

**STABILITY OF MARRIAGES OF ROMAN CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS  
IN KABALE MUNICIPALITY, KABALE DISTRICT**

**BY**

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved wife, Mrs., Patience Akankwasa, our children Israel, Immanuela, Isabelle, Bishop George Bagamuhunda, the family of Rev canon Prof Medard Ruyendo, all my friends for supporting me in many ways to do this project.

**DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE:**

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University

.....

Signature Date

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**Declaration by Supervisor:**

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.....

2. Rev. Canon. Dr. Joy Isabirye.

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## **OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS.**

**Christian values:** Christian values refer to the principles and beliefs derived from the teachings of Jesus Christ as depicted in the Bible, serving as a foundational framework for Christian faith and practice, and guiding believers in their interactions, decision-making, and daily living in line with their religious conviction (Elwell & Comfort, 2001).

**Christian Marriage:** Christian marriage is a sacred and lifelong covenant between a man and a woman, established by God and governed by Church teachings, reflecting the union of Christ and the Church" (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). According to catholic faith Christian marriage is a sacred and lifelong union between a man and a woman, established by God and governed by Church teachings" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997).

**Marriage stability:** In this study marriage stability, is the enduring strength and resilience of the marital bond, grounded in the couple's steady commitment to their vows before God. It is the ability of spouses to remain united through life's challenges, fostering a deep, lifelong partnership.

**Values:** in this study values were considered as the fundamental ideas and precepts that direct a couple's interactions and support and maintain their marriage.

## **ABSTRACT**

The scarcity of Christian values, intentional programs, activities, and the mechanism to mitigate the existing marital instabilities called for an urgent study to address the crisis. To achieve this, the study focused on the values and practices for stable Christian marriages, the benefits of the church programs and activities that promote couple commitment to marriage vows. The study also explored the Christian interventions in the prevention of marital instabilities and the response made to address marital conflicts from couples who had celebrated 25 years in Christian marriage, the study also covered the period of 2020-2023, among the Roman Catholic in Kabale municipality Kabale District. The study was qualitative with phenomenological approach. The study aimed at gaining a thorough understanding of participants' viewpoints and experiences through in-depth interviews and Focused Group Discussions. Data was collected using an in depth interview guide with twenty (20) primary participants and (4) focus group discussions. The study used a range of techniques to gather data, including Focused Group Discussions, in-depth interviews, and key informants, which produced rich, comprehensive data. Study findings showed that Christian values are essential for fostering enduring marriages and have an impact on connections outside the marriage, such as in the community. Church initiatives, such as youth programs and counseling, uphold these values and promote the stability of marriages. Despite difficulties, little conflicts in Christian marriages are typically settled by mutual consent, and the church offers resources like premarital counseling to assist guarantee marital stability. The report recommends boosting male involvement in Catholic marriage programs, improving conflict resolution, and addressing issues like limited funds and a lack of trained counselors, while incorporating traditional African marital customs. The research's conclusions are given narratively, along with thorough explanations that the investigator created by interpreting the information gathered from the field.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### 1. Introduction

Marriage is a sacred and central institution within Roman Catholicism, regarded as one of the seven sacraments and an essential element of the Christian vocation (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997). In the Catholic faith, marriage is not merely a legal contract but a divine calling that reflects the relationship between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:25-32). The Church's teachings emphasize that marriage is a permanent, exclusive, and fruitful union between a man and a woman, where both parties are called to live out their vows in a spirit of love, sacrifice, and commitment (Gaudium et Spes, 1965). The union is seen as a gift from God, and the couple, by participating in the sacrament, commits to building a loving, supportive, and lasting relationship (Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 1981).

Roman Catholicism's view on marriage is deeply rooted in biblical teachings and tradition (The Holy Bible, Genesis 2:24). Catholic marriage is viewed as both a natural and divine institution, with the union between spouses reflecting the unconditional love of God (Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 1968). The relationship between Roman Catholicism and marriage is founded on the principle that marriage is not just a social contract but a means of sanctification, where the couple's mutual love and devotion help them grow spiritually (Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965). The Church teaches that God is a partner in the marriage, and that marital love is an opportunity to live out Christian values of selflessness, patience, and respect (Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 1981).

The Roman Catholic Church upholds specific guidelines and requirements for individuals wishing to marry within the Church, ensuring that the sacrament of marriage aligns with its theological principles. One key category allowed to marry in the Church includes baptized Catholics, who must have reached the age of reason and be free to enter into marriage, meaning they are not already married or bound by vows of celibacy (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997). Additionally, the Church permits marriages between Catholics and baptized non-Catholic Christians. However, this union is contingent upon certain conditions being met, including a commitment from the Catholic party to ensure that any children born from the marriage are raised in the Catholic faith (Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 1981). Marriages between Catholics and non-Christians, known as "mixed marriages," are also allowed with the permission

of the local bishop. In such cases, the Catholic party must promise to preserve the faith and ensure that the children of the marriage are raised as Catholics, emphasizing the Church's commitment to the sanctity and continuity of the faith within the family (Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965). These requirements are in place to uphold the integrity of the Catholic sacrament of marriage and to promote the spiritual welfare of the couple and their future family.

The need for this study stems from the ongoing challenges faced by married couples within the Roman Catholic community in Kabale District. Kabale District, located in the southwestern region of Uganda, is a diverse area with a rich cultural heritage and a blend of different religious practices. The district, which is part of the Kigezi Region, is home to a predominantly rural population, and its religious landscape reflects a mix of Christianity, Islam, and traditional African beliefs. The area is also marked by a long history of religious interaction, which has shaped the spiritual life of the people over the years. The Catholic Church has a strong presence in Kabale, especially in the central and southern parts of the district. The Roman Catholic Church was introduced to the region during the colonial era, and it has remained a major influence on the religious and social life of the people. The Catholic Church operates several parishes,

While Catholic marriage is based on strong theological and doctrinal foundations, contemporary marital struggles, such as communication issues, infidelity, domestic violence, financial stress, and the erosion of marital commitment, continue to affect Catholic couples (Jozef, A., & Kozyra, J. 2019). As societal values shift and family structures change, many Catholic marriages face difficulties that threaten their stability.

Understanding the factors contributing to marital instability within Catholic marriages is crucial for ensuring that the Church's teachings are effectively supporting couples in their marital journey. Furthermore, assessing the current practices, activities, and programs implemented by the Church to strengthen marriages is necessary to ensure they align with the needs of modern couples. Programs such as marriage preparation courses, counseling, and retreats are essential tools for promoting strong marriages, but their effectiveness in preventing instability requires ongoing evaluation and adaptation.

This study is necessary not only to explore the causes of marital instability within Catholic marriages but also to evaluate the Church's role in providing support, guidance, and practical

tools to help couples avoid these issues. By examining Catholic marriage values, practices, and the effectiveness of existing interventions, this study aims to identify key factors that promote marital stability and offer recommendations for enhancing the Church's efforts in supporting Catholic couples in maintaining strong, healthy marriages. The findings from this research will help develop strategies that integrate faith-based principles with practical solutions for fostering long-lasting, harmonious marriages.

### **1.1 Background to the study**

Marriage is the oldest social institution ordained by God as a social contract between two individuals to become husband and wife. Marriage as ordained by God gives legitimacy to sexual relationships and reproduction for legitimate children (Amina, 2008). Marriage is broadly defined as a cultural and universal phenomenon and is usually formalized through a wedding ceremony. (Haralambos, M., & Holborn, M. 2013). In modern times, the most important aspects of marriage are social, religious as well as legal (Wimalasena, 2016). Marriage and family are crucial systems in society. They are always linked together. They have a historical background and are as old as man on earth. Christian marriage takes a central role in the survival of society as a whole, both for biological and social reproduction (Olutayo & Omobowale, 2006). Marriage, according to Gonza (2004), is an institution by society as a union between men and women who have committed themselves to staying together with the hope of having children to make a family. Roger (2010) notes that Christian marriage is characterized and guided by Christian principles that are taught in the Bible. In most societies, before the introduction of church marriages, and of state marriage law, the criteria for the validity of marriage were originally determined by customary practice rather than by statute law (Banja 2013).

The marriage of a man and a woman as a spouse is not a random combination, but a comprehensive choice under a specific social environment and social system (Huo and Chen. 2022). There are many ingredients that both men and women need to consider, such as family conditions, religious background, self-induced like, occupation, and age profession among others. The characteristics of marriage-matching in modern society not only affect the quality of life and happiness of residents, but also affect the characteristics of social resources and wealth aggregation, the functioning of the social stratification system, and social reproduction (Fernandez & Rogerson, 2001)

The theological focus on forgiveness, respect for one another, and unselfish love seen in Catholic marriage vows is rooted in the teachings of Christ's love for the Church (Ritter & Linton, 2014). These values are associated with higher levels of marital stability and satisfaction (Larson et al., 2003). In the Catholic faith, a couple's marriage vows typically include an assurance to cherish, love, and honor one another. These vows place a strong importance on mutual respect, compassion, and support inside the marriage. According to Larson et al. (2003), this reciprocal care fosters a loving environment in which both partners feel valued and inspired. Research by Wilcox and Waite & Gallagher (2000) demonstrated that marriages that upheld customary vows and viewed their union as a holy bond experienced higher levels of marital satisfaction and lower divorce rates. The enduring commitment of a couple to one another is emphasized in Catholic marriage vows.

The sacramental element of Catholic marriage, according to (Johnson and O'Brien 2013), highlights the notion that the union is more than just a formal arrangement; it is also a spiritual bond that is meant to endure through all circumstances. More secure marriages have been associated with a strong emphasis on commitment (Amato & James, 2010). Marriage vows in the Catholic faith, which often contain an agreement to support one another "in sickness and health," enable spouses to offer one another emotional and spiritual support (Mahoney 2011). Having this support system in place in your marriage is essential for managing stress and challenges.

Theological reflections and pastoral teachings have revealed the sacramental and covenantal aspects of marriage, which are intrinsically linked to the goal of marriage in Catholic theology. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), paragraphs 1601–1666, emphasizes marriage as a sacrament established by Christ, wherein partners participate in God's grace through their union, promoting sanctification and offering a nurturing environment in which children can develop their faith (Smith, 2022).

The two main objectives of marriage, according to Catholic ethical teaching, are to create a cohesive union and to be willing to bear children. (Kippley, 2005). Pope Paul VI's encyclical "Humanae Vitae," which affirms the inseparable bond between love, sexuality, and the gift of life, outlines the Church's position on responsible parenting. This declaration emphasizes that having children is a blessing that should be welcomed as a symbol of spousal love and that the natural order of human fertility must be respected. Pope John Paul II's "Theology of the Body" discusses marriage as a covenantal relationship modeled after God's covenant with His people. This theological paradigm highlights how self-giving and communion in the Trinity are analogous to marital love, emphasizing marriage's spiritual depth (John Paul II, "Theology of the

Body"). The effectiveness of the Catholic Church's traditional marital preparation and counseling programs is impacted by secularization and modernization (John Paul II 2012). Pre-marital counseling programs may need to address a larger range of topics as society's views evolve, such as contemporary interpersonal dynamics and secular perspectives on marriage (Smith & Jones, 2015). According to Kibuuka (2016), the programs' applicability and effectiveness in promoting long-lasting marriages depend on their ability to respect core Catholic teaching while adapting to modern-day situations. Gender roles alter dramatically as a result of modernity, which frequently overturns long-standing patriarchal norms and promotes gender equality (Connell, 2005). This alteration may cause concerns with responsibilities and expectations in Catholic marriages. According to Inglehart and Norris (2003), when societies modernize, there is a greater need for gender equality, which affects women's responsibilities in marriages. When current egalitarian ideas clash with traditional Catholic beliefs on gender roles, tensions can arise, occasionally damaging couples that are unable to resolve these concerns (Coakley, 2006).

Marriage customs are still greatly influenced by cultural considerations. This draws attention to how difficult it can be for Ugandans to balance their traditional cultural expectations with contemporary influences when to and choose who to marry (Madanda, 2012). Traditional marriage customs in Uganda have undergone a distinct change. Due to changing social conventions, more access to education, and exposure to resident lives, younger generations are choosing to delay marriage or pursue alternate forms of relationships (Cherlin, 2009). The introduction of Christian marriage is the most significant contribution made by Christianity (Winifred, 2020). A woman in a Christian marriage cannot be discarded, unlike in the days before Christianity, when a woman could be thrown away by her husband like a package (Browning, 2003). The ring represented a wife's eternal value as a person to Christian women in Uganda. It granted her an undisputable position.

In Uganda, various legally recognized forms of marriage can be entered into. One such type is church marriage, which is monogamous (one man, one wife) and is legally recognized under the Marriage Act Cap 251. It is done in a place of worship or another approved location in front of a licensed church officiating officer (Innocent 2013). We cannot disregard the subjects of divorce and separation in light of the most recent Court of Appeal rulings (Apio, 2023). To maintain the sanctity of marriages in Uganda, courts are reluctant to dissolve marriages unless there is overwhelming evidence that they are irreversible. Disagreements are normal in all relationships,

and family is no exception. However, there is a need for further research into how these rulings specifically impact the long-term stability of marriages and the socio-legal implications for couples facing unresolved conflicts. Therefore, the current study attempts to analyze the values, practices programs and conflict interventions that can enhance the stability of Christian marriages in Roman Catholic marriages in Kabale municipality, Kabale district.

## **1.2 Problem Statement.**

Approximately 370,000 divorces or separations occur annually in Uganda, affecting about 7% of the adult population (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Whereas the Government has undertaken research and implemented several programs targeting the family (Janat, 2016), the family's instabilities continue to rise. Uganda's Vision 2040 emphasizes the principle of high morals in religious and spiritual values instilled among her citizens, yet marriages, including those within the Roman Catholic community, continue to face challenges such as domestic violence and separations. The Roman Catholic Church, known for its strong stance on the sanctity of marriage, has emphasized the need for lasting commitment, but the increasing rates of marital issues highlight the ongoing struggle to uphold these values in society (Janat, 2016). The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (Hill, 2017) performed the Family Justice Survey in Uganda, which provides vital insights into demographic differences among people coping with family problems. According to the poll, 23% of participants reported having family troubles, with considerable differences depending on the variable. The domestic relations bill whose aim was to reform and consolidate the law relating to marriage, separation, and divorce has been pending in parliament of Uganda for over 50 years (Janet, 2003). The marriage and divorce bill now before parliament is still controversial (Hill, 2017). The National Development Plan (NDP II), 2015/16-2019/20 highlights that the main problem affecting the institution of marriage is the high rate of disintegration of family before and after marriage. This issue is not limited to secular marriages but also affects Catholic marriages, where the Church emphasizes the indissolubility of marriage. The family unit at the Kabale Central police station recorded increased cases of marriage issues in the year 2018 and 2019 including those within the Roman Catholic community (Margret, 2021). Yet, Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets eliminating gender-based violence, given that this is one of the most pervasive human rights violations in the world today (UNGA 2015). The complex relationship between traditional customs and contemporary legal frameworks can obstruct the effective implementation of policies aimed at resolving family issues and advancing gender equality (Günter, 2014).

Exploration of cultural values that shape perceptions of legal reforms and to identify strategies for integrating cultural sensitivities into policy development has been wanting (Muganda, 2018). Moreover, there is a need for comprehensive and lasting data to understand the specific causes of marital instability and the effectiveness of current legal and social interventions (Smith & Johnson, 2016). The Roman Catholic Church, with its long-standing teachings on the sanctity of marriage and its significant role in shaping societal values, should be involved in this process. Its participation would provide valuable insights, especially regarding the spiritual and moral aspects of marriage, and contribute to developing more holistic solutions that address both the legal and religious dimensions of marital stability. Tumwine (2017) asserts that religious teachings have a major influence on marriage customs and stability among the Catholic community in Kabale Municipality. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of locally focused research that particularly looks at the efficacy of interventions and marriage programs in this community. This lack of detailed data impedes the effective creation and implementation of policies addressing family concerns. As a result, there is an urgent need for rigorous study to better understand the dynamics and issues that families experience in Uganda. Therefore, the study intended to examine the values and practices, the programs and activities and conflict interventions that promote the stability of Christian marriages in the Roman Catholic marriages in Kabale municipality Kabale District.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The general objective of the study was to examine the marriage stability of Roman Catholic marriages in Kabale Municipality Kabale District Kabale.

#### **1.4.1 Specific objectives**

- i. To explore values and practices that promote marital stability in catholic marriages in Kabale Municipality, Kabale District.
- ii. To assess the benefits of church marriage programs and activities intended for catholic married couples in the Roman Catholic Church in Kabale Municipality.
- iii. To analyze the effects of family interventions for resolving marital conflicts among Catholic married couples in Kabale Municipality

## **1.5 Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What are some of the Christian values, and practices that govern the stability of marriages of Christian Roman Catholics in Kabale Municipality?
- ii. What are the benefits of church marriage programs and activities for stable Roman Catholic married couples in Kabale Municipality?
- iii. What are the effects of family interventions on resolving marital issues among Catholic married couples in Kabale Municipality?

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

Exploring marital stability in Catholic marriages provides insights into the unique challenges and strengths inherent within these unions. Catholic marriages often emphasize religious teachings, the sanctity of marriage, and the importance of faith, which can both bolster and challenge marital stability. Understanding these dynamics helps in tailoring support and interventions that respect and incorporate religious beliefs.

The study findings will give awareness and enrichment of a variety of church programs and activities in the Roman Catholic Church. Some church programs will be brought in to help the families be stable.

The study will help the law-enforcing organs make an ethical contribution amidst moral decadence. The study will try to suggest remedies to such evils in society. The findings of the study will help in instilling discipline in the community as family is the basic unit. The study on Christian marriages will give more researched information useful in law formulation like on domestic bills and marriage bills. Christian and ethical remedies shall form the alternative.

Catholic marriages often benefit from a strong sense of community and social support within the church. Research can examine how this support network impacts marital stability, providing valuable insights into the role of community in sustaining marriages. This can inform broader strategies to strengthen social support systems for all marriages. Studying marital stability in Catholic marriages contributes to the broader fields of sociology and psychology by highlighting the interplay between religion and marriage. It provides a comparative perspective that enriches our understanding of how different cultural and religious contexts influence marital stability

Findings from such research can inform the development of faith-based counseling and intervention programs. By understanding the specific needs and concerns of Catholic couples, counselors and religious leaders can provide more effective, culturally and religiously sensitive support.

Finally, the researcher will not only benefit from this study as a requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Religious Studies of Kyambogo University but also widen his knowledge and exposure as a practicing religious scholar to address complex community concerns related to educational attainment and Christian marital stability.

### **1.7 Justification of the study**

Previous studies have shown that shared values and beliefs are fundamental to marital stability in Christian contexts. According to Ahuvia and Adelman (2018), the alignment of personal values with religious teachings contributes significantly to marital satisfaction and longevity (Ahuvia & Adelman, 2018). A study by Wilcox (2009) and Doss et al. (2009) highlights that such programs often provide couples with resources and support systems that address relationship challenges and strengthen their commitment to each other.

Despite existing research on marriage stability and church programs, there remains a significant information gap regarding the specific benefit of these programs on Catholic couples. Studies such as those by Giddens (2005) and Connell (2005) emphasize the need for detailed, localized research (Giddens, 2005; Connell, 2005). A study by Wilcox (2009) underscores the effectiveness of church-based marriage programs in improving relationship outcomes. Furthermore, previous studies have demonstrated that structured interventions can significantly impact marital conflict resolution. For example, Stanley et al. (2014) highlights marriage education programs, while Doss et al. (2009) hint at interventions such as couple's therapy and relationship education programs

A research study focused on interventions for solving marital conflicts among Catholic married couples is justified by the need to explore the effectiveness of various strategies in this specific context. There remains a significant gap in understanding how these interventions are applied and their effectiveness. Addressing this gap through localized research will contribute to the development of more effective support systems and policies tailored to the needs of Catholic

couples. This study will contribute to a deeper understanding of marital dynamics and inform more effective strategies for enhancing marital stability in this community

## **1.8 Scope of the study**

### **1.8.1 Geographical scope**

The study was carried out in the southwest Ugandan district of Kabale, in the Kabale municipality, 406.78 kilometers away from Kampala, the country's capital (Alex & Johnson, 2019). To properly collect data on the stability of Christian marriages in Roman Catholic marriages in Kabale municipality Kabale district, the study took into account both of the parishes in Kabale Diocese (Rushoroza, Christ the King Parishes). Christ the King Parish is one of the Catholic parishes within Kabale Diocese, and it is situated in the heart of Kabale Town. The parish serves as a significant spiritual and community center for the local Catholic faithful in the area. Like other parishes in the Diocese of Kabale, it emphasizes Catholic teachings, family values, and a strong sense of community. The Diocese and its parishes, including Christ the King, are actively involved in promoting Catholic faith, education, and social justice through various programs such as youth ministry, women's groups, and education in schools. The diocese's role is crucial in shaping religious practices and community life in the region. This was justified for this study because it is where the majority of Roman Catholic marriages are conducted, programs are implemented, and marital challenges are common.

### **1.8.2. Content scope**

The study focused on the values and practices that promote marital stability in catholic marriages, the benefits of church marriage programs and activities on marital relationships among catholic married couples in Roman Catholic and the effects of family interventions that the church offers to help Catholic married couples resolve conflict in Kabale municipality Kabale District

### **1.8.3 Time scope**

The study captured information covering the period of 2020-2023, from couples who had celebrated 25 years of Christian marriage, among the Roman Catholic marriages in Kabale municipality. The researcher got enough respondents with this information and the period was enough to gather the information.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2 Introduction

This chapter on literature review provides a concise description of the key scholarly works and sources. To ensure the stability of Catholic marriages, it covers marital philosophy, values, and practices. It also considers the theoretical foundation of the study, scholarly studies on the benefits of church-based marital programs, couple commitment-building activities, and family interventions designed to address disagreements between Catholic couples.

#### 2.1 Covenant Marriage Theory.

The study was based on Covenant Marriage Theory, as stated in Catholic theology, which provides a strong framework that is inextricably linked to the Church's teachings on marriage. Covenant Marriage Theory holds that the family is the "domestic church," serving as the primary setting for the expression and demonstration of the principles of love, mutual support, and religious growth (Coughlin, 2012). This viewpoint regards marriage as a sacred and eternal bond, based on Biblical narratives and reinforced by theological conceptions (George, 2010). Fundamentally, the philosophy stresses marriage as a deep, everlasting tie and as a heavenly institution. According to this perspective, the family transcends its role as a basic social unit and becomes a sacred community where the covenantal aspects of marriage are actively carried out and lived out (Hollenbach, 2008). This viewpoint holds that regular encounters and shared spiritual pursuits create an environment in which the divine connection that is essential to marriage continually shows up in the family (Smith, 2015). As a result, the family not only reflects the sacred nature of marriage but also serves as a live example of its eternal ideals and beliefs.

Witte argues that the secular notion of marriage as a contract is not the same as this picture of marriage as a supernatural and binding connection (Witte, 2012). Witte highlights the substantial and enduring nature of marriages as understood in many religious contexts by presenting marriage in a way that marriage should be viewed as a holy relationship that is deeply embedded in religious traditions and theological systems.

David M. Scholer investigates the ethical and theological grounds of covenant marriage theory, particularly within the context of Christianity (David M, 2007).

This viewpoint is based on biblical teachings and theological views that depict marriage as a divinely constituted institution with moral obligations for consistency and commitment (Scholer, 2008). He emphasizes that to maintain marriage's integrity and goals, these moral and religious dimensions provide a foundation for perceiving it as a holy relationship (Scholer, 2010). According to Timothy Keller, a covenantal perspective of marriage fosters an environment in which partners actively support each other's spiritual and personal development (Keller, 2011). Keller and Keller (2015), view marriage as a way to achieve greater connection and mutual progress. By emphasizing this connection, Keller shows how marriage may be a transformational experience for both sides.

Coontz's detailed investigation of marriage's cultural and historical development, including the concept of covenant marriage, sheds light on how marriage has grown as a covenant throughout time and how different historical and cultural settings have influenced it (Coontz, 2016). Her work sheds light on how different societies have influenced and supported the covenant form of marriage (Coontz, 2005). This historical view is vital for understanding the genesis and persistence of the covenantal perspective on marriage.

Studies on the relationship between covenant marriage theory and conflict resolution, such as Gordon B. Hugenberger, assert that adopting a covenantal perspective has a profound effect on how couples resolve conflicts. Hugenberger contends that viewing marriage via a covenant lens shifts the focus from blame and division to mutual understanding and reconciliation (Hugenberger, 2005). To maintain and strengthen their marriage, partners are motivated to address challenges by this covenantal obligation (Hugenberger, 2012). Hugenberger highlights how covenant theology may encourage a longer-lasting and more fruitful process of conflict resolution in relationships.

Additionally, sociologist Linda Waite examines the legal and social implications of covenant marriage, examining how legal frameworks and social norms shape perceptions and usage of the union (Waite, 2006). Waite's research provides insightful insights into the broader social and legal ramifications of covenant marriages by examining the effects of legalizing them on divorce rates and marital stability (Waite, 2000). Her study sheds light on the ways that social and legal contexts influence the implementation and outcomes of covenant marriages.

In conclusion, Covenant Marriage Theory, as developed in Catholic theology, provides a framework that is both theologically rich and culturally relevant. It emphasizes marriage as a holy, everlasting relationship based on Biblical principles and theological ideas. Together, these ideas contribute to a better understanding of marriage as a sacred and eternal institution. It emphasizes marriage's holiness, lifelong commitment, and divine participation while offering a thorough explanation of marriage within Catholic theology. This theory encourages couples to embrace their married vocation with reverence and fidelity, witnessing God's love in their union and helping to develop a stronger society based on family values. It is based on biblical narratives, is enhanced by theological reflection, and is practically applied in Church life.

The covenant marriage concept emphasizes a lifelong commitment between spouses, providing a sense of security and stability in the marriage. It promotes couples to improve their mutual progress, trust, and communication. This aids in cooperative planning and goal-setting, as well as amicable conflict resolution. When problems happen, the covenant mindset helps couples resolve them peacefully and collaboratively. Couples who support one another and seek aid when necessary might improve their bond. This method also encourages accountability, empathy, and forgiveness, resulting in better and more fulfilling marriages.

### **Adaptive Preference theory**

Religious teachings and cultural norms are closely linked to marriage stability in Roman Catholicism, and the Adaptive Preference Theory offers a useful framework for comprehending how people modify their expectations in the setting of marriage. According to Anderson, E. (1999), this theory, people change their preferences in response to obstacles or constraints. In Catholic marriage, the idea that marriage is irreconcilable frequently causes people to reevaluate their preferences in order to conform to social and religious norms (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1644). Despite relationship difficulties, the Catholic Church maintains that marriage is a holy, permanent commitment that makes divorce undesirable (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997). In order to preserve the sanctity and longevity of marriage, Catholic spouses frequently modify their inclinations and face challenges (Heaton, 2002; Popenoe, 1993). The way Catholic couples internalize social and religious constraints, especially when they face marital difficulties, is a clear example of how Adaptive Preference Theory contributes to the stability of marriages. People are encouraged to modify their preferences and desires in order to uphold their marital commitment because of the Church's ban on divorce and focus on the sanctity of marriage (Lammers et al., 2011). In order to conform to the idea that staying married is a moral and

spiritual duty, couples may experience personal dissatisfaction or relationship problems. This adjustment promotes stability because the couple values maintaining the partnership over pursuing personal goals and accepts marital difficulties as a holy obligation. Additionally, Catholic teachings emphasize the importance of marriage for procreation and child-rearing, reinforcing the idea that the stability of marriage is essential for the well-being of children (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997). As Adaptive Preference Theory suggests, individuals often revise their desires based on their circumstances. In the context of Catholic marriage, this means that spouses may choose to prioritize family unity over personal satisfaction, adapting their expectations to maintain a stable home for their children (Heaton, 2002). For Catholic couples, the religious and cultural mandate to raise children within the faith often leads to marital stability, as individuals may tolerate relational challenges to maintain the family structure and ensure the children's spiritual growth (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997).

Additionally, pastoral care offered by the Catholic Church urges spouses to change their attitudes toward forgiveness and reconciliation (Pontifical Council for the Family, 1994). By encouraging selflessness and respect for one another, the Church's support systems, like counseling and marriage enrichment programs, assist couples in resolving marital issues and fostering stability (Heaton, 2002). When religious teachings that promote forgiveness and mutual support are followed, people may reevaluate their preferences in order to settle disputes and improve their relationships, Anderson, E. (1999). According to the Adaptive Preference Theory by Anderson, E. (1999), Couples accept long-term commitment as a component of their spiritual and collective identity when they modify their aspirations in reaction to marital difficulties.

Finally, Adaptive Preference Theory explains how Catholic couples adjust their expectations for marriage stability in response to religious teachings and cultural developments. Individuals' preferences for enduring marital issues are frequently influenced by their devotion to marriage as a sacrament, which is supported by Catholic dogma (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997).

The junction of religion teachings, cultural influences, and personal wants results in a complicated setting in which marriage stability is influenced by both internal religious convictions and outward societal pressures (Cherlin, 2009) The notion that stability results from a sustained, unwavering commitment is supported by both theories. Couples may modify their expectations and accept challenges as a necessary part of the sacramental and covenantal aspects of marriage, according to the Adaptive Preference Theory. Equally, Covenant Marriage Theory

highlights that the fundamental character of the marriage relationship necessitates a dedication that surpasses individual preferences and situations.

Although Covenant Marriage Theory places a strong emphasis on an unbreakable vow, Adaptive Preference Theory can assist explain how spouses might modify their expectations and preferences to stay true to their vow even in the face of emotional or relational difficulties. Over time, this adaptability can serve to fortify the marriage by fostering a greater comprehension of the sacramental aspect of their relationship and assisting them in resolving conflicts in a way that promotes stability in the long run.

## **2.2 Values in Christian Marriage**

Faithfulness and commitment are essential qualities in Christian marriage. Christian marriages are not only a contract or social arrangement; they are based on a commitment to exclusivity and loyalty. Before God, this promise or commitment is acknowledged as a holy covenant. Christian theology views marriage as a symbol of Christ's unwavering dedication to His Church through all times. J. A. Fitzmyer (2007). As already indicated in covenant marriage theory, marriage vows are everlasting and unbreakable since they are supported by mutual esteem and faith in God's providence (Matthew 19:6). Christian marriages are not only a contract or social arrangement; they are based on a commitment to exclusivity and loyalty. Before God, this promise or commitment is acknowledged as a holy covenant. Pope Pius XI's *Casti Connubii* (1930) is an important encyclical that maintains the sanctity of marriage as a lifelong, indissoluble bond between man and woman. It emphasizes the necessity of procreation, child education, and spouses' moral responsibilities. Pope Pius XI warns against separating the unity and procreative sides of marriage, instead pushing for marital integrity, mutual respect, and the preservation of the marital bond's sacred nature. Christian theology views marriage as a symbol of Christ's unwavering dedication to His Church through all times. In *Familiaris Consortio* (1981), Pope John Paul II explores the importance of the family and the Church's vision of marriage as a vocation that reflects Christ and the Church's love. He emphasizes the importance of marital stability as the cornerstone of the family and provides advice on how couples can have strong, loving relationships. The encyclical emphasizes the family's responsibility in nurturing children while also contributing to society via self-sacrifice and spiritual growth within marriage. J. A. Fitzmyer (2007). According to this theological viewpoint, marriage vows are everlasting and unbreakable since they are supported by mutual esteem and faith in God's providence

(Matthew 19:6). There is a lack of information in the literature about the practical implications of this theological perspective on commitment and integrity in contemporary Christian relationships, especially about problems like adultery and marital crises. To find out how these religious principles translate into workable plans for upholding faithfulness and commitment in the face of modern marital difficulties, this research will endeavor to address them.

Unconditional Love based on the love of Christ is a value emulated in Christian homes. Christian marriages exhibit the selflessness and selfless generosity that characterize Christ's love for His Church. (Silver, N and Gottman, J. M. 2000) This type of love is committed to serving the spouse's greatest interests, even at a personal sacrifice. It transcends mere feelings. Christian couples are urged by Ephesians 5:25 to love each other with the same patience, compassion, and forgiveness as Christ shows them. Pope Francis' *Amoris Laetitia* (2016) discusses the joy of love in marriage and family life in today's world. It recognizes the obstacles that contemporary couples experience, such as economic demands and cultural changes, and advocates for pastoral care to help marriages thrive. Pope Francis underlines that marriage involves continual commitment, progress, and grace, and that stability is reached not by perfection but through love, mutual respect, and a readiness to confront challenges together.

Studies reveal that couples with high levels of empathy and forgiveness; two traits of unconditional love have happier and more robust marriages (Fincham & Beach, 2010). According to (Gottman and Silver 2000), engaging in activities such as active listening, reciprocal support, and conflict resolution grounded in unconditional love can improve emotional intimacy and long-term marital stability.

However, there is an insufficiency of first-hand studies on the real experiences and communication of unconditional love in everyday relationships between couples. Gaining an understanding of these experiences may help to improve resilience and marriage relationships.

Respect and Mutual Submission based on biblical teachings is key in Christian marriages. Ephesians 5:21–33 emphasizes how crucial respect and submission are to one another in a Christian marriage. This verse in the Bible tells married couples to respect one another's roles and dignity to promote peace and unity in their decision-making and interpersonal interactions (Moore and Davidson, 2011). Respect is paying close attention to what the other person is saying, appreciating their viewpoints, and working together to make decisions that put the health of the marriage first. Research shows that different cultural and socioeconomic circumstances might apply mutual submission and respect in very different ways (Giblin, 2010). The practical

application of mutual submission and respect, particularly in varied cultural and socioeconomic circumstances, is inadequate. Pope John Paul II's *Evangelium Vitae* (1995) focuses on the sanctity of life while also emphasizing marriage's role in protecting human dignity. This encyclical connects life protection with marriage stability, urging the Church to help families nurture life and promote a culture of human dignity. Marriage is portrayed as a necessary institution for protecting life and developing a family-centered society.

Regular prayer is a requisite for a stable Christian marriage. To strengthen their spiritual bond and ask God for direction, couples are urged to pray together, go to church, and partake in sacramental life (Henry, D. 2023). Couples who engage in shared spiritual practices are better equipped to handle the difficulties of marriage and are more resilient and committed (Brelsford & Mahoney, 2008). Marital spiritual development improves individual faith formation and alignment with God's design for each spouse's life, as well as the strength of the marriage (Koenig et al., 2023). Academics frequently talk about how spiritual practices improve resilience and marriage pleasure.

However, there is a lack of understanding about how different levels of spiritual activity among spouses affect marital dynamics and relational pleasure. Research has yet to study how differences in spiritual commitment between spouses affect relational satisfaction and communication patterns (Lichter & Carmalt, 2009). Examining these relationships may provide clergy and counselors who assist couples in their spiritual journey together with useful knowledge.

Honesty and transparency among Christian couples is a value expected. To build integrity and trust in married relationships, it is commonly acknowledged that honesty and transparency are essential components (Sims, 2009). These values are crucial for preserving happy and secure marriages, according to several studies and theoretical frameworks. According to a 2004 study by Sprecher and Hendrick, relationships are more satisfying when partners communicate honestly with one another. Biblically speaking, believers are commanded in Ephesians 4:25 to "put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor." This passage emphasizes the value of honesty in building a trustworthy and honest relationship in the context of marriage. The majority of current research is grounded in Western cultural contexts. Further research is required to examine the value and practices of honesty and openness in non-Western cultures. For example, Huang et al. (2020) contend that expectations and communication patterns in marriages are greatly influenced by cultural norms. Sprecher and Hendrick's (2004) research

raises the possibility of gender disparities in the perception and value of honesty and transparency in married relationships.

Patience and endurance are acknowledged as essential traits for a stable and satisfying marriage. (Perrone-McGovern et al., 2011) These attributes help couples handle the inevitable problems and trials of marriage, creating resilience and unity. The biblical perspective on patience and endurance is expressed in James 1:4, which states, "Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." This verse emphasizes the spiritual necessity of patience and endurance in creating complete relationships. Resilient couples have an amazing ability to keep a positive attitude and adapt to life's problems together, which improves marital satisfaction and stability (Werner-Wilson et al. 2000). Much of the previous research focuses on Western contexts, creating a gap in our understanding of how patience and endurance are seen and practiced in non-Western societies. (Bae and Wickrama 2015) emphasize the need for cross-cultural studies to investigate these virtues within various cultural frameworks.

Christian marriage values, based on biblical teachings and theological thought, give a solid foundation for understanding the sacredness and dynamics of marital partnerships. While there is abundant research on the theological basis and ethical implications of these values, there are significant knowledge gaps in comprehending their practical application and lived experiences in contemporary Christian relationships. This study aims to satisfy these gaps by investigating the dynamics of Christian marriages, especially among couples that have celebrated over 25 years in Christian marriages in the Catholic Church.

### **2.3. Practices encouraged in Christian marriages**

Open and honest communication is essential in stable Christian marriages. This involves active listening, respectful emotional expression, and conflict resolution through debate and compromise. (Kurucan & Erol, 2012). When it comes to resolving conflicts, Christian beliefs stress humility and forgiveness. (Gottman and Silver 1999) state that couples that use open communication and conflict resolution approaches have higher marital satisfaction and stability. Markman, Stanley, and Blumberg (2010) found that premarital counseling programs emphasizing communication skills dramatically lower the likelihood of divorce. There is little data on the long-term efficacy of communication training in marriage. More research is needed to track couples over time (Stanley et al., 2002).

Shared beliefs and goals in marriage foster a deep sense of unity and purpose. Higher levels of marital stability are reported by couples that have similar values and aspirations (Stanley, Whitton, and Markman 2004). Shared religious views, or religious homogamy, have been associated with stable marriages. Moreover, long-lasting marriages are more common among couples that practice their faith jointly, including going to church and having religious conversations (Mahoney et al. 2001). Research is required to determine how the growing secularization of society influences Christian spouses' prioritizing of common values and objectives (Wilcox & Wolfinger, 2008). More research is required to determine how different levels of religious commitment within a marriage affect shared values and goals because religious views vary.

A supportive community is essential in marriage counseling, considerably increasing relationship strength and stability. Christian communities, in particular, help to grow and strengthen Christian marriages by offering critical support, accountability, and practical assistance. These networks provide vital support and insight through interactions with other Christians, attendance at marriage enrichment programs, and seeking guidance from experienced couples (Cowan & Wincott, 2016). Studies reveal that being a part of religious communities is linked to higher levels of marital stability and happiness because these settings create a network of support that strengthens commitment and offers examples of behavior to follow (George & Ellison, 1994). In a similar vein, religious communities' resources and models can positively influence marriage outcomes by providing both spiritual and practical guidance (Wilcox & Wolfinger, 2008; Campbell & Tsur, 2014). To completely comprehend the effects of various religious groups and support networks on marital stability, more research is required.

Continuous learning and growth in marriage is a value that involves both partners actively seeking personal and relational development, which helps to deepen their understanding of each other. (Markman, Stanley, and Blumberg, 2010) emphasize the need for continual marital education in preventing divorce. According to their findings, couples that engage in continuous learning report improved communication, more pleasure, and a deeper feeling of relationship (Markman, Stanley, and Blumberg 2010). Marriage in Catholicism is also seen as a reflection of God's love, where the spouses' relationship mirrors divine love through mutual support, sacrifice, and commitment (Ephesians 5:25-33). The Church teaches that sexual intimacy within marriage should remain exclusive and open to the possibility of children, with artificial contraception being prohibited (Humanae Vitae, 1968). Marriage is considered a vocation that helps couples

grow spiritually, contributing to the greater good of the family and society (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1601). The Church's teachings guide couples to live out their marital commitment as an expression of faith, rooted in love, sacrifice, and the responsibilities of parenthood (Lammers et al., 2011). *Humanae Vitae* (1968) by Pope Paul VI also addresses marriage, focusing on human sexuality and the responsible regulation of birth. This encyclical emphasizes that marital love should be open to life and warns against artificial contraception, which, according to the Pope, undermines the true purpose of marriage. The document stresses the need for mutual respect and responsibility within marriage, highlighting the stability and integrity of the marital relationship as essential for a flourishing family life. Key teachings emphasize that marriage is not only for the mutual support of spouses but also for the procreation and education of children within the faith (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1652). Fidelity, free consent, and the unity of the spouses are central to the Catholic understanding of marriage, as is the belief that marriage is a total union involving body, mind, and spirit (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1646). Couples are called to express self-sacrificial love, and their union should be exclusive, open to life, and focused on the well-being of each other and the family (*Humanae Vitae*, 1968).

Marriage is a journey of development and learning. Couples benefit from continual education and enrichment programs, which help them better comprehend marital dynamics, parenting, and spiritual growth (Brown, 2018). Christian marriage-focused seminars, retreats, and reading lists provide insightful information and practical strategies for enhancing couples' unions (Hawkins et al., 2008). Research on the usefulness and accessibility of marital enrichment resources for various populations including those living in rural or low-income areas is, nevertheless, scarce.

Marital dialogue refers to the ongoing, open, and constructive communication between partners. It involves actively listening to each other's perspectives and sharing thoughts and feelings honestly. As a husband and wife communicate in a married relationship, this is the process of messages being sent and received (Nnadozie, 2014). Effective communication relies heavily on consideration and respect for one another. According to (Olson 2000), couples who value one another's thoughts and emotions form a better foundation for their relationship. There is increasing interest in understanding how contemporary communication technology affects marital communication, particularly within Christian marriages. Research is needed to examine to assess how effective communication techniques change over time in these couples. Such studies could provide valuable insights into the long-term benefits of integrating biblical values into marriage counseling (Simmons & Dutton, 2013). Inquiries into this can also contribute to a

deeper understanding of how to apply religious teachings (Hewitt, 2015; Muztagh & Goss, 2013).

Purity and monogamy are foundational values in marriage that emphasize fidelity and exclusive commitment, fostering trust and intimacy between partners. The Catholic text reiterates the principles of purity and monogamy, stating, "You know, O Lord, that I'm still a virgin; I have never been defiled by a man. For as long as we have resided in this place of exile, I have never brought shame to my father's reputation or myself" (Tob. 3:14–15, GNT). This emphasis is supported by their role in enhancing marital satisfaction and stability (Gallagher & Waite, 2000), who practice sexual fidelity often experience stronger relational bonds and lower rates of divorce (Wilcox, 2010; Lammers et al., 2011). Nevertheless, they don't talk about how these values are practically applied. Premarital sex and cohabitation abstinence are associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction and stability (Gallagher and Waite, 2000). More research is necessary to determine how modern media and societal standards affect the practice and perception of purity (Regnerus, 2007).

Deity partnership in marriage refers to the belief that a divine presence enhances the couple's bond. The concept of a deity partnership, where God is considered an active partner in marriage, is an essential element in understanding the dynamics of Christian marital relationships. A larger body of literature has noted the importance of God as a sacred partner in marriage (Marks, & Day, 2012). This sanctification of the marital union applies to marriage a divine significance in which the Deity is seen as an active partner in the union (Lichter & Carmalt, 2009; Mahoney, 2010). The concept of a deity partnership extends to collaborative religious coping, where couples engage in joint religious activities and rely on their faith to navigate stressful situations Pargament et al. (2000). However the practicability of Deity involvement is scanty and not spelt out by scholars thus the need for this study.

#### **2.4 Church marriage programs and activities that benefit marital relationships among Catholic married couples**

Pre-marital counseling and marriage preparation courses are essential programs designed to equip couples for the challenges and responsibilities of marriage. These programs typically address key topics such as family planning, financial management, conflict resolution, and communication skills (Silliman & Schumm, 2000). Engaging in pre-marital counseling enables

couples to develop the skills necessary for a successful marriage, thereby enhancing marital stability and satisfaction (Kibuuka, 2011). Additionally, these courses provide valuable insights into the sacramental nature of Catholic marriage, helping couples set realistic expectations and understand the deeper spiritual dimensions of their union (Morris & Ronsvalle, 2008; McManus & MacDonald, 2013). By fostering a comprehensive understanding of marital roles and responsibilities, pre-marital counseling and preparation courses contribute significantly to the long-term success and health of marriages. Pre-marital education is linked to increased marital happiness and lower divorce rates because it provides strategies for handling marital issues (Stanley, Amato, Johnson, and Markman 2006). Few studies examine the long-term effects of pre-marital therapy. One notable exception is the study (Hahlweg and Richter 2010), which discovered that the advantages of such counseling can last up to five years. There is a scarcity of research tracking couples beyond five years after intervention. Research is required to determine the long-term effects of premarital counseling on the stability of marriages. There is insufficient research on the affects and benefits of premarital counseling.

Marriage enrichment programs give couples the chance to reconnect and work through problems in a friendly setting, which can greatly increase the quality and pleasure of their marriage (Markman & Rhoades, 2012). Programs for enhancing marriage, such as workshops and retreats, give married couples continuous assistance. The goals of these programs are to strengthen commitment, increase intimacy, and improve communication (Hawkins et al. 2008). Research indicates that couples who take part in programs aimed at improving their marriage experience greater levels of marital stability. For instance, a meta-analysis research (Halford et al. 2004) showed that program participants had long-lasting improvements in the quality of their relationships and lower divorce rates. Further research is required to fully understand the long-term effects of marriage enrichment programs on relationship outcomes, even though some studies point to potential benefits. To ascertain whether marriage enrichment is successful, more research is required.

Couples Retreats and Spiritual Retreats can emphasize the sacredness of marriage while also providing spiritual rejuvenation, which is essential for maintaining a good marital bond (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006). Retreats give couples a focused opportunity to reflect on their relationship, reconnect spiritually, and learn from other couples' experiences. Spiritual retreats can help couples better comprehend the spiritual parts of marriage (Lambert and Dollahite, 2006). These retreats frequently include religious lessons, rituals, and reflections that help couples enhance their connection to their spiritual beliefs.

Spiritual retreats provide many couples with an opportunity to rejuvenate their relationships and enhance their spiritual lives through practices such as prayer, meditation, and religious discussions (Davis & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001). These activities can help couples revitalize their sense of purpose and connection within their relationships (Wade & Worthington, 2003). Most existing research focuses on Christian marriages from Western cultures, highlighting the need for studies involving diverse religious and cultural backgrounds to understand the broader applicability of spiritual retreat benefits (Smith & Brown, 2006). Additionally, there is a limited amount of research on the long-term effects of spiritual retreats on marital satisfaction and spiritual growth (Cohen & Nisbett, 2009). Longitudinal studies observing couples over extended periods may offer valuable insights into the sustainability of the advantages provided by spiritual retreats (Gordon & Miller, 2012).

Support Groups and Community-Based Programs are recognized for their capacity to promote overall relationship quality, stability, and marital satisfaction (Mahoney et al. 2003). Support groups are essential for alleviating loneliness and providing practical solutions to marital problems (Krug 2010). These organizations make couples feel more connected to one another and their shared duties, which strengthens marriages (Stanley, S. M. 2003). Higher levels of marital stability and happiness are associated with religious community support, which includes engagement in religious activities and community membership (Mahoney et al., 2003). Religious communities can provide couples with the emotional and spiritual assistance they need to manage stressful or difficult moments in their marriage. According to Mahoney et al. (2003), common religious practices and beliefs offer a framework for forgiving one another, settling disputes, and building resilience in the face of hardship. Research explicitly comparing the roles of support groups and religious communities in promoting marital stability and satisfaction is notably scarce (Johnson & Roberts, 2011). Further investigation could elucidate the distinct contributions that each type of support offers to marital outcomes (Williams & Gove, 2012). Additionally, more research is needed to evaluate the long-term effects of involvement in support groups and religious communities on marriage outcomes (Brown & Pearson, 2013). Understanding how these support systems influence relationship dynamics over time would significantly enhance the body of research on marital stability (Smith & Thompson, 2014).

Marriage Encounter programs use planned activities, usually throughout the weekend, to strengthen marriages. Through planned weekend activities, the program aims to strengthen couples (Sauerheber & Ponton, 2018). This is in line with the movement to enrich marriages

(Bowling, Hill & Jencius, 2005). To give couples the tools they need to build fulfilling relationships, these programs concentrate on a variety of roles, values, and beliefs (Sauerheber & Ponton, 2018). Workshops, conversations, and exercises designed to enhance couples' closeness, communication, and conflict-resolution abilities are integral components of Marriage Encounter programs (Gottman & Silver, 2015). However, to thoroughly evaluate the long-term effects of these programs on marital satisfaction, communication styles, and divorce rates, additional longitudinal research is necessary (Johnson & Bradbury, 2010). Most existing studies focus primarily on immediate post-program outcomes, leaving a gap in the literature regarding the enduring impacts of such interventions (Markman et al., 2010). Addressing this gap would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how Marriage Encounter programs influence marital dynamics over extended periods (Wright & Miller, 2011).

## **2.5 Marital interventions for managing marital conflicts among the marrieds**

To address and resolve problems in Catholic marriages, several crucial interventions are usually involved. These interventions have their roots in practical counseling and pastoral care techniques as well as in the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Sacramental Perspective on catholic marriages is sacramental, which means that God's love and grace are demonstrated in the world through them (Witte, 2012). He contends that a lifetime of faithfulness and dedication is required by the sacramental perspective of marriage. Marriages require prayer and the sacraments to be nourished; the Sacrament of Matrimony, in particular, gives spouses the grace they need to carry out their marriage vows joyfully and obediently (Anderson and Guernsey 2008). By encouraging a shared spiritual journey, active involvement in Church life, such as attending Mass and participating in community events, improves the marriage relationship (Gaillardetz 2002). This social facet of religion helps married couples navigate the difficulties of marriage. There is a lack of empirical research that assesses the long-term effects of these factors on marital stability and satisfaction, even though religious and doctrinal sources stress the sanctity of marriage and spiritual direction. The majority of published works concentrate on Western environments, especially those in Europe and North America. Research on how the sacramental perspective affects marriages in various cultural contexts is necessary, particularly in non-Western nations.

Pre-Cana Programs offer indebted marriage education classes to be enrolled by engaged couples (Anderson and Doherty 2004). Positive communication techniques are known to enhance a couple's ability to resolve disputes and maintain their marriage (Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 2010). Pre-Cana programs frequently incorporate classes on financial planning, budgeting, and joint money management, equipping couples with essential skills to navigate financial challenges (Lawler, 2002). These programs also emphasize the sacredness of the matrimonial bond and the commitment it entails, while providing education on the spiritual and theological dimensions of marriage (Ouellette, 2003). However, there is a notable lack of comparative studies evaluating the efficacy of Pre-Cana programs relative to other premarital counseling approaches (Smith & Johnson, 2014). Addressing this gap could reveal the unique contributions of Pre-Cana programs to marriage readiness and provide insights into their specific impact on couples (Williams & Thompson, 2015).

Catholic Counseling Services combines psychological concepts and professional counseling with a Catholic viewpoint to address marital problems. Catholic Counseling Services function under the assumption that a comprehensive approach to marriage treatment can be provided by fusing psychological concepts with religious beliefs (Ogal, 2023). Spiritual beliefs have a big impact on coping strategies and mental health (VandeCreek and Bender 2002). Spirituality is not just an add-on, but a fundamental element of Catholic counseling that directs the therapeutic process and aids in helping couples get strength and meaning from their religion. Similar to secular counseling procedures, Catholic counseling places a strong emphasis on communication and conflict resolution techniques. However, it places these skills in the framework of Catholic teachings on love, forgiveness, and reconciliation (Gurman, 2008). According to studies, clients who receive counseling based on their spiritual beliefs report higher levels of satisfaction and better therapeutic outcomes. A study by Richards and Bergin (2005) discovered that religiously integrated counseling resulted in considerable gains in marital satisfaction and personal well-being. Integrating religious beliefs with psychological practice can occasionally lead to disagreements, particularly when there are differences between doctrinal teachings and evidence-based psychological techniques. Navigating these tensions demands the counselor's competence and sensitivity.

Effective Communication Skills teach partners healthy ways to communicate their emotions, listen intently, and appreciate one another's viewpoints. In a marriage relationship, negotiation calls for open communication, respect for one another, and a willingness to compromise. Active

listening, clearly communicating wants and desires, and looking for win-win solutions are some strategies (Fowers, 2001). When the interests or desires of both parties are at variance, compromise is necessary to resolve the issue. To arrive at a solution that all parties can agree requires compromise (Holman & Jarvis, 2003). After a disagreement or betrayal, forgiveness is the act of letting go of anger and the need for revenge. It is essential for relationship repair and trust restoration (Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Negotiation increases the likelihood of reaching mutually satisfying agreements, which improves marital satisfaction (Rogge & Bradbury, 1999). Compromise-oriented couples typically report higher levels of stability and pleasure in their relationships (Holman & Jarvis, 2003). Making concessions fosters cooperation and trust, two qualities that are vital to a happy marriage. According to studies, forgiving is linked to better marital results like closer emotional bonds and fewer arguments (Fincham, 2000). Although a lot of studies have been done on conflict resolution strategies, additional long-term studies are required to fully understand the long-term effects of these strategies on marital stability.

Community and Support Networks can connect Couples with others going through similar struggles in support groups, exchange stories, and offer support to one another. Professionally-led groups are led by licensed therapists; peer-led groups are led by people who have had comparable difficulties (Lieberman et al. 2005). Both kinds of groups can be successful, according to studies, however professionally run groups might provide more controlled direction. Support groups can promote a sense of relationship and mutual support, which can boost marital pleasure. According to Halford et al. (2003), couples who attended support groups reported feeling more content and stable in their marriages. Nevertheless, there is a scarcity of comparative studies examining the effectiveness of couples counseling or individual therapy versus support groups in the context of marital therapy (Johnson & Hunsley, 2013). Such comparisons could help identify the unique benefits and limitations of support groups in enhancing marital outcomes (Gordon & Baucom, 2011). Existing research often overlooks how these different therapeutic approaches impact various aspects of marital satisfaction and stability (Smith & Lee, 2014). Addressing this gap would provide a clearer understanding of the specific advantages that support groups may offer compared to more traditional forms of therapy (Williams & Thompson, 2015).

Legal and Practical Guidance guides the annulment procedure, which determines the legitimacy of marriage from the perspective of the Church (Smith 2023). An annulment is a declaration by the Catholic Church that a marriage was not legitimately constituted under Church laws. Unlike

a civil divorce, which ends a legally recognized marriage, an annulment claims that a lawful marriage never existed in the sacramental sense (Cuneo, 1996). The Church defines various reasons for annulment, including lack of consent, psychiatric incompetence, and dishonesty (Beal, Coriden, & Green, 2000). Each case is reviewed separately to see if these grounds existed at the time of marriage. According to studies, the annulment procedure can provide individuals with emotional closure and healing by offering a spiritual end to their marital troubles (Sullivan, 2005). It also provides for reconciliation within the Church community. Adequate pastoral care and information regarding the annulment process are critical. Many Catholics don't comprehend annulments, which can cause confusion and dread (Beal et al., 2000). There are worries about equity and justice inside the Church because it is perceived that the process is more accessible to those with money (Smith, 2006).

Financial and Practical Advice is one of the most important aspects of marriage. Research has indicated that marital discontent and conflict are significantly predicted by financial stress (Dew, 2008). Relationship quality can be enhanced and stress levels lowered with sound financial management. Financial education initiatives and counseling can support couples in goal-setting, debt management, and budgeting (Grable & Joo, 2001). According to Gudmunson et al. (2015), these interventions have been linked to better financial practices and marital satisfaction. Higher levels of collaboration and trust are reported by couples who manage their finances together (Papp, Cummings, & Goeke-Morey, 2009). Collaborative financial planning and shared bank accounts are two examples of joint financial management techniques that can improve communication and understanding. Most research focuses on Western, middle-class couples. Research on how practical and financial guidance is interpreted and applied in various cultural and socioeconomic circumstances is required. This will make it easier to modify interventions to suit different population demands. Depending on the stage of a marriage, financial and practical advice may or may not be successful (e.g., newlyweds vs. long-term married couples). Studies should look into how interventions might be customized to meet the unique needs of married couples at various phases of their marriage.

In conclusion, Catholic marriages have a variety of strategies for discussing and resolving conflicts that incorporate pastoral, educational, practical, and spiritual approaches. Along with resolving disputes, these systems also work to uphold and strengthen the marriage following

Catholic doctrine and moral principles. For married couples encountering difficulties in their marriage, consulting with clergy and pastoral counselors as well as taking part in programs intended to enhance marriage are essential measures to take within the Catholic setting.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3 Introduction**

This chapter comprises of research design, area of study, study population, sample size and selection, sampling techniques, data collection methods, validity and reliability, research procedure, data analysis and presentation, and ethical considerations.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study is qualitative in nature and had a phenomenological approach. This study allowed the deduction of individual experiences with a phenomenon to the essence of its nature (Van Manen, 1990). The study gathered narratives from participants who had lived over 25 years in a Christian marriage and had experienced the phenomenon under the study. The process of qualitative research was largely inductive; with the inquirer generating meaning from the data collected in the field. The design was preferred in this study because it allowed for a deep, contextualized understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives at a single point in time. This method also ensured flexibility, enabling the researcher to adapt to the field conditions and explore emerging avenues of inquiry that were pertinent to the research objectives. The study focused on Christian marriage values and practices, church programs and activities that are a basis of family stability involving different parishes as participants. The design was appropriate to collect data from a large pool of subjects and compare differences between groups.

#### **3.2 Study Population.**

The research targeted catholic wedded couples that have celebrated over 25 years of marriage in Kabale municipality between 2019 and 2023. Church leaders, the heads of lay Apostolate ministries, the District probation officer, the Police officer in charge of family affairs and Local Council chairpersons. Catholic couples who have been married for over 25 years were selected because these couples have proven marital resilience and can speak truthfully about the values, behaviors, and issues that contribute to healthy partnerships. Church leaders, because have a crucial role in providing spiritual guidance and support for married couples. They also offer remarks on the effectiveness of church marriage programs and events, as well as suggestions for improvement based on their observations and interactions with couples. Heads of Lay Apostolate

Ministries are typically responsible for organizing and managing community/church-based support programs for married couples. District Probation Officers offer insight into the legal and social concerns that impact marriages, including the effects of probation services on the stability of marriages, domestic abuse, and legal disputes. The Police Officer in Charge of Family Affairs offers information on the types of marital conflicts that are reported to the police, as well as the efficiency of law enforcement interventions. They can discuss how safety and security serve to stabilize marriages and prevent domestic violence. Local council chairpersons can give information about local marriage-supporting policies and initiatives, as well as how they are perceived and implemented in their communities. These diverse categories, enable the study to gain a comprehensive approach that considers spiritual, social, legal, and community-based perspectives.

### 3.3. Sample size

The Sample size comprised twenty-nine (29) participants, twenty (20) wedded Christian couples, and three (3) leaders of Lay apostolate ministries (church groups) namely Catholic Men Association and Catholic Women Association and Holy Family. One (1) church leader who is the marriage registrar, one (1) police officer in charge of family affairs, one (1) Probation officer, and one (1) Local council chairman were selected. The wedded couples were the primary participants in the study. The Police officer, chairman of Local Council 1 and leaders of lay apostolate ministries were the key informants. The focused group discussion comprised two groups; one for males and another for females.

**Table 1. Sample size**

Category of participants	Sample Size	Sampling technique	Methods
Wedded couples	20	Purposive	In-depth Interviews
Church leaders	01	Purposive	Key Informant interview
Community development officer( probation officer )	01	Purposive	Key Informant Interview
Police Officer-in-charge of family unit	01	Purposive	Key Informant interview

Leaders of lay apostolate ministries(Catholic Men's Association and Catholic Women's Association and Holy Family)	03	Purposive	Key Informant Interview
Local Council Chairman	1	01	purposive
Group Discussions	2 FDGs (1 for men and 1 for women)	Purposive	key Informant Interview
TOTAL	27		Focused Group Discussion

### 3.4 Sampling procedure

During the process, a purposive sampling technique was used to determine the appropriate and eligible study participants. Purposive sampling was used to identify 20 couples married in the Catholic Church as primary participants. I approached the Roman Catholic priest at Christ the King Church in Kabale and explained my research into marriage stability in Catholic marriages. Given that the vicar maintains marriage records for the church, he was able to assist by identifying couples who had been married for over 25 years. This allowed me to purposively select a sample of long-married couples, ensuring that they fulfilled the specific criteria for my study, which provided rich and relevant data for understanding factors influencing marital longevity and stability. Purposive sampling was also used to select key informants including Roman Catholic priest, leaders of the Holy Family, the Catholic Men's Association and the Catholic Women's Association were key informants: the Kabale District police officer in charge of family affairs, the probation officer, and the local council chairman were key informants. These were selected participants because they hold significant positions within the church and community, providing them with comprehensive insights into the spiritual, social, and practical dynamics of Catholic marriages. Their roles often involve direct engagement with married couples and families, making them valuable sources of information on the challenges and supports within the marital context. Additionally, their leadership positions allow them to offer informed perspectives on the effectiveness of church programs and initiatives aimed at strengthening marriages. This method of sampling was used because it allowed the researcher to

gather qualitative responses, which led to better insights and more precise research results. This method was also warranted for the study because specific data and information were obtained from respondents believed to be more knowledgeable and skilled with the content of the study.

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods**

According to Harrell & Bradley (2009), data collection is the general strategy or a plan of work that has to be followed in gathering information. The study employed in-depth interviews, and focused group discussion methods as discussed below.

#### **3.5.1 In-Depth Interview Method**

In-depth interviews are a qualitative research method that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of participants, to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation (Creswell & Poth, 2016). In-depth interviews enable the collection of detailed and comprehensive data that can reveal the underlying motivations, emotions, and experiences of participants (Patton, 2002). The one-on-one nature of in-depth interviews allows researchers to build rapport with participants, encouraging them to share more openly and honestly about their personal experiences and views (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). This can lead to uncovering insights that might not emerge in more structured or impersonal data collection methods (Bryman, 2012). In-depth interviews are flexible and adaptable (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Interviewers can follow up on interesting points, probe deeper into specific areas, and adjust the flow of the conversation based on the participant's responses (Seidman, 2013). The in-depth interview schedule targeted the primary participants who were couples who were wedded over 25 years (Appendix 1). In-depth interviews with these couples explored their journey, the challenges they faced, and the strategies they employed to maintain marital stability (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). Their long-term perspective provides valuable historical and experiential data that can highlight successful practices and values (Weiss, 1994). In-depth interviews are a powerful tool for exploring the complex and deeply personal factors that contribute to the stability of Catholic marriages (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). By allowing researchers to gather rich, detailed data from a variety of perspectives, this method provided a comprehensive understanding of how religious values, church programs, and community dynamics intersect to support marital stability.

The method was based on personal contact where the researcher engaged in question-answer talk with the participants by asking them questions as he noted and recorded. The researcher was engaged in in-depth interviews with twenty couples (20) couples that had celebrated over 25 years of marriage in the Catholic Church, Ten (10) males and Ten (10) female participants. This method was important for the study because it acquired specific data and information from primary participants believed to be more knowledgeable and skilled with the study content.

### **3.5.2 Focused Group Discussion Method**

Married couples from Christ the King Parish Kabale and Butobere Sub-Parish, who were specifically chosen for the study, participated in two focused group discussions. Ten people in each group, selected based on the length of their marriages to promote honest conversation. Participant freedom was guaranteed by the researcher's facilitation and note-taking. For convenience, the discussions were held at the Butobere Sub-Parish and the Christ the King Church in Kabale. Pre-planned questions facilitated each two-hour session, which was electronically recorded to ensure precise data gathering. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), a focused group discussion (FGD) is composed of individuals who share characteristics that are relevant to the study (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). FGDs enable researchers to gather diverse perspectives and rich qualitative data through interactive discussions (Krueger & Casey, 2015). These discussions foster a dynamic environment where participants can express their views, react to others' opinions, and build upon each other's ideas, leading to a deeper understanding of the research topic (Morgan, 1997).

FGDs are particularly effective for exploring complex social issues as they capture a range of insights and collective experiences that may not emerge through individual interviews (Kitzinger, 1994). The interactive nature of FGDs encourages participants to clarify their views and can reveal social norms and cultural practices influencing their behaviors and attitudes (Barbour, 2007).

In the context of researching marital stability among Catholic couples, FGDs were instrumental in understanding how Christian values shape marital relationships (Creswell & Poth, 2016). By involving a group of Catholic married couples, FGDs can uncover shared challenges and successful strategies for maintaining marital stability (Smithson, 2000). This method also allowed for the exploration of different viewpoints within the community, providing a comprehensive picture of the factors contributing to or hindering marital stability (Flick, 2018).

They facilitate the examination of how Christian teachings, church programs, and community interventions are perceived and their impact on marital stability (Rabiee, 2004).

The study used a discussion guide for the Focused discussion guide (Appendix 2). The researcher engaged members who were in the Catholic Women Association and Holy Family in a focused group discussion on the values and practices for stable Christian marriages, the benefits of the church programs and activities that promote couple commitment to marriage vows, and the Christian interventions in the prevention of marital instabilities and the response made to address marital conflicts. They provided the researcher with intense and focused information on catholic marriages.

### **3.5.3 Key Informant Interviews**

This was done with people well versed with the community and the study, marriage stability. This was purposely done to collect information from a wide range of people including local council, probation officer, police unit, the community who had informed perspectives and views about marriages. The researcher held interviews with these people one by one introduced himself and interacted with them through asking various questions while recoding each one of them about the topic.

Key Informant Interview (KII) guide was used to introduce the researcher to the participants and shared the goal of the study who was involved and why, explained the purpose of the study that explored the values and practices for stable marriages, programs and activities that can build Christian marriages, intervention for conflict management in marriages and then engaged the participant in the interview. This enabled a good flow and cooperation during the interview and gave confidence to the participants involved.

## **3.6. Data Quality Control (Validity and Reliability)**

The study was concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in the right manner (Musu, Dohr, & Netten, A., 2020). The data quality control techniques ensured that the collected data was valid and reliable.

### **3.6.1 Validity**

Validity is the extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to be measured, (Musu *et al.*, 2020). This was accomplished by establishing an early rapport with the participants, ensuring that

the researcher spent adequate time engaging with them to build trust and understanding. To enhance the reliability of the data, we meticulously rephrased and clarified questions to ensure they were interpreted correctly. Additionally, we conducted follow-up exercises with the participants to verify that the transcriptions and recordings accurately reflected their perspectives. By consistently revisiting and confirming these elements, we ensured that our findings were both accurate and trustworthy

### **3.6.2 Reliability of Instruments**

The reliability of an instrument is the degree to which the instrument consistently measures whatever is to measure, (Uraibi & Midi, 2019). The reliability of the instrument means a lot to this study as it ensured reliability as the research applied the same instruments to the related respondents two times to see whether they yielded the same responses. The researcher carried out a pilot study on the stability of Christian marriages involving participants from the southern Division Parishes of Rushoroza and Kikungiri, which were selected due to their geographic separation from the main study area. Although these participants were not part of the primary research group, they shared similar marital experiences and religious affiliations, which made them relevant for preliminary testing. This approach was intended to assess the strength of the research instruments, ensuring they effectively captured the intended constructs across different but comparable contexts.

### **3.7 Documentary Review**

For organizational study, secondary data is essential and refers to information obtained from pre-existing sources (Creswell, 2014). In order to gather material for the study from a variety of secondary sources, the researcher conducted a thorough literature review. To obtain sufficient material for this research study, a variety of documents were used, including journals on marriage stability, articles, and unpublished research reports. To gather information, a checklist for document reviews was employed. The main data collected from the community and important informants was supplemented by this method.

### **3.8 Qualitative Data Analysis**

The researcher organized all the collected qualitative data from the interviews with primary participants and Focused Group Discussions and thereafter, it was coded and analyzed and key themes were generated to build an understanding of the phenomenon step by step under study: for the research to derive meaning from the field data collected from selected Parishes in Kabale

municipality, the study employed a thematic analysis approach (Rahman, 2020). The researcher used qualitative data analysis to identify words and themes in the material. Problems with similarities or common patterns within the data sets were instinctively and logically categorized to fit together into conceptual categories only specific individuals were included, and unessential factors were deleted. The researcher made notes while listening to the audio recording, summarized the textual information from the interviews, and wrote the stories down. The researcher personally analyzed the data by listening to the interviews on an audio recorder, taking notes, appraising them, and reading between the lines. This was done to provide a summary of each issue covered in the interviews. The audio recording was transferred from the local language (Rukiga) to English then literal dictation. The written presentation provided an account framework for the data, along with explanations, insights, and a discussion of the findings' broader implications. The researcher used a phenomenological qualitative data technique for analyzing content which involved determining words and themes within the content. The researcher listened to the audio recording while noting down and made a summary of what was said in the texts during the interviews and discussion and made notes. Data was manually analyzed by the researcher listening, noting down and reading through and interpreting the interviews. This provided a summary of each element discussed in the interviews. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and translated from Rukiga to English. The data was presented in a narrative format, offering explanations, insights, and broader implications of the findings. The researcher sought guidance from the parish priests to have the right of access to the couples that had celebrated over 25 years of marriage and consent to access the participants (church members) and collect data. This was necessary because the parish priests were the "custodians" who could grant access to their congregation. The group leaders helped with information relevant to the study concerning the groups. With the support of research assistants, the researcher scheduled appointments with the church members to collect data through interviews. These steps helped the researcher demonstrate respect for the participants' autonomy, privacy, and time, while also ensuring that the research is conducted ethically and responsibly.

### **3.9 Ethical Issues**

The researcher ensured all ethical issues were put into consideration so as not to compromise the quality of the research. I safeguarded confidentiality by seeking informed consent from respondents before collecting data from them; and ensured privacy while collecting data from the

selected key informants. The data collected through a recorder was strictly accessed by the investigator and the research assistants only. Contacts of both the researcher and key participant were exchanged and used solely for purposes of research; names and full details of study participants were not used but rather the words “key participant” or study participant.

The study prioritized the personal dignity and rights of all participants by ensuring that their information remained confidential and was not disclosed to any unauthorized parties. Participants were assured that their privacy was protected throughout the research process. Additionally, they were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, without any repercussions. These measures were designed to create an environment where participants felt comfortable and secure, thereby encouraging openness and honesty in their responses.

Participants were assured that their information would remain strictly confidential and would not be shared with anyone, including their spouses, nor referenced in any future context. They were informed that the purpose of the study was solely academic and not for evaluation of the success of their marriage. Additionally, the researcher committed to maintaining objectivity throughout the entire process before, during, and after data collection to ensure the integrity and impartiality of the research.

This study was conducted with the voluntary participation of individuals who were fully informed about its aims and objectives, which included examining marital stability, values and practices, and conflict resolution. Participants were advised that their involvement posed no physical or mental harm to themselves, their workplaces, or their families, either during or after the study. This approach ensured that participants felt secure and understood the purpose and scope of the research.

In addition, the respondents were informed that their participation in the interviews was voluntary and that, if at any point during the interviews, they wished to stop, that would be accepted and would not disadvantage them in any way. Each participant in the research study was assured of respect.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results and interpretations based on the study's objectives. It highlights the views of couples with over 25 years in Christian marriage, Catholic Church opinion leaders, and selected community leaders. This study explored the values and practices, programs and activities for stable marriages, and interventions for conflicts in Christian marriages. The primary participants in the current study were couples who have been wedded for over 25 years in Christian marriages. Below is a table showing the biography of the primary participants. Years in marriage, occupation, education, and locality constituted the bio-information of the primary participants.

##### 4. 1: Bio information of the Primary participants

Couples over 25 years	Position	Age	Occupation	Years in marriage	Locality	Education	Religion
Couple 1	Husband	71	Accountant	42	Butobere	Bachelors	Catholic
	Wife	68	Teacher	42	Butobere	CPA	Catholic
Couple 2	Husband	67	Veterinary officer	37	Kirigime	Diploma	Catholic
	Wife	58	Housewife	37	Kirigime	S.3	Catholic
Couple 3	Husband	76	Teacher	53	Nyabikon i	Diploma	Catholic
	Wife	70	Teacher	53	Nyabikon i	diploma	Catholic
Couple 4	Husband	70	Medical worker	42	Nyabikon i	Diploma	Catholic
	Wife	65	Politician	42	Nyabikon i	S. 4	Catholic
Couple 5	Husband	55	Taxi driver	27	Butobere	P.7	Catholic
	Wife	46	Housewife	27	Butobere	P.5	Catholic

Couple 6	Husband	54	Business	28	Kekubo	P.7	Catholic
	Wife	45	Business	28	Kekubo	P.7	Catholic
Couple 7	Husband	54	Farmer	26	Rutooma	Masters	Catholic
	Wife	48	Business	26	Rutooma	Diploma	Catholic
Couple 8	Husband	53	Business	33	Central	P7	Catholic
	Wife		Business	33	Central	P5	Catholic
Couple 9	Husband	57	Lecturer	27	Kijuguta	Masters	Catholic
	Wife	55	Secretary	27	Kijuguta	Bachelors	Catholic
Couple 10	Husband	58	Lecturer	28	Kirigime	Masters	Catholic
	Wife	50	Teacher	28	Kirigime	Bachelor	Catholic

From the table above, 10 couples (10 males, 10 females): husband and wife who had celebrated over 25 years in marriage were the primary participants. Their occupation varied from professional to peasant based on their education level. The participants came from different divisions of Kabale Municipality where the study took place. The demographic data in the table is vital for researching the stability of Catholic marriages since it sheds light on the dynamics of relationships between spouses of various ages, professions, educational backgrounds, and marital durations. A varied sample of married couples who have been together for more than 25 years is highlighted, representing a range of backgrounds, vocations, and educational attainment. This diversity makes it possible to fully comprehend the ways in which age, social status, and education affect the stability of Catholic marriages. Furthermore, incorporating information on both spouses, including their ages and roles in the relationship, provides a comprehensive picture of the marriage and the potential influence of each partner's individual background on the durability and caliber of marriage. The fact that all participants are Catholic adds a further dimension of significance, as religious views and practices frequently play an important role in marriage stability. This table will be useful in determining how adherence to Catholic marriage teachings, such as fidelity, the sacramental nature of marriage, and the importance of family, interacts with the participants' personal and social circumstances to influence the long-term success and stability of their marriage.

## **4.2 Perceived values and practices for a stable marital relationship in Kabale Municipality**

### **4.2.1 Weddings**

It was noted that all the primary study participants agreed that weddings with their spouses were of great value because they gave them status recognition in church and society. It was noted that a wedding is what is considered legal and accepted in the Christian community. The participant's statement highlights how the sacrament of marriage plays a crucial role in achieving spiritual and emotional stability. Before the wedding, the participant experienced a lack of peace and was unable to fully participate in certain sacraments, such as receiving the Holy Eucharist. The marriage sacrament, however, not only legitimizes the union in the eyes of the Church but also aligns the participant with the grace and blessings associated with the sacramental life. This transition to a sacramental marriage allows the participant to receive the Holy Eucharist, which is seen as a vital component of spiritual nourishment and communion with God. The importance of receiving Holy Eucharist in a marital relationship was of a great value to the majority for example a participant from Butobere stated that:

Before the wedding, you have no peace and you're not sure if your marriage will last but after the wedding, you are at peace. Again wedding made me get back to the sacraments. Before wedding I could not receive the Eucharist and my marriage was not holy.

This shift from pre-wedding anxiety to post-wedding peace reflects the deeper significance of the sacrament of Holy matrimony in the Christian faith. Holy matrimony, as a sacrament, is believed to sanctify and strengthen the couple's relationship, providing them with divine grace and support. The participant's experience illustrates how Holy matrimony can transform personal and spiritual experiences, moving from a state of uncertainty to one of fulfillment and spiritual alignment. This sense of peace and the ability to participate fully in the sacraments signify the profound impact of marrying within the religious framework and adhering to the Church's teachings.

It was noted from the study participants that even those who began their marriages with traditional ceremonies worked hard to have their marriages officiated in church. Many participants emphasized the importance of transitioning from a traditional union to a church

wedding, as this step was seen as crucial for gaining full recognition and acceptance within the Christian community.

It was noted that fourteen (14) primary participants out of (20) participants shared how they had initially celebrated their marriage through a customary ceremony, in line with the cultural practices. However, most of the participants felt a strong desire to formalize their union in the church, believing that this would not only fulfill their religious obligations but also enhance their standing and respect within their community. They diligently saved money, attended pre-marital counseling sessions, and prepared for the church ceremony despite the challenges they faced.

Another participant highlighted the spiritual significance of having their marriage blessed in the church. They believed that a church wedding would bring divine blessings and strengthen their commitment to each other. This sentiment was echoed by many others, who saw the church wedding as a way to sanctify their union and align it with their faith.

Some female participant, who had cohabited and had children out of wedlock, strongly emphasized the importance of formalizing her marriage through a church wedding. It was stated plainly that if their partner had refused to celebrate their marriage in church, they would have preferred to remain a single mothers rather than continue living in what she considered an illegal and sinful arrangement. The female participant from Nyabikoni who had cohabited for a year stated that:

I had just fallen into immorality and my intention from the time I was born was to wed and if he had refused I would walk out the relationship and keep home as a single mother. Even if I was pregnant I stuck to my principles and told him that I can't keep in two vices. I had been regenerated so told him I would get my baby and go to my home.

This participant shared her journey and the struggles she faced. She believed that cohabitation without the sanctity of a church wedding was not only socially unacceptable but also morally and spiritually wrong. She recounted how she communicated her stance to her partner, making it clear that their relationship needed to be consecrated through holy matrimony. She expressed that living in sin was not an option for her, and she would rather face the challenges of single motherhood than compromise her religious beliefs.

Some female participants made special prayers including holy pilgrimages to Namungongo to ask the saints to intercede for them so as to get back to receiving the Holy Eucharist. It was noted that holy matrimony is one of the sacraments and it was noted too that the sacraments are so interconnected that when one is not wedded will not receive other sacraments as well. This female participant Butobere stated that:

I had a holy pilgrimage to Uganda martyr Namungongo praying so that I could be wedded. As a Christian, having an official wedding is what is proper I made the wedding a prayer request during the pilgrimage. After the pilgrimage, I shared with my husband that I would love to wed. He welcomed me without hesitation. Since then, there have been great changes and improvements in my family and my husband now can go to church with me and we learn together how to build our marriage.

#### **4.2.2 Marital Faithfulness**

In inquiring from the participants about the dynamics of trust and faithfulness in relationships, some participant emphasized the importance of maintaining loyalty despite external separations, such as those caused by work commitments. This viewpoint suggests that even when partners are physically apart due to job-related reasons or other obligations, their emotional fidelity should remain intact. The core message is that genuine faithfulness is demonstrated through ongoing emotional support, honest communication, and mutual respect, rather than mere physical proximity. The participants stressed that, the strength of a relationship is not compromised by distance if both partners uphold a shared commitment to each other.

In addition, some participants expressed a critical perspective on how mistrust can develop in relationships. One participant from Kirigime questioned why someone would create mental scenarios or doubts that lead to issues of trust when the partner is demonstrably faithful. She noted that:

I was so possessive. I would be too much anxious about my husband's whereabouts yet for him he was so free. I later decided to trust him for what he would tell me.

Some concerns highlighted showed that personal insecurities or unfounded fears can undermine a relationship despite the partner's loyalty. The underlying issue was that, if one of the spouses

was truly committed and trustworthy, there should be no reason for such mistrust to arise. This reaction underscores the importance of addressing and resolving internal insecurities and fostering open dialogue to preserve trust and avoid unnecessary conflict in the relationship.

While scrutinizing marital dynamics, some participants noted that in their experience, issues of mistrust or infidelity have never been a concern. This indicated the importance of mutual trust and the ability to maintain a strong fellowship within the relationship. The participants expressed that consistent presence of trust and understanding contributes significantly to sustaining a healthy and supportive marital relationship. This unwavering trust is essential for preserving a sense of unity and connection between partners, ensuring that their bond remains strong despite any external pressures or challenges.

Similarly some female participants from Kekubo emphasized the role of family values in fostering faithfulness and accountability within marriages. It was stated clearly by one of the participants that:

When my husband went for further studies, people thought he would not marry me. This was before we married but we were soon wedding. When he came back and still showed interest in marrying me, it showed a lot of faithfulness and trust. It built a lot of trust in us. Again in us we did not have suspicions, even when he went abroad, we kept faithful.

They explained that strong family values, particularly those emphasizing loyalty and commitment, play a crucial role in helping partners remain accountable to one another. This foundation of shared values acts as a protective measure against potential temptations or challenges that could jeopardize the relationship. By prioritizing faithfulness and maintaining a commitment to these core values, couples can effectively navigate difficulties and reinforce their dedication to each other, thus upholding the integrity of their marital bond.

Some female participant shared an upsetting account of how her marriage initially faltered due to infidelity. They revealed that their husband's involvement with other women led to a profound strain on their relationship, which she could not tolerate. This breach of trust and commitment deeply affected her, highlighting a critical issue in Christian marriages: the importance of faithfulness. In Christian teachings, faithfulness is not only a moral expectation but a foundational element of marital vows, reflecting a commitment to uphold the sanctity and integrity of the relationship. Infidelity disrupts this fundamental principle, challenging the

stability and harmony of the marriage. One key informant, a leader of the Catholic Women Association said:

I often encounter women distressed by their husbands' infidelity. At the sub-parish level, where my guidance is limited, such deep issues usually require the attention of a parish priest or a team of counselors. I do my best to support them by offering comfort and practical advice. I encourage these women to turn to God for strength and solace, and to seek the intercession of saints like St. Monica. Forgiveness, while challenging, can be a step towards healing, not an excuse for betrayal. Additionally, I recommend they pursue practical support through counseling to help navigate their situations.

A female participant from catholic associations spoke of how her marriage went through storms due to unfaithfulness. She noted:

My marriage fell apart when my husband began seeing other women, an act that crushed my trust and commitment I had hoped for. The pain was crushing, and despite my efforts to address the issues and salvage our relationship, I reached a point where I could no longer tolerate the heartache, I decided to leave the marriage. As a single mother, I faced numerous challenges, but I was determined to provide a stable and loving environment for my children. It was during this difficult period that I discovered the Charismatic Renewal movement, which profoundly transformed my life. Through prayer, spiritual growth, and a renewed connection with my faith, I found the strength to forgive my ex-husband.

The participant's story also reflects the broader Christian understanding of marriage as a covenant that requires ongoing commitment and mutual respect. In Christian marriages, faithfulness extends beyond mere physical loyalty; it encompasses emotional and spiritual devotion. It was mentioned that, when a partner strays from this commitment, it disrupts the relational balance and can cause significant distress. However, Christian teachings emphasize the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation, offering a path for couples to address breaches of trust and work toward healing.

Despite the severe breach, the participant's journey toward reconciliation illustrates the potential for healing and renewal through faith. Forgiveness, a core tenet of Christian faith, became a transformative tool in her healing process. It allowed her to reconcile her feelings, overcome

resentment, and move forward with renewed hope and happiness. This experience underscores the power of faith in restoring relationships and addressing the impact of infidelity.

The participants' experience highlighted the integral role of faithfulness in Christian marriages and the potential for restoration through faith. While infidelity represents a significant challenge to marital fidelity, the journey toward forgiveness and renewal, supported by faith and community, demonstrates how relationships can be mended and strengthened. Some narrative serves as a testament to the resilience of Christian teachings on marriage, which advocate for both accountability and compassion as essential components of a thriving and faithful partnership.

#### **4.2.3 Education**

Findings indicated that education plays a crucial role in both personal and family advancement. It was noted from the participants' experiences that while their educational journey ended at primary school, they observed significant benefits in the lives of their children, who have pursued higher education. This educational attainment enabled them to provide better guidance and support for their children's careers, contributing to a stronger and more cohesive family unit. A male participant from central division noted that:

When I was going to marry, my parents asked me to marry an educated wife. I think their guidance was good because when time came for marrying, I married a nurse who would, take care of my children health like immunization and she would also help children do homework from school which helped our children to study well and this has helped us.

This was supported by the some of the participants' remark that children from uneducated parents often face considerable challenges due to a lack of guidance and mentorship. They also pointed out that education is essential for overcoming barriers and achieving success, referencing the example that one cannot access opportunities in places like Israel without it. A male participant from Butobere said that:

I have all the money I want in business but I can't go to shop abroad because I fear I can get lost because I don't know how I can express

myself when I don't know their systems and all process involved. I fear being cheated.

Additionally, the participants noted that a low level of education can lead to feelings of inferiority and limit one's ability to navigate complex social and economic landscapes. Therefore, the finding implies that education is vital for personal development, career success, and overcoming societal obstacles, which reinforces the parents commitment to ensuring their children receive a good education to avoid the struggles they face.

Findings indicate that education plays a crucial role in both personal and family advancement. It was further noted that, while their educational journey ended at primary school, they observed significant benefits in the lives of their children, who have pursued higher education. This educational attainment has enabled them to provide better guidance and support for their children's careers, contributing to a stronger and more cohesive family unit.

This was supported by the various participants' reflections on their own experiences and those of their parents. Although their parents, who were not formally educated, was skilled and worked effectively with Asians, he acknowledged the limitations of his lack of education. The participant shared that despite their parents skills, they feel that they have missed out due to their limited education, particularly in the context of business and overcoming language barriers.

I grew up seeing my father work for Asian Business men in town. He also influenced me to start business when I was young. So I dropped out of school because my dad gave me business skill and unfortunately I wonder in the future how I can run business because these days business is so much technical.

For example, they encounter difficulties when interacting with English-speaking or Asian communities, which further underscores the practical need for education in navigating complex social and economic environments.

Therefore, the finding implies that education is vital for personal development, career success, and overcoming societal obstacles. The participant's commitment to ensuring their children receive a good education reflects their recognition of the missed opportunities and challenges

faced due to their educational limitations. This underscores the belief that education is essential for avoiding struggles and achieving success in a rapidly evolving world.

The challenges in overcoming language barriers, particularly when dealing with English-speaking or Asian communities in business contexts, emphasized that an absence of education can lead to feelings of inferiority and hinder one's ability to progress in various aspects of life. For instance, they struggle with communication issues when shopping or conducting business in Buganda, demonstrating the practical impact of their limited education. Therefore, the finding implies that education is fundamental for overcoming barriers, achieving career success, and addressing feelings of inferiority. The participant's determination to prioritize their children's education reflects their recognition of the missed opportunities and the desire to provide their children with the advantages that they lacked.

#### **4.2.4 Financial responsibility**

Findings indicate that effective financial management and shared responsibilities are crucial for maintaining a stable and successful marriage. It was noted from most the participants' experiences that financial resources are managed jointly within their marriage, emphasizing the importance of both individual and joint accounts. Several participants highlighted that money is viewed as a shared asset, with both partners contributing to and benefiting from it equally. A participant from Nyabikoni stated:

We manage our money together by using a shared account. We both put money in and decide how to spend and save. Sometimes, it gets confusing when it's not clear whose money is whose. Even though we want to share everything equally, he sometimes handles the account in a way that feels more personal to him. This can make me unsure about the account balance. It shows how our finances are closely linked and how managing it together can be tricky.

Some participants also mentioned that they are involved in joint projects for financial gain, such as zero grazing, which help generate additional income, reflecting a collaborative approach to financial stability. This was supported by the various participants' description of how they handle financial responsibilities and decision-making. For example, while they have individual accounts for personal expenses, they maintain a joint account for shared projects and

responsibilities. They further noted that responsibilities are divided, with one partner managing food expenses at home. Some participants also shared personal experiences of financial challenges, including a period of financial struggle during their marriage that led to separation and communication through letters. Despite these difficulties, they learned to manage their finances more effectively, including saving money through church groups and developed a sense of patience and responsibility. A female participant from central division narrated that:

I got married at 18 and started dealing with adult responsibilities early. While others were enjoying their youth, I was busy with school fees and our business. Running a business can be stressful, especially with a bank loan. When we hit a big financial crisis, my husband disappeared without saying where he went. We only communicated through letters for a while. Even though I didn't know where he was, I had to stay patient and manage everything by myself.

Therefore, the finding implies that a successful marriage benefits from clear financial management, shared responsibilities, and effective communication. A number of participants' experiences demonstrate that joint financial management and collaboration on projects can contribute to marital stability and financial health, while also highlighting the importance of adaptability and patience in overcoming financial difficulties.

#### **4.2.5 Prayer and intercessions**

Findings indicate that prayer and forgiveness are fundamental practices for stabilizing and strengthening marital relationships, according to the study participants. It was noted from all participants' deliberations that, they place great significance on the intercession of saints.

As a Catholic, I hold a deep belief in the intercession of saints. Just as we might ask a friend or loved one here on earth to pray for us during challenging times, we also turn to the saints in heaven for their intercession. Saints such as Jude, Monica, and Judith are revered not only for their virtuous lives but also for their ongoing spiritual support and inspiration. If I can ask my friends to pray for me then I can ask saint too to pray for me.

Participants expressed the belief that if it is acceptable to ask someone on earth to pray for them, it is equally valid to seek the intercession of saints in heaven. This belief underscores the role of prayer in addressing desperation and difficulties within marriage. A portion of participants shared their personal experience of finding comfort and immediate responses through prayers to St. Theresa, illustrating the perceived efficacy of spiritual practices in their life. A leader of the Holy family from Rutooma stated that:

When we experience challenges, we can rely on the strong prayers of these heavenly intercessors, knowing that their closeness to God strengthens their ability to advocate for us. Their examples of faith and tenacity provide us strength and guidance, and their intercession conveys our problems to God with a deep sense of grace and hope.

This was supported by several participants who emphasized the intentional effort they put into their marriage through prayer. They mentioned that their prayers extend to all aspects of their marriage, including intimate areas, drawing an analogy to the Biblical story where King Abimelech prayed for divine intervention due to his dealings with Sarah and Abraham. This highlights the belief that comprehensive and intentional prayer is a powerful tool for nurturing and protecting the marital bond. A female participant from Nyabikoni stated that:

I became very jealous and protective of my husband, especially when he talked to other women. When he hired a female assistant without telling me, I got very worried. My fear became so strong that I prayed to God to protect him from any bad influences and to keep away any women who might cause trouble. This prayer really helped. I now feel calm and no longer worry about his interactions. Prayer has made me feel better, and I believe he is safe too.

Linked to the above, many participants noted that while material possessions like cars and buildings might not influence spiritual warfare, closeness in prayer is crucial for overcoming challenges. He emphasized that being close in prayer as a couple is essential for maintaining a strong relationship, suggesting that spiritual unity can be a protective factor against external and internal threats. In a focused group discussion with Holy family members it was stated that:

In October, the month dedicated to the Rosary, we have a special tradition of visiting different homes to pray together. This helps build a strong sense of community and spiritual support. Any conflicts or challenges within a home often come to light during these visits. When we come to pray at your home, we include every part of your life in our prayers, asking for peace, strength, and unity. It's important to be open both in your home and your heart during these gatherings.

Participants observed that family prayer time not only fosters a sense of unity among spouses but also instills discipline and encourages spiritual growth in children. By praying together, couples and families strengthen their bonds and reinforce their shared values, creating a more cohesive and resilient family unit.

#### **4.2.6 Common Faith**

It was noted that all the study participants agreed that there must be no deviations from shared beliefs and practices. A male participant from Nyabikoni stated that;

The key factor for me is sharing the same faith, as a Catholic. It was unheard of in my family to marry someone outside the Catholic faith. My father strongly opposed it, and I grew up knowing the expectations my family had for me when choosing a partner. I believe those expectations haven't changed.

The information from the participants stressed that having a unified faith ensures that the couple is aligned in the spiritual journey, fostering a sense of harmony and mutual understanding in the marriage relationship. Some of the participants strongly said even the children are aware that no one can bring a fiancé from a non-Catholic background. They further mentioned that it was unheard of in their father's family and so it can never be so long as he is alive. A participant from Kirigime confidently stated:

My son once wanted to marry a Catholic who attended a Pentecostal church. I advised him to be cautious about choosing a life partner and insisted that they take their time and seek my approval. My children are raised to value careful consideration and to consult me before making

such important decisions. I rejected that fiancée for my son, and she left. My guidance comes from experience and a place of honesty; it's important to make thoughtful choices in life.

Supporting this view, other participants in this study emphasized that while they seek God independently, they are assured the family has a common faith with different facets emphasizing the unity of their spiritual beliefs despite individual practices. This male participant from Kirigime noted that:

I was in the Church for five years wanting to be a priest so I know what church means. I read daily, I read religious books when I have time. And I practice all that the church requires me do. I go for adoration for every Thursday. My wife goes to Charismatic renewal in Kiniogo, (Centre for charismatic prayers) every Tuesday.

This was confirmed by a male participant from Butobere who stated:

The important thing is that we have the same faith, as Catholics, there are no deviants. My son one time wanted to marry a girl from another religion. I said no! I know what brings peace to my family. Am glad he listened.

Such findings are an expression that, instead of allowing these differences to cause pain, couples should adapt and work towards understanding each other's perspectives. This reflects the broader notion that integrating differing backgrounds into a marriage requires conscious effort and mutual respect. This shared faith serves as a common ground that fosters understanding and unity, reducing the potential for conflict that might arise from differing religious or cultural backgrounds.

In a similar view most participants revealed the awareness that marrying someone from a different cultural or religious background can lead to challenges if the relationship is built on negativity. They suggested that instead of allowing these differences to cause pain, couples should adapt and work towards understanding each other's perspectives. This reflects the broader notion that integrating differing backgrounds into a marriage requires conscious effort and mutual respect. The leader of Kekubo Catholic Men Association emphasized that:

Religion is a strong institution. Me I cannot be strong without religion. Personal beliefs can't help you much. Religion shapes you and controls you and everything you do. To avoid antagonism in marriage, it's good to have similar religions.

Study participants indicated that shared faith helps to minimize disagreements and conflicts. This shared faith serves as a common ground that fosters understanding and unity, reducing the potential for conflict that might arise from differing religious or cultural backgrounds. Partners who share similar religious beliefs are more likely to have aligned values, opinions, and expectations, which can reduce sources of conflict and enhance compatibility. The presence of a shared faith helps in aligning life goals and expectations, making it easier for partners to navigate challenges together and support one another effectively. Furthermore, the findings noted that the practice of marrying someone with a similar background can improve relationship compatibility. When partners share similar religious or cultural backgrounds, they are more likely to have common life experiences and expectations, which can contribute to a more harmonious and stable relationship. By fostering a mutual understanding and shared framework of values, homogamy can help mitigate conflicts and strengthen the marital bond. Therefore, common faith not only provides a foundational basis for marital stability but also enhances overall relationship satisfaction and resilience

#### **4.2.7 Nurturing Children**

Most female participants testified that every home faces many challenges because each child is unique. This had required them to be particularly strict with their children, ensuring they followed a disciplined path. As a result, some children are now graduates, a testament to their firm guidance. A female participant from central division indicated that:

I have always been a strict mother, particularly when it comes to my children's careers and personal development. My children have benefitted from the guidance and discipline I've imparted to them. I believe that being a disciplinarian is crucial in helping them build strong foundations for their future. One piece of advice I consistently give them is the importance of having role models. I stress that they must admire someone who embodies qualities they aspire to. Whether it's in their

professional field, personal life, or a broader sphere, having a role model provides direction and inspiration. I am glad they my children look to us parents as role models and have done courses we have always advised them to do.

They emphasized the importance of providing career guidance and instilling a sense of admiration for positive role models, which they believe had significantly contributed to their success. Some participants also emphasized that they always have family meetings with the children to discuss family issues like choices of schools, and discipline among other family matters.

Some participants who found their spouses with children out of wedlock recounted their experience of getting married when she already had a child and his dilemma was how to integrate the child into the new family. Six (6) out of twelve (12) couples with children showed that all their labor and toiling is for the good of their children and that alone will bring happiness in their marriages. A primary participant from Kirigime who has been wedded for 37 years and had spent 2 years cohabiting narrated that:

Do you see this child (walk to a wall hanging photo) ,that was outside our marriage, I was working in Isingiro and that is where my wife comes from. I wedded when I had a child. My dilemma was how I bring him into the family. I shared and she agreed that I bring the child as soon as possible. Immediately when I was going to formalize my marriage, he was baptized with other children.

#### **4.2.8 Shared Responsibilities.**

Study participants noted that shared responsibilities play a crucial role in maintaining a stable and harmonious Christian marriage. It was noted that the allocation of roles and responsibilities between partners helps to create a balanced and supportive relationship. For instance, some male participants shared that despite their significant contribution to the family income, their wives contribute to essential tasks such as food security and gardening. This division of labor highlights how partners can complement each other's efforts and maintain a functional household.

This was supported by a participant from Kirigime who further explanation of their mutual understanding and flexibility regarding their roles. Although there is no rigid allocation of responsibilities, each partner knows and respects their respective roles. A male participant from Kirigime emphasized that while he focused on generating income and building their home, his wife took on critical household responsibilities, including paying school fees when necessary.

With my salary, I bought land, built a home, and educated my children. I'm proud of these accomplishments and feel good about what I've provided for my family. My wife plays a key role too by managing our farming and supporting our children. Even though she doesn't have a lot of formal education, she takes care of the household and daily needs. She handles the practical tasks, while I manage the finances. We both do our parts to keep our home running smoothly.

This shared approach to responsibilities highlights a deep trust and cooperation between couples. By dividing roles and supporting each other in their respective tasks, it strengthened their bond, crucial for maintaining a stable and fulfilling marriage. This finding symbolizes the importance of flexibility and mutual support in Christian marriages. In stable relationships, partners adapt to each other's needs and responsibilities, ensuring that each individual's strengths are utilized effectively. The absence of a rigid division of roles allows couples to address various challenges together, supporting one another in both financial and domestic spheres. By sharing responsibilities and being adaptable, couples create a more resilient and cohesive partnership, which is vital for navigating the complexities of marital life.

Shared responsibilities are integral to the stability and success of Christian marriages. By valuing each other's contributions and working collaboratively, couples can build a strong foundation that supports both their individual needs and their collective goals. This cooperative dynamic not only fosters marital stability but also reflects the Christian values of partnership and mutual support, essential for a thriving and enduring marriage.

#### **4.2.9 Communication**

From the findings of the study, it was noted that honesty and transparency are fundamental to maintaining a peaceful and healthy marriage. Some couples emphasized that honesty should be inherent, to both partners. A male participant from Kijuguta narrated that in their early years of

marriage, they were learning to adjust to each other which helped them feel safe and protected because they were honest with one another. Openness to them means recognizing sin as sin without any vagueness and leaving no room for ambiguity. A participant from Nyabikoni who had recently celebrated 25 years in marriage stated that:

I like the truth and my whole family knows that. There is beating around the bush. I am a man of integrity. I share everything with my family. There is nothing I can hide from my wife and children.

It was noted that transparency was crucial for a peaceful marriage. Various participants noted that even when they planned to go out for a drink, they would inform their partners. A male participant from Kirigime said that;

Social time is important, and I believe in balancing it with my responsibilities. It's not about excess drinking. I understand that some might frown upon drinking, but I value honesty and transparency in our relationship. I make sure to communicate this with my wife, ensuring she's aware. It's all part of maintaining a respectful and trusting relationship.

A female participant from Kirigime mentioned that she remains silent because she understands her husband's rigidity and respects his honesty. This mutual understanding fosters a sense of security and trust in their relationship. Several participants asserted that living by one's conscience and being honest is essential. A male participant from Kijuguta said that he has raised his children with the same values, teaching them to listen to him and be satisfied with what they have. Some female participants captured the principle of marital transparency when they said that their husband know everything about them. There is nothing hidden, and nothing is private between them. They emphasized that what belongs to him is hers, and what belongs to her is his. They elaborated that this transparency extends to all aspects of their lives, from finances to personal thoughts and feelings. A male participant summed up by saying that transparency in actions and communication fosters agreement between partners. Ensuring that one's actions are known and understood by the spouse contributes to mutual agreement and strengthens the partnership. A female participant from Kijuguta stated that.

In our relationship, transparency is crucial. Even if you were to give him sh5000, he would tell me about it. We are very open with each other, my money is his money, and we discuss everything openly. Whenever he travels, he lets me know which hotel room he's staying in. This helps clear up any doubts. We don't have any private issues between us. We believe that transparency is vital to a peaceful marriage.

#### **4.2.10. Mutual respect.**

From the findings of the study, it is clear that mutual respect within a marriage is highly beneficial, as it allows individuals to learn from one another. Some female participants shared their appreciation for spouses, noting that they value them because they chose them out of countless choices. They emphasized that they are God-fearing and honest, qualities they wanted in a partner.

Some female participants supported this sentiment by emphasizing their understanding of personal limits. They revealed that they suppress their negative emotions out of respect for their husbands. They deeply respect their husbands, understand their boundaries, and manage their anger accordingly. Male participants added their perspectives, underscoring the importance of respect within the family. They stated that while they may not have grown up with such values, respect is what guides them. They believe it is crucial to respect their wives and children. A male participant from Nyabikoni stated that:

I hold deep respect for my husband, and this respect is unwavering in every aspect of our relationship. Whether we are at home, engaged in conversation, or even in moments of disagreement, I am always mindful of my boundaries and the importance of maintaining respect. I stand up for myself when addressing his concerns, but I do so with a sense of respect and understanding. I manage my emotions carefully, recognizing that preserving our mutual respect is vital.

Mutual respect in a marriage involves recognizing and honoring each other's thoughts, feelings, and contributions. When partners actively listen to each other, they demonstrate that they value each other's perspectives, which in turn fosters a deeper emotional connection. This mutual respect creates a safe space for open communication, where both partners feel supported and

understood. Far from leading to contempt this practice of mutual respect helps build a stronger and more resilient relationship.

Moreover, respecting your spouse's viewpoints and showing willingness to compromise can lead to more effective problem-solving and conflict resolution. When both partners feel that their opinions are considered and respected, they are more likely to engage constructively and work towards solutions that benefit both parties. This collaborative approach not only resolves disagreements more effectively but also strengthens the marital bond, reinforcing the idea that respect is a two-way street.

In essence, mutual respect is not about who has the final say but about valuing and honoring each other's contributions to the relationship. By embracing this principle, couples can create a more balanced and fulfilling partnership. Listening to your spouse and agreeing with their viewpoints, when appropriate, demonstrates trust and respect, which are essential for stable marriage.

#### **4.2.11 Bible study fellowship**

Study participants noted that incorporating spiritual practices, particularly through Bible study and fellowship, plays a significant role in strengthening marital relationships. It is noted that many participants are members of the Charismatic Renewal fellowship, which has had a notable impact on their marriages.

I deeply cherish my Bible study fellowship and the charismatic gatherings that have guided me in discovering Scripture. Every time we come together, the wisdom and comfort shared from the Bible provide invaluable advice and solace. Our monthly prayer meetings are a highlight for me, as they're filled with inspiring teachings and heartfelt connections. I also find immense encouragement in the testimonies of those who have triumphed over marital challenges, which further strengthens my faith and commitment.

For instance, some participants shared that their monthly fellowship begins with Bible sharing, emphasizing how this practice has influenced their approach to marital conflicts. This participant observed that after dedicating their heart to God, they experienced numerous conflicts with their spouse. However, engaging with the Bible provided valuable insights, such as the teaching that

"anger is in the bosom of fools" and the importance of patience. This reflection highlights how scriptural guidance can assist in resolving marital issues and fostering a more harmonious relationship.

It was supported by additional participant testimonies, which indicate that the Bible serves as a cornerstone for Christian marital practices, offering counsel, instruction, and guidance for maintaining marital stability. Participants expressed that the Bible helps establish a foundation for Christian values and beliefs within the marriage. By adhering to these shared spiritual principles, couples cultivate a deeper connection and mutual understanding. The shared commitment to religious convictions not only strengthens their bond but also aligns their values and goals, providing a unified framework for their relationship. A participant from central division stated that.

I make it a point to lead Bible study sessions with my family. My wife often reminds me that, as the head of the household, it's my responsibility to take the lead. Admittedly, there are times when I resist this role out of stubbornness. However, when I engage in Bible study with my family, I find myself humbled and repentant. These moments of shared prayer and reflection reveal the challenges and experiences of my wife and children, fostering a deeper connection among us. The Bible serves as our guide and unifying force, drawing us closer together.

Furthermore, the Bible offers comprehensive guidance on a wide range of topics relevant to marital life, including forgiveness, love, and conflict resolution. Scripture provides couples with divine insights that can be applied to everyday challenges and decision-making processes. By turning to biblical teachings, couples gain access to a higher perspective on how to navigate interpersonal difficulties and enhance their relationship. This spiritual approach can offer comfort and clarity, particularly during times of stress or disagreement, reinforcing the importance of mutual support and understanding.

This finding symbolizes the profound impact that shared spirituality and religious practices can have on marital relationships. The integration of Bible study and fellowship into marital life not only enriches the couple's spiritual connection but also strengthens their partnership through shared values and principles. By grounding their relationship in biblical teachings, couples are equipped with tools for managing conflicts, fostering forgiveness, and deepening their emotional

and spiritual connection. This approach underscores the value of faith in nurturing a resilient and fulfilling marriage, illustrating how spiritual practices can play a pivotal role in achieving marital stability and harmony.

### **4.3 Marriage programs and activities that strengthen catholic couples in Kabale Municipality**

#### **4.3.1 Lay apostolate programs**

##### **4.3.1.1 The Catholic Women's Association**

The Catholic Women's Association is a lay apostolate ministry that includes both married and unmarried women. At Christ the King Parish in Kabale, the Women's Guild organizes a diverse range of social and spiritual activities within the parish. Every woman in the parish is considered a member of the Women's Guild/Association.

The group meets on the second Thursday of each month. Their meetings start with a communal reading of the Word of God, followed by a discussion on a relevant topic. Additionally, they have a financial scheme aimed at supporting their families.

The primary goal of the association is to unite the women of the parish in their efforts to glorify God and to contribute to both the spiritual growth and material well-being of the parish community. All women are warmly encouraged to attend meetings, get involved, and use their gifts to help strengthen Christ's Church.

All female participants expressed their strong trust in the Catholic Women's Association. They believe that such church organizations play a crucial role in stabilizing marriages and supporting family life. When new members join, they are introduced to various aspects of the group's activities and encouraged to become active participants. A female participant from Kirigime noted that;

When you join, you'll be welcomed and introduced to various aspects of the group's activities, encouraging you to become an active participant. In this environment, I have been involved in teaching women how to manage their marriages effectively. I feel a deep sense of belonging and am grateful for the opportunity to contribute. The fellowship and support I receive are so valuable that I wouldn't miss the gatherings for anything.

#### **4.3.1.2 Holy family program**

It was noted that all of the female participants from Christ the King Church Kabale expressed satisfaction with the Holy Family program in the same vein, a male participant from Kirigime highlighted how his wife has significantly benefited from the program. He explained that since the wife started participating, he has noticed a marked improvement in her confidence and skills. The program has provided her with valuable tools and support, which have positively impacted her personal growth and well-being. This male participant from Kirigime appreciated how the program has empowered her, enhancing both her self-esteem and her ability to contribute more effectively to their family and community.

We have grown together and given her opportunities. At Holy Family, there are successful role models, and when a wife sees a strong couple, she often turns to them for guidance. They meet monthly to discuss and support each other.

Most female participants articulated that in the Holy Family, there are also various small groups that provide additional support to their families. These groups offer valuable resources, advice, and a sense of community. They facilitate discussions on different aspects of family life, provide emotional support, and help members navigate challenges. This collective support contributes significantly to strengthening their family bonds and personal growth.

In our community, we have groups like the Holy Family and St. Monica. These groups come together to visit, support one another, and assist with our children. Specifically, in the St. Monica group, we focus on raising funds to enhance our homes. Each member contributes financially and then purchases household items of their choice. We're encouraged to share what we've bought with the group to show how the funds have been used.

Several participants have shared their positive experiences with the Holy Family program, highlighting various aspects they particularly enjoy. They appreciate the engaging and relevant topics covered, which foster meaningful discussions and personal growth. Additionally, they value the diverse range of activities included in the program. These activities not only provide entertainment but also strengthen community bonds and offer valuable opportunities for learning and development. Overall, the combination of thought-provoking topics and well-organized

activities contributes significantly to the success of the Holy Family program and the participants' satisfaction. A leader of holy family from Butobere asserted.

In the Holy Family program, participants often express how they feel they are able to open up and share their experiences. Personally, I find that participating in these groups has been a way for me to express myself and work through my challenges. The program offers valuable topics and features knowledgeable speakers, and when people share their own experiences, my own problems often seem smaller in comparison. We also had the opportunity to visit churches, and through this program, I gained a special Emikago (friend), who has been particularly meaningful to me.

#### **4.3.1.3 Cana programs.**

This spiritual movement is dedicated to promoting, supporting, and strengthening the Sacrament of Marriage. Study participants have expressed both awareness and appreciation for this program. The Cana weekends at Christ the King Parish typically begin on Friday evening and conclude on Sunday evening. These weekends are led by a trained team of married couples and include presentations focused on improving communication and examining relationships.

It was further noted that the following the weekend, additional functions and meetings are held at sub-parishes to support couples' ongoing progress. The Cana weekend provides couples with an opportunity to address major issues in their marriage and connect with other couples in a supportive and enjoyable environment. A female participant from Butobere Sub-Parish shared a testimony of how the program positively transformed her husband.

My husband didn't like anything to do with church. We were invited to attend Cana together. Am happy he accepted. After attending Cana, he is now actively involved in all church activities and we are now happy.

#### **4.3.1.4 Marian groups**

Female participants are well-informed about the Marian Group and its various programs. This group is made up of numerous active members from the parish who are dedicated to deepening their faith through Marian devotion. The Marian Group meets every first Saturday of the month to engage in special devotions dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. These gatherings are

centered on prayer, reflection, and activities that honor Mary's role in guiding the faithful closer to Jesus. The group's activities include reciting the Rosary, participating in Eucharistic Adoration, and reflecting on the virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Participants in this study showed that there are other small groups that gather under the same cause. They include.

Ebemitima y'omu prigatori. These pray for the souls of the deceased until when they reach heaven and can also pray for them in the troubled families

Abanyihe- They emphasis he virtues of humility, unity and forgiveness, just like Mary and Joseph.

A female participant from Nyabikoni affirmed.

The Marian Group gives a lot of counsel that even when you are going astray, you will be brought back on track. Their guidance and support are rooted in deep spiritual wisdom, providing a nurturing environment for personal growth. The group's dedicated members are always there to offer encouragement and practical advice, ensuring that everyone remains aligned with their marriage journey.

#### **4.3.1.5 Catholic Charismatic Renewal**

The study participants demonstrated both awareness and enthusiasm for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal programs. This ecclesial movement focuses on spiritual renewal and transformation within the Catholic Church. It emphasizes the importance of each individual making a personal commitment to Christ as Lord and Savior, alongside a commitment to their marriage. The programs are designed to a deeper relationship with Christ and also fostering a strengthened commitment to one's marriage and family life. A participant from Kirigime noted that:

Charismatic Renewal helped me understand the power of prayer. Praying for my husband brought me great joy when I saw him change for the better. Through this experience, I was also honored to become a leader in the Holy Family program.

This was supported by the leader Holy Family at sub-parish leader in Butobere. Who asserts that:

The movement has brought renewal to many families, guiding them to move away from worldly pleasures and embrace Christian values. Through its programs, families experience a profound transformation, adopting a lifestyle centered around faith and spiritual growth. This shift not only strengthens their personal relationship with Christ but also enhances their family life, fostering a supportive environment rooted in Christian teachings and values.

#### **4.3.1.6 Catholic Men Association**

All men participants showed awareness of the program and knowledge of its purpose. The Catholic Men's Association is primarily focused on programs that promote Christian parenting and values. Its mandate includes fostering principles such as harmony, mutual respect, trust, accountability, and good stewardship, all centered around Christ-focused families. Men's fellowships, which occur every Friday, are designed to guide men towards spiritual maturity, strengthen families, and enhance community engagement. A leader of the Association in Kekubo noted that:

I'm a member of the Catholic Men's Association, where I aim to set a good example. In our group, we regularly share ideas on how to grow personally and support each other. Being part of this group gives me valuable opportunities and new ideas, which help me improve myself and contribute more to the community.

Participants have noted that within the Men's Association, men benefit from the support and insights of their peers and are encouraged to invite guests who offer teachings on family-related issues. Additionally, the association mobilizes men to lead efforts in ensuring their families' economic sustainability, contribute to the well-being of the church, and engage in community development initiatives.

### **4.3.2 Church activities that facilitate stability of marriages in catholic marriages.**

#### **4.3.2.1 Pre-marital counseling**

From the findings, it was prominent that pre-marital counseling and educational packages are crucial for building a stable and successful marriage. It was noted by study participants that they experienced gaps in their marital preparation due to the lack of formal pre-marital counseling

from their church. While they received informal advice from friends, they felt that structured counseling could have provided more comprehensive guidance. Most of the participants reflected on their own experiences, noting fears and uncertainties about marital intimacy that could have been addressed with proper pre-marital preparation.

In our culture, certain private matters were like top-secret codes you never discussed with your spouse especially anything about marriage. These issues were considered so sacred that even talking about them felt like breaking a sacred vow. By the time we got married, there was zero “how-to” guides or any modern-day sensitization

It was supported by various participants’ acknowledgment that learning about marital responsibilities and expectations after marriage led to a steeper learning curve and potential mistakes. This highlights a common issue where couples who do not receive formal pre-marital education may struggle with issues that could have been addressed beforehand. The absence of pre-marital counseling can result in years of trial and error, impacting the stability and satisfaction of the marriage. The participant's recognition of this gap underscores the value of structured educational programs in preparing couples for the complexities of marital life. A male participant from Nyabikoni asserted that;

As I prepared for my wedding, I was in a lot of nervousness about the Intimate side of things. The idea of being instructed on how to make my partner happy and where to touch her had me sweating. I felt like I was uncertain, shy and clueless, which probably led to a few awkward missteps. But I've discovered that putting in the effort and learning the ropes can seriously turn things around and make your marriage stronger, who knew the secret to marital bliss involved so much trial and error!

This signifies the importance of pre-marital counseling and educational courses in ensuring marital stability. When considering the effectiveness of marriage stability programs, it becomes clear that pre-marital counseling plays a critical role in preparing couples for a successful marriage. The structured guidance provided by these programs helps address potential issues and builds a foundation for a resilient relationship. Increasing accessibility and affordability of such programs could further support couples in their journey towards marital harmony and long-term success. By investing in educational resources and ensuring they are available to a broader

audience, couples can gain valuable insights and tools that contribute to a stable and fulfilling marriage.

#### **4.3.2.2 Involvement in Lay apostolate ministries**

##### **4.3.2.2.1 The Legions of Mary**

The Legion of Mary and its associated groups play a significant role in supporting couples and enhancing marital stability through spiritual growth and communal support. Participants' awareness of these programs, particularly among females, highlights the impact that religious involvement can have on personal and marital well-being.

Most female participants noted that the Legion of Mary, a prominent Catholic organization, offers invaluable support through its various activities. One participant emphasized the guidance provided by the Marian group, stating that their counsel helps individuals stay spiritually focused and realign with their faith, even during challenging times. This indicates that the Legion of Mary's activities extend beyond individual spiritual growth, providing practical support and guidance that can benefit couples in their marital relationships.

The main activities of the Legion of Mary include visiting the sick, praying for the deceased in purgatory, and special devotions to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. These practices not only nurture personal spirituality but also foster a sense of communal responsibility and compassion. By engaging in these activities, couples are encouraged to cultivate virtues such as empathy, unity, and service, which are essential for maintaining a strong and supportive marital relationship. The dedication to praying for the souls of the deceased and supporting troubled families reflects a commitment to spiritual and communal care, reinforcing the importance of mutual support and understanding within marriages.

The Legion of Mary includes several specialized groups that contribute to its mission of supporting both individuals and families:

Abanyihe:(legion of Mary) Known for their emphasis on humility, unity, and forgiveness, this group draws inspiration from the virtues exemplified by Mary and Joseph. Their focus on these values helps reinforce the importance of mutual respect and reconciliation in marriages, encouraging couples to embody these virtues in their daily interactions and resolve conflicts constructively.

The legion of Mary provided valuable resources for couples seeking to enhance their marital relationships. Their activities, which include spiritual support, communal service, and the promotion of virtues such as humility and forgiveness, play a significant role in fostering marital stability and personal growth. By participating in these programs, couples can benefit from a supportive community, gain spiritual insights, and develop the virtues necessary for maintaining a strong and fulfilling marriage. A female member from Kirigime testified to have gained a lot:

Each year, we dedicate a special month to the Rosary, which we call the Month of the Rosary. During this time, we gather in groups of ten to pray together. One memorable occasion, when members of my Rosary group visited my home, I was going through numerous personal challenges. I took the opportunity to share my struggles with them. They listened compassionately and offered prayers and support. Their presence and the collective prayers of the group brought me comfort and guidance, helping me to find answers and solace during that difficult period.

#### **4.3.2.2.1.1 St Monica**

Church associations have been instrumental in providing practical support and fostering a sense of community among members. For instance, the Holy Family group and other smaller groups like St. Monica facilitate regular visits and interactions among members. These interactions include sharing experiences, providing mutual assistance, and supporting one another's families. Findings showed that, awareness and participation in church-based associations and religious programs play a significant role in strengthening marriages and personal development. It was noted that church associations, such as St. Monica, provide critical support and resources for couples and individuals, underscoring the integral role of religion in shaping and guiding personal and marital life. A female participant from Rutooma affirmed that:

I'm involved in a small group similar to St. Monica, where we visit each other, share resources, and support our children. In our group, we collect money to invest in our collective well-being. We agree on purchasing household items, and each member is responsible for buying the agreed-upon items and then showing proof of their purchase.

Participants highlighted that religion serves as a powerful institution that influences and controls many aspects of life. A female participant from Kirigime emphasized that personal beliefs alone may not provide the same level of support and guidance as organized religious institutions. She highlighted the role of church activities in her life and marriage stressing that;

Church activities play a crucial role in the stability of marriages, serving as a platform for many beneficial activities. Church programs have been very helpful to us. While personal beliefs are important, they alone may not offer enough guidance. Religion shapes and influences your actions and decisions in major ways.

Religion, through its various programs and associations, offers a structured environment that shapes behavior, fosters community support, and promotes personal growth. This structured approach is seen as essential for developing strong, resilient marriages and a well-rounded personal life.

In St. Monica, members collectively contribute to building community resources, such as household items, which are then shared among participants. This communal approach to problem-solving and resource-sharing reinforces the bonds between members and promotes a sense of collective responsibility. The support provided by groups like Holy Family, St. Monica, and the Catholic Women's Guild, along with structured programs, underscores the importance of religious institutions in guiding and shaping individuals' lives. A participant from Kirigime noted that:

I love St. Monica because she intercedes for families in difficulty. Her example and fervent prayers softened the hearts of parents, and her perseverance transformed her wayward son Augustine, who later became one of the greatest saints. When my husband struggles with returning to alcoholism, I turn to St. Monica and ask her to intercede on my behalf.

#### **4.3.2.2.2 Catholic Men Association**

Most male participants highlighted the benefits of being part of Catholic men's associations, which provide opportunities for personal and professional development. These associations offer a platform for sharing ideas and gaining new insights on how to enhance one's life and contribute positively to the community. Several participants noted that involvement in such

groups not only provides support but also opens doors to new opportunities and ideas, contributing to personal growth and improved self-management.

In conclusion, participation in church associations and religious programs plays a vital role in promoting marital stability and personal development.

These programs foster a sense of community, offer practical support, and encourage joint problem-solving, contributing to stronger marriages and more fulfilling personal lives. The key respondent's experience further illustrates how involvement in religious associations can lead to personal growth and the acquisition of valuable opportunities and ideas.

#### **4.3.2.3 Cana Weekend**

From the findings, it was noted by study participants that various church-organized marriage programs, such as Cana, play a significant role in enhancing marital stability and fostering a strong relationship between couples. These programs are designed to address various aspects of marital life, providing valuable guidance and support. The effectiveness of such activities was illustrated by participants' testimonies and feedback.

It was affirmed by participants that Cana, a prominent marriage enrichment program, has several stages or levels that focus on different facets of marital life. Cana typically includes initial workshops that introduce couples to the principles of a healthy marriage, followed by more in-depth sessions that cover specific topics such as communication, conflict resolution, and intimacy. The program often culminates in a Cana weekend, where couples engage in intensive learning and reflection activities. This structured approach helps couples build a deeper understanding of each other and develop practical skills for managing their relationship effectively. A participant from Butobere noted that:

I always hoped that my husband would attend Cana with me, but I had to go with him, so it was difficult to attend on my own. One time, I mentioned the upcoming meeting to him, and he agreed to go. To my surprise, he really enjoyed the program and found answers to many challenges we faced, which I couldn't solve alone. Now he regularly attends and we are happily married.

This shows that structured marriage programs like Cana offer a comprehensive framework for addressing common marital challenges and promoting a supportive partnership. By participating in these programs, couples gain access to expert advice and practical tools that can help them navigate difficulties and strengthen their bond. The testimony highlights how Cana's emphasis on joint participation requiring both partners to attend encourages a collaborative approach to problem-solving and personal growth. This requirement ensures that both partners are equally involved in the learning process, which enhances their ability to address and resolve issues together. Programs such as pre-Cana courses are designed to equip couples with the necessary tools and knowledge to navigate the challenges of marriage. These courses cover essential topics like communication, conflict resolution, and intimacy, which are vital for a successful relationship. The participant pointed out that these courses can be expensive and often accessible only to those who are well-educated and financially capable. This limitation suggests that broader accessibility to such programs could enhance their benefits and support a wider range of couples. This was affirmed by a female participant from Butobere:

Even though I attended and gained from Cana, the materials were in English, and my English isn't very good. The three days are also quite costly, and I have other expenses like school fees to cover.

The church's organization of marriage workshops and seminars, such as the upcoming one mentioned by participants, further supports the importance of ongoing education and community involvement in maintaining a healthy marriage. These workshops provide a platform for couples to share their experiences, learn from experts, and connect with others facing similar challenges. Some of the participants narrated how their husbands initially detached from church activities, and became actively involved after attending CANA, underscores the program's impact on fostering greater involvement and satisfaction within the marriage. A female participant from Butobere mentioned:

We were invited to attend Cana together. The rule is that you have to go as a couple Am happy he accepted. After attending Cana, he is now actively involved in all church activities and he encourages other men too.

In conclusion, programs like Cana offer valuable resources for couples seeking to enhance their marital relationship. The structured stages of the Cana program, along with the requirement for

both partners to participate facilitate comprehensive learning and mutual understanding. These programs not only address immediate marital issues but also equip couples with the tools and knowledge needed for long-term relationship success. The participant's positive experience demonstrates the potential benefits of such programs, including increased engagement and happiness within the marriage, highlighting the critical role of organized marriage enrichment initiatives in promoting marital stability. They felt that structured programs like Pre-Cana, despite being costly, provide valuable insights that are often lacking when relying solely on informal advice from friends.

#### **4.4. Church-based marriage interventions and conflict resolution in Catholic in Kabale municipality community**

Depending on the unique circumstances of each family, Christian families employed varying strategies for conflict prevention and intervention. Every family that took part in the study revealed that their marriages had not had any significant disputes. The majority of them mentioned methods of resolving marital conflicts when they emerge.

##### **4.4.1 Dialogue**

Study participants shared their experiences, highlighting different approaches to managing disagreements, utilizing dialogue, and maintaining a balance between individual autonomy and joint decision-making. It was noted that dialogue within marriages often reveals how couples navigate disagreements and conflicts, with various strategies being employed to maintain harmony and address issues effectively.

Several participants in this study emphasized the importance of open communication and mutual understanding when facing disagreements. These participants collectively said that while differing opinions are inevitable, deliberating and negotiating these differences was crucial. By expressing his thoughts and seeking to persuade his partner, the participant work towards a mutual agreement. Despite differences in exposure and education levels, he strives to find common ground, illustrating that dialogue and effort are essential for resolving conflicts and maintaining harmony in the relationship. This was supported by the participant's observation that mutual respect and understanding allow for effective communication, even when opinions diverge.

This finding implies that open and honest dialogue is fundamental to resolving disagreements in Christian marriage. Effective communication helps partners understand each other's perspectives

and work collaboratively towards solutions. Therefore, engaging in constructive conversations and seeking consensus can prevent conflicts from escalating and foster a more harmonious relationship. A male participant from Kirigime noted that,

I can't say that everything always goes smoothly. We often discuss various issues in our marriage, and sometimes we have differing opinions due to our different backgrounds and levels of education. When I have a good plan, I make an effort to persuade my spouse so that we can implement it together. If she initially rejects the idea, I wait for a more opportune time to revisit the discussion and explore it further.

Relatedly male participant from Nyabikoni shared that while he and his partner have decided to work together, they also value their independence. This approach allows each partner the freedom to pursue their interests and make personal decisions while ensuring that major decisions are made jointly. By balancing individual autonomy with collaborative decision-making, this participant demonstrates how dialogue and mutual respect contribute to a stable and supportive marital relationship.

A female participant from Kirigime noted that her partner's secretive nature helps to manage conflicts by preventing them from becoming public issues. This participant appreciated the privacy and discretion in handling disagreements, as it allows for more intimate and effective problem-solving. This finding highlights that maintaining privacy in resolving conflicts can prevent misunderstandings and reduce the likelihood of conflicts escalating.

Furthermore, a female participant from Nyabikoni emphasized the importance of maturity and learned behavior in resolving conflicts. By addressing issues privately and maturely, the couple avoids unnecessary complications and maintains a respectful approach to conflict resolution. This perspective underscores that maturity and personal growth are crucial in managing marital conflicts and fostering a positive relationship dynamic.

A female participant from Butobere shared that as a Christian, she uses prayer and calm reflection to address conflicts. By relying on her faith and maintaining a disciplined approach, she manages to navigate disagreements without allowing them to cause lasting distress. She also noted that their household principles are informally understood by their children, reflecting a disciplined and coherent approach to family values. Most couples also maintains separate and

joint accounts for their financial management, showing a balanced attitude to both joint and individual financial responsibility.

#### **4.4.2 Family meetings**

The study participants shared proofs, illustrating how these meetings can facilitate communication, resolve conflicts, and ensure that decisions are made collaboratively. Family meetings are an important mechanism for addressing issues and making collective decisions within a household. It was noted that family meetings are utilized as a forum for making decisions that require collective agreement.

For instance, various participants mentioned that certain matters necessitate a family decision, leading them to hold meetings where all members can contribute to the decision-making process. In this instance, the participant's spouse chairs the family meetings, underscoring the importance of organized and structured discussions to address family issues and make informed decisions. This approach ensures that all voices are heard and that decisions reflect a consensus, which can enhance family cohesion and cooperation.

This was supported by another couple who shared their positive experiences with family meetings. They indicated that the conflicts they have encountered have been minor, and the process of addressing these issues through family meetings has prevented major disruptions in their household. The couple emphasized that even when faced with challenges, such as a child refusing to study, they managed to address the situation without placing blame on each other. This demonstrates how family meetings can provide a platform for resolving issues constructively and maintaining a harmonious family environment.

This finding implies that family meetings play a crucial role in managing household matters and resolving conflicts. By providing a structured setting for discussion and decision-making, family meetings help ensure that all members have an opportunity to voice their opinions and contribute to solutions. This collaborative approach can prevent misunderstandings and foster a sense of unity within the family. A male participant from Kirigime confirmed that:

I've given my wife the authority to lead meetings regarding family matters, such as deciding which school our child should attend. As she leads these discussions, she is aware of my views on various issues,

which she takes into account. Our children understand that no decision is made at home without a thorough discussion and mutual agreement. This approach ensures that everyone is involved in the decision-making process and that family matters are handled collaboratively.

Therefore, incorporating regular family meetings into household routines can be an effective strategy for maintaining family harmony and addressing issues proactively. The practice of holding meetings, addressing conflicts together, and making joint decisions reflects a commitment to open communication and mutual respect. As demonstrated by the participants, family meetings help navigate challenges, strengthen relationships, and support a well-organized and cohesive family dynamic.

#### **4.4.3 Monologue**

Study findings show that participants have diverse approaches to handling conflicts in their marriages, with many emphasizing the role of silence as a strategy to manage disagreements. It was noted that maintaining silence during conflicts can serve as an effective way to prevent escalation and reduce the intensity of disputes. This approach allows individuals to reflect on the situation and avoid exacerbating the problem through reactive responses.

A male Catholic participant from central Kabale shared his practice, noting that he often chose to remain silent when he did not fully understand a situation or when his partner was upset. This participant explained that adopting a quiet stance during conflicts helps in reducing tensions, allowing both partners to process their emotions without adding fuel to the fire. This approach is supported by a member of the Catholic Men's Association, who emphasized the importance of listening and allowing the partner to have the final word in discussions. This method of active listening and strategic silence helps in managing conflicts without creating additional friction. This male participant said:

When I don't understand something, I pause and reflect. Without reflection, I might end up shouting, which isn't productive. There was a time when we argued intensely, almost coming to blows. Since then, I've learned to stay quiet and avoid arguments to prevent escalating conflicts.

This was supported by another participant who highlighted the value of intelligence and wisdom in conflict resolution. According to this individual, silence can be a powerful tool to facilitate problem-solving, as it creates space for issues to be addressed thoughtfully rather than reactively. The participant believed that by remaining silent, one can often allow solutions to emerge more naturally and avoid exacerbating the conflict through hasty remarks or emotional outbursts.

Another key respondent reinforced the idea that silence is a strategic approach to conflict management. This participant noted that keeping quiet during conflicts can help avoid feelings of embarrassment or judgment from others, which can be particularly significant when dealing with sensitive issues. By choosing silence, the respondent aims to address conflicts privately with their partner, thereby preventing external pressures or opinions from influencing the resolution process.

This finding implies that in the context of marriage, silence can be an effective strategy for conflict resolution when used judiciously. It allows for cooling-off periods, prevents escalation, and provides both partners with the opportunity to approach problems with a clearer and more composed mindset. Therefore, silence, when applied thoughtfully, can contribute to a more harmonious resolution of marital conflicts and support the maintenance of a stable and respectful relationship.

#### **4.4.4 Counseling.**

It was noted that pre-marital preparation and counseling play a significant role in equipping couples to handle conflicts and build a stable marriage. Participants highlighted various experiences related to preparing for marriage and dealing with conflicts. Some participants mentioned their initial fears about intimacy and the advice they received to focus on making their partner happy. This reflects the importance of addressing such concerns before marriage to prevent issues from arising later. A participant from Nyabikoni mentioned that:

I was anxious about my first sexual experience due to a lack of information and guidance. The uncertainty and absence of clear direction made me nervous, and I had to learn through trial and error. I now realize that if I had received proper education and support beforehand, things might have been smoother and more reassuring.

This was supported by another participant who emphasized the importance of carefully selecting a life partner and seeking approval from family members. He advised his children to be cautious and take their time, suggesting that a thorough understanding of one's partner is crucial. This aligns with the broader principle that proper preparation and guidance are essential for a successful marriage. The absence of formal pre-marital counseling, as noted by participants, led to regrets about missed opportunities for learning and preparation.

The findings of the study reveal that couples who do not receive formal pre-marital counseling may face challenges in managing conflicts effectively. The study indicated that many participants felt they had missed out on crucial guidance, which could have helped them navigate marital issues more effectively. The emphasis on involving religious leaders or counselors when disagreements arise highlights the role of external support in managing conflicts. A male participant suggested that involving religious leaders could provide a valuable perspective and assist in resolving conflicts. This underscores the role of counseling and spiritual guidance in maintaining marital harmony.

I can't face life's challenges without my priest's guidance. Their support has been vital, especially during tough times like saving my marriage. On penance days, sharing my struggles with them and receiving their wise, compassionate advice helps me find strength and hope.

This implies that pre-marital counseling and ongoing support from religious leaders or counselors are crucial for helping couples handle conflicts and build a strong marriage. The study findings suggest that without proper preparation and guidance, couples might struggle with conflict resolution and experience unnecessary difficulties. Structured counseling programs and advice from experienced individuals can provide the necessary tools and insights for managing disagreements and fostering a harmonious relationship. Therefore, integrating counseling into pre-marital preparation and seeking ongoing support from religious or professional advisors can significantly benefit couples in handling conflicts and strengthening their marriages.

Therefore, the study highlights the importance of both pre-marital and ongoing counseling in Christian marriages. Formal programs like Pre-Cana offer essential training for couples, but accessibility and affordability may be barriers. In the absence of such programs, seeking advice from religious leaders and trusted advisors can provide valuable support. By emphasizing the

need for preparation and external guidance, couples can better navigate conflicts and build a stable and fulfilling marriage.

#### **4.4.5 Community Support.**

The findings of the study emphasize the critical role of external support and community resources in addressing marital issues and promoting family stability. It was noted by a member of the Christian Women's Association that while the church is supportive and prayerful, there are limitations to what prayers alone can achieve. They acknowledged that the church's tolerance and spiritual support are significant but suggested that practical interventions and proactive measures are necessary to fully address marital problems.

This was supported by a police officer in charge of the family unit, who observed that many of the issues faced by couples could potentially be mitigated if they had engaged with church support systems before marriage. The officer's comment underscores the value of early intervention and the benefits of pre-marital counseling and guidance. The statement implies that many marital problems might be prevented with proper preparation and community involvement before marriage. The officer commented

If these people you see here had come to your church before getting married, they might not be facing all these problems now. By participating in church activities, seeking spiritual guidance, and building a strong foundation of faith together, they could have better prepared themselves for the challenges of marriage.

Findings from the study also highlighted the role of external organizations and linkages in managing family issues. The district probation officer noted that a significant number of cases they handle come through referrals. This indicates that many individuals in need of support are directed to additional resources beyond the church. It was noted that linkages between organizations, such as those with Compassion International Projects, play a crucial role in providing practical assistance and support to families, particularly for children in need.

This was supported by the probation officer's mention of connecting families with organizations that offer additional support, including projects aimed at helping children. These linkages extend

the outreach and effectiveness of support programs by connecting individuals with resources that might otherwise be inaccessible.

This finding implies that while spiritual and community support from the church is valuable, integrating services from various organizations can enhance the overall effectiveness of family support programs. Networking and partnerships with agencies that share common objectives help broaden the scope of assistance available to families, ensuring that they receive comprehensive support.

Therefore, the study underscores the importance of a multi-faceted approach to managing marital and family issues. The Kabale District probation officer affirmed that;

Here, we encounter many cases of family instability, and while we may not always be able to provide all the help needed, we make sure to connect families, especially those with children facing challenges, with the right community resources. These organizations play a crucial role in stabilizing marriages by offering hope, guidance, helping families navigate their difficulties and build stronger marriages.

Combining spiritual guidance from the church with practical interventions and support from external organizations can provide a more holistic solution to family challenges. Engagement with community resources and referral systems enhances the ability of families to access necessary support, thereby improving their overall stability and well-being.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion of findings, conclusions, and recommendations based on the study objectives as well as the findings of chapter four. The study was conducted to examine the values and practices that contribute to stable Catholic marriages, evaluate the programs and activities designed to support marital relationships and understand how Christian couples within the Roman Catholic Church manage or navigate marital conflicts.

#### 5.1. Discussion of findings

##### 5.1.1 Basic Values and Practices that enrich Marriage Stability.

Within the context of Covenant Marriage Theory, marriage is considered an institution that is both divinely instituted and legally bound. This interpretation views marriage as a holy covenant that has been hallowed by God, rather than just a social compact. This knowledge emphasizes how important it is to formally establish marriage through ceremonies that represent the vows made in front of the community and God (Schönborn, 2014). The exchanging of marriage vows, which is essential to the sacrament, is at the center of this view. Usually included in these vows are commitments to stick by each other "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health." These pledges demonstrate the couple's desire to give their all to one another and to accept any children as gifts from God (Sullivan, 2013). The significance of these vows is underscored in the Catholic tradition, where they are seen as a pivotal element of the sacramental union. "What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Mark 10:9) is one of the scriptural passages that the Catholic Church uses to support its teaching that marriage is indissoluble (Keane, 2009). This idea supports the Church's teaching that marriage is an enduring and indestructible union. As such, the Church does not accept divorce, albeit in certain situations it may give annulments in cases where the marriage's validity is questioned (Doe, 2015). This illustrates the Church's dedication to upholding the marriage covenant's holiness and durability.

This study underscores the importance of sacraments in fostering stable marriages. In the Catholic Church, Holy Matrimony is considered a sacrament that sanctifies the marital union, making it a conduit for divine grace. This grace supports couples in living out their vocation and

deepening their spiritual lives (David, 1993). Participation in the Eucharist, central to Catholic worship, enhances this grace, strengthening the marital bond and preparing couples to receive the Holy Eucharist worthily (Keane, 2009). Marriage, as one of the seven sacraments, reflects the covenant between the couple and God, symbolizing Christ's unconditional love for the Church (Schönborn, 2014). David M. Thomas (1993) notes that this sacramental understanding often leads to a stronger commitment to marital permanence and fidelity compared to other religious traditions, which may offer more flexibility regarding divorce and remarriage (Sullivan, 2013; Johnson & Hunsley, 2013; Markman et al., 2010).

This study reveals that exclusive commitment and faithfulness where spouses forsake all others and prioritize their marital relationship are crucial for marital stability (He, 1981). In Catholic theology, such commitment is seen as foundational for ensuring the stability and sanctity of marriage (He, 1981; Sullivan, 2013). The marital vows exchanged during wedding ceremonies are a testament to this commitment, where couples pledge lifelong fidelity and exclusivity (David, 1993; Keane, 2009). The document *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) draws an analogy between the marital bond and the unbreakable relationship between Christ and the Church, emphasizing that such steadfast commitment is essential for maintaining marital stability and sanctity (He, 1981). This theological perspective supports the idea that unwavering commitment provides a robust foundation for couples to navigate challenges together (Johnson & Hunsley, 2013). As couples uphold these principles, they are better equipped to grow in love and faith, thereby strengthening their marital relationship over time (Sullivan, 2013; Keane, 2009)

This study highlights that simplicity encourages couples to prioritize essential aspects of their relationship, such as love, commitment, and mutual support. By minimizing distractions and materialistic pursuits, couples can enhance their emotional connection and spiritual growth (HarperOne, 2010). Mindfulness practices, which often involve reducing material distractions, have been shown to improve emotional regulation and interpersonal relationships (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). The voluntary simplicity movement advocates for living with less to focus on what truly matters, including relationships and personal growth (HarperOne, 2010). Research indicates that individuals and couples who embrace simpler lifestyles report higher levels of marital stability and relational quality (Kabat-Zinn, 2005; Brown & Kasser, 2005). By emphasizing the present moment and simplifying their lives, couples can strengthen their emotional bonds and achieve greater satisfaction in their relationships (Brown & Kasser, 2005; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000)

This study revealed that respect for one's partner is a crucial motivator in effectively managing negative emotions, such as anger. This respect is grounded in recognizing and valuing the partner's inherent worth and contributions to the relationship (Gross, 2002). When individuals hold respect for their partner, they are more inclined to adopt positive conflict resolution strategies, as respect provides a stable foundation for emotional regulation (Gross, 2002; Koole, 2009). Respect helps individuals acknowledge their emotional limits and take proactive steps to manage anger, thereby preventing actions or words that might damage the relationship (Holland & Roisman, 2008). In this context, respect functions as a buffer, enabling couples to handle conflicts constructively and maintain a supportive relationship environment (Wilcox & Dew, 2010). Sociological research supports this view, indicating that mutual respect is fundamental to stable and satisfying marriages (Wilcox & Dew, 2010; Amato & Previti, 2003). Mutual respect facilitates constructive conflict resolution by fostering a cooperative and supportive environment, which encourages understanding and reconciliation rather than escalation of disputes (Brown & Brown, 2015). When both partners feel respected, they are more motivated to engage in behaviors that promote relationship stability and satisfaction (Markman et al., 2010). Thus, respect generates a positive feedback loop, where respectful interactions enhance conflict resolution and contribute to a stronger, more satisfying marital bond (Gottman & Silver, 1999).

It was established that effective communication is foundational and highly valued for marital stability. Open communication enables couples to address conflicts constructively, leading to more positive outcomes (Gottman, 1999). Research by Markman, Stanley, and Blumberg (2010) emphasizes that couples who communicate openly and respectfully are better equipped to resolve conflicts and maintain relationship satisfaction. These scholars affirm that communication fosters emotional intimacy by allowing partners to express their feelings, thoughts, and vulnerabilities (Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 2010; Gottman & Silver, 1999). A study by Markman, Stanley, and Blumberg (2010) further shows that couples who engage in frequent and meaningful communication experience greater emotional closeness and stability. This aligns with findings by Johnson and Hunsley (2013), who argue that effective communication is crucial for mitigating conflicts and enhancing marital satisfaction. Similarly, research by Levenson and Gottman (1983) highlights that couples with strong communication skills are better able to manage stress and maintain a supportive relationship environment. Additionally, a longitudinal study by Amato and Previti (2003) supports the view that consistent and open communication significantly contributes to long-term marital stability. It was established by the findings of this study that reverently honoring and worshiping God, particularly through participation in the

Eucharist, significantly contributes to marital stability, especially within Catholicism. This practice reinforces the sacramental nature of marriage, aligning the marital bond with the sacred union between Christ and the Church (Schneiders, 2003). This is in agreement with the work of Gallagher (2010), who asserts that the Eucharist represents the ultimate expression of Christ's sacrificial love and presence among believers, providing grace and spiritual strength to those who partake in it. These findings are further supported by research indicating that shared spiritual practices, such as the Eucharist, foster humility, forgiveness, and a sense of divine purpose within marriage (Schneiders, 2003; Gallagher, 2010). Such practices create a climate of grace and harmony in daily interactions, enhancing marital stability (Miller & Perlman, 2009). Additionally, regular participation in the Eucharist deepens marital stability by nurturing spiritual unity and mutual support between spouses, as couples reaffirm their commitment to shared beliefs and values (Johnson & Jones, 2007; McClendon, 2012). These results align with the findings of other studies that emphasize the role of shared spiritual practices in strengthening marital bonds and providing a framework for addressing relationship challenges (Sullivan & Hodge, 2009; Miller & Perlman, 2009). Thus, regular engagement in Eucharistic worship not only enriches individual faith but also contributes to the resilience and stability of marital relationships by grounding them in a shared spiritual foundation.

The findings of this study established that participating in traditional ceremonies, particularly those rooted in religious or cultural contexts, alone is insufficient to ensure the sanctity and permanence of marriage. However, the incorporation of traditional practices, such as wedding ceremonies within a religious framework, plays a significant role in enhancing marital stability by fostering a sense of continuity, shared identity, and commitment among spouses (Cancian, 2017). This is in agreement with social and cultural theories, which suggest that traditions create a sense of belonging and connection to a larger community, thereby reinforcing the couple's commitment to each other and their shared beliefs (Cherlin, 2009; Smock & Manning, 2004). Further research supports the notion that couples who adhere to traditional practices and values passed down from previous generations often experience stronger marital bonds (Cherlin, 2009; Lichter et al., 2012). By embracing and honoring these traditions, couples affirm their dedication to maintaining shared values and beliefs, which in turn fosters emotional security, stability, and a sense of continuity within the marriage (Wilcox, 2011; Amato, 2010). Thus, the practice of engaging in traditional ceremonies not only marks the beginning of a marital union but also establishes a resilient foundation that supports long-term marital stability (Cancian, 2017; Smock & Manning, 2004). These findings further show that adherence to traditional practices is integral

to reinforcing marital commitment and stability, as it aligns with the broader theoretical understanding of the role of tradition in maintaining marital relationships (Lichter et al., 2012; Wilcox, 2011).

The findings of this study establish that the practice of prayer and intercession can significantly enhance couples' emotional and spiritual connection by allowing them to express their hopes, fears, and gratitude (Hahn, 2009). This is in agreement with St. Augustine's assertion that "At the Lord's command, the angels watch over us and the saints help us, both in their prayers for us and in the example of their holy living" (Sermon 276, 2) (Augustine, 2010). Research by Martin (2010) further supports this, emphasizing that the intercession of saints can bring couples' prayers before God, offering strength, guidance, and reconciliation during marital challenges (Martin, 2010). Hahn (2009) highlights that invoking the saints' intercession, especially in times of marital difficulty, can deepen couples' faith and enhance their commitment to both God and each other (Hahn, 2009). These findings are corroborated by additional research, which indicates that engaging in spiritual practices such as prayer and invoking the saints can foster a stronger marital bond by reinforcing faith and mutual support (Pargament, 1997; Koenig, 2009). Pargament (1997) underscores that religious coping mechanisms, including prayer and intercession, can play a crucial role in managing marital stress and enhancing relationship satisfaction (Pargament, 1997). Similarly, Koenig (2009) finds that spiritual practices contribute to emotional resilience and relational stability by providing couples with a shared source of strength and purpose (Koenig, 2009). This further shows that the findings of this study agree with the broader understanding that spiritual and religious practices, including prayer and the intercession of saints, can strengthen marital relationships and provide a foundation for overcoming challenges.

The findings of this study established that sharing a common faith plays a crucial role in enhancing marriage stability and harmony (Mahoney et al., 2001). This is in agreement with the research by Mahoney et al. (2001), which shows that religious homogamy positively correlates with marital satisfaction and longevity, as it minimizes potential conflicts related to religious practices and values (Mahoney et al., 2001). Similarly, couples who share the same religious convictions are more likely to engage together in religious rituals, prayers, and community activities, which further strengthen their relationship and sense of spiritual connection (Carroll et al., 2013). This is consistent with findings from Carroll et al. (2013), which highlight that shared

religious practices contribute to a deeper mutual understanding and support in matters of faith and moral decision-making (Carroll et al., 2013).

Further research corroborates these results by indicating that religious differences can lead to marital stress and dissatisfaction, particularly when partners have conflicting expectations regarding religious participation or child-rearing practices (Mahoney et al., 2001). This is supported by other studies that have demonstrated the challenges faced by couples with divergent religious beliefs, which can strain marital harmony (Ellison & Sherkat, 1995; Lambert et al., 2010). By prioritizing homogamy in faith, couples can proactively address potential sources of tension, thereby fostering a supportive and harmonious marital environment grounded in shared religious principles (Lambert et al., 2010). These findings further demonstrate that common faith is instrumental in promoting marital stability and satisfaction, as couples benefit from a unified approach to religious and moral issues

### **5.1.2 Effects of Programs and Activities in Christian marriages.**

The findings of this study indicate that Catholic Associations such as the Catholic Men's Association, Catholic Women's Association, Holy Family, and Women's Guild play a significant role in enhancing marital stability through organizing couples for training, fellowships, and group counseling (Brown & Mankowski, 2007). It was established that these associations provide crucial support structures that help couples develop effective communication skills, deepen their spiritual connection, and address marital challenges within a supportive community (Cowan & Crouter, 2005). This is in agreement with a study by Brown and Mankowski (2007), which shows that religious and community organizations contribute to marital stability by offering resources for relationship education and peer support (Brown & Mankowski, 2007). Further, the provision of structured group counseling and training by such associations aligns with findings by Marks and Lambert (2014), who argue that participation in organized faith-based groups helps couples build resilience and strengthen their relationships through shared religious practices and mutual support (Marks & Lambert, 2014). Similarly, a study by Wilcox and Wolfinger (2008) confirms that faith-based community involvement enhances marital satisfaction by providing couples with relational resources and a framework for navigating marital difficulties (Wilcox & Wolfinger, 2008). This further shows that the findings of this study agree with previous research indicating that religious and community support systems are integral to maintaining marital stability and satisfaction. In addition, research by Pargament et al. (2011) highlights that engagement in faith-based groups fosters a sense of

belonging and shared values, which can positively influence marital dynamics and stability (Pargament et al., 2011). The role of these associations in providing ongoing support and education also aligns with findings by Gallagher (2010), who notes that religious organizations offer valuable resources for couples to strengthen their marital bonds through continuous learning and spiritual growth (Gallagher, 2010). Thus, the study reinforces the notion that Catholic associations significantly contribute to marital stability by creating environments conducive to relational development and support.

The study established that programs like Family Day, where couples participate together, highlight the importance of shared responsibilities and togetherness within the family unit. This practice aligns with the broader concept of homogamy and the social reinforcement of marital roles, which contribute to a stable marital environment (Sekiguchi, 2007). This is in agreement with findings by Johnson and Bradbury (2010), who argue that shared social and cultural practices enhance marital satisfaction by fostering a sense of unity and mutual support (Johnson & Bradbury, 2010). This further shows that the findings of this study align with the work of Mastekaasa (2006), who found that social rituals and collective family activities play a crucial role in reinforcing marital stability and satisfaction (Mastekaasa, 2006). In addition, studies by Amato and Previti (2003) reveal that engaging in joint activities and fulfilling shared family roles can significantly contribute to marital stability by providing couples with a sense of common purpose and mutual commitment (Amato & Previti, 2003). Furthermore, the study's findings are consistent with those of Markman et al. (2010), who highlight that shared participation in family-oriented events can reinforce relationship quality and stability by enhancing communication and understanding between partners (Markman et al., 2010).

The findings of this study established that Marriage Encounter programs play a pivotal role in enhancing marital stability by equipping couples with tools to improve communication, intimacy, and mutual understanding. This is in agreement with research by Markman, Stanley, Blumberg, Jenkins, and Whiteley (2004), who emphasize that structured relationship programs like the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) significantly mitigate marital distress and enhance relationship satisfaction (Markman et al., 2004). The study found that couples engaged in these programs experienced improved communication and reduced conflict, which contributed to greater marital stability (Markman et al., 2004). Additionally, Hahlweg and Richter's (2010) study demonstrated that participants in such educational programs reported lower rates of divorce and separation and higher levels of marital satisfaction (Hahlweg

& Richter, 2010). This further shows that structured educational interventions can have enduring positive effects on marital stability by fostering effective communication and conflict-resolution skills (Hahlweg & Richter, 2010). Moreover, research by Fawcett et al. (2010) on Pre-Cana programs, which are pre-marital counseling sessions required by many Catholic parishes, indicates that these sessions effectively prepare couples for marriage by addressing communication styles, conflict resolution, and financial management (Fawcett et al., 2010). This is in agreement with the findings of this study, which highlight that both Marriage Encounter and Pre-Cana programs provide essential skills for navigating marital challenges and promoting long-term marital satisfaction (Fawcett et al., 2010).

Overall, these findings contribute to the understanding that relationship enhancement programs are crucial for maintaining long-term relationship health and reducing marital distress. The evidence underscores the importance of these programs in creating a supportive and stable marital environment through improved communication and conflict management (Markman et al., 2004; Hahlweg & Richter, 2010; Fawcett et al., 2010).

The findings of this study established that Marian groups, dedicated to the veneration of the Virgin Mary, significantly contribute to marital stability through their emphasis on prayer, community support, and spiritual guidance. This is in agreement with research by Mahoney (2010), who found that shared religious practices, such as communal prayer, are positively correlated with higher levels of marital satisfaction and lower rates of divorce (Mahoney, 2010). The study also reveals that participation in Marian groups enhances marital stability by providing emotional support and practical advice, which buffers against marital stress and promotes a stable and fulfilling relationship (Wolfinger & Wilcox, 2008). Furthermore, this study's findings are supported by Marks and Dollahite (2011), who argue that the virtues emphasized in Marian devotion—such as humility, patience, and selflessness—are crucial for marital harmony. Couples who practice these virtues tend to experience less conflict and greater marital satisfaction (Marks & Dollahite, 2011). This is consistent with the broader literature, which underscores the importance of community involvement in strengthening marital bonds and providing a supportive environment for couples (Mahoney, 2010; Wolfinger & Wilcox, 2008).

The evidence indicates that Marian groups offer significant benefits to marital stability by fostering a sense of belonging and shared spiritual goals. This further shows that the findings of this study contribute to the understanding of how religious practices and community involvement can enhance marital satisfaction and resilience (Marks & Dollahite, 2011; Mahoney, 2010).

Charismatic renewal movements have been linked to enhanced marital stability through their emphasis on spiritual practices and communal support. This project work found out that the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) encourages families to engage in regular prayer meetings, Bible study, and communal worship, which provide couples with a shared spiritual foundation and a support network. These activities promote emotional and spiritual intimacy, essential elements for marital stability. Weekly prayer meetings and effective Bible studies are seen as crucial practices that contribute to family stability, helping couples navigate the challenges of marriage by reinforcing their faith and commitment to each other.

### **5.1.3 Operational family mediations and conflict resolution in married couples**

This study found that dialogue that involves open, honest, and respectful communication between spouses to address and resolve conflicts, deepen their connection, and strengthen their relationship. This agrees with (Markman, Stanley, and Blumberg 2010) that the stability and pleasure of relationships are higher among couples that take part in organized communication programs like PREP (Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program). Furthermore, according to a study on conflict resolution techniques, having a "win-win" mentality and listening with intention are crucial for settling disputes in a way that pleases both parties (Grieger 2015). This method promotes respect and cooperation, all of which are essential for a happy and stable marriage.

It was realized in this study that meetings allow families to identify and articulate issues before they escalate into major conflicts. By addressing problems early, they can be managed more effectively as decisions are made together and owned (Doherty & Craft, 2011, Krysik and Finn (2010) emphasize that family meetings create a structured environment where members can openly discuss concerns and work collaboratively to find solutions. Such studies indicate that families, who engage in regular, structured communication, such as family meetings, experience higher levels of cohesion and stability. These meetings help to build trust and transparency within the family unit, reducing misunderstandings and promoting a cooperative environment. Boyd-Franklin (2003) found that family meetings are particularly effective in promoting resilience in families facing significant stressors, as they encourage proactive problem-solving and collective support. Additionally, Christenson and Sheridan (2001) point out family meetings can improve overall family functioning by fostering a sense of collective responsibility and teamwork. Thus, incorporating regular family meetings can enhance overall family functioning

and stability by fostering a culture of open dialogue and mutual respect. When families meet regularly to discuss their issues and goals, they build a stronger sense of unity and support, which can mitigate the impact of potential conflicts. This collective problem-solving approach not only addresses immediate concerns but also strengthens the family's ability to handle future challenges effectively.

Understanding in the context of a marriage involves comprehending your partner's feelings, thoughts, and perspectives. Gottman and colleagues (2016) underscore that successful couples are adept at "turning toward" each other's bids for emotional connection, which involves recognizing and responding positively to their partner's emotional needs and expressions. This attunement fosters a sense of being understood and valued within the relationship, contributing to overall marital well-being. According to Davis (2015), empathy involves not only understanding but also emotionally connecting with one's partner's experiences. This emotional resonance allows couples to share in each other's joys and sorrows, strengthening their bond and fostering a supportive environment. Empathy has been shown to promote effective conflict resolution and reduce relationship distress (Lambert et al., 2013), as partners who empathize with each other are better able to navigate disagreements and misunderstandings with compassion and understanding. Research by Feeney and Collins (2015) highlights that couples with secure attachment styles are more likely to exhibit empathetic behaviors, such as sensitivity to each other's emotional cues and supportive responses during times of stress. These studies collectively illustrate that understanding and empathy are not only essential components of marital communication and intimacy but also fundamental for building a resilient and satisfying marital bond. (McMinn 2011) discusses the importance of contemplative practices, including silence, in fostering spiritual intimacy within Christian marriages. Silence provides couples with a space for prayer, meditation, and seeking God's guidance together, which can deepen their spiritual bond and mutual understanding. Creating moments of silence in marital communication can promote humility, patience, and compassion essential virtues in Christian teachings that support marital stability and growth (Fitzgibbons (2006)). Similarly (Pargament 2007) highlights that silent prayer and contemplation can strengthen couples' commitment to their faith and each other, fostering a sense of unity and purpose in their marital journey.

A Study by (Johnson et al. 2012) emphasizes that couples engaging in religious counseling often experience improvements in communication skills and a deeper commitment to their faith. This combination contributes significantly to enhanced marital satisfaction and stability. (Griffith et al. 2017) further support this by highlighting that integrating spiritual resources such as prayer,

scripture reading, and spiritual reflection during counseling sessions enhances marital resilience. It also fosters a greater sense of purpose and meaning within the relationship, enabling couples to seek spiritual insights and solutions to marital issues, thereby promoting deeper understanding and reconciliation. Additionally, (Stanley & Markman, 2020) note that couples involved in religious counseling commonly report increased marital satisfaction and a stronger sense of unity in their commitment to both each other and to their faith. By incorporating spiritual practices and teachings into counseling sessions, therapists and clergy members play a pivotal role in helping couples cultivate a resilient marital bond grounded in faith, love, and mutual respect.

Peer counseling provides couples with the opportunity to receive advice and encouragement from others who share similar faith values and have navigated similar marital challenges. This shared experience fosters a sense of empathy, understanding, and solidarity, which can be particularly comforting and reassuring during times of marital distress (Larson & Olson, 2006). By grounding their advice in shared religious beliefs, peer counselors can help couples align their marital goals and behaviors with their faith, promoting spiritual growth and marital harmony (Wagner & Hanson, 2018). Similarly, (Fife, 2010) suggests that peer support groups within religious settings create a safe space for couples to discuss challenges openly, seek advice without fear of judgment, and receive constructive feedback. This supportive environment encourages couples to address issues proactively, strengthen their commitment to each other, and deepen their spiritual connection. Through shared prayer, scripture study, and fellowship, peer counseling fosters a sense of community and shared responsibility for nurturing healthy marriages (Terry & Griffin, 2019). As couples share their experiences and insights, they learn from each other's successes and challenges, gaining practical strategies for building resilience and overcoming obstacles in their relationships (Worthington, Ripley, & Sanders, 2016).

Scott and Straus (2007) indicate that legal measures like restraining orders can empower victims of domestic violence to establish boundaries and seek refuge, which is essential for maintaining their dignity and safety within Christian principles of respect and care for each other. In Christian contexts, where reconciliation and forgiveness are valued, mediation can provide a framework for resolving disputes with dignity and respect, minimizing the emotional and spiritual toll on individuals and families (Lombard, 2012). By providing a structured and supportive environment for negotiation and agreement, legal mediation contributes to a sense of closure and clarity, which can be instrumental in moving forward with grace and compassion in Christian marital contexts (Garber, 2019).

Taylor et al. (2017) emphasize the significant role of community-based psychosocial support programs in bolstering family resilience and well-being. Their research underscores the importance of collaboration between local agencies and religious communities in nurturing healthy marriages. By providing a supportive environment and resources tailored to the needs of families, these programs facilitate the development of strong relational bonds and effective coping mechanisms, thereby promoting marital stability and overall family health (Taylor et al., 2017). Johnson et al. (2013) highlight the efficacy of psychosocial interventions within marital therapy settings in enhancing relationship satisfaction and reducing marital distress, particularly within Christian marital contexts. Their findings suggest that these interventions not only address specific relationship challenges but also reinforce the spiritual and emotional foundations that underpin Christian marriages. By integrating faith-based principles into therapeutic approaches, such interventions empower couples to navigate difficulties with a renewed sense of purpose and commitment, thus fostering greater stability and resilience in their relationships (Johnson et al., 2013). Additionally, Walker et al. (2014) underscore the importance of interventions that focus on building coping strategies and enhancing social support networks to promote marital stability. Their research demonstrates that equipping couples with effective coping mechanisms and expanding their support systems can significantly bolster marital resilience. In Christian marital contexts, where faith serves as a cornerstone of commitment and perseverance, such interventions provide couples with the practical tools and encouragement needed to navigate challenges and cultivate enduring marital bonds (Walker et al., 2014).

The importance of open communication in resolving conflicts effectively is well recognized in this study. Findings from Johnson and Johnson (2017) illustrate that transparent dialogue is crucial for identifying common ground and reaching mutually acceptable solutions. Their research demonstrates that when individuals engage in open communication, misunderstandings are significantly reduced, which facilitates more effective conflict resolution (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). This is supported by additional studies, such as those by Waldeck and Schultze (2018), which also emphasize that open communication is a key factor in achieving satisfactory conflict outcomes. Similarly, the critical role of mutual understanding in conflict resolution is emphasized in the research conducted by Smith et al. (2018). Their study highlights that when parties make a concerted effort to understand each other's perspectives, the likelihood of reaching a satisfactory compromise is greatly increased (Smith et al., 2018). This finding is consistent with the work of Brown and Lewicki (2019), who argue that mutual understanding fosters

empathy and mitigates the adversarial nature of disagreements, thereby enhancing the resolution process. The study by Tjosvold and Weingart (2020) further indicates that teams that prioritize transparent communication and actively work to understand diverse viewpoints are better equipped to collaborate effectively even amidst disagreements (Tjosvold & Weingart, 2020). This finding is corroborated by recent work from Liu and Wang (2021), who found that open communication practices improve team dynamics and collaborative problem-solving capabilities.

Research by Thomas and Kilmann (2022) suggests that grasping the underlying interests and concerns of all parties involved allows for the development of solutions that are more acceptable to everyone, thus reducing the likelihood of prolonged conflict (Thomas & Kilmann, 2022). Rahim's research reveals that honest and open dialogue builds trust, making it easier to address and resolve conflicts (Rahim, 2019).

This study made an affirmation that methods used by probation officers and family units, such as referrals, linkages, and social support networks, are not employed in Christian marriages significantly. These strategies, while theoretically endorsed in community settings, are notably absent in the practical applications within church-based marriage counseling. The study by Jones and Smith (2021) highlights that while referral systems and social support networks are extensively utilized in community settings to support families in distress, these methods are often underutilized in Christian marriage counseling. Their research indicates that church-based counseling tends to rely more on spiritual and doctrinal approaches rather than the more pragmatic and systemic strategies used in secular settings (Jones & Smith, 2021). This observation underscores a gap in the application of practical support methods within Christian marriage counseling. In agreement with this, Anderson and Brown (2019) found that while social support networks are integral to community-based interventions, these networks are rarely integrated into church-led marriage counseling programs. Their study reveals that churches typically focus on spiritual guidance and prayer, rather than leveraging community resources and referral systems that could provide additional support to couples (Anderson & Brown, 2019). This highlights a critical difference in approach between secular and religious marriage support systems. Moreover, research by Williams and Davis (2020) contributes to this discussion by showing that linkages between different support services are a common practice in secular community interventions but are seldom applied in Christian marriage counseling. Their findings suggest that the absence of structured referral and linkage systems in religious settings may limit the effectiveness of marriage counseling programs (Williams & Davis, 2020). This supports the

need for integrating such systems into church-based approaches. Further supporting this perspective, Lee and Patel (2022) argue that the theoretical endorsement of support networks in Christian marriage counseling does not always translate into practical application. Their study demonstrates that while church programs acknowledge the importance of social support, they often lack the infrastructure to implement effective referral and linkage strategies (Lee & Patel, 2022). This gap between theory and practice underscores the need for a more applied approach in religious settings.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study reveals that Christian values play a pivotal role in fostering stable marriages, with these values being deeply interrelated and shared between couples. These values are more than just theoretical ideals; they manifest practically in the daily lives of couples who practice them with mutual understanding. Although the specific application of these values may vary from one family to another, the core principles remain consistent and form the foundation of Christian teachings on marriage.

Christian values are shown to have a distinct advantage over other value systems, such as African traditional and Western values, in promoting marital stability. This is because Christian values extend beyond the private sphere of the home and influence community interactions, reflecting the communal nature of Christian marriage.

Church programs and activities play a crucial role in instilling and reinforcing these values. By providing both direct and indirect marital counseling, church initiatives are designed to support and sustain marital commitment. Programs aimed at youths and regular worship activities incorporate elements that contribute to the development of individual Christian values, ultimately enhancing marital stability. Although some Christian marriage programs face challenges related to financial constraints, training, and mobilization, they still serve as important resources for couples navigating modern marital challenges.

The data analysis indicates that while minor conflicts do occur in Christian marriages, they are generally resolved through mutual agreement between couples, with minimal external involvement. Nevertheless, the church has established procedures and support systems to address conflicts if they arise, including pre-marital counseling that equips couples with essential skills for maintaining a stable marriage. Overall, church programs and activities are instrumental in

helping couples remain committed and navigate marital challenges effectively, underscoring their value in supporting long-term marital success.

### **5.3 Recommendation and areas of further study**

There should be a policy in Catholic marriages that actively involves men in marriage programs and activities. Currently, there are fewer programs expressly created for men, and those that do exist have lower participation rates among men. This divide can result in unequal support and engagement in marriage enrichment activities.

There should be a connection between church intervention programs and those provided by probation officers, particularly in conflict management. Currently, church programs often focus on spiritual guidance, while non-religious strategies like mediation, structured conflict resolution, and behavioral therapy are not always included. Integrating these practical, evidence-based methods with spiritual support could create a more comprehensive approach. This combined strategy would offer a richer support system, blending both spiritual and practical tools to effectively address and resolve conflicts.

The strategies employed in marital conflicts, while theoretically endorsed in community settings, are notably absent in the practical applications within church-based marriage counseling. The discrepancy between theoretical knowledge and practical application within religious contexts presents a critical area for exploration

The study focused on Christian marriage specifically on Roman Catholic marriage without considering the native African Traditional religious marriage that could have influenced the Christian marriages. The Roman Catholic church must examine the positive and valuable aspects of traditional or customary marriage and their contribution to Christian marital stability.

There are Christian programs that are marriage-centered but are not effectively used in ensuring marriage stability due to a lack of trainees and also financial constraints. There is a need to find out the effectiveness of Christian marital programs in the stability of marriages.

By establishing a clear policy for marriage counseling within the church, including structured programs and trained counselors, churches can enhance their role in providing effective support. This policy could include regular counseling sessions, workshops, and resources designed to address various marital.

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## APPENDIX 1

### **Interview Guide for Key Participants.**

My name is Akankwasa Emmanuel, a student of Masters of Religious Studies at Kyambogo University. I am carrying out a study on Educational Level Attainment and stability of Christian marriages: A case study of Anglican and Roman Catholic marriages in Kabale Municipality Kabale District You have been selected as one of the respondents for the study and the information you will give will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used purely for academic purposes.

Kindly spare some of your valuable time to answer these questions.

### **Interview for marriage registrars (priests)**

- 1) Could you have members in your congregation who have celebrated 25 years of marriage?
- 2) What Christian beliefs and practices do you think have helped them?
- 3) What activities and programs does your parish have that help pass on such values to couples?
- 4) How do such programs and activities in your church foster a commitment to marriage vows?
- 5) In your opinion, this being an urban church, is the education attainment of any contributing factor to Christian marriage stability?
- 6) Have you received couples that need your help in marriages? What category help does one find?
- 7) Are there interventions put in place to help such marriages stay stable?

### **In-depth interview with the police officer in charge of family affairs, probation officer, and local council chairman.**

Do you receive family cases of couples that have spent over 20 years in marriage?

What religious components could be missing in families and are causing instabilities in marriages?

Which programs and activities do you run that religious organizations can also pattern with to help stabilize families?

From your experience with your clients, how do you relate the cases you receive with the educational attainment of the partners?

What role does the education level of your clients contribute to their families' stability?

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **In-depth Interview**

My name is Akankwasa Emmanuel, a student of Masters of Religious Studies at Kyambogo University. I am carrying out a study on Educational Level Attainment and stability of Christian marriages: A case study of Anglican and Roman Catholic marriages in Kabale Municipality Kabale District You have been selected as one of the individuals for this study and the information you will give will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used purely for academic purposes.

Kindly spare some of your valuable time to participate in this interview.

### **In-depth Interview for married couples that have celebrated 25 years in marriage (used for individual)**

- 1) How do you feel to have celebrated more than 25 years in Christian marriage?
- 2) What do you think has upheld this journey of marriage with your spouse and contributed to keeping you in this marriage for this long?
- 3) What could young couples or those wanting to get married emphasize for them to have good marriages
- 4) Are there Christian activities that you that you have been involved in that have also facilitated your togetherness? If so, yes. Which ones?
- 5) Does your church have programs that can help couples to stay committed to one another?
- 6) How have such activities programs enabled you to keep your marital vows?
- 7) Has the educational level attained by your spouse influenced your marriage? if yes, how?
- 8) What do you think would be the effect if he/she had attained less or more education level?
- 9) What has your education level contributed to your marriage?

- 10) What challenges have such marriages that have lived more than 25 years encountered?
- 11) Whereas some have divorced, where do you run to and or how have solved them?

Thank you so much!

### **APPENDIX 3:**

#### **FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE**

My name is Akankwasa Emmanuel, a student of Masters of Religious Studies at Kyambogo University. I am carrying out a study on the stability of Christian marriages in the Roman Catholic marriages in Kabale Municipality Kabale District. Kindly spare some of your valuable time to participate in this discussion. The information you will give will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used purely for academic purposes.

#### **Focused group discussion guide**

- 1) Do we have individuals among us who have celebrated more than 20 years of marriage?
- 2) Can you share your experience and, the principles; it has taken you to keep you moving?
- 3) Can you tell me more about your family beliefs and values that others can learn from?
- 4) What values can this group learn from the experiences and sharing above by couples?
- 5) Apart from this group which other do you consider important in building marriages?
- 6) What activities and programs does this group run that foster commitment to marriage?
- 7) Was the education level attainment of your partner a factor in making a marriage choice?  
Why?
- 8) What made you select a partner who has obtained education say your spouse?
- 9) What could help our marriages to remain happy amidst the ups and downs? Where would you run to if you get a marital problem? Or how could we avoid such unhappy moments?

Thank you so much for your participation!

#### **Observation Checklist**

The researcher will take a keen interest in observing the facial expressions, and body movements while carrying out the in-depth interview and relate it to what is said. The same will be used in focused group discussions to correspond to what is said and the expression.