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Marriage across Cultures and Its Implications to the Church: A Survey of Christ Is The Answer Ministries, Kenya

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Abstract

Marriage across cultures is not fully accepted by many ethnic groups, even among those who have embraced Christianity. The research on which this paper is based investigated the trends of Christian marriages across cultures in terms of numbers, age at marriage, motivation and ethnic groups involved. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative design methods in data collection and analysis. The population comprised seven assemblies of Christ Is The Answer Ministries. The sample consisted of 247 respondents in marriage across cultures, seven senior pastors, seven pastors' in-charge of Family Care and Enrichment Ministry and three couples in a focus group discussion. The main data collection tool was a questionnaire. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The study found that marriages across cultures are on the increase, the age at marriage for both men and women is increasing but the age difference is decreasing. Love for one another and a common faith in Christ were found to be the main motivations to marriage. The ethnic groups leading in marriage across cultures among men are Luo, Luhya, Kikuyu and Kamba while among women are Kikuyu, Luhya, Kamba and Kalenjin. The study recommends an improvement on keeping of marriage records and members' contacts; creation of awareness among youth and parents on marriage across cultures as a way of preparing them for such unions and dealing with ethnic prejudice/stereotypes to enhance acceptability. It is further recommended that the Church address issues of ethnicity and marriage across cultures as part of its pulpit ministry.

Introduction

Marriage across cultures is not fully accepted by many ethnic groups. Even among those who have embraced Christianity there is still some resistance. Muffin (2000) defines cross cultural as comparing or dealing

with two or more different cultures. A marriage across culture is therefore a relationship between a man and a woman who come from different ethnic groups with different cultures. It is different from a monoculture marriage where both husband and wife belong to the same ethnic group with same culture. Because of being not fully accepted marriages across cultures are characterised by lack of approval by parents, relatives and friends; are shunned, looked upon with suspicion and experience delays in getting parental consents. Marriages across cultures are approached with fears and doubts, because they are harder to succeed than monoculture marriages and more difficult because of having to live with people of a different culture. In some cases the couple may experience a mixed feeling of happiness because they are getting married, and a feeling of hurt where parents, relatives and friends do not approve the marriage and therefore fail to take part in the wedding (Romano, 1988).

In Kenyan situation marriages across cultures are taking place in an environment where ethnic communities have for the last two decades experienced recurrent ethnic tensions and sometimes violence on every election year. As a result, these marriages are likely to experience seasons of anxiety, uncertainty and fear. These experiences have the potential of leading to unfulfilled marital expectations, increased divorce rates, separation and cohabitation.

Biblical Perspective of Marriage across Cultures

The Church, like the ethnic communities, has also struggled as to whether marriage across cultures is biblical or not and has therefore found itself in a dilemma whether to support them or not. The Bible imposes restrictions and prohibitions on marriage for it to function as God intended. These restrictions are meant to maintain cultural values, passing on of healthy genes and for benefiting one's children in matters of inheritance (MacDonald 1975). Although pagan customs encouraged marriage with anyone, Israelites were forbidden from marrying foreigners because they would lead them into idolatry. For this reason, the Old Testament provides laws for marriage between Israelites and foreigners, and among Israelites. In marriage between Israelites and foreigners, Israelites were forbidden to marry Canaanites (Israelite

women to Moabite or Ammonite men). However, marriage was allowed between Israelite men and Moabite women and restrictions were less stringent against Egyptians and Edomites (Ungers, 1988). Biblical examples of interracial/interethnic marriage include the account of Abraham, who married Hagar the Egyptian and Keturah the Canaanite. Moses also married a Cushitic/Ethiopian wife (Numbers 12:1-8). Other examples are that of Ruth, a Moabite daughter-in-law of Naomi who was married to Boaz, a Jew (Ruth 4). Ruth through marriage to Boaz became part of the lineage of Christ (Matthew 1:5). Rehab of Jericho (Joshua 2), a Canaanite, got married to an Israelite and ended up being included in the lineage of Christ (Matthew 1:5) (Unger, 1988; Richardson & Bowen, 1983). If God was against such marriages, the patriarchs will not have been involved, he will not have defended Moses against Aaron and Miriam when they spoke against his wife and some of those involved would never have found their way into the lineage of Christ. What was forbidden then and is today is a marriage that would lead a believer in Christ to idolatry, is against expected moral behaviour, would lead to heathen practices or affects one's social conscience.

The New Testament supports this view as expressed in 2 Corinthians 6:14, where Christians are forbidden to be “unequally yoked” with unbelievers. Where both partners are Christians, marriage across cultures is not forbidden and should therefore be accepted and even encouraged. This view is supported by Colossians 3:11 which states, “Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.” Nationality, ethnicity, economic or social status do not make any difference to those who are in Christ. What should be discouraged is a Christian marrying a non-Christian, because of the likely danger of one losing faith in Christ and the confusion children will suffer by being raised in an environment where one of the parents is not a Christian (Unger, 1988).

Opportunities for Marriage across Cultures

Despite the resistance to marriage across cultures, young people who are leaving their homelands to study, visit or work away from their home are finding increasing opportunities of marrying spouses in other ethnic groups. These opportunities are enhanced by factors that include improved communication in terms of road, air travel and technology,

which makes distance no longer a barrier, local traditions and customs which are losing their hold on marriage and adoption of a similar lifestyle in urban areas. The young people are also facing similar challenges at school and at work place which makes it easier for them to identify with each other irrespective of their ethnicity. The world is also fast becoming a global village, where ethnic groups now have so much in common such that the traditional and ethnic barriers that separated them are giving way to a similar life style (Romano, 1988). Religious differences are also declining in significance as barriers to marriage, thus allowing interfaith marriages (Sander, 1993). These factors are influencing the pool of friends and relationships that develop among young people, some of which end in marriage. It is also argued that, with an increased education, career and an older average age at marriage young people are becoming more independent in choosing who to marry, thus leaving parents with little or no option other than to accept whatever partner their child choose (Sharon, 2013; Chen, 2010).

Marriages across cultures in Kenya experience challenges both before and after marriage. Before marriage, the challenges include acceptability by both sets of parents and relatives, stereotyping or tribal prejudices because of historical ethnic differences, which may be political, social or economic and bad examples of people from the ethnic group, which reflect an ethnic group negatively. Stereotyping is strong among communities who lack or have little exposure, awareness or are ignorant of other communities' culture. Lack of acceptability leads to delay in giving parental consent to a marriage, extended courtship, delayed wedding, cohabitation or cancelling of the wedding. It may also lead to lack of participation and attendance of the wedding by parents and relatives. Other challenges before marriage revolve around cultural expectations in dowry and negotiations, wedding preparation and the events of the wedding day. Within marriage, the challenges include adapting to a spouse's culture, managing in-laws/relatives, communication, husband/wife roles, ethnic prejudice, parenting, sex/intimacy and food. However it is important to note that how serious these challenges are, depends on how deeply involved the partners are in their cultures of origin and where they come from because it determines how exposed they are to other communities and cultures; and how social or conservative their communities are (Kibuthu, 2014).

From what is happening, it is evident that times have changed, such that it is no longer possible to discourage marriage across cultures whether within or outside the church. The increasing opportunities that young people have to meet prospective spouses out of their ethnic groups encourage such marriages to take place. The challenge to the church and those outside is to understand what is happening and find ways and means of helping such couples. The concern is whether the Church is aware of the trends of these marriages and has the capacity in terms of pastoral and other necessary resources that are appropriate to assist couples in marriage across cultures, their families and relatives for the benefit of marriage institution.

This study carried out an investigation on marriage across cultures in Christ Is the Answer Ministries (CITAM), with the purpose of establishing the trends in terms of numbers, age at marriage and ethnic groups involved.

Trends in Marriage across Cultures

Marriage across cultures has faced opposition in most ethnic groups. Between 1920 and 1938, in some states in USA whites were prohibited from marrying Indians, Chinese, Japanese, Philipinos, Malatis, Blacks, Malay and Mongolians (marriage 101, n.d). It was not until 1967 that the Supreme Court declared laws prohibiting interracial and interethnic marriages as illegal. Since then interracial/interethnic marriages increased from 6.8% to 14.6% between 1980 and 2008, and more than doubled between 2000 and 2012 (Kulczycki & Lobo, 2002; Buchelle, 2013). By 2011, USA had 4.5 million married interracial/interethnic couples (Sharon, 2013).

In East, Central and Southern Africa, there is a low degree of inter-church, inter-ethnic, interracial and inter-faith marriages. This is attributed to the principle of “like marrying like” which is a dominant factor in choice of marriage partner among many ethnic groups. The ethnic group of origin remains one of the strongest influences in the choice of a marriage partner. In Zambian and South African towns, interethnic marriages are on the increase, while they are fewer in East Africa (Kisembo, Magesa and Shorter 1998).

A survey conducted in Nairobi in 1972 showed that, the younger generation was open to marriage across cultures. While there appeared

to be few interethnic marriages then, the conclusion was that, there was a strong possibility of a gradual increase (Kisembo et al., 1998). Muturi (2011) arrived at a similar conclusion in a survey, conducted to establish attitudes and practices towards the marriage institution in Kenya. The survey found that majority of respondents would not mind marrying someone from another ethnic group. The two surveys did not however involve couples in marriage across cultures and therefore provided a general trend that lacks in statistical evidence of the actual situation. The regional studies also provide a general trend without going into any details. There is therefore a regional and a national gap in knowledge in marriage across cultures. This study was meant to fill this gap and therefore involved couples in marriage across cultures among Christians in an environment with recurrent ethnic tensions and sometimes violence.

Trends in Age of Marriage across Cultural Marriages

It is argued that whether a marriage succeeds or fails, is to some extent determined by the age of the couple at marriage (Eshleman, 1991). Early marriages are associated with a higher probability of divorce (Cherline, 1980), because the partners are not prepared for mate selection process and marital role performance thus leading to relatively low marital satisfaction (Lee 1977). Later marriage (over 20 years) may reduce divorce because as age increases couples are more able to make mature decisions on marital commitment, which increases marital stability (Call & Otto, 1977; Heaton, 2002).

Since the turn of the century, the median age as well as the age difference between males and females have varied considerably, with the age for men always being higher than that for women. The age differences between men and women are smallest at the younger ages and increase as their age increases (Eshleman, 1991).

In many African societies, marriage took place after the rite of circumcision, which took place before or immediately after puberty. The rite declared the initiates ready for marriage (Mbiti, 1975). Age at marriage for both men and women has therefore considerably varied among the different ethnic groups. Men married at age 25–30 and women 16–18 (Mair, 1994; Gehman, 1980).

Many countries today have a set age limit for marriage. Most states in USA have a limit for couples to be at least 18 years, in order to marry without parental consent. Below 18 years, a couple would require a court or parental consent (Strong et al., 2008). The Kenyan customary law has no fixed age for marriage. However many ethnic groups have rituals and rites of passage that must be fulfilled before marriage (Theological Advisory Group, 1994). In Christian and civil marriages it is required that one be mature by virtue of having a national identity card or passport, both of which are issued upon attaining 18 years.

Trends in Mate Selection

Selection of marriage partners in many societies, have varied from a collective decision by the couple's kin group, use of an intermediary to individual's decision (Strong et al., 2008). In Europe and America, by 1600 AD the choice of a marriage partner was an economic arrangement between families in which status, prosperity and future economic stability were a priority. Marriage also served as a strategic tool for the establishment of trade, diplomatic ties, peaceful relationships, fulfillment of mutual obligation and as a status symbol (History of Marriage, 2014). In Africa marriage is not only an association between a man and a woman but a matter of interest to the two sets of parents, wider circle of relatives and lineage of each. In most ethnic communities, every marriage requires the consent of parents or a nearest male relative or lineage head (Mair, 1984). In marriage across cultures, the choice of a marriage partner is the responsibility of the couple because many parents may not approve of it as stated below:

“In many ethnic groups in Africa, parents of both partners and close relatives may be saddened by the commitment of their daughter/son to one with whom they may not be effectively able to communicate due to language barrier and by the prospect of having grandchildren who will not know them well and their way of life.” (Kisembo, 1998, p.161)

Today in Africa and many other parts of the world, marriage is based on love, mutual respect, commitment, trust and understanding of each other (History of Marriage, 2012), shared values, tastes, expectations and goals (Strong et al., 2008).

Methodology

The study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. It was located in CITAM which was selected because it is multiracial and multiethnic (CITAM Strategic Plan, 2007–2016) and easily accessible (Singleton, 1993). CITAM had nine assemblies which included: CITAM Valley Road (1959), Woodley (1994), Karen (1997), Parklands (1998), Kisumu (2000), Ngong (2003), Buruburu (2005) (CITAM Strategic Plan 2007–2016), Thika Road (2008) and Nakuru (2010). Only assemblies that had been in existence for more than five years were included in the study. Consequently, Valley Road, Woodley, Karen, Parklands, Kisumu, Ngong and Buruburu participated. The study was confined to couples in marriage across cultures.

The study had four samples, which included senior pastors, pastors in-charge of FACE, couples in marriage across cultures and couples for focus group discussion. Simple random sampling was used in the selection of the samples. The seven senior pastors and seven FACE pastors were purposively sampled, based on the assemblies selected. Three couples (6 people) were purposively selected to participate in focus group discussion (Kombo & Tromp, 2009). The selection was done in consultation with the pastors.

For couples in marriage across cultures, marriage records from the seven assemblies were analyzed to determine the total number of marriages CITAM has conducted over the years. The records included dummy marriage certificates, counterfoil certificates and marriage application forms. Between 1987 and 2013, 1,914 marriages had been conducted out of which 742 were marriages across cultures. A 20% (Kombo & Tromp, 2009) of the total marriages across cultures in every assembly were sampled giving a total sample of 147 couples. While they were sampled as couples, they however filled the questionnaires individually. This was to ensure equal representation of male and female respondents to ensure that views of both genders were captured.

Two hundred and ninety four questionnaires were administered of which 247 (84%) were returned, meeting the acceptable response rate of between 60% and 70% (Kibagendi, 2009).

A restricted questionnaire (Sogaard, 1996; Orodho, 2008) was used for couples in marriage across cultures while a structured interview guide and a structured discussion guide were used on senior pastors and pastors in-charge of FACE and focus group discussion respectively (Best, 1981; Kombo & Tromp, 2009).

The questionnaires were self-administered. The researcher conducted the interviews with the senior pastors and pastors in-charge of FACE. One focus group discussion was held. The researcher led and recorded the focus group discussion. A combination of quantitative and qualitative data analyses approaches were used. Quantitative data analyses techniques included Microsoft Excel and SPSS. Data from the open-ended questions were categorised and thematically analysed (Creswell, 2008, 2010).

Findings of the Study

Demographic Information of Respondents

Out of the 294 questionnaires administered, 126 (51.0%) were returned by male and 120 (48.6%) by female. One respondent (0.4%) did not state his/her gender. The responses showed that the age distribution of respondents was 2.8% (22–25 years), 18.6% (26–30 years) 38.5% (31–35 years) 22.3% (36–40 years), 13.8% (41–45 years), 2.0% (46–50 years) and 2.0% (51–55 years). Majority of the respondents (38.5%) were in the 31–35 age bracket and 82.2% of respondents were below 40 years old. This implies that majority of the couples are middle aged with most having gotten married within the last 20 years.

The responses revealed that the respondent's level of education was 1.6% had primary education, 0.4% secondary education, 27.1% college diploma and 45.3% university graduates with a first degree. The remaining 20.6% had a Master's degree and 1.2% had attained Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) level of education. Of the remaining 1.2% did not state their level of education while 2.4% had other forms of education. The findings show that majority of respondents (67.1%) had attained university graduate and above level of education. This indicates that the majority of couples in marriage across cultures in CITAM are well educated, which definitely has an influence in their decision-making concerning marriage.

The findings also established the respondent's employment status to be 67.6% employed, 24.3% self-employed, 6.1% unemployed and 2% did not state. The majority of respondents (94.2%) were employed or self employed, an indication that couples in marriage across cultures are in gainful employment and therefore able to make financial contribution to their marriage.

Concerning respondent's duration in marriage the study established that: 58.7% had been married for 1 to 5 years, 21.5% for 5 to 10 years, 10.1% for 11 to 15 years, 4.5% for 16 to 20 years, 2% for 21 to 25 years and 0.4% for over 30 years. The remaining 2.8 % failed to state how long they had been married. Majority of respondents (58.7%) were less than 5 years in marriage, while 97.6% were married during the last 20 years.

A majority of couples in marriage across cultures in CITAM are therefore young in marriage and most likely with very young families. The fact that they have also been married within the last 20 years means they have been able to ride against the waves of ethnic tensions experienced in the country during the period.

It can be concluded that couples in marriage across cultures in CITAM are middle-aged, a majority having attained a university level of education, either employed or self-employed and married within the last 20 years.

Trends in Marriage across Cultures

The trends in marriages across cultures were looked at in terms of number of marriages, age at marriage and the ethnic groups involved.

In-depth interviews with the senior pastors and pastors in-charge of FACE, established that the number of marriages across cultures are on the increase. They attributed the increase to factors that provide opportunities for the young people from different ethnic communities to meet and interact with one another both within and outside the church. These factors were identified to include the changing, weakening or breaking down of customs and traditional barriers that previously did not allow mixing of boys and girls, thus allowing free mixing of young people in schools, church, work place and residential areas. These interactions

have helped them to appreciate and view each other positively despite their ethnic and cultural differences. The urbanisation process that is rapidly taking place in the country through migration from rural to urban centers in search of employment and other opportunities, has also contributed by producing a generation of young people who are born in urban areas with weak ethnic cultural backgrounds and therefore they do not have an ethnic mindset. These free interactions, lack of cultural backgrounds and an ethnic mindset are leading to establishment of relationships some of which end in marriage.

Within the church, the socialisation of young people (children and youth) which takes place in common church services, fellowships, Bible study groups, picnics, excursions, sports, dinners, etc provides a forum for the youth to form a circle of friends, who are able to connect easily and form relationships, some of which end in marriage. The young people are also motivated to marriage across cultures by the increasing number of couples in marriage across cultures in participating assemblies, which included pastoral staff. It was established that among the pastoral staff in participating assemblies out of the 42 pastors 37 (88%) were married of whom 25 (67.6%) are in marriage across cultures. In one assembly, it was 100%, while in other two it was 83% and 80%. No assembly had less than 50% of its pastors in marriage across cultures.

The respondents indicated what motivated them to marriage across culture were 95.1% by their love for one another, 77.3% a common faith in Christ, 12.6% demonstration of having control over their life, 1.6% social pressure to get married, 1.6% to escape loneliness, 1.2% as an act of compassion to a partner, 0.8% rebellion to parents and 0.8% to escape an unhappy home environment. Love for one another, common faith in Christ and demonstration of control in one's life, stood out as the three main factors that motivated couples in CITAM to marry across cultures. The majority of respondents therefore have genuine motives to enter into marriage, which should therefore enhance their marital success.

The views expressed by the senior pastors and pastors in-charge of FACE on the increasing trend of marriage across cultures were supported by data from content analysis of marriage records. The records established that the total number of marriages across cultures in CITAM has steadily increased from 1987 to 2012, but with fluctuations as indicated in Figure 1.

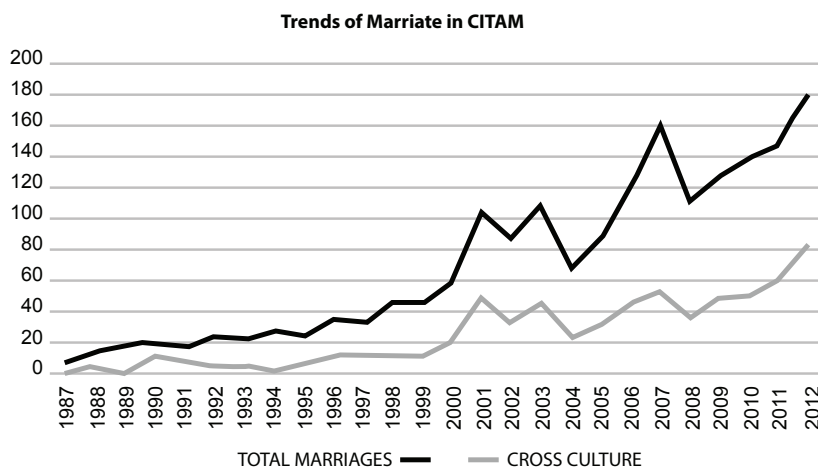


Figure 1: Trends of Marriage across Cultures in CITAM 1987–2012

There was an increase from 1987 to 1990, decline from 1991 to 1994, increase from 1995 to 2001, decline in 2002, increase in 2003, decline in 2004, increase from 2005 to 2007, decline in 2008 and then a steady increase from 2009 to 2012. The declines are associated with political events in the country, which included the 1992 general election, which was followed by the first ethnic clashes and displacements of communities in 1993 to 1994. The decline in 2001–2004 was just before and after the first multiparty elections in 2002, while the decline in 2008 was associated with the 2007 elections and post-election violence that followed in early 2008. The lowest annual percentage of marriage across cultures was in 1994 at 6.9%, while the highest was in 1990 at 57%. The highest average was before the first ethnic violence and displacements after the 1992 elections, while the lowest average was after the violence. This is an indication that the violence influenced the decline in marriage across cultures. It is however notable that the number of marriages increased in some years before and on election years as can be seen in 1992, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2007, and 2012. Pastors attributed the increase to couples' desire to ensure that their wedding took place before elections just in case there would be violence afterwards to disrupt or interfere with their wedding arrangements. It was established that ethnic tensions and violence are agitated by election losers who pit ethnic communities against each other. It takes time for ethnic tensions to come down after violence and displacements thus the desire to beat the elections.

The annual average of marriages across cultures in participating assemblies from 1987 to 2013 (August) was 33.8%. Karen assembly had the highest average at 48.5% while Buruburu had the lowest at 35.6%. The percentage differences in assemblies were attributed to the composition of members and congregants in terms of affluence and exposure to other ethnic communities. The findings show that the more cosmopolitan, affluent and exposed an assembly is to other communities, the more marriages across cultures would be expected. The three leading assemblies, Karen, Parklands, and Woodley reflect the affluence of the people in their neighbourhood as compared to the others.

Trends in Age at Marriage

The study established the trends in age as indicated in Figure 2.

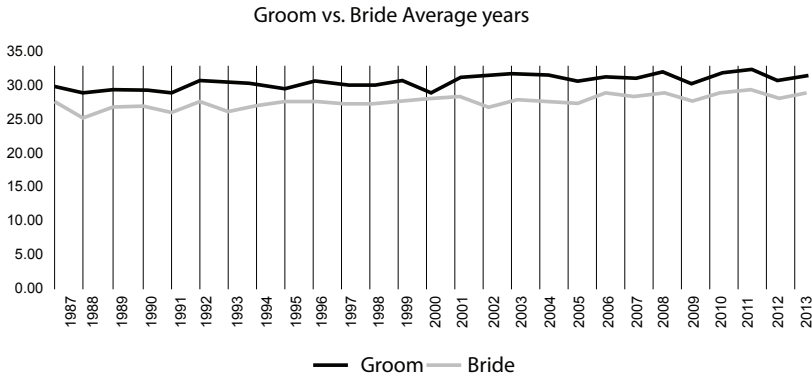


Figure 2: Trends in Age of Bride and Groom

The lowest annual average age for men was 29.05 years in 1988 while the highest was 32.93 years in 2011, showing an increase of 3.88 years. The mean annual average age for men from 1987 to 2013 was 30.99 years. The lowest annual average age for women was 25.46 years in 1988 while the highest was 29.78 years in 2011, showing an increase of 4.32 years. The mean annual average age for women was 27.62 years. The age at marriage for men had therefore fluctuated between 29 and 31 years, while that of women between 25 and 30 years. The range for men is 2 years while that for women is 5 years. The age difference between

men and women fluctuated over the years with highest peak in 1993 at 4.38 years and the lowest in 1996 at 1.42 years. From 2003, the age difference between men and women narrowed. The age difference at marriage between men and women from 1987 to 2013 was 2.56 years. The indication is that both men and women in marriage across cultures are marrying at a mature age when they are able to make informed marital decisions and are responsible for their decisions.

Ethnic Groups in Marriages across Cultures

Thirteen ethnic groups were found to be involved in marriage across culture. Among men, the Luo were leading at 29.65%, followed by Luhya 23.58%, Kikuyu 16.71%, Kamba 11.32%, Kisii 4.71%, Kalenjin 2.96%, Meru 2.42%, Taita 2.04% and Maasai 1.48%. The Embu and Teso were 0.80% and 0.13% respectively. For women the Kikuyu were leading at 39.21% followed by Luhya 16.3%, Kamba 15.1%, Luo 8.6%, Kalenjin 7.3%, Meru 4.2%, Taita 2.4% and Maasai 1.9%. The Embu, Teso, Giriama and Turkana were at 0.4%, 0.13%, 0.26% and 0.26% respectively. The non-Kenyans representing 4.2% men and 1.2% women were interracial marriages, who were not represented in the sample of couples surveyed.

A comparison of representation of both men and women in the various ethnic groups is shown in Figure 3.

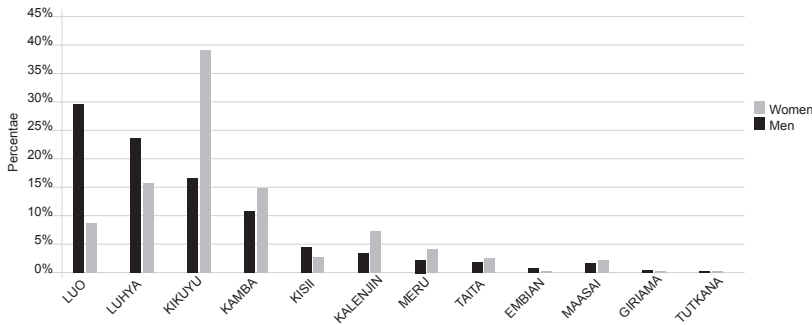


Figure 3: Men and Women in Ethnic Groups in Marriage across Cultures

Men from Luo, Luhya, Kisii and Embu show a higher tendency of getting into marriages across cultures than women in their ethnic

groups, while women from Kikuyu, Kamba, Kalenjin, Meru, Taita, Maasai, Giriama and Turkana show a higher tendency of getting into marriage across cultures than men from their ethnic groups.

Discussion

The increase in marriage across cultures in CITAM is a reflection of the trend taking place in other countries, this is because they are receptive to each other despite the recurrent ethnic tensions. Some factors attributed to the increase include urbanisation, technology, education and residency, personality, having things in common and where one works because it determines the pool of partners one has. There is also a growing change in balance of power between young adults and their parents with the consequence that the family of origin's ability to control whom one marries is rapidly changing (Stabbleford, 2014).

The majority of inter-cultural couples were married during the last 20 years. This is also the period when Kenya has experienced recurrent ethnic tensions and sometimes violence during elections. The worst being in 2007/2008 when about 650,000 people were displaced from their homes and 1,133 died (Namunene, 2009). The fact that couples have made a choice for marriage across cultures during this period is an indication of a genuine motivation and commitment to one another and to their marriage. The fact that the leading ethnic groups involved in marriage across cultures are also the same communities that have been involved in the recurrent ethnic tensions and sometimes violence also means that ethnic prejudices and political affiliations have not deterred the young people from intermarrying. This is a pointer to the fact that ethnicity and political affiliation among young people is losing hold on their decision on whom to marry. The older generation and the political leaders who are sometimes driven by their ethnic affiliations will need to take note of what is happening and change. Failure to do so, their persistence will continue to hurt their own children and destabilise their marriages. Increase in marriage across cultures is bound to have a positive effect for the nation because as intermarriages increase, the ethnic prejudices will decline, leading to a more united nation. The Christian couples involved are a good example of being the "light and salt" in their communities because it is a demonstration of living their faith in Christ even when it comes to marriage.

Majority of couples intermarrying are motivated by their love for one another, their common faith in Jesus Christ and a demonstration of their freedom to choose a marriage partner. This is in agreement with what is stated in 1 Corinthians 13:4–8, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails.” Galatians 3:28 says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” These motivations form a strong foundation for these marriages and give the marriage a high probability of success because couples are able to endure challenges from within, opposition from without and always have hope that with the help of God their marriage will succeed.

The fact that the men from Luo, Luhya, Kisii and Embu show a higher tendency of getting into marriages across cultures than women from their ethnic groups; while women from Kikuyu, Kamba, Kalenjin, Meru, Taita, Maasai, Giriama and Turkana show a higher tendency than men from their ethnic groups, is significant because it represents both the big and small tribes in the country. While couples are motivated to marry across cultures by love for one another, their common faith as Christians and a demonstration of control over their lives, the study did not look into what motivates the preference between ethnic groups, because that was beyond the scope of this study. This will be an interesting area of study in future.

The mean average age at which both men and women are getting married has been increasing, while the age difference has continued to decrease as compared to previous studies (Kumari & Abaidulla, 1997). The delay to get married is attributed to the pursuit of education and career. Majority of respondents had a graduate and above level of education and were employed or self-employed, both of which have the effect of delaying marriage. There is a possibility that this trend will continue in future because of the increasing opportunities that are now available in the country and outside to further one's education even while working. The implication of this is that the young people must be prepared to withstand pressure from family, relatives and friends to marry early. Delayed marriages and the pursuit of a career will also influence the number of children they have.

An improved level of education status of both men and women is considered a positive factor for the stability and success of marriage because the couple is able to relate at same or near level of understanding (Goldscheinder & Waite, 1991) and both are equally able to make an economic contribution to the marriage (Ono, 1998). However, it may also have a negative effect because of the flexibility of a spouse to leave instead of hanging in a marriage that is abusive or not working, because they are able to independently support themselves (Heaton, 2002). While the level of education for couples in marriage across cultures is therefore a positive factor that will enhance the success and stability of their marriage; the church will need to ensure couples are well prepared through premarital and post-marital counselling to give them the support they need for the stability and success of their marriage. The couples should also be free to seek for counselling help when faced by challenges that they are not able to resolve by themselves.

Age at marriage is considered important because to some extent it determines the maturity of the couple and stability of the marriage. For a marriage that is satisfying and enduring, couples should be 20 years and above at marriage (Ross, 1991 and Weaver et al, 2002). Early marriages (15 to 20 years) are associated with a higher probability of marital instability and divorce (Call & Otto, 1977; Cherline, 1980; Heaton, 2002). Consequently, it is considered that a rising age at first marriage is among the factors that enhance marital success. This is because couples are then able to make mature decisions on choice of marriage partners and commitment to marriage, something that would be a challenge at a younger age. The age at which couples in marriage across cultures in CITAM are getting married (men 29–32 and women 25–30 years) is at an age that will enhance stability and success of their marriage. As the age and level of education continue to increase and employment status improves, it may contribute to increase of marriages across cultures, which have the potential to be stable and successful. CITAM is therefore likely in future to experience an increase of marriages across cultures among its congregants.

What is happening in CITAM congregations with marriage across cultures steadily increasing, the age of men and women at marriage increasing, and the age difference between men and women decreasing is most likely the trend that is taking place in the church in all urban towns in Kenya and Africa. This trend will continue in future posing

a challenge to communities that are entrenched in their cultures and prejudiced about others. This wave will be hard to stop. The trend however brings hope of uniting ethnic groups as they embrace one another in marriages across cultures.

Recommendations

CITAM should improve on keeping of marriage records and preferably have them computerised for ease of updating and retrieval. Improvement of management of records is necessary if CITAM is to provide an efficient service to members and congregants and to reduce on time taken in searching for the records when needed.

CITAM should develop a computerised system of keeping members' contact records at assemblies. All participating assemblies lacked up-to-date membership records in terms of telephone numbers, emails and postal address, which makes it very difficult to communicate with them.

There is need to establish the number of couples/families in marriages across cultures in each assembly, understand their challenges and come up with strategies on how to address them in order to ensure their stability and success. Apart from those who were married in CITAM, there would be others who have joined CITAM while married and some who married there but might have since left.

CITAM should provide pulpit ministry (preaching and teaching) that addresses ethnic issues on a continuous basis as part of its ministry. This should not wait until on election years or after elections, when ethnic tensions are high or violence has taken place. The objective should be to ground members and congregants in the word of God and to diffuse the recurrent ethnic tensions. As part of achieving its vision, CITAM should take advantage of its radio station and television channel to influence the whole nation through this pulpit ministry.

CITAM should create awareness through its various church forums, to both youth and parents on the growing numbers of marriages across cultures, to help them appreciate that marriage across cultures is a possibility. This will enhance acceptability of marriages across cultures and granting of parental consent should their children be involved.

Conclusion

Marriage across cultures in CITAM is on the increase. This is most likely to be the trend among the Christian community in Nairobi, other urban

centres in Kenya and in Africa. These marriages involve young people in their middle age, with a good level of education and who are in gainful employment. This gives them the independence of making a choice of a marriage partner. Their motivation is love for one another, commitment to Christian faith and a demonstration of control of their lives. These factors coupled with their economic status are a strong foundation for marital stability and success. The political and cultural differences of their ethnic groups who are involved in recurrent ethnic tension and sometimes violence have however not stopped them from intermarrying. This is a confirmation that they are above their ethnic differences. There is a strong possibility that these marriages will continue to increase in future.

Consequently, marriages across cultures have a strong contribution to make in Kenya and Africa, where inter-ethnic differences are strong. It is accepted on most societies that strong marriages of any kind have the potential to unite communities together because they create strong links of intimate relationships. Positive attitudes and values are encouraged or learned in the process of socialisation in the family. Marriage across cultures is therefore a significant remedy for prejudices and misconceptions about other ethnic group's culture. Kenya and other nations of Africa can benefit from marriage across cultures, not because the partners have deserted their original ethnic groups but because the families they form, love, and belong to, transcend the limitations of both ethnic groups.

The Bible proclaims a unity that embraces people of other ethnic groups, language, race, caste, class and nations. Though marriage is different from social unity, when people are brought together in successful marriages, the bond of unity between couples, their families and relatives are created. A community of love, understanding, mutual respect and peaceful relationship comes into being. These Christian values are generally humanising, liberating and redeeming. In Christ the barriers of race, ethnic group and language do not hold (Galatians 3:23–29). CITAM and the church at large therefore stand to gain if this is the result of successful marriages across cultures. In light of this, marriage across cultures should be supported by the church through their pulpit ministry (teaching and preaching), counselling and pastoral care. Churches should also provide support and encouragement to couples intending to get into marriage across cultures, and support and encourage their families.

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