number of participants spoke of learning about marriage in informal ways either from their own self-directed initiative or it

was impressed upon by others. 22 participants (11 couples) out of the 24 participants had been married before convalidating their marriage in church. They said that they had gained insight about marriage in their own personal ways before starting to stay together as a couple. Jose a male participant aged 34 years said: “I did not seek guidance about marriage... I observed the experience of my cousin in his marital life and made a decision on how I want to live my marriage life and this is what my marriage is based on.” Participants also said that they gained knowledge by listening to conversations of those older than them already in marriage. For instance, Furaha a female participant who has been married for 7 years shared: “I used to listen to my mother and other women’s conversation about marital life and I gained knowledge...” Similarly Susan said: ... “I related more to those who were in marriage and reflected on what they said later when I was alone to gain insight.” Liz a 30 year old narrated: “I was impressed by my sister’s marriage... they seemed to be so happy... I watched and listened to every word...this is what I base my marriage on.” The voices of these participants clearly indicated that preparation arose from a personal motivation to gain knowledge.

The socialization process also provided a cordial environment for the participants to learn and to prepare for marriage. Participants said this preparation was part of their upbringing and was impressed upon them by their parents, close family relatives, and the society as they progressed across the developmental stages in life. Tunda a 34 years old female participant who has been in marriage for 8 years related: “My first encounter with marital preparation was with my mother when I was growing up...” To others this socialization process took the form of disciplinary actions for morals to be instilled as Taji a male participant narrated: “...my father did not spare the rod on me as I grew up... it was

bitter but it shaped my character making me who I am today in my marriage....” In other circumstances, the message would be hidden behind parables and folk tales as Fadhili a female participant and Kazi a male participant who are both 42 years old shared their experiences: “My grandmother would always advice on what to expect in marriage in riddles and parables....” (Fadhili). Kazi on the other hand narrated: “I used to listen to the folk tales and conversations about marriage issues by the older men as they enjoyed their beer...” Socialization played an important role in instilling values and norms that are essential in ensuring a stable and satisfactory relationship.

4.2.2 Skills Acquisition. In Kanyangi parish, the church premarital education for couples utilizes the Christian model. This is a form of face-to-face encounter with the clergy and involves teaching the couples skills in several areas of life. Participants said this education is based on three motives.

The church believes it is from a Christian family where a strong church emanates and is founded and so this is a very important element in the church. When couples marry in the church, they form the primary structure of the domestic church and therefore the clergy have a church related motive to ensure that many couples marry in church. Maria a 32 year old strong Christian who has been married for the last eight years argued: “The church gives a lot of emphasis to the number of Christian marriages that occur in the church because the strength of the church is anchored on well functioning marriages and families.” This was substantiated by Fadhili another female participant who said: “I went through a mass wedding... but the preparation was shallow and not need specific...” The entire program is facilitated by the clergy (priest, catechist or seminarian) and therefore the preparation tends

to lean more on the principles and ideals of a Christian marriage, an area which the clergy have a command in. Zed a male participant who was also a catechist shared his experience: “My marriage is working by God’s grace. I was only prepared for two weeks before marriage. I think the priest assumed because I am a catechist that I know everything in marital life.” Thus, the main goal of this motive is to produce many marriages that form the bedrock of the church.

The second motive is faith based and its main objective is to strengthen the sacrament and vocation of marriage and how to live out the gospel message in accordance with the teachings of the church. It helps the couple to journey in faith during their marriage. Participants said that during premarital education, the faith based motive was ranked highly and given precedence as it was aimed at enabling the marrying couples to tap the spiritual resources that lie at the basis of their personal commitment and find their expression in the sacramental celebration of their marriage. Muoti stated: “This preparation strengthened my faith and this has improved my marriage”. Participants claimed it was expected that the Holy Spirit would be a teacher to the couple in matters of interpersonal relationships and all other relational issues in their marriage. Maria recounted: “The church is assuming a lot that the married couple will gain teachings from the Holy Spirit....but this highly depends on the level of their faith...” This motive is aimed at increasing the religiosity of the couples and consequently changing their attitudes and behaviors.

Instruction for marital preparation in Kanyangi Catholic parish is presumed to be a gradual and progressive process which starts in childhood and continues up to marriage. The first stages involve preparing the child for character formation, moral value and spiritual formation. Afterwards, the grown up individual is then prepared for the sacrament of

matrimony. This was attested by what Taji shared: “From my Sunday school teachings, I desired to have a holy wedding ... this was written in my heart and was like reference to every relationship that I got into.” A stronger Christian foundation of an individual nurtures faith, and increases the chances that they would be properly prepared to face the challenges in marriage.

Nevertheless, many marriages that take place in Kanyangi parish do not involve couples who started their foundation in the Catholic Church. Jose a male participant who had been married for 9 years shared his experience: “We used to have many misunderstanding in our relationship because I and my wife belonged to different denominations... I was Catholic and she was protestant”. Jose continued... “This church preparation has brought a lot of light and peace into our marriage.” In fact, many spouses started church attendance either after marriage or when they were grown up and therefore the aspect of church based character formation and moral values was less likely to originate from church teachings as Uduma stated: “I was brought up an atheist... my mother was a witch doctor and Church was nowhere... started warming up to it after marriage to a Christian wife... it is good and now I base my marriage in God.” Thus, character formation can originate from different spheres of life but if it is well established it plays a salient role in marriage.

The third motive is relationship-based and the clergy put more emphasis in this area to improve the interpersonal relationship between the partners and hence create a cordial atmosphere for the marriage relationship to thrive. Participants said that the clergy key in on major coping skills that can sustain and preserve the marriage relationship such as interpersonal communication and conflict management. Again participants acknowledged

this to have been a good learning area as shared by two female participants. Tunda admitted: “Before we attended the premarital preparation, we had difficulties communicating...this teaching has changed our attitudes ... we now talk about our relationship and our marriage is healthy.” Fadhili narrated: “...I listen to where the conversation is heading and change the topic...we now have peace in our relationship and our marriage is flourishing.” The positive behavior change witnessed in the relationships of these participants is an indication that relationship-based training is an important factor in premarital preparation.

4.2.3 Discussion. It has come out from the participants in this study that two forms of premarital preparation are practiced in Kanyangi parish, a reflection of the trend occurring in other countries in the world. The skills acquisition formal premarital preparation was only Christian based and involved face-to-face encounter with the facilitator for a number of sessions in a specified period of time. Following this encounter, the participants were able to gain awareness on certain social skills and techniques to support and enhance their marital relationship, change their attitudes and habits, and live satisfactory marriages. These findings are in agreement with what Duncan et al., (2010) found out that premarital education programs enhance awareness in marital relationships, enhance cognitive change and offer skills training. What’s more, Avilla and Del Prette (2013) highlighted that social skills are salient determinants of marital satisfaction.

The informal premarital preparation was based on the Kamba socialization practices which run across the lifespan from childhood to marriage, and self-directed personal motivation. Weiss (2014) in his study concurs with these findings when he suggests that

self-directed informal premarital preparation can be achieved through family socialization and modeling. According to Kyalo (2011), the Kamba socialization practice starts from a young age and is marked by various rituals and stresses on certain values and norms which are essential in marriage life. This was corroborated by one participant who said that his grandfather started narrating to him stories about marriage life before he could begin attending school. Conversely, spouses who felt the Kamba traditional preparation had been overtaken by events, or who did not have parents or grandparents to provide this service, the personal initiated preparation was of great value.

In the present study, all the participants had received formal premarital preparation from the clergy. This is absolutely in accordance with Wilmoth and Smyser (2012) findings that 90% of couples at the present receive preparation from a religious institution. In addition, the study revealed that 11 (91.7%) out of the 12 couples who participated in the study stayed together for some period and then convalidated their marriages. This is well substantiated in Knieps-Port le Roi (2012) review of the Catholic marriage preparation survey 2010 which confirmed that there was a growing trend of couples to live together before marriage.

From the findings in this study, it appears that the church premarital preparation was geared towards secondary prevention. The participants had lived through certain experiences in their marriages and therefore undertaking premarital preparation helped them mitigate any undesirable behaviors that could result to further deterioration of the relationship. Coote (2012) argued that secondary prevention is helpful to couples who are at-risk of experiencing difficulties and dissatisfaction in their relationships and this indeed

captures what participants in this study shared. Unquestionably, as a result of this intervention, many of the marriages in Kanyangi parish were restored and rejuvenated.

The clergy in preparing couples for marriage were guided by certain motives namely: the church related motive, the faith related motive and the relationship based motive. These motives were aimed at increasing the number of church marriages and strengthening the family unit where the church originates. Knieps Port le Roi (2012) agrees with these findings when he asserts that, the Christian counseling model is basically anchored on marital spirituality, Christian life and service as a couple, the rite of marriage and the marriage vows while providing little support to the relational dimensions of the marriage relationship. However, this generalized education to all couples regardless of their level of risks might benefit some couples while remaining irrelevant to others. Some participants in the present study had alluded to little attention being given to the quality of the marriage relationship and this is in line with what Wilmoth and Smyser (2012) found out that the clergy concentrate only on a few areas such as communication, relationship to God and the wedding ceremony. This in turn leads to inadequate premarital preparation, and consequently marital distress, separation and divorce become common visitors in the present day church marriages. On the other hand, Halford and Bodenmann (2013) in their study argued that if providers of premarital education could offer content that focuses on the risk factors specific to individual couples, then that material is likely to be more relevant and meaningful than a general fixed curriculum for all couples.

On the whole, it has been established that couples in Kanyangi parish have two complementary forms of premarital preparation i: e the formal and the informal preparations. However, none of these seems to be sufficient by itself to prepare the couples

to have a satisfactory relationship. It is now understandable why Kyalo (2011) found out that lack of premarital preparation was a major cause of marital distress in the Catholic Diocese of Kitui even when various denominations exist.

4.3 Premarital Inventories

The study sought to understand if premarital inventories were a determining factor in ensuring effective premarital preparation in Kanyangi parish. Two themes emerged from this including assessment for marriage preparation and enriching marriage preparation.

4.3.1 Assessment for Marriage Preparation. Throughout the interviews with the participants in the present study, there was no single participant who said that any form of assessment was done about their issues in marriage even though 11 couples (22 of the participants) had convalidated marriages. Three participants; Maria, Bahati, and Kazi said they felt inadequately prepared in some areas of their marriage because nobody sought to know what issues they may want addressed. These participants argued that preparation without needs assessment is not likely to address the risk issues that are likely to make their marriages dysfunctional. Maria who has been in marriage for 8 years argued: “The church teachings helped me to choose a partner of my choice and ended there...during the real marriage no assessment or further teachings on how to live the marriage life or how to solve conflicts...” Bahati a 36 year old male participant shared: “There were issues I wanted to resolve but no one identified them in the premarital education, I was left the same way with my problems as before.” He continued ...“an assessment tool would have brought out areas of contention in my marriage that the eye cannot see.” At times a spouse may shy away from

disclosing his or her issues for fear of being labeled a weakling as Kazi a male participant stated: “Some things I can’t say openly as a man because they can be taken as weaknesses... but an assessment tool can bring them out without being linked to me directly.” These participants’ narratives clearly point to the necessity for premarital inventories to identify the risk factors which are likely to interfere with the smooth functioning of a marriage relationship.

Undeniably, each spouse brings to the marriage relationship their own expectations which if not identified and dealt with early in the relationship, can be harmful to the marriage. Nora a 29 year old female participant who has been married for three years narrated: “I felt so lucky... there were mass weddings in the parish which did not require assessment ...it was marriage for free. It did not bother me there was no marital preparation... my interest was the marriage certificate.” On the other hand, marriage can also be based on the wrong reasons as Baraza argued: “... I was lonely because my parents and siblings had left. Out of loneliness I decided to get a partner to keep me company and help me with my daily activities.” Baraza continued ... “later I was not committed to my responsibilities of marriage... I realized I was not properly prepared to handle a marriage.” An assessment would have brought out each of these spouses’ marriage expectations and they deliberate with their partners what was workable for their situation.

Unpreparedness for marriage is a prerequisite for marital failure. Participants in this study argued that many marriages were falling apart quickly because they were based on shallow preparation. Maria shared: “...during our courtship period, we used sweet words to each other and this brought a euphoric state where it was not possible to identify character defects in each other and or even seek help... I just rushed in.” Tunda a female participant

gave a picture of how little preparation couples could give to this life changing undertaking: “I met my husband on my way from hospital... he proposed to me and three days later he came to my parent’s home and I accompanied him to become his wife only to realize later who the man was...” Liz a 30 year old female participant shared: “...I assumed things will fall into place once we are a couple... I did not take time to study things out or identify weak areas...” Taking time to prepare for what to expect in marriage enables couples to be psychologically prepared for challenges faced in marriage.

4.3.2 Enriching Marriage Preparation. While 10 (41.7%) of the participants who took part in this study felt that the church was doing enough in preparing them for marriage without assessment, 14 (58.3%) said that there is need to assess the needs of couples before marriage preparation. These participants acknowledged that needs assessment is an important approach that should never be neglected for it can save many marriages from slipping into distress.

Awareness is an important factor that can influence the outcome of marital relationships. Participants argued that without needs assessment those couples who were at risk of marital distress might never know about their vulnerability or be identified for intervention. Uduma shared his experience: “My parents separated when I was young ... I had no one to turn to for advice. It was a lonely life ... I needed somebody to understand my issues and help me start life in the correct path...” In addition, couples who are in satisfactory and stable marriages also require awareness about their weak areas which need strengthening. Rehema a 41 year old female participant who had been married for 10 years said: “Marriage is a complex affair...some issues I am unknowledgeable about though my

marriage is satisfactory... I need awareness to keep my marriage from problems.” Muoti another male participant argued: “In the absence of parental preparation in contemporary marriages, premarital inventories are salient in guiding couples to understand each other and to make rational decisions about marriage.” Thus, assessing couples’ needs before premarital preparation creates awareness on their strengths and weaknesses and this enables them to seek appropriate interventions to strengthen their relationship.

4.3.3 Discussion. Determining the risk factors that may make the marriage of a couple unstable or unsatisfactory is the basis for premarital prevention strategies. Premarital assessment is considered a salient element of premarital preparation programs that help in identifying these factors and therefore lack of needs assessment in premarital preparation is de-service to the premarital couples. In the present study, 14 participants (58.3%) said that it is important for the needs of premarital couples to be identified first through specific designed tools and this is in line with what other studies have suggested. Williamson et al., (2015) claimed that through assessment at high risk couples are identified and specific interventions implemented to help the couple acquire protective factors to overcome them. Hunter and Commerford (2015) on the other hand argued that, the effectiveness of premarital preparation programs largely depends on the characteristics of individual couples undertaking the program and therefore failure to identify these defects through assessment will consequently affect the programs outcome.

The incorporation of premarital inventories in preparation for marriage ensures risk factors are identified and appropriate interventions carried out to prevent future marital distress or to stop problems that were already being experienced in the marriage. Halford

and Snyder (2012) claim that once these inventory-based tools are administered, they bring out the different dimensions about the current relationship strengths and weaknesses which predict the couple's future relationship satisfaction and stability. Once these areas are identified, the couple is able to share with each other and generate a solution, or they get feedback from the professional who is administering the tool and this enriches their knowledge and skills on how to live a satisfactory relationship. An assessment before marriage ensures primary prevention where the couple makes informed decisions about the way forward, while assessment for married couples is a secondary preventive measure which enables them to mitigate any further destruction to the relationship.

It appears from the expressions of the participants in the present study that premarital inventories are an important asset that needs to be incorporated in to marital preparation in Kanyangi parish. Lack of these important tools has led to inadequate preparation for couples marrying in church. This was a discrepancy from what other premarital programs in the world are based on. Due to inability to assess the needs of spouses getting into marriage, negative attitudes and expectations are left unidentified and these become detrimental in future as witnessed from participants' narratives. These findings follow the trend of the studies by Ngazimbi et al., (2009) and Johnson (2015) who identified positive expectations as a motivation for enhancing the marital relationship while negative expectations give rise to unrealistic beliefs about the marriage causing it to lose strength and value.

In addition, when needs are identified, it gives the couple a chance to discuss some of the issues which otherwise would not been known and make informed decisions about the relationship. The couple may decide to work out the identified issues and by doing so get an opportunity to prepare well for their stay together or they may decide they are incompatible

and discontinue the relationship before destruction can occur. The church being the leading provider of premarital preparation in Kanyangi parish needs to take up this challenge and educate her congregants about premarital inventories in marriage preparation and their importance. Furthermore, the church should take a leading role in implementing the same in order to decrease marital distress and enhance marriage relationships.

4.4 Perception on Premarital Preparation

This study also intended to examine the perceptions that participants had in relation to value addition of premarital preparation to the individual, couple and the marriage relationship. Two themes emerged: Value addition and marital quality.

4.4.1 Value Addition. Twenty participants who took part in this study and who had managed to have at least four premarital sessions admitted that there has been some transformation in their lives as individuals, couple and in their relationship. Participants claimed that their marriage relationships became regenerated and strengthened because they learnt how to forgive. “Before I used to be consumed by anger and end up being violent. Now I forgive and forget easily... our marriage is full of peace” (Baraza). Fadhili claimed: “This education made me wiser and restored my joy. I used to carry grudges for long but not any more...I can now express my feelings easily...” Alima said: “Learning to let go has brought me happiness and our relationship has harmony.” Forgiveness can be a transformative and healing process in marriage life.

Couples are now in a position to understand one another. Participants said that premarital education enhanced communication between the spouses. Muoti admitted: “After the premarital education, we are able to listen to one another talk, we argue positively and

have unity of purpose.” Couples can now live in peace and harmony in their marital relationships because they have skills to resolve their conflicts. Tunda said: “We now understand each other weakness and we also respect each other expectations. In fact, we now correct each other constructively and give suggestions to each other on how to improve.” Baraza narrated: “We now ask each other questions openly about our undertakings and this has increased trust, patience, forgiveness and understanding, and our relationship is now awesome.” Uduma and Liz said: “We express support and complement each other’s work... this has led to closer bonding in our relationship and we are happy in our marriage.” It seems that premarital preparation has benefited these couples in all the three levels - the self, couple and the relationship as can be witnessed from their statements.

The phrase the ‘fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom’ seems to have been fruitful to participants in the present study. A number of participants claimed their spirituality had increased and this had a positive effect on their marriage. Muoti stated: “My faith increased...I was set free and I can now see some development in my marriage.” Uduma exclaimed: “Thanks to this preparation my prayer attitude has significantly improved...” Simba a 37 year old male participant said: “The teachings have improved my self-regulation and I no longer engage in violent confrontations. I have decided to be committed to a peaceful marriage.” Baraza shared: “... I now reflect on what I am about to do before I do it...in fact I pray over it ...and peace and love has returned in our marriage.” Taji admitted: “I now admit my wrongs openly without shame and apologize easily.” Maria acknowledged: ... “There is more spiritual support in our relationship and this has enhanced our attachment to each other.” It appears improvement in spirituality has a positive effect on attitude and behavior and this enhances interpersonal interaction among the couples.

4.4.2 Marital Quality. Participants in this study attested that premarital preparation however little, was beneficial to their relationship. Marriages are now satisfactory with minimal misunderstandings as shared by Baraza: “For the past two years after convalidating our marriage, we have had no major misunderstandings and we are living well with each other.” Participants now perceive their marriages as important and are committed to their responsibilities. Tunda gave her account: “My husband’s attitude has more changed for the better. He is more sincere with his earnings and his daily routine. He is real himself and I no longer mistrust his whereabouts.” Zawadi claimed: “We now work as a team and the fruits speak for themselves.” Fadhili argued: “He no longer lifts his hand to beat me and I am happy...these days he does not frequent the drinking ... resources are available and he is concerned about our family affairs.” Susan pointed out: “We make joint decisions as a couple and so we accomplish more...” These couples are now enjoying better quality marriages as a result of commitment to one another and to the relationship.

The participants claimed they could now solve their problems unlike before. The premarital education program has enhanced the problem solving skills for many couples such that they do not have to end up in conflict every time a disagreement sets in. Flora a 23 year old participant who had been married for one year said: “You know... two axes in the same basket cannot avoid knocking on each other. But when the tension from the hitting is too much, we turn to the problem solving skills and discuss things over.” Muoti argued: “The preparation enhanced my listening skills and self-control and I no longer argue over trivial issues or rush into conclusions.” Fadhili stated: “I listen to where the argument is going and change the topic....when we are at ease, I bring it up and we solve the problem

and our relationship is blossoming.” Enhancing problem solving skills for these participants has decreased chances of engaging in negative interactions and instead improved marital quality.

4.4.3 Discussion. The participants who participated in the present study perceived premarital preparation as an advantageous program. As reported in their verbatim narratives, they felt greatly nourished by the preparation that they received. To illustrate, couples who had high risk factors for marital distress such as poor communication, financial misunderstandings, marital aggression and violence, lack of assertiveness, little commitment among others gained skills on how to overcome them and were enjoying happy marriages. For those who received it before marriage they said the preparation helped them appreciate each others’ strengths, weakness, and areas that needed growth in advance and so were able to identify and prevent marital distress before it could take root.

The voices of these participants are in agreement with what existing research indicates - that premarital programs improve the self, couple and the relationship itself making marriage satisfactory and in fact those who have participated in it can recommend it to other couples considering marriage (Coleman, 2012; Vail, 2012). In addition, Mackintosh (2012) suggested that, premarital preparation provides a stronger foundation for couples who are getting into marriage for the first time while those at risk improve after participation. Again, in this sense a study by Hawkins and Ooms (2012) confirms these participants’ arguments by highlighting that, after relationship education couples are 40 - 50% better in terms of relationship quality. On the other hand, these participants were able to assess their marriage from a more realistic point of view because of the social skills which

they have acquired, and which are perceived to be major determinants of marital satisfaction (Avilla & Del Prette, 2013). The ability to forgive, understand, be committed and solve problems gives new impetus to the relationship which propels it to a better position and participants have explicitly indicated this to be the case in their marriages.

However, other researchers have different views about the outcomes of premarital preparation. Fawcett et al., (2010) in their meta-analytic study indicated that preventive programs do not improve relationship quality but rather appear to improve couple communication. This divergence is attributed to the fact that, participants in premarital preparation programs are usually engaged to be married or recently married, and therefore they are excited about each other and this contributes to their high level of relationship satisfaction. Nevertheless, while these researchers might have a substantive argument, it should be remembered that effective couple communication is an integral part of a satisfactory marriage (Epstein et al., 2013).

According to the demographic data of the participants in this study (Table 4.1, p. 48), the average number of years in marriage was 7.5 years and the marriages were still counting on the benefits. These findings are in line with results of previous studies that indicate that couples who participate in premarital education are 79% better in their marriages (Duncan et al., 2010) and manifest a 39% lower chances of divorce over five years (Maybruch, 2012; Vail, 2012) as compared to those who do not take part in it.

Given that many first time marriages are more vulnerable in the first four to seven years after marriage (Härkönen, 2013), it can be hypothesized that the premarital preparation given to the participants in this study was a preventive strategy that provided immunity from marital distress and enhanced their marital quality. Schofield et al., (in press) support this

argument by suggesting that participants who take part in premarital education communicate better, manage their finances effectively, and are self-motivated to make their relationship work thus reducing chances of marital distress and divorce. In fact, these preventive measures have enabled these participants to perceive their marriage from a positive angle and employ the skills learnt to maintain satisfaction in their relationships. Yilmaz and Kalkan (2010) stated that couples who partake in premarital preparation are able to reflect on their relationship and evaluate it from a more realistic point of view and this gives the relationship a new lease of life. This preventive strategy has counteracted the risk factors that were being experienced by the participants thus making their relationships more desirable.

4.5 The Dimensions of Pre-marital Preparation Models

The study was also aimed at identifying the dimensions in the secular, Christian and traditional premarital preparation models used in Kanyangi and how their integration can enrich marriage preparation. Three themes emerged: The Christian model, the Kamba traditional model and the integrated approach model.

4.5.1 The Christian Premarital Model. The Christian model is currently the most used model of choice in Kanyangi parish. The premarital content of this model is based on a non-standardized curriculum as claimed by participants. There were quite a number of participants who could not remember a single topic covered during the preparation. Zawadi a 36 year old female participant said: “Mmm...I can’t remember the topics we covered but we had Biblical quotations which stressed that God created woman as a perfect helper for

the man...so we are one and not two...” Several participants however were able to talk about areas which were taught during the preparations.

Marital commitment is a personal dedication to the marriage relationship and for one another, and involves creating an interest for both the partner and the relationship, and identification with the relationship. Individuation and differentiation from family of origin and past friends plays a salient role in the success of a marriage. This topic was emphasized during the church premarital education. Baraza shared: “We were encouraged on behavior change in marriage...to leave the past life and start a new one ...that remembering past affairs can easily ruin our marriage.” Uduma argued: “We let go our original families... started and nurtured our own way and became committed to it... this has brought closeness and success in our marriage.” Rehema claimed: “It has taken hard work towards our relationship and to one another to get 10 years of marital satisfaction and stability... thanks to the church premarital preparation.” It takes commitment to start, nurture, and maintain a healthy marriage relationship.

Prayer is a component that plays an important role in every Christian marriage and therefore the clergy put emphasis on it during premarital education. Uduma claimed: “Prayer is a powerful tool that can move mountains.... during and after the premarital preparation, prayer has changed my life...” He continued... “I was brought up in a dysfunctional family where God was not known... this was until I met and married a Christian wife... prayer continues to be a cornerstone in our marriage... we are happy.” Tunda confirmed Uduma’s claims: “We pray for our marriage and this has increased our understanding and enhanced our relationship.” Susan stated: “We attend church services together and do other church activities as required ...worship units us more in our marriage.” Religiosity either in the

form of prayer or just doing any other religious activity by the couple seems to have a positive effect on their marital bond as indicated by the voices of these participants.

There is no marriage that is free of conflict but knowing how to manage the conflict is the door to a stable relationship. Conflict resolution is a partially innate and partially learnt skill for peaceful coexistence. Participants in the present study said that the premarital preparation improved the way they looked at their partners and life in general and this decreased the number and intensity of the conflicts which they used to have. “The skills taught helped me to have self control and I no longer burst on his face when he wrongs me. This lessened our quarrels and increased our unity” (Alima). Being in a position to handle issues as they arise prevents them from escalating to destructive levels and ensures a satisfactory relationship. This requires effective couple communication.

Communication is an absolutely important factor in building a reliable marriage relationship. Several participants said this area was emphasized during the preparation though no in depth material was provided regarding it. Zawadi narrated: “Issues of how to talk to each other was touched on that we should be submissive to our husbands... listen first before giving answer, and forgiving often.” Muoti confessed: “Poor communication was a major area of conflict in our marriage and so when it was taught it helped us resolve the issue”. Learning how to communicate increased understanding among the couples as indicated by Tunda: “We now sit down and look at the problem and its causes instead of blaming each other. Ee... he now reprimands and gives corrections with love unlike beatings of the past.” Besides, participants who were taught this topic say their communication has moved to another level as Liz shared: “Now we understand each other better... we share our feelings and empathize more unlike in the past...” Maria claimed:

“Better communication skills enable us to encourage each other even when our relationship is going through hard times...” Good and effective communication skills enables couples to understand and relate with each other well and this enriches the relationship.

Finances contribute to the well-being of married spouses. And, financial management is a key pillar in marital happiness and stability. Many of the participants in the present study had only one partner as the breadwinner - the man. Five of the female participants (Zawadi, Fadhili, Tunda, Alima & Flora) confessed that many of the conflicts in their marriage arose from financial issues. The premarital education was an eye opener for these spouses to sort out these issues as they claimed. Fadhili said: “The teaching changed my thinking completely... I used to complain many times about the finances because he was not open... thanks to the marriage preparation, there is now openness and trust... peace has returned to our relationship.” Tunda shared: “We now budget according to our available resources... none of us is dissatisfied any more about how finances are acquired and spend... we support each other to acquire the finances and we are happy for that.” Understanding how family finances are earned and utilized enhances trust, cooperation and support in a marital relationship and this strengthens the bond between the spouses.

Premarital programs require sufficient time to accomplish. The premarital education in Kanyangi parish takes between 2 weeks to 4 months and has left some participants feeling inadequately prepared. Tunda claimed: “Though my expectation was answered because my husband’s attitude changed, I never felt completely taught. I only use prayer as my strong tool to overcome”. This was corroborated by Fadhili when she said: “The period given for preparation was too short, only two months and there were so many activities to accomplish.” By comparison, the fresh marriages were not better placed in preparation as

indicated by Taji: “We took only two weeks and attended two sessions for preparation. The priest said we did not need so much preparation since we had been brought up in the church from childhood.” Time is therefore an essential factor in ensuring quality marital preparation as indicated by these participants.

Indeed, a number of participants; Jose, Bahati, Muoti, Zed, Kazi and Maria expressed their dissatisfaction with the duration taken to prepare for marriage and termed it as inadequate. For instance, Kazi is of the opinion that “marriage is not a one day event...the church should set a minimum period for preparation. Many of us young people are being drawn into marriage by appearances and money...” In addition, Bahati shared: “Preparation should take at least six compulsory months ...four months for assessment, education, evaluations and then two months for the wedding preparation.” Muoti on the other hand said: “Some marriage preparation sessions were rushed leaving the couple little chance for learning anything of value.” He continued... “Yes... young couples take the decision to marry for granted imagining that things will fall into place with time... preparation should be given ample time and sessions done slowly and in stages...to establish if there is commitment” (Muoti). These recommendations from participants are based on experience and therefore are valid and hence require attention.

Although premarital preparation is a life changing educational process, it has been limited to an average 4 sessions. These vary for different individuals and different groups and range from 2- 6 sessions of 30 minutes to 1 hour. Purity a 36 year old female participant said: “Our preparation was in a group... the catechist visited from far... this shortened the time for learning to 3 sessions of 1 hour.” Muoti narrated: “I only got time over the weekend and so I attended two sessions of 1 hour each before the wedding... I did not learn

much.” A medium number of sessions have been suggested to be enriching as Bahati narrated: “We were given a lesson of one hour for four days in four weeks and we gained knowledge and learnt many new skills that are holding us together 10 years later.” The number of sessions that couples meet to learn is an important factor in determining the quality of the outcome.

The Christian premarital education in Kanyangi parish is delivered through group presentations. Many of the participants in this study attended group preparations and convalidated their marriages through mass weddings. Participants acknowledged this as a cost effective way of preparation and would prefer it to individual preparation. Fadhili and Susan shared: “When we are many people, we share what is being taught and this makes it more understandable, and we also divide the cost of the activity making it affordable.” However, Liz a 30 year old participant decried the short period that it took saying: “The time was not sufficient for reflection or any meaningful interaction, sharing and gaining of skills. Couples should be given enough time to benefit from the program.” Three couples (Taji & Flora; Maria & Simba; Zed & Furaha) had been prepared through individual couple preparation. Maria however said: “I prefer group preparation... people share experiences and this is enriching.” But Simba claimed: “The individual preparation is more personalized to the couple and there is more attention...” Thus, many couples tend to prefer group preparation because it is more experiential and cost effective and this fits their situation.

Every skill taught requires an evaluation as a follow-up to assess if the learners can practice it. The participants in the present study had been married in church between one and ten years and none of them reported any follow-up from the church on how they were doing. Two participants attested to this: “You are the first one to come to check us up in

our marriage since the wedding” (Zawadi & Baraza). Fadhili argued: “It is now three years after our mass wedding ...no evaluation from the church on how things are in our marriages... only our sponsor couple encourages us.” Indeed, follow-up is an important part of marriage that should be taken seriously as participants interviewed said: “The fire of the preparation fades with time” (Muoti) and “the lessons are forgotten” (Baraza) and therefore marital distress and separation creeps into Christian marriages. Maria argued: “Spouses get tired of each other with time... there is need for revival.” Fadhili stated: “Educating couples should continue in their marriage life because there are never enough lessons in marital life and nobody outgrows corrections.” Maria lamented: “The church used to arrange marriage encounters years back ... this is no more ... not even general talk about marriage from the clergy is available and this is why our marriages are weakening.” Thus, various modalities should be embraced to ensure follow ups are effected in marriages relationships.

Marriage relationships are vulnerable to situational changes, social economic status, technological advancement, among many other factors and therefore it should be safeguarded and strengthened regularly. Uduma narrated: “Marriage is like cooking food...if one places the food on the jiko and does not add more firewood, then the fire dies out and the food is not fully cooked. This is what happens to marriage without follow up.” He continued...“the church should have routine programs where all church married couples come together for refresher courses and revival of their marriages....” It appears that follow-up is a vital ingredient of premarital preparation that adds a lot of value to marriages.

Meanwhile, participants said there is need to enrich the premarital preparation in Kanyangi parish. Zed claimed: “We need a broader content to meet premarital couples’ needs.” Maria admitted: “... a formal and more comprehensive curriculum for premarital

preparation is what is lacking... this way many things can be captured.” Some of the additional content areas that couples felt they have challenges in and do not have skills in include parenting and technology. Parenting has become a big challenge to the present day parents. Liz narrated worriedly about what was happening to her: “I am trying everything to instill values into my children... but social influence is overwhelming... copy pasting everything they see and hear. They have become disrespectful and disobedient... their communication is disturbing... I wish I had parenting skills.” This only shows how desperately couples require parenting skills and why they should be incorporated into premarital preparation.

Another problematic area for couples today and which has become a major cause of marital distress that requires attention during premarital preparation is technology. Taji narrated: “I work during the day...at night I start chatting in the internet ... my wife gets angry and accuses me of infidelity. It has become addictive... my mother intervenes regularly... otherwise my marriage would be gone.” Uduma admits: “These WhatsApp, facebook platforms are killing marriages... there is need to stress the boundaries...” The voices of these participants are loud and clear about the dangers that are looming in marriages due to advancement in technology.

4.5.2 The Kamba Traditional Model. Participants in the present study said that the Kamba traditional model is used by only a few who have parents still holding on to some elements of the Kamba cultural values. This model of preparing individuals for marriage starts from childhood and is a daily socialization process through which children are taught moral values and given practical lessons on how to act at certain circumstances. Kazi

narrated: “I started receiving lessons about marriage from my grandfather way before I went to school...it was about relating with women and choosing well her family of origin...” This is indicative of the seriousness this preparation is given in terms of duration and sessions.

According to the Kamba tradition, people were not marrying from foreigners whose background could not be ascertained. This check point ensured integrity of the marriage relationship was guaranteed. Zed recounted: “When I was mature enough to marry, I approached my father and aunt and told them of my intention... father approved the family of origin for my future wife saying, no girl from such a family can be a bad wife.” Zed continued... “Aunt advised me on the cultural and moral values to uphold to maintain my marriage. The views of father and aunt have been my support in marriage...” Fadhili claimed: “My grandmother started giving me lessons about marriage in my young days through proverbs although they did not have any meaning then...until much later and these have come in handy in my marriage.” The Kamba traditional preparation was holistic in nature and gave precedence to the integrity of the marriage relationship.

Nevertheless, the Kamba traditional model is almost becoming extinct with Western culture dominating and overshadowing it. Rehema said: I prefer the Church education to the empty stories from my grandmother.... you know these stories cannot be substantiated.” However, this shedding of African cultural values has not been without shortcomings as participants Kazi and Maria confirm. Kazi claimed: “Young people of today marry after one day meeting... no preparation. They do not understand each others’ character, family of origin... they marry for face value... in a few months they are killing each other.” Maria on the other hand argued that young people are taking marriage for granted and engage in cross-cultural relationships without seeking to learn that culture or even involving their

parents in it...“Today’s generation marry across different ethnic tribes without regard to cultural diversity ... only when distress starts, they start to involve others... understanding each other’s background first would prevent difficulties in marriage” (Maria). There is a need to strike a balance between traditional and modern practices of preparing couples for marriage because each has its important role to play in enhancing a satisfactory marriage.

4.5.3 Integrated Premarital Approach. From the point of view of participants in the present study, the church has a role to play in integrating some aspects of the Kamba traditional model and the secular model into the Christian model which is the model of choice for many in the present study. They claimed one institution is not a tree of knowledge in any particular field and therefore integration is going to comprehensively deal with the many social, cultural and spiritual issues that are ailing the marriage institution.

In this study 13 (54.2%) participants said that an integrated model will benefit the couples more while 11 participants (45.8%) preferred the Christian model only. Participants acknowledged that skills learning is a dynamic field and therefore requires concerted efforts to achieve so that what one model fails to achieve the other can elaborate. Maria shared: “I prefer an integrated model... as many authors write the same book on a subject... each emphasizes on different topics... when the reader reads the book ... there is enhanced understanding of the subject, so should marital preparation be.” Uduma and Susan argued: “When a team of different facilitators with different professional backgrounds relevant to marriage teach the areas of their specialty to couples, different experiences are shared and the couples gain more.” Maria said: “The church should provide a well formulated curriculum which has incorporated all the three models of premarital preparation...” Kazi on

the other hand argued: “The church should have mature model couples who have experience in the Kamba traditional model of marriage preparation to act as church elders for purposes of inculcating the Kamba traditional model in the church marriage preparation system.” Kazi continued... “The church can have “thome wa motao” (a place resembling the Kamba place where the father figures used to discharge advice to the young) in which the elders accompany the couples during marriage preparation.” There is more value addition when a holistic premarital program comprising the traditional, secular and the Christian models is adopted.

What’s more, the status of who is preparing the couple did not go unnoticed in this study. The fact that the clergy are unmarried individuals leaves couples receiving their marital preparation in doubt as Fadhili attested: ... “I can’t avoid wondering whether the priest or the Catechist who are unmarried is the best example for us in marriage preparation because they lack the experience in the field... it is better when other facilitators are included...” When the couples have trust and confidence in the facilitators, they are likely to learn and retain more, and put it into practice.

4.5.4 Discussion. In Kanyangi parish, only two of the premarital preparation models are in use; the Christian and the Kamba traditional models. The secular model has not been in use in this parish. This can be attributed to the fact that professional counseling is still a new concept in Africa and thus its uptake is still slow (Rupande & Tapfumaney, 2013). Although this may be true, the clergy should be able to implement this form of premarital preparation not unless there are hindrances. Halford (2011) suggested some of the possible barriers that the church may have include cost of training material, lack of training for the

clergy, and a negative belief that such programs are secular in nature and therefore not admissible in Christian premarital preparations.

Kanyangi parish is in a rural set up and therefore the participants in this study had low incomes. This implies that the cost of training might have been a key obstacle for premarital couples explaining why the secular model of preparation has not been exploited. According to Wood et al., (2012), low income couples are less likely to participate fully in secular premarital programs or even practice the skills learnt adequately. Furthermore, Coleman (2012) in his review claimed that 2% of the clergy who implement the premarital programs do not have the prerequisite requirements to accomplish the task. In addition, Wilmoth and Smyser (2012) had similar findings when they claimed the clergy do not cover some topics because they lack the expertise to handle them. This becomes a barrier to quality preparation, and may be a plausible explanation why the clergy in Kanyangi parish do not engage in the secular model trainings.

The Christian model is currently the model of choice for many couples intending to marry in Kanyangi Parish with only a small fraction of the Kamba socialization process of marriage still being practiced. Existing literature reveals that the church is the largest contributor to marital preparation in many countries (Halford, 2011). The most covered topics in the Christian model for Kanyangi parish included communication, conflict resolution, financial management, prayer, and marital commitment. These mirror what Wilmoth and Smyser (2012) found from the clergy as the most well covered topics in premarital preparation. Meanwhile, there are other contributory factors to marital distress according to participants in the present study that clergy do not seem to take seriously including family of origin, personality traits, parenting, roles and responsibilities of the

couple. As stated earlier, the clergy claim that these areas are less covered because they do not have the expertise to handle them and may require other professionals to cover them (Wilmoth & Smyser, 2012), a view that was expressed by the participants in the present study.

The skills-based content areas play an important role in ensuring marital satisfaction and stability and this is reflected by the narratives of participants in this study. For instance, there exists a strong evidence base indicating that premarital communication and conflict solving skills are positively correlated with good marital outcomes (Fawcett et al., 2010). Halford and Bodenmann (2013) in their study indicated that, communication is a significant attribute in relationships that can be modified to bring immediate and future positive results in relationship quality. The confession of participants in the present study indicating ineffective communication patterns to be a major source of marital dissatisfaction and how this was overcome through premarital education attests to this argument from past research. Consequently, teaching communication and conflict resolution skills to couples before marriage or immediately after is a preventive strategy to deter conflicts and to increase marital satisfaction (Khosrojauid, Aslipoor, Firoozshad, & Hedaiatsafa, 2015).

Another thorny feature causing marital distress is finances. This is such a conflict area that five female participants in the present study said that it was their biggest challenge before premarital preparation. Archuleta (2013) argued that where couples lack good financial management skills, there are differences in opinions and goals and this breeds conflicts and this is in line with the views of the participants in this study. Furthermore, Dew (2011) supports this finding by attributing money to marriage disagreements and divorce. In fact, research has identified financial conflict to be the most abundant dispute in

marriage, ranking it as the third major source of dissatisfaction among the top ten sources of conflict in marriage (Dew et al., 2012). As a result, gaining skills and awareness in this area in the initial stages of marriage acts as a preventive measure that enhances understanding between the spouses as indicated by the participants in the study.

Equally important, the components of commitment and religiosity provided for in the premarital program of Kanyangi parish contributed significantly to enhancing marital satisfaction among participants in this study and this is corroborated by past studies. In their study, Onsy and Amer (2014) indicated that couples with a sense of religiosity in their marriage tend to display higher levels of marital satisfaction. The high levels of commitment to the spouse and the marriage relationship exhibited by couples in this study after premarital preparation decreased chances of marital distress, separation and divorce, and instead increased chances of seeking help when problems arose in their marriages. On the contrary, Halford and Bodenmann (2013) highlighted low commitment to be a major risk factor for relationship problems.

The Christian model in use in Kanyangi is largely anchored on the moral principles and ideals of the word of God as suggested by Mbunga (2010) with a few improvements and inconsequential incorporation of elements of the Kamba value systems. The clergy when preparing couples for marriage capitalize on the fact that religion exerts a positive influence on marital quality and stability (Mahoney, 2010) by promoting relationship-related values, norms and social support which on the other hand enhances investment in the marriage and discourages behaviors that harm marriage (Mullins, 2016). It came out profoundly from the present study that, there is more commitment and satisfaction in a marriage relationship when both spouses share a common religious faith as opposed to when they profess different

faiths. Mahoney (2010) concurs with this outcome by arguing that couples who have similar religious faith have low levels of divorce. Besides, Lopez et al., (2011) pointed out that couples with similar religious faith share similar worldviews and commitment to their undertakings and hence have minimal disagreements which enables them to maintain a high level satisfactory relationship.

When the Christian believes and Church practices of the couple is increased, this significantly promotes their psychological well-being and trust, and consequently create marriage enhancing behaviors such as sexual fidelity and temperance (Fincham et al., 2011). Participants in the present study identified their increased common faith as a significant factor in their bonding. Philip et al., (2012) confirm this in their argument that couples who have had long lasting marriages identify their faith as a major contributing factor to their marital stability and longevity.

Nevertheless, the Christian model of premarital preparation in Kanyangi was described by many participants as lacking formality in its design. Due to this, the content provided was never consistent, and the duration and number of sessions differed for different participants rendering it inadequate. What these participants are reporting as deficiency in content was also highlighted by Poley (2011) and Coleman (2012) as insufficient premarital preparation. Besides, Kyalo (2011) in his study identifies with what these participants were saying because he indicated inadequate premarital preparation as the major contributor of marital distress in the Catholic Diocese of Kitui in which Kanyangi parish is part of.

As an illustration, the duration for preparation ranged from two weeks for some couples to four months for others with an average of four sessions of 30 minutes to 1 hour

each. This however is not an exceptional omission for kanyangi parish, as Wilmoth and Smyser (2012) found out that clergy provide on average approximately four 1 hour session of marriage preparation. On the contrary, research suggests that for any meaningful behavioral change to be achieved, the length and intensity of marriage preparation should be given considerable attention (Wilmoth & Smyser, 2012). Couples who receive a moderate dosage (4-7 sessions) of instructional time are rated as having sufficient preparation and claim to enjoy strong marital relationships (Hawkins et al., 2008). This study confirms this because couples who had four sessions claimed to have acquired more skills which helped them to engage in positive interactions and hence improved their coexistence. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2008) set six months as the sufficient duration required for effective premarital preparation. This is indicated as enough time to do assessment and provide enough sessions as opposed to the shorter period of time where the couple will be concentrating their time, energy and other resources on the wedding day and less on learning any substantial material that can help them stay away from relationship problems.

The premarital education program in Kanyangi involved organizing group lessons for those intending to marry. A majority of the participants (75%) in the present study were prepared through group sessions while six participants (25%) were prepared through individual couple education. These findings are in agreement with Ooms (2010) study which showed that many marriages and relationship programs are presented to couples in a group setting although individual couples may choose individualized intervention depending on the risk factors at play. The participants acknowledged that group preparation enhanced learning through sharing and was less costly. Futris et al., (2011), Owen et al., (2012), and

Marcotte (2015) in their studies highlighted that many couples prefer small group discussions whether structured or unstructured because this is more cost effective in terms of resources which agrees with claims of participants in the present study.

Another important feature that was completely missing in the Christian model practiced in Kanyangi parish was follow-up. According to participants in this study, no follow up on the relationship enhancement program which they received had been done so far and this aligns with what other studies have unearthed about premarital programs (Hunter & Commerford, 2015). Markman, Rhoades, Stanley, Ragan, and Whitton (2010) found out that the effects of premarital preparation diminish with time, a sentiment that was expressed by participants in the present study, and so refresher courses are required to restore the strength of the marriage. It is therefore an important practice to make routine follow-up sessions to check whether the transformation realized after premarital preparation was still being maintained and to help them point out problems that may be creeping into their marriage.

Despite the short duration and few sessions being provided for preparation through the Christian model in Kanyangi parish, the content was substantially relevant and tailored at strengthening their relationship thus preventing marital distress and its obvious outcomes. Rogge, Cobb, Lawrence, Johnson, and Bradbury (2013) support this type of program when they argue that low-dose and low-cost interventions may be the way to go in order to create opportunities for more low-income couples to have fulfilling and enduring relationships. Meanwhile, participants felt that the areas of parenting, technology, cultural values and personality require attention so that the program can holistically prepare couples for a lasting marriage life.

This Christian model basically focused on secondary prevention as suggested by the number of couples who were convalidating their marriages (91.7%) as compared to one couple (8.3%) who had a fresh wedding. The expressions of the participants indicate that premarital education helped those couples who were already experiencing problems and those who were at-risk of experiencing them to gain insight on how to remedy them (Coote, 2012) and experience marital satisfaction. These secondary strategies brought about a restoration and revival of the relationships as suggested by the narratives of the participants.

The study findings also indicate that the informal premarital preparation through socialization in the Kamba traditions has decreased considerably as the society conforms to the global trend of enculturation. Out of the twenty four participants, only six participants were socialized in the Kamba traditional value systems of marriage. Given that the initial stages of marriage are predominantly significant in determining a sense of partnership and defining the future of any marriage (Amanda, 2015), the dynamics surrounding the young generation in Kanyangi parish recently married or indenting to marry is therefore worrisome.

According to Halford and Bodenmann (2013), meta-analytic studies suggest that effective premarital preparation programs carried out in the early years of marriage do produce sufficient effect sizes on the couple relationship satisfaction and this holds true for participants in this study. However, other research studies suggest that there is no concrete evidence suggesting that premarital education enhances marital quality (Halford, 2011). These studies base their argument on the basis of the universal premarital education programs provided to all couples regardless of their needs. They claim that for these programs to be efficacious then they should focus on a need specific couple preparation.

On the whole, the specific study objectives were achieved. Two forms of premarital preparation programs were identified to be in use in Kanyangi parish and participants were categorical that use of premarital inventories is a useful measure in ensuring adequate preparation is achieved. Besides, participants perceived premarital preparation as a transformative process which added value to the individual, the couple and the relationship and thus enhancing their marriage. To sum up, the participants in the present study recommended that a comprehensive model which incorporates all the dimensions of the secular, traditional and Christian models should be embraced in order to deal sufficiently with marital issues. McAllister, Duncan, and Hawkins (2012) in their study indicated that blended programs of premarital preparation produce better results in marital satisfaction than any single form implemented separately and this supports the voices of participants in this study. According to a study by Bradbury and Lavner (2012), ignoring to embrace this important focus will most likely continue to compromise the effects of interventions provided to premarital couples.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings of this study in line with the study objectives. It also re-visits the conceptual framework, provides concluding remarks about the study and gives recommendations for policy makers and further research in line with the study outcomes. The summary section provides a discussion on the results of the study as per their weight in the findings instead of as per the specific of objectives of the study. Again, the conceptual framework is revisited in this chapter to explain the changes in the variables as the study progressed. The reflexivity section provides an overview of how the researcher dealt with her subjectivity in the study.

5.1 Summary

The main objective of the present study was to explore the role of premarital preparation in the first ten years of marriage among married couples in Kanyangi parish. The study sought to shed light on whether premarital preparation can prevent marital distress if done before marriage or in the initial years in marriage. Using a qualitative method data was collected and thematically analyzed. The findings of this study point to the revelation that premarital preparation as a preventive strategy can lower marital distress thus eliminating separation and divorce from society.

From the analysis of the collected data, it is clear that the Christian model of premarital preparation played an important role in enhancing marital quality. Participants

were categorical about how appropriate this model of preparation was to their lives. Although this model had challenges such as lack of a curriculum, short duration, a few number of sessions and the lack of follow ups, it still contributed significantly to improving the marriage relationship of those who participated in it. On the same note, participants were conscientiously clear that some issues could not be addressed by the Christian model alone and therefore an integrated premarital preparation model was required as a solution to the many issues bedeviling the marriage institution.

Next, the findings also indicate that the form of premarital preparation drew a lot of discussion from the participants. These participants' voices were able to identify the direction that premarital preparation has taken in contemporary society. The information gathered in section 4.2 (p.48) can help those charged with policy formulation in the field of premarital preparation to develop a need based preventive strategy as opposed to the general education for all as an intervention for marital distress. In addition, premarital inventories were viewed by participants as an important domain of premarital preparation that should be incorporated into the program to make it more viable. The absence of premarital inventories means no assessment of couple needs was done, and that if verbal assessments were done then due to lack of confidentiality, superficial needs were addressed as indicated by voices of the participants in the present study. Lastly, participants perceived the value added by premarital preparation to be substantial. And, as past literature indicates these benefits are progressive and so the participants will continue to enjoy them for quite some time, refer others to undergo preparation and be role models for those with an intention to get married.

5.2 Conceptual Framework Re-visited

The present study was qualitative in nature and hence chances of a shift occurring in data collection were eminent. The aim of re-visiting this part was to see whether the variables being studied remained the same or changed during and after the study.

Independent variable

Dependent variable

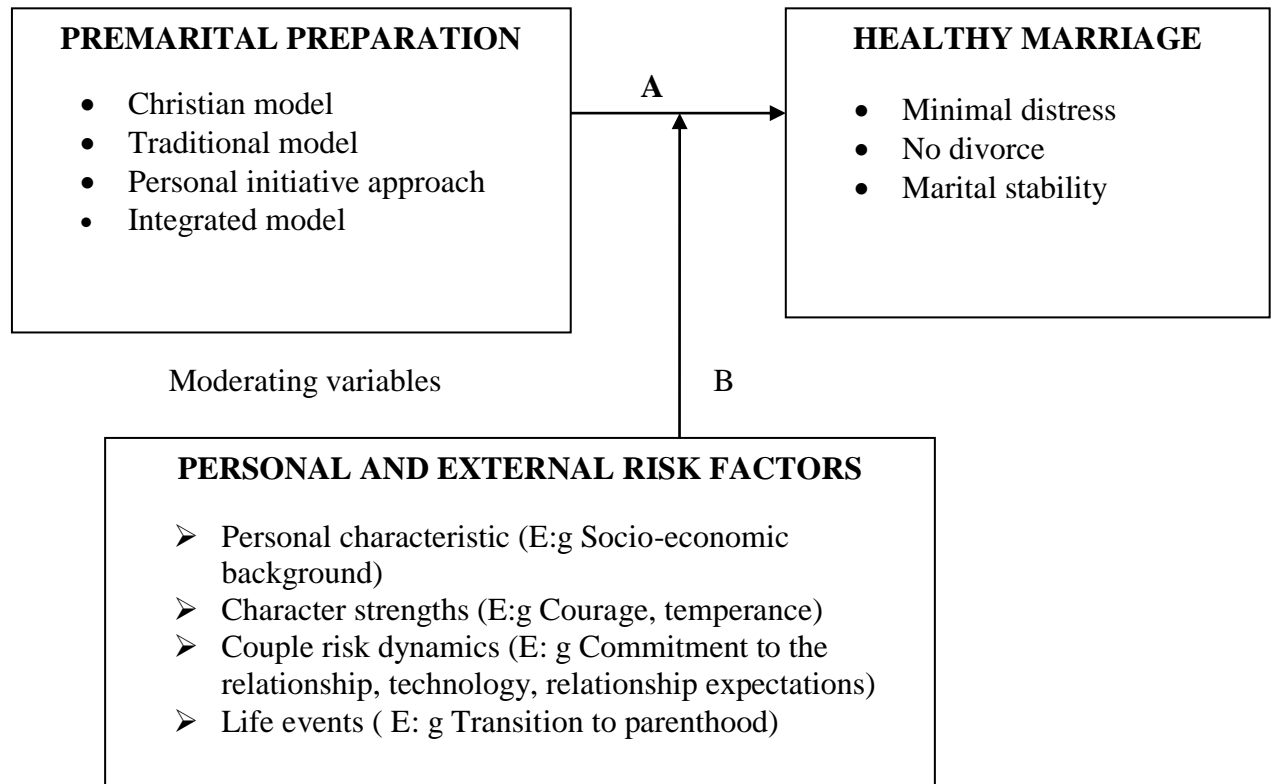


Figure 5.1: Conceptual framework re-visited

After carrying out the study, the conceptualization of the study variables changed as indicated in the conceptual framework re-visited (Figure 5.1). The study found out that the secular premarital model was not applicable to the participants in the location of the study. In contrast to it, participants had adopted a personalized initiative of observing and listening to those already in marriage and curving their own way of living and maintaining marital satisfaction. Nevertheless, it came out strongly from participants in the present study that an

integrated model which caters for all aspects in human life (cultural, social and spiritual) would go a long way in addressing in a holistic manner marital problems.

On the whole, premarital preparation has been able to modify most of the moderating variables making marriage a satisfactory venture. Meanwhile, technology and marriage expectations remain key couple risk challenges that require concerted efforts to modify.

5.3 Conclusions

On the basis of the findings of this study the following conclusions were arrived at:

- That both the formal and informal forms of premarital preparation make significant contribution in enhancing marriage quality and therefore programs that prepare couples for marriage should embrace both.
- Premarital preparation in the first ten years of marriage brings about a satisfactory marital relationship and hence should be advocated for.
- That assessment of couple needs forms the basis for premarital preparation.
- The church is not taking seriously its duty to educate couples on important matters of marital relationships.
- There is no curriculum or standardized premarital education manual for preparing couples in the church.
- An integrated premarital preparation program would go a long way in restoring the quality and longevity of marriages.

5.4 Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

5.4.1 Policy Recommendations. Based on the current reports from the media fraternity, it is apparent that the marriage institution in Kenya is not safe and satisfactory and this should worry those mandated with the responsibility for ensuring safety for the citizens. On the basis of the findings of the present study the following recommendations were made.

- The church in Kanyangi should prepare a standardized and comprehensive education manual for premarital preparation which should be reviewed on a regular basis.
- The church should embrace a participatory integrated model of premarital preparation and should involve experienced professionals in its implementation.
- There is need for the church to collaborate with relevant government ministries and non-governmental organizations to provide sustained regular awareness creation programs to educate people on the necessity to undergo premarital preparation.
- Refresher courses be held occasionally, and marriage encounter be reinstated and be brought to the out station level so it becomes accessible to many couples.
- Mentor couples should be part of the premarital program as resource persons to premarital and newly married couples.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Studies. This study was undertaken through a qualitative research method. There were several limitations to it including a small sample size, audio recording and the presence of the researcher which may have interfered with the outcome of the study. It is recommended that in future a quantitative study should be done to enable the generalization of the results. On the other hand, the study was limited only to rural Catholic couples with no participants from other denominations, non-believers or urban dwellers. For future studies it would be prudent to include a large sample size that

embraces many cultural backgrounds so that the results become holistic. Further, the participants were all married. It would be important in future to do the study with couples who are preparing for marriage and make follow-up studies after marriage to so as to get a true picture of the results.

5.5 Reflexivity

In this qualitative research, the researcher was extremely engaged in a continued and vigorous experience with the participants (Creswell, 2014). This involvement was likely to bring out certain ethical and personal issues into the research process (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2013). This aspect in the study is referred to as researcher reflexivity. Reflexivity is the researcher's self-awareness and understanding of what he or she brings to the research process: his or her capabilities, knowledge, experience, values, hopes, fears, epistemological and ontological assumptions (Woods, Macklin, & Lewis, 2016).

It was important that the researcher was aware of her role in the study and the potential this had in influencing the outcome of the study. This self-awareness was necessary to reduce subjectivity in the study and was achieved through self-examination of the researcher's assumptions, emotional reactions and cultural positioning (Probst & Berenson, 2014) among others. This self-examination was achieved through keeping a journal and debriefing with others. After every interview with a participant(s), the researcher reflected on what was going on in her mind and emotionally as the interview progressed, the assumptions, projections, attachments and biases she made, and wrote them down.

To start with, the researcher was of the same ethnic group and same denomination as the participants. This meant that she had some prior background information about the site and therefore had to be extra careful when identifying participants not to get participants she had prior knowledge. This was aimed at avoiding inaccurate information and being carried away during interviews to make mental conclusions that could lead to the wrong interpretation of the data collected. On the other hand, the researcher had been motivated to do research in this topic by the many media revelations about marital distress. Thus she had to be extra vigilant when probing for information to avoid leading the participant towards giving information that could support her position. As data collection progressed and transcription continued, themes started to emerge, the researcher had to be continuously focused to avoid wanting to hear information that leans on the identified themes.

The researcher was a Catholic faithful who had undergone the church premarital preparation process. She therefore had to take caution to avoid assuming about the correctness of the information provided by the participants. Besides, the researcher was a counselor by profession and had experiences with clients with marital distress issues and therefore could have biased opinions about the quality of the information provided by the participants. Hence, writing daily reflections in a journal helped the researcher to remain focused on the study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Research Consent Form- Participants

<p>Title of the research project: The role of premarital preparation in the first ten years of marriage among married couples of Kanyangi parish, Catholic Diocese of Kitui, Kenya.</p>
<p>Brief outline of project, including its purpose and the activities of participants:</p> <p>The study will be exploring the role of premarital preparation as a preventive strategy to marital distress and divorce in the first ten years of marriage among married couples. The participants will be required to tell their stories regarding the topic being explored.</p>
<p>Name of researcher: Catherine Kavuli Nyamai</p>
<p>Position of researcher: MA Student</p>
<p>Contact address for researcher: Tel. 0722434283</p>
<p>Contact of the college: P.O Box 15055 Langata South Rd. Nairobi, Kenya. Tel:+254891407</p>
<p>Signed by researcher.....</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>Statement to be signed by the participant:</p> <p>I confirm that the organizer has explained fully the nature of the project and the range of activities which I will be asked to undertake. I confirm that I have had adequate opportunity to ask questions about this project.</p> <p>I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time during the project, without having to give a reason.</p> <p>I agree to take part in this project, by taking part in the interview.</p> <p>Signed by participant.....Date.....</p>

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Instructions. This interview guide has two parts. Fill in the answers for part I. Part two will be guided by the interviewer. Please answer the questions as they apply to you.

Part I: Demographic Information of the Participant

1. Gender: M F
2. Age: Years
3. How many years have you been married?

Part II: Interview guide

	General questions	Probing questions
Research Question 1	<p>Q 1. What form of premarital preparation did you go through before your marriage?</p> <p>Q2. What type of premarital preparation was used to prepare you for marriage?</p>	<p>Question 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How did you acquire the premarital skills? ▪ Did you read for yourself, watch a video or were there seminars organized to teach you the skills? <p>Question 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Who prepared you for marriage? A clergy, a professional family therapist or the socialization process?
Research Question 2	<p>Q1. How were your needs assessed before you undertook the premarital preparation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was there any tool used to assess your requirements? ▪ Were there verbal questions regarding what you might require to be prepared for marriage?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do you feel there is need to assess a couples needs before preparing them for marriage? Why? ▪ How would you prefer this to be done?
<p>Research Question 3</p>	<p>Q1. What is your perception about premarital preparation?</p> <p>Q2.What value did this preparation add to your marriage?</p>	<p>Question 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Did you feel adequately prepared by the pre-marital program offered? Expound. ▪ Were your expectations met? How? ▪ What is your attitude towards premarital preparation? ▪ What form of premarital preparation would you prefer and why? ▪ What type of premarital preparation do you think is appropriate in addressing couple issues before marriage? ▪ In your own opinion, would you prefer a traditional, spiritually or secular oriented preparation or a mixture of spiritual and other existential issues program? Give reasons. ▪ Would you prefer a team teaching the program or the clergy/ professional only and why? <p>Question 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are there benefits of the premarital preparation that you undertook? What are they? ▪ Can you attribute the current status of your marriage to premarital preparation or to lack of it? How?

<p>Research Question 4</p>	<p>Q1. How was the premarital preparation conducted?</p> <p>Q2. What would be your recommendation regarding future premarital preparation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What topics were covered? ▪ How many sessions did you go through? ▪ How long did it take for you to prepare for marriage? ▪ Who took you through the program? Was it a team or an individual? If a team who were involved? ▪ What were the qualifications of the facilitator(s)? ▪ Was there follow up after marriage? If yes after how long and how many times? <p>Question 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What additional content should be covered? ▪ How much time should couples anticipating marriage take to prepare for marriage? ▪ What format should be employed? ▪ Are there positive Kamba traditional practices that can be incorporated into premarital preparation? Describe them. ▪ Who should facilitate premarital programs?
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Appendix C: Coding and Themes

CODE	THEME	OBJECTIVE
1:1.1 “Observation”; 2:1.1 “Experience”; 3:1.1 “Parents”; 1:1 “Stories”; 9:1.1 “Aunt” 5:1.1 “Grandmother”; 16:1.1 “Peers” 2:1.1 “Self-discovery”;7:1.1 “Reflection”; 12:1.1”Sister”;15:1.1 “Elders”; 5:1.1 “Proverbs”; 10:1.1 “Conversations” ; 2:1.1 “Listening” 15;1.1 “Fork tales”; 1.1.1 “Cousin”	Theme 1: Informal preparation <i>Sub theme 1:</i> Personal preparation. <i>Sub theme 2:</i> Socialization	1
23:1.1 “Seminars”; 2:1.1; 5:1.1 “Classes”; 2:1.2 ; 4:1.1 “Catechist”; 8:1.1; 5:1.1 “Priest” 8:1.1 “Communicate”;23:1.1 “faith”;5:1.1 “Conflict”; 7;4.1 “Seminararian”; 23;1.1 “Teaching”; 23;4.1 Church”; 5:1.1 “Mass wedding”; 23:4.1 Christian marriage”	Theme 2: Skills acquisition <i>Sub theme 1:</i> Church based preparation. <i>Sub theme 2:</i> Faith based preparation. <i>Sub theme 3:</i> Relationship based preparation	1
11:2.1 “Expectations”;7:2.2 “Wrong reasons”;15: 2.1“Appearance” 1:2.1; 2.2.1...24:2.1 “No inquiry”; 3:2.1 “Issues”1.2.2 “No questions” 11:1.1 “Loneliness”; 8:2.1 “Courtship”; 18: 2.1 “Certificate” ; 15:2.1 “Privacy”; 23.2.1 “Euphoria”; 12.2.1 “Assumptions”	Theme 1: Assessment for marriage preparation <i>Sub theme 1:</i> Expectations <i>Sub theme 2:</i> Unpreparedness	2
4:2.2 “Unknowledgeable”; 7: 2.2 “Conflict” 3:2.2 “Readiness”;6:2.2 “Understanding”; 15:2.2 “Problems”; 8:2.2 “Input”; 6:2.2 “Separation”; 6.2.2 “Guidance”; 23.2.2 “Enhancement” 23.2.2 “Awareness”	Theme 2; Enriching marriage preparation <i>Sub theme:</i> Growth	2
2:3.2 “Commitment”; 12:3.2 “Trust”; 4:3.2; 5:3.2; 24.3.2 “Self-regulation”; 5:3.2 “Honesty”; 21:3.2 “Happiness”; 11.3.2 “ Complement”; 12.3.2” Express support” 13:3.2; 5:3.2 “Openness”; 6:3.2 “Unity”;	Theme 1: Value addition <i>Sub theme 1:</i> Forgiveness <i>Sub theme 2:</i> “We	3

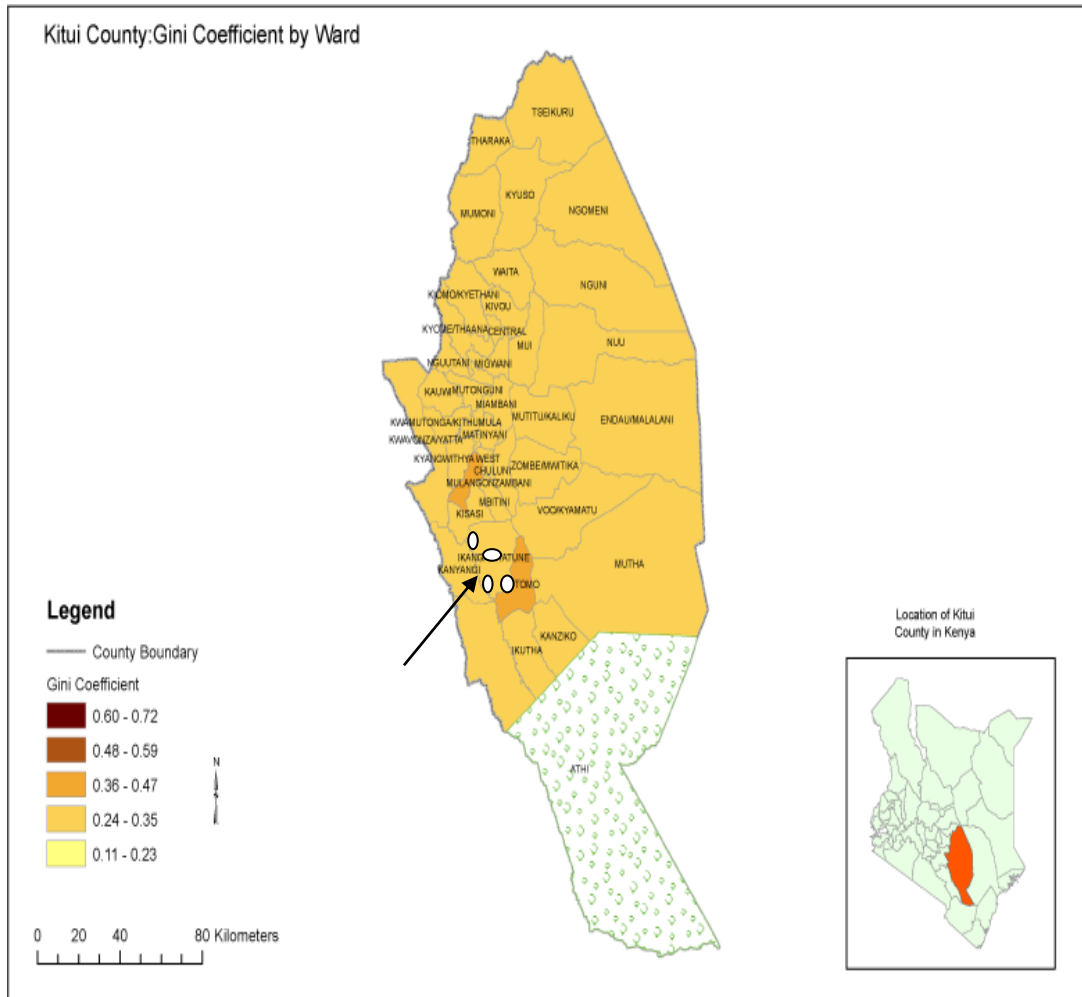
<p>7: 3.2 “Reflection”; 23:3.2 “Hope”; 7.3.2 “ Asking questions”; 5.3.2 “ Expressing feelings”; 8:3.2; 5:3.2 “Understanding”; 11:3.2; 5:3.2 “Forgiveness”; 15: 3.2 “Communication”; 8.3.2” Patient”; 5:3.2 “Wiser”; 6:3.2 “Peace”; 13.3.2 “Letting go”8.3.2“Respect”; 23.3.2 “Encouragement”; 21.3.2 “Admitting wrongs openly”; 11.3.2 “Fear of God”; 24.3.2 “ Spiritual support”; 3:3.2 “Faith”</p>	<p>understand each other.”</p> <p>Sub theme 3: “I have grown spiritually”</p>	
<p>7: 3.1 “No misunderstandings”; 5:3.1 “Happy”; 8:3.1 “Sincere”; 8.3.3 “Teamwork” 6:3.1 “Commitment”;5.3.3” Joint decisions” 6:3.1 “Self-control”; 23:3.1 “Problem solving”;22.3.1 “Discussion”; 12.3.1 “Available to talk”</p>	<p>Theme 2: Marital quality Sub theme 1: Commitment</p> <p>Sub theme 2: “we solve our problems”</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>2:4.1 “Relationships”; 3:4.1 “Sacraments”; 5:4.1 “Listening”; 6:4.1 “Communication”; 13:4.1 “Commitment”; 6:4.1 “Faith”; 23:4.1 “Selection”; 15: 4.1 “Conflict resolution”; 1:4.1 “Priest”; 13:4.1 “Skills”; 8:4.1 “Courtship”; 12: 4.1 “Catechist”; 7:4.1;6.4.1 “Encouragement”; 11: 4.1 “Prayer”; 8.4.1 “Understanding”</p> <p>5: 4.1 “Two months”; 21:4.1 “Two weeks”; 23:4.1 Six “months”; 8:4.1 “Three months” 1:4.1; 3:4.1; 6:4.1; 9:4.1;15:4.1; 23:4.1 “Inadequate”; 11:4.1 “Unsatisfactory”; 6:4.1 “Rushed”; 6:4.2 “Longer”; 4:4.2 “One year.”</p> <p>1:4.1; 19.4.1 “Three meetings”; 3:4.1 “Four meetings”; 5: 4.1 “One hour”; 16: 4.1 “Two meetings” 8: 4.1 “30 Minutes”</p> <p>1.4.1; 3.4.1; 5.4.1; 11.4.1; 15.4.1 “ Group”; 9.4.1; 10.4.1; 21.4.1; 22.4.1; 23.4.1 “Individual”; 16.4.1 “ Sharing”; 5.4.1 “ Cost effective” 12.4.1 “Skills”;</p>	<p>Theme 1: Christian premarital model</p> <p>Sub theme 1: Premarital content</p> <p>Sub theme 2: Duration</p> <p>Sub theme 3: Sessions</p> <p>Sub theme 4: Method of learning</p>	<p>4</p>

<p>3.4.1 “Lessons” 17.4.1 “Discussion”;11.4.1 “Priest”; 5.4.1 “Catechist”;24.4.1 “Enrich”;1.4.1 “Teach”; 6.4.1 “Deliver”</p> <p>2.4.1 “Reminder”; 7:4.1 “Forget”; 1:4.1 “Encouragement”; 6:4.1 “Fade”; 2:4.1; 8:4.1 “Check up”; 8:4.2 “Refresher”; 5:4.1 “Renewal”; 10:4.1 “Encounter”; 23:4.1 “Seminars”; 14:4.1 “Diminish”; 12:4.1 “Talk”; 15:4.1 “Feedback”;9:4.1 “Counseling”; 23:4.1 “Courses”; 8: 4.1 “Evaluate”; 23.4.1 “Get tired”</p> <p>9: 4.2 “Texting”; 6:4.2; 11:4.1 “Chatting”; 21:4.1 “Social media”; 12:4.1 “Child upbringing”; 22:4.1 “Unfaithfulness” 9:4.1 “Broaden”; 23.4.1 “Curriculum”</p>	<p><i>Sub theme 5:</i> Follow up</p> <p><i>Sub theme 5:</i> “We need more”</p>	
<p>15:4.2; 9.4.1 “Morals”; 14:4.2 “Elders”; 5.1.1 “Grandmother”; 9:4.2 “Father”; 9:4.2 “Approval”; 15:4.2 “Grandfather”; 23:4.2 “Counseling”; 11: 4.2 “Thome”; 23:4.2 “Ethnic” 5:1.1 “Proverbs”;4.4.1 “ Empty stories”;15:1.1 “Folk tales”; 23:4.2; 9.4.1 “Cultural values”</p>	<p>Theme 2: Kamba traditional model</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>23:4.2 “Incorporate”; 2:4.2 “Mixture”; 16: 4.2; 11.4.2 “Team”; 5:4.2 “Integrated”; 15:4.2; 23.4.1 “Model couples” 23:4.2 “Merger”</p>	<p>Theme 3: Integrated approach</p>	<p>4</p>


Key

- ❖ First number of the code (1) indicates number of respondent
- ❖ Second number of the code (1.1) indicates objective number
- ❖ Third number of the code (1.1.2) indicates probing question

Appendix D: Map of Kitui County (Catholic Diocese of Kitui)



Key

→  Kanyangi Parish

Appendix E: Letter of Authorization from the Sub-County Director of Education Lower Yatta

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
State Department of Education

Tel: 0725 928630



SUB COUNTY EDUCATION OFFICE
LOWER YATTA
P.O BOX 995 -90200
KITUI

When replying please quote;

ED/LW(YTT)/R-S/250/VOL 1/63

14/06/2018.

Nyamai Catherine Kavuli

Tangaza University College

P.O Box 15055 -0509

NAIROBI.

RE: AUTHORITY TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN LOWER YATTA SUB COUNTY.

Authority is hereby granted to the above named person to carry out research on “The Role of premarital preparation in the first ten years of marriage among Catholic couples in Kanyangi Parish,Diocese of Kitui County,Kenya” in Lower Yatta Sub County for a period not exceeding 5th June 2019.

Therefore this office allows the bearer of this letter to carry out the research in the Sub County.

Thank You.

John K. Ndatho

Sub County Director

Lower Yatta.



Appendix F: Letter of Authorization from County Commissioner Kitui County



THE PRESIDENCY
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND COORDINATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

E-mail; cckitui@gmail.com
Telephone:
Fax:

OFFICE OF THE
COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KITUI COUNTY
P.O. BOX 1 - 90200
KITUI

.....
When replying please quote Ref. and date

K.C.603/11/34


13th June 2018

Nyamai Catherine Kavuli
Tangaza University College
P.O. Box 15055-0509
NAIROBI

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Reference is made to a letter from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation Ref. No. NACOSTI/P/18/28498/22903 dated 5th June 2018 on the above subject matter.

You are hereby authorized to carry out research on ***“Role of premarital preparation in the first ten years of marriage among catholic couples in Kanyangi Parish, Diocese of Kitui in Kitui County” for a period ending 5th June 2019.***


BEATRICE ODIRA
FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KITUI COUNTY



Appendix G: Letter of Authorization from the County Director of Education Kitui County

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
State Department for Education**

Telegrams "EDUCATION"
Kitui
Telephone: Kitui 22759
Fax :04444-22103
E-Mail :
cde.kitui@gmail.com



COUNTY EDUCATION OFFICE
KITUI COUNTY
P.O BOX 1557-90200
KITUI

When replying please quote;

Ref. No: KTIC/ED/RES/22/266

Date.13/06/2018

Nyamai Catherine Kavuli
Tangaza University College
P.O Box 15055- 0509
NAIROBI

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to conduct a research on "**Role of premarital preparation in the first ten years of marriage among Catholic couples in kanyangi Parish, Diocese of Kitui County, Kenya**" I am pleased to inform you that permission has been granted to undertake research in Kitui County for the period ending **5th June, 2019**.

You are advised to liaise with the respective Sub County Directors of Education before embarking on the exercise.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Juliah Komunga".

**Juliah Komunga
County Director of Education
Kitui County**

**COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
KITUI
P. O. Box 1557, KITUI.**

Appendix H: Letter of Authorization from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation



**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION**

Telephone: +254-20-2213471,
2241349, 3310571, 2219420
Fax: +254-20-318245, 318249
Email: dg@nacosti.go.ke
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke
When replying please quote

NACOSTI, Upper Kabete
Off Waiyaki Way
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref. No. **NACOSTI/P/18/28498/22903**

Date: **5th June, 2018**

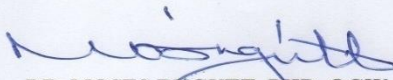
Nyamai Catherine Kavuli
Tangaza University College
P.O. Box 15055-0509
NAIROBI.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on *“Role of premarital preparation in the first ten years of marriage among catholic couples in Kanyangi Parish, Diocese of Kitui, Kenya,”* I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Kitui County** for the period ending **5th June, 2019**.

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Kitui County** before embarking on the research project.

Kindly note that, as an applicant who has been licensed under the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 to conduct research in Kenya, you shall deposit a **copy** of the final research report to the Commission within **one year** of completion. The soft copy of the same should be submitted through the Online Research Information System.


DR. MOSES RUGUTT, PHD, OGW
DIRECTOR GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Kitui County.

The County Director of Education
Kitui County.

Appendix I: Letter of Authorization from Tangaza University Ethics Review Committee



TANGAZA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

The Catholic University of Eastern Africa

DIRECTORATE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES & RESEARCH

E-mail: dir.pgsr@tangaza.ac.ke Website: www.tangaza.ac.ke

OUR Ref: DPGSR/ERC/No.006/05/2018

Date: 17th May 2018

Nyamai Catherine Kavuli,
Reg. No. 16/00231
Institute of Youth Studies
Tangaza University College

Dear Ms. Nyamai,

RE: Role of premarital preparation in the first ten years of marriage among Catholic couples in Kanyangi parish, Diocese of Kitui, Kenya

Reference is made to your request dated 9th May 2018 for ethical approval of your thesis proposal research tools by Tangaza University Ethics Review Committee.

We are pleased to inform you that your proposal and the research tools have gone through the ethical review committee as requested and the approval has been granted. In line with Tangaza University College Research policy, you will be required to submit a copy of the final research findings to the Director of Research for records.

Before proceeding to the next stage, ensure that all the comments that were made regarding your research tool have been addressed to the satisfaction of your supervisors. Note that it is an offence to proceed without addressing the concerns of the Ethics Review Committee.

This approval is valid for one year from 17th May 2018.

This approval does not exempt you from obtaining a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI).

Yours sincerely,

Daniel M. Kitonga (Ph.D)
Director, Post-Graduate Studies & Research

TANGAZA COLLEGE
Catholic University of Eastern Africa
P. O. Box 15055 - 00509
NAIROBI

CC:

Ms. Lucy Njiru –Programme Leader, MA in Counseling Psychology

Appendix J: Plagiarism Report

