

**THE IMPACT OF SPIRITUAL-BASED MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS
ON MARITAL SATISFACTION: A CASE OF MARRIED COUPLES' CARE
GROUPS AT CITAM, KENYA**

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Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for the award of a degree in any other university.

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Dedication

This work is devoted to my biological children and numerous individuals I have guided in matters of marriage, whom I consider my spiritual children. Furthermore, I extend my dedication to my spouse, Reverend Charles Thuku, and my companions, whose prayers, motivation, and emotional assistance have been invaluable.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on marital satisfaction by exploring Married Couples' Care Groups (MCCGs) program in CITAM (Christ is the Answer Ministries), Kenya. The study employed a mixed-methods approach and was based on Gottman's Sound Relationship House Theory as the theoretical framework. CITAM Thika Road, CITAM Clay City, and CITAM Woodley Churches were purposively selected as the research sites. The study population consisted of 1,000 participants, including the leaders, from MCCGs in the selected assemblies. Consecutive sampling, also referred to as sequential or sampling, was utilized in this study sampling 286 participants. Out of those sampled, 152 participants responded to the questionnaire, representing a response rate of 63.3%. Data collection involved a validated questionnaire combining quantitative measures on marital satisfaction, evaluated in terms of friendship, and conflict management, and qualitative measures capturing the participants' subjective experiences and perceptions. Quantitative data was analyzed using frequencies, percentages; mean scores, and standard deviation scores, while qualitative data was examined using thematic analysis. The findings revealed a moderately high level of marital satisfaction among the respondents, as measured on a 5-point Likert scale, with their involvement in MCCGs. Qualitative data indicated positive influence on respondents' marriages, with effective communication emerging as the overarching theme. The study's findings indicate value for spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs in promoting couple friendship and conflict management within the Kenyan context. It provides religious groups with insight on the potential role of marriage enrichment programs in fostering marital satisfaction.

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Abbreviations

CITAM- Christ Is The Answer Ministries

FaCE- Family Care and Enrichment Ministry

ISERC – Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee

MCCG- Married Couples’ Care Group

NACOSTI- National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation

SPSS- Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

Operational Definition of Terms

Conflict management: In the context of marriage, conflict management refers to the strategies and processes employed by spouses to address and resolve disagreements, disputes, or conflicts that may arise within their relationship (Gottman, 2020). It involves the development of effective communication skills, active listening, empathy, and problem-solving techniques to navigate differences and find mutually satisfactory solutions (Gottman, 2020). The study adopted this definition.

Couple friendship: Couple friendship refers to a unique form of companionship and emotional connection that exists between two individuals who are in a romantic relationship or marriage. It is characterized by mutual support, trust, intimacy, and shared experiences, which contribute to the overall well-being and satisfaction of both partners (Johnson, 2018). The study embraced the above elements in its exploration of this variable.

Marital satisfaction: Marital satisfaction is the subjective assessment of the quality and happiness experienced in a marital relationship (Odero, 2018). It encompasses multiple dimensions, such as emotional intimacy, communication, trust, conflict resolution, sexual satisfaction, and overall relationship fulfillment. Marital satisfaction serves as a crucial indicator of the general well-being and stability of a marriage. This research will investigate couple friendship and conflict management as potential indicators of marital satisfaction.

Marriage enrichment: Marriage enrichment refers to interventions or programs aimed at enhancing and strengthening the quality of marital relationships. These programs typically focus on improving communication, resolving conflicts, promoting intimacy, and fostering overall marital satisfaction (Baucom 2019). The study adopts this meaning throughout the report.

Marriage education This refers to efforts or programs that provide couples with knowledge, skills, and principles to improve their relationship (Hawkins, 2017). On the other hand, marriage enrichment involves promoting positive change, growth, and the enhancement of existing elements in a relationship.

Marriage enrichment programs: Marriage enrichment programs refer to structured interventions or workshops designed to enhance and strengthen the quality of a marital relationship. These programs typically provide couples with the necessary skills, knowledge, and tools to improve communication, resolve conflicts, deepen emotional intimacy, and foster a sense of connection and mutual support within the marriage (Nyambura et al., 2021). This is how this concept is understood throughout this study.

Married Couples' Care Groups (MCCGs) are fellowships established by the congregations of Christ Is the Answer Ministries under the Family Care and Enrichment Ministry to enhance the marital well-being of participating couples. Married couples are encouraged to voluntarily join these groups to receive mentorship, share challenges, and receive encouragement (CITAM Strategic plan 2023-2027). In the present study, marriage enrichment was examined within the context of Married Couples' Care Groups (MCCGs) as a means to enrich marriages through counseling, professional guidance, and peer education.

Marriage: Marriage is regarded as a sacred and covenantal union between two individuals, which is deeply rooted in religious or spiritual beliefs and practices (Dollahite, 2017). This perspective perceives marriage as a divine institution, guided by principles and teachings derived from religious scriptures or spiritual traditions. The study uses this view to understand the effectiveness of the MCCGs

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background to the Study

Introduction

Marriage is a fundamental institution that plays a vital role in society, providing individuals with emotional support, companionship, and a foundation for family life (Carlson et al, 2020). However, maintaining a satisfying and healthy marital relationship can be challenging due to various factors, including conflicts and a lack of couple friendship. Consequently, marriage enrichment programs have emerged as valuable interventions to enhance marital satisfaction and strengthen couples' relationships (Lambert, 2018). One promising approach to marriage enrichment involves incorporating spiritual and religious elements into the intervention programs. Spirituality plays a crucial role in the lives of many individuals, offering a source of guidance, values, and emotional support (Thompson, 2019). Thus, incorporating spiritual elements in marriage enrichment programs may provide couples with additional resources to navigate challenges, strengthen their bond, and promote marital satisfaction.

This study investigated the impact of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on marital satisfaction, with a specific focus on couple friendship and conflict management. The case study was conducted within the context of Christ is the Answer Ministries (CITAM) in Kenya. CITAM is a prominent religious organization known for its emphasis on family values and the provision of various spiritual-based programs, including marriage enrichment initiatives. By examining the specific context of CITAM in Kenya, this case study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs influence couple friendship and conflict management, as well as the overall marital satisfaction experienced by participating couples. This chapter provides important information that founded this study. It highlights the background to the study with the aim of clarifying the research gap envisioned by the researcher. The chapter also gives details of the

background to the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, objectives and research questions, hypothesis, assumptions, justification, significance, and scope of the study. The study also acknowledged limitations and delimitations that were envisaged.

Background to the Study

Marriage is a complex institution that plays a crucial role in individuals' overall well-being and societal stability. However, maintaining a satisfying and fulfilling marital relationship can be challenging, particularly in the face of conflict and the erosion of couple friendship (Barton et al., 2021; Fowers et al., 2022). In recent years, spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs have gained popularity as interventions aimed at promoting marital satisfaction. These programs incorporate religious and spiritual teachings, emphasizing the importance of couple friendship and conflict management (DeFrain, 2020; McKee, et al., 2018). Marriage enrichment programs are structured programs designed to strengthen and improve marriages or committed relationships. These programs typically aim to enhance communication, increase intimacy, and provide tools and strategies for resolving conflicts and deepening the connection between partners (Owens & Duncan, 2018).

According to Ama (2015), marriage is one of the most indispensable needs of human beings, and that is why many people get married to meet this need. One of the most important goals of marriage is the desire to attain marital satisfaction (Heshmati et al., 2016). Marital satisfaction is defined as a global evaluation of the state of one's marriage and a reflection of marital happiness and functioning (Farzaneh et al., 2016). There is growing evidence that numerous factors play a role in attainment of marital satisfaction (Farzaneh et al., 2016). These elements include effective communication, interaction patterns, gender roles, intimacy, problem solving and management of conflict (Sauerheber & Ponton, 2018). Research (Hawkins, 2006; Imhoff, 2019; Jacobi, 2017) has demonstrated that marriage enrichment programs plays an imperative role in marital satisfaction and enhances happy and successful

marriages. Marriage enrichment programs aims to help couples to make constructive change in any or every aspect of life that could be faced with challenges through a caring relationship which promotes marital satisfaction. It also increases couple's relationship satisfaction by helping them to acquire skills like conflict resolution, effective communication, negotiation, effective discussions which promotes their marital relationship.

One promising approach to marriage enrichment involves incorporating spiritual and religious elements into the intervention programs (Muncy, 2022). Spirituality plays a crucial role in the lives of many individuals, offering a source of guidance, values, and emotional support. Thus, incorporating spiritual elements in marriage enrichment programs may provide couples with additional resources to navigate challenges, strengthen their bond, and promote marital satisfaction (Muncy, 2022). However, limited research has explored the specific impact of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on marital satisfaction, as indicated by couple friendship and conflict management. Understanding the unique benefits that spiritual elements can bring to marriage enrichment interventions is crucial for designing effective programs that resonate with couples' diverse needs and beliefs (Kennedy et al., 2018).

The literature on marriage enrichment tends to conclude that marriage enrichment programmes are successful especially by empowering couples with the skills needed to build functional relationships and stronger family structures, thus preventing future problems (Neswiswa et al., 2020). Research has identified positive impacts related to healthy marriage. People in satisfying marriages live longer, have fewer health issues while they are alive, have a higher self-reported satisfaction from life, and suffer from fewer mental illnesses than those who are in marriages marked by stress and difficulty (Pierce, 2016). Nevertheless, the present research aims to investigate whether the extensive examination of the beneficial effects of successful marriages extends to individuals involved in CITAM programs, particularly those

participating in MCCGs. While research shows correlations between satisfying marriages and various positive outcomes, it is important to recognize that not all marriages will necessarily lead to the same results. Therefore, a study of the individual and contextual factors that can influence these outcomes would provide a more nuanced perspective.

Church developed marriage enrichment programs and care groups are spreading fast from church to church because of their emphasized dramatic positive change in marriages, including increased marital satisfaction (Balswick & Balswick, 2007). The positive changes are shown in written or video testimonies that prove to be strong evidence of the effect of marriage enrichment programs. Religious organizations are mostly the centers for marriage enrichment dissemination and thus, most churches take the initiative to develop faith-based marriage enrichment programs (Combs et al., 2008). An evaluation of religiously tailored marriage enrichment in Christian therapy, found that high religious commitment influence participant's closeness to the facilitator and greater improvement of solving the presenting problems (Holmes, 2020).

Religion plays a significant role in shaping marital relationships in Kenya. The influence of religious beliefs and practices on marital satisfaction has been explored in studies such as the one conducted by Kibet et al. (2020). Their research found that religious teachings and practices could enhance marital satisfaction by promoting values such as commitment, forgiveness, and communication. Research conducted by Owiti and Opanga (2017) explored the experiences of divorced individuals in Kenya, including those who were members of religious institutions. The study found that divorce within religious communities, including churches, is a reality, and individuals faced various challenges in the aftermath of divorce. It means that churches need to seek an effective way of sustaining marriages within its members.

The impact of divorce within churches can be multifaceted. Divorce can lead to emotional distress, social stigma, and difficulties in maintaining active participation within the church community (Adzovie, 2020). It may therefore be expected that churches would play a significant role in providing support and counseling to married couples, but their approach to divorce and remarriage can vary depending on their theological beliefs and denominational practices. It should be noted that several churches in Kenya prioritize the preservation of marriages and actively discourage divorce by implementing strategies such as pre-marital counseling, marriage enrichment programs, and pastoral guidance (Smith, 2020). These initiatives are designed to equip couples with the necessary tools and support to enhance their marital bond and effectively navigate challenges (Johnson, 2018; Thompson, 2019). The objective of these interventions is to strengthen marriages and cultivate marital fulfillment through comprehensive marriage enrichment programs (Brown, 2021). It is important to highlight that the notion of enrichment extends beyond the mere establishment of a marital union and encompasses continuous exploration and improvement of marriages, rather than being treated as a one-time event (Clark, 2017).

Divorce rates in Kenya have been on the rise in recent years. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) report on marriages and divorces, there was a steady increase in divorce cases from 7,357 cases in 2014 to 11,992 cases in 2018 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). This upward trend indicates a growing prevalence of divorce within the country thus the need to employ relevant intervention programs. The study at hand is curious about this high divorce rate especially in the Church. As noted by Owiti and Opanga (2017) the general statistics of divorce has not spared the church. Is there a challenge that causes spouses not to find marital fulfilment in each other and how would spiritual leaders in particular assist their members to curb the issue of marital dissatisfaction.

Researchers (Carlson et al., 2020; Javadivala et al., 2021; Mutai, 2019) agree that communication skills remain a major influence on couple satisfaction. Couples who engage in routine relationship maintenance (e.g., providing advice and managing conflict) report feeling happier, more satisfied, and more committed to their relationship (Tavakol et al., 2017). Additionally, how couples choose to manage conflict in their relationship is associated with individuals' perceptions of satisfaction within the relationship. One body of research suggests that frequent conflict in relationships corresponds with lower relational satisfaction (Plummer, 2015) and other research suggests the intensity of the conflict predicts marital satisfaction (Pierce, 2016). Another perspective suggests the effective management of conflict in a relationship can help to increase the perceived satisfaction in a relationship (Wadsworth, 2016). Communication strategies such as ignoring or avoiding conflict can sometimes bring individuals greater satisfaction in their relationships.

Marital satisfaction is a true sign of pleasure towards a spouse. It is an expressive reply from couples' internal assessment regarding their marriage in all facets of the association (Fahimdanesh et al., 2020). Marriage enrichment is depicted as change, growth, enhancement of already present ingredients in a relationship and the assumed direction of this change and growth is from the non-intimate to intimate (Hawkins, 2017). It means that divorce and domestic violence are ultimate evidence of marital dissatisfaction. Investigating the impact of MCCGs on marital satisfaction set the context of this study on evaluating the marriage enrichment offered in preventing these aftermaths. The research inquired how this program impacted the marital satisfaction of couples at CITAM.

In a study conducted in Latin by Mehr et al. (2021), findings of meta-analysis showed that marriage enrichment programs have a positive and significant effect on marital intimacy. In explaining this finding, it can be said that the marriage enrichment programs have elements of education that have been able to affect intimacy (marital quality, satisfaction,

adaptation, commitment and happiness). In United States of America, a study conducted by Jacobi (2017) showed that marital enrichment programs provide couples with the skills necessary to aid them in responding to challenging situations that arise in marriage, such as conflict. Considering the powerful influence spirituality may have in individuals' lives, the addition of spirituality as a foundation to a marital enrichment program may have an effect upon the power of the program in enhancing couples' marriages. For example, a study done by Keyhandoost and Namani (2017) revealed a positive correlational relationship between spirituality and marital satisfaction. Marriage has been the center of focus for a variety of researchers (Jacobi, 2017). Factors contributing to marital success and failure have both been studied and analyzed for decades (Gehart, 2010). The United States (US) government, faith communities, and societies around the world have recognized the benefits of healthy relationships. In assessing spirituality as a protective factor for married couples in adjusting to their first five years of marriage, Mika (2011) found significant relationships existed between spirituality/religiosity and dyadic cohesion for the females and between spirituality/religiosity and dyadic consensus for males; both were important factors in the dyadic adjustment of couples. Such studies convey that spirituality may play an important role in marital enrichment programs.

Mikle and Gilbert (2019) conducted a study where they examined the extent to which marriage and couple relationship education programs targeting African-Americans utilize culturally relevant components and the efficacy of such components. The findings suggested that African-American couples benefit from the incorporation of culturally relevant programs as a way to establish healthier relationships and couple satisfaction through improved relationship skills and communication. Overall support for cultural values essential in the African-American culture included connectedness, spirituality, strong African-American identity, and prayer. Some of these elements find concurrency in the church could indicate a

positive impact of church programs and spirituality on marital success. The current study investigated the number of couples who are interracial.

In a study conducted by Adzovie (2020), results suggested that married Christians in Accra Metropolis who engage in marriage enrichment programs are relatively satisfied in their marriages. They are satisfied with the expression of affection, love and appreciation by their partners, differences in temperament as well as character displayed (Mutai, 2019). With regard to the duration of marriage, those married for up to ten years and those married over 20 years reported more marital satisfaction than those married between 11-20 years. Another study established that communication challenges and the performance of marital roles have the potential to improve or reduce satisfaction in marriage (Carlson et al., 2020). These studies point to the emphasis that churches should have in enhancing marriage sustainability.

In the Kenyan situation, divorce rates have continued to rise. For instance, between the years 2010 to 2015, there were a total of 1246 cases filed in Milimani Law courts, with 123 cases in 2015 alone. This upward trend is not conclusive due to the high cost of legal divorce, as many individuals choose to dissolve their marriages outside of court (Omor, 2018). According to the available data from the Kenya Health Demographic Survey (2014), 7.7% of women and 4.7% of men were either divorced or separated. Additionally, the survey revealed that 24 to 25% of women who were currently or previously married had experienced domestic physical violence within the 12 months preceding the survey. These records, obtained from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS et al., 2014), indicate a significant level of marital dissatisfaction and instability. Furthermore, a report by the National Police Service (Kamau et al., 2021) disclosed that 15% of marriages in Kenya end in divorce. In Nairobi County alone, during the first three months of 2018, there were 34,272 separations and 21,573 divorce cases reported in the Crime Situation report. However, the statistics above do not tell us what is going on in the Church.

In Kenya, most studies have focused more on the effect of premarital counseling on marital satisfaction which have proved to be of great effect (Kariuki, 2017; Mutunga, 2020; Odera, 2018; Waititu, 2017). Kibuthu (2017) studied the effect of religiosity on marital satisfaction among married couples in CITAM assemblies, and found that, praying, fasting, reading scriptures, serving together in church brought couples together and had a significant influence on marital satisfaction. This study also noted that belonging to a faith community where there was couple counselling, FaCE ministry and Married Couples Care Groups, had positive impact on marriages, as couples got an opportunity to share challenges and encouragement from fellow Christians and church leaders. However, the studies did not provide scientific data establishing the significant effect of the different programs on marital satisfaction. Since sustenance of marriage is so important, there is need to establish such data.

The impact of divorce within churches can be multifaceted. Divorce can lead to emotional distress, social stigma, and difficulties in maintaining active participation within the church community. Churches often play a significant role in providing support and counseling to married couples, but their approach to divorce and remarriage can vary depending on their theological beliefs and denominational practices. It should be noted that several churches in Kenya prioritize the preservation of marriages and actively discourage divorce by implementing strategies such as pre-marital counseling, marriage enrichment programs, and pastoral guidance (Smith, 2020). These initiatives are designed to equip couples with the necessary tools and support to enhance their marital bond and effectively navigate challenges (Johnson, 2018; Thompson, 2019). The objective of these interventions is to strengthen marriages and cultivate marital fulfillment through comprehensive marriage enrichment programs (Brown, 2021). It is important to highlight that the notion of enrichment extends beyond the mere establishment of a marital union and encompasses continuous exploration and improvement of marriages, rather than being treated as a one-time event

(Clark, 2017). This is what makes marriage enrichment programmes like MCCGs very significant.

Married Couple Care Groups (MCCGs) are marriage fellowships that are offered across all Christ Is the Answer Ministry (CITAM) assemblies (CITAM Web, 2022). Family Care and Enrichment (FaCE) Ministry in each assembly oversee them. All married couples are encouraged to join irrespective of the number of years they have been married. The main goal is to improve couples' relationships through mentorship and support by peers and professionals. Though they have been offered for a period of time, there is limited research on their empirical policy and effectiveness on marital satisfaction in relation to couple friendship and conflict management.

The CITAM Strategic Plan 2023-2027 (CITAM Web, 2022) outlines the objective of the Family Care and Enrichment Ministry (FaCE), which includes the provision of care to families in general and couples in particular. The desired outcomes under this objective are the development of God-fearing families, thriving families, and healthy Christian families. One of the action plans to achieve this objective is the participation of couples in assigned MCCGs. These groups involve regular meetings among couples in the same group to discuss ways to improve their marriages, thereby promoting ongoing relational growth within the CITAM assemblies. The question the study asks is; "are these care groups effective in enhancing marriage satisfaction. The study focused on couple friendship and conflict management as the indicators of marital satisfaction. According to Gottman, these are key ingredients of a sound couple relationship. In the Gottman Sound Relationship House, the two ingredients form the basic structure of the house, indicating how critical they are (Gottman 2016). The researcher therefore considered the exploration of these variables a significant contribution towards underscoring the value of the MCCGs in CITAM.

Statement of the Problem

Churches in Kenya prioritize the preservation of marriages and actively discourage divorce by implementing strategies such as pre-marital counseling, marriage enrichment programs, and pastoral guidance (Smith, 2020). Divorce within religious communities, including churches, is a reality, and individuals faced various challenges in the aftermath of divorce (Owiti, 2017). To enhance marriage sustainability, marital satisfaction plays a crucial role. However, numerous factors, such as communication difficulties and unresolved conflicts, can negatively affect marital satisfaction (Fowers et al., 2021). According to Kibet et al. (2020), religious teachings and practices impact marital satisfaction by promoting values such as commitment, forgiveness, and communication. The researcher was curious about the potential wealth in the MCCGs found in CITAM in relation to their impact on couple friendship and conflict management as variable for marital satisfaction as a religious program.

A previous research on MCCGs in CITAM, Kenya, focused on the impact of small groups such as MCCGs on marital satisfaction (Kibuthu, 2017). The research however did not specifically examine the impact of these programs on couple friendship and conflict management as indicators of marital satisfaction. A program in a prominent populous church like CITAM requires the signature of a theoretical standard. According to Gottman theory, successful couples maintain emotional connection by treating each other as good friends, manage conflicts in a constructive way and create shared meaning fostering a stronger sense of connection and purpose (Gottman, 2015). Therefore, if CITAM MCCGs score high on this variable, they stand to be valuable programs.

The study proposed that evaluating the MCCGs using Gottman theory would validate the value of the program and/or also reveal areas of improvement. Continued use of the program without doing this, would expose the users to unverified weaknesses and therefore

undermine its purpose. Consequently, the study investigated the effects of MCCGs on marital satisfaction, specifically in relation to couple friendship and conflict management, an aspect that has not been addressed in previous research in the Kenyan context. Conducting the study within the Kenyan context provided valuable insights and allowed for a comparison of results with research conducted in Western societies. Other studies that focused on the two indicators of marital satisfaction; couple friendship and conflict management were based on the western context (Kim, 2020; Watson, 2019).

Objectives of the Study

Specific objectives were:

1. To assess the impact of MCCGs on couple friendship within selected CITAM Assemblies in Kenya.
2. To examine the effect of MCCGs on conflict management within selected CITAM assemblies in Kenya.
3. To explore the personal experiences of participants in MCCGs within selected CITAM assemblies in Kenya.
4. To identify areas of improvement on the MCCG program as perceived by participants within selected CITAM assemblies in Kenya.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on marital satisfaction, specifically focusing on the dimensions of couple friendship and conflict management. The study was conducted as a case study within the context of CITAM (Christ is the Answer Ministries) in Kenya. By investigating the effectiveness of these programs in promoting marital satisfaction, the research aimed to contribute towards the validation of this program within church settings. The researcher also hoped to contribute to existing knowledge and understanding of the role of spirituality and

spiritual programmes in enhancing marital relationships, while providing insights for further development and improvement of such programs.

Research Questions

The research was guided by the following questions:

1. What is the impact of participating in Married Couples' Care Groups (MCCGs) on the level of couple friendship among couples in selected CITAM Assemblies in Kenya?
2. How does participation in Married Couples' Care Groups (MCCGs) influence conflict management among couples in selected assemblies in Kenya?
3. What are the perceived experiences of participants' participation in Married Couples' Care Groups (MCCGs) within selected CITAM assemblies in Kenya?
4. What areas of the MCCGs program need improvement as perceived by participants and facilitators within selected CITAM assemblies in Kenya?

Assumptions of the Study

The study made the following assumptions:

1. That the Married Couples' Care Groups has impact on couple friendship management thus influencing overall marital satisfaction.
2. That the Married Couples' Care Groups enhances couples' conflict management capacity thus influencing overall marital capacity
3. That participants in the MCCG's were in touch with their personal experiences of benefits they have acquired.
4. That areas of improvement on the MCCGs can be harnessed from the participants and facilitators in the MCCG program.
5. That the respondents would cooperate and readily provide honest feedback of their experience in the MCCG program following the research methodology explained in chapter 3.

Justification of the Study

Married couples care groups provide a supportive and nurturing environment for couples to strengthen their relationships. This study explored the effectiveness of these groups in promoting marital satisfaction as indicated by conflict management and couple friendship among participant couples. Marriages face various challenges, including communication breakdowns, financial stress, and parenting difficulties. This calls for effective marriage enrichment programs, especially in the Church, because their marriages are sacred. If marriages fail, the experience among church members would likely be more devastating. The study advanced that by applying Gottman theory to assess the MCCGs, it would not only validate the program's worth but also identify potential areas for enhancement. Failure to conduct such an evaluation would leave users vulnerable to unverified shortcomings, consequently weakening the program's intended objectives.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide to the Church community with a tested spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on marital satisfaction, with a specific focus on couple friendship and conflict management. In so doing, the Church, because it holds marriage in high esteem, can be confident in their effort to strengthen marriages among their congregants. This is significant in the aspiration of the Church to stand out as the model for societal wellbeing. The study is significant as it provided empirical evidence to guide the development, implementation, and evaluation of interventions that promote healthy and thriving marital relationships through the MCCGs. The findings from the study can inform professional practice in various fields, such as marriage and family therapy, where the practitioners benefit from evidence-based interventions and strategies to enhance the quality and effectiveness of their work with couples.

The study focused on two crucial factors for marital satisfaction: couple friendship and conflict management that have not been explored in past researches in spiritual programmes in Kenya. Understanding the impact of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on these factors provides valuable insights into how couples can foster healthy relationships and navigate challenges effectively. This is important to CITAM churches and other Kenyan churches that are exploring for an effective tool for marriage enrichment. A copy of the research findings will be availed to the church leadership for use in strengthening MCCGs in terms of recruitment and planning for relevant training programs and activities to mitigate marital dissatisfaction. The findings may also be beneficial to other churches who may want to start marriage care enrichment programs for their congregants to help them enrich their marriages. Family therapists would be a valuable resource for churches in supporting the care group leaders to provide professional psychoeducation to participants where need arises.

Scope of the Study

This study focused on the impact of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on marital satisfaction by studying a case of selected CITAM Assemblies in Kenya. CITAM was selected because of its large population and standardization of ministry activities across different assemblies (CITAM Strategic Plan 2023-2027). The study focused on assemblies that have well established and functional marriage care groups. These were; Woodley, Clay City and Thika Road. The study population was 286 comprising 143 from Woodley, 74 from Thika Road and 69 from clay city assemblies. The population included MCCG leaders and participants. The study utilized a research design that combined quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The data collection phase of the study took place over a period of six months, starting after the necessary ethical considerations and approvals were obtained.

Limitations of the Study

The study had the following limitations:

1. Firstly, it was anticipated that childless couples and those in turbulent marriages may perceive the information sought as intrusive and confidential and fail to be truthful in their feedback. To curb this, the respondents were assured of confidentiality throughout the research process from data collection, analysis and presentation. Anonymity of respondents was upheld through the entire process.
2. Secondly, the research was conducted in urban church settings, recognizing that participants in these areas may be more affected by modernization compared to those in rural settings. As a result, their perceptions of marital satisfaction and the importance of peer mentorship through marriage enrichment programs may differ. To maintain consistency and avoid introducing variables related to urban and non-urban environments, the study focused exclusively on churches in urban areas. The study population was drawn from assemblies located in Nairobi, Kenya.
3. Thirdly, marital satisfaction is influenced by various factors, including communication, financial matters, intimacy issues, and others. However, this study specifically focused on couple friendship and conflict management. The questionnaire used in the study only included items that pertained to these specific variables of couple friendship and conflict management.
4. Fourthly, the study was voluntary and some participants might have decided not to participate. To safeguard against this, the researcher first sent hard copies of questionnaires for the sake of those who could be unable to complete online questionnaires. Online questionnaires were distributed to all those who provided their email addresses.

Delimitations of the Study

The study focused on the impact of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on marital satisfaction in regard to couple friendship and conflict management only. Other variables were not explored. The study population was also delimited to participants of MCCGs only. The researcher recognizes that there are other couples who are not engaged in MCCGs in CITAM. This were excluded from participation. Finally, couple participants were restricted to the selected CITAM Churches; CITAM Thika road, Clay City and Woodley. By setting delimitations, the researcher clarified the focus of the study and ensured that the research questions were feasible and realistic within the given parameters.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter encompassed a comprehensive and expanded discussion, covering the key views, background, statement of the problem, purpose, objectives, and research questions of the study. It also addressed assumptions, justification, significance, and scope, while acknowledging the limitations and delimitations. This thorough exploration laid a solid foundation for the subsequent chapters and provided readers with a comprehensive understanding of the study's context, goals, and parameters.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Marital satisfaction is a crucial aspect of a successful and fulfilling marriage. In recent years, the role of spiritual-based programs in enhancing marital satisfaction has garnered significant attention among researchers and practitioners. One particular context where these programs have gained prominence is in church settings. This literature review aims to explore the impact of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on marital satisfaction, focusing on the case of married couples' care groups at CITAM (Christ is the Answer Ministries), Kenya.

Marriage enrichment programs have a primary goal of bolstering and enriching the quality of marital relationships through a blend of spiritual and relational interventions. These initiatives typically combine teachings, discussions, and activities that revolve around religious beliefs and values. By seamlessly integrating spiritual principles with practical strategies for building relationships, these programs equip couples with essential tools and resources to nurture a profound connection, effectively address conflicts, and ultimately foster higher levels of marital contentment. The overarching purpose is to empower couples with the means to strengthen their bond, enhance their understanding of each other, and create a more fulfilling and harmonious marriage. Through these comprehensive approaches, couples can navigate challenges with newfound resilience and deepen their emotional and spiritual connection.

CITAM, a prominent evangelical church in Kenya, provides a diverse range of care groups designed exclusively for married couples. These care groups serve as a valuable platform where couples can come together, interact, and participate in activities that foster personal and relational growth within a spiritual context. By offering marriage enrichment programs rooted in spirituality, CITAM aims to equip couples with the necessary tools and

understanding to cultivate vibrant and flourishing marriages. The church's commitment to empowering couples is evident through its provision of spiritual-based resources and guidance, enabling them to navigate the complexities of married life. CITAM's emphasis on nurturing healthy relationships underscores its dedication to strengthening marriages through the promotion of holistic well-being within a spiritual framework.

This literature review delves into existing research on the impact of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on marital satisfaction. By synthesizing empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and practical insights, this review aims to shed light on the effectiveness and significance of these programs within the context of married couples' care groups at CITAM, Kenya. It explores the various dimensions of marital satisfaction that are influenced by such programs, including communication, conflict resolution, intimacy, and overall relationship quality. Understanding the impact of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on marital satisfaction is of utmost importance for researchers, practitioners, and religious communities alike. In conclusion, this literature review critically analyzes the impact of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on marital satisfaction, focusing on the case of married couples' care groups at CITAM, Kenya. By investigating the dimensions of marital satisfaction influenced by these programs, this review aims to create the context for the research by uncovering what has already been done and what is yet to be done. It also contextualizes the research with the theoretical framework.

Marriage Enrichment

Marriage is a significant institution that plays a crucial role in individuals' lives, societies, and cultures. It is a union that requires continual investment and nurturing to maintain a satisfying and fulfilling relationship (Ephesians 5:22-33, NIV). Over the years, researchers and practitioners have explored various approaches and interventions to enhance marital satisfaction and promote healthy relationships (Smith, 2018). One such approach of

gaining attention is spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs. These programs integrate principles of spirituality, religious beliefs, and values into the context of marriage, aiming to strengthen the bond between spouses and foster a deeper connection (Johnson, 2019).

Married couples care groups are spiritual-based marriage enrichment program conducted by CITAM. CITAM is a church in Kenya known for its commitment to supporting families and promoting strong marital relationships through the implementation of various initiatives (CITAM, Web 2022). This literature review aims to investigate the impact of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on marital satisfaction within the MCCGs at CITAM, Kenya. Understanding the effects of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on marital satisfaction is of paramount importance, as it provides insights into the potential benefits and contributions of such programs to couples' well-being and relationship dynamics (Thompson, 2020). By exploring the experiences and outcomes of couples who have participated in these programs, researchers can shed light on the mechanisms through which spiritual-based interventions influence marital satisfaction. Additionally, examining the specific context of CITAM and its care groups allows for an in-depth analysis of the unique cultural, religious, and social factors that may influence the program's effectiveness (Yusuf, 2021).

History of Marriage Enrichment

Marriage enrichment programs have a long and evolving history, with several notable milestones and influential references (Thomson, 2020). Some key programs and references that have contributed to the development of marriage enrichment include the Marriage Encounter, Couple Communication, PREP (Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program), Gottman Method Couples Therapy and PREPARE/ENRICH. Marriage Encounter was founded in the 1950s by Catholic Priest Father Gabriel Calvo, and focuses on improving communication and intimacy through weekend retreats. It has expanded globally across

various religious denominations (Calvo, 1990). The Couple Communication program was developed in the 1970s. It was a skills-based program emphasizing effective communication and conflict resolution (Miller & Wackman, 1974). Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) was created in the late 1970s, and offers comprehensive relationship education. It focuses on communication, conflict management, and long-term relationship satisfaction (Markman, 2010). Gottman Method Couples Therapy draws on extensive couple research and aims to improve friendship, conflict management, and shared meaning in relationships, offering assessments, interventions, and tools (Gottman, 2015).

The Structure of Spiritual-based Marriage Enrichment Programs

Vision

The vision of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs is to foster and strengthen marriages by integrating spiritual principles and values into the foundation of the relationship (Fischer, 2017). These programs aim to create a sacred space where couples can deepen their connection with each other and a higher power, drawing inspiration and guidance from their shared spiritual beliefs. According to Fischer, couples can experience greater love, harmony, and purpose in their relationship by nurturing the spiritual dimension of their marriage. Dollahite et al. (2017) highlights the role of religiosity in enhancing marital relationships and suggests that spiritual beliefs and practices contribute to better conflict resolution and overall marital satisfaction. Spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs embrace this vision by incorporating religious teachings, rituals, and practices to promote unity, forgiveness, and emotional healing within couples (Dollahite, 2019). The programs aspire to facilitate transformative experiences for couples, allowing them to deepen their spiritual connection and discover new levels of intimacy, compassion, and mutual support (Fincham, 2019). The programs envision offering couples a framework that combines

evidence-based strategies with spiritual insights, helping them cultivate hope, resilience, and spiritual growth within their marriage (Eisenhower, 2019).

In conclusion, spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs have a compelling vision that encompasses providing couples with transformative and spiritually grounded experiences. These programs strive to deepen the spiritual connection between partners, allowing them to embark on a journey of personal growth and self-discovery. By nurturing this connection, couples can cultivate a marriage that is deeply rooted in love, faith, and shared spiritual values. Such programs aim to facilitate profound transformations within individuals and their relationships, fostering a harmonious and meaningful bond that transcends the everyday challenges of married life. Ultimately, the vision of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs is to empower couples to create a sacred and fulfilling union that is guided by their shared spiritual beliefs and values. The current study sought to examine the vision that guides the MCCGs of CITAM as understood by the participants.

Mission

The primary purpose of marriage enrichment programs is to support and strengthen marriages by providing resources, education, and support to couples. Research conducted by Sang (2020) emphasizes the profound impact of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on couples. These programs not only strengthen commitment and resilience but also foster personal growth and unity within the partnership. Couples who participate in these programs are better prepared to tackle the complexities of married life, facing challenges with renewed purpose and optimism. The spiritual foundation of these programs enables couples to navigate adversities successfully, preserving their emotional connection and rekindling hope and purpose in their relationship (Sang, 2020). In essence, these findings highlight the transformative potential of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs in promoting thriving and harmonious relationships.

Spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs also provide opportunities for couples to be able to foster deeper friendship and emotional intimacy within the marital relationship. These programs encourage couples to explore their inner selves, connect on a deeper emotional level, and develop a greater understanding and acceptance of one another (Sang, 2020). By engaging in activities such as prayer, meditation, or reflective exercises, couples can strengthen their emotional bond and create a safe space for vulnerability and genuine connection. This deeper friendship and emotional intimacy serve as a solid foundation for a thriving and fulfilling marriage (Sang, 2020). However, it is important to recognize that the dynamics of relationships are multi-faceted and can vary greatly from couple to couple. While friendship and emotional intimacy are important, they are not the sole determinants of a thriving and fulfilling marriage. Other factors such as effective conflict resolution skills, shared values, compatible goals, and individual growth within the relationship also play critical roles. Recognizing the complexity of relationships allows us to appreciate the diversity of experiences and promotes a more comprehensive understanding of what contributes to a thriving and fulfilling marriage.

In conclusion, Spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs emphasize the importance of spirituality in enhancing marital satisfaction and overall well-being (Sang, 2020). These programs take into account the spiritual aspect of couples' lives and incorporate it into their content, providing a comprehensive approach to improving relationships. By fostering spiritual growth, promoting effective communication and connection, and offering a values-based framework, these programs empower couples to develop a spiritually enriching and fulfilling relationship (Otieno, 2019). The key objectives of these initiatives are to cultivate emotional intimacy, facilitate effective communication, and encourage mutual support between partners. They strive to create a world where couples can thrive in their relationships, experiencing emotional intimacy, effective communication, and mutual support

(Brown & Williams, 2019; Davis et al., 2021). These programs integrate traditional marital counseling techniques with spiritual teachings, rituals, and practices, emphasizing the importance of relying on a higher power for marital satisfaction (Jacobi, 2017).

Policy

Spiritual marriage enrichment programs operate by incorporating spirituality and faith-based principles into the process of strengthening and enhancing marriages. These programs often aim to deepen the spiritual connection between couples, foster emotional intimacy, and provide guidance based on religious teachings and values. Some common elements and practices found in spiritual marriage enrichment programs include spiritual Content such as spiritual teachings, scriptures, and religious traditions. They may explore topics such as prayer, meditation, forgiveness, gratitude, and the role of spirituality in marriage. Retreats and Workshops where couples can dedicate focused time to their relationship are also included in the programs. The programs may also incorporate counseling and guidance from trained spiritual leaders or counselors who can offer support and advice based on religious beliefs and principles. This can involve individual sessions with couples or group sessions with other participating couples.

Spiritual marriage enrichment programs often emphasize the importance of community and support from like-minded couples. They may facilitate group discussions, networking, and opportunities for couples to connect and share their experiences. These programs may incorporate specific rituals or practices that hold spiritual significance. Examples include couple's prayer, blessings, renewal ceremonies, or participation in religious ceremonies together. The programs may offer educational resources, books, study guides, or online materials to help couples deepen their understanding of spirituality in the context of their marriage. These resources can provide practical guidance and tools for strengthening the relationship. It is important to note that the specific operation and practices of spiritual

marriage enrichment programs can vary depending on the organization, denomination, or religious affiliation. This study therefore sought to examine how the policies at CITAM operate and how they can be improved for more effectiveness.

Spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs can be defined as structured interventions or activities that focus on integrating spirituality and religious beliefs into the context of marriage in order to strengthen and enhance couples' relationships. These programs often involve teachings, exercises, discussions, and practices that aim to deepen couples' spiritual connection, foster personal growth, and promote marital satisfaction (Thomson, 2020). The importance of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs lies in their potential to provide couples with a framework to explore and nurture their spiritual beliefs and values within the context of their relationship (Smith, 2018). These programs recognize the role of spirituality as a significant aspect of many individuals' lives and seek to leverage its power to enhance marital satisfaction and overall well-being. By integrating spiritual principles, practices, and teachings, these programs offer couples multiple opportunities (Smith, 2015).

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in marriage enrichment programs as a way to strengthen marital bonds and improve the overall well-being of couples (Otieno, 2019). Among the various approaches to marriage enrichment, one noteworthy strategy involves incorporating spirituality into the design and content of these programs. By recognizing the significance of spirituality in couples' lives, spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs strive to enhance marital satisfaction by nurturing the spiritual aspect of their relationship (Baker, 2018). The objective of this study is to examine the effects of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on marital relationships. By delving into this topic, the paper aims to shed light on the impact of integrating spirituality into marriage enrichment initiatives and how it influences the dynamics between couples.

Spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs are rooted in the belief that spirituality plays a vital role in shaping individuals' and couples' lives (Otieno, 2019). They recognize that spiritual beliefs, values, and practices can profoundly influence marital dynamics, communication, and overall relationship satisfaction. These programs often draw from various religious traditions or incorporate universal spiritual principles that resonate with participants from diverse backgrounds. One of the fundamental philosophical tenets of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs is the understanding that individuals are holistic beings with physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual dimensions (Johnson, 2019). These programs emphasize the integration of these dimensions to promote a more comprehensive and fulfilling marital experience. By nurturing the spiritual dimension, couples can find deeper meaning, purpose, and connectedness in their relationship (Chege, 2020). The primary objective of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs is to support couples in cultivating a spiritually vibrant relationship (Eisenhower, 2019). These programs aim to foster spiritual growth. Spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs encourage couples to explore and develop their spiritual beliefs and practices. By engaging in shared spiritual activities, couples can deepen their understanding of each other's spiritual perspectives, creating a foundation for mutual respect, support, and growth (Eisenhower, 2019). The program also enhances communication and connection. These programs recognize that spirituality can serve as a bridge for effective communication and emotional intimacy. By incorporating spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation, or ritual into their relationship, couples can create sacred spaces for open dialogue, vulnerability, and shared experiences (Mugambi et al., 2017). Finally, the program provides guidance and values-based framework. Spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs often offer couples a values-based framework that aligns with their spiritual beliefs. This framework helps couples navigate

challenges, make decisions, and prioritize their relationship based on shared spiritual values and principles (Kwobah, 2019).

The effectiveness of a program can be influenced by various factors such as its context, approach, and specific activities involved. Thus, it is crucial to acknowledge that the activities may differ based on the program, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive investigation. The primary objective of this research was to examine the specific activities encompassed within MCCGs. By doing so, it aimed to provide CITAM, Kenya with valuable insights that would help them prioritize and concentrate on the activities that would maximize the program's effectiveness. Consequently, the research findings will serve as a valuable resource to guide CITAM, Kenya in making informed decisions regarding which activities to emphasize for the betterment of their program.

Spiritual Activities

Spirituality in marriage plays a significant role in fostering a deep and meaningful connection between partners (Fischer, 2016). It encompasses the shared beliefs, values, and practices that couples incorporate into their relationship to nurture their spiritual growth and well-being (Holmes, 2020). Spirituality can manifest in various ways, such as engaging in prayer, meditation, or attending religious services together. It provides a framework for couples to navigate life's challenges, offering solace, guidance, and a sense of purpose (Johnson, 2019). A study by Sang (2020) showed that couples who prioritize spirituality in their marriage often experience greater satisfaction, increased emotional intimacy, and enhanced overall well-being (Sang 2020). By cultivating a spiritual bond, couples can foster a deeper understanding of each other, promote forgiveness and compassion, and strengthen their commitment to their shared journey. Spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs equip couples with tools and strategies to draw upon their spiritual resources during

challenging times, promoting resilience and growth (Holmes, 2020). Some spiritual activities that are incorporated in spiritual based marriage enrichment programs are discussed below.

Through the integration of spirituality into their marital dynamics, couples can experience a profound deepening of their commitment to one another (Sang, 2020). This mutual embrace of spirituality provides a source of strength and support, drawing from their shared faith or belief system. Commitment and resilience fostered by spiritual enrichment enables couples to navigate challenges more effectively, ensuring the preservation of their emotional connection and instilling a renewed sense of hope and purpose in their relationship (Adzovie, 2020). As couples embark on this journey of spiritual bonding, they often find solace and strength in their shared beliefs, which acts as a unifying force that helps them overcome obstacles together. By drawing from the reservoir of spiritual resources, couples can forge a stronger emotional connection, allowing them to maintain their love and support for one another, even during the most trying times (Chege, 2020).

Prayer

Engaging in prayer together as a couple can foster spiritual connection and intimacy (Kibuthu, 2017). It involves setting aside time for joint prayer, where couples communicate with a higher power, express gratitude, seek guidance, and offer blessings for their relationship. Couple's prayer allows partners to share their deepest hopes, fears, and desires, creating a sacred space for vulnerability and emotional connection. It strengthens the spiritual bond between partners and provides a source of support and comfort during challenging times. The study by Doe and Smith (2022) explored the impact of couple's prayer on marital spirituality and found that regular prayer practices were associated with increased marital satisfaction, greater emotional closeness, and improved conflict resolution skills. Couple's prayer can serve as a powerful tool in enhancing the spiritual dimension of a marriage, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose.

Scripture Reading and Reflection

Reading and reflecting on sacred texts, such as the Bible, can provide couples with spiritual guidance and inspiration (Johnson, 2021). Couples can choose passages that resonate with their relationship and discuss their meanings and relevance in their lives. Scripture reading and reflection offer opportunities for introspection, personal growth, and shared exploration of faith. It allows couples to align their values, ethics, and beliefs, promoting a deeper understanding of each other's spiritual perspectives. The research conducted by Johnson and Thompson (2021) delved into the impact of scripture reading and reflection on marital satisfaction. The findings indicated that engaging in regular scripture reading as a couple was associated with increased relationship satisfaction, improved communication, and a greater sense of spiritual connection. Scripture reading and reflection can nourish the spiritual dimension of a marriage, providing couples with wisdom and guidance as they navigate their journey together.

Spiritual Retreats

Participating in retreats designed specifically for married couples can offer opportunities for reflection, renewal, and deepening spiritual connection (Brown et al., 2020). These retreats provide a dedicated time and space for couples to step away from the demands of daily life and focus on their relationship and spiritual growth. Through workshops, discussions, and guided activities, couples can explore their values, goals, and shared vision for the future. Spiritual retreats often incorporate practices such as meditation, prayer, and self-reflection, which allow couples to reconnect with their inner selves and with each other on a deeper level. Brown and Wilson (2020) conducted a qualitative study on couple's retreats, highlighting the transformative power of these experiences. The research revealed that retreats facilitated personal and relational growth, increased marital satisfaction, and

strengthened spiritual connections. Spiritual retreats provide couples with an immersive and transformative experience that can revitalize their marriage and deepen their spiritual bond.

Rituals and Ceremonies

Incorporating spiritual rituals and ceremonies, such as blessings or vow renewals, into marriage enrichment programs can enhance the sacredness and meaning of the marital bond (Lee, 2019). These rituals create moments of significance and symbolism, reinforcing the spiritual connection between partners. Rituals can serve as reminders of shared values, commitments, and the sacred nature of the marital union. By engaging in rituals and ceremonies together, couples strengthen their sense of identity as a couple and infuse their relationship with deeper meaning and purpose. Lee and Adams (2019) explored the role of sacred rituals in marriage through a qualitative exploration. The study emphasized that rituals fostered emotional closeness, increased marital satisfaction, and provided couples with a sense of stability and security. Incorporating rituals and ceremonies into marriage enrichment programs can enrich the spiritual dimension of a relationship, promoting a sense of unity and transcendence beyond the mundane aspects of everyday life.

Meditation and Mindfulness

Practicing meditation and mindfulness exercises together can promote spiritual awareness, presence, and emotional well-being within the marital relationship (Garcia, 2018). Couples can engage in guided meditation sessions, mindfulness walks, or breath-work exercises, cultivating a sense of calm, clarity, and centeredness. Meditation and mindfulness allow couples to deepen their connection with themselves and with each other, fostering empathy, compassion, and a greater capacity for understanding. By cultivating mindfulness, couples can navigate conflicts with greater awareness and non-reactivity, promoting healthier communication patterns and conflict resolution. Garcia and Martinez (2018) investigated the role of meditation and mindfulness in enhancing marital satisfaction. The research

demonstrated that couples who practiced meditation together reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction, emotional intimacy, and overall well-being. Incorporating meditation and mindfulness practices into marriage enrichment programs can enhance the spiritual dimension of the relationship, promoting a deeper sense of presence, peace, and interconnectedness.

Peer Mentorship

Couples in marriage enrichment programs offer support to each other in a peer mentorship relationship while those who are younger in marriage learn from the more experienced ones. Those that are encountering relationship challenges also find a safe space among other members for mentorship and guidance (Baker et al., 2022). Moreover, group leaders or trained counselors may provide individual or couples counseling to address specific issues and provide professional guidance (Hill & Evans, 2020). Social activities, such as dinners, picnics, game nights, or outings, are often organized by marriage care groups to foster a sense of community and camaraderie among couples (Gonzalez & Lee, 2018). These activities create opportunities for couples to connect with others, establish friendships, and enjoy shared experiences (Turner & Reed, 2021). Marriage care groups frequently hold regular gatherings where couples assemble to discuss a range of topics pertaining to marriage and family life (Smith & Johnson, 2018). These meetings create avenues for sharing personal experiences, seeking advice, and learning from one another (Jones et al., 2019).

Marriage care groups strive to provide a supportive community for couples, offering them resources, guidance, and a safe space to navigate the challenges and joys of married life (Johnson et al., 2022). By incorporating various mentorship activities and programs, these groups contribute to the overall well-being and strengthening of marital relationships by strengthening commitment and resilience of participants. Marriages often face various challenges and difficulties throughout their journey. Spiritual-based marriage enrichment

programs recognize the potential of spiritual beliefs and practices to provide couples with a sense of grounding, stability, and resilience in the face of adversity (Miller et al., 2021). Through a blend of peer mentorship, professional guidance, social activities, and consistent gatherings, these programs foster an inclusive and nurturing environment that facilitates the strengthening of couples' relationships. A central tenet of these programs is the acknowledgment of the vital role played by community and interpersonal connections in promoting the well-being of marriages. The researcher's curiosity was specifically directed towards exploring the mentorship activities within the context of MCCGS and their potential impact on the participating couples' marriages. By conducting this inquiry, the researcher aimed to unravel the intricate influence of mentorship on the dynamics of couples' relationships within the framework of MCCGS.

The community and interpersonal connections that happen in marriage enrichment programs also serve an accountability purpose. The programs offer couples the opportunity to identify and cultivate shared meaning and purpose in their relationship alongside other couples. The programs help couples align their values, goals, and purpose, fostering a sense of shared meaning that goes beyond individual aspirations (Fischer, 2016). By exploring their spiritual beliefs and values together, couples can establish a common vision for their marriage and create a framework that guides their decisions, actions, and aspirations. This shared sense of purpose provides a foundation for accountability, mutual support, growth, and fulfillment within the program community relationship.

Training and Teaching

Marriage enrichment programs involve team building activities that foster togetherness that creates space for peer marital guidance and teaching (Martin, 2019). Training activities may involve participation in workshops and seminars focusing on various subjects, including effective communication, conflict resolution, intimacy, parenting, and

financial management, among other aspects relevant to married life (Miller, 2020). These events provide education and practical tools for enhancing marital relationships (Johnson, 2021). To provide couples with an opportunity to learn away from the pressures of daily life, marriage care groups may organize retreats or getaways (Harris, 2017). These retreats frequently involve activities such as couples' training in topical issues, counseling sessions, relaxation exercises, relationship-building exercises, and opportunities for introspection and revitalization (Martin, 2019).

Training in aspects such as effective communication and conflict resolution happen during group meetings. Spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs recognize the significance of these skills and provide couples with tools and strategies rooted in spiritual principles to improve their communication and conflict resolution abilities. These programs often emphasize active listening, empathy, forgiveness, and nonviolent communication techniques (Clark, 2017). By integrating these principles into their interactions, couples can establish open and honest lines of communication, resolve conflicts constructively, and build a stronger foundation of trust and understanding (Piechotta, 2022). It is important to note, however, that every relationship is unique, and the application of these principles may vary depending on individual circumstances and dynamics. Nonetheless, by embracing open communication, constructive conflict resolution, and trust-building, couples can enhance their chances of cultivating a strong and fulfilling relationship.

According to Fischer (2016), spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs place significant importance on teaching and training for personal growth, self-reflection, and self-improvement. During group meetings, participants learn crucial disciplines such as prayer, meditation, and self-exploration. Practicing these disciplines, enable couples to augment their personal well-being while simultaneously nurturing the growth and development of their relationship. As a result, a more gratifying and harmonious marital relationship can be

attained (Robert, 2019). However, while the emphasis on personal growth and self-reflection is undoubtedly beneficial, it is necessary to consider the subjective nature of spirituality and its compatibility with individual beliefs and values (Smith, 2020). Some individuals may find it challenging to engage in practices that are not aligned with their personal spiritual or religious convictions, which could hinder their ability to fully participate in these programs. There is therefore need to evaluate the impact of such programs, such as the MCCGs of CITAM, in consideration of the subjective nature of spirituality.

Examples of Spiritual Based Marriage Enrichment Programs

Retrouvaille

According to the website of Retrouvaille International, the program provides support for troubled marriages (Retrouvaille, 2022). It embraces a Catholic Christian viewpoint and provides a weekend retreat coupled with subsequent sessions after the retreat. The primary objective of the program is to enhance communication, strengthen emotional connections, and nurture spiritual development within the framework of marriage. The program designed to assist couples in healing and revitalizing their relationships. It offers a supportive and secure environment where couples can acquire new tools and strategies to enhance their communication, strengthen their bond, and restore trust.

Retrouvaille program is rooted in the Catholic faith but welcomes couples of all religious backgrounds. It is led by volunteer couples who have personally faced and successfully overcome marital challenges. These couples act as mentors and facilitators, sharing their own experiences and providing guidance to participants. Typically, the program begins with a weekend retreat followed by a series of post-weekend sessions (Retrouvaille, Web 2022). During the retreat, couples have an opportunity to reflect on their relationship, identify areas of conflict, and acquire effective communication techniques. The post-weekend sessions extend the work initiated during the retreat, offering ongoing support and guidance

to help couples implement the tools they have learned and maintain positive changes in their relationship. The program focuses on assisting couples in resolving common issues such as breakdowns in communication, conflicts, infidelity, and emotional distance. It places emphasis on open and honest communication, forgiveness, and the rebuilding of trust. The program provides a confidential and non-judgmental space where couples can address their concerns and work towards healing and renewal (Retrouvaille International, 2022)

Marriage Ministries International

Another example is Marriage Ministries International (MMI). According to the website of MMI, this organization is dedicated to enriching marriages through a spiritual foundation, providing a range of programs and resources designed to support couples (Marriage Enrichment Ministries, 2022). These offerings include weekend retreats, workshops, and online courses. By combining spiritual principles, teachings from the Bible, and practical communication tools, MMI's programs strive to enhance relationships and foster growth within marriages. There is limited knowledge that the programs have been empirically evaluated concerning their effectiveness (Marriage Ministries International, 2022.). The current research sought to establish scientifically, the effectiveness of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs offered in CITAM, Kenya and commonly referred to as MCCGs. There are limited studies specifically investigating the effectiveness of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs, particularly MCCGs, within the context of CITAM, Kenya. By focusing on MCCGs within the specific context of CITAM, Kenya, the researcher will contribute to the body of knowledge regarding spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs, adding valuable insights and potentially informing the development and implementation of similar programs in other cultural and religious contexts.

Married Couple Care Groups

MCCGs are anchored in CITAM Strategic Plan 2023-2027 under the Care objective (CITAM, 2022). The care groups are administered through the Family Care and Enrichment Ministry (FaCE), which aims to offer support to families as a whole and specifically focus on couples. The intended results of this goal are the cultivation of families rooted in faith, flourishing families, and strong Christian households. To accomplish this objective, married couples are encouraged to join MCCGs, which entail regular gatherings for couples within the same group to explore strategies for enhancing their marriages. This initiative facilitates continuous relational growth within the CITAM married community. Discipleship and mentorship are core functions of MCCGs. These strategies aim to provide marital care to congregants and promote marital bliss and family cohesion. CITAM church places doctrinal importance on the strengthening of marriage and adheres to a no divorce stance. However, as a representative of denominations that uphold the continuity of marriage, the failure of marriages within their congregation would likely cause distress among individuals. To bridge the gap in improving marital bliss among married congregants and strengthening families, CITAM has established Married Couples Care Groups (MCCGs). The MCCGs serve as a platform for couples to learn from each other and enhance their marital satisfaction. However, it is essential to determine whether CITAM has a guiding policy for the MCCGs and assess their impact on marital satisfaction. The research findings can potentially enhance the effectiveness of the MCCGs and expand their reach within and beyond the CITAM congregation.

Marital Satisfaction

Psychological research has highlighted the significance of marital satisfaction as a fundamental concept related to an individual's subjective assessment of their relationship with their spouse (Fahimdanesh et al., 2020). Marital satisfaction serves as a crucial indicator of

the overall well-being and quality of a marriage, encompassing various factors such as communication, emotional connection, and conflict resolution (Clark, 2017). Understanding and measuring marital satisfaction is essential for gaining insights into the dynamics of marital relationships and identifying areas that require attention or intervention (Davoodvandi et al, 2018). Researchers such as Gottman have utilized various measures and methodologies to investigate factors influencing marital satisfaction and explore effective strategies for enhancing it. By examining the multidimensional nature of marital satisfaction, researchers aim to contribute to the development of interventions and programs that promote healthier and more fulfilling marriages (Gottman, 2016; Clark, 2017; Davoodvandi, 2018).

Assessing marital satisfaction involves examining various indicators that offer valuable insights into the quality of a marital relationship. Several commonly utilized indicators include effective communication, conflict resolution skills, emotional intimacy, sexual satisfaction, couple friendship, and relationship equity (Gottman, 2015; Mark et al., 2017). Effective communication is vital for establishing a satisfying marital relationship. Positive and open communication fosters better understanding, conflict resolution, and overall satisfaction. Couples who possess the ability to resolve conflicts constructively and without escalation tend to experience higher levels of marital satisfaction (Gottman, 2015). Emotional intimacy, which pertains to the depth and quality of emotional connection between partners, plays a significant role in marital satisfaction. Sharing thoughts, feelings, and experiences fosters emotional intimacy and is strongly associated with marital satisfaction (Mutunga, 2020). A fulfilling and mutually satisfying sexual relationship is linked to higher levels of marital satisfaction. The commitment to the relationship and the willingness to invest time and effort are important indicators of marital satisfaction. Strong commitment contributes to relationship stability and satisfaction. Perceived fairness and equality in the division of roles, responsibilities, and decision-making contribute to marital satisfaction.

When partners perceive their relationship as fair, satisfaction levels tend to be higher (Wazir et al., 2020).

The present study examined the role of couple friendship and conflict management as key factors influencing marital satisfaction, drawing upon the conceptual framework proposed by Gottman. Within Gottman's Sound Relationship House theory, couple friendship and conflict management are considered foundational elements that shape the overall quality of a couple's relationship. By investigating these constructs, the study aimed to shed light on their significance in marital relationships, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of factors influencing overall marital satisfaction (Gottman, 2017).

Couple Friendship

According to a study by Reis (2019), one significant factor that was found to contribute to marital satisfaction is the quality of couple friendship. Couple friendship refers to the emotional bond, companionship, and mutual support between partners within a marriage (Reis, 2019). It encompasses the couple's ability to enjoy each other's company, engage in shared activities, and provide emotional support to one another. Research has consistently shown a positive association between couple friendship and marital satisfaction (Advovie, 2020). One study found that couples who reported higher levels of friendship within their relationship also reported higher levels of overall marital satisfaction. It also established that couple friendship was a strong predictor of marital satisfaction over time (Lewis et al., 2017).

The quality of couple friendship can influence various aspects of marital satisfaction. For example, couple friendship has been found to enhance communication patterns, promote conflict resolution skills, and foster intimacy within the relationship (Gottman, 2015). Additionally, couples who perceive their partner as their best friend tend to have higher levels of relationship satisfaction and commitment (Hendrick, 2016). Investing in and nurturing

couple friendship can have significant benefits for marital satisfaction. Couples can enhance their friendship by engaging in shared hobbies, spending quality time together, and expressing appreciation and support for one another (Reis & Patrick, 2019).

In conclusion, couple friendship plays a vital role in determining marital satisfaction. The emotional bond, companionship, and mutual support between partners within a marriage contribute to overall relationship satisfaction and longevity. Couples can enhance their marital satisfaction by prioritizing and cultivating a strong and supportive friendship within their relationship source. However, while couple friendship can contribute to marital satisfaction, it is crucial to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of relationships and consider the various factors that influence satisfaction. Incorporating a more nuanced understanding of individual differences, potential challenges, and alternative factors that contribute to relationship satisfaction would enrich the broaden knowledge in this area.

Conflict Management

While conflicts are inevitable in any relationship, the way couples manage and resolve those conflicts can significantly impact marital satisfaction (Smith, 2021). Effective conflict management techniques facilitate understanding, empathy, and compromise, fostering a stronger and more satisfying marital bond (Davis, 2015). Research has consistently demonstrated a significant association between conflict management styles and marital satisfaction. For instance, studies by Johnson (2019) and Smith et al. (2021) have found that couples who utilize more constructive conflict management strategies, such as compromise and collaboration, tend to report higher levels of marital satisfaction. These styles promote effective communication, empathy, and understanding, fostering a sense of emotional connection and intimacy between partners.

On the other hand, couples who rely on destructive conflict management styles, such as avoidance, competition, and accommodation, often experience lower levels of marital

satisfaction (Gottman, 2020; Miller, 2018). These approaches can lead to increased resentment, unresolved conflicts, and a lack of emotional support, ultimately straining the marital bond. Moreover, effective communication plays a crucial role in conflict management and marital satisfaction. Couples who engage in active listening, express their emotions and needs assertively, and engage in constructive dialogue are more likely to resolve conflicts successfully and experience higher levels of marital satisfaction (Markman et al., 2017). Open and honest communication fosters mutual understanding, empathy, and the ability to find solutions that satisfy both partners (Sang, 2020).

In conclusion, conflict management is a vital indicator of marital satisfaction, as it directly influences the quality of a couple's relationship (Carlson et al., 2020). Couples who employ constructive conflict management strategies and prioritize effective communication are more likely to experience higher levels of marital satisfaction (Otieno, 2020). Conversely, relying on destructive conflict management styles can lead to dissatisfaction and relationship distress. Therefore, developing and utilizing healthy conflict management skills can enhance marital satisfaction and contribute to a happier and more fulfilling marriage (Wanja, 2021). However, marital satisfaction could be multi-faceted. While conflict management is undoubtedly an essential factor in marital satisfaction (Muncy, 2022). Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that there are other elements that contribute to a couple's overall relationship quality. These may include factors such as compatibility, emotional intimacy, trust, and shared values (Keyhandoost, 2017). It is also important to note that the relationship between conflict management and marital satisfaction is likely bidirectional. Marital satisfaction can also influence conflict management styles. Finally, it is worth mentioning that conflict management styles and preferences may vary among couples. Some individuals may naturally be more conflict-avoidant, while others may be more assertive or confrontational.

Empirical Literature Review

Married couples' care groups have been suggested to contribute to marital satisfaction, although empirical testing of this relationship is limited (Jacobi, 2017). These groups facilitate the enhancement of couples' friendship by providing opportunities to learn and develop healthy relationships, engage in discussions about relevant issues, observe other marriages, and receive mentorship and guidance on cultivating friendships (Holmes, 2020). Conflict management, particularly for newlyweds, is addressed through mentorship provided by older couples who offer guidance on conflict resolution strategies (Muncy, 2022). A study by Piechota found that training and mentorship are more effective in facilitating learning compared to counseling and lecture-style seminars (Piechotta, 2022). In order to foster marital growth and satisfaction, these groups address daily challenges on a weekly or fortnightly basis. Marriages characterized by fatigue, monotony, emptiness, and dullness have been recommended to participate in these marriage growth groups. By participating in these groups, couples can improve their communication skills and experience increased closeness and joy (Piechota et al., 2022). The programs present a multitude of advantages to couples aiming to reinforce their bond and elevate their overall marital contentment.

These programs typically furnish instruction, assistance, and direction to assist couples in cultivating more robust communication abilities, resolving conflicts, and fostering a deeper emotional attachment. Enhanced communication skills is a critical benefit of marriage enrichment programs (Imhoff, 2019). Research shows that relationship enhancement programs offer benefits to couples (Jacobi, 2017; Javadivala et al., 2021; Hawkins, 2016; Holmes, 2020; Thomson, 2022). However, program effectiveness varies based on factors like content, format, and individual circumstances. Therefore, it is important to study the impact of a spiritual-based marriage enrichment program in Kenya. A study conducted by Kibuthu (2017) explored the effect of religiosity on marital satisfaction among

married couples at CITAM assemblies. The study found that, praying, fasting, reading scriptures, serving together in church brought couples together and had a significant influence on marital satisfaction. This study also noted that belonging to a faith community where there was couple counselling had a positive impact on marriages. This was due to the fact that couples were given an opportunity to share challenges and receive encouragement from fellow Christians and church leaders (Kibuthu, 2017). However, the research did not explore the impact of the programs on marital satisfaction constructs of couple friendship and conflict management which this research sought to establish.

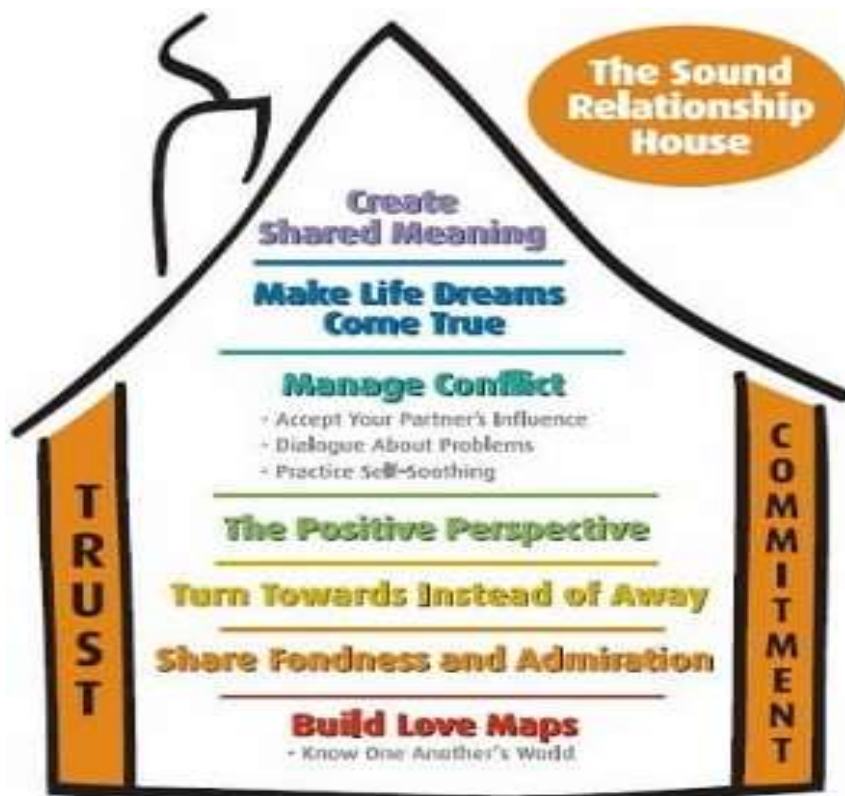
Theoretical Framework

In research, a theoretical framework provides a conceptual foundation for studying a particular topic. It helps researchers organize their thoughts, define key variables, and establish relationships between different concepts. It serves as a fundamental basis for investigating a specific subject matter. It also plays a crucial role in assisting researchers in structuring their ideas, determining essential variables, and establishing connections between various concepts (Gibson, 2020). This framework enables researchers to place their study within the existing body of knowledge and build upon previous research, thereby contributing to the advancement of the field (Gibson, 2020; O'Connor, 2021). Additionally, a theoretical framework aids in narrowing down the focus of the research by highlighting the key concepts and variables that are relevant to the study's objectives (O'Connor, 2021). By providing a systematic structure, the framework helps researchers to develop hypotheses, formulate research questions, and select appropriate methodologies and data analysis techniques (Gibson, 2020). Overall, the utilization of a theoretical framework enhances the rigor and clarity of research, facilitating a comprehensive and systematic approach to investigating complex phenomena (O'Connor, 2021).

Gottman's Sound Relationship House Theory

This study utilized Gottman's theory of the Sound Relationship House model, a widely used theory in marriage enrichment programs (Navarra et al., 2016). The Gottman Sound Relationship House is a theoretical framework developed by Dr. John Gottman and his colleagues to understand the components of healthy relationships. Source? Developed in 1994, the theory posits that a healthy and sound relationship is based on two fundamental principles. Firstly, partners should treat each other like good friends, encompassing respect, affection, empathy, and positivity. Secondly, conflicts should be managed in positive and gentle ways. It is essential to maintain a balance between positive and negative behaviors, with positive behaviors outweighing negative behaviors in a ratio of 5:1. This balance is crucial for promoting and sustaining marital satisfaction among couples (Gottman & Gottman, 2017; Navarra et al., 2016). The Sound Relationship House comprises seven levels: building love maps, sharing fondness and admiration, turning towards instead of away, maintaining a positive perspective towards each other, managing conflict, making life dreams come true, and creating shared meaning. These levels are further condensed into three components: the friendship system, the conflict system, and the meaning system (Navarra et al., 2016). The theory was applicable in marriage enrichment programs as it provides guidance for couples to develop healthier relationships, ultimately leading to marital bliss and satisfaction.

Figure 1: *The Sound Relationship House theory*



Source: Adopted from (Gottman & Gottman, 2017)

The first three levels in the Sound Relationship House Theory deal with couple friendship, specifically in building love maps by getting to know each other better in terms of likes and dislikes, aspirations and dreams (Gottman & Gottman, 2017; Navarra et al., 2016). This process creates a sense of being understood and connected. However, when this stage is not functioning properly, emotional distance and feelings of being uncared for can arise. Sharing fondness and admiration occurs when spouses appreciate and notice each other, establishing affection and respect, which in turn makes them feel valued and cared for. On the other hand, partners develop contempt when they are attacked and criticized (Davoodvandi et al., 2018; Gottman & Gottman, 2017; Navarra et al., 2016). The attempt of marriage partners to reach out and connect with each other demonstrates intimacy, described as "turning towards" instead of turning away. This stage involves building the emotional account by creating opportunities to reconnect. If these moments are declined or responded to

negatively, the partner may withdraw (Davoodvandi et al., 2018; Gottman & Gottman, 2017; Navarra et al., 2016).

The fifth level of the Sound House Relationship Theory is "Manage Conflict," which explains how couples resolve conflicts. Effective conflict management in this theory involves accepting the partner's influence, engaging in dialogue about issues, and practicing self-soothing. It emphasizes that conflicts are normal, natural, and positive aspects of a healthy relationship. Couples who can manage conflicts amicably are gentle towards each other and avoid blaming. Constructive conflict management also involve being able to accept influence, remain calm, and repair damage (Gottman, 2017).

The Sound Relationship House Theory draws from the social exchange theory developed by George Homans in 1958, which suggests that individuals assess the risks and benefits of social relationships, and love is a two-way exchange (Redmond, 2015). The balance between the rewards obtained from the relationship and the costs incurred guides the development, maintenance, and exchange in marital relationships. Rewards include pleasure, gratification, and satisfaction, while costs are factors that hinder or inhibit behavioral sequences. The success of new behaviors learned from marriage enrichment programs depends on whether the consequences are more rewarding and if maladaptive behaviors and underlying causes have been addressed by program facilitators (Junius, 2020; Kariuki, 2017). The principles of the Sound Relationship House Theory have been applied to study the effects of premarital counseling on marital success and stability. Gottman couple therapy has effectively improved marital adjustment and couple intimacy, enhancing marital satisfaction in areas such as trust, commitment, compromise, emotional connection, and quality of sexual relationship. It has also assisted first-time couples in transitioning to parenthood without compromising their marital satisfaction (Davoodvandi et al., 2018; Navarra et al., 2016; Nikounejad & Naderi, 2016).

In this study, the independent variable was marriage couples' care groups (MCCGs), while marital satisfaction was the dependent variable. The underlying logic was to determine if marriage enrichment programs with clear concepts and comprehensive utilization of the theory's contents lead to a positive impact on couple friendship and conflict management. Furthermore, the study explored whether this knowledge ultimately leads to marital satisfaction and an overall increase in the percentage of couples with marital satisfaction (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

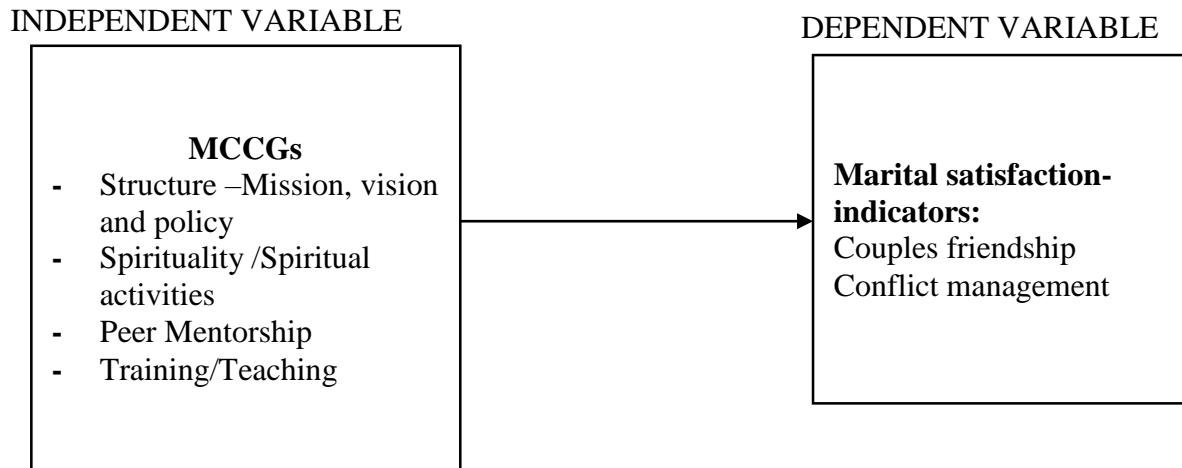
Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework in research is a comprehensive and systematic structure that establishes a theoretical basis, identifies key variables, and outlines their relationships (Johnson, 2022). According to the American Psychological Association (APA, 2020), a conceptual framework serves as a foundation for understanding and analyzing complex phenomena or problems. By utilizing a conceptual framework, researchers are able to organize and integrate existing theories, concepts, and empirical evidence, which enhances the rigor and coherence of their research endeavors (Johnson, 2022). The conceptual framework helps researchers identify knowledge gaps, formulate hypotheses, and choose research methods (APA, 2020; Johnson, 2022). Therefore, the utilization of a conceptual framework is crucial in research as it contributes to the overall quality and advancement of scientific knowledge in various disciplines.

According to the conceptual framework utilized in this study, the independent variable was the spiritual based marriage enrichment programs offered in CITAM commonly referred to as Married Couples Care Groups (MCCGs). The evaluation of the program focused on its concept, vision, activities covered, and theology. Marital satisfaction served as the dependent variable, with couple friendship and conflict management. The literature review suggested that demographic factors, including gender, length of marriage, and the

presence or absence of children, were anticipated to exert a moderating effect on marital satisfaction, though this was not investigated in the current study.

Figure 2: *Conceptual Framework*



Source: Author (2023)

Synthesis of Literature Gaps

The existing literature extensively examined the empirical evidence demonstrating the effects of marriage enrichment programs on marital relationships. However, recent scholars suggests that marriage enrichment programs may have a positive influence on marital satisfaction (Hawkins, 2016; Holmes, 2020; Jacobi, 2017; Javadivala et al., 2021; Thomson, 2022). Nevertheless, the majority of studies have been conducted in Western countries, with a predominant focus on research conducted in the United States. These studies are based on Western models, and their applicability in non-Western contexts remains uncertain. Limited research has been conducted outside the Western world. Furthermore, the majority of studies have primarily examined non-spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the impact of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs in a Kenyan context, a case study of the MCCGs of CITAM, utilizing a mixed methods approach. Effectiveness of the MCCGs is not validated by data, hence the case for this study. It is also important to consider the diverse range of beliefs and values within couples and to critically

evaluate the empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of these programs in fostering shared meaning, purpose, and overall relationship satisfaction, hence the importance of the current study of MCCGs of CITAM.

Chapter Summary

The literature review chapter has provided a comprehensive analysis of the impact of spiritual-based marriage enrichment programs on marital satisfaction, with a focus on couple friendship and conflict management. By examining relevant studies and theories, as well as conducting a case study on CITAM in Kenya, this review contributes to the existing knowledge and understanding of the subject. The findings highlight the potential benefits of incorporating spirituality into marriage enrichment programs and offer insights for further research and program development in this field. The next chapter looks in the methodology employed in this study.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research methodology employed in the study. It discusses the research design, target population, sample selection, and sampling technique. Additionally, it describes the type of data obtained and the methods used for data collection. The chapter also explains the concepts of validity, reliability, and instrument pretesting. Furthermore, it covers the processes of data collection, data analysis, data presentation, and ethical considerations.

Research Paradigm

The research adopted pragmatism philosophy that was inductive and based on understanding human experience (Orman, 2016). Proponents of pragmatism argue that what is of practical concern in any scientific inquiry is the research problem and as such, the singular or combination of methods that leads to the best solution is what counts (Shah et al., 2018). They therefore emphasize the balancing of methodological rigor with practical relevance (Da Silva et al., 2018; Hafsa, 2019). This study sought to understand the impact of participation in married couple care groups on marital satisfaction. The main reason for adopting a pragmatist position in this study was to allow the researcher to have a pluralistic stance of gathering data in order to best answer the research questions. This study tried to define terms by their application to human experience in order to address problems in their real world.

Research Design

Research design is concerned with the plans and procedures that guide the research (Dawadi et al., 2021; Mukherjee, 2017). It shapes the decisions related to sampling design, type of data, data collection methods, research procedures and data analysis plans (Okesina,

2020). The purpose of research design is essentially to guide the process of translating the problem of the study into data that when processed, provide answers to specific questions. (Asenahabi, 2019; Schoonenboom et al., 2018). This study considered mixed method design as having great merit in pursuing the answers to the research questions. Therefore, the researcher used both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data tends to be open-ended without predetermined responses while quantitative data usually includes closed-ended responses such as found on questionnaires (Campbell et al., 2020; Pluye et al., 2018).

The basic persuasion of mixed methods design is the combination of multiple methods involving the gathering and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data into a single unified whole (Hafsa, 2019), which is seen as complementary (Coy, 2019; Kelle et al., 2019). This harmonizes conclusions drawn from scientific enquiries, ensuring that all perspectives regarding the full clarification of the phenomenon. The researcher viewed mixed method approach as the appropriate choice for the present research, because of the expected comprehensiveness of the study the creative integration of methodologies in the search for answers to research questions. According to Hafsa (2019), mixed-methods research inherently offsets the limitations of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, thereby yielding more valid and reliable research output. Adopting a pluralistic view of inquiry into effectiveness of marriage care groups on marital satisfaction is expected to yield a holistic understanding of the effectiveness of the care groups in impacting marriage relationships positively.

The study utilized a convergent parallel mixed methods design. The converging findings were used to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This design allows researchers to draw upon the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, providing a more holistic and robust perspective on the research question at hand. In this design, data are collected concurrently and analyzed separately, followed by a

comparison and integration of the findings. The quantitative component involved gathering empirical data on marital satisfaction, while the qualitative component involved gathering in-depth information about MCCGs' policies, mission, participants, personal experiences, and perceptions. The study employed a cross-sectional design, gathering data at a specific point in time, primarily due to its cost-effectiveness and time efficiency (Creswell, 2018).

Quantitative data allow for generalizability and statistical inference. The convergent parallel research design has several advantages. Firstly, it allows researchers to address complex research questions that require both qualitative and quantitative data. By employing mixed methods, researchers can explore the depth and breadth of a phenomenon more comprehensively. Secondly, the design helps researchers to overcome the limitations of using a single method by complementing the weaknesses of one method with the strengths of the other. This enhances the overall validity and reliability of the research findings. Lastly, the design promotes triangulation. According to Yin (2017), when qualitative and quantitative findings come together, they can offer a stronger and more intricate comprehension of the research problem. Employing this particular design enables researchers to acquire a more holistic understanding of intricate research inquiries and bolster the credibility and dependability of their findings (Creswell, 2018).

Study Population

The population was ideally supposed to be all the members of CITAM attending MCCGs but the programme is not established uniformly among all CITAM churches. The researcher consulted CITAM leadership to get information about the establishment of MCCGs in the various assemblies. Three assemblies were purposively selected according to the level of establishment of the MCCGs programme. At the time of the research, CITAM Woodley had 35 MCCGs; CITAM Thika Road had 30, and CITAM Clay City had 20. The target population within this subset of the CITAM churches consisted of a total of 1000

participants of MCCGs in the selected assemblies. This population included both the members and the group leaders including the FaCE ministry leaders at these assemblies. The study included couples living together, regardless of the duration of their marriage. Each partner in the couples completed the questionnaire.

Sample Size

The sample size refers to the proportion of the target population included in the study to draw conclusions about the entire population (Etikan & Babatope, 2019). It is necessary for the sample size to be both adequate and representative to generalize the results to the larger population (Taherdoost, 2016). In cases where data collection from the entire population is impractical or unfeasible, a sample size is determined using a formula to estimate an adequate sample (Martinez-Mesa et al., 2016). For this study, the sample size was calculated using the Yamane formula (Israel, 2003), resulting in a sample size of 286 participants worked out as below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} = \frac{1000}{1 + 1000(.05)^2} = 286$$

Where n represent the sample size, N the total population and e the precision of .05. This is predicted to be a representative sample from the population. The distribution of the sample between the churches was done using stratified proportionate sampling as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Sampling Matrix

CITAM Assemblies Proportion	Sample
CITAM Thika Road	74
CITAM Clay City	69
CITAM Woodley	143
Total	286

Sampling Method

Consecutive sampling, also referred to as sequential or sampling, was utilized in this study (Sharma, 2017). This non-probability sampling technique involves selecting participants based on their availability and accessibility throughout the data collection phase. In this particular investigation, individuals who were members or leaders of MCCGs were approached with a questionnaire as they became available. This sampling method was chosen due to the impracticality and infeasibility of obtaining a random or representative sample from a larger population. Participants were recruited in the order they completed the questionnaire until the desired sample size was attained. The researcher found this method to be convenient, efficient, and cost-effective, allowing for swift recruitment without the need for extensive sampling strategies. This sampling technique ensures that every member of the population has an equal opportunity to be chosen as a representative (Sharma, 2017). However, it is important to note that consecutive sampling is susceptible to bias. To address this concern, the researcher collected data in three distinct assemblies. Additionally, caution was exercised when interpreting the findings, as they may not be generalizable to the entire population of interest.

Types of Data

Determination of data types is crucial in research (Paterson & Leung, 2016). There are two main types of data: primary and secondary data. For this study, the researcher collected primary data, which involved gathering original data directly from the participants to achieve the study's objectives. The researcher utilized the following databases for literature search: EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, ProQuest, Sage, APA, Wiley Online Library, and Thesis database. The research focused on collecting both quantitative and qualitative data on marital satisfaction, specifically regarding couple friendship and conflict management.

Qualitative data were also collected on the marital changes experienced by couples after joining the Married Couples' Care Groups (MCCGs) and on the MCCGs' policy.

Research Procedures

In terms of data collection procedures, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was adopted in line with a mixed-methods research design (Kimmons, 2022). The researcher followed a series of steps, including obtaining approval from Pan Africa Christian University, applying for a research license from the National Commission of Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), seeking permission from the deputy bishop of CITAM, and obtaining permission from senior pastors of selected assemblies for data collection. Semi-structured questionnaires were used as the research instrument, containing sections for both quantitative and qualitative data. Some questionnaires were administered physically, while others were administered online through the Kobo Toolbox software platform. The distribution and follow-up of the questionnaires were coordinated by the FaCE leaders in the respective assemblies. To ensure confidentiality, participants were identified with codes instead of their names, and a confidentiality clause was included in the questionnaire.

Data Collection Methods

A structured questionnaire is a set of questions and items that allow research participants to provide their responses in writing or by checking boxes, either on paper or online (Young, 2016). This study divided the questionnaire into five sections (Appendix A). The first section included questions about demographic factors like age, gender, length of marriage, ethnicity, presence or absence of children, and the person who influenced their participation in Married Couples' Care Groups. The second section used a Likert scale adapted from Gottman's Sound Relationship House questionnaire to measure marital satisfaction in terms of couple friendship and conflict management (Gottman, 2014). The

third section contained open-ended questions about marital changes since joining the Married Couples' Care group. The fourth and fifth sections gathered information from MCCG and FaCE leaders about the group's vision, mission, activities, and any observed marital changes among the couples.

The Likert scale, a widely used psychometric tool in psychology, is designed to assess respondents' agreement levels on a 5-point scale, ranging from "not at all" to "all the time." Each statement within the scale represents a specific attribute, contributing to an underlying construct when considered alongside related statements. Its popularity stems from the high reliability it offers and the ease of use experienced by participants. However, it is important to note that Likert scales are not immune to potential biases, particularly social desirability bias, where respondents may provide answers they perceive as socially desirable rather than reflecting their true feelings (Joshi et al., 2015). In the present study, Section A focused on exploring couple friendship, while Section B delved into the topic of conflict management. By utilizing the Likert scale in these sections, researcher was able to comprehensively examine these aspects within the research domain.

Instrument Pre-testing

The pre-test helped evaluate the suitability of the instruments and make necessary modifications for generating satisfactory data. Instrument pre-testing is done before the actual administration of the research tools. The tools are administered on a small sample of respondents to evaluate the suitability of the data collection instruments to yield the desired data towards the achievement of the research objectives (Edlund & Nichols, 2019). This initial trial is critical because it enables researchers to have an adequate impression of the practical issues that need to be taken into consideration in the data collection process besides generating data for instrument validity and reliability analysis. The instruments were tested using 5 participants of MCCGs from a CITAM Assembly that was not part of the target population.

Pretesting the instrument enabled the researcher to determine whether participants understood the questions asked and provide responses with ease. Upon the pre-test, the instruments modified to generate satisfactory data to answer the research questions.

Instrument Validity

Instrument validity concerns the ability of a research tool to measure what is intended (De Souza et al., 2017). Therefore, determination of instrument validity is an important procedure in any research. The degree to which questionnaires and discussion guides as research tools embody the underlying construct should be evaluated and measures taken to ensure that required validity expectations are met (Taherdoost, 2016). Four types of validity are relevant in research and these are: criterion validity, content validity, construct validity and face validity. Criterion validity is concerned about the instrument's consistency with previously validated tools. This is typically achieved by comparing the validity outcomes of the instrument with widely accepted practice tools. Content validity is concerned with the scrutiny of item content to ascertain whether the concepts under investigation are really the ones being measured (Ghazali, 2016).

Construct validity addresses the practical relationship between two or more theoretically related constructs (Bhattacharyya et al., 2017). Face validity is achieved through an expert review of the tool. In this study, the supervisor reviewed the tool. Validity encompasses the appropriateness of the research tools, the processes followed and the data generated (Leung, 2015). It covers the entire range of research from research questions to methodology and design. To achieve this, audit trails were maintained by documenting the process through the research cycle. The study utilized Gottman Sound Relationship House questionnaire which is a standardized tool that is widely used in the field of relationship research (Gottman, 2017). A study on the effectiveness of Gottman method established that, the method can be used as an effective treatment to improve marital relationships,

adjustment, and intimacy. Therefore, researchers, therapists, and other authorities should pay particular attention to this method (Davoodvandi et al., 2018).

Instrument Reliability

Regarding instrument reliability, for quantitative research, it refers to the consistency of results generated by the research tools (Taherdoost, 2016). In qualitative research, emphasis is placed on credibility and confirmability, ensuring that the research accurately represents the perspectives of the interviewees (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Credibility entails the accurate representation of the original perspectives of the interviewees in the research output. This means that the interpretation and conclusions drawn must be supported by the views of the respondents as originally expressed. Assurance of instrument reliability was satisfied through the determination of appropriate themes, supported by verbatim responses in the reporting of research results. The questionnaire used in the study was adopted from Gottman's Sound Relationship House questionnaire, known for its high validity and reliability (Davoodvandi et al., 2018).

Positionality of the Researcher

The researcher acknowledged their own positionality and engaged in reflexivity to recognize personal positions that could influence the research (Corlett & Mavin, 2018). The researcher, being a member of CITAM holding leadership positions and having served in FaCE ministry in various CITAM assemblies engaged in reflexivity to develop and embrace her positionality. In this respect, the researcher posed self-reflexivity questions, as to why the topic of research was chosen including personal motivations and interests for the research. This entailed a self-reflection regarding how personal interests, experiences and values (Shaw et al., 2020) shaped the research.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a methodical and scientific procedure for processing raw data into useful information that can inform the determination of answers to research questions (Samani, 2016). In Mixed-methods, data analysis requires an elaborate plan for synthesizing, integrating and cross-validating quantitative and qualitative data (Scherman et al., 2018). This involves utilization of both deductive and inductive logic of data processing that calls for careful quantitative data manipulation and meticulous immersion into qualitative data in order to generate robust interpretations (Rai, 2018). Data processing itself is a rigorous endeavor that begins with data quality assessment such as completeness and random checks for logical sense of responses in order to mitigate the risk of what Buchanan and Scofield (2018) refers to as garbage or noise.

During the conduct of this study, the quantitative data underwent analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 28.0) software. The focus was on numeric data, which underwent a thorough examination. The initial step involved a meticulous cleansing process, where missing values were identified and appropriately addressed. Additionally, outliers were carefully investigated, and inconsistent responses were removed from the dataset (Chai, 2020). This systematic approach can be classified as a data exploration process, as it serves as a fundamental step in inductive reasoning. It sets the groundwork for subsequent inferential analysis, allowing for meaningful interpretations and generalizations (Jebb et al., 2017). By employing SPSS software, the researchers were able to efficiently manage and analyze the collected data, extracting valuable insights and patterns that could inform their study. Overall, this study prioritized the careful treatment and analysis of quantitative data, recognizing the significance of a rigorous data exploration process to pave the way for accurate and reliable findings. The utilization of SPSS software, coupled with the established methodologies for addressing missing values, outliers, and inconsistent

responses, contributed to the robustness of the study's data analysis procedures (Chai, 2020; Jebb et al., 2017).

Data analysis was performed on the dataset using descriptive statistical techniques of data transformation, summarization and visualization through computation of percentage scores, mean scores, and standard deviations. Data was then presented through tables, histograms and boxplots (Sharma, 2018). For each specific objective, a composite index was generated to represent the extent to which the various constructs manifested in the sample. Accordingly, data transformation facilitated the determination of a composite score for marital satisfaction regarding couple friendship and conflict management. The data was then subjected to descriptive analysis in order to explain the effectiveness of MCCGs on marital satisfaction of the participants using themes for qualitative data and composite scores for quantitative data. Qualitative data on the other hand was hand-coded. Meaningful data chunks were identified, retrieved, isolated, grouped, and regrouped. Related topics were grouped to generate themes which served as the headings in the finding section and displayed multiple individual perspectives, supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence. The themes were discussed stating their meaning, and offered researcher's perspective per each theme discussed, that was used to second the quantitative data.

Ethical Considerations

All scientific inquiries call for adherence to ethical requirements throughout the research process. Ethical principles of research and consideration of ethical decisions are necessary to safeguard the interest of humans (Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020; Okesina, 2020). Initially, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the University's Ethics Review Committee, research license from the National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) (Appendix B) and a letter from CITAM headquarters giving

permission to carry out the research among MCCGs participants in the selected assemblies (Appendix E).

The data collection tool included informed consent part as the first paragraph of the tool (Appendix A). By completing the questionnaire, the participants consented to voluntarily get involved in the study. The questionnaires contained written commitment to confidentiality and anonymity through the entire process of data collection, coding, and presentation. The researcher made every effort to respect the privacy of research participants and safeguard their identity throughout the process. Study codes as opposed to real names were used to identify the respondents. Also, the researcher did not have direct interaction with the participants which would serve to remove bias. Electronic data received from the respondents was treated with utmost confidentiality by storing it in a lockable cabinet. Upon completion of the study, plans were made to destroy the data collected a period of one year in order to ensure fidelity and confidentiality of the study participants. The results obtained from the study were shared in a conference. Further plans were made to share a copy of the research project with the leadership of CITAM as agreed when the authority to collect data was granted.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explained in detail the research methodology that was applied to answer the research questions. Cross-sectional mixed method research design was used. Purposive sampling method was used to select the individuals who are participating in the Married Couples' Care Groups (MCCGs) in the selected CITAM churches. The type of data that was collected, data collection method and procedures have been described. It has further expounded on instrument validity, reliability, pretesting and data analysis techniques that were utilized in the study. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations that ensured participants' rights were safe-guarded.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the findings and the results of the study. The chapter is divided into five main sections. The first section analyzes the response rate and demographic characteristics of the respondents. Consequently, the analysis of the impact of the MCCG couple friendship among the respondents. The third section comprises the analysis of the effects of MCCGs on conflict management among the participants. The fourth section presents the qualitative analysis of the personal experiences of the MCCGs participants. Lastly, the fifth section presents the analysis of the improvements which should be incorporated into the MCCGs in perspective of the participants.

Response Rate and Demographic Analysis

This sub-section provides an analysis of the response rates, including how they differ by gender and age. The study used descriptive statistics to investigate the study's overall response rate. Table 2 shows the number of respondents who agreed and participated in the study after being contacted with the questionnaires.

Table 2: *Response Rate*

Number of Respondents	Responses	Percentage
286	152	63.3

Table 2 shows that the response rate for this study was 63.3%. This response rate was acceptable for this study because it measured the levels proposed by Fincham (2008), who held that a researcher should desire at least a 60% response rate for a research study.

Respondents Local Assemblies

The study sought to investigate which CITAM assembly, among CITAM Woodley, CITAM Thika Road, or CITAM Clay City the respondents belonged. Table 3 shows the distribution of the respondents according to the CITAM assembly to which they belong.

Table 3: *Respondents' Local Assemblies*

Local Assembly	Frequency	Percent
CITAM Thika Road	83	54.6
CITAM Woodley	36	23.7
CITAM Clay City	33	21.7
Total	152	100.0

The table shows 52% of the respondents were from CITAM Thika Road. Another significant number (30.2%) of the respondents were from CITAM Woodley and lastly, 17.8% of them were from CITAM Clay City.

Roles of the Respondents in the MCCGs

The roles of the respondents in Married Couple Care Groups (MCCGs) were investigated using descriptive statistical analysis. Table 4 reveals the results of the analysis of whether the respondents were regular members or whether they had leadership positions in the MCCGs.

Table 4: Roles of Respondents in MCCGs

Role	Frequency	Percent
MCCG Member	108	71.0
MCCG Leader	44	29.0
Total	152	100.0

The table shows that 71.0% of the respondents were members of the MCCGs while the remaining 29.0% held some positions of leadership besides being members of the groups.

Age of Respondents

The study investigated the ages of the respondents of the study. Table 5 shows the age distribution of the participants of this study.

Table 5: *Age of the Respondents*

Strata	Frequency	Percent
25-31	15	9.9
32-38	57	37.5
39-45	46	30.2
46-52	17	11.2
≥ 53	17	11.2
Total	152	100.0

The table shows 9.9% of the respondents were between 25 to 31 years. The largest group of respondents 37.5% were in the age bracket of 32 to 38 years. Those who were between 39 to 45 years were 30.2%, while those in the age bracket of 46 to 52 years and 53 years or more accounted for 11.2% of the respondents.

Gender of the Respondents

The study also used descriptive statistics to analyze the gender of the respondents.

Table 6 shows the results of the gender analysis of the respondents.

Table 6: Gender of the Respondents

Strata	Frequency	Percent
Female	76	50.0
Male	76	50.0
Total	152	100.0

The table shows the gender of the respondents. The table shows that there was an equal number of males and females, both had percentages of 50.0%. This is logical because the study involves couples.

Duration of Marriage

The study analyzed the duration the respondents had been married. Table 7 shows the results of the analysis of the duration for which the respondents had been married.

Table 7: Respondent's Duration of Marriage

Strata	Frequency	Percent
1-5	35	23.0
6-10	40	26.3
11-15	34	22.4
16-20	13	8.6
21-25	12	7.9
26-30	11	7.2
31-35	6	3.9
≥ 36	1	.7
Total	152	100.0

The table shows the percentages and age brackets the respondents thus: (23.0%) 1 to 5 years, (26.3%) 6 to 10 years, (22.4%), and 11 to 15 years (8.6%). The table further shows that 16 to 20 years were (7.9%) 21 to 25 years, (7.2%) 26 to 30 years, (3.9%) 31 to 35 years and (0.7%) of the respondents constituted those who had been married for 36 years and above.

Nature of Marriage of Respondents

The study inquired whether the respondents were either in an interracial or an interethnic marriage. Table 8 shows how the respondents responded to this question.

Table 8: *Nature of Marriage of Respondents*

Strata	Frequency	Percent
No	75	49.3
Yes	77	50.7
Total	152	100.0

The table shows that 50.7% of the respondents were in agreement to the question, “Are you interracial or interethnic couples?” averring that they were either in an interracial or interethnic marriage. On the other hand, 49.3% of the respondents disagreed.

Presence of a Biological Child

The study investigated whether the respondents had any biological children. Table 9 shows the nature of the responses of the respondents.

Table 9: *Presence of Biological Children*

Strata	Frequency	Percent
No	17	11.2
Yes	135	88.8
Total	152	100.0

The table showed that a significant majority (88.8%) of the respondents had biological children because they agreed with the question that they had biological children. The analysis also established that 11.2% of the respondents did not have any biological children. Issues of children have been flagged by Tavaloli et al. (2022) as a possible source of challenges in marital satisfaction.

Who Influenced Respondents to Join MCCGs

The study sought to establish who influenced the respondent couples to join the MCCGs programs. Table 10 shows the response that the participants gave in terms of who influenced them to join the MCCGs.

Table 10: *Influencers of Respondents to Join MCCGs*

Strata	Frequency	Percent
Pastor	61	40.1
MCCGs Leader	31	20.4
Peers	32	21.1
Other (Specify)	28	18.4
Total	152	100.0

The table shows that 40.1% of the respondents had been influenced to join the MCCGs by the pastor, 20.4% by an MCCG leader, (21.1%) by their peers and lastly, 18.4% of the respondents were influenced to join the MCCGs by other people or other factors. This finding was important in knowing the influencers of individuals to join the MCCGs, which according to the study by Tavaloli et al. (2022) can help make strategies and increase the effectiveness of the MCCGs.

The Structure of MCCGs

The study investigated the structure of MCCGs in terms of vision and missions of the program. Respondents reactions were cleaned and coded into themes tables which yielded themes pointing to these aspects regarding the structure.

Table 11 *Theme Summary for Structure of MCCGS*

Themes	Subthemes
Empowering marriages	Leading of the Holy Spirit
Peer marital edification	Fellowship, devotion

Theme 1: Empowering Marriages for Godly Lives.

Regarding the question of the missions of MCCGs, Analysis of the responses given by MCCG leaders regarding the mission of the MCCGs revealed empowering marriages for Godly lives as the salient theme. The theme manifested through various sub-themes such as nurturing families, supporting, and helping them create an impact in the community. The theme suggested that the mission of the MCCGs is to empower marriages for godly lives among its members. Most of the respondents felt that the mission of the MCCGs was geared towards helping the members lead empowered lives, through different help and encouragement that they received from the MCCGs.

Respondent 01 commented as shown in the verbatim below:

Res 10 “Empower marriages.”

The respondent recognized that at the heart of the activities and engagement of MCCGs, the main aim of their interaction was to empower marriages and foster Godly lives among the member couples. Furthermore, the notion of empowering marriages was evident in the response given by leader respondent 15, who commented as follows;

Res 15 “To be led by Holy Spirit in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ by nurturing and affirming the God-ordained institution of the family, and proclaiming biblical truths worldwide.”

The respondents considered nurturing, affirmation sharing, and proclamation of God’s truth. All these activities are geared towards empowering the couples using God’s truth so that they may lead Godly lives through their marriages. The mission of the MCCGs is supported by the opinion of Jacobi (2017) who expressed the belief of looking at marital satisfaction through God and his power.

Theme 2: Peer Marital Edification.

Thematic analysis of the actual activities which the members engage in when they meet revealed peer marital edification as the overarching theme. The theme manifested through two major subthemes, prayer, and marriage-related discussions. The respondents revealed through their responses that they are often involved in prayer and marriage-related discussions to address the various issues, which affect families and marriages among them. One of the respondents, respondent 11, who agreed that prayer and marital discussion were ways of edifying one another responded as indicated below.

Res 11 “We often pray together at the start and end of the MCCG, we review with honesty how we have been as husband and wife while we have been away from our last meeting. We share a meal or snack together as a group, we discuss candidly matters of family and relationships following a systematic way provided for us by the Navigators manual and other resourceful materials provided by our church at CITAM Thika Road. We plan a weekly couples date, a yearly retreat, and a family get-together fan day, for all members in our group and their families.”

From the foregoing verbatim excerpt, it is evident that prayer and marriage-centered discussions are at the heart of the numerous activities in which the MCGGs members organize and participate in. The respondent’s sentiments show that prayer for families is often informed by the candid marriage-related discussion that they engage in. Respondent 10 also emphasized the points on discussion and prayer and marriage discussion in her response;

Res 10 “We catch up, do devotion, and carry out the study of the day with material for the day (Currently our MCCG is doing a guide on parenting), then we wind up with prayers for the needs among us. We also assign the couples to pray for each other at the end of

the session. The couple prays for the couple chosen for the rest of the month until we meet in the consequent month.”

Engaging in these activities is healthy for the couples’ marital satisfaction because research has shown that peer marital education can be highly effective in improving marital satisfaction and reducing the likelihood of divorce (Mutunga, 2020). Couples who participate in these programs report improved communication, conflict resolution skills, increased intimacy, better connection, and a greater sense of mutual understanding and support. This is supported by the sentiments of respondent 8 and 9 who expressed thoughts which support these findings

Res 08 “Our communication has become better when we get conflicts.”

Res 09 “A slight improvement in our bed.”

From the verbatim excerpts above it is evident that the respondents’ intimacy and conflict and edification had improved since they began their engagement in the MCCGs.

Objective1: Impact of MCCG on Couple Friendship within Selected CITAM

Assemblies

The first objective of the study was to assess the impact of MCCGs on couple friendship within the selected CITAM Assemblies in Kenya. This section presents the descriptive statistical analysis of satisfaction in terms of friendships and presents and discusses the results.

Descriptive Statistics for Couple Friendship

The study used descriptive statistics to investigate the level of marital satisfaction of the respondents regarding their friendship. Table 12 shows the descriptive for marital satisfaction: friendship items.

Table 12: *Descriptive Statistics for Couple Friendship Items*

Items	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel emotionally close to my partner	152	1	5	4.19	1.008
I think my partner cares about me	152	1	5	4.46	.880
I feel confident we can deal with whatever problems might come up in our relationship	152	1	5	4.26	.957
I consider myself happy in this relationship	152	1	5	4.37	1.006
My Spouse usually listens to me	152	1	5	4.04	1.003

Table 12 shows that regarding the statement, “I feel emotionally close to my partner,” most of the respondents agreed that they feel closer to their partners ($\bar{x}=4.19$, $\sigma_x =1.008$, $N=152$). The finding showed that the respondents were very emotionally close to their partners. The finding is important because the definition by Mutunga (2020) held that one of the significant factors to be used in the determination of marital satisfaction is a function of the closeness of the couples in their marriage. Furthermore, viewing the findings in light of the findings of the study by Kibuthu (2017), it suggests that engagement in MCCGs has a correlation with the couple friendship.

With respect to the statement, “I think my partner cares about me,” on average most of the respondents concurred that they felt their partners cared for them ($\bar{x}=4.46$, $\sigma_x =.880$, $N=152$). The result suggested that on average, most of the respondents cared deeply for their partners. When defining the concept of marriage satisfaction, Fahimdanesh et al. (2020) used social care as one of the most significant aspects of marriage satisfaction. Therefore, the above finding is significant because the high level of social care implies better couple friendship. Couple friendship contributes to marital satisfaction.

As pertains the statement, “I feel confident we can deal with whatever problems that might come up in our relationship,” on average most of the respondents agreed that they were confident that together they could deal with the different problems that could face their relationships ($\bar{x}=4.26$, $\sigma_x =.957$, $N=152$). The finding suggested that there was a high level of confidence regarding relationship conflict resolution. The finding was in line with Yeun and

Yang (2012) that the ability to effective communication, confidence and readiness for conflict resolution was one of the characteristics of conflict resolution. Nonetheless, the high rates of confidence could be due to the teachings of the Bible about marriage that the respondents have mastered and are using as guidance in marriage.

Concerning the statement, “I consider myself happy in this relationship,” most of the respondents on average agreed that they considered themselves happy in their relationships ($\bar{x}=4.37$, $\sigma_x =1.006$, $N=152$). The findings suggested that most of the respondents were happy in their marriages. The result point to the high levels of connection in marriage as postulated by Navarra et al.(2016). The results are consistent with the suppositions made by researchers that happiness is not only a sign contentment in the marriage but also a show of marital satisfaction among the married couples (Sassler & Lichter, 2020).

Lastly, regarding the statement, “My spouse usually listens to me,” most of the respondents on average agreed that their spouses listened to them ($\bar{x}=4.04$, $\sigma_x =1.003$, $N=152$). The finding indicated that on average most of the respondents listened to their spouses. The finding suggests that there is a high level of marital satisfaction among the respondents. The results align with the suggestions made by Knowles (2011) that couple friendship can be measured using the communication aspect of the couple’s living. Listening actively among the respondents is a sign of effective communication. However, the communication could be as a result of increased access to knowledge relating to communication and its effectiveness in matters such as marriage, without having any effect on their marital satisfaction.

Descriptive Statistics for Couple Friendship Composite Score

A composite mean score was computed for the marital satisfaction measure of a couple’s friendship. Table 13 shows the descriptive statistics for the composite score of

marital satisfaction in terms of couple friendship. It shows the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values.

Table 13: Descriptive Statistics for Marital Satisfaction: Friendship Composite Score

			Statistic	Std. Error
Composite mean score	Mean		4.2689	.07070
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.1292	
		Upper Bound	4.4086	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.3681	
	Median		4.6000	
	Variance		.755	
	Std. Deviation		.86873	
	Minimum		1.00	
	Maximum		5.00	
	Range		4.00	
	Interquartile Range		1.00	
	Skewness		-1.604	.197
	Kurtosis		2.413	.392

Table 13 shows that generally, on average, the respondents had high levels of marital satisfaction in terms of couple friendship ($\bar{x}=4.2689$, $\sigma_x = .07070$). The finding implies that on average most of the respondents had high levels of friendship, indicating high levels of marital satisfaction, as postulated by Mutunga (2020) who posited that couples who get close are likely to be satisfied. Furthermore, the table also shows that respondents in the middle of the data were satisfied with their marriages (IQR= 1.00). Lastly, there was negative skewness (Skn = -1.604) which indicates that most of the respondents averred, “True” and below in their responses, showing that most of them had high marital satisfaction in terms of couple friendship.

Histogram for Couples’ Friendship Composite Score

The marital satisfaction friendship composite score was analyzed visually as shown in figure 3.

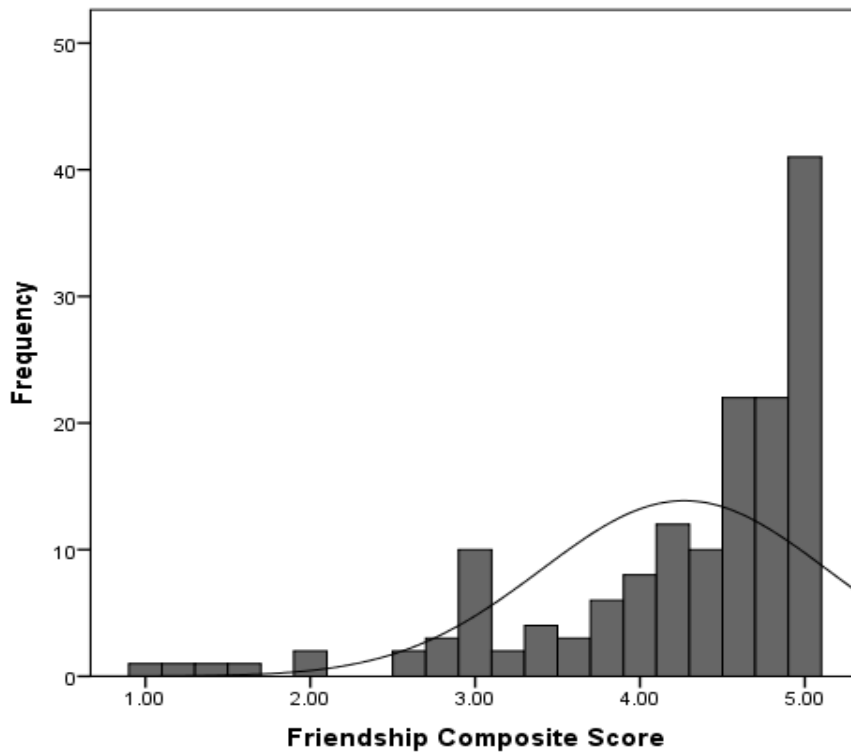
Figure 3: *Histogram of Couples' Friendship Composite Score*

Figure 3 shows that friendship composite score was skewed towards the upper end of the rating on a 5 –point scale, signaling that couples manifested high levels of friendship.

Descriptive Statistics for Marital Satisfaction: Love Map

The study investigated the marital satisfaction of the respondents with regard to their love paradigm of the satisfaction. Table 14 shows percentages distribution of respondents based on their responses to the love maps statements as either true or false.

Table 14: *Descriptive Statistics for Love Map Items*

Items	N	True	False
I can tell you some of my partner's life dreams.	152	96.7%	3.3%
My partner is familiar with what are my current stresses	152	79.6%	20.4%
I can list my partner's major aspirations and hopes in life	152	86.8%	13.2%
I know my partner's major current worries	152	80.9%	19.1%
I can list the relatives my partner likes the least	152	74.3%	25.7%

Table 14 shows that most (96.7%) of the respondents responded “True” regarding the statement, “I can tell you some of my partner’s life dreams,” while the remaining (3.3%) responded, “False,” which implies that the most of them knew their partners’ dreams. The

results suggest that most respondents had deep inner knowledge and they share deeply about their dreams with one another. The findings of the analysis conducted by Navarra et al., (2016) on Gottman's (1993) theory that the level of closeness in a relationship is indicative of marital satisfaction can be used to interpret these results. Nonetheless, the deep knowledge of the dreams can be associated with the substantial time spent together among the couples, which might not have any correlation with their marital satisfaction (Sassler & Lichter, 2020).

With respect to the statement, "I can list the relatives my partner likes the least," most (74.3%) of the respondents averred, "True," while 25.7% of the respondents responded, "False," showing that majority of them could list the relatives their partners liked least. This suggests that majority of the respondents had an in-depth knowledge of their partners even to the point of knowing the relatives that their partners liked least. This suggests high levels of marital satisfaction as proposed by Gottman (1993) that the love map is a useful tool in measuring the rate and level of marital satisfaction among the clients.

Furthermore, concerning the statement, "My partner is familiar with what are my current stresses," most (79.6%) of the respondents responded "True" while 20.4% of the respondents reacted, "False," indicating that majority of the respondents agreed that they believed that their partners were aware of their current stresses. The finding implies that the couples experienced high levels of marital satisfaction in line with their love map. The findings can be interpreted in the light of Piechota et al. (2022) which held that sharing deep issues with one another in marriage can help the couple improve their rates of marriage satisfaction.

As pertains the statement, "I can list my partner's major aspirations and hopes in life," most (86.8%) of the respondents replied, "True," and 13.2% of the respondents responded, "False," showing that majority of the respondents were aware of their partners'

aspirations and hopes in life. The findings implied closeness among the majority of the couples. The finding is consistent with the proposition of Knowles (2011) who held that the greater view of marriage can also be inferred from the level of closeness between the couples. Nonetheless, the deeper knowledge of one another can be a sign of past effort in the relationship and might have nothing to do with the current marital satisfaction among the couples.

Lastly, regarding the statement, “I know my partner's major current worries,” most (80.9%) of the respondents agreed that they knew their partners’ major current worries, while 19.1% responded, “False,” indicating that they did not know major current worries for their partners. The finding implied that most couples were satisfied regarding the perspective of their love maps as was proposed by Gottman (1993) that high love maps is a sign of high marital satisfaction. Nonetheless, the deep knowledge of one another’s worries could be due to whining among the couples about individual problems and not necessarily satisfaction (Fang & Bushnell, 2019).

Descriptive Statistics for Love Map Composite Score

A composite score was computed for the love map aspects of the respondents’ marital satisfaction by summing up the true statements and computing the mean scores. The composite score was then analyzed using descriptive statistics. Table 15 shows the mean, standard deviation and upper and lower bounds, interquartile range, and the skewness of the data. The table shows that a high love maps composite score was obtained on a scale from 1 to 5, suggesting high marital satisfaction in terms of love maps ($\bar{x}=4.1974$, $\sigma_x =.08659$). It also shows that there was negative skewing in the data ($S_{kn}=-1.131$), indicating that most of the respondents responded, “True” and below, showing that most of the respondents had high marital satisfaction in terms of their love maps.

Table 15: *Descriptive Statistics for Marital Satisfaction: Love Map Composite Score*

			Statistic	Std. Error
Love Maps	Mean		4.1974	.08659
Composite Score	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.0263	
		Upper Bound	4.3684	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.2822	
	Median		5.0000	
	Variance		1.140	
	Std. Deviation		1.06752	
	Minimum		1.00	
	Maximum		6.00	
	Range		5.00	
	Interquartile Range		1.00	
	Skewness		-1.131	.197
	Kurtosis		.566	.391

Histogram for Love Map Composite Score

A visual representation of how respondents were distributed according to their love maps rating is shown in figure 4.

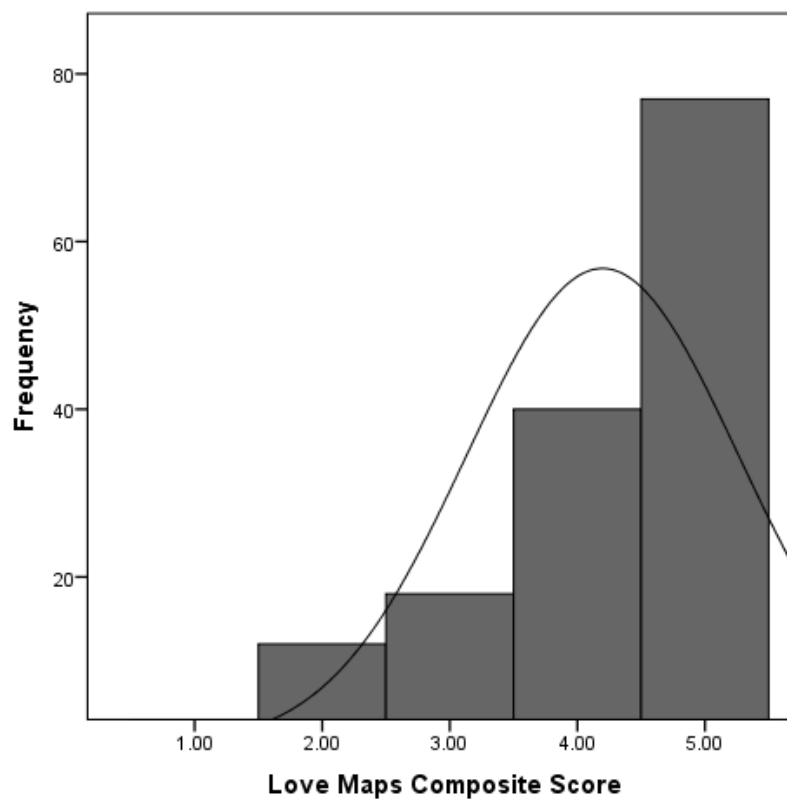
Figure 4: *Histogram for Love Map Composite Score*

Figure 4 depicts that the distribution was skewed towards the upper score from 1 to 5, implying that most of the respondents had high love maps score rating.

Descriptive Statistics for Marital Satisfaction: Fondness and Admiration System

Descriptive analysis was performed to determine the marital satisfaction of the respondents in terms of their fondness and admiration system. Table 16 shows the descriptive statistics for the fondness and admiration system of the marital satisfaction of the respondents.

Table 16: *Descriptive Statistics for Fondness and Admiration System*

Items	N	True	False
My partner really respects me	152	77.3%	22.7%
I feel loved and cared for in this relationship	152	83.6%	16.4%
Romance is something our relationship definitely still has in it.	152	70.7%	29.3%
When I come into a room, my partner is glad to see me.	152	72.8%	27.2%
My partner appreciates the things I do in this relationship	152	80.7%	19.3%

The table shows that 77.3% of the respondents responded, “True” regarding the statement, “My partner really respects me,” while 22.7% responded, “False.” The finding implies that most of the respondents were fond of and admired one another. This suggests that they have marital satisfaction rates as was held in the study conducted by Fahimdanesh et al., (2020) who proposed that high levels of interpersonal appreciation leads indicate high rates of marital satisfaction.

Furthermore, most (83.6%) of the respondents agreed that they felt loved and cared for, because they reacted, “True,” to the statement “I feel loved and cared for in this relationship” while 16.4% of the respondents responded, “False.” The finding shows most of the respondents have high levels of fondness, which is in support of the propositions made by Gottman and Gottman (2017). This implies that couples have high marital satisfaction. However, caring can also be done from a sense of obligation and might not indicate intentionality which can be used to qualify it as an indicator for marital satisfaction.

Regrading the statement, “Romance is something our relationship definitely still has in it,” most (70.7%) of the respondents responded “True” indicating that they agreed that romance was something that their relationships still had in them while 29.3% of the respondents reacted, “False” to the statement. This suggests that majority of the couples were still fond of and admire one another, which points to high levels of marital satisfaction among them. Sprecher and Hatfield (2016) proposed that the presence of love and romance in marriage can be a pointer and indicator of marital satisfaction. Nonetheless, romance is not an entirely completely accurate measure of the level of marital satisfaction among different couples.

Regarding the statement, “When I come into a room, my partner is glad to see me,” most (72.8%) of the respondents responded, “True,” while 17.2% reacted, “False,” indicating that majority of the respondents believed that their partners were glad to see them walk into a room ($\bar{x}=.73$, $\sigma_x =.446$, $N=152$). The finding is an indicator that most of the respondents were glad about their partners’ ingress. This according to the analysis by Davoodvandi et al. (2018), is an indicator of a high level of fondness which is a pointer to high levels of marital satisfaction. However, entering a room and expression of gladness can be complex matters which cannot be used to tell the level of marital satisfaction between couples on its own. Multiple perspectives approach should be used (Nikrahan, 2023).

Lastly, reading the statement, “My partner appreciates the things I do in this relationship,” most (80.7%) of the respondents responded “True” and indication that they agreed that their partners appreciated the things they did in their relationships, while 19.3% of the respondents said, “False,” to the statement. The finding is consistent with the description given by Navarra et al. (2016), that the appreciation is an indicator of fondness and admiration which can point to high levels of marital satisfaction. However, appreciation only

cannot be the adequate measure of fondness and admiration or marital satisfaction among the couples (Lavner et al., 2016).

Descriptive Statistics for Fondness and Admiration System Composite Score

A composite score was computed for the fondness and admiration system items. Descriptive statistics were then used to analyze the composite score. Table 17 shows the descriptive statistics for the fondness and admiration system composite score. The table shows the percentages, lower and upper bounds, variance, skewness, interquartile range and the maximum and minimum values.

Table 17: *Descriptive Statistics for Fondness and Admiration System Composite Score*

			Statistic	Std. Error
Fondness Composite Score	Mean		3.8355	.13249
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	3.5738	
		Upper Bound	4.0973	
	5% Trimmed Mean		3.9649	
	Median		5.0000	
	Variance		2.668	
	Std. Deviation		1.63344	
	Minimum		.00	
	Maximum		5.00	
	Range		5.00	
	Interquartile Range		2.75	
	Skewness		-1.025	.197
	Kurtosis		-.505	.391

The table shows that a high fondness and admiration system composite score was obtained on a scale from 1 to 5, suggesting high marital satisfaction in terms of fondness and admiration ($\bar{x}=3.8355$, $\sigma_x = 0.13249$). The table also shows that the respondents in the middle of the data also had averagely high levels of love and fondness (IQR= 2.75). Lastly, it shows that there was a negative skewness (Skn=-1.025) which means that most of the respondents responded “True” to the prompts investigating fondness and admiration system. The finding suggests that the respondents had high rates of marital satisfaction, going by the supposition made by Gottman and Gottman (2017) that high levels of fondness is an indicator

of high rates of marital satisfaction. Nonetheless, marital satisfaction is complex and cannot be determined based on one of the key measures and it is worth looking for in entirety.

Histogram for Fondness and Admiration System Composite Score

Figure 7 is a histogram that provides a visual impression of the distribution of respondents by fondness and administration.

Figure 5: *Histogram for Fondness and Admiration System Composite Score*

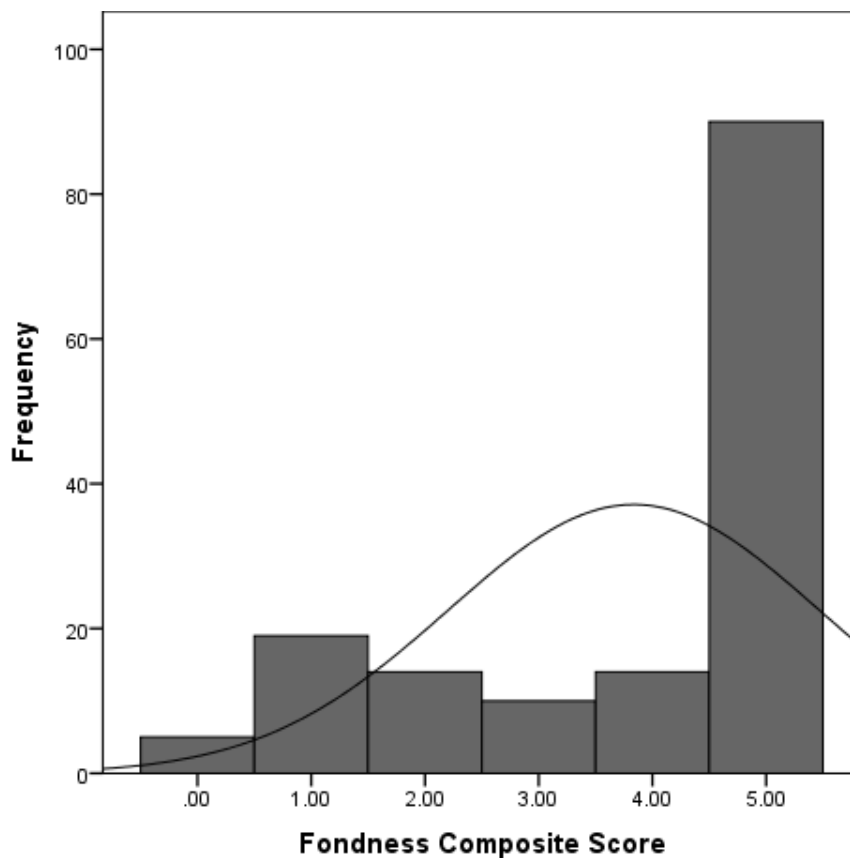


Figure 5 shows that the distribution of fondness and admiration was highly skewed towards the upper score from 1 to 5, implying that majority of the respondents exhibited high fondness and administration for their spouse.

Descriptive Statistics for Turning Towards or Away

Descriptive analysis was performed for the turning towards or away aspects of marital satisfaction. Table 18 shows the results for the descriptive statistics for the turning towards or against aspect of marital satisfaction. The table shows the percentages for “True” and “False.”

Table 18: *Turning Towards or Away*

Items	N	True	False
I really enjoy discussing things with my partner	152	77.6%	22.4%
We always have a lot to say to each other	152	71.5%	28.5%
We have a lot of fun together in our everyday lives	152	60.5%	39.5%
We really have a lot of interests in common	152	52.0%	48.0%
We like to do a lot of the same things	152	42.1%	57.9%

The table shows that 77.6% of the respondents responded “True” regarding the statement, “I really enjoy discussing things with my partner” while 22.4% said, “False.” This implies that most of the respondents enjoyed discussing issues with their spouses. The analysis points to the likelihood of high levels of marital satisfaction based on the discourse posed by Gottman and Gottman (2017) that enjoying speaking together is a strong indicator of marital satisfaction among couples. However, the ease and enjoyment of communication alone cannot be used to judge the level of satisfaction, even though it is a strong indicator of the same (Lavner et al., 2016).

Regarding the statement, “We always have a lot to say to each other,” 71.5% of the respondents reacted, “True,” averring that they said a lot to each other while 28.5% reacted, “False.” This analysis implies that majority of the respondents had a lot of ease of communication with one another. The analysis, going by the characteristics of things that bring marital including speaking to one another, satisfaction as given by Navarra et al. (2016), is a strong indicator of high levels of marital satisfaction. Nonetheless, the content and contexts of the communication in which the respondents have ease of communicating with one another is not explained and thus it can be errant to use such communication to decide that the respondents had high levels of marital satisfaction.

Furthermore, regarding the statement, “We have a lot of fun together in our everyday lives,” most (60.5%) of the respondents reacted, “True” averring that they had much fun together in their everyday lives while 39.5% reacted, “False,” showing that they did not have a lot of fun together. The analysis suggests that there was a mutual soothing among

the majority of the couples, which according to Gottman and Gottman (2017) is a sign of marital satisfaction. However, while having fun is a pointer to the general openness and likeability among couples, it is not the only determinant of effective communication or marital satisfaction (Fincham, 2019).

Regarding the statement, “We really have a lot of interests in common,” most (52.0%) reacted “True” showing that they had high levels of marital satisfaction because they had the best of their really had a lot of common interests, while 48.0% of them reacted, “False,” indicating they did not have common interests. The high score for the common interests according to the descriptions given by Navarra et al. (2016), points to the fact that the respondents could be having high levels of marital satisfaction. Nonetheless, the presence of commonality in interests cannot be used to totally decide that the respondents were highly satisfied in their marriages.

Lastly, regarding the statement, “We like to do a lot of the same things,” most (57.9%) of the respondents replied “False” indicating that most of the denied doing a lot of things together with their partners, while 42.1%, reacted, “True.” The finding suggests that the respondents did not have high couple friendship levels. However, this is just one item on the list of the myriad of items that measures satisfaction and cannot be singled out as to hold that the respondents had no high levels of marital satisfaction.

Descriptive Statistics for Turning towards or Away Composite Score

A composite score was generated for the tuning towards or away measure of the marital satisfaction. The composite score was then analyzed using descriptive statistics. Table 19 shows the results of the analysis. It shows the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and the maximum and minimum values.

Table 19: *Descriptive Statistics for Marital Satisfaction: Turning Towards or Away Composite Score*

		Statistic	Std. Error
Turning Toward	Mean	3.0329	.13412
Composite Score	95% Confidence Lower	2.7679	
	Interval for Mean		
	Bound		
	Upper	3.2979	
	Bound		
	5% Trimmed Mean	3.0921	
	Median	3.0000	
	Variance	2.734	
	Std. Deviation	1.65348	
	Minimum	.00	
	Maximum	5.00	
	Range	5.00	
	Interquartile Range	3.00	
	Skewness	-.258	.197
	Kurtosis	-1.101	.391

The table shows that a high turning towards or away composite score was obtained on a scale from 1 to 5, suggesting high marital satisfaction in terms of turning towards or away ($\bar{x}=3.0329$, $\sigma_x =.13412$). There was negative skewing of the data ($Sk_n=-2.58$) showing that most of the respondents reacted “True” and below to the statements regarding turning towards and away.

Histogram for Turning towards or Away Composite Score

A visual analysis of respondents’ scores for turning towards or away is presented in figure 6.

Figure 6: *Histogram for Turning Toward or Away Composite Score*

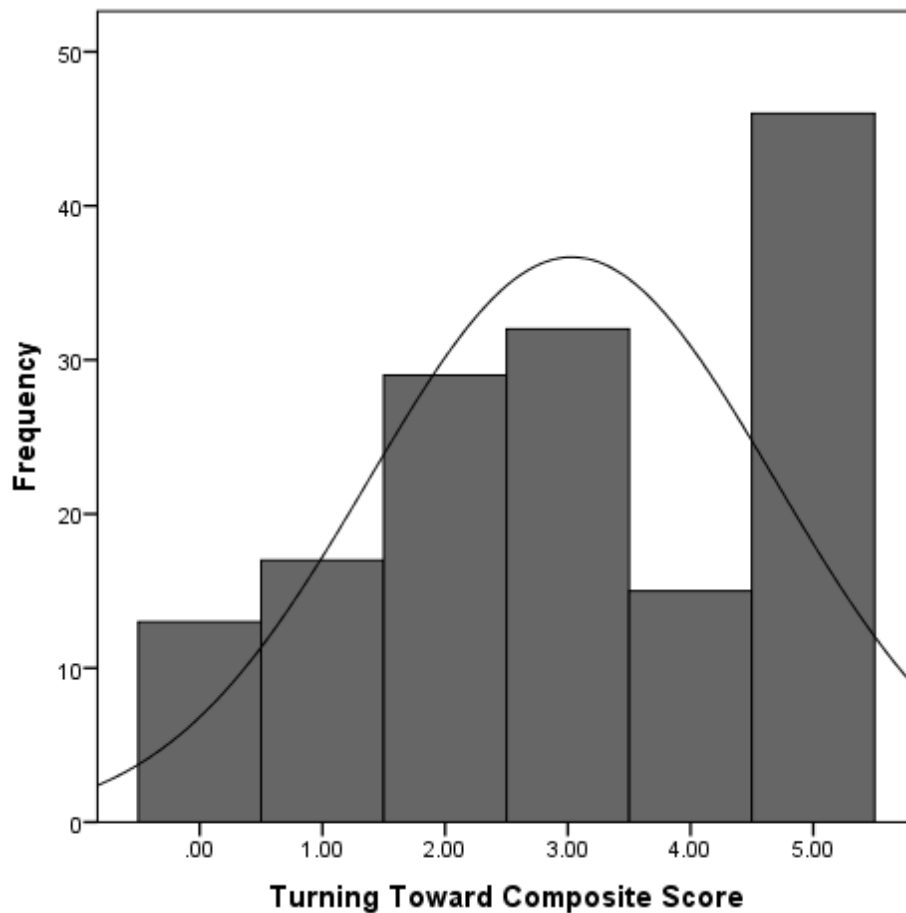


Figure 6 shows that there was a marginal skewness of the distribution towards the middle and upper scores from 1 to 5, implying that most of the respondents had above average marital satisfaction in terms of turning towards each other.

Generally, the quantitative data suggested strongly that couple friendship was high among the respondents. Aspects such as couple friendship ($\bar{x}=4.2689$, $\sigma_x = .07070$), love maps ($\bar{x}=4.1974$, $\sigma_x = .08659$) and fondness and admiration ($\bar{x}=3.8355$, $\sigma_x = 0.13249$) were high, and the aspects of tuning towards or away ($\bar{x}=3.0329$, $\sigma_x = .13412$) was moderate. Collectively, these results suggest that couple friendship was high, and consequently their marital satisfaction.

Qualitative Data on Couple's Friendship

The qualitative data was coded, cleaned and analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis of qualitative data revealed intimacy and communication as a manifest theme. The theme was manifested through subthemes such as intimacy, communication, finances, sex, and in-laws as below:

Table 20: *Summary of Themes of Couples' Friendship*

Themes	Subthemes
Intimacy and communication	Sexual intimacy, oneness
Strongly Godly marriages	Christ-centered marriages, mutual love

Theme 1: Intimacy and Communication

Most of the respondents recognized that intimacy and communication were not only great topics to discuss in their MCCGs meetings but also very pertinent issues to the flourishing of their marriages. Leader respondent 07 for example, responded,

Res 07 "Over the years we have dealt with finances, conflict, communication,

parenting, sexual intimacy, intimacy and oneness with God, in-laws, and other family relations, and death."

From the foregoing comment, respondent 07, the intimacy of any form, spiritual, physical, and sexual, dominates the discussion that the MCCG members involve in and they help form their perspectives about the same.

The emphasis on intimacy and communication can also be deduced from the comments made by leader respondent 05 who said commented as shown the verbatim below:

Res 05 "Conflict in marriage, communication, sex, raising children, enhancing friendship in marriage work-life balance, planning for retirement, etc."

From the comments, it is also deducible that the aspect of intimacy and communication is emphasized in the discussion by the members of the MCCGs. The theme is a sign that the members of the MCCGs have high marital satisfaction because intimacy and communication were listed by Mutunga (2020) as some of the major indicators or pointers of marital satisfaction. This means the members of the MCCGs discuss these issues regularly, it is logical to surmise that these discussions will produce the fruit of marital satisfaction among the members.

Marital accountability was also one of the salient themes which emerged when the responses investigating the changes which had occurred to the respondents since they joined the MCCGs were thematically analyzed.

Theme 2: Strong, Godly Marriages

Thematic analysis of the vision of the MCCGs yielded strong, Godly marriages as the salient theme. The theme emerged in two major sub-themes including strong marriages and godly marriages. The theme of strong godly marriages suggested that the MCCGs vision was to help the members develop strong godly marriages. The respondents held that the marriages were not only vibrant but also to glorify God. The need for strong godly marriages was evident in the sentiments of respondent 12, an MCCG leader who commented as follows:

Res12 “Creating Christ-Centered marriages and being the light, that marriage works in our community when you work it with God's help. To Foster and nurture healthy vibrant fellowships that meet couples’ needs through the support of the Local church that we all belong to. Being united as a family of believers who believe in marriage.”

From the foregoing verbatim excerpt, it is clear that the respondent had strong marriage that was anchored in Godly principles. The response shows that the vision of the MMCGs is geared towards having not only strong Godly marriages but also support the local

Church and its development through fostering meaningful relationships. The same sentiments were shared by the MCCG leader respondent 20 who commented:

Res 20 “To see all marriages grounded on God's Word and last a lifetime through mutual love.”

The comment of member respondent 20 also emphasizes that even though the growth and grounding of marriages is a priority among the members of the MCCGs, the growth must be done through the belief in the word of God. This finding supports Jacobi’s (2017) view that spiritually founded programs place their notion on God for marital satisfaction.

Objective 2: Effects of MCCG on Conflict Management

The second objective of the study was to examine the effect of MCCGs on conflict management within selected CITAM assemblies in Kenya. This section performs descriptive statistics on the measures of Gottman’s Sound House Relationship scale regarding conflict management to determine the marital satisfaction of the respondents of the study.

Descriptive Statistics for Conflict Management: Harsh Start Ups

Descriptive statistics was performed on the harsh start up items to establish the score of the respondents on the individual items. Table 21 shows the percentage distribution of the respondents on harsh startups items.

Table 21: Descriptive Statistics for Conflict Management: Harsh Start Ups

	N	True	False
Our arguments seem to come up out of nowhere.	152	30.9%	69.1%
I often seem to get blamed for issues.	152	41.1%	58.9%
My partner criticizes my personality.	152	28.9%	71.1%
My partner brings up issues abruptly or with poor timing	152	32.9%	67.1%
I find my partner's negativity unnerving and unsettling.	152	29.5%	70.5%

The table shows that, most (69.1%) of the respondents reacted, “False” to the statement, “Our arguments seem to come up out of nowhere,” while 30.9% of them reacted, “True.” The finding suggests that there are fewer harsh startups among the respondents. This

implies that there possible positive family relationships among the respondents. Yeun and Yang (2012) held that the presence of the ability to stay without nagging and repetitive arguments is a sign of increasing marital satisfaction in couples.

Furthermore, regarding the statement, “I often seem to get blamed for issues,” most (58.9%) of the respondents denied that proposition of the claim by responding, “False” showing that most of them did not seem to get blamed by their spouses for issues while 41.1% reacted, “True.” This finding viewed in perspective of the study done by Gottman et al. (2015) which includes blaming one another for issues, is an indicator of higher marital satisfaction among the respondents. However, avoiding blame could be an evasive tactic to avoid harsh discussions and does not necessarily mean that there are no concerns for the said issues.

Regarding the statement, “My partner criticizes my personality,” 71.1% of the respondents said, “False,” showing that most of them did not have their personalities criticized by their partners while 28.9% reacted “True.” Viewing this finding through the lens of the analysis done by Canelakes (2011) suggested that majority of the respondents have high marital satisfaction among the respondents. However, silence or failure to criticize personality could be a coping mechanism amid the dissatisfaction with marriage and cannot be used to infer that the respondents are highly satisfied in their marriages.

Regarding the statement, “My partner brings up issues abruptly or with poor timing,” 67.1% of the respondents denied the statement while 22.9% of the respondents were in agreement. The finding suggests that there was an effective conflict management system among the respondents, which points to the high levels of marital satisfaction among them. Nonetheless, the partners may choose not to bring up issues for the sake of maintaining peace in their relationship.

Lastly, regarding the statement, “I find my partner's negativity unnerving and unsettling,” 70.5% of the respondents responded, “False,” showing that they did not find their partners’ negativity unnerving and unsettling, while 29.5% reacted, “True,” showing that they found their partners’ negativity unnerving and unsettling. This finding shows that the majority of the respondents had better conflict management with their partners, which is consistent with the findings of the study by He et al. (2018) which held that closeness and absence of signs of negativity is a sign of better conflict management.

Descriptive Statistics for Harsh Start Ups Composite Score

The study investigated the data of harsh start-ups by computing a composite score. The composite score was then analyzed using the descriptive statistics. Table 22 shows the descriptive statistics for harsh startups composite score.

Table 22: *Descriptive Statistics for Conflict Management: Harsh Start Ups Composite Score*

			Statistic	Std. Error
Harsh Start Ups Composite Score	Mean		1.6250	.12861
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	1.3709	
		Upper Bound	1.8791	
		5% Trimmed Mean	1.5278	
	Median	1.0000		
	Variance	2.514		
	Std. Deviation	1.58558		
	Minimum	.00		
	Maximum	5.00		
	Range	5.00		
	Interquartile Range	3.00		
	Skewness	.717	.197	
	Kurtosis	-.552	.391	

The table shows that a low turning towards or away composite score was obtained on a scale from 1 to 5, suggesting high marital satisfaction in terms of turning towards or away ($\bar{x}=1.6250$, $\sigma_x =.12861$). The table also shows that most of the respondents in the middle of the data responded “False” to the questions regarding the harsh startups (IQR=3.00). Lastly

the table also shows that there was a positive skewness ($Skp=.717$), which shows that showing that they responded false and above.

Histogram for Harsh Startups

Figure 7 shows a histogram that reveals how respondents' harsh start-ups was distributed overall.

Figure 7: *Histogram for Harsh Startups*

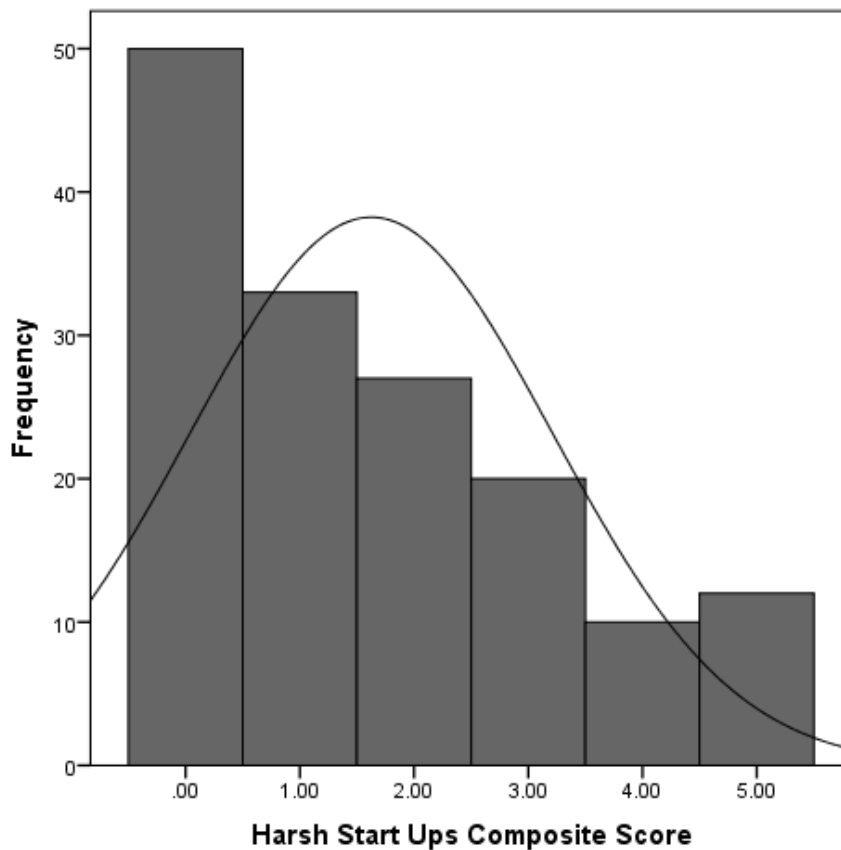


Figure 7 shows depicts a skewed distribution towards the lower end of the scores from 1 to 5. This means that most of the respondents did not experience harsh start-ups in their marriage.

Descriptive Statistics for Repair Attempts

The items measuring repair attempts among the respondents was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Table 23 shows the results of the repair attempts measures of conflict management.

Table 23: *Descriptive Statistics for Conflict Management: Repair Attempts*

Item	N	True	False
We are good at taking breaks when we need them.	152	58.0%	42.0%
Even when arguing, we can maintain a sense of humor.	152	54.7%	45.3%
We are pretty good listeners even when we have different positions on things.	152	60.7%	39.3%
If things get heated, we can usually pull out of it and change things.	152	69.3%	30.7%
My partner is good at soothing me when I get upset	152	62.3%	37.7%

The table shows that 58.0% of the respondents confirmed the claims of the statement, “We are good at taking breaks when we need them,” showing that they believed that they are good at taking breaks whenever such are needed, while 42.0% of the respondents reacted, “False,” showing that they were not good at taking breaks when they needed them. The analysis is consistent with the proposals made by Gottman and Gottman (2017) that the ability to take breaks helps with conflict management by helping the repair attempts and in the end impacting marital satisfaction positively. However, the presence of taking a break cannot be taken to the absolute measure of the repair attempts or conflict management, or marital satisfaction among the participants because it is just one isolated measure of a complex interconnected subject of marital satisfaction (Gottman et al., 2015).

Regarding the statement, “Even when arguing, we can maintain a sense of humor,” 54.7% of the respondents reacted “True” agreeing with the claims of the statement that they had and maintained a sense of humor even during their arguments, while 45.3% of the respondents responded “False,” showing that they did not maintain a sense of humor when arguing. The analysis is an indicator of effective conflict management ability from the couples, looking when it is considered against the arguments made by Gottman and Gottman (2017) that the ability to solve their conflicts is a sign of good conflict management skills, which indicates that such couples have high levels of satisfaction in their marriages.

Regarding the statement, “We are pretty good listeners even when we have different positions on things,” 60.7% of the respondents reacted, “True” indicating that they listened to one another well even when they had different positions on things while 39.3%

reacted, “False,” indicating they were not active listeners when taking positions on various things. This suggests that they were better at making repair attempts even during conflicts. Going by the discussion and analyses by Gottman et al. (2015) is an indicator of better conflict management which translates into marital satisfaction. However, listening is one of the many key indicators of conflict management which cannot be solely used to settle that the respondents have high rates of marital satisfaction.

Regarding the statement, “If things get heated, we can usually pull out of it and change things,” 69.3% of the respondents reacted, “True,” showing that they usually pulled out of it and changed whenever things got heated, while 30.7% of the respondents responded, “False,” indicating that they could not pull out and change things when things get heated. The finding, viewed in light of the analysis done by Yeun and Yang (2012), strongly suggests that the respondents effectively manage their conflicts and ensure their marital satisfaction. The ability to snap out of a heated argument and calm down could be various reasons such as a deliberate reason to let things go and not better conflict management which can be used to infer marital satisfaction.

Lastly, regarding the statement, “My partner is good at soothing me when I get upset,” most (62.3%) of the respondents reacted, “True” showing that their partners were good at soothing them when they get upset, while 37.7% of the respondents reacted, “False,” showing that their partners were not good at soothing them when they get upset. The finding suggests that they did not have good conflict management skills, which in turn ruined their marital satisfaction, as was suggested by Gottman and Gottman (2017). However, the soothing ability is just one aspect of conflict in which the respondents have indicated they did not believe their partners knew what to do to try and repair their relationships and logically, it would be wrong to judge them with the only variable in which they have indicated negativity.

Descriptive Statistics for Repair Attempts Composite Score

A composite score was computed for the data about the repair attempts aspects of conflict management. The composite score was then analyzed using descriptive statistics. Table 24 shows the results of the analysis. It shows the median, mean, upper and lower bounds, skewness, and maximum and minimum values.

Table 24: *Descriptive Statistics for Conflict Management: Repair Attempts Composite Score*

			Statistic	Std. Error
Repair Attempts Composite Score	Mean		2.7881	.12663
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	2.5379	
		Upper Bound	3.0383	
		5% Trimmed Mean	2.8201	
	Median	3.0000		
	Variance	2.421		
	Std. Deviation	1.55610		
	Minimum	.00		
	Maximum	5.00		
	Range	5.00		
	Interquartile Range	2.00		
	Skewness	-.275	.197	
	Kurtosis	-.948	.392	

The table shows that an average repair attempt composite score was obtained on a scale from 1 to 5, suggesting moderate marital satisfaction in terms of repair attempts ($\bar{x}=2.7881$, $\sigma_x =.12663$), which according to the analysis done by Yeun and Yang (2012), is an indicator of high levels of marital satisfaction. Furthermore, the table shows that the respondents in the middle of the data showed low levels of the ability to attempt a repair in cases of conflict with their partners (IQR=2.00). Lastly, there was negative skewness in the data (Skn=-.275), which shows that most of the respondents answered “True” and below.

Histogram for Repair Attempts Composite Score

The distribution of repair attempts composite score was visually depicted using the histogram in figure 8.

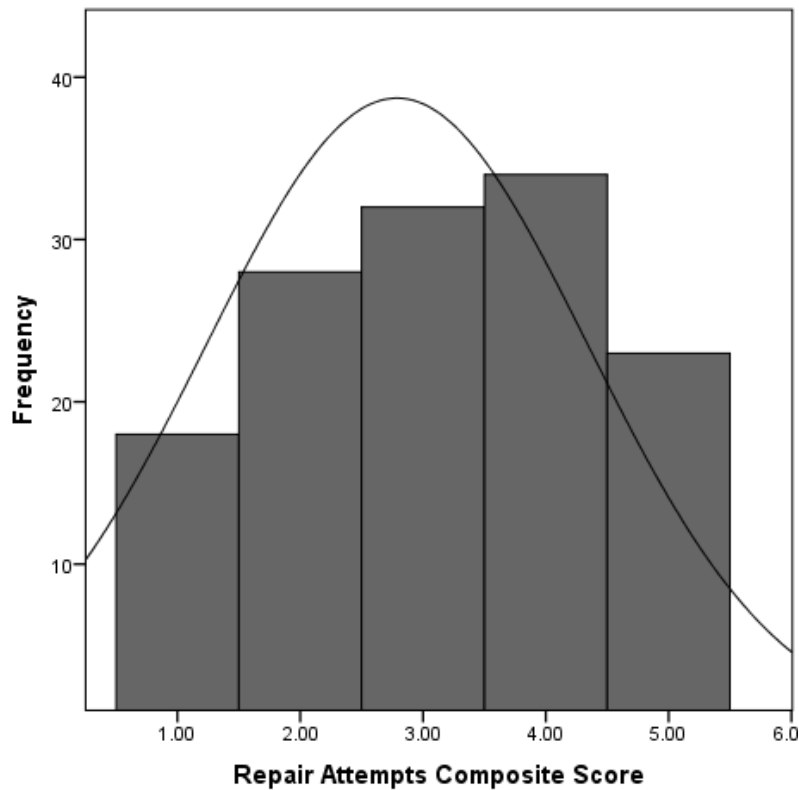
Figure 8: *Histogram for Attempts Composite Score*

Figure 8 shows that the distribution was slightly skewed towards the upper end on a scale from 1 to 5. This means that most of the respondents attempted to manage their conflicts through repair attempts.

Descriptive Statistics for Compromise

The items measuring the compromise aspect of conflict management among the respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Table 25 shows the percentage distribution of respondents for each items as either true or false.

Table 25: *Descriptive Statistics for Compromise Items*

Item	N	True	False
We are usually good at resolving our differences	152	71.1%	28.9%
We both believe in meeting each other halfway when we disagree	152	58.6%	41.4%
In discussing issues, we can usually find our common ground of agreement	152	76.3%	23.7%
Yielding power is not very difficult for me	152	72.2%	27.8%
Give and take in making decisions is not a problem in this relationship	152	80.1%	19.9%

The table shows that, 71.1% of the respondents responded “True” to the statement, “We are usually good at resolving our differences,” indicating that they were good at resolving their differences, while 28.9% of them responded, “False,” showing that they were not usually good at resolving their differences. The finding, according to sentiments made by Navarra et al. (2016) is a pointer to the effective conflict management abilities of the couples and consequently a sign of high levels of marital satisfaction. However, the ability to solve the problems could be the willingness to stop the continued whining rather than to seek peace of the marriage and this cannot be used to definitively deduce that the respondents had a high level of marital satisfaction.

Furthermore, regarding the statement, “We both believe in meeting each other halfway when we disagree,” 58.6% of the respondents reacted “True” indicating that they believed they could meet one another halfway in cases of problems or disagreements in their marriages, while 41.4% reacted, “False,” indicating that they did not believe in meeting each other halfway. The finding suggested that there was a great conflict management ability among the couples. The finding is consistent with the posits made by Gottman and Gottman (2017) that the ability to meet one another is an indication of great compromise which shows a high level of marital satisfaction. However, meeting each other halfway in a disagreement could also be a manipulative act of wanting to gain more especially when one of the spouses has greater interests in the matter causing disagreement. Therefore, this can be the only measure used to say that the respondents had a high level of compromise and consequently marital satisfaction.

Regarding the statement, “In discussing issues, we can usually find our common ground of agreement,” 76.3% of the participants averred, “True,” showing that they discuss issues and find their common ground of agreement, while 24.7% reacted, “False,” showing that in discussing issues, they could not find a common ground of agreement. According to

the propositions made by Fahimdanesh et al. (2022) this may be a sign of better conflict management and possibly an indicator of marital satisfaction among couples. Furthermore, finding a common ground for agreement is just one aspect of the multifaceted issue of marital satisfaction and cannot be used to rule that there are high levels of marital satisfaction among the respondents.

Regarding the statement, “Yielding power is not very difficult for me,” 72.2% of the respondents agreed they found it easy to yield power in their marriages, while 27.8% of the respondents reacted, “False,” showing that yielding power was difficult for them. This finding, according to the discourse by Yeun and Yang (2012) is a sign of effective conflict management among the respondents, because yielding power increases the chances of common ground and better marital satisfaction. Nonetheless, yielding power can also be a wielding of power by one of the spouses to have their way by luring their partners to feel like they are letting go, while in the real sense, they are gaining power.

Lastly, regarding the statement, “Give and take in making decisions is not a problem in this relationship,” 80.1% of the respondents agreed that they easily practiced give and take in decision-making in their relationships, while 19.9% of the respondents reacted, “False,” showing that give and take in making decisions was not a problem in their relationship. This finding suggests that the respondents are good at compromising in their relationships, which according to the propositions made by Gottman and Gottman (2017) is a sign of high marital satisfaction. Nonetheless, marital satisfaction is a complex issue that cannot be decided by one aspect; compromise.

Descriptive Statistics for Compromise Composite Score

A composite score was computed for the data in the items measuring the compromise aspects of conflict management among the couples. The composite score was analyzed using descriptive methods. Table 26 shows the results of the descriptive analysis of the composite

score. It shows mean, standard deviation, upper and lower bounds, skewness, and maximum and minimum values.

Table 26: *Descriptive Statistics Compromise Composite Score*

		Statistic	Std. Error	
Compromise Composite Score	Mean	3.5724	.11682	
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	3.3416	
		Upper Bound	3.8032	
	5% Trimmed Mean	3.6725		
	Median	4.0000		
	Variance	2.074		
	Std. Deviation	1.4402		
		1		
	Minimum	.00		
	Maximum	5.00		
	Range	5.00		
	Interquartile Range	2.00		
	Skewness	-.726	.197	
	Kurtosis	-.461	.391	

Table 26 shows that a high compromise composite score was obtained on a scale from 1 to 5, suggesting high marital satisfaction in terms of compromise ($\bar{x}=3.5724$, $\sigma_x = .11682$). Viewing such a finding through the lens of the analysis done by Piechota et al. (2022) suggests that the respondents have effective conflict resolution methods and consequently high rates of marital satisfaction. The table also shows that the respondents in the middle of the data did not believe that they compromised well in their relationships to resolve or manage conflicts (IQR=2.00). Lastly, the table shows that there was negative skewness (Skn = -.726) showing that the respondents mainly agreed “True” and below.

Histogram Compromise Composite Score

Figure 9 presents a visual representation of the distribution of respondents’ compromise scores.

Figure 9: *Histogram for Compromise Composite Score*

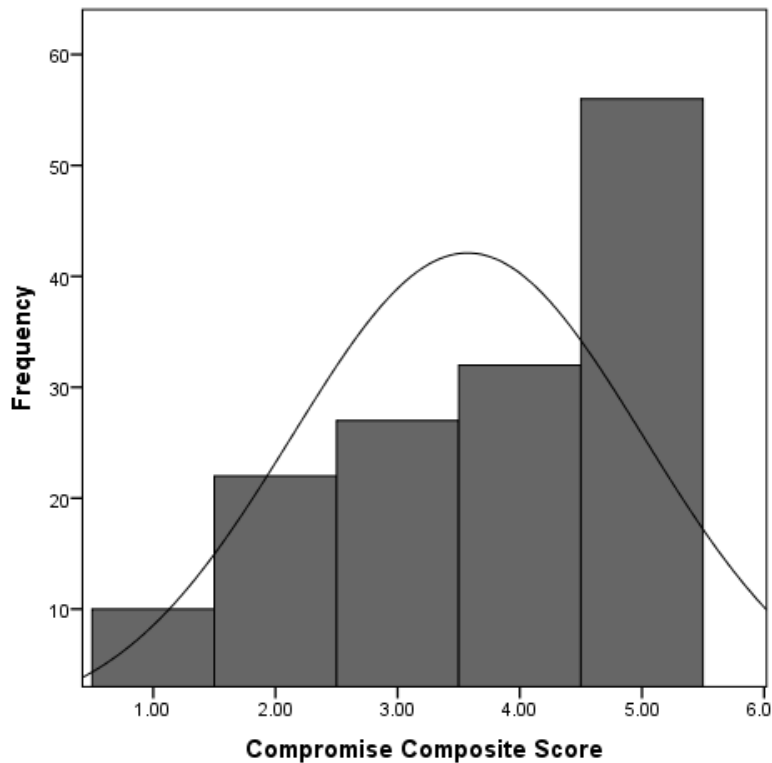


Figure 9 reveals that respondents' compromise was skewed towards the upper end from 1 to 5, which is an indication that most of the respondents made compromises in their marriage.

Objective 3: Personal Experiences of Participants in MCCGs

The third objective of explore the personal experiences of participants in MCCGs within selected CITAM assemblies in Kenya. The qualitative obtained from the questionnaire alongside the quantitative data were coded into theme tables and the salient themes were yielded. This section presents the qualitative analysis of the themes to explore the changes which have occurred to the people since they joined the MCCGs.

Theme 1: Marital Accountability

Thematic analysis revealed salient themes that arose from the analysis. One of these themes was marital accountability. From the thematic analysis, (MCCGs) proved to be effective in improving marital accountability among participants as was evidenced in the respondents' comments. The findings of the study revealed that MCCGs had a significant

impact on improving marital accountability among participants. Participants reported that groups provided them with a supportive environment where they could share their marital challenges, discuss solutions, and receive support and guidance from fellow members. The groups were also instrumental in fostering open communication, honesty, and trust among couples, which are critical components of a healthy marriage.

One of the responses which show that the MCCGs had caused the respondents to be accountable in their marriages was from respondent 26 who commented as follows:

Res 26 “Has increased accountability, supported in realization of our dreams and aspiration, through knowledge shared, referrals, etc.”

The respondent’s comment shows they have grown in their accountability just by being around other couples who also face the same challenges. The views of this respondent were supported by respondent 43, who commented:

Res 43 “Brought us closer. accountability platform.”

These sentiments show that the engagement in the activities of MCCGs has changed the members by improving their accountability in marriage.

Theme 2: Improved Communication

Improved communication was salient theme yielded by the thematic analysis of the responses given by the participants concerning the changes they have experienced since joining the MCCGs. The study also revealed that MCCGs helped participants to develop a better understanding of their spouses, which led to improved communication and conflict-resolution skills, as can be observed from their responses. Participants reported that the groups provided a safe space where they could learn to empathize with their spouses' perspectives, communicate more effectively, and resolve conflicts amicably. This, in turn, improved the quality of their marriages and led to greater marital satisfaction. The improved

communication in marriages can be seen from the response given by Participant 37 who commented:

Res 37 “It has helped us improve on issues, especially communication”

Similarly, participant 54 commented:

Res 54 “Greatly as we find a support base where we can comfortably share our experiences and issues and expect prayers and support.”

The comments show that the engagement with other couples during their meetings in MCCGs impacted their communication, and improved their marital satisfaction, as per the suggestions made by Nikounejad and Naderi (2016) that effective and friendly communication in marriage is an indicator of higher marital satisfaction.

Theme 3: Better Conflict Management

Better conflict management, emerged as one of the salient themes in the changes which the respondents had experienced since they joined the MCCGs. Another important finding was that MCCGs helped couples to build stronger relationships with their spouses and with God, which changed their approach to conflict management. Participants reported that, the groups provided a platform for spiritual growth, where they could learn from each other, pray together, and share their spiritual experiences. This, in turn, helped them to deepen their relationship with God, which positively impacted their marriages. The change of perspective about conflict and the resulting betterment of conflict management among the active members of MCCG was evident in the comments made by respondent 60 who remarked as follows:

Res 60 “It has been a positive experience so far as you get to learn that most of the issues cut across all couples. I also get to learn how to respond positively on most of the challenges.”

From the comments it is evident that interacting with other people has made it easy for the respondent to see that their marital challenges are not unique to them, and that changes how they handle their conflict and this has led to their conflict management, which according to Babcock et al. (2013), is a sign of marital satisfaction. The study yielded that the support, especially from the Church and its leadership was needed for the enhancement of the effectiveness of the MCCGs in improving the marital satisfaction among the respondents in the selected assemblies and build families that are rooted in faith, which is the goal of the MCCGs, as was proposed by CITAM Web (2022). The findings generally relate to Gottman's theory because they show the different roles played by various aspects of the sound house rules in the marital satisfaction of couples from selected assemblies CITAM, Kenya.

Objective 4: Improvement on the MCCGs as Perceived by Participants

The fourth objective of the study was to identify on improvement, the MCCG program as perceived by participants within selected CITAM assemblies in Kenya. The study used the qualitative data which was obtained from the questionnaire when the participants responded to the areas which felt could be improved in the MCCGs. The data was then coagulated and coded into the theme tables, which yielded themes which are discussed in the following sub-sections to unearth the improvements which could benefit the MCCGs in selected CITAM assemblies. The thematic analysis yielded three major themes: increased support, training and guidance.

Theme 1: Support

Support was one of the salient themes yielded by the thematic analysis of the MCCGs aspects which should be improved as per the respondents. Increased support proved to be one of the most important space for improvement for the MCCGs so that the participants can have the best benefits from these. The verbatim excerpt shows that support especially from the leadership of the church was needed to improve the MCCGs to the point that the respondents can have the best benefits from them. Furthermore, other respondents who affirmed the need

for increased support, especially from the Church towards the MCCGs commented evident in the verbatim excerpts that follow:

Res 01 “Coordination with church leadership. Training of MCCG leaders. Development of marriage enrichment resource material.”

Res 03 “Pastoral team to plan to be visiting these MCCG groups and get to know how they are doing and get to know if there are specific topics they can teach to enrich the group.”

Res 13 “Identifying us more materials work with and, more couples retreat, dinners, lunches, breakfasts, couple conferences, etc.”

Res 23 “Leadership of MCCG, study materials, clear policies guiding existence of MCCGs, capacity building for MCCG leaders, general sensitization to the congregation on the significance of belonging to an MCCG.”

Res 43 “Review of size & age sets within each MCCG. The FACE ministry to facilitate workshops for both MCCG leaders & members as a way to encourage, guide & mentor both leaders & members. This may increase the survival rate of new MCCGs.”

From the foregoing verbatim excerpts, it is evident that increased support is one of the improvements, which the respondents believed that would benefit the MCCGs in selected CITAM assemblies. The actions evident such as restructuring, resizing and providing the resources are forms of support which the respondents seek for MCCGs. Furthermore, the need for increased support manifested through the need for mentorship among the respondents. The following respondents’ comments show the evidence of the need for support in form of mentorship among the respondents.

Res 04 “Mentorship.”

Res 12 “More forums to share mentor families at large, e.g. plenary sessions, afternoon sessions on marriage therapy.”

Res 12 “The leaders also need leaders for them to debrief and refuel their spiritual as they bear the weight of the group.”

Support, whether in form of collaboration with Church leadership or mentorship is therefore an importance improvement which the Church has to provide to the MCCGs because these findings are in line with the findings by Dudziak (2021) that the marriage enrichment programs must have support from external affiliate institutions so that the couples do not wear out in the process of helping one another.

Theme 2: Guidance

Thematic analysis also yielded guidance as one of the aspects in which the MCCGs should improve to increase their efficacy in improving marital satisfaction among the respondents. Guidance emerged to be needed not only for the members of the MCCGs but also for the MCCG leaders. The respondents believed that continued guidance of them, and their leaders in the MCCGs would be beneficial to them as they continue to seek marital satisfaction by involving in the activities structured by MCCGs. Respondents whose responses showed the need of guidance commented as shown in the verbatim excerpts provided below:

Res 3 for, example commented, “Having a structure that guides all couples on growing together.”

Res 39 “Guide new couples on how best to enjoy sex. It should be said more candidly during PMCC rather than going with expectations on the first night.”

Res 43 “The leaders also need leaders for them to debrief and refuel their spiritual as they bear the weight of the group.”

The foregoing verbatim excerpts suggest and strongly support the finding that guidance is one of the improvements needed for the MCCGs to be more effective than they are in addressing marital satisfaction of the participants. This finding corroborates the findings of the study by Mullins (2016) who supposed that marriage is a complex institution that to be satisfied in it, it will take the guidance of the Church and the other mature people who have also explored the challenges of marriage.

Theme 3: Training

Training emerged as one of the themes in the thematic analysis of the qualitative data relating to the perceived improvements which the respondents felt could benefit MCCGs. Training was heavily associated with the internal issues such as conflict management and progress of the MCCGs. Respondents averred that training is a needful improvement that has to be integrated into the MCCGs to increase the probability of the success of the MCCGs and this can be seen in some of their responses as shown in the following verbatim excerpts:

Res 19 “Train on conflict management, boundaries when interacting with people of opposite gender (some people tend to get close with people of opposite gender who are not their spouses).”

Res 35 “Training on how to handle areas like conflict management and financial related issues.”

Res 43 “Review of size & age sets within each MCCG. The FACE ministry should facilitate workshops for both MCCG leaders & members as a way to encourage, guide & mentor both leaders & members. This may increase the survival rate of new MCCGs” (Respondent 43).

From the foregoing verbatim excerpts, it is evident that the respondents strongly believe that the training of the members and leaders of the MCCGs can help improve the efficiency of MCCGs in promoting healthy, godly marriages among them. This finding also

corroborates the findings of the study by Şirin and Deniz, (2016) who opined that marriage enrichment program leaders and the members should involve in continuous training to better their performances and reduce the risks of exacerbating marital satisfaction of the members of such programs. The implications that the increased training can enhance the effectiveness of the MCCGs is plausible in light of the results of the study by Tavaloli et al. (2022) who held that marriage complexity requires combined training for the leaders of the enrichment programs and the married partners themselves.

Theme 4: Vision and Mission

The vision of the MCCGs emerged as an issue which was worth improving one from the thematic analyses of their responses to the question of the vision of the MCCGs. The following responses from some of the of the respondents show that the respondents were either not aware of the vision of the MCCGs, or it was not clearly enunciated by the Church for them to recite and follow.

Res 12 “Not aware.”

Res 22 “Not sure.”

Res 29 “We don't have.”

Res 43 “None.”

From the foregoing verbatim excerpts, it is evident that the respondents did not know the vision and mission of the MCCGs or the MCCGs did not have clearly written and documented vision and mission statements for the members to know and work towards in all their activities and engagements. These two scenarios, according to Roblek et al. (2018), can reduce the effectiveness of the programs to enrich couple friendship and consequently marital satisfaction among the respondents.

Discussion of the Findings

The results and discussions demonstrated that couple friendship was high among the respondents which in turn suggested that they had high levels of marital satisfaction. This section presents the discussion of the results of the study.

Impact of MCCG on Couple Friendship within Selected CITAM Assemblies

The first objective of the study was to assess the impact of MCCGs on couple friendship within the selected CITAM Assemblies in Kenya. On average, the participants reported high marital satisfaction regarding the friendship aspect. This suggests that most respondents had a strong sense of friendship, indicating high marital satisfaction. Going by Mutunga (2020) who propose close bond as evidence of marital satisfaction, it is safe to conclude that this couples experience marital satisfaction. In summary, these findings demonstrate that the participants had a positive perception of their marriages and valued the friendship aspect.

Practitioners working with couples can prioritize and promote the development of a strong sense of friendship within the relationship. Emphasizing activities that foster friendship, such as shared hobbies, open communication, and quality time together, can be beneficial in enhancing overall marital satisfaction (Sauter et al., 2022). Additionally, practitioners can use these findings to guide interventions aimed at improving couples' satisfaction by focusing on strengthening the friendship aspect of their relationship. By helping couples build a solid foundation of friendship, practitioners can contribute to long-term marital happiness and stability. Understanding the link between friendship and marital satisfaction can inform effective strategies and interventions for practitioners working with couples.

Effects of MCCG on Conflict Management

The second objective was to examine the effect of MCCGs on conflict management within selected CITAM assemblies in Kenya. The results demonstrated that there were better conflict management among the respondents. Viewing this finding through the lens of the analysis done by Canelakes (2011) suggested that majority of the respondents have high marital satisfaction among the respondents. Furthermore, the respondents had high levels of repair attempts, which in light of the results of the study analysis done by Yeun and Yang (2012), is an indicator of high levels of marital satisfaction. The implications of the above findings suggest that the implementation of Marriage and Couple Counseling Groups (MCCGs) has a positive effect on conflict management within CITAM assemblies in Kenya. The results indicate that respondents reported better conflict management skills, which aligns with the analysis conducted by Canelakes (2011), suggesting high levels of marital satisfaction.

Personal Experiences of Participants in MCCGs

The third objective of explore the personal experiences of participants in MCCGs within selected CITAM assemblies in Kenya. Thematic analysis revealed that marital accountability, improved communion and better conflict management were some of the personal experiences which these respondents had by participating in the MCCGs. These findings, in light of the findings of the study by Babcock et al. (2013) which held that a thriving marriage has to have better conflict mangament and free fellowship among themselves while being able to hold one another accountbale, points to the marital satisfcation emanating from the respondents' experineces in the MCCGs. The findings generally relate to Gottman's theory because they show the differet roles played by various aspects of the sound house rules in the marital satisfcation of couples from selceted assemblies CITAM, Kenya.

Improvement on the MCCGs as Perceived by Participants

The last objective of the current study was to identify on improvement, the MCCG program as perceived by participants within selected CITAM assemblies in Kenya. Thematic analysis elicited three major themes; support, guidance and training as some of the changes which the respondents believed should be made to the MCCGs to increase their efficiency in ensuring marital satisfaction among the respondents. The findings suggest that participants value additional support from the program, including emotional and practical assistance. They also emphasized the importance of receiving clear guidance on conflict resolution strategies and effective communication techniques. Furthermore, participants highlighted the importance of ongoing training to enhance their skills and knowledge in maintaining marital satisfaction. Incorporating these suggested changes can contribute to further enhancing the effectiveness and impact of MCCGs in promoting healthy marriages among the participants.

Chapter Summary

This chapter concentrated on data analysis as well as presenting and analyzing the study's primary findings. Descriptive statistics revealed high scores in terms of marital satisfaction ($\bar{x}=4.2689$, $\sigma_x =.07070$), love maps ($\bar{x}=.8405$, $\sigma_x =.01726$), fondness and admiration systems ($\bar{x}=.8095$, $\sigma_x =.03657$) and turning toward one another ($\bar{x}=.6076$, $\sigma_x =.02684$). Qualitative analysis revealed that marital accountability, improved communication, better conflict management, as some of the key personal experience while support, guidance, and training represented improvements. The next chapter summarizes the key findings per objective, and discusses implications as well as conclusions drawn.

Chapter 5: Summary of Findings, Implications, Recommendations, Areas for Further Research, and Conclusion

Introduction

The overarching purpose of this study was to evaluate the efficacy of Married Couples' Care Groups on marital satisfaction with respect to couple friendship and conflict management in selected CITAM assemblies. This chapter provides an overview of the study's primary findings, examines the theoretical and practical consequences of the findings, and makes suggestions while recommending areas for future research. The chapter then draws a conclusion based on the current study's findings.

Summary of Key Findings

Status of Couple Friendship of the Participants

The first objective of the study was to assess the impact of MCCGs on couple friendship within the selected CITAM Assemblies in Kenya. The study revealed that on average, the respondents had high levels of couple friendship ($\bar{x}=4.2689$, $\sigma_x=.07070$). The study revealed that most of the respondents had high levels of friendship ($\bar{x}=4.2689$, $\sigma_x=.07070$). Furthermore, the love maps aspect of their marital satisfaction was also investigated using descriptive statistics. The analysis revealed that the respondents had high levels of marital satisfaction regarding the aspects of their love maps ($\bar{x}=4.1974$, $\sigma_x=.08659$). Furthermore, the analysis of their fondness and admiration system revealed that they had high levels of fondness and admiration systems ($\bar{x}=3.8355$, $\sigma_x = 0.13249$). Lastly, the analysis of the respondents' friendship in terms of turning toward or turning away revealed that they had moderate rates of turning toward one another ($\bar{x}=3.0329$, $\sigma_x = .13412$). These findings generally established that the respondents had high levels of friendship and by implication, high level of marital satisfaction. The theme of bonding with spouse and creating

friendship was emergent from the qualitative results, suggesting that high marital satisfaction resulted from MCCGs.

Conflict Management Status of the Participants

The second objective of the study was to examine the effect of MCCGs on conflict management within selected CITAM assemblies in Kenya. The descriptive analysis revealed that the respondents had low levels of harsh startups ($\bar{x}=1.6250$, $\sigma_x = .12861$). It also showed that the respondents had moderately high repair attempts ($\bar{x}=2.7881$, $\sigma_x = .12663$) and high levels of compromise ($\bar{x}=3.5724$, $\sigma_x = .11682$), which all strongly suggested that the respondents had high rates of conflict management. The implication of these findings is that the participants enjoy good marital satisfaction. This aligns with the findings of the study by He et al. (2018) which linked conflict management skills to higher marital satisfaction. Findings from qualitative analysis revealed that respondents appreciated MCCGs participants learnt from each other on ways of conflict resolution, enabling them to resolve conflicts more amicably. The findings suggest strongly that MCCGs were an effect agent for promoting conflict management and consequently couple friendship among the respondents.

Personal Experiences of Participants in MCCGs

The third objective of the study was to explore the personal experiences of participants in MCCGs within selected CITAM assemblies in Kenya. The study revealed that marital accountability, improved communication and better conflict management are some of the major personal experiences which the respondents had gotten since joining the MCCGs. These findings explained the positive status of the participants on their couple friendship rating and capacity for conflict management. The findings showed that MCCGs are instrumental in developing these attributes among the couples and therefore supporting their marital satisfaction. This finding agrees with Gottman and Gottman's (2017) Sound

Relationship House which emphasize participation in such forums in order to develop marital care skills.

Improvement on the MCCGs as Perceived by Participants

The last objective of the study was to identify on improvement, the MCCG program as perceived by participants within selected CITAM assemblies in Kenya. Qualitative analysis was used for this objective. Qualitative analysis revealed that the needful improvements as perceived by participants included support, guidance and training, which the respondents believed would enhance the efficiency of the MCCG programs. Support is necessary as marriages can have ups and downs, and couples often face challenges along the way. A care group that emphasizes support creates a safe and non-judgmental space for couples to share their experiences, concerns, and struggles (Mehra et al., 2018). It allows couples to feel understood and validated, knowing that they are not alone in their journey. Support from others who may have faced similar situations can provide comfort, encouragement, and a sense of community.

Secondly, marriage is a lifelong commitment that requires continuous effort and growth. Couples may benefit from guidance and insights on how to navigate various aspects of their relationship. Experienced facilitators or mentors within the care group can offer valuable advice, share effective communication strategies, and help couples develop skills to strengthen their bond. Guided discussions and educational resources can also provide couples with a broader perspective on common issues in marriage and ways to address them.

Thirdly, just like any other skill, building a successful marriage requires learning and practice. A care group that incorporates training sessions or workshops can equip couples with practical tools and techniques to enhance their relationship. Topics such as conflict resolution, active listening, emotional intelligence, and maintaining intimacy can be covered

in these training sessions (Mehra et al., 2018). By providing structured learning opportunities, couples can gain valuable insights and acquire the necessary skills to nurture a healthy and fulfilling marriage.

Implications

Various practical and theoretical implications portend from the results of this study. This section presents a discussion of the practical and theoretical implications of the study, based on the findings of the study.

Practical Implications

From a practical viewpoint, the Marriage and Couples Care Groups (MCCGs) are vital in enhancing marital satisfaction within the CITAM assemblies. MCCGs offer valuable accountability and encouragement for couples striving to strengthen their relationship. Within these groups, members hold each other responsible for upholding biblical principles and fostering a supportive environment where couples can work towards improving their marital bond. Moreover, MCCGs serve as platforms for individuals to discover the diverse dimensions of their shared struggles. This knowledge enables them to embark on a joint journey of mutual edification in marriage as they connect with others who face similar marital challenges. Witnessing fellow group members persevere through their marital journeys offers inspiration and motivation to persist and grow in their relationships (Sauter et al., 2022). Through these powerful dynamics, MCCGs truly empower and enable couples to navigate the ups and downs of married life together.

The MCCGs benefit the marital satisfaction of the members for many reasons, which the study established. MCCGs provide a space for couples to grow spiritually together through spiritual activities. The group's activities, including Bible study, prayer, and worship, help to deepen couples' understanding of their faith and their relationship with God (Lebow

& Snyder, 2022). Furthermore, unity for marital satisfaction, developed in the MCCGs meetings, increases the members' vulnerability and ability to ask for help from their peers. Peer marital edification are facets of MCCGs and these activities grow married couples in comparison to other settings where they would be skeptical of being judged when they share fears and anxiety about their marriages.

Pastors have a significant influence on the way people join the MCCGs. They are an integral part of the whole system, which ensures the best results when it comes to the marital satisfaction of the members. Members gain confidence when they receive advice from their pastors, and this encourages more couples to join the MCCGs. Pastors are the authorities that link married couples not only to God but also to the rest of the congregants with whom they can walk and share marriage experiences and this promotes marriage satisfaction. Furthermore, as proposed by Leblow and Snyder (2022), they often have a comprehensive understanding of the congregation and its members. They may be aware of couples who could benefit from joining a care group or who are seeking to connect with others. Pastors can play a pivotal role in introducing couples to existing care groups or even facilitating the formation of new groups based on specific needs.

Growth in terms of support, accountability, and intentionality occurs when the members of the MCCGs meet. By seeing other couples hold on to their marriages, other married couples are challenged to find people willing to walk with them on the journey of marriage (Thomas et al., 2017). At the same time, they share their struggles and victories. This way, the members of the MCCGs improve the satisfaction in their marriages by learning about conflict management, friendship, love, and compromise. By actively engaging in care groups that focus on these areas, couples can gain valuable insights, tools, and support to improve their marriages. These groups provide a platform for learning, sharing experiences, and receiving guidance from others who may have faced similar challenges. With effort and

dedication, couples can enhance their communication, strengthen their emotional connection, and ultimately increase their satisfaction in their marriages (Mehra et al., 2018).

Theoretical Implications

The study found that Gottman's Sound Relationship House was an excellent tool in confirming the status of a couple's friendship and conflict management. This implies that the concepts and principles outlined in the Sound Relationship House theory effectively capture important aspects of successful relationships. By assessing the quality of friendship and conflict management, it can provide insights into the overall health and strength of a marriage. This was confirmed by qualitative data that linked various dimensions of Sound Relationship House to marital satisfaction.

The results implied that Sound Relationship House remains a solid theory for evaluating the health of marriages even in Kenya, not just where it was formulated. The study suggests that the theory is not limited to the context where it was initially formulated but can be applied to evaluate the health of marriages in other cultural contexts, such as Kenya. This finding indicates the potential cross-cultural validity of the theory. However, it will be interesting to increase data evaluating this tool within Kenya to increase the confidence of its generalizability across African contexts where it has not been widely exploited. Cultural factors can influence relationship dynamics, communication styles, and conflict resolution strategies. Therefore, evaluating the applicability of Gottman's theory in different cultural settings is crucial to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Further studies in various cultural contexts can help identify any necessary adaptations or modifications to the theory to account for cultural nuances and specific challenges faced by couples.

For a research such as this, for it to be the only tool, it is required to have a longitudinal research data so that comparisons are done at various stages of marital

development to be able to speak credibly to the significance of an enrichment program as a tool of marital development. Longitudinal research involves studying participants over an extended period, observing and collecting data at multiple stages of marital development. This approach allows researchers to examine changes and patterns in relationship dynamics and assess the impact of interventions or enrichment programs over time. By collecting data at various stages of marital development, researchers can explore the long-term effects of enrichment programs and assess the stability of relationship qualities measured by the Sound Relationship House theory. Longitudinal research provides a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to marital satisfaction and success. It also enables comparisons between couples who have participated in an enrichment program and those who have not, facilitating credible assessments of the program's effectiveness.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of the research, the study makes recommendations as follows;

- i. The study unearthed that pastors had influenced many couples to join MCCGs than peers and FaCE group leaders. The pastors at CITAM therefore should be intentional in urging the members of the Church to join FaCE so that a greater percentage of the congregants can be involved in the MCCGs, which has proven to be beneficial to the marital satisfaction of the couples. Furthermore, the study determined that the vision and mission of the MCCGs were not clear to the respondents. The Church therefore should make endeavor to enunciate and document these important aspects of the MCCGs to help improve the effectiveness of the program.
- ii. The study recommend that churches can adopt MCCGs and structure it to suit their own establishment. This is because the study established that the couples who were involved in MCCGs scored highly on the different aspects of marital satisfaction including friendship and conflict management, aspects which have been proved to be

important which Sauter et al. 2022) found to be essential to the overall marital satisfaction of the couples. CITAM should therefore find ways to incentivize the members to join the MCCG programs available in the Church because this can help increase marital satisfaction and reduce the problem of divorce which is plaguing the modern Church.

- iii. The study highlighted the need for pastors to support, training and guidance of MCCGs to increase their efficiency in promoting healthy, godly marriages among the members of the selected CITAM assemblies. The Church therefore should collaborate with the leaders and members of the MCCGs and promote guidance, supportive leadership and training which can benefit these leaders and members engage in meaningful ways that heal rather than exacerbate the state of their marriages.

Areas for Further Research

Despite the insightful findings of this study, there still remain gaps that could be explored to optimize the efficacy of the MCCGs to the marital satisfaction of the members of the local assemblies in CITAM.

- i. Although this study revealed that the respondents had high levels of marital satisfaction, it only involved participants from three CITAM local assemblies located in Nairobi, CITAM Thika Road, Woodley, and Clay City. There is a need to extend the investigation of the efficacy of the MCCGs in improving marital satisfaction. Further studies should be conducted including participants from other assemblies and other regions to determine the efficacy of the MCCGs not only in the three assemblies but in other regions as well.
- ii. The quantitative data analysis in this study was mainly descriptive. Further quantitative inferential studies are needed to establish the link (if any) between marital satisfaction and engagement in MCCGs. Establishing this link and its magnitude

through correlation, regression and moderator analysis can help the Church establish where exactly they should target, if they want to ultimately improve the marital satisfaction among the members of CITAM, Kenya.

- iii. The current study only involved members of the Church. There is need for a comparative study which looks at the rates of marital satisfaction among members of MCCGs and non-members and explore the different factors that affect the level of marital satisfaction.
- iv. The study shows evidence of effectiveness of MCCGs in promoting couple friendship and consequently marital satisfaction. However, since couple friendship and marital satisfaction are volatile issues which can be very challenging to predict in an instance, there is need for longitudinal research should be conducted among these respondents. Longitudinal studies will help observe and investigate participants over an extended period, observing and collecting data at multiple stages of marital development. provides a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to marital satisfaction and success. It also enables comparisons between couples who have participated in an enrichment program and those who have not, facilitating credible assessments of the program's effectiveness.

Conclusion

The research has evaluated the efficacy of Married Couples' Care Groups on marital satisfaction with respect to couple friendship and conflict management in selected CITAM assemblies. The study revealed that the respondents scored highly on friendships measure of their marital satisfaction. Descriptive statistics also showed that the participants scored highly on-the aspects of conflict management. From the qualitative data, the study highlighted marital accountability, improved communication, and better conflict management were some of the changes which had occurred to the couples since they joined MCCG.

Lastly, the study identified support, training and guidance as some of the pertinent improvements that should be incorporated into the MCCGs to enhance the efficiency of the MCCGs in improving the quality of marriage among the participants. Therefore, the leadership in CITAM should find ways to improve the efficacy of MCCGs and get more members involved because they produce marital satisfaction among the members.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear respondent, thank you for participating in this study, your contribution is highly valued. My name is Grace Wanyeki a Masters student at PAC University carrying out a study on how effective Married Couples Care Group (MCCG) is in promoting your marriage satisfaction especially in regards to couple friendship and conflict management. You are requested to fill in the questionnaire fully to the best of your capability. In case of areas you don't understand feel free to ask for clarification. To ensure confidentiality, we will use study code instead of names. We will ensure that the raw data is not exposed to the public and will be secure. Time required to fill in the questionnaire is approximately 20 minutes.

Kindly sign this form to confirm your consent to participating in this study.

Participant's Signature: Date:

Study code:

Indicate if you are an MCCG/FaCE Leader or just a Member.

MCCG /FaCE Leader: (Fill in Sections 1- 5)

MCCG Member: (Fill in Sections 1- 3)

SECTION 1: Socio Demographic Factors (To be completed all the participants)

Age in years:

18- 24

25-31

32-38

39-45

46-52

≥ 53

Gender

Male

Female

Length of Marriage in years:

0-5

6-10

11-15

16-20

20-25

26-30

31-35

≥ 36

Are you interracial / interethnic couples? Yes

No

Do you have biological children?

Yes:

No:

If Yes, How many children?

1-5

6-10

>10

For how long have you been born again/ a believer in Jesus Christ (years)?

1-5

6-10

11-15

16-20

20-25

>25

Who influenced you to join Married Couple Care Groups (MCCGs)?

Pastor

MCCGs Leader

Peers

Others: (Specify)

SECTION 2: Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire (To be completed by all the participant)

I feel emotionally close to my partner.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

I think my partner cares about me.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

I feel confident we can deal with whatever problems might come up in our relationship.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

I consider myself happy in this relationship.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

My Spouse usually listens to me.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

LOVE MAPS

Read each statement and place a check mark in the appropriate TRUE or FALSE box.

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 place a check mark in the appropriate TRUE or FALSE box.

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 it.		
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 place a check mark in the appropriate TRUE or FALSE box.

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.		

WHEN WE HAVE CONFLICT

HARSH START UPS

WHEN WE DISCUSS OUR ISSUES	TRUE	FALSE
Our arguments seem to come up out of nowhere.		
I often seem to get blamed for issues.		
My partner criticizes my personality.		
My partner brings up issues abruptly or with poor timing.		
I find my partner's negativity unnerving and unsettling.		

REPAIR ATTEMPTS

DURING OUR ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT BETWEEN US	TRUE	FALSE
We are good at taking breaks when we need them.		
Even when arguing, we can maintain a sense of humor.		
We are pretty good listeners even when we have different positions on things.		
If things get heated, we can usually pull out of it and change things.		
My partner is good at soothing me when I get upset		

COMPROMISE

DURING OUR ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT BETWEEN US	TRUE	FALSE
We are usually good at resolving our differences.		
We both believe in meeting each other halfway when we disagree.		
In discussing issues, we can usually find our common ground of agreement.		
Yielding power is not very difficult for me.		
Give and take in making decisions is not a problem in this relationship.		

QUALITATIVE SECTION

SECTION 3: (To be completed by all the participants)

What do you actually do when you meet together in the MCCG (Married Couple Care Groups)?

.....
.....

How has participating in an MCCG influenced your marriage?

.....
.....

What have you learnt about marriage from your Married Couples' Care Group (MCCG)?

.....
.....

What marital changes has occurred since you joined the Married Couples' Care Group (MCCG)?

.....
.....

What areas do you think can be improved to ensure the MCCGs are more effective?

.....
.....

SECTION 4: Mission/vision/philosophy/content of MCCG program (To be completed by MCCG leaders)

What is the vision of MCCGs?

.....
.....

What is the mission of MCCGs?

.....
.....

Does the MCCGs have a policy guideline that runs it, If Yes Which One?

.....
.....

Do you follow a booklet that serves as marriage guide/curriculum when you meet in your MCCG, If Yes, which one?

.....
.....

What topics have you discussed so far concerning marriage in your MCCG?

.....
.....

Have you ever discussed about couple friendship in marriage? If Yes what changes (if any) did you observe in participant couples in this aspect?

.....
.....

Have you ever discussed about Conflict management in marriage? If Yes, what changes (if any) did you observe in participant couples in the aspect of conflict management?

.....
.....

What areas do you think can be improved to ensure the MCCGs are more effective?

.....
.....

SECTION 5: Mission/Theology/Policy/ Activities covered in MCCGs (To be Completed by FaCE leaders)

What was the original intent of initiating MCCGs in all CITAM assemblies?

.....
.....

What is the vision and mission of the MCCGs?

Vision

.....

Mission

.....

What policy guidelines governs all the MCCGs offered in all the CITAM assemblies?

.....
.....

What are the expected activities to be covered during the MCCGs meetings?

.....

.....

What are the actual activities carried out during the MCCGs meeting?

.....

.....

What areas do you think can be improved to ensure the MCCGs are more effective?

.....

.....

APPENDIX B: NACOSTI PERMIT

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 964940	Date of Issue: 20/March/2023
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
<p>This is to Certify that Ms. GRACE NJOKI WANYEKI 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: EFFICACY OF MARRIED COUPLES' CARE GROUPS ON MARITAL SATISFACTION; COUPLE FRIENDSHIP AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AT SELECTED CITAM ASSEMBLIES for the period ending : 20/March/2024.</p>	
License No: NACOSTI/P/23/24383	
964940 Applicant Identification Number	 Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
	Verification QR Code
	
<p>NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.</p>	
See overleaf for conditions	

THE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION ACT, 2013 (Rev. 2014)
 Legal Notice No. 108: The Science, Technology and Innovation (Research Licensing) Regulations, 2014


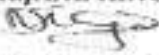
The National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, hereafter referred to as the Commission, was established under the Science, Technology and Innovation Act 2013 (Revised 2014) herein after referred to as the Act. The objective of the Commission shall be to regulate and assure quality in the science, technology and innovation sector and advise the Government in matters related thereto.

CONDITIONS OF THE RESEARCH LICENSE

1. The License is granted subject to provisions of the Constitution of Kenya, the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, and other relevant laws, policies and regulations. Accordingly, the licensee shall adhere to such procedures, standards, code of ethics and guidelines as may be prescribed by regulations made under the Act, or prescribed by provisions of International treaties of which Kenya is a signatory to
2. The research and its related activities as well as outcomes shall be beneficial to the country and shall not in any way;
 - i. Endanger national security
 - ii. Adversely affect the lives of Kenyans
 - iii. Be in contravention of Kenya's international obligations including Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN).
 - iv. Result in exploitation of intellectual property rights of communities in Kenya
 - v. Adversely affect the environment
 - vi. Adversely affect the rights of communities
 - vii. Endanger public safety and national cohesion
 - viii. Plagiarize someone else's work
3. The License is valid for the proposed research, location and specified period.
4. The license any rights thereunder are non-transferable
5. The Commission reserves the right to cancel the research at any time during the research period if in the opinion of the Commission the research is not implemented in conformity with the provisions of the Act or any other written law.
6. The Licensee shall inform the relevant County Director of Education, County Commissioner and County Governor before commencement of the research.
7. Excavation, filming, movement, and collection of specimens are subject to further necessary clearance from relevant Government Agencies.
8. The License does not give authority to transfer research materials.
9. The Commission may monitor and evaluate the licensed research project for the purpose of assessing and evaluating compliance with the conditions of the License.
10. The Licensee shall submit one hard copy, and upload a soft copy of their final report (thesis) onto a platform designated by the Commission within one year of completion of the research.
11. The Commission reserves the right to modify the conditions of the License including cancellation without prior notice.
12. Research, findings and information regarding research systems shall be stored or disseminated, utilized or applied in such a manner as may be prescribed by the Commission from time to time.
13. The Licensee shall disclose to the Commission, the relevant Institutional Scientific and Ethical Review Committee, and the relevant national agencies any inventions and discoveries that are of National strategic importance.
14. The Commission shall have powers to acquire from any person the right in, or to, any scientific innovation, invention or patent of strategic importance to the country.
15. Relevant Institutional Scientific and Ethical Review Committee shall monitor and evaluate the research periodically, and make a report of its findings to the Commission for necessary action.

National Commission for Science, Technology and
 Innovation (NACOSTI),
 Off Waiyaki Way, Upper Kabete,
 P. O. Box 30625 - 00100 Nairobi, KENYA
 Telephone: 020 4097000, 0713788787, 0735404245
 E-mail: dp@nacosti.go.ke
 Website: www.nacosti.go.ke

APPENDIX C: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Certificate of Ethical Clearance</h2>	 <p style="font-size: small;">Pan Africa Christian University Thika Road Campus Valley Road Campus P.O. Box 30875-00300 +254 709950088 +254 109950012 ethics@pacuniversity.ac.ke www.pacuniversity.ac.ke</p> <h3 style="text-align: center;">INSTITUTIONAL SCIENTIFIC ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE (ISERC)</h3>	
<p>This Certificate is awarded to</p> <p>Wanyeki, Grace Njoki</p> <hr/> <p>For the research titled</p> <p>Efficacy of Married Couples' Care Groups on Marital Satisfaction; Couple Friendship and Conflict Management at Selected CITAM assemblies.</p> <p>Ref/PAC/ISERC/008/2/23</p> <hr/> <p>having complied with PAC University Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee's guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures for ethical clearance.</p>			
<p>This Certificate is issued subject to compliance with the following requirements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Before commencing the study, you are required to obtain a Research License from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) as well as other institutional clearances as and where needed. ii. Only approved documents including research instruments and informed consent forms will be used. iii. All changes including amendments and/or deviations are to be submitted for review and clearance by PAC University Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee before use. iv. Any expected or unexpected changes that may increase the risks to study participants or affect the integrity of the study must be reported in writing to PAC University Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee within two days. v. Any request for renewal or approval must be submitted to PAC University Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee at least four weeks prior to the expiry of this Certificate and must be accompanied by a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal. 			
Date of issue	27/2/2023	Expiry date	27/2/2024
<p>DR. JANE KINUTHIA</p>  <p>Secretary PAC_ISERC</p>			

APPENDIX D: PAC UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

2ND MARCH, 2023



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

P.O. Box 56875 - 00200
Nairobi, Kenya
Lumumba Drive, Roysambu
off Kamiti Rd, off Thika Rd
Tel: 0734 400694/0721 932050
Email: enquiries@pacuniversity.ac.ke
website: www.pacuniversity.ac.ke

**RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION & ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER FOR
WANYEKI GRACE NJOKI REG. NO: MMFT/10650/0/18**

Greetings! This is an introductory letter for the above named person a final year student at Pan Africa Christian University (PAC University), pursuing the degree of Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy.

She is at the final stage of the programme and is preparing to collect data to enable her finalise on the Thesis. The Thesis title is *"Efficacy of Married Couples' Care Groups on Marital Satisfaction; Couple Friendship and Conflict Management at Selected Citam Assemblies"*.

We kindly request that you allow her obtain a research permit so as to proceed and conduct research at Selected CITAM Assemblies in Kenya.

Warm Regards,

PAN AFRICA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
REGISTRAR
P.O. Box 56875 - 00200,
TEL: 0721 932050 0731 400694
NAIROBI, KENYA

Dr. Lilian Vikiru
Registrar Academic Affairs
Pan Africa Christian University
Lumumba Drive, Roysambu, off Kamiti Rd, off Thika Rd
Tel: +254 730-955306/+254734400694
Email: registrar.a2
Web:

APPENDIX E: CITAM RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

RE: SEEKING AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT AN ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN SELECTED CITAM ASSEMBLIES inbox x



John Karita <jkarita@citam.org>
to me

Wed, Mar 22, 2:10 PM

Dear Grace

I hereby give approval for you to carry out the research within the CITAM Churches you listed in your request.

All the best

Rev. Karita Mbagara, PhD.

Deputy Bishop - **CITAM**



From: grace wanyeki <gracewanyeki@gmail.com>
Sent: 21 March 2023 20:20
To: John Karita <jkarita@citam.org>

search?from=jkarita%40citam.org&subset=all&within=1d&sizeoperator=s_sl&sizeunit=s_smb&query=from%3A(jkarita%40citam.org)/jyXPWwc9kDBmBZd

APPENDIX F: THEME TABLES

What is the vision of MCCGs?

	Transcribed Response	Codes	Subthemes	Themes
	Thriving, successful, and spiritually sound families	Successful Spiritually Families	Growing families	
	Building marriages that last to God's glory	Building Marriages	Godly marriages	
	Develop Godly marriages	Godly Marriages	Godly Marriages	
	To grow our marriages, God's way	Grow Marriages God's Way	Strong Godly families	
	Healthy marriages	Healthy marriages	Healthy marriages	
	families thriving for the glory of God	Thriving for Glory God	Godly families	
	Strengthening families	Strengthening Marriages	Strong marriages	
	To reach out to more other couples and build strong families	Build strong families		
	To make sure each couple is well equipped with knowledge	Knowledge		
0	To strengthen families and grow together	Strengthen		
1	To be role models of ideal marriage in the world age	Role Models		
2	Creating Christ Centered marriages and being the light that marriage works in our community when you work it with God's help. To Foster and nurture healthy vibrant fellowships that meets couples needs through the support of the Local Church we all belong tom Being United as a family of believers who believe in marriage.	Christ-centered Marriage works God's help		
3	Strengthening marriages		Strong marriages	
4	Enrich marriages	Enrich marriages	Strong marriages	
5	Families growing together		Growing families	

6	I think to be accountability groups for couples	Couples	Accountability	
7	Growing families together		Strong marriages	
8	To be close friends and a family and strengthen each family unit to stand harsh times	Strengthen Family Friends	Strong marriages	Strongly Godly Marriages
9	To have strong and vibrant marriages through interactions with other couples.	Strong, vibrant, marriages	Strong Marriages	
0	To see all marriages grounded on God's Word and last a lifetime through mutual Love.			
1	Couples and families serving God's purpose in our generation	God's purpose	Godly marriages	
2	CARE that should and is the VISION, CARE as the name goes MARRIED COUPLES care GROUP	Care	Growth in marriage	
3	To care for families through the married couples	Care for families	Strong families	
4	Marriages that will impact the world with their marriages			
5	To improve marriages for God's Glory.		Godly marriages	
6	Going to higher heights in caring for other members of the team	Helping other	Growth in marriages	
7	Fellowship in healthy marriages			
8	To see couples, flourish and discover the sole purpose because God brought them together, hence thrive.	Flourish	Strong Godly marriages	
9	To know God and to make Him known through evangelism and discipleship	God		
0	To have Effective Families	Effective families	Strong families	
1	-To be Promise Keepers that mirror the heart of Christ in our Marriages.	Mirrors Christ Marriages	Christ-like marriages	
2	To have lasting bonds as couples support one another	Lasting Bonds Support	Growing couples	

3	To strengthen the bond of couples in relation to raising godly families	Strength Bind Godly families	Strong Godly families	
4	Thriving Marriages for a better community	Community	Thriving marriages	
5	Redeemed families, communities & societies worldwide through Christ.	Redeemed families	Redeemed Families for Christ	
6	To have families to be admired in the society	Families Admired	Admired Families	
7	That couples will build relationships that will go beyond MCCG	Build relationships	Strong marriages	

What is the Mission of MCCGs?

	Transcribed Response	Codes	Sub Themes	Themes
	Empower marriages	Empower marriages	Empowerment of marriages	
	To raise couples who are committed to a lifelong relationship	Raise Couples	Commitment	
	To grow couples who will impact the world through nurture,	Nurturing Impacts	Nurturing Couples	
	Reaching out to couples with an impact	Impact	Impacting couples	
	To promote solid fellowship, that provides care, support, nurture, and accountability for married couples	Promote Care Nurture Accountability	Nurture Empowerment of families	
	Impact marriages in all sectors, money love, communication, devotion much more	Impact Communication Devotion		
	Inspire, strengthen, and save marriages by serving one another.			Empowering Marriages for Godly Lives
	To impact the families through care	Impact Families	Impacting Families	
	Build friendships and learn from each other			

0	Disciple families	Disciple families	Empowerment of Families	
1	To care for members of the group and fellowship	Care Fellowship	Empowerment of families	
2	To build bonds through encouraging and building each other up in order to promote effective happy marriages.	Build Encouragement Effective Happy marriages	Empowerment of families	
3	Holding hands as couples during the journey	Holding hand	Supporting families	
4	To empower couples to live out their God-ordained purposes.	Empower	Empowerment	
5	To be led by Holy Spirit in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ by nurturing & affirming the God-ordained institution of the family & proclaiming biblical truths worldwide.	Led nurturing God-ordained Affirming		

What topics have you discussed so far concerning marriage in your MCCG?

	Transcribed Responses	Subthemes	Themes
1.	Communication, Spicing up our sexual life, Conflict Resolution, and Family altar	Intimacy Communication	
2.	Finance communication losses parenting		
3.	Communication, Financial management, Intimacy, Parenting, and Friendship, among others	Intimacy Communication	
4.	Marriage as a covenant, healthy conflict management, sex, familiarity in marriage		
5.	Conflict in marriage, Communication, sex, raising children, enhancing friendship in marriage work-life balance, planning for retirement, etc.	Intimacy Communication	
6.	Communication, finances, sexual intimacy, parenting	Intimacy Communication	
7.	over the years we have dealt with finances, conflict, communication, parenting, sexual intimacy, intimacy and oneness with God, in-laws and other family relations, death	Intimacy Communication	
8.	Parenting, communication, conflict management, intimacy, writing a will		
9.	Communication, conflict resolution, sexuality, children's upbringing, business opportunities, etc. Sometimes we just meet we		

	interact and pray together. Other times we visit one of them to console our parents		
10	Conflict issues, sex issues, money issues		
11	How our journey started		
12	Communication, conflict resolution, finances, in-laws		
13	Communication, intimacy	Intimacy Communication	Intimacy and Communication
14	Communication		
15	Sex and communication.	Intimacy Communication	
16	Sex, communication, conflict resolution		
17	How we support each other at home		
18	Conflict Resolutions, sex & intimacy, Gender roles		
19	Sexual intimacy, communication and conflict resolution, finances, roles, and responsibilities leaving a legacy, currently ongoing with parenting		
20	Communication, conflict resolution	Intimacy Communication	
21	Communication		
22	Finances; In-laws: raising teenage children; communication in marriage	Intimacy Communication	
23	Money matters, health, dental care, intimacy		
24	Intimacy, Finances, Communication		
25	Communication, Finance, Family,		
26	Intimacy, duties, and responsibility.		
27	Handling in-laws, conflict resolutions, investments	Intimacy Communication	
28	Sex and intimacy	Intimacy Communication	
29	Healthy marriage habits		
30	Communication, conflict resolution, parenting, finances, baggage, seasons of marriage, etc		

31	Communication, covenant, love		
32	Communication, finances, dealing with in-laws, etc.		
33	Communication		
34	Finances, Inheritance, Finances, Children, Parenting, and In-laws.		
35	Many covering - Communication, Intimacy, Finances, Parenting, Retirement		
36	Thankfulness, healthy marriage habits, living, and cleaving.		
37	Appreciation, care, sharing life issues		
38	Communication, sexuality, finance, dealing with relatives., parenting, friendship, conflict management	Intimacy Communication	
39	In-laws, finances.		
40	Covenant, finances, intimacy, parenting, prayer	Intimacy Communication	
41	Conflict Resolution		
42	Communication, conflict management		
43	Marriage as a covenant, conflict resolution, intimacy, communication		
44	Marriage, Finance, Parenting, Conflict Resolution		
45	Building a Godly alter, roles and responsibilities in marriage, intimacy, raising Children in a Godly way, finances	Intimacy Communication	
46	Priesthood, finances, Intimacy, communication, parenting, conflict	Intimacy Communication	
47	Finance management, conflict resolution, parenting		
48	Finances, legal issues esp. succession,		
49	Children, investments, communication		
50	Financial management, Sex, and intimacy	Intimacy	

51	Finance and sex	Intimacy	
52	Conflict resolution, sex, finance, good upbringing of children, faithfulness, communication, etc	Conflict Resolution	
53	Communication, finances, In-laws, how to raise kids, how to understand the other partner	Communication	
54	We pray for each other and discuss family challenges; it's not very well structured		
55	Conflict resolution, Parenting, communication family finances		
56	Law and family in Kenya, types of marriages, inheritance,		

What do you engage in when you meet together in the MCCG (Married Couple Care Groups)?

	Interview Transcription	Subthemes	Themes
	Bible study, sharing experiences on marital issues, eating together	Marriage-related Discussions	
	Fellowship, discussion of sessional issues		
	Discuss issues about marriage. Eat and feast. Talk and pray	Marriage-related Discussions	
	Pray, share our lives support each other	Prayer	
	Pray, share how our month has been and, study material together		
	Catch up on how we are all doing as individuals and, in our marriages, and discuss the topic of the day from a guide offered by the church. This however changes in case the group feels there is a burning topic we should attend to for that session.	Marriage-related Discussions	
	Discuss topics related to marriage and how we can grow and enrich our marriage.		
	We go through the study but before that we just ask each other how they are		
	We discuss topics or trending issues affecting marriages and how to overcome them		
	Share a meal, have a person share a devotion, get to know how each couple is doing, delve into study material, pray for one another		
0	We catch up, do devotion, and carry out the study of the day with material for the day (Currently our MCCG is doing a guide on parenting), then we finish	Marriage-related Discussions	

	with prayers for the needs among us. We also assign the couples to pray for each other at the end of the session. The couple prays for the couple chosen for the rest of the month until we meet in the consequent month.	Prayer	
1	We often pray together at the start and end of the MCCG, we review with honesty how we have been as husband and wife while we have been away from our last meeting. We share a meal or snack together as a group, we share candidly on matters family and relationship following a systematic way provided for us by the Navigators manual and other resourceful materials provided by our church at CITAM Thika road. We plan a weekly couples date, a yearly retreat and family get together fan day for all members in our group with their families.	Prayer	
2	I like discussing as they are. Real issues		
3	Bible Study, speakers		
4	We discuss about marriage life and fellowship together		
5	Discuss marriage relates aspects to better our marriage		
6	We have been going through study materials on marriage		
7	We share, enlighten, encourage one another		
8	Share a meal and pursue a topic common to all of us		
9	Discuss various topics; we start by checking how we are really doing and build from there		
0	Study a book		
1	Bonding stories, have studies together and play games		
2	We discuss issues affecting our marriages		
3	Discuss topics that suit marriage		
4	We discuss issues concerning our marriage or have a speaker to talk to us		
6	Catch up on our wellbeing our children what we are up to. Then we discuss the subject matter of the day.		
7	Have fun through questions if we truly know our partners		

8	We laugh a lot, learn together, eat together, pour out ourselves to one another, pray together, challenge one another		
9	We have discussions around marriages. I always like the ice breaker where we have questions for each other as couples.		
0	Catch up on how the month has been, share devotion, discuss a common topic, do outdoor activities occasionally,		
1	Discussing about marriage mentoring twelve conversation guides		
2	Discuss mostly on things that may affect marriage		
3	Discuss marital issues		
4	Fellowship, read marriage related materials and also have fun together with our family. Also learn a lot of day-to-day life experiences from each other		
5	Discuss marriage issues and have fun by engaging in activities.		
6	We have materials provided by the church and we also discuss our relationships status, problems, good news etc.	Marriage-related Discussions	
7	Discuss issues affecting marriages		
8	We eat together and discuss various topics in regards to enriching our relationship	Marriage-related Discussions	
9	Discuss various topics, have fun and help each other		
0	Discuss issues openly		
1	Discussing different experiences in our marriages		
2	Discuss issues, swallow ship and prayers		
3	Pray, do the 12 conversations on marriage, eat, talk, share issues		
4	Share our life issues, discuss 12 conversations of marriage		
5	Learn from each other		
6	We discuss topics identified and agreed by members		

7	We discuss up and down of marriage and marital issues. We also look for ways to solve the issues.	Marriage-related Discussions	Peer Marital Edification
8	Share experiences. Pray together		
9			
0	Initially we had a manual from the church. We went through with our MCCG. When we finished, we met and talked about different things that influence good relationships in marriage, we discussed about in laws, matters finance etc.		
1	Multiple: prayer, care for each other		
2	Discuss issues affecting families		
2	We share our experiences in marriage and disappointment		
3	Discuss issues affecting us as couples		
4	Sharing on how everyone is doing and their marriages too. Discuss a given topic from the guide books provided.		
5	Discuss our marriage expectations		
6	Pray, complete a study guide, discuss our marriages		
7	Check on each other, read books, discuss contemporary issues affecting us etc.		
8	Pray	Prayer	
9	Get a topic to discuss, majorly a common issue being experienced by most people in the group.	Discussions	
0	Discuss a study material then catchup	Marriage-related Discussions	
1	Catch up, discuss the study, pray for each family	Marriage-related Discussions	
2	We are not members of any due to distance.		
3	We catch up as couples, follow through a study guide and pray for each couple's needs	Marriage-related Discussions Prayer	
4	Discuss life issues in marriage	Prayer	

5	I have not attended for a while		
6	Sharing experience and walking together	Prayer	
7	Bonding		
8	Pray share and encourage one another	Prayer	
9	Catch up and discuss on topics assigned through the year		
0	Discuss issues and pray together	Marriage-related Discussions	
1	Fellowship, share our highlights and challenges, sometimes discuss a pre-determined topic	Marriage-related Discussions	
2	Meet up. Check on each other. Have a fun activity. Discuss marriage building topics.	Marriage-related Discussions	
3	Share our joys and challenges. We help each other through them		
4	Fellowship and swallow ship		
5	We do topical discussions, prayers	Marriage-related Discussions Prayer	
6	Discuss on issues		
8	Pray and study the word		
9	Discuss different subjects or topics as pre planned or engage in scheduled activities.	Marriage-related Discussions	
0	Talk, games, reflections and social activities.		
1	Fellowship, prayer, study	Prayer	
2	Use study material		
3	We discuss issues that we are facing as married people...and find ways of creating more moments for bonding		

4	Discuss issues affecting marriages with openness.		
5	Have fun, learn and bond.		
6	Follow discussion topics...bond over a meal, pray for one another		
7	Bible study swallow ship		
8	Fun fellowship, pray and have topical presentations or discussion	Prayer	
9	Praise and worship, eat, catch up and share testimony, discuss a topic and pray	Prayer	
0	We discuss about how our families are faring. We also talk about our prayer requests. We talk about positive things about our spouses.	Marriage-related Discussions	
1	Fellowship, discuss marriage issues		
2	Fellowship, pray, assist each other and pray together		
3	Discuss on our family ad relationship progress		
4	We discuss on matters affecting married couples and come up with solutions	Marriage-related Discussions Prayer	
5	We engage in different activities like going for vacations together as families where we get humble time to discuss issues. Monthly meetings with topics to be handled by specific people. We visit our parents up country as a team	Marriage-related Discussions Prayer	

How has participating in a Married Couples' Care Group influenced your marriage?

		Sub-themes	Themes
1	We have learned from other couples on issues about marriage and family i.e., peer mentorship	Peer support	Marital Accountability
2	Appreciate my spouse. Understand that we are alone in our marital situation.		
3	Greatly a place of accountability and support		
4	It has helped me to realize that my problems are not unique		
5	We have been able to learn how to communicate, resolve issues in our marriage and how to love one another more.		

6	Like everything we go through is normal and each couple go through it		
7	It has influenced it positively more particularly knowing that the issues you are undergoing others have been there too	Peer support	
8	We have grown in how we handle issues; we have also been positively influenced by how other couples run their homes.	Peer support	
9	We are very free as a couple		
	We have been able to be more open to each other. It has helped us know the challenges we go through are not unique to u only but also other couples experience the same		
10	Given me a platform to vent; to also be encouraged		
11	Accountability and group therapy		
12	To see the marriage big picture form different perspectives	Peer support	
13	It has encouraged me to accept my weak points and approach things positivity.		
14	We can resolve conflicts more amicably		
15	More informed through sharing, an avenue to share pain points		
16	We learnt a topic on finances and it opened my savings habit		
17	We have been tremendously blessed as husband and wife to be part of an accountability group which has shared values with us. We continue to unlearn to learn, we learn from those older than us and those younger than is and this has been a great Journey for the years we got married.		
18	We learn some things from other couples		
19	We are more objective when resolving conflict. We've had peers to celebrate life's joys as well support during difficult seasons		
20	It helps us refresh and feel relieved for a moment		
21	Shown us despite the small issues we sometimes have, other couples are dealing with much deeper complex issues. That we are doing well considering what others are going through		
22	Learning from other people's experiences	Peer support	
23	Yes. It has helped us freely talk about many things we would otherwise close up		
24	It has made me to be patient in my marriage. Otherwise, I could have moved out long time ago.		

25	I have a platform to speak up on issues affecting us		
26	Has increased accountability, supported in realization of our dreams and aspiration, through knowledge shared, referrals etc.	Accountability	
27	You realize the we go through almost the same issues in some seasons of life. The couples who have been married longer encourage the younger ones that it will work out.		
28	Has influenced me alot on how to take care of my marriage		
29	MCCG, we have learnt how to love each other, how we can work together as a team, even how to raise our child in a godly way.		
30	We find ourselves committed to make our marriage work. Learn from each other.		
31	It has humbled us to realize we have been together for 28 years by the Grace of God and to know the younger couples are looking up to us for counseling and mentorship.		
32	We are able to withstand each other and difficult times		
33	Positively by getting insights on how to handle some issues		
34	Brings much warmth surrounded by friends and just to know that couples experience almost the same challenges		
35	It's made us come to the realization that our issues are not unique but common to the group		
36	Helps us realize other side of our relationship		
37	It has helped us improve on issues especially communication	Improved Communication	Improved Communication
38	Bonding with my partner and creating friendships		
39	I have been encouraged that our issues are not unique to our marriage		
40	Intentional about how we approach various issues		
41	We are happy and open to each other.		
42	Helped me to accept our imperfections.		
43	Brought us closer. accountability platform.		
44	The participation has made us know that conflicts and disagreements are common place	Conflict management	Better Conflict Management
45	Made me a better understanding on the marriage as an institution centered on Christ Jesus	Christ	

46	We are more confident in facing issues that may crop up viewing each other from God's perspective of love.		
47	To always focus on the positive side of marriage		
48	My marriage has thrived in the midst of other couples. We can talk over anything and everything. We feel accountable	Conflict Management	
49	It's been an eye opener to how to handle issues in different seasons.		
50	It's been great sharing, learning and growing with other couples		
51	It has changed my perspective and also encouraged me that it's possible to have a happy marriage		
52	It's an accountability group. We can share our minds without feeling judged		
53	My spouse knowing that my issues are better than what other men make their wives go through		
54	Greatly as we find support base where we can comfortably share our experiences and issues and expect prayers and support		
55	We have couples who we are accountable to.		
56	We learn from each other especially conflict resolution and parenting		
57	Provides avenue to be together, learn to care & support from other couples, pray over issues affecting us.		
58	We get to learn from our fellow MCCGs given that the group is diverse across ages		
59	Whenever I listen to our friends, I got challenged n I do rectify where I do wrong to my partner		
60	It has been a positive experience so far as you get to learn that most of the issues cut across all couples. I also get to learn how to respond positively on most of the challenges		Better Conflict Management
61	Positively and especially knowing that other couples also go through the same issues		

What areas do you think can be improved to ensure the MCCGs are more effective?

	Transcribed Responses	Sub themes	Themes
1.	Coordination with church leadership. Training of MCCG leaders. Development of marriage enrichment resource material	Leadership involvement	Increased Support
2.	A guided curriculum	Guidance	Guidance

3.	Pastoral team to plan to be visiting these MCCG groups and get to know how they are doing and get to know if there are specific topics they can teach to enrich the group		
4.	Mentorship	Mentorship	Increased Support
5.	Provide a study guide to facilitate discussions	Support	
6.	Follow-up from FACE team, publicity of MCCGs, joint activities by MCCGs, Quarterly Couples	Accountability	Increased Support
7.	Fellowships spearheaded by MCCG leadership training of leaders, having more sessions for debrief on difficult issues		
8.	Mobilization from church should be increased		
9.	Have a guide; booklet to study together.		
10.	More trainings	Training	Training
11.	Training and workshops		
12.	More forums to share n mentor families at large, eg plenary sessions, afternoon sessions on marriage therapy	Mentorship	
13.	Identifying us more materials work with and, more couples retreats, dinners, lunches, breakfasts, couple conferences. etc	Events and Finances	Increased Support
14.	Studies categorized into topics with homework		
15.	Finance		Increased Support
16.	Better communication and availability of materials	Communication and materials	Increased Support
17.	Tackling really issues that affect marriage		Intentionality
18.	More resources that couples can tap o to. E. Study guides		Support
19.	Train on conflict management, boundaries when interacting with people of opposite gender (some people tend to get close with people of opposite gender who are not their spouses)		Training
20.	MCCG structures are great. The leaders need to be supported more through trainings.	Support	Support
21.	Not necessarily physical meetings but can have media and other speakers invited to have join MCCGs meetings		
22.	Encouraging people to join mccg		
23.	Leadership of Mccgs, study materials, clear policies guiding existence of Mccgs, capacity building for Mccg leaders, general sensitization to the congregation on the significance of belonging to an mccg	Guidance Support	Guidance and Increased support
24.	More involvement of church leadership in running of MCCG. Vision and mission to be well communicated to ensure they are not turned into welfare groups	Guidance Support	Guidance and Increased support
25.	Bring togetherness and strong associations		

26.	Ensure the Top Leadership of the Church actively participate in MCCGs to share their experinces and encourage couples.		Support
27.	Interface with other ministries for wholesome input to families touching all areas relevant		
28.	Commitment.		
29.	Coaching to leaders why MCCGs exist and moreso making sure it's not another Safari Group meeting		
30.	Have the elderly couples in all MCCGs to share nuggets and mentorship		
31.	Guidance		
32.	Commitment by all participating couoles		
33.	There is need to have a guide on the changing time which are affecting marriages eg Covid.		
34.	Training on how to handle areas like conflict management and financial related issues		Training
35.	Pastors to be visiting groups		Support
36.	marital age grouping acordibg to yrs of staying together		
37.	Guide new couples on how best to enjoy sex,it should be said more candidly during PMCC rather than going with expectations on the first night		
38.	Active follow up by the leadership and equipping leaders		
39.	Coordination and support from the church		
40.	More joint meetings need to be held for sharing of ideas		
41.	The leaders also need leaders for them to debrief and refuel their spiritual as they bear the weight of the group		
42.	Church guidance because mostly MCCGs are left on their own	Guidance	Guidance
43.	Accommodating every opinion		
44.	Review of size & age sets within each MCCG. The FACE ministry to facilitate workshops for both MCCG leaders & members as a way to encourage, guide & mentor both leaders & members. This may increase the survival rate of new MCCGs.		Training and increased support
45.	Invite guest speakers who are neutral to the group		
46.	Having a structure that guides all couples on growing together.	Guidance	