

**MODERATING EFFECT OF TRUST AND COMMITMENT ON THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERSPOUSAL FRIENDSHIP AND
MARITAL QUALITY OF MEMBERS IN KARURA COMMUNITY
CHAPEL, NAIROBI**

PATRICIA WANJIRU WANDERI

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF
ARTS IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY

PAN AFRICA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

JUNE 2025

DECLARATION

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

Signed _____
Patricia Wanjiru Wanderi (MMFT/19714/0/21)

Date _____

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University Supervisors.

Signed _____
Dr. Amos Keya Alumada

Date _____

Signed _____
Dr. Emmanuel Gitonga Gicharu

Date _____

Table of Contents

DECLARATION.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ix
ABSTRACT.....	x
LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	xiii
OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS.....	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY..	1
Introduction	1
Background to the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	7
Purpose of Study	8
Objectives of the Study	8
Research Questions	9
Assumptions of the Study	9
Justification of the Study	10
Significance of the Study	11
Scope of the Study.....	12
Limitations and Delimitations of the Study	13
Chapter Summary.....	14
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	15
Introduction	15
Description of Interspousal Friendship	15
Intimate Partner Knowledge.....	23
Couple's Mutual Understanding.....	24

Empathy and Marital Quality	25
Relationship Between Fondness and Admiration and Marital Quality	26
Respect and Marital Quality	27
Affection and Marital Quality	28
Appreciation and Marital Quality	30
Turning Towards Each Other and Marital Quality	31
Bids for Connection.....	33
Enthusiasm Towards Each Other.....	34
Genuine Spousal Interest.....	35
Turning Away and Marital Quality	36
Turning Against and Marital Quality.....	37
Moderating Role of Trust and Commitment on the Relationship Between Interspousal Friendship and Marital Quality.....	39
Trust and Marital Quality	40
Commitment and Marital Quality.....	41
Strategies to Enhance Marital Quality	42
Theoretical Framework	43
Gottman Sound Relationship House Theory	44
Conceptual Framework	50
Research Gap.....	51
Chapter Summary.....	52
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	54
Introduction	54
Research Paradigm.....	54
Research Design.....	56
Target Population	57

Sample Size	58
Sampling Method	59
Types of Data	60
Data Collection Methods.....	60
Data Collection Procedures	63
Instrument Validity	63
Instrument Reliability.....	65
Researcher's Positionality.....	66
Data Analysis.....	67
Ethical Considerations.....	68
Chapter Summary.....	69
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	70
Introduction	70
Response Rate and Demographic Analysis	70
Response Rate.....	71
Gender Distribution	71
Age Distribution	72
Years in Marriage.....	74
Number of Children.....	75
Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education	76
Relationship Between Love Maps and Marital Quality	77
Descriptive Analysis of Love Maps Items.....	77
Descriptive Analysis of Marital Quality Items	80
Correlation Between Love Maps and Marital Quality	82
Relationship Between Fondness and Admiration and Marital Quality	84
Descriptive Analysis of Fondness and Admiration Scores	84

Correlation Between Fondness and Admiration and Marital Quality	89
Relationship Between Turning Towards and Marital Quality	89
Descriptive Analysis of Turning Towards Scores	90
Correlation Between Turning Towards and Marital Quality	93
Moderating Role of Trust and Commitment in the Relationship Between Interspousal Friendship and Marital Quality	94
Descriptive Analysis of Trust and Level of Commitment	95
Moderating Effect of Trust and Commitment	97
Strategy Measures for Interspousal Friendship and Marital Quality	108
Theme #1: Open and Honest Communication:	109
Theme #2: Forgiveness and Rebuilding Trust	110
Theme #3: Spiritual and Emotional Support:	111
Chapter Summary	112
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION	114
Introduction	114
Summary of Findings	114
Implications	117
Conclusions	121
Recommendations	123
Areas for Further Research	125
Appendix I: Informed Consent	147
Appendix II: Questionnaire	149
Appendix III: Key Informant Interview Guide	152
Appendix IV: Permit from Postgraduate Studies in PAC University	154
Appendix V: NACOSTI Research License	155

Appendix VI: Church Application	156
Appendix VII: Karura Community Chapel Senior Pastor's Authorisation.....	158

DEDICATION

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, whose grace, wisdom, and strength have been my constant guide throughout this journey. To my family, especially my husband and sons whose unwavering support, prayers, and encouragement have been my greatest source of inspiration. To my mentors and friends, for their belief in my abilities and their invaluable guidance along the way. May this work bring honor to God and serve as a testament to His faithfulness in all things.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am sincerely thankful to the Almighty God for His wisdom, guidance, and grace throughout this project. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisors, Dr. Amos Keya and Dr. Emmanuel Gicharu, for their invaluable assistance in helping me complete this thesis. I also want to thank my lecturers, who empowered me and imparted immense knowledge during my studies. To my greatest supporters, my husband Victor Nkiiri and my sons, Jaidan and Etana, I am deeply grateful for your patience and compassion as I tirelessly worked toward completion. I would also like to acknowledge my fellow students for their unwavering support throughout our studies and research work. I truly appreciate their presence and contributions.

ABSTRACT

Marital quality encompasses emotional intimacy, communication, and relationship satisfaction in couples. The interspousal relationship between a husband and wife is a deep and intimate connection characterized by love, trust, and affection. This study aimed to investigate the moderating effect of the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality in a church community. The study focused on how factors such as fondness, admiration, love maps, and bids for connection affect the overall quality of marital relationships. The research used Gottman Method Couples Therapy as a guide anchored on a correlational mixed methods approach. The study was conducted at Karura Community Chapel (KCC) on a sample size of 194 respondents. The researcher used both probability and non-probability sampling techniques to select respondents that best answered the research questions. Primary data was collected directly from the respondents and key informants using questionnaires and interviews. For quantitative data analysis, the researcher used Pearson's correlation coefficient statistical tests through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 29). Furthermore, regression analysis was used to test the moderating effect of trust and commitment on the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality couples. Qualitative data was analysed by identifying and classifying major concepts or themes. A significant positive correlation was found between marital quality and love maps ($r = .573, p < .01$), fondness and admiration ($r = .704, p < .01$), and turning towards ($r = .713, p < .01$). Collectively, these interspousal friendship dimensions had a significant positive main effect on marital quality ($B = .649, p < .01$), as did commitment ($B = .619, p < .01$). The moderating effect of trust was not significant ($B = .002, p > .05$), but the moderating effect of commitment was significant ($B = -.006, p < .01$). The qualitative themes identified in the study include companionship and mutual support, balancing competing priorities, consistent communication and emotional support, communication and trust, trust and commitment as a stabilizer, rebuilding trust and commitment, and spiritual and emotional support. Conclusion was drawn that interspousal friendship is essential for enhancing marital quality, with trust and commitment serving as resilience anchors. It was recommended that pastors should encourage couples to deepen their understanding of each other's inner world through sermons and marriage enrichment programs. Premarital counsellors should guide couples in developing their love maps early on in their relationships. Married couples should prioritize the development of love maps by making a concerted effort to understand each other's thoughts, emotions, and life aspirations and intentionally practice turning-towards behaviors. This study has contributed to knowledge by empirically testing the role of interspousal friendship in enhancing marital quality, specifically within a religious community context. Future studies should explore how external forces impact the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality.

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Response Rate	71
Table 2 Distribution of Respondents by Age	73
Table 3 Respondents Years in Marriage	74
Table 4 Distribution of Respondents by Number of Children	75
Table 5 Respondents' Level of Education.....	76
Table 6 Love Maps Item Scores.....	77
Table 7 Marital Quality Item Statistics	800
Table 8 Correlation Between Love Maps and Marital Quality	83
Table 9 Distribution of Responses to Fondness and Admiration	84
Table 10 Correlation between Fondness and Admiration and Marital Quality	89
Table 11 Distribution of Responses to Turning Towards	900
Table 12 Correlation between Turning Towards and Marital Quality	93
Table 13 Regression of Marital Quality on Interspousal Friendship while Controlling for Trust and Commitment.....	9797
Table 14 Moderated Regression Analysis.....	10505

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 The Sound Relationship House	45
Figure 2 Conceptual Framework	50
Figure 3 Distribution of Respondents by Gender	72
Figure 4 Distribution of Respondents by Love Maps Classification	79
Figure 5 Distribution of Respondents by Overall Marital Quality Rating.....	82
Figure 6 Distribution of Respondents by Love Maps Classification	87
Figure 7 Distribution of Respondents by ‘Turning Towards’ Classification	92
Figure 8 Level of Trust in the Relationship	9595
Figure 9 Level of Commitment in the Relationship	9696

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease of 2019
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
ISERC	Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee
KCC	Karura Community Chapel
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer
MAQ	Marital Adjustment Questionnaire
MQS	Marital Quality Scale
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation
PREP	Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SRH	Sound Relationship House

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Admiration: This term refers to how partners consider each other, maintain high regard, and value each other in a romantic relationship (Tobore, 2020). In this research, admiration includes the spouses' positive perception of each other and their appreciation towards one another.

Commitment: This term refers to the decision to stay together in the relationship and with the partner in a marriage (Gottman & Silver, 2015). Commitment fosters a sense of security and safety within the relationship (Asif & Saim, 2018). For this study, commitment encompass the confidence and dedication in the relationship and towards the spouses.

Fondness: This term refers to the warmth, affection, and positive regard that partners feel and express towards each other. This means that spouses validate, acknowledge, and cherish each other's actions, qualities, and uniqueness (Navarra & Gottman, 2018). This research applies respect and affection as potential indicators of fondness.

Four Horsemen of Apocalypse: This term refers to the negative and destructive communication patterns in a marital relationship that can predict the end of the relationship (Gottman & Silver, 2015). These behaviours include criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling. This study applies criticism and contempt as aspects of negative communication patterns.

Interspousal Friendship: This term refers to friendship between spouses, characterised by emotional bonding, mutual support, and companionship, which is indispensable for a marriage's success and longevity (Camirand & Poulin, 2022). This study applies the concepts of love maps, fondness, admiration, and turning towards as key aspects of interspousal friendship.

Love Maps: This term refers to an in-depth knowledge of the partner's world, encompassing individuals significant to them, life events, achievements, challenges, emotional states, and various aspects of their existence (Gottman & Silver, 2015). In this study, love maps will encompass intimate partner knowledge of dreams, desires, hopes, and aspirations. In addition, partners' empathy, understanding, and spousal involvement with each other's life.

Marital Quality: This term refers to the subjective, global evaluation of the relationship and behaviours in the relationship and can be measured in various ways. Marital quality encompasses emotional intimacy, communication, and relationship satisfaction (Chonody et al., 2020). In this research, marital quality includes relationship satisfaction and emotional intimacy.

Turning Towards: Turning towards is described as how partners acknowledge and respond to each other's attempts at engagement (Hosseinpoor et al., 2022). It is considered a crucial aspect of cultivating healthy relationships. This study encompasses spousal bids for connection, genuine spousal interest, and enthusiasm towards each other as elements for turning towards.

Trust: This term refers to the confidence that a partner will act in the best interest of the other (Gottman & Gottman, 2017). Trust is a crucial aspect of building and nurturing fulfilling relationships. Couples who trust each other experience a sense of freedom and peace that allows them to establish close bonds (Shirdel et al., 2019). In this study, trust encompasses the reliability and priority that spouses have over each other.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

This chapter provides a background of the study, a statement of the problem, research objectives, and research questions. The significance and justification for conducting the study is also discussed. The scope of the study, limitations, and delimitations, as well as the associated assumptions, are outlined. It ends with a chapter summary.

Background to the Study

In the journey of marriage, life takes a new turn when two individuals decide to embark on a joint path. Communication, expectations, and adjustments are some of the key aspects that come into play when two people become life partners (Tasew et al., 2021). Marriage is a fundamental institution in every society and forms the basis for the existence of a family (Osafo et al., 2021). It is not just a status but also the most emotionally significant relationship in adulthood for many couples (Gallagher & Stokes, 2021). A healthy and fulfilling marital relationship can strengthen the family unit and improve physical and psychological health (Baghkasi et al., 2020). In addition, social relationships, particularly friendships, are vital for life satisfaction and individual welfare (Kaufman et al., 2022). Married individuals spend significant time together, sharing experiences and goals and raising children. The proximity and shared experiences shape the partners' individual development (İnce & Işık, 2022).

Marriage is considered a fundamental process in society that provides emotional support, companionship, and a foundation for the family (Sim & Sim, 2020). Tavakol et al. (2020) infer that marriage is a culturally significant union between spouses that is

legally recognised. In fact, the marital relationship is a special bond that is expected to provide love, care, and stability. In addition, it is an intimate and long-lasting union that can bring happiness to the couple. Marital stability plays a crucial role in creating satisfaction in a marriage. (Li et al., 2022). Gottman and Silver (2015) suggest that the quality of a marriage is a vital aspect of the overall well-being of both couples and families. It encompasses several factors such as spouses' contentment, intimate connection, and communication. The quality of a marriage is also determined by how partners interact, such as their love maps, fondness, admiration, and turning towards each other. Therefore, interspousal friendship, when fostered, close relationships may result in satisfactory marital quality (Chonody et al., 2020).

Forming a family through specific customs or ordinances between a man and a woman is crucial in the family life cycle (Rozita & Arjang, 2021). The bond between a husband and wife is a deep and intimate connection characterised by love, trust, and affection (Gottman & Silver, 2015). Consequently, couples that strive to maintain a sturdy and solid relationship reduce their social impairment and distress levels (Mansoureh et al., 2020). However, maintaining a satisfying and healthy marital bond can be challenging due to various factors, such as conflicts and a lack of companionship (Eslami et al., 2020). Therefore, achieving a fulfilling and contented marital union can be demanding, especially when spouses face emotional disconnection and strife (Barton et al., 2021).

Interpersonal and intrapersonal factors influence couples' evaluation of marital quality (Rozita & Arjang, 2021). Attention has been given to interpersonal determinants of marital quality as it is an important indicator of overall well-being and mental health (Oyoo, 2020). Contemporary studies emphasize the pivotal role of healthy relationships

in promoting psychological resilience and emotional stability (Chonody & Gabb, 2019; Fakari et al., 2022). Thus, the idea of a "healthy marital relationship" not only provides emotional support but also acts as a buffer to mitigate the harmful effects of distress. Romantic relationships are known for their emotional intimacy, depth of connections, and companionship, which makes one curious about the relationship between spouses (Towler et al., 2022). Establishing a solid bedrock of friendship is imperative when building a romantic partnership. Friendship is highly valued for its potential to maintain long-lasting emotional bonds and provide a solid base for effective communication, mutual understanding, and conflict resolution (Chonody & Gabb, 2019).

Studies have shown that it is not good for one's health to remain in an unhappy marriage. This can lead to substance abuse, cardiovascular issues, and even death (Gottman & Silver, 2015). However, being in a relationship that is characterised by dissatisfaction and discord can also damage the effect of one's mental and physical health (Eslami et al., 2020). For instance, unresolved conflicts and disagreements can cause emotional detachment and isolation, leading to marriage instability (Filiz & Elif, 2023). In addition, marital discord can result in infidelity within the spousal subsystem (Salih & Chaudry, 2023). Friendship is crucial for overall well-being and life satisfaction, not just in romantic relationships (Chonody et al., 2020). Therefore, the quality of social interactions, especially friendships, significantly predicts one's overall well-being and life satisfaction (Kaufman et al., 2022; Malm et al., 2022).

Kaufman et al. (2022) highlight the importance of friendships in romantic relationships, which contributes to marital interactions. However, the study recommends further in-depth research into the relationship between couple friendship and marital satisfaction, as this remains a relatively underexplored area in the field. This highlights

interesting questions about how similar dynamics might present themselves in couples' relationships and how friendship quality may impact mental well-being (Chonody et al., 2020). In fact, the study suggests investigation on the assumption that spousal friendship may be the single most influential factor that influences marital happiness (Gottman & Silver, 2015). Thus, by examining the relationship between the friendship of spouses and the quality of their marriage, this study can provide valuable insights.

A global perspective on marital quality trends underscores the importance of exploring factors contributing to marital health (Puspitasari & Gayatri, 2022). If there are negative patterns in their interactions, it can lead to an unhealthy marital quality with patterns including violence and, ultimately, divorce. In the U.S. Census Bureau (2016), there were reports of 2,245,404 marriages and 827,261 divorces. Consequently, these statistics mean that approximately 37% of marriages end in divorce. It is worth noting that while 34% of women and 33% of men aged 20 years or older who have been married have gone through a divorce, the percentage of adults aged 55 to 64 who have divorced is much higher, at around 43% for both genders. Additionally, Baghkasi et al. (2020) studied Iranian couples and discovered that various stressors can affect couples' marital quality. The study found that spousal interactions significantly impact marriage quality, with friendships between partners leading to greater satisfaction. Furthermore, research among soldiers' spouses in Turkey indicated that marital dissatisfaction could raise the risk of mortality and morbidity due to psychological and biological changes (Filiz & Elif, 2023).

The early stages of the recent COVID-19 Pandemic saw a rise in fights, thus affecting marital quality between romantic partners in the United States (Ipsos, 2020). Poor marital quality decreased satisfaction, leading to an increased likelihood of marital dissolution. Factors such as reduced interactions between spouses, thus affecting

interspousal friendship during the COVID-19 Pandemic affected couples' marital quality, with issues such as financial insecurity, loss of income, and isolation arising (Hertz-Palmor et al., 2021). These difficulties have also impacted family resilience. One study by Goodwin et al. (2020) notes an increase in divorce rates compared to the pre-pandemic period, while another study by Manning and Payne (2021) reports a decline. During the pandemic, support between spouses was a crucial coping strategy, with external support from friends being less effective than that of a marital partner (Puspitasari & Gayatri, 2022). Thus, it is necessary to investigate critical factors that can enhance marital quality and address vulnerabilities during a crisis.

Marriage is still a common experience across African cultures as noted by Tasew et al. (2021) with marital issues occurring across different societies. A study conducted in Hosanna Town, Southwest Ethiopia, examined the result of poor marital quality leading to prevalence of divorce which impact on health and socioeconomic status. The results revealed a marriage dissolution rate of 26% (Asfaw & Alene, 2023). In Accra, the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (2015) recorded 5,080 divorces within eight years. Poor marital health can lead to various negative outcomes such as depression, eating disorders, alcoholism, chronic diseases, and even divorce. A lack of intimacy can cause the latter, differing gender ideologies, financial struggles, and third-party interference (Osafo et al., 2021). Couples require strategies to address marital quality leading to distress and divorce.

In Kenya, the trends of marital instability have led to a rise in divorce rates. Over the past five years, the quality of marriages has declined, resulting in 17% of marriages ending in divorce (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2014). Furthermore, the statistics suggest a rise in the number of divorces, with a total of 212,972 divorces having

taken place by the year 2014. Comparatively, the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) (2014) revealed that among the married or living together, 47.2% of women experienced physical violence. These statistics further showed that 53.9% of the women experiencing physical violence were in Nairobi. Additionally, men who experienced physical violence were Roman Catholic, Protestant, or another Christian at 44-47%. Also, among the ever-married women, the likely perpetrator of physical violence was the current husband or partner, with 57% (KDHS, 2014). More recently, Kenya DHS (2022) revealed that among 12.9% of women who have gone through sexual violence, the most reported perpetrators are the current husbands, with 71% (KDHS, 2022). Thus, these trends highlight the urgent need to investigate factors contributing to marital quality.

An emergent theme is the pivotal role of spousal friendship in enhancing marital quality. Specifically, Sadeghzadeh et al. (2023) posit that couples who depend on one another within the framework of friendship are poised to experience a heightened quality of marital life. Love, fondness, admiration, and turning towards each other are factors that help build and maintain a solid friendship between spouses, which is critical for a healthy and fulfilling marriage (Gottman & Silver, 2017). Trust is the foundation that allows for vulnerability and openness, which are critical for deepening friendship and marital satisfaction (Lee et al., 2021). In addition, commitment involves a long-term view of the marriage which involves choosing the marriage and the partner, even in difficult times (Gottman & Silver, 2017). Hence, it is essential to explore the significance of interspousal friendship in promoting healthier and more fulfilling marital quality, (Keverenge et al., 2020). This highlights the need to examine the relationship between spouses' friendships and the quality of their marriages.

Statement of the Problem

Marital quality has become a key subject of interest in recent studies, emphasising the various elements contributing to its dynamics. Research by Şanel and Erkan (2022) has identified crucial factors such as quality time and words of affirmation as significant to enhancing marital relationships. In a separate study, Champiri and Dehghani (2023) highlighted the importance of couple bondedness and effective communication styles. These studies collectively highlight the diverse influences on marital quality, yet a comprehensive understanding of how both positive and negative interactions merge to affect marital satisfaction is lacking. To bridge this gap, the current research examined the influence of interspousal friendship on marital quality, proposing that this factor may act as a crucial mediator in the relationship between couples.

A study conducted in Lugari, Kakamega County, Kenya, by Keverenge et al. (2020) shows a positive correlation between premarital counselling and marital harmony. This study emphasizes the importance of strategies to promote a healthy and satisfying marriage. Spousal friendships emerged as a factor in marital harmony, influencing marital satisfaction. However, the study did not investigate the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality. Therefore, this study sought to investigate further whether the strength of friendship between partners can enhance marital quality.

Moreover, insights from Wanyeki (2023) highlight the beneficial outcomes of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs, emphasizing the importance of couple friendship and conflict management within a church context. Although leveraging Gottman's Sound Relationship House Theory, this research falls short of thoroughly examining the intrinsic elements of interspousal friendship itself. Specifically, it overlooks examining components such as love maps, fondness, admiration, and turning

towards, which could independently influence marital quality. Consequently, there is a call for additional research to assess the relationship between friendship and marital quality, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the critical role that friendship between spouses plays in enhancing marital quality.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality, and to investigate the moderating effects of trust and commitment within that relationship. The study aimed to explore how elements of friendship between spouses, such as fondness, admiration, love maps, and turning towards one another contribute to the quality of marriage. Specifically, the study seeks to determine whether the presence of trust and commitment enhances or buffers this relationship, thereby strengthening or altering the influence of friendship on marital quality.

Objectives of the Study

The following specific research objectives guided the study:

1. To examine the relationship between love maps and the marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County, Kenya.
2. To investigate the relationship between fondness and admiration and the marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County, Kenya.
3. To evaluate the relationship between turning towards behaviour and the marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County, Kenya..

4. To establish the moderating role of trust and commitment in the relationship between interspousal friendship and the marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County, Kenya.
5. To identify strategy measures to enhance the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Research Questions

The research will answer the following questions:

1. How do love maps relate to the marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County, Kenya?
2. In what ways do fondness and admiration influence marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County, Kenya?
3. What is the relationship between turning towards behaviour and marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County, Kenya?
4. How do trust and commitment contribute to the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County, Kenya?
5. What strategies can be developed within Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County, Kenya, to enhance interspousal friendship and marital quality?

Assumptions of the Study

The study made several key assumptions. It posited that spouses share a degree of friendship, which is expressed through love maps, fondness, admiration, and mutual support. It also assumed that the quality of a marriage can be assessed by measuring factors such as satisfaction, communication, and overall relationship well-being.

Additionally, the study suggested that the friendship between spouses can have either a positive or negative impact on the quality of their marriage. The study also emphasised that key informant interviews offered valuable insights from respondents.

The results indicated a strong positive correlation between interspousal friendship and marital quality, supporting the initial assumption. Trust emerged as a significant predictor of marital quality, further validating the assumption. Additionally, commitment demonstrated a statistically significant positive relationship with marital quality. The findings suggested that both trust and commitment play a moderating role, although the strength of this moderation varied. Notably, trust had a stronger moderating effect compared to commitment.

Justification of the Study

The quality of a marriage is an important topic, and research shows that having a strong friendship between spouses can lead to greater satisfaction (Sadeghzadeh et al., 2023). Programs have been developed to help couples before and during marriage to improve the quality of marriages. In Kenya, mediation is also being used to resolve divorce cases. According to Gottman and Silver (2015), couples who have strong friendships are more likely to enjoy spending time together, which can help build emotional intimacy and improve physical and psychological well-being. Therefore, understanding the importance of a strong friendship between spouses can help couples promote greater satisfaction and overall well-being in their marriage.

The increasing number of divorce cases worldwide brings about significant pain and negative effects on both individuals and families (Ipsos, 2020). Investigating the underlying factors contributing to this rise is essential to prevent more couples from experiencing failed marriages and potential harm to their well-being (Baghkhiasi et al.,

2020). By studying the relationship of friendship and couples' marital quality, the findings can help propose strategies to help couples create stronger, more enduring marriages that can ultimately improve marital quality; consequently reducing divorce rates (Gallagher & Stokes, 2021). Additionally, this knowledge can help identify early warning signs of relationship problems, which can be used to develop marital enrichment programs and preventative strategies.

Significance of the Study

Understanding how friendships between spouses impact their marriage quality is crucial. This study has the potential to assist couples in building thriving marriages, leading to improved marital satisfaction and healthier, stronger marital relationships. Furthermore, enhanced marital quality positively impacts the mental health and emotional well-being of couples. In fact, strong marriages are associated with better physical and mental health outcomes, ultimately reducing healthcare costs and boosting overall welfare for individuals and families. Therefore, the findings of this study can provide valuable insights into healthy relationship models for marital counsellors, clinicians, marriage enrichment developers, churches, and couples.

The results of this research can enhance the knowledge in psychology and relationship science. They can be applied in future studies examining the long-term effects of marital quality. Moreover, this research can provide valuable insights for policymakers as they formulate targeted strategies aimed at enhancing family support systems. By integrating these insights, policymakers can develop comprehensive relationship education programs and effective marriage therapy initiatives, ultimately fostering healthier family dynamics and improving overall community well-being. This

research could positively impact the welfare of children, community cohesion, and societal harmony, as families are the foundation of stable communities.

Understanding the various aspects of interspousal friendship and how factors such as fondness, love maps, and turning towards each other can influence marital quality provides valuable insights to pastoral counsellors. They can identify individual needs and offer targeted care to strengthen marriages, which is essential for the congregation's vitality. From an academic perspective, the findings of this research can benefit marriage and family researchers, enriching their understanding of the complexities of marital relationships. The results may also guide engaged partners through pre-marital guidance, helping them prepare better for building a solid foundation for a fulfilling marital relationship.

Scope of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the link between interspousal friendships and marital quality of members within the Karura Community Chapel (KCC) in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The study is confined to the geographical location of the Karura Community Chapel, which is a non-denominational church founded in 1996 with over 2,000 adult members (Karura Community Chapel, n.d.). KCC has eight different campuses and comprises people from various nationalities, age groups, and social and economic backgrounds, making it an ideal and diverse population to study. Additionally, KCC has a well-established marriage ministry that is accessible to all eight of its church plants. The study involved 194 members, either husbands or wives, with a marriage duration of at least one year. As part of their strategic plan for the years 2023-2027, KCC's leadership aims to prioritise family discipleship by providing family-focused materials and research that address the unique challenges faced by different family

structures (Karura Community Chapel, 2023). The church's family life department, particularly its marriage and family ministry, serves as a platform for reaching both engaged and married individuals (KCC Strategic Plan 2023-2027). Data was collected for one month in October 2024.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Research on the influence of interspousal friendship on couples' marital quality is valuable. However, it may have specific limitations that require careful consideration. While it is plausible that strong interspousal friendships may positively impact the quality of marriage, it is essential to note that the findings of this study may not necessarily indicate a causal relationship. Additionally, the respondents in the study may have been subject to bias during data collection, which could have led to underreporting of negative responses and over-emphasis of socially desirable traits. Given the subjective nature of both friendship and marital quality, individuals' responses may vary, making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions from the study results.

It is important to remember that many factors can affect the quality of a marriage, such as personality, stress from outside sources, and life events. Because of this complexity, it can be difficult to pinpoint friendship's role in a marriage. Additionally, the respondents in this study may have different perceptions and experiences regarding the quality of their marriage. Cultural and demographic differences of the respondents may also limit the findings of this study, so it's important to be aware of these limitations and use them to guide future research. Despite these limitations, studying the impact of friendship on marital quality is still an important topic to understand.

It is crucial for researchers to specify the parameters within which they investigate a study. In this research, the parameters were delimited to respondents within a specific

church community of Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County. It is worth noting that the results may not be generalisable to other contexts beyond this specific community. Finally, this research excluded members who are participating or have participated in therapeutic strategies to allow the focus to be on naturally occurring friendship dynamics. The focus of the research was on members who are part of the marriage life ministry in Karura Community Chapel churches.

Chapter Summary

This study aimed to examine the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality. The chapter has detailed the study's background, problem statement, specific objectives, and research questions. It has also outlined the study's assumptions and the scope of the population. Finally, the chapter has acknowledged the research's limitations and delimitations. The next chapter provides the literature review, and conceptual and theoretical framework.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter of the study delves into existing research related to the topic and applies the conceptual framework. The review aims to assess the correlation between interspousal friendship and the quality of marital relationships. The first section explores the literature on fondness and admiration and how these factors impact the quality of a marriage. The second section reviews the literature on the depth of love maps in interspousal friendship and the consequent influence on couples' marital quality. The third section assesses the impact of turning towards behaviour on couples' relationships. The fourth section reviews trust and commitment as a moderating factor in interspousal friendship and couples' marital quality. Additionally, the chapter examines the empirical relationship between interspousal friendship and the quality of marital relationships and discusses the relevant theory and its application. Finally, the conceptual and theoretical framework for the study is presented at the end of the chapter.

Description of Interspousal Friendship

Research has illuminated various factors that are instrumental in strengthening marital quality and enriching emotional intimacy. These elements include establishing an earnest emotional connection, allocating shared time, the reciprocity intrinsic to marital dynamics, and the permeability of boundaries within the spousal relationship (Kamali et al., 2020). An emergent theme in the literature is the pivotal role of spousal friendship in enhancing marital quality. Specifically, Sadeghzadeh et al. (2023) posit that couples who depend on one another within the framework of friendship are poised to experience a heightened quality of marital life. Therefore, this perception forms a significant basis for

investigating interspousal friendship and informing a crucial practical pathway to fortifying marital bonds.

Delving deeper into the dynamics of spousal friendship, Chonody et al. (2020) identify it as a critical determinant of marital satisfaction. This assertion is supported by Fengyi et al. (2022), who map out the significant influence of perceived social support on the quality of marital relationships. In a similar disposition, recent empirical efforts by Salih and Chaudry (2023) underscore the profound impact of emotional care, mutual understanding, honesty, and openness on marital satisfaction, thereby affirming the multifaceted nature of marital dynamics. These studies collectively authenticate the hypothesis that the depth and quality of friendship between spouses directly correlate with the overall health and satisfaction within a marriage.

Gottman and Silver (2015) contribute to this discourse by underscoring the essence of friendship within the marital context. The argument is that a robust friendship between spouses, characterised by emotional bonding, mutual support, and companionship, is indispensable for a marriage's success and longevity (Camirand & Poulin, 2022). Articulating the characteristics of a strong spousal friendship, such as emotional bonding, mutual support, and companionship, underscores the foundational importance of these elements in fostering marital success and longevity to reduce marital distress (Chonody et al., 2020). This body of work collectively highlights the criticality of nurturing friendship as a cornerstone for nurturing marital friendship and intimacy. Consequently, this research not only validates the critical role of interspousal friendship in enhancing marital quality but also underscores the necessity for further scholarly exploration to understand the nuances of this relationship.

Baghkasi et al. (2020) emphasise the essence of marital success, positioning the development of a profound and meaningful friendship at the heart of enduring partnerships. This friendship, they argue, is rooted in mutual respect and enjoyment of one another's company, coupled with an intimate knowledge of each other's preferences, likes, and dislikes. The expression of fondness further characterizes such a relationship through small, everyday gestures and a keen attunement to each other's needs and desires (Navarra & Gottman, 2018). In addition, fondness allows for spouses to intentionally recognize each other's abilities, thus raising awareness towards each other and improving positive affect (Neto & Ferreira, 2023). While crucial on their own, these components also function interdependently, significantly amplifying the quality and depth of the marital bond.

The concept of "love maps," which involves developing a deep understanding of one's partner's thoughts, feelings, and preferences, emerges as a critical element in this discourse (Tarkeshdooz et al., 2021). Moreover, displaying affection, respect, and admiration within the marital context and engaging in consistent positive interactions are underscored as pivotal to fostering a successful and fulfilling relationship (Tavakol et al., 2020). Indeed, Castro (2021) suggests that a spouse's lack of knowledge and concern can lead to a reduced emotional connection, ultimately compromising marital quality. In synthesizing these insights, it becomes clear that cultivating a robust interspousal friendship is not merely beneficial but essential for marital longevity and satisfaction. The intricate interplay between understanding, respect, affection, and daily positive interactions forms a comprehensive framework within which this research can contribute insights for successful marital relationships.

Overall, et al. (2021) highlight that the foundation of spousal relationships in marriage is built upon a combination of physical, emotional, cognitive, and experiential intimacy. This complex framework of intimacy acts as the core pillar supporting the bond between spouses, enabling them to share a wide range of human experiences. In addition, Marsh et al. (2020) expands on this connection by discussing the importance of partners sharing their innermost thoughts, desires, and aspirations. Such sharing fosters a passionate and unified relationship, which is essential for the marital bond's growth and maintenance. While the existing literature provides a comprehensive view of these intimate dimensions, a noticeable gap exists in understanding how these elements collectively influence marital quality over time.

Positive emotional exchanges in this dynamic enhance the connection and facilitate a nurturing atmosphere for the relationship's development, leading to harmony and optimal functioning (Das & Sathyanarayana, 2022). Christensen et al. (2020) highlight the significance of emotional intimacy in creating a sense of closeness and cognitive functionality in the enjoyment of exchanging ideas and dreams. Bradbury and Bodenmann (2020) complement this by pointing to experiential intimacy, which is about couples enjoying activities together, as a key factor in strengthening the marital relationship. Highlighting this gap emphasizes the necessity for this research to examine the impact of these forms of intimacy on marital bonds. Such exploration is crucial for crafting targeted strategies to bolster marital relationships, offering significant contributions to the field of marital health and partnership enrichment.

Spouses may find their expectations unfulfilled, resulting in disappointment and strain within the relationship (Gwilt, 2021). Fahimi and Taghvaei (2022) suggest that what was once perceived as love and commitment may eventually give way to emotional

exhaustion. Mardani et al. (2023) noted that when efforts to cultivate intimacy yield unsatisfactory outcomes and marital fulfilment wanes, individuals may encounter marital burnout. Goudarzi et al. (2022) further posit that the components of interpersonal relationships, rather than the mere duration of marriage, play a significant role in precipitating emotional divorce. These insights shed light on the intricate interplay between unmet expectations, emotional strain, and the erosion of marital satisfaction. In contemplating these findings, it becomes evident that the gap lies in the need to investigate how lack of love maps contribute to the deterioration of marital relationships over time. Specifically, the literature in Mardani et al. (2023) lacks exploration of the specific expectations that precipitate marital discord and the underlying processes that mediate the relationship between unmet expectations and marital dissatisfaction. Addressing this research gap would be essential to help develop targeted strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of reduced fondness and foster marital quality.

Recent research by Mardani et al. (2023) involving 20 couples has shown that expressing admiration towards each other can significantly strengthen marital bonds. The study also discovered that exploring each partner's "love maps" greatly improves understanding within the marriage while making concerted efforts to connect is essential for maintaining healthy marital relationships. Furthermore, it suggests that actively avoiding monotony and emotional disengagement is critical in preventing potential relationship issues (Fahimi & Taghvaei, 2022). This research used a quasi-experimental method on a control group of couples dealing with conflict and seeking assistance from family counselling services. The researcher's plan to expand the current study through random sampling and exploratory research methods points to a clear gap in the current body of knowledge. Although Mardani et al. (2023) provides preliminary results provide

valuable insights into enhancing marital harmony, there is a need for a more in-depth examination of how these dynamics affect marital satisfaction across different couple relationships. They also highlight the importance of developing more effective therapeutic and counseling approaches.

Investigations have highlighted the significant impact that a couple's involvement in mutual social networks has on their marriage, focusing on how this engagement affects marital happiness, durability, and the likelihood of separation (Aseka et al., 2021). Findings indicate that couples with minimal social overlap, characterized by separate friendships, lack of friend approval, and minimal interaction with their partner's social network, face an increased risk of their relationship ending (Awinja, 2018). Conversely, couples with shared friendships often enjoy greater support and resilience within their marriage. Aspects such as laughter, common interests, and shared commitments significantly enhance marital satisfaction (Chonody et al., 2020). Although this research provides important insights, it also points to a significant gap in understanding how social integration influences marital well-being. There is a need for more detailed exploration into how the presence and quality of spousal friendship support the maintenance and enhancement of marital bonds and how they can mitigate factors that typically lead to marital discord. Addressing this research gap is crucial for developing strategies to improve marital satisfaction and stability by leveraging the strength of social connections.

Research on marital relationships includes various factors such as communication, roles, responsibilities, sexual satisfaction, parenting, and intimacy (Amri et al., 2022; İnce & Işık, 2022; Worley & Marina, 2020). Although extensive, studies have yet to pinpoint a definitive metric for marital satisfaction, attributing this challenge to the subjective nature of individuals' experiences within their marriages (Champiri et al., 2023). Among women,

factors such as education level, experiences of disappointment, and failure are noted to influence sexual satisfaction variably, suggesting that context matters significantly in marital dynamics (Bilal & Rasool, 2020). Furthermore, demographic variables like age, marriage duration, number of children, educational attainment, and number of marriages have demonstrated considerable effects on marital outcomes, with education emerging as a particularly influential factor differentiating the experiences of illiterate from educated women (Amri et al., 2022). However, this body of research leaves a significant gap regarding the potential for trust and commitment in the relationship between friendship and marital quality.

The dynamics of marital satisfaction are intricately linked to how spouses perceive and anticipate each other's actions and reactions within the relationship. For instance, Dobson et al. (2023) highlight that a spouse's sense of boredom can adversely affect the perceived quality of the marital relationship. The challenges of infertility, recognized universally, also play a crucial role in shaping marital satisfaction. In addition, research by Mohaddesi et al. (2022) reveals that experiences related to infertility can impact marital satisfaction in both positive and negative ways, underscoring the complexity of this issue. Moreover, the perception of equity in the division of domestic responsibilities has been found to influence marital satisfaction predominantly among women; this perception shifts with the introduction of collaborative decision-making between partners (Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2022). Although these insights exist, this research aimed to bridge the gap in understanding how mutual perceptions and expectations, especially in response to shared challenges or routine aspects of marital life, affect the quality of the marital relationship.

Empirical Literature

This part highlights the underpinning contemporary literature for each of the four objectives in this study:

Relationship Between Love Maps and Marital Quality

The concept of "love maps," as detailed by Gottman and Silver (2015), refers to the mental representations and cognitive frameworks spouses construct about each other's lives. These maps include comprehensive knowledge of the partner's significant relationships, recent events, achievements, challenges, emotional well-being, and various other life aspects. This depth of understanding transcends mere acquaintance, delving into the partner's aspirations, fears, and life experiences (Navarra & Gottman, 2018).

According to Gottman and Gottman (2017), such detailed love maps form the cornerstone of emotional closeness and intimacy, posing the reflective question: "Is profound love possible without a deep knowledge of the other?"

This intimate partner knowledge between spouses is pivotal for couples effectively dealing with life's stressors and conflicts (Wanyeki, 2023). These insights suggest that enhancing love maps necessitates continuous communication, transparency, mutual curiosity, emotional attunement, and sharing personal histories (Osafo et al., 2021). Despite the recognised importance of love maps in building and maintaining intimacy, this research will explore the mechanisms through which these cognitive and emotional structures are developed, maintained, or altered over the lifespan of a marital relationship. Specifically, this study focuses on intimate partner knowledge, couples' mutual understanding, and empathy employed to deepen their understanding of each other over time, thereby sustaining or enhancing the quality of their emotional connection and overall relationship satisfaction.

Intimate Partner Knowledge

The relationship between intimate partner knowledge and marital satisfaction has been a focus. Nawaz et al. (2019) investigated 360 married couples, half of whom had self-engaged marriages and the other half had arranged marriages. The study found a strong positive correlation between marital satisfaction and the perceived social support from spouses, highlighting that intimate partner knowledge of a spouse and reducing negative behaviours such as criticism is key to reducing anxiety within the marital relationship. These findings were consistent across both love and arranged marriages, suggesting that the depth of spousal knowledge is crucial to marital satisfaction. In addition, Helms et al. (2020) further explored the interplay between marital quality, spousal knowledge, and friendships among 142 married couples. The study underscored the significance of mutual support from both the spouse and close friends in enhancing marital quality. Interestingly, while both partners were invested in strengthening their marital bond, husbands showed a more pronounced inclination to work on their marriages in collaboration with their wives rather than with close friends.

Gabb (2022) added another dimension to the discussion by linking successful sexual intimacy to personal awareness, profound knowledge of the partner, and a strong partnership. The testimony from a wife in the 35-54 age range indicated that sexual satisfaction deepens as couples grow older and more familiar with each other. There is a research gap in understanding the role of intimate partner knowledge in different stages of marriage and life transitions. The current study explored how the evolution of intimate partner knowledge and its impact on marital satisfaction relate to life events such as parenthood, career changes, and ageing. This emphasises the pivotal role of a couple's friendships in fortifying the marital relationship.

Couple's Mutual Understanding

Gottman and Silver (2015) emphasize the significance of nurturing interspousal friendships, pinpointing the critical role played by understanding each other's worlds, or "love maps," as foundational elements that enhance marital satisfaction and overall relationship quality (Gallagher & Stokes, 2021). This perspective underscores the complex influence that the dynamics of interspousal friendships exert on the evolution, strength, and even the possible breakdown of marital unions (Baghkasi et al., 2020). Shifts in how closely intertwined partners are can introduce instability, potentially escalating into conflicts that threaten marriage (Worley & Marina, 2020). Therefore, cultivating mutual friendships and reinforcing positive aspects of the spousal bond emerges as critical for fostering relationships that are not only resilient but also lasting (Mu, 2023). However, while these insights are invaluable, they also reveal a notable gap in our comprehension of the specific aspects of friendship. As such, this study aimed to explore how trust and commitment impact marital dynamics and strengthen spousal friendships.

In the study by Yoo and Joo (2021), the focus was on how understanding each other, spousal passion, commitment, and satisfaction within marriage are interconnected, and whether there are any differences in these aspects between genders. Their research found that understanding each other is a crucial element of love, which is positively linked to how satisfied partners are in their marriage. It was observed that men reported a stronger perception of love than women. Moreover, intimate interactions filled with understanding had a more significant impact on marital satisfaction for women. The study pointed out that men face difficulties in understanding their spouses' needs, highlighting the importance of love in improving the quality of marital relationships. This difficulty

signals a need for more in-depth research into how couples experience and navigate their understanding of each other in their marital relationships. However, the study leaves a gap in understanding the detailed role of love maps, mental representations of one's partner's psychological and emotional world, in enhancing marital satisfaction. While it acknowledges the importance of love in marital quality, it stops short of exploring how spousal understanding of each other specifically contributes to deepening marital satisfaction over time.

Empathy and Marital Quality

Thalia et al. (2022) articulate that empathy, the ability to grasp and respond to another's unique experiences, emerges as a critical component in relationships. Gottman and Silver (2015) emphasise the importance of spouses understanding each other's worries and pains, encapsulated in the concept of love maps. Deborah et al. (2023) explored how empathy impacts sexual intimacy and marital satisfaction among 26 men. The qualitative research, utilising semi-structured interviews, uncovered that while men experience significant marital distress, their emotional needs often remain unaddressed, leading to feelings of neglect. This study, however, focused solely on men, suggesting a gap in understanding how empathy functions across genders in marital contexts. The lack of an extensive investigation into the role of empathy for both partners' experiences suggests a critical area for this research, aiming to shed light on the broader implications of empathy on the quality of a marriage.

The assets that couples bring into their relationship, such as shared lifestyles and mutual dependency, significantly contribute to marital enrichment (Aseka et al., 2021). In an investigation in Tanzania, Aloyce et al. (2022) examined how diminishing empathy

and attention among romantic partners could incite jealousy and lead to intimate partner violence. Conducted with 30 men through in-depth interviews, the study revealed perceptions of neglect by their wives, questioning the depth of their emotional bonds. These findings emphasize the significance of empathy in a couple's friendship dynamics, which determines their marital satisfaction and overall quality. This highlights the need for comprehensive studies involving both partners to comprehend the multi-layered nature of marital satisfaction and quality fully.

Relationship Between Fondness and Admiration and Marital Quality

Factors such as respect, affection, and appreciation contribute to the resilience and stability of successful marriages, shielding them from the threat of divorce. Gottman and Silver (2015) underscore the significance of cultivating fondness and admiration within a relationship, as they serve as cornerstones for mutual respect between partners. The absence of these sentiments can lead to contempt and diminished passion, as evidenced in Muslim couples in Indonesia (Puspitasari & Gayatri, 2022). Indeed, fondness and admiration are crucial for maintaining relationship vitality, as their absence can potentially escalate into intimate partner violence, as evidenced in a study conducted in China (Zhu & Yu, 2021). Addressing this gap could offer valuable insights into cultivating healthier and more resilient marital bonds, thereby contributing to the overall well-being of couples and reducing the risk of marital distress.

In a comparative study by Wang and Umberson (2023), which examined dyadic collaborative support in same-sex and different-sex marriages, women partnered with women exhibited a greater tendency to admire and support their spouses compared to women partnered with men. Conversely, the findings revealed that women in

relationships with men were less likely to receive admiration from their partners. These findings in Wang and Umberson (2023) underscore the importance of openly acknowledging and discussing one another's positive attributes to fortify the bond between partners. While studies highlight the detrimental effects of reduced admiration, research is needed to investigate strategies or communication patterns that could enhance these crucial elements. However, amidst these beneficial insights, the current study explored the influence of friendship among heterosexual couples in a Christian setting.

Respect and Marital Quality

Zoppolat et al. (2019) assert that respect is a cornerstone in maintaining high-quality marital relationships. For instance, in a qualitative study of 12 couples, those who showed respect towards each other reported better marital relations during interviews (Wazir et al., 2020). The study found that husbands and wives who value each other's decisions and considerations have better quality marriages. In fact, couples who identify and respect each other's roles in the relationship experience better relational well-being (Turner-Zwinkels & Spini, 2020). Demonstrating mutual regard and valuing each other's perspectives correlates with enhanced marital satisfaction, as evidenced in this study done in an Islamic marital context. This opens avenues for comparative research across different cultural or religious backgrounds to understand the universal and unique aspects of respect in marriage.

Research by Oyoo (2020) to investigate the protective factors of marital stability in Homabay County, Kenya, underscores respect as a pivotal element. The sample comprised 123 respondents, including church ministers, marriage advocates, marriage counsellors, elders, and ministers. The study assessed several factors through a cross-

sectional survey, including marital faithfulness, sexual satisfaction, financial ability, presence of biological children, respect, honour, and care. The study results showed that respect is a significant predictive factor for marital stability and can even enhance communication between spouses. However, the study warned that no single factor can be considered the most important. Despite identifying multiple factors contributing to marital stability, the study calls for direct insights from spouses to enrich the understanding of these dynamics, acknowledging the limitation of deriving conclusions from marriage facilitators and counsellors alone.

Tobore (2020) notes that romantic love, characterized by admiration, consideration, and high regard for one another, creates synergy in a marital relationship. The study further remarks that by making significant investments, couples can keep their emotional connection alive. Another study exposes that spouses experience higher satisfaction in their relationships when there is respect and acknowledgement of each other's perspective rather than being critical of one another (Bradbury & Bodenmann, 2020). Infact, inadequate affection, reduced admiration, lack of respect for one another and lack of emotional intimacy may be prerequisites for abuse, infidelity, and, ultimately, divorce (Osafo et al., 2021). Therefore, how each spouse perceives the other can affect their reactions and interactions, which in turn can impact the overall health of the marriage (Shrout et al., 2023).

Affection and Marital Quality

Gottman and Silver (2015) define fondness in a marital relationship as warmth, affection, and positive regard that partners feel and express towards each other. This means that spouses validate, acknowledge, and cherish each other's actions, qualities, and

uniqueness. Partners actively appreciate each other's positive qualities, efforts, and actions. Spouses also show physical and emotional affection, such as hugging, kissing, and offering loving gestures (Yilmaz et al., 2023). Additionally, there is an underlying positive regard for each other. Finally, spouses treat each other with respect, valuing each other's individuality, perspectives, and opinions (Malm et al., 2022). Thus, fondness creates a strong emotional connection between spouses, fostering relational security and intimacy.

In a marital relationship, fondness plays a crucial role as couples expect intimacy in their relationship. However, a recent study by Vu (2021) on couples aged 30 and below has revealed gender differences in the desire for love and emotional affection between spouses. The study indicates that women exhibit a greater need for affection and love. Moreover, women often have to adjust and accommodate their emotional demands because men tend to suppress their feelings and thoughts or show a lack of involvement in expressing their emotions. Thus, gender imbalances are likely to inform perceptions that impact the quality of a couple's marriage.

The couples' subjective perception of their we-ness, described as their interdependence on each other, their collective partnership, and their attraction or liking towards each other, influences their marital quality (Cruwys et al., 2022). Yoo and Joo (2021) conducted a study to investigate whether there are gender differences in how love, passion, commitment, and marital satisfaction are perceived. The study found that intimacy, commitment, and passion - the three components of love - were all positively linked to marital happiness. The study did not find any significant differences between genders, except that men tend to perceive love to be greater than women do. The study also revealed that both men and women experience profound love in their marriages, and

that love plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of marriage. However, the study found that men had difficulty understanding their wives' needs, even though women reported being less satisfied with their marriages than men (Yoo & Joo, 2021). The study's results can help family therapy programs understand how love is impacted by gender.

Appreciation and Marital Quality

Gottman and Silver (2015) elucidate that fondness within a marital context signifies the warmth, affection, and positive recognition that partners reciprocate. This encompasses validating and appreciating each other's actions, qualities, and distinctiveness, embodying physical and emotional gestures of affection, and a foundational respect for one another's individuality and viewpoints. Such dynamics cultivate a profound emotional bond, reinforcing relational security and closeness. Despite the acknowledged importance of fondness and affection for intimacy in marriage, disparities in the expression and desire for emotional connection have been observed, particularly among younger couples (Farimah et al., 2020).

Research by Vu (2021) highlights gender-specific differences in the yearning for love and affection, noting a pronounced demand from women and a tendency among men to withhold emotional expression. This imbalance potentially influences the perceived quality of marital interactions. The role of affection extends beyond mere expressions of fondness, significantly impacting the well-being of relationships (Debrot et al., 2021). In fact, affectionate communication, especially in the context of avoidant attachment styles, can foster positive behavioral changes (Schrage et al., 2020). However, this study area

suggests an opportunity to explore further how affectionate behaviours influence various attachment styles within marital dynamics.

Leong et al. (2019) conducted a study in Hong Kong on 113 couples who had been married for at least six months. The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of gratitude on marital satisfaction. Researchers measured gratitude as both a grateful mood and a grateful disposition. A grateful disposition refers to the overall tendency of partners to recognize and appreciate each other's contributions and benefits in their relationship. Gottman and Silver (2015) emphasize the use of gratitude a component of healthy and resilient relationships. Appreciation counters negativity that would be ensuing in the relationship. For instance, verbal compliments towards each other in a marital relationship shows the value that spouses have over each other.

On the other hand, a grateful mood is a retrospective measure of acknowledging and appreciating one's spouse's contributions in the relationship. The results indicated that grateful mood predicted both an individual's and their partner's marital satisfaction. However, the grateful disposition only predicted an individual's grateful mood, but not their partner's. In the study, it was found that spouses with a higher grateful disposition experience heightened grateful moods. This leads to higher marital satisfaction, even though individuals' grateful disposition threshold varies for grateful mood experiences (Leong et al., 2019). This study highlights the need for further research on the impact of sincere affectionate exchanges on marital quality.

Turning Towards Each Other and Marital Quality

When someone receives a bid for connection from their partner, they can respond in three ways: turning towards, away, or against (Navarra & Gottman, 2018). In their

recent publication, Hosseinpoor et al. (2021) introduce the concept of "turning towards" as a crucial element for cultivating healthy relationships. This concept highlights the significance of how partners acknowledge and respond to each other's attempts at engagement. Similarly, Veldorale-Griffin (2023) adds that "turning towards" involves partners acknowledging bids for connection, expressing enthusiasm, and displaying a genuine interest in each other's bids for connection. Additionally, David (2024) further clarifies that a bid for connection can be any verbal or non-verbal action to foster a positive interaction between partners. Though seemingly minor, these moments are critical in enhancing marital satisfaction by accumulating positive interactions over time. Jalalvand et al. (2023) support this notion, finding that couples who consistently turn towards each other report stronger and healthier relationships and manage conflicts with a more positive outlook towards one another. Hence, it is important to understand how these dynamics specifically affect different demographic groups or couples in various stages of their marital relationship.

Coflin and Powell (2022) expand on the possible responses to bids for connection, categorizing them into three distinct types: turning towards, turning away, and turning against. Turning towards is characterised by a positive and supportive acknowledgement of the bid, fostering emotional trust, intimacy, and a deepened connection, indicative of attentiveness and care. Conversely, turning away involves ignoring or failing to recognize the partner's bid, often due to distraction or disinterest, which can lead to emotional disconnection and feelings of loneliness over time. The third response, turning against, is an antagonistic reaction that may include rejection, sarcasm, or criticism, contributing to conflict and a widening emotional gap between partners. Furthermore, there is a need for more nuanced research on strategies to encourage more positive interactions and mitigate

negative responses, particularly in contexts where patterns of turning away or against have become entrenched.

Bids for Connection

Fattahi et al. (2021) describe "turning towards" as the affirmative and engaged responses partners exhibit during attempts to connect or communicate. This involves one partner recognising and validating the other's effort to establish a connection, fostering mutual acknowledgement and affirmation. Through shared humour, affection, and dedicated time together, couples can enhance their emotional bond, significantly strengthening their relationship. Williams (2023) suggests that couples consciously create moments for undisturbed interaction to deepen this connection, such as dedicating time daily for mutual reflection on the day's events. However, the challenge arises when couples miss these opportunities for connection amidst the routine aspects of daily life, often due to distractions or preoccupations with other responsibilities. This oversight highlights a potential area for further research: identifying and overcoming the barriers to "turning towards" in everyday interactions, thereby enhancing marital stability and emotional intimacy.

In investigating emotional connection as a catalyst for marital satisfaction, Williams (2023) highlights the significance of emotional connection in enhancing marital satisfaction, emphasizing that respectful and mature interactions between spouses bolster the relationship's resilience during conflicts. This approach ensures that attempts by one spouse to engage or connect with the other, referred to as "bids", are not neglected. Conversely, Muriithi (2023) conducted a study to investigate the influence of physical touch on marital quality among couples in Nairobi. The findings indicated a notable

improvement in marital satisfaction when spouses positively respond to each other's bids for physical closeness, contributing to a stronger marital bond through various forms of non-verbal intimacy. Interestingly, despite the positive impact of physical touch, there remains an expressed desire for a deeper emotional connection between spouses. This gap suggests a need for further research to develop comprehensive marital strategies that address both physical and emotional aspects of spousal connection.

Enthusiasm Towards Each Other

Positivity resonance, as explained by Wells et al. (2022), refers to the shared moments that couples experience when they feel positive emotions, show mutual concern for each other's well-being, and exhibit behavioral alignment. Specifically, in this analysis of conflict interactions among 154 married couples, synchrony was observed in partners' movements, speech patterns, and pacing, fostering a stronger sense of emotional connection and unity. The findings revealed that affirming bids and fostering positive non-verbal synchrony contribute to relationship health and are associated with increased longevity. However, the study was conducted on couples who were in conflict. Thus, studying couples who are not necessarily in conflict broadens our understanding of positive emotions, such as enthusiasm, and their influence on marital quality.

Longitudinal research on married couples emphasizes the importance of positivity during conflicts, where positive responses such as validation, enthusiasm, and humor serve as protective factors against relationship strain (Verstaen et al., 2020). Similarly, Otero et al. (2020) found that the expression of positivity resonance emerges as a stronger predictor of relationship satisfaction than the overall frequency of positive emotions. Recent findings shed light on the broader implications of maintaining positive responses

to a partner's bids for connection within marital relationships (Wells et al., 2022). Consequently, qualitative inquiry from this research explored how couples' acknowledgement and responsiveness to each other's attempts to connect contribute to their marriage's overall quality and longevity.

Genuine Spousal Interest

Sasaki and Overall (2021) underscore the importance of demonstrating genuine interest in one another within marital dynamics. According to their research, positive emotions are important for a happy marriage but are not enough to resolve conflicts. Successful conflict resolution requires both partners to be interested in one another while being attentive. If one partner lacks this genuine interest and shows a negative attitude or is not interested in the other, it can cause problems. Even during positive interactions, if one partner seems unresponsive, it can harm the relationship. This can erode the quality of the marriage and lead to relationship distress. Despite the insights gained from this study, there remains a gap in understanding how to adapt and integrate these communication techniques into various cultural contexts and relationship dynamics.

The practice of turn-taking represents a fundamental component of active listening in couples' communication, facilitating a deeper mutual understanding and ensuring that both partners feel heard. Gottman and Silver (2015) advocate for the speaker-listener technique, a structured approach to conversation that allows spouses to express themselves without interruption, thereby enhancing the clarity and accuracy of communication between partners. Itzchakov et al. (2022) further affirm the value of this technique, noting its effectiveness in preventing misunderstandings and promoting a more accurate exchange of thoughts and feelings. This approach is highlighted as a critical

element of daily interactions that bolsters couples' capacity to respond to each other's needs and desires effectively. Hence, these concepts are useful for investigating ways to develop more nuanced strategies for enhancing marital quality.

Turning Away and Marital Quality

When spouses actively respond to each other's needs and create a supportive environment, they improve the quality of their marriage by strengthening their emotional connections (Amber et al., 2020). How partners respond to each other's attempts at connection significantly affects their level of emotional intimacy. Hostile or distant responses can harm the communication dynamic within the couple (Overall et al., 2020). Yuan et al. (2022) discovered that negative communication patterns, such as silence, withdrawal, and a lack of interest from a spouse, arise from negative reactions to these bids for connection, with perceived responsiveness playing a vital role. The absence of mutual responsiveness and the habit of ignoring each other's attempts at connection can lead to feelings of being undervalued and emotionally disconnected within the relationship (Merwin & Rosen, 2020). This area of research would benefit from studying how trust and commitment can serve as moderating factors that affect the impact of responses to bids for connection between couples.

Tong et al. (2021) researched the impact of prolonged internet usage on the dynamics of marital relationships in China during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The study found that excessive internet use led to a sense of neglect among spouses, resulting in decreased marital satisfaction. The study also revealed cases where the internet was used to initiate extramarital romantic relationships. Additionally, the research showed that increased internet use replaced attempts by partners to connect with each other, leading to

a digital form of "turning away" within the relationship. This suggests the need for further investigation into how digital behavior affects emotional availability and responsiveness between spouses, which could undermine the foundation of marital intimacy and connection.

Tanay et al. (2020) highlighted the critical nature of effective communication in nurturing understanding between partners, particularly regarding marital distress experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study indicated that the enforced national lockdowns not only caused emotional distancing among spouses who were geographically separated but also posed challenges for couples who found themselves in close quarters for prolonged periods. The phenomenon of over-familiarity, leading to potential relationship saturation, was observed, suggesting a nuanced impact of physical proximity on the quality of romantic relationships. These insights, derived from the American context regarding the effects of spousal proximity on romantic engagements, underscore the importance of extending research to explore how similar dynamics manifest and are navigated within the Kenyan setting. Such an investigation could shed light on how couples engage in "turning away" each other, offering a deeper understanding of relationship maintenance across different cultural landscapes.

Turning Against and Marital Quality

Pasca and Wagner (2023) conceptualize "turning against" in marital interactions as encompassing a spectrum of adverse responses to attempts at connection by a partner, which include manifestations of hostility, expressions of anger, and acts of aggression (whether physical, verbal, or indirect). These negative interactions can culminate in disputes characterized by critical and dismissive exchanges, thereby escalating conflict

within the marital dynamic. The sustained presence of such antagonistic responses, if not effectively mitigated, can engender a pervasive sense of frustration, significantly compromising the foundational stability of the marital relationship. This elucidation highlights a critical area for further investigation, particularly exploring strategies to mitigate negative responses and enhance positive communication within marriages. Employing a mixed-methods approach could yield comprehensive insights into the multifaceted dynamics of "turning against" behaviours and their impacts on marital stability, offering a nuanced understanding that could inform targeted strategies.

Al-Shahrani and Hammad (2023) explored the impact of diminished emotional connection on marital relationships and mental well-being, uncovering that a void in emotional intimacy often results in relationships becoming distant and devoid of warmth. Additionally, they highlighted that mutual apathy, which can be termed as turning against each other, could precipitate reduced emotional intimacy (Mu, 2023). Notably, their investigation was situated outside a Christian framework, signalling an opportunity for further research within a Christian context. Such an inquiry would not only broaden the understanding of how religious beliefs influence the dynamics of emotional connection and disconnection in marriage but also contribute to a more comprehensive discourse on strategies for preventing emotional divorce among Christian couples. This gap presents a unique avenue for research to examine the specific challenges and resources within Christian marriages that impact emotional connectivity and well-being.

David (2024) highlights the phenomenon where partners may exhibit dismissive responses to attempts at connecting, a behaviour classified as "turning against." Such interactions can inflict emotional distress and undermine the relationship's intimacy. Similarly, Nantje (2023), in a Norwegian study, observed that marital dissatisfaction,

particularly regarding sexual fulfilment, tends to be higher among couples who intentionally avoid sexual intimacy. This avoidance can lead to emotional turmoil, frustration, and a sense of rejection within the marital bond. These findings suggest a correlation between the propensity of spouses to either engage ("turn towards") or disengage ("turn away") with each other and the overall quality of the marital relationship. The existing research underscores a gap in understanding the impacts of sexual avoidance on marital quality and the mechanisms through which emotional connectivity and sexual intimacy interact to influence marital satisfaction. Explorative investigation into these dynamics could offer deeper insights into the complexities of marital relationships and inform more targeted strategies.

Moderating Role of Trust and Commitment on the Relationship Between Interspousal Friendship and Marital Quality

Shirdel et al. (2019) express that trust and commitment are essential factors determining marital relationship success or failure. In Navarra and Gottman (2018) framework, trust and commitment are significant elements that affect spousal friendship and marital quality. The interpersonal elements, such as trust and commitment, play a crucial role in fostering marital harmony (Draganović, 2021). Gottman Method Couple theory emphasizes the significance of trust and commitment in enabling spouses to turn towards each other during times of conflict, create shared meaning, and manage their differences. Furthermore, these factors are crucial in ensuring that the positive aspects of friendship within a marriage translate into marital satisfaction and stability.

Trust and Marital Quality

Trust serves as a crucial pillar for fostering and sustaining rewarding relationships, with its growth hinging on a myriad of factors (Yilmaz et al., 2023). Partners who share mutual trust relish in a sense of liberty and serenity, paving the way for deeper connections (Shirdel et al., 2019). Gottman and Gottman (2017) posit that mutual trust between couples amplifies their mutual comprehension and affection and paves the way for true emotional closeness. For example, research by Asif and Saim (2018) delved into the dynamics of trust and marital contentment among both single-income and dual-income couples, surveying 50 couples. This study employed the Trust Scale and the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale to gauge the influence of trust on marital happiness, while also scrutinizing differences between genders. Findings revealed that trust markedly influences marital satisfaction in single- and dual-income couples, albeit with noted gender-specific variations in trust levels. Thus, such findings shed light on the pivotal role of trust in enhancing interspousal friendship and the overall quality of marital relationships.

Gondal et al. (2020) examined how trust influences the relationship between marital satisfaction and machiavellian traits among couples. Their research aimed to unravel the impact of trust on the dynamics between machiavellian behaviors and marital happiness, involving 193 married respondents up to 60 years old. The findings highlighted a shift in the relationship between machiavellianism and marital satisfaction from positive to significantly negative under conditions of low trust. Additionally, a qualitative investigation by Wazir et al. (2020) utilized a cross-sectional approach to identify key elements bolstering marital bonds. This study underscored the critical role of trust in enhancing the companionship between partners, with thematic analysis illustrating

how trust boosts marital confidence and satisfaction. These insights suggest that further quantitative exploration into trust as a key moderating factor in marital relationships might yield broader, more applicable results.

Commitment and Marital Quality

Lin et al. (2022) conducted a study on the dynamics of marital commitment and its impact on the quality of relationships among couples in the Chinese military. The study surveyed 171 military couples and found that male soldiers displayed higher levels of both marital commitment and relationship quality compared to their female partners. Furthermore, the study revealed that the frequency at which partners exhibited altruistic behaviors played a critical role in shaping the degree of marital commitment, ultimately influencing the overall quality of their marital relationship. On a related note, Hou et al. (2019) explored the intricate links between marital commitment, communication, and satisfaction within Chinese couples, employing an actor-partner interdependence model for their analysis. This research, involving 400 couples, highlighted that effective communication served as a bridge connecting marital commitment to satisfaction. Interestingly, the study found that wives had a greater sensitivity to how communication facilitated the transition from marital commitment to satisfaction compared to husbands. It also pointed out the presence of disparities in the levels of marital commitment, communication, and satisfaction between spouses. These findings suggest that a deeper comprehension of the cultural backdrop, gender nuances, and the various hurdles faced can enhance our understanding of these relationships.

In a study conducted by Oyoo (2020), couples who share the same religious beliefs tend to have a stronger bond of love and friendship. Though religion discourages

divorce, it can further strengthen a couple's commitment to their marriage, resulting in a sense of responsibility and security that is crucial for maintaining a stable and long-lasting relationship. The study also revealed that there are various factors influencing the quality of a marriage, such as personal experiences, background, status, and culture. Therefore, exploring the impact of commitment on the quality of a marriage between spouses, based on their lived experiences of friendship, would provide valuable insights.

Strategies to Enhance the Relationship Between Interspousal Friendship and Marital Quality

Research has demonstrated that structured premarital counseling programs significantly improve marital harmony and stability. A study conducted in Lugari, Kakamega County, Kenya, found that premarital counseling enhances spousal friendships and positively influences marital satisfaction. Similarly, Wanyeki (2023) underscores the effectiveness of spiritually based marriage enrichment programs in fostering trust, commitment, and communication within Christian marriages. These findings suggest that marital enrichment programs, particularly those grounded in faith-based settings, offer crucial support mechanisms for couples.

Interspousal friendship is central to marital quality. Research highlights that emotional connection and support foster deep marital bonds. According to Gottman and Silver (2015), couples who develop "love maps", a deep understanding of each other's emotional worlds, experience greater relationship satisfaction. Similarly, Otero et al. (2020) emphasize that "turning towards" behaviors, where spouses positively respond to bids for attention and support, create an emotional bank that enhances marital stability. Thus, strengthening interspousal friendship and emotional intimacy remains a key factor in sustaining marital relationships.

Trust and commitment are essential for a successful marriage. According to Shirdel et al. (2019), trust is a key factor in marital stability, influencing both emotional security and long-term satisfaction. Gottman and Gottman (2017) further explain that trust develops gradually through consistent positive interactions, which reinforce friendship between spouses. Commitment, on the other hand, means prioritizing the marriage even in difficult times, which fosters a long-term investment in the relationship. Thus, this literature underscores the importance of targeted strategies, including premarital counseling, trust-building mechanisms.

Effective conflict resolution strategies are vital for sustaining marital quality. Research highlights that couples who engage in constructive dialogue and avoid contemptuous exchanges have more resilient relationships. Navarra and Gottman (2018) assert that expressing admiration and mutual respect buffers couples against destructive communication patterns. Yuan et al. (2022) similarly emphasize that cultivating a culture of appreciation and fondness is essential for marital stability. These studies emphasize the need for proposed strategies that promote constructive communication strategies and community-based support systems to enhance marital quality.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is a collection of ideas and concepts formulated by experts in a specific research field. Its main purpose is to provide a foundation for conducting further studies. According to Kombo and Tromp (2018), a theoretical framework provides a structured foundation by integrating theories, concepts, and models. This integration helps understand, explain, and predict phenomena related to the research. Moreover, it provides a basis for developing hypotheses and research questions, designing the study, and interpreting the findings. This research used the Gottman Method

Couples Therapy of the Sound Relationship House (SRH) as a guide (Gottman & Gottman, 2017).

Gottman Sound Relationship House Theory

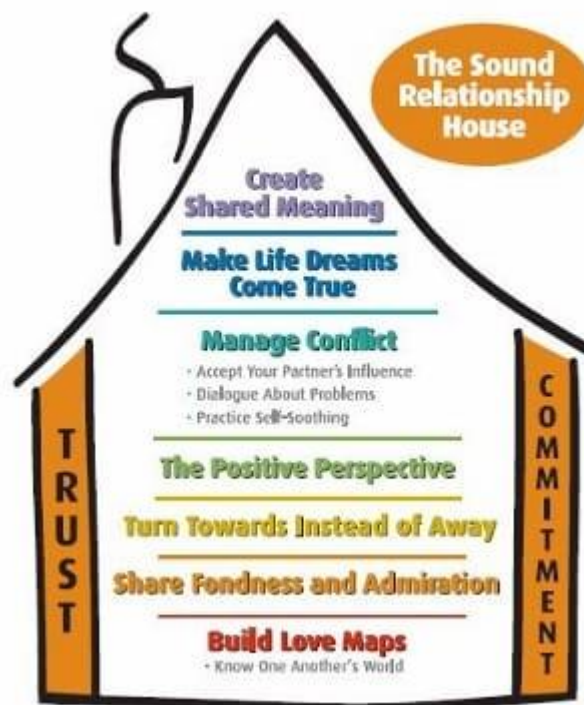
This research was based on the Sound Relationship House (SRH) model developed by Dr John Gottman and Dr Julie Gottman in 1994. This model results from over two decades of empirical investigation into the dynamics of marital relationships. It identifies the critical foundational elements necessary for a healthy and long-lasting partnership. Unlike other theories that take a biopsychosocial approach, which includes aspects such as cognition, family history, emotion, inner psychological processes, and relational schemas, Gottman Method Couple Therapy delves deeper into exploring the underlying layers of meaning beneath behavioral interactions (Lebow & Snyder, 2022).

It is essential to understand the differences in relationships among people of different races, ethnicities, and sexual orientations. This includes couples from the LGBTQ community and those in stepfamilies. It is important to consider this when choosing a theory to guide your understanding of relationships (Coolhart, 2023). The fundamental idea is that a strong support network of friendships is crucial for a successful marriage. A robust friendship between spouses and the buffering effect on marital quality is supported by scientific research (Navarra & Gottman, 2018). Employing the analogy of a house to illustrate the complexity of marital bonds, Gottman and Gottman (2017) articulate the SRH model through seven integral levels, as depicted in Figure 1. These levels include building love maps, sharing fondness and admiration, turning towards each other rather than away, sustaining a positive perspective, effectively managing conflict, realizing life dreams together, and cultivating shared meaning. This structured approach

offers a panoramic view of the essential components contributing to marital relationships' vitality and stability.

Figure 1

The Sound Relationship House



Source: Adopted from Gottman and Gottman (2017)

The SRH has seven levels, which can be condensed into three components: the friendship system, the conflict system, and the meaning system (Navarra & Gottman, 2018). The first level of the Sound Relationship House, the building of love maps, creates a sense of recognition and brings about awareness and interest in the spouse's inner world, thoughts, hopes and feelings. The second level, sharing fondness and admiration, encourages spouses to pay attention to each other by appreciating and admiring one another. This second level creates attention and value for each other. The third level helps spouses move towards each other, rather than criticizing or rejecting one another. These

combined efforts provide opportunities for emotional intimacy, relational satisfaction, and couple communication (Davoodvandi et al., 2018; Gottman & Gottman, 2017).

According to Gottman and Gottman (2017), the fourth level of the SRH of building a positive perspective is built on the previous levels, and reflects a positive approach of viewing the relationship. In addition, Gottman and Silver (2015) differentiate that relationships may have both solvable and perpetual problems in the fifth level of managing conflict. The distinction between the two problems, while softening start-up conversations and receiving repair attempts, are techniques that can help manage conflicts effectively. However, the goal of conflict management is not to eliminate conflicts but to handle them in a way that strengthens the relationship. The sixth level of making life dreams come true by Gottman and Gottman (2017) encourages and supports spouses' dreams, aspirations, and hopes towards each other. This mutual support builds a strong and deep emotional connection with partners working towards making these dreams a reality. The seventh level of creating shared meaning involves building a mutual and shared sense of purpose with rituals of connection and a deep understanding of what each partner needs to fulfil their life. Gottman and Silver (2015) researched marital stability and divorce prediction, which led to the development of a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the dynamics of marital relationships.

This study focused on the first three levels of Sound Relationship House, which describe the system of friendship and intimacy. The study is consistent with the research of Davoondi et al. (2018) that the first three levels improve emotional intimacy. Central to Navarra and Gottman (2018) is the concept that a strong friendship between spouses is the foundation for a high-quality marriage. In fact, an evaluation conducted by Tarkeshdooz et al. (2021) to help couples solve their marital difficulties and identify

factors affecting their emotional intimacy noted that various approaches could be used to improve it. The results posited that Gottman Couple treatment helps improve the love and affection between spouses, which increases marital satisfaction (Tarkeshdooz et al., 2021). Therefore, the Gottman Method Couples Therapy provides a robust framework to conduct this research.

For a stable marriage, having mutual respect, honour, and communication that fosters understanding and spending quality time together is essential (Oyoo, 2020). In addition, the study further opposes perpetual criticism, stating it as one of the detriments of marriage and encouraging dialogue instead. In comparison, Veldorale-Griffin (2023) identifies several key components that contribute to marital quality, including love maps, fondness, admiration, and turning towards each other's worlds. This theory is supported by extensive observational research, distinguishing between "masters" and "disasters" of relationships. Gottman's theory provides a robust theoretical framework for examining the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality (Bradbury & Bodenmann, 2020). It emphasizes the multifaceted nature of marital satisfaction, rooted in deep friendship, mutual respect, and emotional support (Lebow & Snyder, 2022). By applying Gottman's principles, researchers and practitioners can better understand and facilitate the development of high-quality marital relationships. This framework guides empirical research and offers practical implications for marital counseling and strategies to strengthen the marital bond through friendship (Doss et al., 2022).

Based on Gottman's pioneering work in relationship psychology, this theoretical framework delves into the complex dynamics between spousal friendship and marital quality, with a particular emphasis on the concepts of "love maps," fondness and admiration, turning towards, and the moderating roles of trust and commitment (Gottman

& Gottman, 2017). Love maps refer to the mental space where one stores information about their partner, such as their likes, dislikes, hopes, and fears (Hosseinpour et al., 2022). Research shows that couples who are devoted to learning about each other benefit from a more stable and satisfying marital relationship (Vowels et al., 2021). However, studies have also found that couples may become less intentional about maintaining their love maps as their marriage progresses (Tavakol et al., 2020). Therefore, developing a more profound understanding of each other's inner psychological world is crucial to fostering a deeper emotional connection. Empathy is the key to developing such an understanding, and it is essential for building emotional intimacy and friendship within the marriage. Empathetic responses encourage emotional expression between partners, fostering collaboration and intimacy (Puspitasari & Gayatri, 2022).

Having fondness and admiration for one's partner and regularly expressing respect and appreciation is important for a healthy relationship. It acts as a buffer against feelings of contempt, which can lead to divorce. Navarra and Gottman (2018) state that contempt is one of the key predictors of divorce. Yuan et al. (2022) state that a strong current of mutual respect and appreciation is essential for a stable and satisfying relationship, even during conflicts. However, some couples experience reduced marital quality over time. Kochuparambil (2021) suggests that marital quality decline can be attributed to reduced passion and harmony between spouses. Interestingly, spouses in the early stages of their marriage (below 10 years) tend to have higher marital quality than those who have been married for over 30 years.

Otero et al. (2020) refer to “turning towards” as how partners acknowledge their bids for attention, connection, or support. These positive responses to these bids build emotional bank accounts, increase emotional connection, and enhance marital

satisfaction. Consequently, this dynamic interaction pattern strengthens the friendship at the heart of the marriage, making it more resilient to stressors. Moreover, Shirdel et al. (2019) point out that trust is a critical factor affecting a marital relationship's success or failure. The family stress model emphasizes the importance of coping strategies involving existing resources and the development of new ones as needed. While a strong friendship built on trust between spouses can help maintain marital stability, it may not always be sufficient (Lee et al., 2021). Gottman and Silver (2015) express that the strength of the relationship between a married couple's friendship and the quality of their marriage is influenced by their trust level. Yilmaz et al. (2023) express that trust is something that develops gradually over time through consistent positive interactions. These interactions can include showing support, mutual understanding of yearnings and longings, and getting to know each other well. When trust is established, it becomes the foundation that allows for vulnerability and openness, which are critical for deepening friendship and marital satisfaction. Trust is not just a result but also a facilitator that enhances the positive impact of friendship behaviors on the overall quality of a marriage.

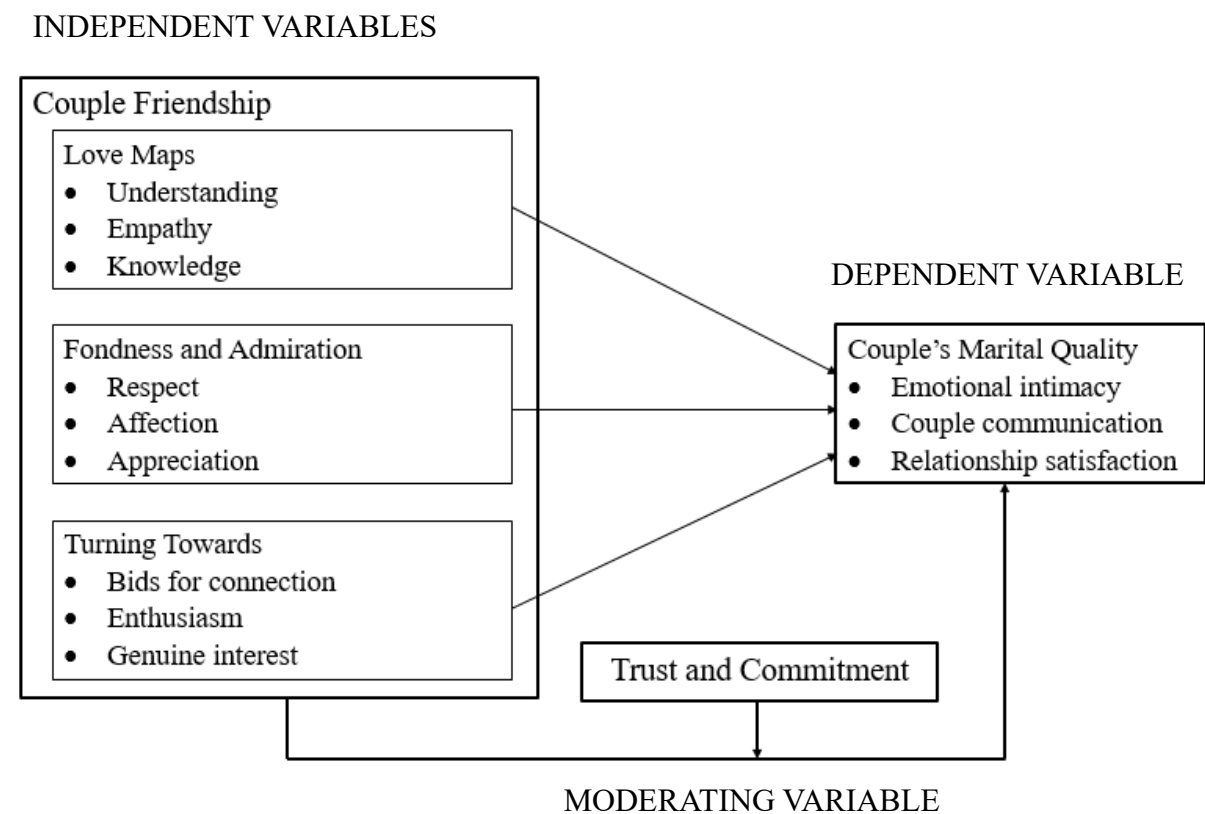
Commitment is all about having a long-term perspective on marriage and selecting your partner, even when things get tough (Gottman & Silver, 2017). This approach creates a sense of security and enables couples to invest more deeply in their relationship, which in turn helps them to maintain their intimate knowledge, express fondness and admiration, and attune for support (Gottman & Gottman, 2017).

Commitment also motivates partners to engage in behaviours that promote a strong friendship, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of their marriage (Li et al., 2022). Therefore, commitment encourages partners to prioritize their relationship, work on their love maps, and maintain a cycle of positive interactions.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 2 represents the conceptual framework depicting the relationship between the dependent, moderating, and independent variables. The conceptual framework presents the independent variable as interspousal friendship.

Figure 2
Conceptual Framework



Source: Author (2024)

The three elements within interspousal friendship are love maps, fondness, admiration, and turning towards. Marital quality is the dependent variable with three elements including emotional intimacy, couple communication, and relationship satisfaction. Trust and commitment are the moderating variables that are represented. This study focused on the first three levels of Sound Relationship House, which describe the system of friendship and intimacy: building love maps, sharing fondness and admiration,

and turning towards instead of away (Gottman & Silver, 2015). The SRH has seven levels, which can be condensed into three components: the meaning system, the friendship system, and the conflict system (Navarra & Gottman, 2018). The study is consistent with the research of Davoondi et al. (2018) that the first three levels improve emotional intimacy. Central to Navarra and Gottman (2018) is the concept that a strong friendship between spouses is the foundation for a high-quality marriage.

The study's conceptual framework is depicted in Figure 3, where interspousal friendship is the independent variable. This friendship comprises three elements: fondness and admiration, love maps, and turning towards each other. The framework illustrates how a strong foundation of friendship within a marriage, characterized by a deep understanding of each other, mutual respect, and consistent emotional support, directly affects the quality of the marital relationship. Trust and commitment also play crucial roles, as they deepen and secure the connection between partners, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of the marriage.

Research Gap

A study was conducted by Kochuparambil (2021) on the evaluation of marriage quality among couples in Kerala, India. The study used the MAQ and MQS, as well as the demographic inquiries and the three items of the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale. Data was gathered from a criterion-based sample of 260 couples in Kerala using a quantitative survey study design. The findings revealed that individuals with fewer years of marriage, better levels of education, and no children expressed higher levels of marital satisfaction. However, the study did not demonstrate whether and how trust and commitment intersect in the nexus between interspousal friendship and marital quality.

This presented a conceptual gap which the present study sought to fill by examining trust and commitment as a moderator of the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality among married individuals in Karura Community Chapel, Nairobi.

Njeri (2020) conducted a study to investigate the connection between psychological health, friendship, and marital quality. A self-administered data collection tool was employed, which included a marital quality evaluation and social demographic questionnaire. The study found a strong correlation between psychological well-being and marital stability, adaptability, and satisfaction. Thus, psychological health was a key predictor of marital quality. The current study added to the existing knowledge as it investigated distinctly the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality.

Aseka et al. (2021) conducted a study to establish how spousal support influence marital satisfaction among Christian couples. The study used a descriptive study research design and a quantitative research methodology. The results showed a strong positive association between spousal support and marital satisfaction that was statistically significant. Spousal support, according to the study, is crucial to a marriage's success. Thus, the present study sought to fill the knowledge gap to conduct further investigation of the relationship between interspousal friendship and couples' marital quality.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the existing research on the connection between interspousal friendship and the marital quality of couples. The research was based on Gottman's Couple Theory, which aims to improve couple intimacy and marital quality. The chapter has also presented a conceptual framework that explains how the

independent and dependent variables are related to each other. The studies conducted so far have examined interspousal friendship and its impact on couples' marital quality in general. However, they have not been comprehensive enough to provide findings that are relevant to the current study. This created a knowledge gap that the current study sought to address by investigating the relationship between interspousal friendship and couples' marital quality. The following chapter details the research methodology used for the study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Regardless of their experience levels, scholars use research methods to make predictions, provide explanations, and describe phenomena (Jason & Glenwick, 2016). A research methodology addresses a research problem in a structured manner to achieve results that are dependable, accurate and defensible (Kapoor et al., 2022). It is crucial to determine the appropriate research design based on the type of research questions asked (Rena, 2022). A research methodology provides a comprehensive approach to address research questions and provide solutions to research inquiries (Creswell & Plano, 2018). This chapter discusses the research design methodology, study population, sample, sampling method, data types, collection methods, instrument pre-testing, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

Research Paradigm

Research paradigms guide research by structuring principles and assumptions that inform understanding and enable the organisation of studies (Park et al., 2020). This study adopted a pragmatic research approach. Traditionally, research is guided by one of three main paradigms: positivism, interpretivism, or pragmatism. The positivist paradigm assumes that there is only one objective and measurable reality (Creswell & Poth, 2024). Positivist researchers aim to achieve generalizability, precision, reliability, and replicability by focusing on observable reality (Creswell & Clark, 2018). The interpretive paradigm, also known as constructivism, suggests that there are multiple realities instead of one (Keong et al., 2023). According to Creswell and Poth (2024), interpretivism is a

paradigm associated with qualitative studies for which probabilistic models are unsuitable.

The third research paradigm is pragmatism, which emerged to bridge the gap between the previous approaches by adopting a more naturalistic view that considers the constant change of situations (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The pragmatic research approach interrogates emerging ideas and beliefs regarding the worldview (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). This study applied the pragmatic approach, which focused on understanding the real-world implications for marital relations. This paradigm allowed for a multifaceted approach to friendship and marital quality. Hence, due to the suitability of this approach to address real-world and specific issues, the outcomes can help directly inform strategies, therapies, and marital programs designed to improve marital quality.

The mixed-methods approach revealed the depth and context of personal experiences when exploring the friendship phenomenon between spouses that would otherwise be lost if the quantitative method were used alone. In addition, the study accommodated multiple perspectives by engaging marriage counsellors and couples to address the relevant aspects of interspousal friendship and marital quality. Kelly (2019c) describes the pragmatic approach as an iterative process that enhances research findings' relevance and potential transferability, even though they may need to be generalised. Thus, a holistic understanding incorporating quantitative and qualitative approaches applied in this study, provided a more comprehensive and meaningful understanding of the relationship between spouses.

Research Design

The researcher used convergent mixed methods to obtain a more thorough understanding and improve the accuracy of the results (Tasew et al., 2021). One of the first steps when conducting research is to choose a research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). This refers to the procedures or methods used to collect and analyse data on specific variables related to a particular research question (Aggarwal & Ranganathan, 2019). Researchers can use different approaches in social research, such as quantitative and qualitative methods. These approaches can overlap or complement each other (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). The nature of the study determines the research methodology, and there are differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches (Jason & Glenwick, 2016).

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed; in this research, key informant interviews were conducted with ministry leaders to explore the nature, dynamics, and experiences of interspousal friendship. For the qualitative approach, interviews with ministry leaders were conducted to explore the nature, dynamics, and experiences of interspousal friendship. The qualitative approach offers diverse viewpoints are used to obtain rich, localized information that explores and describes the meanings, experiences, and processes from the respondents' perspectives (Jason & Glenwick, 2016). As for the quantitative approach, the researcher used a correlational quantitative research design that does not require manipulation of interspousal friendship or marital quality variables. The design identified the measure and strength between interspousal friendship and marital quality (Roemer et al., 2021). It relies on a larger sample size to produce statistically significant and generalisable data. The correlational approach allowed for a systematic investigation and quantification of how strong interspousal friendship and

couples' marital quality are related (Cooper et al., 2012). The researcher used statistical analysis, the correlation coefficient, to measure the relationship between interspousal friendship and couples' marital quality (Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2022).

The quantitative research findings can be used to predict changes in marital quality based on spouse friendship. The systematic collection of information through the quantitative method allows for accurate measurements of each variable (Aggarwal & Ranganathan, 2019). Furthermore, using standardised instruments enables precise quantification of the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality. The scales allow for an objective collection of data. Thus, by comparing and analyzing data, the empirical evidence can be used to assess the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality.

Fàbregues et al. (2020) emphasize that independent data collection, separate analysis, and eventual merging of findings in the convergent parallel mixed methods design reinforce and enrich the elaborate findings while providing further insights. The friendship between spouses is complex and can be examined from different angles and sociological dimensions (Nadolu et al., 2020). The corroboration of findings for quantitative and qualitative approaches, can significantly enhance the overall findings of the study. Thus, the researcher used convergent mixed methods to obtain a more thorough understanding and improve the accuracy of the results (Tasew et al., 2021).

Target Population

The target population was centred on individuals who are married and actively involved in the family life ministry at Karura Community Chapel (KCC) in Nairobi City County. These individuals participate in the marriage, men's, and women's ministries. The

KCC family life ministry department oversees the well-being of all married individuals within KCC and its church plants with a population of 375 members. It is led by 12 ministry leaders (Karura Community Chapel, 2023). Each ministry is structured with a director, assistant director, ministry heads, and ministry leaders. The respondents should be married for one year or more to ensure that spouses have had enough time to build a strong friendship in their marriage. The respondents should not be separated or have filed for divorce, as their marital dynamics may differ from those in an ongoing marital relationship.

Sample Size

A sample is a small part of a larger group that accurately represents the whole population. In research, it is important to ensure that the sample truly reflects the population under study (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). To achieve this, the researcher must determine an appropriate number of respondents or observations for the study, considering practical considerations such as time, access, and funding (Althubaiti, 2022). However, determining an optimal sample size can be challenging due to practical constraints such as finances, human resources, and time (Gumpili & Das, 2022). Denis (2020) highlights that sample sizes can range from very small to very large, and selecting an appropriate sample size that is neither too large nor too small is crucial. The sample size should be large enough for statistical analysis and to achieve the study's objectives (Althubaiti, 2022). In this study, Yamane's (1967) formula was used to determine the sample size thus:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n is the sample size to be determined

N is the population size of 375

e is the margin of error set at 0.05.

Substituting the given formula as;

$$\begin{aligned}
 n &= \frac{375}{1+375(0.05)^2} \\
 &= \frac{375}{1+375(0.0025)} \\
 &= \frac{375}{1+0.9375} \\
 &= \frac{375}{1.9375} \\
 &= 193.5
 \end{aligned}$$

Rounding off to the next whole, the sample size “n” was 194 individuals. For the qualitative approach, the final sample size was a matter of judgment rather than calculation (Creswell & Clark, 2018). The researcher used 12 marriage ministry leaders will be purposively selected to obtain detailed information about their experiences of interspousal friendship and marital quality (Obilor, 2023).

Sampling Method

Sampling in research can be challenging for researchers as it is crucial to ensure that the sample obtained is representative of the entire population (Cash et al., 2022). The first step is to determine the population of interest. Thus, to help design quality research, it is essential to have sampling techniques; probability and non-probability sampling are the two main types of sampling methods (Berndt, 2020). Probability sampling is typically used in quantitative research and is suitable for larger populations. In contrast, non-probability or purposive sampling is associated with qualitative research and is suitable

for very small or hard-to-access populations (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). According to Stratton (2023), probability and non-probability sampling techniques bear advantages and disadvantages. For instance, probability sampling increases the generalisation and representativeness of the findings. On the other hand, non-probability sampling, which is adopted for its low cost in qualitative research, may require a strategy of replication research for generalisation (Althubaiti, 2022).

Probability or non-probability sampling techniques can be applied to select ways that best answer the research questions (López, 2023). Consequently, this research utilised simple random sampling. In addition, for non-probability sampling, the researcher can use their judgment (Lopez, 2023). This study utilised purposive sampling to collect diverse perspectives and identify key themes (Cash et al., 2022; Saunders et al., 2019). To accomplish the research objective, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 12 Church Family Life Ministry leaders at Karura Community Chapel, who provided knowledge and targeted expertise of the study.

Types of Data

When determining the research aims and the questions that need to be addressed, researchers may gather either primary or secondary data (Barroga & Matanguihan, 2022). For this research, primary data was used. The data was collected directly from the respondents and key informants. Collecting respondent data to obtain qualitative data that accurately reflects their realities and lived experiences is important.

Data Collection Methods

The research utilized quantitative and qualitative approaches, gathering primary data through the Gottman assessment tool and couples' ministry leaders' interviews.

These tools included segments that aim to address the study objectives. Thus, the researcher used structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to collect the data. The questionnaire was divided into sections. The first section collected demographic information such as age, gender, marriage duration, and number of children. The second section used Gottman's Sound Relationship House scale to assess interspousal friendship through love maps, fondness, admiration, and turning towards, between married individuals as indicated in Appendix II. The third section used the Likert scale adopted from Gottman's Sound Relationship House to measure marital quality. The scale ranges from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

For this research, the Gottman Institute developed questionnaire can be found online in the first part of the Sound Relationship House (2000-2014). The questionnaire considered the three levels of interspousal friendship in the Sound Relationship House Questionnaire (5-item scale). The first level is love maps, which entails a detailed understanding of spouses' world and life, including dreams, worries and stress. Sample items include "I can list the relatives my partner likes the least"; "I know my partner's life major worries". To calculate the scale percentage, the researcher got the number of true responses, divided it by 5 and multiply it by 100. Client scores of 0 to 60% show that the love maps need improvement. Scores of 61 to 80% depict marginal love maps, and scores of 81 to 100% state that there are robust love maps between the spouses.

The second part of the questionnaire details the fondness and admiration of the spouses and the praise they offer each other with a fundamentally positive view of each other (Gottman & Silver, 2015). The items include love, respect, joy, happiness in each other, and care for the partners. Sample items include; "My partner appreciates the things I do in this relationship"; "Romance is definitely something our relationship still has in

it"; "My partner really respects me". To calculate the scale percentage, the researcher got the number of true responses, divided it by 5 and multiply it by 100. Clients' scores of 0 to 60% underscore that fondness and admiration need improvement. Scores of 61 to 80% depict marginal ability to be fond and admire each other, and scores of 81 to 100% show strong fondness and admiration.

The third part of the questionnaire entailed the turning towards behaviour between married individuals. This third section assessed the behavioural exchanges between the spouses, which store up goodwill and maintain a positive sense of each other. The behaviour includes sharing fun times together, having common interests, doing many of the same things together, and holding discussions. Sample items include, "We always have a lot to say to each other"; "We have a lot of fun together in our everyday lives"; and "We like to do a lot of the same things together". To calculate the scale percentage, the researcher got the number of true responses, divided it by 5 and multiply it by 100. Clients' 0 to 60% scores underscore that turning towards each other needs improvement. Scores of 61 to 80% depict marginal ability to turn towards each other, and scores of 81 to 100% show a strong turning towards exchange behaviour.

The third part of the questionnaire in Appendix II is the trust and commitment. The sample items include, "My trust in this relationship has been seriously shattered"; "Sometimes I don't feel important to my partner"; "I don't feel like I am my partner's first or major priority in his or her life"; "When I am feeling bad, my partner is willing to meet my needs". For trust, the response of agree shows lower trust. The total trust score was calculated by the number of items that are either Disagree or Strongly Disagree divided by 5 X 100. For commitment, the response of agree shows more commitment.

The total commitment score was calculated by the number of items that the response is either Agree or Strongly Agree, divide by 5 X 100.

Conducting key informant interviews with open-ended questions for the marriage ministry leaders provided the opportunity to gather responses regarding their interspousal friendship and its impact on marital quality, as outlined in Appendix 3. Sample items on the interview guide included, “From your observation and experience, what are the key components of friendship between spouses?"; " Can you discuss any specific instances where you observed the impact of a strong friendship between spouses on their marital quality?"; " What challenges do couples face when developing and sustaining friendship within their marriage?"; " What steps (if any) have you taken to cultivate friendship in your marriage?"

Data Collection Procedures

A researcher requires a research permit for the study and then administers the instruments to the respondents (Kombo & Tromp, 2018). The researcher introduced the purpose of the study to the KCC ministry leaders and ensured their confidentiality. The researcher issued the informed consent form before administering the research instruments. The research instruments were administered both virtually and physically with the help of a research assistant at a pre-agreed time and location. Key informant interviews were conducted with the ministry leaders upon obtaining informed consent. The collected information was recorded and transcribed for data analysis. The fieldwork lasted two weeks.

Instrument Validity

To use an existing instrument in research, it is essential to establish the validity of the scores obtained from past usage (Creswell & Poth, 2024). The validity of the scores

can be determined by three traditional forms: content validity, predictive validity, and construct validity. Content validity checks whether the items measure the intended content, while predictive validity shows whether the scores predict a criterion measure. Lastly, construct validity verifies whether the items measure hypothetical concepts or constructs.

The initial study on the validity of the Gottman (2015) questionnaire across a sample of 130 couples transitioning into parenthood provides a correlation of friendship and intimacy sections on a 5-item scale as follows: The correlation scores for husband 0.28 and wife 0.24 indicate a positive correlation which suggests that a greater knowledge of spouse's internal world is associated with greater marital quality. The husband love maps correlation score of 0.28*** suggests a statistically significant positive relationship between the husband's love maps and marital satisfaction at the 0.001 significance level. The wife love maps correlation score of 0.24** suggests a statistically significant positive relationship at the 0.01 significance level, though slightly less than that for husbands. For the sample studied, the higher coefficients of 0.47*** for wives and 0.32*** for husbands might imply that wives' understanding of their husbands plays a more significant role in marital satisfaction than husband's understanding of their wives.

Fondness and admiration scores of 0.38*** for the husband and 0.48*** for the wife indicate a significantly positive correlation between fondness and admiration and marital satisfaction. The data suggests that fondness and admiration play a slightly more critical role for wives than husbands. In addition, there's high confidence in the findings, and the results are unlikely to be due to random chance. The bids for connection, attention and support are mutually important for both wife and husband, contributing to marital satisfaction. Both wife and husband have similar correlation coefficients of 0.48*** and

0.49** respectively towards this concept. The significance levels (***) and **) also provide strong evidence of the correlation between turning towards and marital quality, reinforcing the reliability of the findings.

The Gottman questionnaire indicates content validity with an acceptable level of a good model in the ratio of Chi-Square to freedom degrees of less than two and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of less than 0.05 (Hooman, 2016). In addition, a study on infertile couples by Njafi et al. (2014) established the construct validity of a questionnaire with a score of 0.85 based on Gottman's Locke & Wallace adjustment questionnaire. However, Kombo and Tromp (2018) caution that interviews from the same person can bear different results in different interviews.

Instrument Reliability

Instrument reliability ensures that the measured constructs give the same score over time and different conditions (Al Jaghsi et al., 2021). Scores from previous use of the instrument that authors report that have measures of consistency demonstrate instrument reliability (Creswell & Poth, 2024). In the initial study, the reliability of the Sound Marital House (SMH) questionnaires was conducted by John Gottman with Kim Ryan on the long form of the Sound Relationship House Scales on 51 couples in a two-day workshop (Gottman & Silver, 2015). In the area of friendship on a 20-item scale, the scales for the husband with an average age of 45.3 years and wife with an average age of 43.7 years, respectively, had the following Cronbach alphas: Love Maps was 0.61, 0.59; Fondness and Admiration were 0.91, 0.91; Turning Towards was 0.91, 0.90.

A second study was conducted on 130 couples going through the transition to parenthood on a reduced 5-item scale with the following reliabilities for husband and wife

respectively: Love Maps 0.52, 0.68; Fondness and Admiration as 0.83, 0.87, Turning Towards as 0.83, 0.87 (Gottman, 2015). Furthermore, a study on the reliability and validity of Gottman questionnaires shows that Cronbach's alpha of 0.96 and coefficient of split-half of 0.94 provide acceptable reliability (Shirdel et al., 2019). In addition to this, Gottman's Locke & Wallace Cronbach's alpha reliability scale was found to be 0.88 for the study of 16 couples that determined the validity of Gottman couple therapy on improving couples' marital intimacy (Davoodvandi et al., 2018).

Researcher's Positionality

The researcher must consider how their positionality and identity might influence various aspects of the research, including data collection, research questions, study design, and analysis (Wilson et al., 2022). The researcher acknowledges that a student therapist who is also a part of the congregation they are studying may have certain advantages. They would have a better understanding of the organisation and its workings. Additionally, respondents may feel more comfortable sharing genuine data during data collection than being more cautious with an "outsider" researcher (Chew-Graham et al., 2002). Thus, the researcher's acknowledgement of the advantages helped the effectiveness of the study.

The researcher was mindful of potential biases arising from their dual role and continuously reflected on their identity and perspective concerning the research topic. Moreover, the researcher assessed the assumptions related to the research topic, design, context, and process. By doing so, the researcher aimed to exercise reflexivity and question any assumptions that may be made from the study population and the topic. This helped produce a research account that is honest and trustworthy. Thus, the researcher's reflexivity is crucial for conducting ethical and independent research.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involves scrutinising and examining the acquired data to make inferences and deductions (Kombo & Tromp, 2018). The examination of databases is required to address the research questions in qualitative and quantitative data analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2018). For quantitative data analysis, the researcher used Pearson's correlation coefficient statistical tests through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 29 to address the research questions. The researcher employed the T-test to determine the statistical significance of interspousal friendship and marital quality based on the intervening variable (Denis, 2020). The correlation test determined the statistically significant relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality (Treiman, 2009). The ANOVA determined the statistical significance difference between interspousal friendship and members' marital quality. Furthermore, multivariate regression analysis was utilised to establish the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality. The computer software SPSS Version 29 facilitated the capturing and evaluating the data collected.

Qualitative data analysis may not always be computable arithmetically (Kombo & Tromp, 2018). Qualitative data analysis seeks to make general thematic statements from material that describe events and occurrences such as text, materials, and photographs (Busetto et al., 2020). The researcher analysed the data by identifying and classifying major concepts or themes (Rena, 2022). The researcher perused the collected data, develop a coding system, classified major topics covered, indicated major themes, developed a summary report, presented the findings using direct quotations, and reported emphasis using intensity that aligns with the research objectives.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines and individual integrity govern professional conduct while researching to maintain compliance with ethical principles (Morina, 2021). To this effect, the researcher obtained institutional compliance by fulfilling the ethical review requirements and obtaining an ethical clearance certificate from PAC University's Institutional Ethics Review Committee (ISERC). In addition, the researcher also obtained a permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). Similarly, written permission was obtained from the Senior Pastor of Karura Community Chapel (KCC) to conduct the study on its congregants. The researcher maintained credibility in research by avoiding data falsification, conflict of interest, lack of respect for respondents' rights, and plagiarism (Drolet & Girard, 2020).

To ensure research integrity and respect for research respondents, researchers need to demonstrate a genuine concern for people's quality of life; researchers should not engage in research for personal gain or conduct research that has harmful effects (Drolet et al., 2023). The researcher provided an informed consent form, which clearly stated the academic purpose of the study. The respondents had the option to undertake the research voluntarily. The researcher further explained the justification for conducting the research and highlighted the benefits of the findings, which provided strategies for enriching couples' marriages. Maintaining confidentiality and preserving the anonymity of the respondents was a top priority.

Protective measures were implemented to secure the data, including safeguarding sensitive information and using pseudonyms in reports to maintain confidentiality. Plagiarism was kept below the required threshold of 15% for all data. Throughout the research process, honesty and transparency were prioritized to prevent any exploitation or

breaches of consent. Additionally, the researcher conducted debriefing sessions with the couples' ministry leaders following the interviews. The researcher plans to share digital copies of the summary report and infographics, as well as organize presentations or seminars at Karura Community Chapel to present the findings. This will provide participants with the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the results. A detailed report will also be sent via email or through a secure online platform.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the research design and methodology that were chosen to achieve the study objectives have been explained. In addition, the chapter has clarified the employment of a mixed methods research design. The sample population has also been described, along with the study site. The data type, data collection methods, research procedures, and data analysis plan have been discussed. In conclusion, the chapter has highlighted the research's guidance through ethical considerations and the researcher's positionality on the study. The study results are analysed and interpreted in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the research findings. The chapter commences with the analysis of response rate and respondents' demographic profile. The rest of the chapter proceeds in line with the specific objectives. The first objective was to examine the relationship between love maps and the marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County. The second objective was to investigate the relationship between fondness and admiration and the marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County. The third one was to evaluate the relationship between turning towards behaviour and the marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County. The fourth one was to establish the moderating role of trust and commitment in the relationship between interspousal friendship and the marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County. Finally, to propose strategy measures for the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County. Qualitative results are used to corroborate the quantitative findings in line with mixed-methods research design. The results for each objective are discussed in light of existing empirical and theoretical literature.

Response Rate and Demographic Analysis

This section analyses the response rate and demographic characteristics such as gender, age, years in marriage, number of children, and level of education.

Response Rate

A total of 194 individuals were approached for participation. The response rate is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Response Rate

Respondent category	Frequency	Percent
Responded	172	88.7%
Non-respondents	22	11.3%
Total	194	100.0%

Table 1 reveals that out of the 194 individuals approached, 172 participated, yielding a response rate of 88.7%, while 22 individuals (11.3%) did not respond. This relatively high response rate suggests that the data gathered was adequate for data analysis. This is in line with Wolf et al. (2020) who argued that response rates exceeding 60% are considered good.

Gender Distribution

Figure 3 displays the respondents' gender distribution.

Figure 3

Distribution of Respondents by Gender

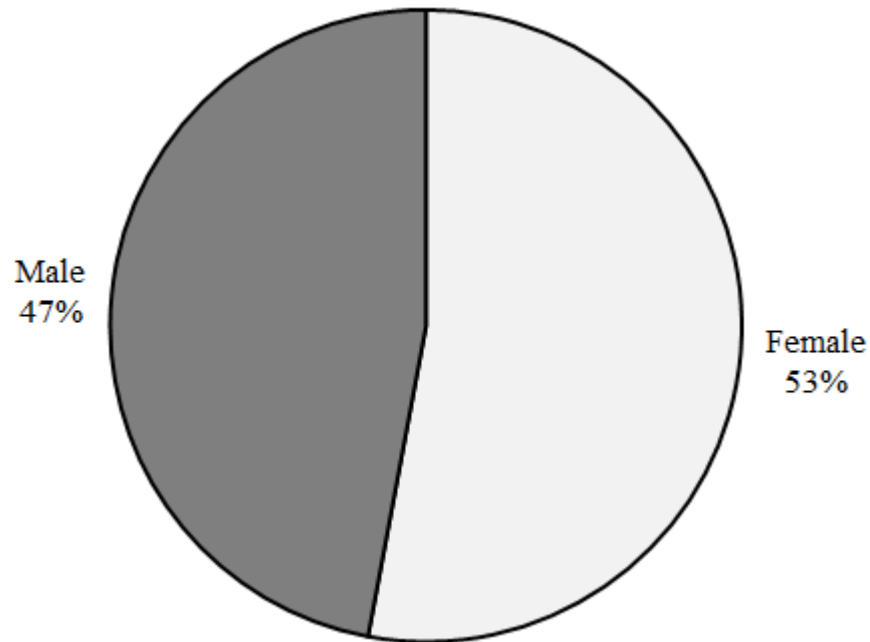


Figure 3 shows that 53% of the respondents were female, while males accounted for 43%. This distribution suggested that there was adequate gender representation in the study, though with a marginal majority being female. This is in line with Zurlo (2023) observation that the female population in the church is higher than their male counterparts. Thus, the distribution obtained signifies the representativeness of the sample by gender.

Age Distribution

The age distribution of respondents in the study provides valuable insight into the demographic characteristics of the sample. Table 2 presents the distribution of respondents by age.

Table 2

Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age bracket	Frequency	Percent
Less than 20 years	4	2.3%
20-29 years	46	26.7%
30-39 years	76	44.2%
40-49 years	22	12.8%
50-59 years	15	8.7%
60 years and above	9	5.2%
Total	172	100.0%

Table 2 reflects the age distribution of respondents in the study, which revealed that most of the respondents were between 30 and 39 years old (44.2%), followed by those in the 20-29 years age range (26.7%). A smaller portion of the sample was represented by individuals aged 40-49 years (12.8%), with even fewer respondents in the 50-59 years (8.7%) and 60 years and above (5.2%) age brackets. Only 2.3% of respondents were under 20 years of age. This indicates that the study predominantly sampled individuals in their 20s to 40s. The distribution suggests most of the respondents in the study were relatively young or middle-aged couples. This aligns with the findings of a previous study by Ng'ang'a (2023) which also established that majority of the members of the church in her study were relatively young. This may be explained by rural-urban migration in search of better opportunities.

Years in Marriage

The distribution of respondents' years in marriage provides an overview of the sample's marital duration. Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3

Respondents' Years in Marriage

Years in marriage	Frequency	Percent
1-5 years	27	15.8%
6-10 years	37	21.6%
11-15 years	48	27.5%
16-20 years	29	17.0%
21-25 years	13	7.6%
26-30 years	2	1.2%
31-35 years	7	4.1%
36 years and above	9	5.3%
Total	172	100.0%

Table 3 reflects that the majority of respondents had been married for 11-15 years (27.5%), followed by those who had been married for 6-10 years (21.6%) and 1-5 years (15.8%). A smaller proportion had been married for 16-20 years (17.0%), while fewer respondents were married for 21-25 years (7.6%) or 31-35 years (4.1%). Only a small number of respondents had been married for 26-30 years (1.2%) or 36 years and above (5.3%). This distribution indicates that most respondents (62.7%) had been married for more than a decade. This signals that majority of the respondents were in relatively stable

marriages. This finding affirms the empirical observation by Acquah et al. (2024) that religious couples experienced high marital stability.

Number of Children

The distribution of respondents' number of children provides an insight into family sizes within the sample. Table 4 presents the distribution.

Table 4

Distribution of Respondents by Number of Children

Number of children	Frequency	Percent
None	11	6.4%
1 child	24	14.0%
2 children	60	34.9%
3 children	42	24.4%
4 children	12	7.0%
5 children and above	23	13.4%
Total	172	100.0%

Table 4 shows that a significant proportion of respondents had two children (34.9%), followed by those with three children (24.4%) and one child (14.0%). A smaller number of respondents had five or more children (13.4%) and four children (7.0%). Only 6.4% of the respondents reported having no children. This distribution suggested that the majority of respondents had small to moderate family sizes, with two to three children being the most common. This finding is consistent with the statistics reported in the

Kenya Health and Demographic Survey report (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2023) which put the average number of children per woman in urban places at 2.8.

Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education

The distribution of respondents' level of education highlights the educational attainment within the sample.

Table 5

Respondents' Level of Education

Level of education	Frequency	Percent
Primary education	3	1.7%
Secondary education	8	4.7%
College education	49	28.5%
University education	112	65.2%
Total	172	100.0%

As shown in Table 5, the majority of respondents had university education (65.2%), followed by those with college education (28.5%). A smaller proportion had secondary education (4.7%) and primary education (1.7%). This distribution reflected the presence of a more educated demographic within the Karura Community Chapel population. This finding contrasts with the study by Ng'ang'a (2023), which reported that the majority of respondents had attained only up to the secondary level of education, suggesting that the educational attainment of churchgoers is context-specific. Given that Karura Community Chapel is situated in a high-income neighborhood, its proximity to a

higher socioeconomic class likely accounts for the higher proportion of respondents with university-level education.

Relationship Between Love Maps and Marital Quality

The first objective of the study was to examine the relationship between love maps and the marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County. This section presents descriptive results of love map items and marital quality. It also provides an inferential analysis of the relationship between love maps and marital quality.

Descriptive Analysis of Love Maps Items

Respondents were asked to indicate whether the love maps statements in Table 6 were true or false. The table presents the percentage distribution of respondents who agreed with the statements as true with respect to their marital relationships.

Table 6

Love Maps Item Scores

Love maps statements	Percent
I can tell you some of my partner's life dreams.	95.3%
I can list my partner's major aspirations and hopes in life.	91.9%
I can list the relatives my partner likes the least.	90.7%
I know my partner's major current worries.	87.2%
My partner is familiar with my current stresses.	81.4%
Love maps aggregate score	89.3%

Table 6 shows that 95.3% of respondents could identify some of their partner's life's dreams, and 91.9% could list their partner's major aspirations and hopes in life. This finding aligns with Sadeghzadeh et al. (2023), who suggest that couples who have a deep mutual understanding of each other's aspirations are more likely to experience higher marital satisfaction. Additionally, 90.7% of respondents could name the relatives their partner likes the least, while 87.2% knew their partner's major current worries. This finding resonates with Gottman and Silver's (2015) assertion that the level of knowledge partners have about each other's lives is fundamental to creating emotional closeness and satisfaction in marriage. Furthermore, 81.4% of respondents reported that their partner was familiar with their current stresses. This finding echoes Navarro and Gottman (2018), who emphasize that emotional intimacy, reflected in knowing each other's stresses, is essential for marital satisfaction. The aggregate score for all love map statements was 89.3%, indicating a high level of awareness and knowledge of each other's inner world among the couples in the study.

Figure 4 summarizes the love maps classifications.

Figure 4

Distribution of Respondents by Love Maps Classification

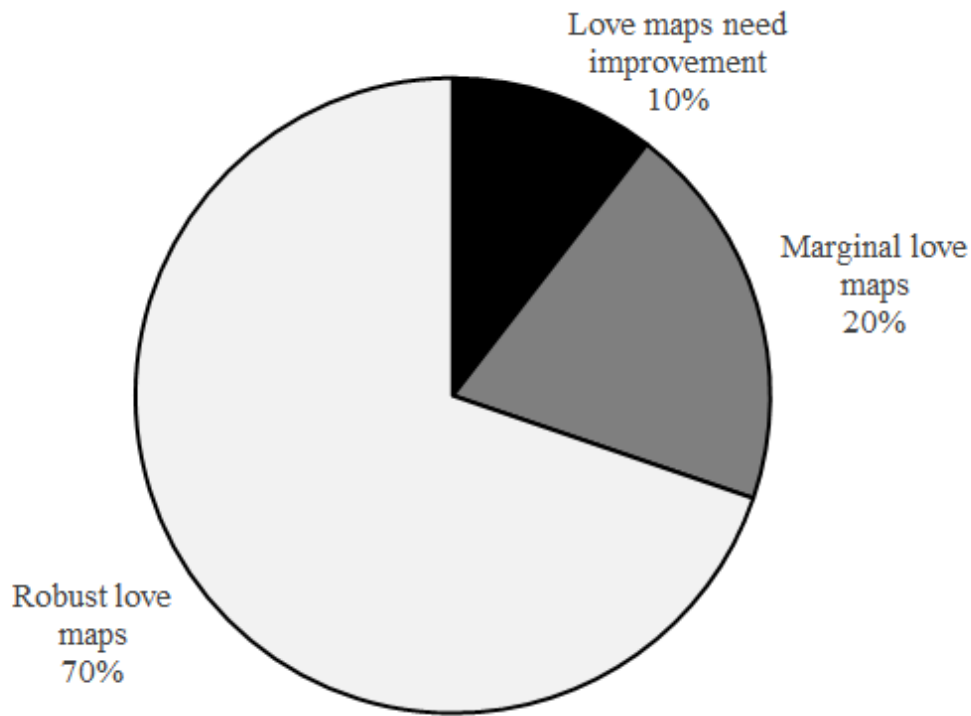


Figure 4 shows that 70% of the respondents had robust love maps, while 20% of the respondents had marginal love maps. However, some 10% of the respondents had love maps that needed improvement. This result is consistent with Chonody et al. (2020), who identify spousal friendship and knowledge of each other's world as a critical determinant of marital satisfaction. The finding is also in line with Kamali et al. (2020), who suggest that couples who invest time in developing a deep emotional connection and mutual understanding of each other's inner world are more likely to report higher marital satisfaction.

Descriptive Analysis of Marital Quality Items

Table 6 shows the mean and standard deviation scores of respondents' rating of marital quality items on a 5-point scale.

Table 7

Marital Quality Item Statistics

Marital quality items	Mean	Std. Deviation
I think my partner cares about me	4.26	.998
I feel confident we can deal with whatever problems that might come up in our relationship	4.12	1.064
My partner usually listens to me	4.04	1.028
I consider myself happy in this relationship	4.00	1.127
I feel emotionally close to my partner	3.98	1.043
Marital quality aggregate score	4.08	1.052

Table 7 indicates that respondents generally felt positive about their relationships. The highest-rated item was "I think my partner cares about me," with a mean score of 4.26 (SD = 0.998), followed by confidence in dealing with relationship problems (M = 4.12, SD = 1.064) and feeling listened to by their partner (M = 4.04, SD = 1.028). Respondents also rated their happiness in the relationship (M = 4.00, SD = 1.127) and emotional closeness to their partner (M = 3.98, SD = 1.043) positively. The aggregate score for marital quality was 4.08 (SD = 1.052), reflecting a generally high level of marital satisfaction among the respondents. Figure 5 classifies the scores into high and low marital quality. This result supports Mardani et al. (2023), who emphasize that

consistent emotional engagement and understanding of each other's love maps contribute significantly to marital satisfaction.

Corroboration of these quantitative findings was found in the theme of 'emotional safety and care'. Respondents repeatedly mentioned that interspousal friendship involves a sense of security and emotional comfort between spouses. They highlight how friendship in marriage is characterized by care, love, and concern for one another, with spouses feeling safe and supported enough to grow together. This is consistent with scholarly literature by Dhaliwal (2021) who identifies love and care for one another as crucial for marital enjoyment and emotional safety. This emotional safety fosters an environment where spouses can laugh, cry, and share their aspirations and fears, knowing that they are backed by a partner who has their best interests at heart. This emotional bond is seen as crucial to maintaining a strong and lasting marriage. The following are an extract of the verbatim remarks:

"This is where couples genuinely like and enjoy each other's company... They feel safe with each other which gives room for growth in their everyday lives."

(Respondent 6, 2024)

"A warm relationship where the spouses have care, love and concern for one another as friends. Having mutual trust and support for each other." (Respondent 9, 2024)

"Companionship, communication, fun and care. Laughing together, crying together." (Respondent 10, 2024)

Figure 5 displays the respondents' rating of their overall marital quality.

Figure 5

Distribution of Respondents by Overall Marital Quality Rating

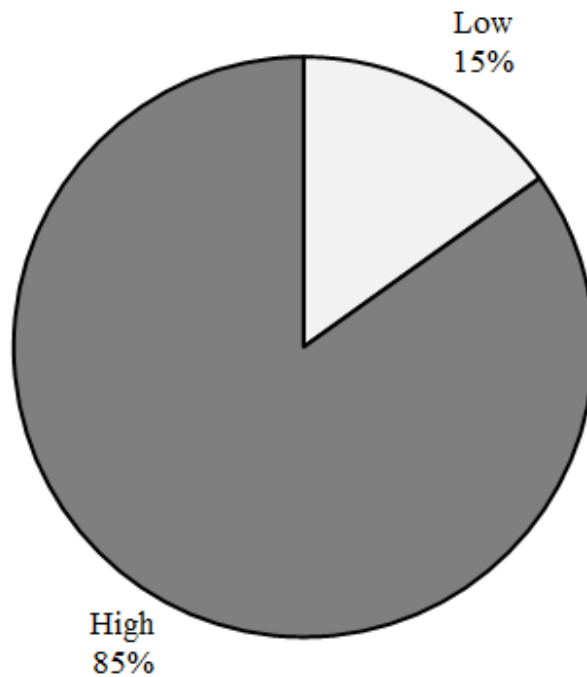


Figure 5 shows that 85% of the respondents rated their overall marital quality highly, while 15% of the respondents perceived their marital quality as low. These results agree with Gottman and Silver (2015), who characterize the bond between a husband and wife as a deep, intimate connection. This connection, characterized by love, trust, and affection, nurtures marital quality. The findings further relate with Baghkasi et al. (2020), who highlight that a profound emotional connection, underpinned by mutual respect and understanding, is essential for enhancing marital quality.

Correlation Between Love Maps and Marital Quality

The correlation analysis examined the relationship between marital quality and love maps. Table 8 presents Pearson Correlation Coefficient at $p < .01$.

Table 8

Correlation Between Love Maps and Marital Quality

		Marital Quality	Love Maps
Marital Quality	Pearson Correlation	1	.573**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	172	171
Love Maps	Pearson Correlation	.573**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	172	172

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8 displays results indicating a significant positive correlation between marital quality and love maps ($r = .573$, $p < .001$). This indicates that higher levels of knowledge about one's partner (as measured by love maps) are associated with higher levels of marital quality. This finding corroborates the work of İnce and Işık (2022) who argued that deep knowledge of one's partner (through love languages) fosters emotional intimacy and marital success. The strong positive relationship suggests that understanding and awareness of a partner's inner world is an important factor in enhancing marital satisfaction. This is in line with recent research in Kenya by Muriithi (2023) which found that expressing fondness towards each other through touch can significantly strengthen marital bonds. The study also suggested that exploring each partner's "love maps" greatly improves understanding within the marriage while making concerted efforts to connect is essential for maintaining healthy marital relationships.

Relationship Between Fondness and Admiration and Marital Quality

The second objective of the study was to investigate the relationship between fondness and admiration and the marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County. This section begins by presenting the percentage distribution of respondents with respect to various fondness and admirations statements.

Descriptive Analysis of Fondness and Admiration Scores

The study assessed respondents' agreement with statements regarding fondness and admiration in their relationships. Table 9 presents the distribution of respondents who agreed with the statements as true.

Table 9

Distribution of Responses to Fondness and Admiration

Fondness and admiration statements	Percent
My partner really respects me.	89.0%
I feel loved and cared for in this relationship.	87.8%
When I come into a room, my partner is glad to see me.	85.5%
My partner appreciates the things I do in this relationship.	82.6%
Romance is something our relationship definitely still has in it.	73.3%
Fondness and Admiration aggregate score	83.6%

Table 9 indicates that 89.0% of respondents felt respected by their partner, and 87.8% reported feeling loved and cared for in their relationship. This finding is consistent with the work of Zoppolat et al. (2019), who highlight respect as a cornerstone in maintaining high-quality marital relationships, suggesting that respect fosters better

communication and relational well-being. Additionally, 85.5% of respondents noted that their partner was glad to see them when they entered a room, while 82.6% felt appreciated for their contributions to the relationship.

This finding aligns with Gottman and Silver (2017), who emphasize the importance of showing affection and warmth, as such gestures reinforce the emotional connection and intimacy between partners. It also mirrors Leong et al. (2019) who found that appreciation that is often expressed through gratitude, enhances marital satisfaction by reinforcing positive interactions and recognition of each other's contributions.

A smaller percentage, 73.3%, agreed that romance was still a part of their relationship. This finding resonates with Tobore (2020), who argues that sustaining romantic affection through mutual respect and admiration is crucial for maintaining marital vitality and satisfaction. The aggregate score for fondness and admiration was 83.6%, indicating generally high levels of positive regard and affection among the couples in the study. The expression of fondness further characterizes such a relationship through small, everyday gestures and a keen attunement to each other's needs and desires (Navarra & Gottman, 2018). This high score reflects the importance of fondness in marriage, as noted by Gottman and Silver (2015), who define fondness as a key element in fostering a deep emotional bond and maintaining marital satisfaction. These findings were corroborated by insights from key informant interviews that highlighted the theme of companionship and mutual support as characterizing interspousal friendship. Many respondents describe interspousal friendship in terms of being companions who genuinely like and enjoy each other's company. They emphasize mutual trust, respect, and the feeling of being able to rely on one another in good and bad times. This companionship involves engaging in shared activities, from light-hearted conversations to deeper,

heartfelt exchanges, which are key aspects of friendship. Spouses are seen as confidants who support one another, with the friendship forming the foundation of a strong marital relationship that transcends romantic feelings. This was reflected in the following verbatim views:

"Mutual likeness between a couple that transcends romantic feelings."

(Respondent 1, 2024).

"Being friends and participating in activities that friends join in – from conversations (both light and heartfelt), hanging out, taking part in fun activities etc." (Respondent 3, 2024).

"Companionship, trust, respect, a confidant and mutual support." (Respondent 4, 2024).

Figure 6 This text summarizes the classifications of fondness and admiration as strong, marginal, and needs improvement.

Figure 6

Distribution of Respondents by Fondness and Admiration Classification

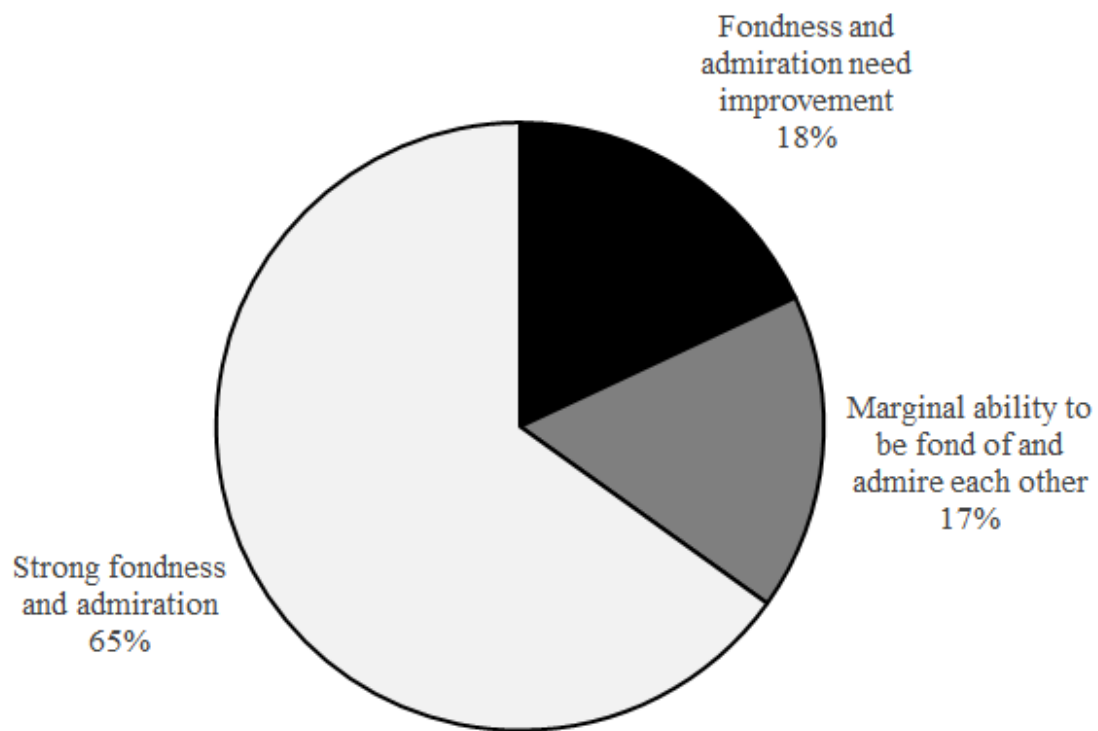


Figure 6 shows that 65% of the respondents experienced strong fondness and admiration in their marriage. This finding supports the research by Wang and Umberson (2023), which stresses that mutual admiration is critical in sustaining positive emotional connections and contributing to relationship quality. However, 17% of the respondents reported only marginal ability to be fond of and admire each other, while for 18% of the respondents, fondness and admiration needed improvement. This finding underscores the importance of addressing gaps in emotional connection, as Gottman and Silver (2015) emphasize the role of admiration in preventing contempt and sustaining marital happiness. This result highlights the potential risks identified by Osafo et al. (2021), who suggest that a lack of affection and admiration can lead to marital dissatisfaction and increase the risk of divorce. Moreover, displaying affection, respect, and admiration

within the marital context and engaging in consistent positive interactions are underscored as pivotal to fostering a successful and fulfilling relationship (Tavakol et al., 2020).

As pertains challenges to developing and sustaining friendship within marriage, the most salient theme that emerged from the qualitative responses is the challenge of balancing competing priorities. Many respondents cited factors such as time constraints, busy careers, parenting responsibilities, and the pressures of daily life as significant obstacles to maintaining and developing marital friendship. These competing demands often leave limited space for couples to nurture their relationship, leading to potential strains on their friendship. Other challenges mentioned, such as dealing with past trauma, trust issues, and cultural expectations, further complicate the ability to sustain a strong friendship within marriage. Some of the verbatim remarks were as follows:

"Time pressure, competing priorities, busy careers, demands of parenting (children)." (Respondent 2, 2024)

"The rigors of being a spouse and the duties that come with marriage- e.g. being parents, dealing with finances, dealing with in-laws etc. at times will strain this friendship." (Respondent 3, 2024)

"Competing needs in their lives, lack of commitment from either party, busy work-and-life schedules. Sometimes after couples get married and the marriage relationship is viewed as a goal rather than a journey, there is laxity in commitment and consistency and working consciously on the relationship." (Respondent 6, 2024)

"The one asset to build the friendship is the most limited, time. You need to be really structured as there are so many demands on this limited resource, your job,

kids, your ‘you’ time and spouse's time. If not carefully structured one or more will get injured." (Respondent 8, 2024)

Correlation Between Fondness and Admiration and Marital Quality

The correlation analysis explored the relationship between marital quality and fondness and admiration. Table 10 shows the correlation coefficient at $p < .01$.

Table 10

Correlation between Fondness and Admiration and Marital Quality

		Marital Quality	Fondness and Admiration
Marital Quality	Pearson Correlation	1	.704**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	172	172
Fondness and Admiration	Pearson Correlation	.704**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	172	172

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 10 results revealed a strong, significant positive correlation between the two variables ($r = .704$, $p < .01$). This suggests that higher levels of fondness and admiration within a relationship are strongly associated with higher levels of marital quality. This relates with the work of Shrout et al. (2023), who indicate that mutual admiration is strongly correlated with higher marital satisfaction and relational stability.

Relationship Between Turning Towards and Marital Quality

The third objective of the study was to evaluate the relationship between ‘turning towards’ behaviour and the marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in

Nairobi City County. In this section, the percentage distribution of respondents' agreement with 'turning towards' items is first analysed, followed by inferential analysis of the relationship between 'turning towards' and 'marital quality'.

Descriptive Analysis of Turning Towards Scores

This study assessed respondents' agreement with the statements related to "turning towards" behaviours in their relationships, which reflect emotional engagement and shared activities. Table 11 shows the percentage distribution of respondents who agreed with the statements as true.

Table 11

Distribution of Responses to Turning Towards

'Turning towards' statements	Percent
I really enjoy discussing things with my partner.	83.1%
We always have a lot to say to each other.	72.7%
We have a lot of fun together in our everyday lives.	67.4%
We really have a lot of interests in common.	62.6%
We like to do a lot of the same things.	62.0%
Turning towards aggregate score	69.6%

Table 11 indicates that 83.1% of respondents enjoyed discussing things with their partner, while 72.7% felt they always had a lot to say to each other. Additionally, 67.4% agreed that they have fun together in their everyday lives. A smaller percentage, 62.6%, reported having many common interests, and 62.0% liked doing the same activities with their partner. The aggregate score for 'turning towards' behaviors was 69.6%, indicating

moderate levels of emotional engagement and shared interests among couples in the study. This was also reflected in the qualitative findings which revealed consistent communication and emotional support in day-to-day married life as a recurrent theme. Respondents frequently emphasized the role of regular check-ins, open communication, and sharing daily experiences as central to maintaining spousal friendship. For example, one respondent reported, “We check on each other about our days, knowing what is happening in our worlds, sharing goals and dreams” (Respondent #2), while another highlighted “hanging out, sharing updates in the middle of the day... and supporting each other emotionally” (Respondent #1). This communication is complemented by emotional support, such as shared humour, affection, and genuine concern for one another's wellbeing. These practices foster a sense of connection and teamwork, ensuring that both partners remain engaged in each other's lives and maintain a strong emotional bond in their marriage.

These results align with the findings of Hosseinpour et al. (2022), who stress the importance of “turning towards” as an essential mechanism for nurturing healthy relationships, as well as Veldorale-Griffin (2023), who emphasizes genuine enthusiasm towards bids for connection. Similarly, qualitative data from this study highlights regular emotional support and communication practices – such as sharing daily experiences and providing emotional updates – which resonate with the concept of positivity resonance discussed by Wells et al. (2022) and the importance of shared moments of emotional connection. In terms of fostering positive responses to bids, this study’s findings resonate with the work of Sasaki and Overall (2021), who argue that genuine interest in one’s spouse and active listening are pivotal for maintaining a healthy marriage. This is echoed in the respondents’ emphasis on regular check-ins and emotional support, which enhance

the sense of connection between partners. As such, strategies that promote turning towards behaviors in daily interactions – such as improving communication, recognizing bids for connection, and ensuring emotional availability – are critical in ensuring sustained marital satisfaction.

Figure 7 summarizes the ‘turning towards’ classification, displaying how the respondents were distributed in terms of strong turning towards exchange behaviour, marginal ability to turn towards each other, and turning towards needing improvement.

Figure 7

Distribution of Respondents by Turning Towards Classification

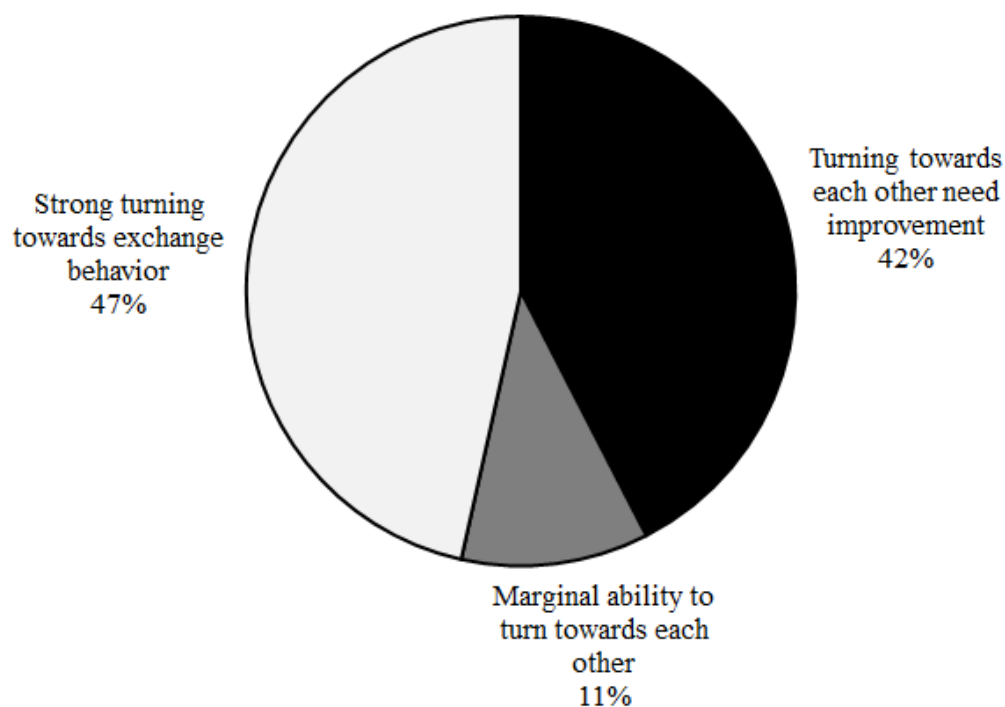


Figure 7 shows that 47% percent of the respondents experienced strong ‘turning towards’ exchange behaviour in their marital relationship. However, some 11% of the respondents had only marginal ability to turn towards each other, while for a significant share of the respondents (42%), turning towards needed improvement. The overall

moderate level of ‘turning towards’ behaviors is consistent with findings by Navarra and Gottman (2018), where partners who engage positively with each other's bids for connection build emotional intimacy and trust. However, it is noteworthy that 42% of respondents reported that ‘turning towards’ behaviors needed improvement, and 11% exhibited marginal ability to engage in this practice. This finding parallels the insights of Fattahi et al. (2021), who point out that not all couples engage equally in these critical interactions. Furthermore, the 47% of respondents reporting strong turning towards behavior mirrors the research of Jalalvand et al. (2023), who found that consistent turning towards fosters stronger and healthier relationships.

Correlation Between Turning Towards and Marital Quality

The correlation analysis examined the relationship between marital quality and "turning towards" behaviors. Table 12 shows the correlation results.

Table 12

Correlation between Turning Towards and Marital Quality

		Marital Quality	Turning Towards
Marital Quality	Pearson Correlation	1	.713**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	172	172
Turning Towards	Pearson Correlation	.713**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	172	172

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 12 results show a strong, significant positive correlation between the two variables ($r = .713$, $p < .01$), indicating that higher levels of turning towards behaviors are associated with higher marital quality. This strong relationship suggests that emotional engagement and shared activities play a key role in enhancing overall satisfaction within marriage. This aligns well with the literature by Navarra and Gottman (2018), and later research by Hosseinpoor et al. (2021) in which "turning towards" is emphasized as a crucial element in cultivating healthy relationships, with couples who consistently respond positively to each other's bids for connection reporting stronger bonds. The findings further reinforced the observation by Jalalvand et al. (2023) that couples who regularly turn towards each other manage conflicts more positively and experience better overall relationship quality. The results also support Veldorale-Griffin's (2023) assertion that genuine enthusiasm and interest in each other's bids for connection significantly contribute to marital quality. Moreover, the study agrees with Coflin and Powell (2022), who note that "turning towards" behaviors foster emotional intimacy and trust, enhancing the overall marital bond.

Moderating Role of Trust and Commitment in the Relationship Between Interspousal Friendship and Marital Quality

The fourth objective of the study was to establish the moderating role of trust and commitment in the relationship between interspousal friendship and the marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel. This section of the analysis first displays the distribution of respondents by level of trust and commitment, followed by regression analysis to test their moderation effect.

Descriptive Analysis of Trust and Level of Commitment

Figure 8 classifies the respondents' level of trust in their marital relationship as either high or low.

Figure 8

Level of Trust in the Relationship

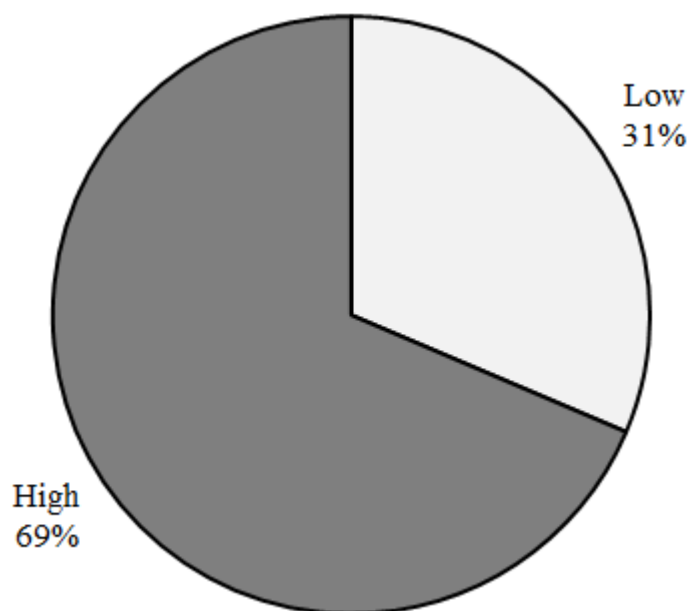


Figure 8 shows that 69% of the respondents rated the level of trust in their marital relationship as high, while for 31% of the respondents, trust levels were low. On this respect, a key theme that emerged from the verbatim responses is the significance of communication and trust in spousal friendship. Many respondents highlighted the importance of open, honest, and effective communication as foundational to maintaining a strong marital bond. This is coupled with trust, which is repeatedly mentioned as a critical component for a healthy relationship. For instance, respondents describe the need for "open communication, loyalty, trust" (Respondent #2), "vulnerability and open

communication" (Respondent #3), and "trust, honesty, genuine care and concern" (Respondent #9). These elements foster emotional safety, understanding, and mutual respect, which are essential for the friendship aspect of marriage. The findings resonate with Gottman and Gottman (2017), who emphasize that mutual trust enhances emotional closeness, affection, and overall marital satisfaction. Similarly, Shirdel et al. (2019) and Yilmaz et al. (2023) stress the significance of trust as a fundamental pillar in maintaining rewarding relationships. The study findings support these claims, with respondents frequently linking trust to emotional security and stability.

Figure 9 illustrates how respondents were distributed based on their level of commitment in their marriage.

Figure 9

Level of Commitment in the Relationship

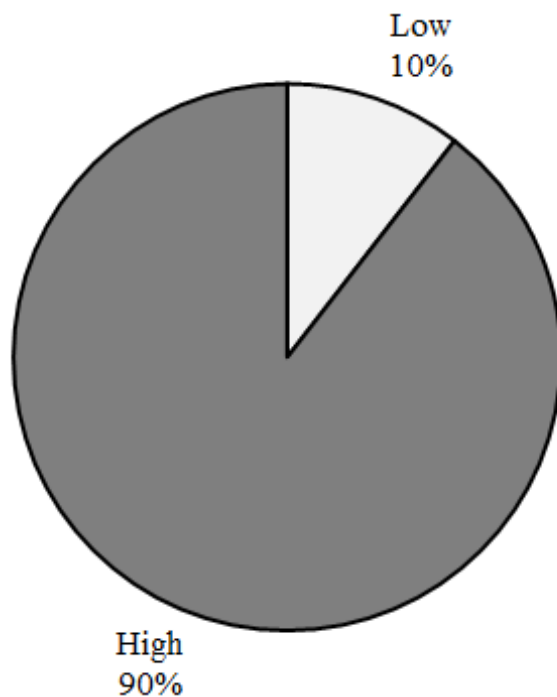


Figure 9 indicates that for 90% of the respondents, the level of commitment in their relationship was high. However, 10% of the respondents rated the level of

commitment in their marriage as low. This suggests that majority of the respondents were highly committed to their marriages. This finding matches with the study by Acquah et al. (2024) which noted high levels of marital commitment among religious couples.

Moderating Effect of Trust and Commitment

Firstly, multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between love maps, fondness and admiration, and turning towards on marital quality, while controlling for trust and commitment.

Table 13

Regression of Marital Quality on Interspousal Friendship while Controlling for Trust and Commitment

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.837 ^a	.701	.692	10.39712		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Commitment, Love Maps, Trust, Turning Towards, Fondness and Admiration						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	41766.005	5	8353.201	77.273	.000 ^b
	Residual	17836.522	167	108.100		
	Total	59602.526	172			
a. Dependent Variable: Marital Quality						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Commitment, Love Maps, Trust, Turning Towards, Fondness and Admiration						
Coefficients ^a						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	17.565	4.650		3.777	.000
	Love Maps	.171	.050	.191	3.414	.001
	Fondness and Admiration	.082	.046	.126	1.758	.081
	Turning Towards	.101	.036	.190	2.805	.006
	Trust	.349	.056	.402	6.279	.000
	Commitment	.105	.058	.107	1.817	.071

a. Dependent Variable: Marital Quality Score in Percent

Table 13 shows the statistical significance (Sig.) which represents the p-value for each coefficient. A p-value less than 0.05 ($p < .05$) denotes that the coefficient is

statistically significant whereas, p -value greater than 0.05 ($p > .05$) indicates that there was no statistical significance. The R^2 indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables in the model. The table reveals that the overall model was significant, $F(5,165)=77.27$, $p < .01$, explaining 70.1% of the variance in marital quality ($R^2=.701$). Among the interspousal friendship variables, both love maps ($\beta=.191$, $p < .01$) and turning towards ($\beta=.190$, $p < .01$) significantly predicted marital quality, while fondness and admiration ($\beta=.126$, $p > .05$) did not reach statistical significance. As control variables, trust ($\beta=.402$, $p < .01$) had a strong positive effect on marital quality, whereas commitment ($\beta=.107$, $p > .05$) did not significantly predict marital quality. The absence of statistical significance between commitment and marital quality aligns with the findings of Lin et al. (2022), which indicated that gender nuances and cultural backgrounds influence perceptions of marital commitment. The significant positive effect of interspousal friendship on marital quality aligns strongly with Navarra and Gottman (2018) who emphasize the role of spousal friendship in fostering emotional closeness, trust, and resilience.

From the qualitative responses, the overarching theme that emerged is deep connection in marital relationships, centered on the role of interspousal friendship in enhancing overall marital quality. Respondents consistently pointed out that friendship fosters a profound sense of mutual trust, understanding, and emotional closeness between spouses. This deep connection is seen as essential for improving communication, resolving conflicts, and creating a more enjoyable and fulfilling relationship. Many respondents also viewed interspousal friendship as the foundation that strengthens the stability and longevity of the marriage, emphasizing that without it, the relationship weakens.

"It develops a depth in the quality of marriage through mutual trust, deeper connection and understanding." (Respondent 1, 2024)

"Being friends as spouses enriches the quality of marriage: One is able to have 'fun' as a friend in addition to carrying out the marital duties of being a wife/husband." (Respondent 3, 2024)

"Interspousal friendship helps to improve the overall marital quality." (Respondent 5, 2024)

"I would say it affects it greatly, and it is actually the very foundation of the relationship and it informs the couple's approach to various aspects of their lives." (Respondent 6, 2024)

"Friendship enhances the marriage relationship because the spouses are able to be real and honest with each other. This helps foster good communication and eases the tension when there is a conflict." (Respondent 9, 2024).

The theme of resilience anchor was another associated with interspousal friendship. The qualitative responses consistently pointed to how deep friendship between spouses serves as the foundation that helps couples endure and overcome various challenges. Whether facing health crises, infertility, or other hardships, friendship provides emotional strength, unity, and the motivation to support each other through adversity (Shirdel et al., 2019). Articulating the characteristics of a strong spousal friendship, such as emotional bonding, mutual support, and companionship, underscores the foundational importance of these elements in fostering marital success and longevity to reduce marital distress (Chonody et al., 2020). This resilient anchor is evident in examples where couples remain committed, sacrifice for each other, and work together to

navigate life's difficulties. Thus, friendship acts as a key factor in fostering resilience and marital stability in the face of adversity as implied in the following verbatim views:

"Sticking together through thick and thin, handling difficult situations with openness and kindness." (Respondent 4, 2024)

"When couples have each other's backs, for instance, in situations that involve matters to do with either of their extended families. Without strong and grounded friendship, it would have been very difficult navigating such terrain. When faced with a life-altering situation like matters to do with health, strong interspousal friendship greatly strengthens couples in walking through such difficult life situations." (Respondent 6, 2024)

"In the event that difficult situations like illness or bereavement, a strong friendship helped the spouses to be genuinely present to help the other spouse cope with the hard times." (Respondent 9, 2024)

On the theme of resilience anchor, Navarra and Gottman (2018) describe trust and commitment as foundational to navigating adversity in marriage. The findings reinforce this perspective by illustrating how friendship acts as a buffer during difficult times, enhancing emotional strength and marital stability.

Constructive conflict resolution was also a salient theme from the qualitative responses. The responses consistently highlighted how couples with a strong friendship foundation can address conflicts in a healthy, respectful, and solution-focused manner. The emphasis is on separating the issue from the person, engaging in open communication, and approaching conflicts with mutual respect and humility. This is in keeping with Baghkasi et al. (2020) who emphasise the essence of marital success, positioning the development of a profound and meaningful friendship at the heart of

enduring partnerships. This friendship, they argue, is rooted in enjoyment of one another's company and mutual respect, coupled with an intimate knowledge of each other's preferences, likes, and dislikes. The respondents identified that by focusing on resolving the problem rather than attacking each other, couples can work together to preserve and strengthen their relationship, demonstrating that constructive conflict resolution is central to marital harmony and the benefit of interspousal friendship. This was apparent in the following verbatim excerpts:

"Conflict resolution is easier in that there is mutual respect, trust and understanding of the best time to engage, how to engage, and the higher need to focus on positive outcomes, through conflict resolution." (Respondent 1, 2024)

"Fighting fair is common, attacking of the problem as opposed to the person." (Respondent 2, 2024)

"By first recognizing the inevitability of conflict in any relationship. A marriage with a strong friendship foundation will purpose to resolve any conflict by being mutually respectful, seeking a win-win solution, being selfless to see the other party's point of view with humility, acknowledging a mistake and being remorseful for the same by apologizing and also through reconciliation and prayers during and after successful resolution." (Respondent 5, 2024)

"Because the spouses care for one another and respect each other. They are able to separate the issue from the person. The focus is growing the relationship despite challenges. There is a determination to surmount." (Respondent 9, 2024)

Emotional security was an overarching theme with respect to the relationship between trust and commitment, and marital quality based on the qualitative responses. Many of the verbatim responses emphasized how trust and commitment create a secure,

stable, and safe environment in the marriage. This aligns closely with the concept of emotional security, which refers to a sense of emotional safety, stability, and mutual support in a relationship. Previous research has illuminated various factors that are instrumental in strengthening marital quality and enriching emotional intimacy. These elements include establishing an earnest emotional connection, allocating shared time, the reciprocity intrinsic to marital dynamics, and the permeability of boundaries within the spousal relationship (Kamali et al., 2020). Respondents in the study narrated how trust and commitment allowed spouses to be vulnerable, express themselves fully, and rely on each other, which strengthens emotional bonds and mutual respect. The following were verbatim expressions:

“Trust and commitment create a safe, warm, and thriving space for both spouses. There is a permanence to the relationship that leads to contentment and security within the relationship.” (Respondent 1, 2024)

"Trusting that your spouse has your best interests at heart and therefore you believe/know that what they do would not be to hurt you. Commitment to make the marriage work also means that the spouses are willing to put in the work (even if they do not feel like it) and eventually the effort to repair/make it work will pay off- leading to better marital quality." (Respondent 3, 2024)

"Trust and commitment creates a safe space for each party and here they are able to thrive well individually and as a couple. When they each give their 100% and are greatly invested in the relationship, it gives room for marital quality to grow and thrive greatly." (Respondent 6, 2024)

"Confidence and security in the relationship." (Respondent 10, 2024)

The findings on emotional security, where trust and commitment create a stable and safe environment for emotional intimacy, correspond with the work of Wazir et al. (2020) and Gottman Method Couples Therapy. The arguments advanced highlight how emotional safety, derived from trust and commitment, facilitates deeper emotional bonds and allows couples to be vulnerable and open with each other. The respondents' emphasis on friendship as a foundation for emotional intimacy and communication reflects Draganović (2021) and Yilmaz et al. (2023), who underscore how trust fosters intimacy in a marital context.

A related theme was the theme of emotional and psychological safety that interspousal friendship provides, which significantly enhances marital quality. Many respondents added that a strong friendship between spouses creates a supportive and secure environment, allowing couples to be vulnerable, trust each other, and feel emotionally safe. The research aligns with empirical efforts by Salih and Chaudry (2023) which underscore the profound impact of emotional care, mutual understanding, honesty, and openness on marital satisfaction, thereby affirming the multifaceted nature of marital dynamics. This safety nurtures deeper bonds, facilitates mutual growth, and encourages open communication, ultimately leading to greater fulfilment in the marriage. This was evident in the following verbatim comments:

"Creates a safe space for couples, supportive environment to be oneself, vulnerable, face the world knowing one is truly supported always and has emotional and psychological safety." (Respondent 1, 2024)

"It enriches the quality of the marriage whereby it is not only duty keeping you together, but also the fact that you truly enjoy each other's company, look forward

to spending time with each other and look out for each other's interests."

(Respondent 3, 2024)

Understanding one another, being on the same page and walking in the same direction is mandatory for a working marriage." (Respondent 8, 2024)

Further views from the respondents revealed that interspousal friendship serves as a foundation for emotional intimacy and effective communication. Respondents consistently highlighted that friendship creates a safe and trusting environment, enabling couples to communicate openly without fear of judgment. This leads to deeper emotional connections, as couples are able to share their fears, dreams, and vulnerabilities more freely. The friendship also fosters loyalty and trust, which further enhances emotional intimacy. This is in line with Bradbury and Bodenmann (2020) who advance the concept of experiential intimacy, which is about couples enjoying activities together, as a key factor in strengthening the marital relationship. As a result, couples who are strong friends experience more fruitful and meaningful communication, which is critical for maintaining a healthy relationship. The argument is that a robust friendship between spouses, characterised by emotional bonding, mutual support, and companionship, is indispensable for a marriage's success and longevity (Camirand & Poulin, 2022). This was evident in the following verbatim remarks:

"Interspousal friendship is the key ingredient of emotional intimacy and effective communication." (Respondent 1, 2024)

"It has improved our emotional intimacy and communication a whole lot. Because of our friendship, we communicate at a much higher level of fears, hopes, dreams, and aspirations vs. just exchanging information." (Respondent 2, 2024)

"The friendship makes it easier to have emotional intimacy and makes communication better, it breaks many barriers." (Respondent 9, 2024)

A moderated regression analysis was conducted to examine the moderating role of trust and commitment in the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality among members of Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County. Table 14 presents the regression output.

Table 14

Moderated Regression Analysis

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.846 ^a	.716	.707	10.13036		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Moderating Effect of Commitment, Trust, Commitment, Interspousal Friendship, Moderating Effect of Trust						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	42669.524	5	8533.905	83.157	.000 ^b
	Residual	16933.002	165	102.624		
	Total	59602.526	170			
a. Dependent Variable: Marital Quality						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Moderating Effect of Commitment, Trust, Commitment, Interspousal Friendship, Moderating Effect of Trust						
Coefficients ^a						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-6.014	10.706		-.562	.575
	Interspousal Friendship	.649	.128	.852	5.053	.000
	Trust	.248	.188	.285	1.320	.189
	Commitment	.619	.177	.625	3.496	.001
	Moderating Effect of Trust	.002	.002	.255	.738	.461
	Moderating Effect of Commitment	-.006	.002	-1.001	-3.047	.003
a. Dependent Variable: Marital Quality						

Table 14 shows that the statistical significance (Sig.) represents the p-value for each coefficient. A p-value less than 0.05 ($p < .05$) denotes that the coefficient is statistically significant whereas p-value greater than 0.05 ($p > .05$) indicates that there was

no statistical significance. The R^2 indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables in the model. Interspousal friendship had a significant positive main effect on marital quality ($B = .649, p < .01$), as did commitment ($B = .619, p < .01$). This finding agrees with Sadeghzadeh et al. (2023) who posit that couples who depend on one another within the framework of friendship are poised to experience a heightened quality of marital life. Trust did not show a significant main effect ($B = .248, p > .05$).

Regarding the interaction terms, the moderating effect of trust was not significant ($B = .002, p > .05$), but the moderating effect of commitment was significant ($B = -.006, p < .01$), indicating that higher levels of commitment may weaken the positive effect of interspousal friendship on marital quality. The findings revealed that trust did not have a significant main effect on marital quality, contradicting Asif and Saim (2018), who found trust to be a significant predictor of marital satisfaction in their study of single- and dual-income couples. This discrepancy suggests that while trust is valued qualitatively, its direct impact on marital quality could be more complex. For example, this may be explained by the possibility that while commitment is generally seen as beneficial for marital quality, rigid commitment could lead to a situation where couples feel obligated to stay in the relationship despite underlying issues. Partners might rely on commitment to stay together rather than actively nurturing the relationship or resolving conflicts. High levels of commitment could create a situation where one or both partners feel secure but complacent, reducing the motivation to invest in or maintain the friendship aspect of the relationship. This complacency could cause the quality of the marital relationship to plateau or decline.

Interestingly, the study suggests that higher levels of commitment may weaken the positive effect of interspousal friendship on marital quality, a finding that could reflect how rigid commitment might lead to complacency rather than active relationship maintenance. This aligns with Draganović (2021), who acknowledges that commitment plays a crucial role in marital harmony, but may also lead to partners relying too heavily on commitment instead of nurturing the friendship aspect of the relationship. Further, the setting of the study, Karura Community Chapel, suggests a religious context where marital commitment may be highly emphasized. In such settings, couples might value commitment so strongly that it overshadows other important relationship dynamics, like friendship. Fahimi and Taghvaei (2022) suggest that what was once perceived as love and commitment may eventually give way to emotional exhaustion. Mardani et al. (2023) noted that when efforts to cultivate intimacy yield unsatisfactory outcomes and marital fulfilment wanes, individuals may encounter marital burnout.

From the qualitative responses, the theme of trust and commitment as a moderator was apparent. Many respondents pointed out that while a strong friendship is essential, trust and commitment serve as the foundation that moderates the marriage and ensures its longevity. Respondents pointed out that without trust and commitment, issues such as emotional affairs, financial secrecy, and miscommunication can lead to significant harm, even in the context of a strong friendship. The following are some of the verbatim remarks:

"Where outside pressure came in the way and infiltrated the relationship. It created a leeway for gaps in the relationship that had a tremendous negative consequence. When there was lack of prioritizing the relationship from one of the

parties and this created room for misunderstanding to stem. When there was a lack of communication." (Respondent 6, 2024)

"When a spouse didn't trust that their spouse could interact well with opposite sex colleagues without having an affair." (Respondent 9, 2024)

"Lack of trust and commitment in a long distance marriage relationships who are good friends still affects the marriage negatively." (Respondent 12, 2024).

Additionally, the findings that couples with strong friendships are better equipped to resolve conflicts constructively correspond with Wazir et al. (2020) and Gondal et al. (2020) exploration of how emotional safety and trust facilitate healthy conflict resolution where they also emphasize the importance of trust in marital relationships, with both studies suggesting that trust enhances companionship and satisfaction, supporting the study's focus on friendship as a moderator. Additionally, Asif and Saim (2018) highlight the relationship between trust and the satisfaction of couples. These findings underscore the critical role of trust in enhancing the companionship between partners, with thematic analysis illustrating how trust boosts marital confidence and satisfaction. Therefore, trust is an essential foundation that directly strengthens the quality of a marriage.

Strategy Measures for Enhancing Interspousal Friendship and Marital Quality

The fifth objective of the study was to identify strategy measures to enhance the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County. Thematic analysis revealed three most predominant themes: open and honest communication, forgiveness and rebuilding trust, and spiritual and emotional support. This section interprets and discusses each in turn.

Theme #1: Open and Honest Communication:

Several respondents emphasized the importance of effective, truthful, and open communication as a key strategy in building or repairing trust and commitment in marriage. This includes expressing feelings about the issues that broke trust, candid conversations, and constructive communication to work through challenges. This was evident in the following verbatim expressions:

"Disclosure on opposite sex interactions of importance, marrying the family finances, access to each other's passwords, accounts and bank cards, budgeting as a couple." (Respondent 2, 2024)

"Communicating your feelings about the issues that broke trust." (Respondent 3, 2024)

"Effective, truthful and open communication." (Respondent 14, 2024)

"Being honest, taking ownership, and constructive communication." (Respondent 7, 2024)

This theme of honest and open communication resonates with Tasew et al. (2021) who note that communication plays a pivotal role in aligning expectations and managing marital adjustments. It is also in accord with Gottman and Silver (2015) who emphasize the importance of clear communication, suggesting that couples who practice open disclosure – such as sharing financial information and addressing trust issues – tend to experience more stable relationships. Similarly, it is in concert with Chonody et al. (2020) who assert that open communication is critical for developing emotional intimacy, a key component of both friendship and marital satisfaction. Likewise, Eslami et al. (2020) argue that by fostering open dialogue, couples can build trust and commitment,

mitigating the potential for emotional disconnection and dissatisfaction, which are significant contributors to marital instability.

Theme #2: Forgiveness and Rebuilding Trust

Many respondents highlighted the need for forgiveness and actively working to rebuild trust. This includes seeking forgiveness, changing behaviors, and showing true repentance over time, along with practical steps like committing to rebuilding trust through shared activities and couple therapy. This was evident in the following verbatim suggestions:

"Beginning with fully facing what led to broken trust, discussing how both parties got there, actively seeking forgiveness, recommitting selves to repairing trust and commitment and doing the work of rebuilding trust through sharing and conversing, having couple dates, doing stuff that makes the couple feel connected, therapy if needed, and making tangible SMART goals towards this." (Respondent 1, 2024)

"Counseling, candid and open conversation and forgiveness. Of course the offender needs to change their ways." (Respondent 10, 2024)

"They say time is the great healer, true repentance can only be shown over time with positive behaviour." (Respondent 11, 2024)

The theme of forgiveness and trust rebuilding aligns with research by Shirdel et al. (2019), who highlight that trust serves as the foundation for vulnerability and openness in relationships. It is also in agreement with Gottman and Silver (2017) who also point to trust as the cornerstone of marital satisfaction, underscoring that trust-building efforts such as therapy and commitment to behavioral change are essential. Further, it agrees

with studies like those by Gallagher and Stokes (2021) who confirm that sustained efforts to rebuild trust contribute to greater marital resilience, helping couples overcome issues that might otherwise lead to marital dissolution. It resonates with research by Asfaw and Alene (2023) in Ethiopia which further reinforces the idea that lack of trust can lead to poor marital quality and divorce, stressing the importance of forgiveness and continuous efforts to restore trust in the relationship.

Theme #3: Spiritual and Emotional Support:

There was a strong emphasis on spiritual and emotional support, particularly through prayer, recognizing God's role in marriage, and seeking external help from reliable sources like mentors or professional counseling. Couples are encouraged to be selfless, extend grace, and seek guidance from trusted support systems outside of family. This was reflected in the voices of respondents as captured in the following verbatim examples:

"Seeking assistance from the right resource persons where needed (Not family!)."

(Respondent 6, 2024)

"Prayers - Recognizing that God is the architect of marriage and that He is heavily invested in a Godly marriage. To build or repair trust, a couple must be selfless; aware of their own limitations/sinful nature; be willing to forgive and extend grace to each other; identifying areas of common interest and building on them; identifying individual strengths and building on them; supporting each other in areas of identified weaknesses; Being deliberate in jointly building the marriage, with each one pulling their own weight towards the success of the marriage."

(Respondent 8, 2024).

"First, from both parties, the desire to do the work i.e., willingness to work on the challenges presented, coupled with honesty and teachable spirits then reaching out for support through the church and here the couple can be given support and also guided on other pathways of approach e.g., being placed with a reliable mentor couple, programs that can support them, marriage therapy & individual support / therapy etc." (Respondent 9, 2024)

The theme of spiritual and emotional support echoes findings by Wanyeki (2023) who highlights that spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs can enhance marital harmony by addressing conflict and nurturing interspousal friendship. Additionally, it resonates with the observation by Keverenge et al. (2020) that couples who receive premarital counseling and engage in spiritual practices report higher marital satisfaction. It reinforces the notion advanced by Fakari et al. (2022) that spirituality provides a framework for selflessness and grace, which is integral to rebuilding trust and extending forgiveness.

Chapter Summary

This chapter's main focus was to present, interpret and discuss the results of the study. This has been accomplished in the chapter through both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative aspects centered on descriptive results and inferential tests of the relationship between interspousal friendship dimensions and marital quality. Qualitative analysis was used to corroborate and explain the quantitative findings. The quantitative data have been presented in appropriate figures and tables while the qualitative analysis has been supported with verbatim responses. The integrated data has then been discussed in the chapter in view of past studies and theoretical

literature. The findings are summarized in the next chapter where implications are discussed and conclusions are drawn.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate how interspousal friendship within a church community affects the quality of marital relationships. The study focused on how factors such as fondness, admiration, love maps, and “turning towards” behavior affect the overall marital quality. This chapter begins by summarizing the findings for each objective. The implications of the findings are then discussed before drawing conclusions. The chapter concludes by proposing various recommendations and areas for further research.

Summary of Findings

The first objective of the study was to examine the relationship between love maps and the marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County. The aggregate score for all love map statements was 89.3%, indicating a high level of awareness and knowledge of each other's inner world among the couples in the study. Specifically, 70% of the respondents had robust love maps, while 20% of the respondents had marginal love maps. However, some 10% of the respondents had love maps that needed improvement. Correlation results show a significant positive correlation between marital quality and love maps ($r = .573, p < .01$), indicating that higher levels of knowledge about one's partner's love maps are associated with higher levels of marital quality.

The second objective of the study was to investigate the relationship between fondness and admiration and the marital quality of members in Karura Community

Chapel in Nairobi City County. The aggregate score for fondness and admiration was 83.6%, indicating generally high levels of positive regard and affection among the couples in the study. These findings were corroborated by insights from key informant interviews that highlighted the theme of companionship and mutual support as characterizing interspousal friendship. Specifically, 65% of the respondents experienced strong fondness and admiration in their marriage. However, 17% of the respondents reported only marginal ability to be fond of and admire each other, while for 18% of the respondents, fondness and admiration needed improvement. As pertains challenges to developing and sustaining friendship within marriage, the most salient theme that emerged from the qualitative responses was the challenge of balancing competing priorities. Many respondents cited factors such as time constraints, busy careers, parenting responsibilities, and the pressures of daily life as significant obstacles to maintaining and developing marital friendship. Correlation results revealed a strong, significant positive correlation between the two variables ($r = .704$, $p < .01$). This suggests that higher levels of fondness and admiration within a relationship are strongly associated with higher levels of marital quality.

The third objective of the study was to evaluate the relationship between ‘turning towards’ behaviour and the marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County. The aggregate score for ‘turning towards’ behaviors was 69.6%, indicating moderate levels of emotional engagement and shared interests among couples in the study. This was also reflected in the qualitative findings which revealed consistent communication and emotional support in day-to-day married life as a recurrent theme. In terms of distribution, 47% percent of the respondents experienced strong turning towards exchange behaviour in their marital relationship. However, some 11% of the respondents

had only marginal ability to turn towards each other, while for a significant share of the respondents (42%), turning towards needed improvement. Correlation analysis showed a strong, significant positive correlation between the two variables ($r = .713$, $p < .01$), indicating that higher levels of turning towards behaviors are associated with higher marital quality. This strong relationship suggests that emotional engagement and shared activities play a key role in enhancing overall satisfaction within marriage.

The fourth objective of the study was to establish the moderating role of trust and commitment in the relationship between interspousal friendship and the marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County. The study established that 69% of the respondents rated the level of trust in their marital relationship as high while for 31% of the respondents, trust levels were low. On this respect, a key theme that emerged from the verbatim responses is the significance of communication and trust in spousal friendship. Many respondents highlighted the importance of open, honest, and effective communication as foundational to maintaining a strong marital bond. For 90% of the respondents, the level of commitment in their relationship was high. However, 10% of the respondents rated the level of commitment in their marriage as low. Among the interspousal friendship variables, both love maps ($\beta = .191$, $p < .01$) and turning towards ($\beta = .190$, $p < .01$) significantly predicted marital quality, while fondness and admiration ($\beta = .126$, $p > .05$) did not reach statistical significance. As control variables, trust ($\beta = .402$, $p < .01$) had a strong positive effect on marital quality, whereas commitment ($\beta = .107$, $p > .05$) did not significantly predict marital quality. The qualitative responses revealed that interspousal friendship enhances marital quality by fostering deep connection, resilience, constructive conflict resolution, and emotional security, which collectively strengthen trust, commitment, and emotional closeness between spouses.

Interspousal friendship had a significant positive main effect on marital quality ($B = .649, p < .01$), as did commitment ($B = .619, p < .01$). Trust did not show a significant main effect ($B = .248, p > .05$). Regarding the interaction terms, the moderating effect of trust was not significant ($B = .002, p > .05$), but the moderating effect of commitment was significant ($B = -.006, p < .01$), indicating that higher levels of commitment may weaken the positive effect of interspousal friendship on marital quality. From the qualitative responses, the theme of trust and commitment as a moderator was apparent. Many respondents pointed out that while a strong friendship is essential, trust and commitment serve as the foundation that moderates the marriage and ensures its longevity.

The fifth objective of the study was to propose strategy measures for the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality of members in Karura Community Chapel in Nairobi City County. Thematic analysis revealed that respondents emphasized the importance of open and honest communication, including candid discussions, constructive expression of feelings, and transparency in rebuilding trust and commitment in marriage. Forgiveness and active efforts to rebuild trust, such as seeking forgiveness, changing behaviors, and engaging in shared activities or therapy, were also highlighted. Additionally, spiritual and emotional support through prayer, recognizing God's role in marriage, and seeking guidance from mentors or counseling were noted as key strategies in strengthening marital relationships.

Implications

The study findings elicit numerous practical and theoretical implications. From a practical viewpoint, couples' engagement in activities that deepen their understanding of each other's thoughts, feelings, and life goals promotes marital quality. This underscores

the importance of emphasizing intentional conversations that update and strengthen love maps, helping couples remain emotionally attuned to one another. This can be particularly beneficial for preventing relational dissatisfaction over time, as it fosters stronger emotional connections as discussed by Vowels et al. (2021). Encouraging couples to regularly discuss their inner world to maintain intimacy and connection is essential for marital quality and longevity.

The findings also encourage couples to actively express admiration and appreciation for each other, even during conflicts. Regular practices of gratitude and respect can help buffer against negative emotions like contempt, which may undermine marital quality as cautioned by Navarra and Gottman (2018). Marriage and family therapists can guide couples to make time for positive expressions of fondness, even amidst busy schedules, to maintain emotional connection. Practicing admiration helps create an emotional foundation that shields the relationship from harm, particularly in the face of challenges. In addition, the study outcomes underscore the relevance of teaching couples to be more mindful of each other's bids for emotional connection and affection, ensuring that they respond positively to these cues (Otero et al., 2020). Therapy strategies can focus on increasing awareness and practice of turning towards each other in everyday interactions. Additionally, shared activities that promote connection should be prioritized to improve emotional intimacy. This approach strengthens the couple's emotional bank account and enhances marital satisfaction.

The need for couples to focus on reinforcing trust through consistent, positive interactions and commitment through long-term relationship goals is supported. This invites marriage counselling to highlight how to build trust, practice transparency, and sustain commitment even during difficult periods. Activities that encourage joint

decision-making and emotional security can help strengthen the relationship in line with Yilmaz et al. (2023). Thus, ensuring trust and commitment enhances the positive effects of friendship on marital quality, providing a resilient foundation for the relationship.

The results suggest that couples can benefit from open, honest communication and forgiveness as key strategies for improving marital quality. Therapies focused on conflict resolution, emotional transparency, and shared activities could also be helpful (Gottman & Gottman, 2017). Additionally, spiritual support through prayer or mentorship can provide a strong foundation for deepening marital bonds and fostering resilience, as these elements help couples navigate challenges together while reinforcing their emotional connection. Therefore, churches can provide spiritual and emotional support as part of their care for couples to enhance marital quality.

In terms of theory, the positive correlation between love maps and marital quality supports Gottman's assertion that having detailed knowledge of each other's inner world is foundational for emotional intimacy (Gottman & Gottman, 2017). This study confirms that love maps enhance marital stability by fostering deeper empathy and communication, which is critical in managing conflict and building a strong relationship. Love maps also serve as the foundation for further intimacy and emotional support in the relationship (Hosseinpour et al., 2022). Similarly, the strong correlation between fondness and admiration, and marital quality underscores the role of positive regard in sustaining marital satisfaction as discussed by Navarra and Gottman (2018). This finding aligns with Gottman's theory that admiration and fondness buffer against negativity and contempt, which Yuan et al. (2022) identify as key predictors of marital dissatisfaction and divorce. By consistently expressing respect, couples build a positive foundation that strengthens

their relationship, enabling them to manage conflicts more effectively and maintain long-term marital happiness.

The study supports Gottman's model by demonstrating that turning towards each other's bids for emotional connection significantly contributes to marital quality (Otero et al., 2020). This finding emphasizes the critical role of emotional engagement and responsiveness in building a resilient marriage. It aligns with Gottman's perspective that turning towards fosters emotional intimacy, which is a key component of marital quality, supporting Davoodvandi et al. (2018) with the idea that a strong friendship system enhances relational satisfaction. For instance, the findings also support Gottman's view that trust is essential for deepening marital intimacy (Shirdel et al., 2019). The moderating effect of commitment further aligns with Gottman's model, suggesting that commitment stabilizes the positive effects of interspousal friendship on marital quality (Gottman & Gottman, 2017). In fact, this highlights the importance of both trust and commitment in ensuring relational stability and emotional closeness in marriage.

The strategies identified in the study, such as open communication and forgiveness, are in line with Gottman's principles of building a strong relationship through shared meaning and conflict management (Gottman & Silver, 2015). The study also supports Gottman's idea that external support systems, such as spiritual guidance and counselling, can reinforce marital bonds. This confirms the versatility of Gottman's model in diverse contexts, making it a robust framework for improving marital relationships through fostering deep friendship and emotional support (Doss et al., 2022).

Conclusions

The study concluded that a deep understanding of each other's inner world, or "love maps," plays a crucial role in enhancing marital quality. Couples who have a thorough awareness of their partner's thoughts, feelings, and life experiences tend to report higher levels of marital quality. When spouses are well-attuned to each other's emotional and psychological needs, it strengthens their connection and improves the overall health of the marriage. Similarly, fondness and admiration are fundamental components of marital quality. Couples who express affection, respect, and appreciation toward one another are more likely to experience positive marital outcomes. These behaviors, such as showing admiration and fondness, help to strengthen emotional bonds and create a sense of security in the relationship. However, busy schedules, parenting responsibilities, and career pressures can challenge couples' ability to maintain these positive emotions. Therefore, it is important for couples to actively prioritize and nurture these expressions of affection to sustain a strong and loving relationship.

Conclusion was also drawn that 'turning towards' behavior – whereby partners offer emotional support, engage in meaningful conversations, and share activities – are critical for maintaining high levels of marital quality. Couples who engage in this behavior are more likely to experience emotional closeness and satisfaction in their marriage. These behaviors build trust, foster intimacy, and strengthen the emotional connection between spouses. However, some couples struggle with consistently engaging in 'turning towards' behavior, indicating that this area requires continuous effort and attention. Improving these behaviors can play a key role in enhancing overall marital happiness and emotional well-being.

While both trust and commitment are essential to marital quality, their roles in moderating the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality differ. Trust was found to have a positive impact on marital quality, but it did not significantly alter the connection between interspousal friendship and marital quality. On the other hand, commitment was identified as a moderator, albeit a weakening factor, suggesting that excessive or overly rigid commitment might limit the benefits that can be gained from a strong emotional friendship. This points to the need for balance between trust, commitment, and friendship in shaping marital quality. Strategies aimed at improving interspousal friendship and marital quality should focus on enhancing communication, rebuilding trust, and providing emotional and spiritual support.

This study has contributed to knowledge by empirically testing the role of interspousal friendship in enhancing marital quality, specifically within a religious community context. It has both quantified and qualified the importance of specific elements such as love maps, fondness and admiration, and turning towards behaviors to enhancing marital quality hence extending the application of Gottman Theory to a religious community. The study has offered valuable insights into the challenges couples face in sustaining these aspects of friendship, such as balancing competing priorities, and proposed practical strategies that provide ground for future knowledge extension.

The study offers valuable insights for Marriage and Family Therapists and the field of Systemic Family Therapy by empirically validating the significance of interspousal friendship in enhancing marital quality. Anchored in Gottman Method Couples Therapy, it highlights actionable factors like love maps, fondness, admiration, and bids for connection, which are central to strengthening marital bonds. By examining trust and commitment as resilience anchors within a religious community, the study

provides culturally relevant strategies for fostering stable and fulfilling marriages. Additionally, its mixed-methods approach equips therapists with both quantitative evidence and qualitative themes, such as companionship and emotional support that can inform therapeutic strategies and marriage enrichment programs tailored to diverse family systems.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the study makes five practical recommendations as follows:

- i) **Recommendation to the Clergy:** Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that pastors actively promote the strengthening of interspousal friendship as a foundation for enhancing marital quality. Given that love maps, fondness and admiration, and turning-toward behaviors showed a significant positive relationship with marital satisfaction, clergy should encourage couples to deepen their understanding of each other's inner world through targeted sermons and marriage enrichment programs. Workshops could be organized focusing on effective communication, active listening, and constructive conflict resolution, as these skills foster the openness and emotional responsiveness. Additionally, since the study confirmed the moderating role of commitment, pastors should deliberately address the importance of affection, admiration, trust, and unwavering commitment in marriage, particularly amidst external pressures such as career demands and parenting responsibilities. By doing so, clergy can equip couples with practical tools that not only build friendship but also anchor their relationship

through trust and sustained commitment, ultimately promoting resilient and fulfilling marriages within the church community.

- ii) **Recommendation to Premarital Counselling Practitioners:** The study findings highlighted the importance of admiration, emotional engagement, and the early development of love maps in strengthening marital quality. Premarital counsellors should therefore guide couples to actively explore each other's emotional needs, values, and goals early in their relationship. Practical exercises encouraging "turning towards" behaviors during stressful moments should also be incorporated, helping couples build emotional responsiveness and mutual support from the beginning.
- iii) **Recommendation to Marriage and Family Therapists:** Given the study's finding that commitment had a significant moderating effect while trust did not, therapists should prioritize helping couples address and strengthen both commitment and trust early in therapy. By introducing tools for open communication, conflict resolution, and reaffirming relational commitment, therapists can better equip couples to enhance the positive impact of interspousal friendship on marital quality.
- iv) **Recommendations to Married Couples:** The findings showed that couples with strong love maps, fondness, admiration, and consistent emotional engagement reported higher marital quality. Married couples should intentionally nurture their understanding of each other's thoughts, emotions, and aspirations by regularly updating their love maps. They should also cultivate fondness and admiration through daily expressions of affection, simple acts of kindness, and active emotional connection, particularly during

times of stress. Additionally, they must address trust issues promptly and maintain open, honest communication to protect and strengthen their marital bond.

Areas for Further Research

The study has left some gaps that provide avenues for future research. Firstly, while the study mainly focused on internal marital dynamics, future studies should explore how external factors such as social networks, socioeconomic status, level of education, and cultural influences impact the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality. Secondly, the study was limited to couples in Karura Community Chapel, Nairobi City County, Kenya. Future research could explore the generality of these findings by examining different cultural, religious, and geographic groups. A cross-cultural comparison could reveal whether the relationships between interspousal friendship, trust, and marital quality are universally applicable or context-specific. Conceptually, commitment was found to be a significant factor, but future research could explore the differential impact of commitment archetypes such as emotional, cognitive, and behavioural commitment on marital quality.

References

- Accra Metropolitan Assembly. (2015). *A.M.A records high divorce cases and low marriage registrations*. Accra.
- Acquah, S., Dzakadzie, Y., & Eshun, P. (2024). Level of education, marital longevity and religion as determinants of marital stability among couples in Tamale Metropolis, Ghana. *Advances in Research*, 25(3), 137-147.
- Aggarwal , R., & Ranganathan, P. (2019). Study designs: Part 2 - Descriptive studies *Perspectives in Clinical Research*, 10(1), 34-36. doi:10.4103/picr.PICR_154_18
- Alharahsheh, H., & Pius, A. (2020). A review of key paradigms: Positivism vs interpretivism. *Global Academic Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(3), 39-43.
- Al Jaghsi, A., Saeed, M., Fanas, S. A., Alqutaibi, A. Y., & Mundt , T. (2021). Validity and reliability of new instruments for measuring patient satisfaction with removable dentures. *BMC Oral Health*, 21, 446. doi:10.1186/s12903-021-01811-w
- Aloyce, D., Stöckl , H., Malibwa, D., Peter, E., Mchome, Z., Dwarumpudi, A., Mshana, G. (2022). Men's reflections on romantic jealousy and intimate partner violence in Mwanza, Tanzania. *Violence Against Women*, 29(6-7). doi:10.1177/10778012221108421
- Al-Shahrani, H. F., & Hammad, M. A. (2023). Impact of emotional divorce on the mental health of married women in Saudi Arabia. *National Library for Medicine*. 18(11).
- Althubaiti, A. (2022). Sample size determination: A practical guide for health researchers. *Journal of General and Family Medicine*, 24(2), 72-78. doi:10.1002/jgf2.600

- Amber, A. P., Chelom, E. L., & David, B. A. (2020). How gender differences in emotional cutoff and reactivity influence couple's sexual and relational outcomes. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*
- Amri, K., Adnan, M., & Fitri, C. D. (2022). Does poverty affect divorce rates? The role of women's income as moderating variable. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8(1). doi:10.1080/23311886.2022.2069908
- Aseka, E. O., Ireri, N. W., & Menecha, J. B. (2021). Relationship between spousal support and marital satisfaction among Christian couples: A case study of two selected churched in Nairobi County, Kenya. *African Journal of Emerging Issues*, 3(4), 70-78.
- Asfaw, L. S., & Alene, G. D. (2023). Effectiveness of a marital relationship skills training strategy on marital adjustment among individuals in Hosanna Town, Southwest Ethiopia: A randomized-controlled trial. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 49(3), 541-560. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/jmft.12641
- Asfaw, L. S., & Alene, G. D. (2023). Marital dissolution and associated factors in Hosanna, Southwest Ethiopia: a community-based cross-sectional study. *MC psychology*, 11(1), 20. doi:10.1186/s40359-023-01051-3
- Baghkhahi, M., Akbari, N., Birashk, B., Khedmat, L., & Haghani, H. (2020). The quality changes of marital relationships in Iranian couples at marriage onset: A descriptive and analytical study. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 48(4), 317-339. doi:10.1080/01926187.2019.1710621
- Barroga, E., & Matanguihan, G. J. (2022). A practical guide to writing quantitative and qualitative research questions and hypotheses in scholarly articles. *Journal of Korean Medical Science*, 37(16). doi:10.3346/jkms.2022.37.e121

- Barton, A. W., Beach, S. R., & Whisman, M. A. (2021). Spirituality and marital satisfaction: a meta-analytic review. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 35(1), 1-13.
doi:10.1037/fam0000847
- Berndt, A. E. (2020). Sampling methods. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 36(2), 224-226.
doi:10.1177/0890334420906850
- Bilal , A., & Rasool, S. (2020). Marital satisfaction and satisfaction with life: Mediating role of sexual satisfaction in married women. *Journal of Psychosexual Health*, 2(1), 77-86. doi:10.1177/2631831820912873
- Bradbury, T. N., & Bodenmann, G. (2020). Strategies for couples. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 16.
- Busetto, L., Wick, W., & Gumbinger, C. (2020). How to use and assess qualitative research methods. *Neurological Research and Practice*, 2, 14. doi:10.1186/s42466-020-00059-z
- Camirand, É., & Poulin, F. (2022). Links between best friendship, romantic relationship, and psychological well-being in emerging adulthood. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 183(4). doi:10.1080/00221325.2022.2078684
- Cash, P., Isaksson, O., Maier, A., & Summers, J. (2022). Sampling in design research: Eight key considerations. *Design Studies*, 78. doi:10.1016/j.destud.2021.101077
- Champiri, F. D., & Dehghani, A. (2023). Predicting sexual satisfaction in Iranian women by marital satisfaction components. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 38(1), 37-51.
doi:10.1080/14681994.2020.1736279
- Chew-Graham, C. A., May, C. R., & Perry, M. S. (2002). Qualitative research and the problem of judgement: Lessons from interviewing fellow professionals. *Family Practice*, 19(3), 285-289.

- Chonody, J. M., & Gabb, J. (2019). Understanding the role of relationship maintenance in enduring couple partnerships in later adulthood. *Marriage & Family Review*, 55(3), 216-238. doi:<https://10.1080/01494929.2018.1458010>
- Chonody, J. M., Killian, M., Gabb, J., & Dunk-West, P. (2020). Relationship quality and sexuality: A latent profile analysis of long-term heterosexual and LGB long-term partnerships. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 17(2), 203-225. doi:10.1080/26408066.2020.1723769
- Christensen, A., Doss, B. D., & Jacobson, N. S. (2020). *Integrative behavioral couple therapy: A therapist's guide to creating acceptance and change* (2nd ed.). W.W. Norton & Company.
- Coflin, K., & Powell, D. (2022). Comparison of emerging adults' bid responses based on their gender and attachment. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*. provide the volume, issue
- Coolhart, D. (2023). Therapy with queer couples. In J. L. Lebow, & D. K. Snyder (Eds.). *Clinical handbook of couple therapy*. Guilford Press.
- Cooper, B., Glaesser, J., Gomm, R., & Hammersley, M. (2012). *Challenging the qualitative-quantitative divide : Explorations in case-focused causal analysis*. International Publishing Group.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2022). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd edition). Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2024). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (5th ed.). Sage.

- Cruwys, T., South, E. I., Halford, W. K., Murray, J. A., & Fladerer, M. P. (2022). Measuring “we-ness” in couple relationships: A social identity approach. *Family Process*, 1-23. doi:10.1111/famp.12811
- Das, K., & Sathyanarayana, R. T. (2022). Love, veritably—A mélange of love, intimacy, attraction, and sensuality. *Journal of Psychosexual Health* 4(3) doi:10.1177/26318318221102126
- David, P. (2024). *Being intimate*.
- Davoodvandi, M., Navabi, N. S., & Farzad, V. (2018). Examining the effectiveness of Gottman couple therapy on improving marital adjustment and couples' intimacy. *Iranian Journal of Psychiatry*, 13(2), 135-141.
- Deborah , L., Nikki, H., & Zoe, T. (2023). No one has ever asked me and I’m grateful that you have men’s experiences of their partner’s female sexual pain. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy* 1-24. doi:10.1080/14681994.2023.2293766
- Debrot, A., Stellar, J. E., MacDonald, G., Keltner, D., & Impett, E. A. (2021). Is touch in romantic relationships universally beneficial for psychological well-being? The role of attachment avoidance. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 47(10), 1495-1509. doi:10.1177/0146167220977709
- Denis, D. J. (2020). *Univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistics using R : Quantitative tools for data analysis and data Science*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Dobson, K., Stanton, S. C., Balzarini, R. N., & Campbell, L. (2023). Are you tired of “us?” Accuracy and bias in couples’ perceptions of relational boredom. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 40(10). doi:10.1177/02654075231168141

- Doss, B. D., Roddy, M. K., Wiebe, S. A., & Johnson, S. M. (2022). A review of the research during 2010–2019 on evidence-based treatments for couple relationship distress. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 48(1).
- Draganović, S. (2021). Perceived relational factors in marital stability among married and divorced Bosnians: Do we understand one another? *Epiphany. Journal of Transdisciplinary Studies*(2), 117-136.
- Drolet, M. J., & Girard, K. (2020). Ethical issues in occupational therapy research: a worrying portrait. *Canadian Journal of Bioethics*, 3(3), 21-40.
doi:10.7202/1073779ar
- Drolet, M. J., Rose-Derouin, E., Leblanc, J. C., Ruest, M., & Williams-Jones, B. (2023). Ethical issues in research: perceptions of researchers, research ethics board members and research ethics experts. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 21(2), 269-292.
doi:10.1007/s10805-022-09455-3
- Eslami, M., Yazdanpanah, M., Andalib, P., Rahimi, A., Safizadeh, M., Davdar, A., & Nakhaee, N. (2020). Marital satisfaction and emotional divorce among Iranian married individuals: A survey of hospital visitors of nine provinces. *Journal of education and health promotion*, 9(83). doi:10.4103/jehp.jehp_570_19. PMID: 32509891
- Fàbregues, S., Hong, Q. N., Escalante-Barrios, E. L., Guetterman, T. C., Meneses, J., & Feters, M. D. (2020). A methodological review of mixed methods research in palliative and end-of-life care. *International Journal for Environmental Research and Public Health*. doi:10.3390/ijerph17113853

- Fahimi, M., & Taghvaei, D. (2022). Predicting marital adjustment based on marital justice and burnout. *Journal of Assessment and Research in Applied Counseling*, 4(1), 1-12.
doi:10.52547/jarac.4.2.1
- Fakari, F. R., Doulabi, M. A., & Mahmoodi, Z. (2022). Predict marital satisfaction based on the variables of socioeconomic status (SES) and social support, mediated by mental health, in women of reproductive age: Path analysis model. *Brain Behaviour*, 12(3). 12(3) doi:10.1002/brb3.2482
- Farimah, F., Azam, N., & Kamran, T. (2020). Self-compassion and forgiveness: Major predictors of marital satisfaction in young couples. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 48(3), 221-234. doi:10.1080/01926187.2019.1708832
- Fattahi , M., Rasouli, M., & Zaharakar, K. (2021). Comparison of the effect of group counseling based on Gottman couple therapy method and systemic-behavioral on marital intimacy of married women. *Quart J Psychol Methods Models Fall*, 12(45), 15–34.
- Fengyi , M., Xiaorui , H., Qing , M., Li , Z., & Lanfeng , X. (2022). Self-reported effects of perceived social support on marital quality in balanced translocation patients and their spouses undergoing preimplantation genetic testing in China: actor–partner interdependence model. *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, 42(7), 3248-3253.
doi:10.1080/01443615.2022.2112020
- Filiz, E., & Elif, G. (2023). Assessment of marital satisfaction among spouses of soldiers: The example of Turkey. *Military Medicine*.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/milmed/usad184>

- Gabb, J. (2022). The relationship work of sexual intimacy in long-term heterosexual and LGBTQ partnerships. *70*(1), 24-41 *Current Sociology*
doi:10.1177/0011392119826619
- Gallagher, E. A., & Stokes, J. E. (2021). Cognitive functioning, gender, and marital quality among older married couples: A dyadic approach. *Journal of Women & Aging*, *33*(2), 137-152. doi:10.1080/08952841.2020.1852859
- Goodwin, R., Hou, W. K., Sun, S., & Ben-Ezra, M. (2020). Quarantine, distress and interpersonal relationships during COVID-19. *General Psychiatry*, *33*(6), 0-4.
- Gottman, J. M., & Silver, N. (2015). *The seven principles of making marriage work*. New York: Crown.
- Gottman, J., & Gottman, J. (2017). The natural principles of love. *Journal of Family Therapy & Review*, *9*(1) 7-26.
- Goudarzi, A., Keykhosrovani, M., Deyreh, E., & Ganji, K. (2022). The effectiveness of emotional therapy on marital boredom and moral commitment in divorced couples. *Razi Journal of Medical Sciences*, *29*(5), 117-126.
- Gumpili, S. P., & Das, A. V. (2022). Sample size and its evolution in research. *IHOPE Journal of Ophthalmology*, *1*(1), 9-13. doi:10.25259/IHOPEJO_3_2021
- Hertz-Palmor, N., Moore, T. M., DiDomenico, G. E., Dekel, I., Greenberg, D. M., & Barzilay, R. (2021). Association among income loss, financial strain and depressive symptoms during COVID-19: Evidence from two longitudinal studies. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, *291*, 1-8.
- Hooman, H. A. (2016). *Structural equation modeling with LISREL application*: Samt.
- Hosseinpoor, M., Masoumi, S. Z., Kazemi, F., Soltani, F., & Ahmadpanah, M. (2022). Investigating the effect of couple-centred counseling by Gottman method on the

- intimacy of infertile couples referring to the infertility Ward of Fatemieh hospitals, Hamadan, Iran in 2020: a quasi-experimental study. *BMC Psychiatry*, 22, 581. doi:10.1186/s12888-022-04228-z
- İnce, Ş., & Işık, E. (2022). The mediating role of five love languages between differentiation of self and marital satisfaction. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 50(4), 407-423. doi:10.1080/01926187.2021.1930607
- Ipsos. (2020). *As pandemic drags on, relationships are getting more serious*.
- Itzchakov, G., Reis, H. T., & Weinstein, N. (2022). How to foster perceived partner responsiveness: High-quality listening is key. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 16(1), e12648. doi:10.1111/spc3.12648
- Jalalvand, D., Goodarzi, K., Karimi, J., & Yaghoobi, A. (2023). Gottman couple therapy on marital burnout and resilience of conflicted couples. *Family Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 12(2), 1-36. doi:10.22034/fcp.2023.62713
- Jason, L. A., & Glenwick, D. S. (2016). *Handbook of methodological approaches to community-based research: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods*. Oxford University Press.
- Kamali, Z., Allahyar, N., Ostovar, S., Shafeq, S. M., & Griffiths, M. D. (2020). Factors that influence marital intimacy: A qualitative analysis of Iranian married couples. *Cogent Psychology*, 7(1). doi:10.1080/23311908.2020.1771118
- Kapoor, R., Mahamuni, R. R., Bhowmick, M., & Quresh, Y. (2022). *Research methodology and methods*. AGPH Books.
- Karura Community Chapel. (2023). *Strategic Plan 2023-2027*.
- Karura Community Chapel. (n.d.). *Karura Community Chapel*.
<https://www.karuracc.or.ke/>

- Kaufman, V., Rodriguez, A., Wals, L. C., Shafranske, E., & Harrell, S. P. (2022). Unique ways in which the quality of friendships matter for life satisfaction. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 23, 2563-2580. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-022-00502-9>
- Kelly, L. M., & Cordeiro, M. (2020). Three principles of pragmatism for research on organizational processes. *Methodological Innovations*, 13(2). doi:10.1177/2059799120937242
- Kelly, L. (2019c). *What's the point? Program evaluation in small community development NGOs*. Melbourne.
- Kenya Demographic and Health Survey. (2014). *Kenya demographic and health survey*. website url: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/PR143/PR143.pdf>
- Kenya Demographic and Health Survey. (2022). *Kenya demographic and health survey*
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. (2023). *Kenya demographic and health survey*
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. (2014). *Marital status by County*. <https://www.knbs.or.ke/marital-status-by-county-and-district/>
- Keong, Y. W., Md Husin, M., & Kamarudin, S. (2023). Understanding research paradigms: A Scientific guide. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business and Government*, 27(2). doi:10.47750/cibg.2021.27.02.588
- Keverenge, E. M., Kipnusu, R. C., Tarus, P., & Karimi, J. (2020). The relationship between premarital counselling and marital harmony among families in Lugari, Kakamega County, Kenya. *Counselling & Psychotherapy Research* 20(3), 556-561 doi: 10.1002/capr.12319
- Klausli, J., & Gross, C. (2020). Premarital education in the Catholic Church: exploring retrospective perceptions of effectiveness of a theologically oriented program on

- relational and spiritual outcomes. *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 49(2), 177-191 doi:10.1177/0091647120956965
- Kochuparambil, G. (2021). A quantitative assessment of marital quality among couples in Kerala, India.
- Kombo, D. K., & Tromp, D. L. (2018). *Proposal and thesis writing: An introduction*. Paulines
- Lebow, J., & Snyder, D. K. (2022). Couple therapy in the 2020s: Current status and emerging developments. *Family process*, 61(4), 1359–1385.
doi:10.1111/famp.12824
- Lee, S. J., Ward, K. P., & Rodriguez, C. M. (2021). Longitudinal analysis of short-term changes in relationship conflict during COVID-19: A risk and resilience perspective. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37, 15-16.
doi:10.1177/08862605211006359
- Leong, J. L., Chen , S. X., Zhu, J. Y., Fung, H. H., & Siu, N. Y. (2019). Is gratitude always beneficial to interpersonal relationships? The interplay of grateful disposition, grateful mood, and grateful expression among married couples. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 46(1) 64-78. doi:10.1177/01461672198428
- Li, F., Chen, C., Wang, J., Peng, H., Wu, L., Ren, L., Yang, Q. (2022). A cross-temporal meta-analysis on marital satisfaction of Chinese couples. *Personality and Social Psychology*, 13. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.903276>
- López, M. (2023). The effect of sampling mode on response rate and bias in elite surveys. *Quality and Quantity*, 57, 1303-1319. doi:10.1007/s11135-022-01406-9

- Malm, E. K., Oti-Boadi, M., Adom-Boakye, N. A., & Andah, A. (2022). Marital satisfaction and dissatisfaction among Ghanaians. *Journal of Family Issues*, 44(12), 3117-3141. doi:10.1177/0192513X221126752
- Manning, W. D., & Payne, K. K. (2021). Marriage and divorce decline during the COVID-19 pandemic: A case study of five states. *Socius*, 7, 4-6.
- Mansoureh, B., Nahid, A., Behrooz, B., Leila , K., & Hamid, H. (2020). The quality changes of marital relationships in Iranian couples at marriage onset: A descriptive and analytical study. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 48(4), 317-339. doi:10.1080/01926187.2019.1710621
- Mardani, F., Navabinejad, S., & Yousefi, E. (2023). The effectiveness of Gottman approach strategy on marital burnout, emotional divorce and emotional regulation of conflicted couples. *Journal of Assessment and Research in Applied Counseling*, 5(3), 16-22. doi:10.52547/jarac.5.3.16
- Mardani, F., Yousefi, S. A., Ghorbani, E., & Mirzaei, Z. (2023). The effectiveness of realistic acceptance and commitment therapy (RACT) on marital burnout and alexithymia in couples. *Journal of Assessment and Research in Applied Counseling*, 5(1), 9-18. doi:10.52547/jarac.5.1.10
- Marsh , S., Dobson, R., & Maddison, R. (2020). The relationship between household chaos and child, parent, and family outcomes: A systemic scoping review. *BMC Public Health*, 20(1), 513.
- Merwin, K. E., & Rosen, N. O. (2020). Perceived partner responsiveness moderates the associations between sexual talk and sexual and relationship well-being in individuals in long-term relationships. *The Journal of Sex Research*. 57(3), 351-364.

- Mohaddesi, H., Khalkhali, H. R., Behrozi-lak, T., Rasouli, J., Edalat, R. N., & Ghasemzadeh S. (2022). Correlation between marital satisfaction and mental health in Infertile couples referred to Kosar infertility clinic in Urmia: A cross-sectional study. *Journal of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Cancer Research*, 7(4), 341-347. doi:10.30699/jogcr.7.4.341
- Morina, A. (2021). When people matter: The ethics of qualitative research in the health and social sciences. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 29(5), 1559-1565. doi:10.1111/hsc.13221
- Mu, Z. (2023). Premarital cohabitation, marital dissolution, and marital quality in China. *Journal of Family Issues*. 45(5), 1305-1325.
- Muriithi, I. K. (2023). *Influence of physical touch on marital quality among heterosexual couples in Nairobi County, Kenya*. [Master's thesis]. University of Nairobi.
- Nadolu, D., Runcan, R., & Bahnaru, A. (2020). Sociological dimensions of marital satisfaction in Romania. *Plos One*. 15(8).
- Nantje, F. (2023). Singles not sexually satisfied? Prevalence and predictors of sexual satisfaction in single versus partnered adults. *International Journal of Sexual Health*, 35(4), 515-528.
- Navarra, R. J., & Gottman, J. M. (2018). Sound relationship house in Gottman method couples therapy. *In Encyclopedia of Couple and Family Therapy*. Springer.
- Ng'ang'a, R. W. K. (2023). *The influence of stakeholders on church growth in Kenya: A case of Presbyterian Church of East Africa in Milimani South Presbytery, Nairobi* [Master's thesis]. Africa Nazarene University.

- Njafi, M., Soleimani, M., Ahmadi, K., Javidi, N., Hosseini, K. E., & Pirjavid, F. (2014). Examining the effectiveness of emotion-oriented couple therapy on increasing compatibility and promoting physical and psychological health among infertile couples. *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology of Iran*, 17, 8-12.
- Obilor, E. I. (2023). Convenience and purposive sampling techniques: Are they the same? *International Journal of Innovative Social & Science Education Research*, 11(1), 1-7.
- Osafo, J., Asante, K. O., Ampomah, C. A., & Osei-Tutu, A. (2021). Factors contributing to divorce in Ghana: An exploratory analysis of evidence from court suits. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 62(4), 312-326. doi:10.1080/10502556.2021.1871839
- Otero, M. C., Wells, J. L., Chen, K.-H., Brown, C. L., Connelly, D. E., Levenson, R. W., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2020). Behavioral indices of positivity resonance associated with long-term marital satisfaction. *Emotion*, 20(7), 1225-1233. doi:10.1037/emo0000634
- Overall, N. C., Chang, V. T., Pietromonaco, P. R., Low, R. S., & Henderson, A. M. (2021). Partners' attachment insecurity and stress predict poorer relationship functioning during Covid-19 quarantines. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 13(1), 285-298.
- Overall, N. C., Clark, M. S., Fletcher, G. J., Peters, B. J., & Chang, V. T. (2020). Does expressing emotions enhance perceptual accuracy of negative emotions during relationship interactions? *Emotion*, 20(3), 353-367.
- Oyoo, E. O. (2020). How to assess the stability status of your marriage. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 4(7) 515-519.

- Park, Y. S., Konge, L., & Artino Jr, J. R. (2020). The positivism paradigm of research. *Academic Medicine*, 95(5), 690-694.
- Pasca, R., & Wagner, S. L. (2023). Firefighters and spouses: Hostility, satisfaction, and conflict. *Journal of Family Issues*, 44(4), 1074-1092.
- Puspitasari, M. D., & Gayatri, M. (2022). Covid-19 and marital dissolution in West Java, Indonesia. *The Family Journal*. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/10664807221124246>
- Rena, L. (2022). *Diving deep into qualitative data analysis in communication disorders research*. J & R Press.
- Roemer, J. J., Tiny, H., Kitty, J. J., Carmine, Z., Giovanni , T., Friedo, W. D., & Merel , v. (2021). Conducting correlation analysis: important limitations and pitfalls. *Clinical Kidney Journal*, 14(11), 2332-2337.
- Rozita, A., & Arjang , S. K. (2021). The structural model of marital quality based on secure attachment style through the mediating role of self-compassion, resilience, and perspective-taking. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 49(1), 16-36.
doi:10.1080/01926187.2020.1813653
- Sadeghzadeh, Z., Ghodssi-ghassemabad, R., Hamdieh, M., Shariatpanahi, S., Faeze, B., Abdoli, M., & Gelehkolaee, K. S. (2023). The assessment of the related factors of emotional divorce among Iranian people during the Covid-19 pandemic: a descriptive study. *BMC Psychology*, 11, 360. doi:10.1186/s40359-023-01395-w
- Salih, L., & Chaudry, S. (2023). Exploring the lived experience of parental infidelity. *Journal of Family Studies*, 29(1), 407-430. doi:10.1080/13229400.2021.1956997
- Şanel, İ., & Erkan, I. (2022). The mediating role of five love languages between differentiation of self and marital satisfaction. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 50(4), 407-423. doi:10.1080/01926187.2021.1930607

- Sasaki, E., & Overall, N. (2021). Partners' withdrawal when actors behave destructively: Implications for perceptions of partners' responsiveness and relationship satisfaction. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 47, 307-323.
doi:10.1177/0146167220926820
- Saunders, M. N., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research methods for Business students*. Pearson Education.
- Schrage, K. M., Maxwell, J. A., Impett, E. A., Keltner, D., & MacDonald, G. (2020). Effects of verbal and nonverbal communication of affection on avoidantly attached partners' emotions and message receptiveness. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 46(11), 1567-1580. doi:10.1177/0146167220910311
- Scotland, J. (2012). Exploring the philosophical underpinnings of research: Relating ontology and epistemology to the methodology and methods of the scientific, interpretive, and critical research paradigms. *English Language Teaching*, 5(9), 9-16.
- Shirdel, M., Hosseini, S., Kimiaee, A., & Safarian, M. (2019). Estimating the validity and reliability of Gottman questionnaires of "couple trust measurement". *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 41(1), 37-46. doi:10.1007/s10591-018-9470-1
- Shrout, M. R., Renna, M. E., Madison, A. A., Malarkey, W. B., & Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K. (2023). Marital negativity's festering wounds: The emotional, immunological, and relational toll of couples' negative communication patterns. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 149. doi:10.1016/j.psyneuen.2022.105989
- Sim, T., & Sim, C. (2020). Prevention of couple distress. Education, enrichment programs, and premarital counseling. In R. G. Carlson, A. P. Daire, & C. J. Hipp (Eds.). *The*

Handbook of Systemic Family Therapy (pp. 51-77). John Wiley & Sons.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119790945.ch3>

Stratton, S. J. (2023). Population sampling: Probability and non-probability techniques.

Prehospital and Disaster Medicine, 38(2), 147-148.

doi:10.1017/S1049023X23000304

Tanay, M., Singh, S., Innamuri, R., & Hasija, A. D. (2020). Marital distress during COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown: a brief narrative. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 8(2), 426-433. doi:10.25215/0802.257

doi:10.25215/0802.257

Taniguchi, H., & Kaufman, G. (2022). Sharing the load: housework, joint decision-making, and marital quality in Japan. *Journal of Family Studies*, 28(3), 914-933.

doi:10.1080/13229400.2020.1769707

Tarkeshdooz, Z., Jenaabadi, H., & Tamini, B. K. (2021). The effectiveness of Gottman Couple Therapy on intimacy and marital adjustment of couples with marital problems. *Razavi International Medical Journal*, 9(3).

Tasew, A. S., Getahun, K. K., & Prete, G. (2021). Marital conflict among couples: The case of Durbete town, Amhara Region, Ethiopia. *Cogent Psychology*, 8(1).

doi:10.1080/23311908.2021.1903127

Tavakol, Z., Moghadam, Z. B., & Nasrabadi, A. N. (2020). Marriage, a way to achieve relaxing evolution: A grounded theory investigation. *Journal of education and health promotion*, 9, 211. doi:https://doi.org/10.4103/jehp.jehp_386_20

Thalia, N., Robert, E., & Anna, R. (2022). Extending empathy to physical symptoms. *Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies*. 23(1), 20–38.

doi:10.1080/14779757.2022.2159503

- Tobore, T. O. (2020). Towards a comprehensive theory of love: The quadruple theory. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, 862. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00862
- Tong, Q., Chu, C. Y., Zhou, D., & Yulei, F. (2021). Does internet connectedness disconnect marriage? A micro empirical analysis. *Social Indicators Research, 158*, 143–176. doi:10.1007/s11205-021-02686-8
- Towler, L. B., Graham, C. A., Bishop, F. L., & Hinchiff, S. (2022). Sex and relationships in later life: Older adults' experiences and perceptions of sexual changes. *The Journal of Sex Research*. doi:10.1080/00224499.2022.2093322
- Treiman, D. J. (2009). *Quantitative data analysis: Doing social research to test ideas*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Turner-Zwinkels, F. M., & Spini, D. (2020). (Mis-)coordinating identities in the transition to parenthood: Investigating the co-development of partners' parenting, domestic and provider identities before and after the birth of the first child. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 50*(1), 1-17. doi:10.1002/ejsp.2591
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2016). Current marital status by age and sex for those ever divorced.
- Veldorale-Griffin, A. (2023). Gottman method couple's therapy. In Y. Watters, & D. Adamson, *Foundational concepts and models of family therapy*. New York: Routledge.
- Verstaen, A., Haase, C. M., Lwi, S. J., & Levenson, R. W. (2020). Age-related changes in emotional behavior: Evidence from a 13-year longitudinal study of long-term married couples. *Emotion, 20*(2), 149–163. doi:10.1037/emo0000551
- Vowels, L. M., Francois-Walcott, R. R., Perks, R. E., & Carnelley, K. B. (2021). Be free together rather than confined together: A qualitative exploration of how

- relationships changed in the early COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 38(10), 2921-2943.
- Vu, T. T. (2021). Love, affection and intimacy in marriage of young people in Vietnam. *Asian Studies Review*, 45(1), 100-116. doi:10.1080/10357823.2020.1798873
- Wang, Y., & Umberson, D. (2023). Dyadic coping and marital quality in same-sex and different-sex marriages. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 40(3), 996-1017. doi:10.1177/02654075221123096
- Wanyeki, G. (2023). *The impact of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on marital satisfaction: A case of married couples' care groups at Citam, Kenya*. [Master's Thesis]. Pan Africa Christian University.
- Wazir, S., Bashir, S., & Ghaffar, I. (2020). Indicators of marital satisfaction in married couples. *Journal of Professional & Applied Psychology*, 1(1). doi:10.52053/jpap.v1i1.2
- Wellington, J., & Szczerbinski, M. (2007). *Research methods for the Social Sciences*. Bloomsbury.
- Wells, J. L., Haase, C. M., Rothwell, E. S., Naugle, K. G., Otero, M. C., & Brown, C. L. (2022). Positivity resonance in long-term married couples: Multimodal characteristics and consequences for health and longevity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 123(5), 983–1003. doi:10.1037/pspi0000385
- Williams, B. W. (2023). *Turn towards each other: Emotional connection as a catalyst for marital satisfaction, especially during times of conflict*. [Master's Thesis]. Brigham Young University.

- Wilson, C., Janes, G., & Williams, J. (2022). Identity, positionality and reflexivity: relevance and application to research paramedics. *British Paramedic Journal*, 7(2), 43-49. doi:10.29045/14784726.2022.09.7.2.43
- Wolf, C., Dillman, D. A., & others. (Eds.). (2020). *Handbook of survey methodology for the social sciences*. Springer
- Worley, T. R., & Marina, S. R. (2020). Work–family conflict, relational turbulence mechanisms, conflict tactics and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 48(2), 248-269. doi:10.1080/00909882.2020.1735647
- Yılmaz, C. D., Lajunen, T., & Sullman, M. J. (2023). Trust in relationships: A preliminary investigation of the influence of parental divorce, breakup experiences, adult attachment style, and close relationship beliefs on dyadic trust. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14.
- Yoo, G., & Joo, S. (2021). Love for a marriage story: the association between love and marital satisfaction in middle adulthood. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 31(6), 1570-1581.
- Yuan, Q., Fan, Z., & Leng, J. (2022). The effect of emotional reactivity on marital quality in Chinese couples: The mediating role of perceived partner responsiveness. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 18(12).
- Zhu, Y., & Yu, Y. (2021). Effect of home isolation on domestic violence and divorce in China during COVID-19 pandemic. *Psychiatry Research*, 306.
- Zoppolat, G., Visserman, M. L., & Righetti, F. (2019). A nice surprise: Sacrifice expectations and partner appreciation in romantic relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*. 37(2), 450–466 doi:10.1177/0265407519867145

Zurlo, G. A. (2023). *Women in World Christianity: Building and Sustaining a Global Movement*. John Wiley & Sons.

Appendix I: Informed Consent

Thesis Title: Investigating the Moderating Effect of Trust and Commitment on the Relationship between Interspousal Friendship and Couples' Marital Quality at Karura Community Chapel.

Principal Investigator: Patricia Wanjiru Wanderi

Introduction: You are invited to participate in a research study at Karura Community Chapel exploring the relationship between interspousal friendship and couples' marital quality together with the moderating factors of trust and commitment. This form provides you with important information about the study. Please take the time to read and understand the contents before deciding whether or not to participate. The investigator's contact information is provided below if you have any questions.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

Complete a demographic questionnaire about yourself and your spouse.

Respond to a series of questions about the quality of your friendship with your spouse.

Answer questions regarding your perception of your marital quality.

Duration: Your participation in this study is expected to take approximately 30 minutes.

Risks and Benefits: There are minimal anticipated risks associated with participating in this study. Your responses will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by the Ethics Review Board. The benefits of participating include contributing valuable information that may enhance our understanding of the factors influencing marital quality at Karura Community Chapel.

Confidentiality: All information collected during this study will be kept confidential. Data will be anonymised and stored securely. No identifiable information will be disclosed in any publication or presentation of the research findings. Your privacy is important to me. Here are the steps I take to ensure that your identity remains confidential:

- You will not be asked to provide any information that will reveal your identity.
- Only myself, my dissertation supervisor, and my data analysis expert will have access to your information. The Ethics Review Committee may also review my research and view your information.
- Your completed information will be kept secure by storing it in a locked filing cabinet and ensuring that both my computer and your data are password protected.
- I will keep your data for 7 years, then delete electronic data and destroy paper data.

If you have any concerns about the confidentiality of your information, please let me know.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

Contact Information: If you have any questions about the study or your participation, please contact the Principal Investigator, Patricia Wanderi on patricia.wanderi@students.pacuniversity.ac.ke

Consent: By signing this form, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided and voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

Respondent's Name: _____ Date: _____

Respondent's Signature: _____

Investigator's Certification: I certify that I have provided a detailed explanation of the study to the respondent, and I believe that he/she understands the information provided.

Investigator's Name: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Signature: _____

Thank you for your willingness to contribute to this research. Your participation is highly valuable.

Read each statement and mark whether true or false.

STATEMENT	TRUE	FALSE
I can tell you some of my partner's life dreams.		
I can list the relatives my partner likes the least.		
My partner is familiar with what are my current stresses.		
I can list my partner's major aspirations and hopes in life.		
I know my partner's major current worries.		

Fondness and Admiration System

Read each statement and mark whether true or false.

STATEMENT	TRUE	FALSE
My partner really respects me.		
I feel loved and cared for in this relationship.		
Romance is something our relationship definitely still has in		
When I come into a room, my partner is glad to see me.		
My partner appreciates the things I do in this relationship.		

Turning Towards or Away

Read each statement and mark whether true or false

STATEMENT	TRUE	FALSE
I really enjoy discussing things with my partner.		
We always have a lot to say to each other.		
We have a lot of fun together in our everyday lives.		
We really have a lot of interests in common.		
We like to do a lot of the same things.		

SECTION III: MARITAL QUALITY

For this section, use a scale of 1 to 5 to indicate your response. The scale is as follows:

1 – Strongly Disagree

2 – Disagree

3 – Neutral

4 – Agree

5 – Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
I feel emotionally close to my partner					

I feel confident we can deal with whatever problems that might come up in our relationship					
I think my partner cares about me					
My partner usually listens to me					
I consider myself happy in this relationship					

SECTION IV: TRUST AND COMMITMENT

For this section, answer to the degree to which you agree or disagree by checking the box under Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither, Agree, or Strongly Agree

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
TRUST					
My trust in this relationship has been seriously shattered.					
I don't feel like I am my partner's first or major priority in his or her life.					
There are some wounds my partner has created that can never fully heal between us.					
Sometimes I don't feel important to my partner.					
When going through hard times in our relationship, I don't feel I can count on my partner to be there for me.					
COMMITMENT					
I feel confident that my partner will stay in this relationship even if we are going through hard times.					
When I am feeling bad, my partner is willing to meet my needs.					
During a fight, my partner does not threaten to leave me.					
I am committed to this relationship.					
I consider my relationship rock solid.					

Appendix III: Couples' Ministry Leaders Interview Guide

Thesis Title: Investigating the Moderating Effect of Trust and Commitment on the Relationship between Interspousal Friendship and Couples' Marital Quality at Karura Community Chapel.

Complete all sections with the required information

Interspousal Friendship

1. Based on your experience, how would you define the interspousal friendship in the marriage context? _____

2. From your observation and experience, what are the key components of friendship between spouses?

3. Can you share how friendship between spouses manifests in day-to-day married life?

Impact on Marital Quality

1. In your view, how does interspousal friendship affects the overall marital quality?

2. Can you discuss any specific instances where you observed impact of strong friendship between spouses on their marital quality?

3. How do conflicts get resolved in marriages with a strong friendship foundation?

Moderating Role of Trust and Commitment

1. How do you think trust and commitment contribute to the relationship between interspousal friendship and couples' marital quality?

2. Are there instances despite a strong friendship between spouses, a lack of trust and commitment impacted a marriage negatively?

3. Are there effective strategies you would recommend for building or repairing trust and commitment in a marriage?

Strategies to Strengthen Marital Quality: Opportunities and Challenges

1. What challenges do couples face when developing and sustaining friendship within their marriage?

2. What are the most significant benefits of interspousal friendship for marital quality?

3. How does interspousal friendship relate with emotional intimacy and couple communication? _____

Strategies to Strengthen Marital Quality: Personal Insights

1. Relating to your experience, how has interspousal friendship affected your overall marital satisfaction? _____

2. What steps (if any) have you taken to cultivate friendship in your marriage?

3. Can you describe steps or strategies (if any) that you have taken to improve your marital quality? _____

Appendix IV: Permit from Postgraduate Studies in PAC University



Thika Road Campus | Valley Road Campus
P.O. Box 56875-00200 | +254 730955000 | +254 730955501/2
enquiries@pacuniversity.ac.ke | www.pacuniversity.ac.ke

REF: PAC/ISERC/59/09/24 Date: 30/9/2024 TO:
PATRICIA WANJIRU WANDERI
PAC UNIVERSITY

Dear Madam,

RE: MODERATING EFFECT OF TRUST AND COMMITMENT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERSPOUSAL FRIENDSHIP AND MARITAL QUALITY IN KARURA COMMUNITY CHAPEL NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

This is to inform you that PAC_ ISERC has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is PAC/ISERC/59/09/24. The approval period is 30th September 2024 – 30th September 2025.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i i. Only approved documents including (informed consent and study instruments,) will be used
- ii ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by PAC_ ISERC.
- iii iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to PAC_ ISERC within 72 hours of notification
- iv iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affect the safety or the welfare of study respondents and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to PAC_ ISERC within 72 hours
- v v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to PAC_ ISERC.

Before commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Jane Kinuthia

Chair, ISERC

Appendix V: NACOSTI Research License

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	
Ref No: 500752	Date of Issue: 08/October/2024
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
This is to Certify that Ms.. Patricia Wanjiru Wanderi of Pan Africa Christian University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nairobi on the topic: MODERATING EFFECT OF TRUST AND COMMITMENT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTER-SPOUSAL FRIENDSHIP AND MARITAL QUALITY IN KARURA COMMUNITY CHAPEL NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA for the period ending : 08/October/2025.	
License No: NACOSTI/P/24/40954	
500752	
Applicant Identification Number	Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Verification QR Code	
	
NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.	
See overleaf for conditions	

Appendix VI: Church Application

Patricia Wanjiru Wanderi
P.O. Box 2786
Nairobi

October 7th, 2024

Rev. George Shiramba
Senior Pastor
Karura Community Chapel
Gigiri, Nairobi
Kenya

Dear Rev. Shiramba,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Patricia Wanderi and I am a member of Karura Community Chapel. I am also currently a post graduate student at PAC University pursuing a Master of Arts degree in Marriage and Family Therapy.

I am writing to seek your permission and support to conduct a research study titled "The Moderating Role of Trust and Commitment on the Relationship between Interspousal Friendship and Marital Quality Among Members of Karura Community Chapel." The purpose of this study is to explore how various aspects of interspousal friendship, including love maps, fondness and admiration, turning towards behavior, trust, and commitment, influence the overall quality of marital relationships within our community.

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Examine the relationship between love maps and marital quality among members of Karura Community Chapel.
2. Investigate how fondness and admiration influence marital quality.
3. Explore the impact of turning towards behavior on marital quality.
4. Assess the contribution of trust and commitment to the relationship between interspousal friendship and marital quality.
5. Develop strategies and support mechanisms to enhance interspousal friendship and marital quality within Karura Community Chapel.

The research will involve individuals who have been married above one year from our congregation. Respondents will be asked to complete surveys and the ministry leaders will be invited to participate in in-depth interviews. All data collected will be kept strictly confidential, and the privacy of all respondents will be maintained throughout the study.

I believe that this research will provide valuable insights that can contribute to the well-being of our congregation by identifying factors that enhance marital quality and developing support mechanisms to strengthen marriages within our community. The

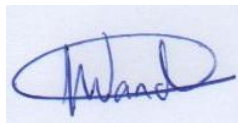
findings may also serve as a resource for future programs and initiatives aimed at promoting healthy and fulfilling marital relationships.

I kindly request your permission to conduct this study within Karura Community Chapel and your support in facilitating the recruitment of respondents. This may include making announcements during services, providing space for interviews, and allowing access to contact information for potential respondents, subject to their consent.

I am happy to discuss this study in further detail and address any questions or concerns you may have. I look forward to your positive response and appreciate your support in this endeavor.

Thank you for considering my request.

Yours sincerely,



Patricia Wanjiru Wanderi

PAC Postgraduate Student

Tel: +254 722 695722

Appendix VII: Karura Community Chapel Senior Pastor's Authorisation



9th October 2024

Patricia Wanjiru Wanderi,
P.O. Box 2786 – 00200,
Nairobi.

Dear Patricia,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I trust you are doing well.

Thank you for reaching out and for your commitment to strengthening marriages within our church community. We appreciate your initiative in conducting this important research and recognize the value it may bring to our congregation. Strong and healthy marriages are foundational to a thriving church and society, and we are encouraged by your dedication to this field.

We are pleased to grant you permission to conduct your study within Karura Community Chapel. Additionally, we will support you in the recruitment of participants by facilitating announcements during services and, where appropriate, providing space for interviews. We trust that all ethical considerations, including confidentiality and informed consent, will be upheld throughout the research process.

Please feel free to liaise with our pastoral team to coordinate logistics and ensure a smooth process. We look forward to learning from your findings and believe they will be beneficial for future ministry initiatives aimed at strengthening marriages in our community.

May God bless you in your studies and research.

Yours sincerely,

Rev. George Shiramba.
Senior Pastor,
Karura Community Chapel.

'Becoming Christ-like Disciples, Engaging the Word.'

Off Limuru road next to Rosslyn Riviera Mall
P.O. Box 663 Village Market, Nairobi 00621
+254 721 990 880 | info@karuracc.or.ke | www.karuracc.or.ke