THE INFLUENCE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT ON MARITAL STABILITY AMONG CHRISTIAN COUPLES IN SELECTED CHURCHES IN EMBAKASI EAST SUB-COUNTY, NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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

PAN AFRICA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

JUNE 2025

DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented to any other college or university for a degree or any other award.

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This thesis has been done under my supervision and is submitted with my approval as the University Supervisor.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband; Rev. Dr. Davies Mutuku, my son; Adam Mutuku, and my sister; Helen who supported and prayed for me in my research journey. I also dedicate the study in memory of my late father; Charles, who began university education but could not complete it. You challenged me and ensured that I could pursue university education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My appreciation goes first to the Almighty God for making all things fall into place from the beginning to the end of this thesis. Finally, I thank Dr. Amos Keya Alumada for his guidance, prompt feedback, and resources that enabled me to write this paper. May God bless you. I am also grateful to all the churches that allowed me to collect data within their assemblies. Last but not least, I appreciate all the respondents who cooperated by responding to the survey questions. To everyone else not mentioned who contributed to the success of this study, I am sincerely grateful.

ABSTRACT

Issues related to finances are among the leading causes of marital instability in newly-weds and middle-aged couples globally. The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of financial management on the marital stability of newly-weds and middle-aged Kenyan Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi City County, Kenya. Specifically, it sought to answer the questions of how spending money, investment, and debt influence marital stability and in what ways financial literacy moderates that relationship. Bowen Theory and the Couple and Finance Theory anchored the study. A correlation research design was employed. Purposive sampling method was chosen to select a sample size of 384 people comprising of 92 newly-weds and 292 middle-aged married members of four selected churches in Embakasi East Sub-County Data was collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using correlation and regression techniques in SPSS Version 27. Descriptive analysis showed that a small majority a small majority is a number which is statistically significant even though in the normal sense as shown on the paper it could be small) of respondents (54.8%) enjoyed high marital stability, while 45.2% fell into the low marital stability category, implying that nearly one in every two marriages were unstable. Correlation analysis revealed that marital stability was significantly correlated to couple spending behaviors ($r = 0.149$, $p < 0.05$) and debt management behaviors ($r = 0.175$, $p < 0.05$) but not financial investment ($r = -0.050$, $p > 0.05$). Further, a positive and statistically significant relationship between financial literacy and marital stability ($r = 0.128$, $p < 0.05$) was established. However, there was no significant moderating effect of financial literacy on the relationship between financial management and marital stability, $R^2=.012$, $F(3,253) =1.03$, $p>0.05$. The study concluded that improvements in spending discipline contributed positively to the marital stability of couples. Effective debt management practices are positively associated with marital stability. While financial knowledge is important, it does not materially alter the impact of financial management practices on marital stability. The study recommended that marriage and family therapists should incorporate financial counseling into their therapeutic practices, emphasizing the importance of joint financial planning, communication around spending, and effective debt management. The clergy should consider offering financial education as part of marriage enrichment programs. A future study should examine the relative explanatory power of financial management of marital stability in light of the broader gamut of factors underpinning marital stability among newly-weds and middle-aged couples.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CFT	-	Couple and Finance Theory
CRC	-	Couple Relationship Characteristics
ERB	-	Ethics Review Board
FMP	-	Financial Management Practices
FS	-	Financial Satisfaction
MQ	-	Marital Quality
NACOSTI	-	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
PAC	-	Pan Africa Christian University
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UNHCR	-	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Budget: A budget is an estimate of the household income and expenditure expected over a period of time (Versal et al., 2023). In this study, it is operationalized as a document that lists the monthly income and expenditure of a couple.

Budgeting: Budgeting refers to the act of intentionally aligning household finance to meet short and long-term financial obligations (Ebigo, 2023). In this study, the term is used to mean the act of recording the amount of household income expected and how it is going to be spent over time.

Couple: A man and a woman staying together in a marriage relationship (Muiga, 2018). In this study, a couple refers to newly-wed and middle-aged marital unions.

Debt: This refers to money one owes to a lender (Ma'in et al., 2021). Debt manifest in terms of credit card debt and mortgage debt.

Differentiation: The ability to remain emotionally objective, while in situations of high anxiety and at the same time, relating to close members of the family like spouse children or siblings and even friends (Calatrava et al., 2022). In this study, differentiation means the ability to function within a marriage irrespective of life pressures.

Financial Behaviour**s:** These are human activities associated with financial management like savings and debts (Rahman et al., 2021). In this study, financial behaviors refers to the spending, savings, and investment decisions and actions taken by newly-wed and middle-aged couples.

Financial Literacy: The knowledge, skills and ability a person possesses that enables one to apply them to various financial activities so that one can make effective and practical decisions (Goyal & Kumar, 2020). Financial literacy comprises of financial knowledge, financial skills, financial attitude, financial awareness, and financial behaviour.

Financial Management: It is the process of planning, organizing and controlling financial activities such as debt acquisition and repayment, budgeting, spending and investing, in order to achieve the goals of an individual institution or organization (Saini et al, 2022). In this study, financial management refers to the act of planning, coordinating, and controlling household spending, savings, and investment.

Financial Responsibility: It is the practice of managing finances and other investments in productive ways (Humaidi et al., 2020). In this study, financial responsibility refers to the obligation newly-wed and middle-aged.

Financial Satisfaction**:** This is a state where a person is contented with their financial position (Nabila et al., 2023). In this study, financial satisfaction refers to the extent to which newly-wed and middle-aged couples are happy with the state of household finances.

Financial Stability: It is a state where the financial management system is capable of ensuring savings are efficiently assigned to investment opportunities sustainably (Phan et al., 2021). In this study, it refers to the sense of financial security newly-wed and middle-aged couples have from their financial status.

Financial Strain: It comprises of anxiety, worry or emotions of not being able to manage life as a result of financial events (French & Vigne, 2018). In this study, it refers to the pressure newly-wed and middle-aged couples feel on household finances due to shortage of finances.

Financial Stress: It is the struggle of not being able to meet primary financial obligations because of financial scarcity (Australian Government, 2024). In this study, it is the psychological pressure arising from being overwhelmed by financial obligations amid scarcity of household income.

Financial Wellbeing: It is the ability of a person to meet all the present and continuing financial responsibilities (Friedline et al, 2020). In this study, it is the state of psychological functioning arising from being in control of one's own finances.

Financial Wellness: It is the ability of an individual to manage finances well and it includes financial security (Zhou & Parmanto, 2020). In this study, it is the psychological health an individual has when having a sense of from being in charge of personal finance.

Investment: This is the act of deploying financial and non-financial resources with a view to generate income (Cronqvist et al., 2023). Investment comprises of real investment and financial asset investment.

Marital Stability**:** It is the possibility that a marriage relationship will remain intact without physical separation or divorce (Effa & Nwogu, 2019). In this study, marital stability refers to the intimacy, attachment, conflict resolution, beliefs and expectations, as well as mutual support that characterize the union of newly-wed and middle-aged couples

Middle-aged Couples: Middle-aged couples refer to partners who have been married for a significant duration beyond their honeymoon phase (Wright et al., 2023). For the purpose of this study, middle-aged couples are couples who had been married for at least 5 years at the time of the study.

Newly-wed Couples:	Newly-wed couples are individuals who have recently gotten married (Srinivas, 2022; Williamson & Lavner, 2020). While there is no strict time limit, the term is used in this study to refer to couples who have been married for two years or less.
Spending:	The act of using money to buy items that fulfills obligations or acquire items that do not increase in value over time (Cronqvist et al., 2023). Spending is a multi-dimensional concept comprising of income-expenditure balance, spending discipline, and spending preferences.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

This chapter provides the background of the proposed study. It lays the foundation upon which subsequent chapters were developed. The research problem is elaborated, study objectives outlined and respective questions developed. Study assumptions, justification and significance are then explained. Finally, the scope, as well as the anticipated limitations and delimitations are laid out.

Background to the Study

During premarital counselling, financial management is one of the topics discussed by the clergy (Adzovie & Dabone, 2021; Mutunga, 2020). In some countries like Indonesia, the ministry in charge of religion developed a pre-marital counseling course to prepare Muslim couples for marriage (Gojali & Quodim, 2020). However, this course is not mandatory when someone wants to register their marriage in Indonesia. The effect of this policy was that the Indonesian pre-marital counseling course was not able to serve its purpose of securing family issues nor decrease the rate of divorce (Bidayeti et al., 2020).) In this course, marriage guidance was offered to the bride and groom and was supposed to help them to understand the reason of their marriage and their rights and responsibilities as husband and wife. This guidance was a way of giving continuous and systematic help from a mentor. It helps them reach an optimal state and adjustment in the marriage environment. It provides the bride and the groom skills to achieve a level of understanding of self, acceptance of self, exeertion of self and realization of self.

Baryl-Matejczuk et al. (2019) documented that poor financial management was linked to marital disagreements and marital instability. Thus, it can be concluded that, “financial management is the key to the study of couple finance” (Le Baron et al., 2018, p. 8). Financial management involves many activities especially for organizations but in this study the researcher focused on spending, investments and debts (Saini et al, 2022). In their study, Rasouli et al. (2018) stated that management of money is one of the components that affects the stability of a marital relationship. Research findings reiterate that sound financial management practices among British couples made the couples less vulnerable to marital instability by preventing the relationship from disintegrating to divorce (Hu, 2019).This is because couples were reluctant to leave marriages during conflict because of the investment they made in the marriage and were afraid of losing Elsewhere, a report on finances and marriage among African American couples proposed that money is the top most enemy of a marriage, and also money is something that could destroy a marriage (Dew et al., 2017).

Financial management challenges, indeed, continue to affect marriages across borders and economies. Rahman et al. (2020) in their study in Malaysia, postulated that materialistic people are spenders, while those with low degrees of materialism are savers who invest in things like stocks. People with high degrees of materialism are susceptible to spend beyond their means. A study by Tasew and Koye (2021)in Ethiopia revealed that one of the factors contributing to conflicts was financial problems. Majority of the research participants explained that challenges on finances arose when spouses could not agree on how to spend their money. Tasew and Koye (2021) further added that husbands frequently spent more money than their wives without their approval. Such disagreements often result into marital dissolution, separation and single-parenthood. In Imenti North, Meru County, Kenya, Kirimi (2019) established that the most challenging problems couples faced during conflicts were expensive lifestyle demands and husbands’ tyranny on how money should be spent. This was in addition to squandering money on alcohol and financing infidelity. Such spending is not appropriate as alcoholism could lead to addictions resulting to marital instability.

Investment is something that is good but research worldwide has shown that it could both possess positive and negative impact on marital stability. According to a study done in the US, Ettman et al. (2020) documented that having investments promotes psychological health and the increased amount of money gained from the investments is related to lower incidences of depression. This money also provides a way to gain physical resources, diminishes the impact of stressors including monetary stressors. For instance, being a home owner is related to a lesser susceptibility to depression. In Egypt, female owned investments are a key source of marital instability. Najjar et al. (2020) undertook a study to examine asset ownership by different genders in Egypt. The respondents reported that when women-owned land in Egypt, the couple experienced marital conflict. This situation led women to handing over control of their properties to their husbands. In addition, men declined to stay in their homes or till their land in the event that their wives were the owners. A separate study carried out in Nairobi City County, Kenya (Omoro, 2018) focusing on the causes of divorce pointed out that couples feared marital dissolution because of what may happen to family investments. Consequently, the family experienced a form of marital stability albeit having no marital satisfaction.

Marital stability has also been found to be affected by the financial management activity of debt acquisition. A study by Azeez and Akhtar (2021) in Spain revealed that when one person falls into debt using family resources, it could lead to conflict. These financial conflicts could then lead to financial stress which consequently lowers the financial satisfaction level in the couple (Aguiar-Diaz &

Zagal-Jimenez, 2021). However, a study in Nigeria revealed that impulse buying done by women had both good and bad implications. The good side is that the women used it as a way of exploring new inventions and new products that have come into the market. The bad side is that they experienced debt, more wastage, remorse through buying inferior products, living above their budget and marital conflicts (Adenuga et al., 2020). In Kenya, studies have been done concerning debts in the marriage and their effects. Njoroge and Lwangale (2021) undertook a study in Trans-Nzoia County Kenya and observed that majority of couple conflicts related to debts, among other factors.

Financial literacy is simply the financial skills gained by a person who has acquired financial knowledge that would enable the person to make sound financial management decisions. Financial literacy empowers and improves the community's quality of life. It is profitable to families in terms of the ability to enhance relationships and more specifically, it contributes to considerable marital stability (Matey et al., 2020). According to Godinic et al. (2020), people who lack financial literacy are likely to experience a variety of negative financial scenarios especially during periods of economic uncertainty such as when the Covid -19 pandemic struck. This leads to financial dissatisfaction and inability to manage the financial strain hence; strained marriages. Marital stability is regarded as the possibility of a marriage being able to remain in one piece or not to end up in separation or dissolution (Effa & Nwogu, 2019). Management of money, which is a way of managing financial resources, spending methods,savings and investments (Sachitra et al., 2019), has been cited as one of the financial components influencing the stability of a marital relationship (Rasouli et al., 2018).

Moreover, marital stability is important for the operation, and health of the household (He et al., 2018). Sawai et al. (2018) reported a relationship between financial management and marital stability. There are many factors that could lead to instability in a marriage relationship but in this study, the researcher focused on financial management. A study by Nadolu et al. (2020) proposed that sound financial management was a strong predictor of stable marriages. In fact, sound financial management practices contribute to both financial satisfaction and marital longevity and stability (Jain, 2018). For instance, Nadolu et al. (2020)examined the sociological dimensions of marital stability in Romania and found a compellinglink between proper money management and stable marriages. Olubgenga & Oluwatosin, (2018) carried out a study in Nigeria which revealed that a critical association exists between poor financial management and marital conflict. The study also showed that marital conflicts led to flooding and stone walling which could lead to divorce if not handled promptly. In Mombasa County, Kenya, a study of drug addiction revealed that drug addicts spend a lot of money to buy addiction drugs, thereby leading to fighting between the spouses, detachment, marital instability, and finally divorce (Abdulrahman, 2020).

Financial problems remain one of the top most problems responsible for divorce in Kenya (Hart, 2018). The divorce rate in Kenya is continuing to escalate from 3476 cases in 2020 to 5611 by 2022 (Mburu, 2023) A lot of research has been done on how to control divorce but little progress has been made to reduce the divorce rate in Kenya. It is worth noting that in Kenya, most studies have looked at how financial management influences marital stability in general but not how the different aspects of money (budgeting, spending, investing and debt acquisition) affect marital stability specifically. Failure to clarify these aspects and the process through which they impact on marital stability, only serve to exacerbate the problem. Hence, the researcher chose to do the study to investigate how these aspects of financial management influence marital stability.

Problem Statement

McCoy et al. (2020) reported that disagreements about finances is not what could leadto marital instability in newly-weds or middle aged couples, but the way spouses talk to each other and sort out money conflicts that leads to marital instability. A plethora of current literature shows that there is a relationship between how couples managed their finances and the stability of their marriage (Dew et al., 2017; Kariuki, 2018; McCoyet al., 2020; Nyamai, 2018; Sawai et al., 2019; Wambunya et al., 2019; Waruiru et al., 2019).For instance, a study done in Poland showed that poor financial management can lead to conflicts among couples (Baryla-Matejczuk et al., 2020). Another study done in Uganda showed that poor financial management led to an increase of anxiety and probability of conflict (Nakazibwe, 2022).

It is important to recognize that having appropriate financial management skills is critical in ensuring marital stability (Skipper et al., 2019). A study in Kisii County reported that there were several conflicts in marriages which have resulted in separation and maritaldissolution (Obure et al., 2021). One of the top eight reasons for separation and divorce reported in Kenya is finances (Hart, 2018). In addition, couples who are young in marriage grumble over finances while the ones who have been in marriage for a longer period will fight about property and money issues. Although a majority of researches in Kenya have focused mainly on how couples handle money in general (Kariuki, 2017; Nyamai, 2018; Obure et al., 2021; Wambunya et al., 2019; Waruiru et al., 2019), they have not looked at how the different aspects of money influence marital stability (i.e., debts, spending, budgeting, or investments). Failure to address these aspects could lead to an increase in marital stability and which will ultimately escalate the divorce rate. Consequently, this study sought to establish how the various financial management aspects influence marital stability among married Christian couples in Nairobi, Kenya.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate how the different aspects of financial management in newly-weds and middle-aged couples among Christians in Embakasi East sub-county, Nairobi City County, affected the stability of their marriage.

Objectives of the Study

The following four objectives guided this study:

1. To explore the effect of spending behaviours on marital stability among newly-weds and middle-aged Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub- County, Nairobi City County, Kenya.
2. To establish the effect of couple investments on marital stability among newly-wedsand middle-aged Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub- County, Nairobi City County, Kenya.
3. To determine the effect of debts on marital stability among newly-weds and middle-aged Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi City County, Kenya.
4. To investigate the relationship between financial literacy, financial management and marital stability among newly-weds and middle -aged Christian couples inselected churches in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi City County, Kenya

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How does spending behaviours influence marital stability among newly-weds

and middle-aged couples in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi City County. Krnya?

2. What is the effect of couple investment on marital stability among newly-weds and middle-aged couples in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi City County, Kenya?
3. What is the effect of debt on marital stability among newly-weds and middle-agedcouples in Embakasi East, Nairobi City County, Kenya?
4. In what ways does financial literacy and financial management relate to marital stability among newly-weds and middle-aged Christian couples in selected churches inEmbakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi City County, Kenya?

Assumptions of the Study

The assumptions of the study were as follows:

1. There is a link between spending behaviours of newly-weds and middle-aged couples and marital stability of Christian couples.
2. There is an association between couple investment and marital stability of newly-weds and middle-aged Christian couples.
3. There is a relationship between debts and marital stability of newly-weds and middle-aged Christian couples.
4. The data gathered was an accurate reflection of the true picture regarding respondents’ financial management practices and stability of their marriage.

Justification of the Study

Studies done globally indicate that poor financial management by a couple can lead to marital instability (Dew et al., 2017; Kariuki, 2018; McCoy et al., 2020; Nyamai, 2018; Sawai et al., 2019; Wambunya et al., 2019; Waruiru et al., 2019). In addition, poor financial management between couples destroys financial satisfaction, creates increased conflicts and eventually destabilizes marriage (McCoy et al., 2020). In fact, conflicts left unattended may lead to divorce (Baryle-Matejczuk et al., 2019). It is also reported that money-related problems are caused by how money management is practiced (Sawai et al., 2018). The above reasons show that financial management plays a critical role in promoting marital stability and hence it is important to carry out the study of exploring the influence of financial management on marital stability.

In Kenya, several studies have demonstrated the factors influencing marital stability. However, very few have looked at how the different financial management variables influence marital stability in newly wedded and middle-aged couples (Kariuki, 2018; Nyamai, 2018; Obure et al., 2021; Wambunya et al., 2019; Waruiru et al., 2019). Kiara (2019) looked at the strategies elderly couples use to maintain marital stability in Westlands Nairobi but fell short of explaining how financial management influenced newly marrieds and older couples who form a bigger fraction of the married population in Kenya.

Among the top reasons for this state of affairs is finances and how young couples tend to grumble over finances more than older ones (Hart, 2018). Cases of separation and marital dissolution in Kenya have been on the increase (Mburu, 2023; Obure et al., 2021). The situation is rather precarious and something needs to be done to curb the escalation of marital stability due to financial challenges. Failure to do this will result in destabilization of marriage and eventually divorce. Hence the need for a study which explored how financial management influences marital stability. The study will help provide information about how this two variables affect each other to cause marital instability and dissolution.

Although a majority of researches in Kenya have focused mainly on how couples handle money in general, few have investigated how the different aspects of money influence marital stability (Kariuki, 2017; Nyamai, 2018; Obure et al., 2021; Wambunya et al., 2019; Waruiru et al., 2019). Against this background, there is therefore need to fill knowledge gaps with respect to spending, investment, and debt management behaviors so that couples can experience marital stability and minimize rampant cases of separation and divorce. Hence the researcher did the study among newly-weds and middle-aged Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya

Significance of the Study

The research findings provide knowledge about where the problems of couple financial management lies and also mention some intervention measures. This knowledge ~~would~~ demonstrate evidence-based reasons on how poor financial management problems influence the stability of a marriage. Mental health practitioners including marriage and family therapists and persons involved with pre-marital counselling will find the research relevant because it could shed some light on where the problem is when couples fight over finances. Some Pastors and church counselling staff can benefit from the independent feedback from their members, and this will help them to counsel their members effectively. The knowledge would be effective in providing information for marriage seminars and formulation of action plans during pre-marital counselling. The government and interested organizations would find the study important during formulation of policies that would reduce conflicts and divorce.

Other people who may benefit are couples. They will be able to use knowledge on spending behaviour, investing and debt management to improve their marriages. Although financial literacy did not moderate the influence of financial management on marital stability in Embakasi East, it moderated in other countries and studies. Hence couples will be able to equip themselves with financial literacy in order to have good financial management behaviours which can result into marital stability. Additionally, researchers will use this thesis as reference material for scholarly work. For instance information from the variables can be used to write literature review. Recommendations from the study will guide students to areas that require further studies. Moreover, pre-marital programs can be developed from this thesis by drawing information on how the bride and the groom can practice sound financial management and how best to handle financial conflicts or avoid them.

The thesis can also be used in theory development, Findings from the study can be used to strengthen the existing theories or to develop new theories. Couple financial programs can also be created from the information from this thesis. Knowledge from the study variables, the theories and the research findings form rich material that would assist in making the couple financial programs. Finally, conceptual frameworks can be developed from this study even though financial literacy does not moderate the relationship between financial management and marital stability. Further studies are recommended on this aspect of the study.

Scope of the Study

The study assessed the influence of financial management on marital stability among newly-weds and middle-aged couples in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya. Specifically, it investigated how the indicators of financial management, including budgeting, spending, couple investments, and debts, influenced marital stability. The sample size was 384 married couples. (Dr Susan) The sample was drawn from Embakasi East, which was selected because it contained residents from different socio-economic statuses, primarily the middle and lower classes. This diversity meant that the results could represent a significant portion of the population residing in Nairobi, Kenya. Additionally, Embakasi East is a sub-county with a high number of churches within a given area, which facilitated the logistics of the research. The population comprised all newly-weds and middle-aged Christian couples residing in the sub-county. (who have stayed in marriage between 1 year to five years) and middle-aged couples (who have stayed in marriage between 6 years to 40 years).

Limitations of the Study

The research was limited to Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya instead of the entire Nairobi County. It concentrated on investigating the influence of aspects of household financial management on marital stability, including budgeting, spending, investments, and debts. The study did not permit the results to be generalized to the entire country because different geographical areas operate under different economic conditions. For example, the majority of people in urban areas were employed in white-collar jobs, with their main source of income being salaries or wages. In contrast, in rural areas, the main source of income was farm produce, and members of a household often worked unpaid when cultivating the farm.

Delimitations of the Study

The researcher collected data from across different socio-economic statuses to ensure it was representative of all socio-economic levels of the people in Nairobi City County. The study explored the financial management practices of couples through closed-ended questions. The questionnaire was designed using simple language to extract the information necessary to aid the study. The approach was a quantitative correlational research design. The outcomes of the questionnaire established how the study variables were related, irrespective of sources of income and the nature of economic activity.

Chapter Summary

This chapter started with the background of the study.The chapter has articulated the research problem and outlined the study objectives. Further, the chapter has presented a discussion of the significance, of the study and justifications and the scope of the study. The limitations and delimitations of the study have also been presented. In the next chapter, a critical review of empirical literature and the theoretical framework are presented.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter provides the literature review of the variables used in the study based on the objectives and the research questions. This includes an identification of the knowledge gaps. The empirical literature review is thematically organized in line with the specific objectives of the study. This is followed by a justification of the theoretical framework and illustration of the conceptual framework. A summary of the reviewed literature is provided at the end of the chapter.

General and Empirical Literature

The following section provides general and empirical literature on the four objectives of this study. This information includes contemporary findings on the subject matter from the global, continental, and regional where applicable.

The Effect of Spending Behaviour on Marital Stability Among Newly-weds and Middle-aged Married Christians

Budgeting is a sub-set of spending. Normally, families budget their income before they spend. A financial budget is an important part of financial planning in some couples. It consists of plan of how financial resources are to be allocated within a given year. Nwala and Bamey (2020) suggested that a budget is a plan of how money will be spent during a specified length of time. Malamy and Muter (2021) affirmed that a budget is a record, which informs people how funds are used so that they can accomplish an array of goals decided beforehand.

Nurhayati et al. (2019) documented that the way Indonesian couples planned for their finances is associated with the quality of their marriage. Couples who budgeted together reported an increase in the satisfaction of their marriage. In Malaysia, another Muslim nation, researchers stated that poor financial planning can lead to increased debt, absence of investments and little savings (Adnan et al., 2021). Saxey et al. (2021) had one explanation for this. According to Gu (2019), decisions to do with money like household budgets, in some instances, involves risk-taking. The person who decides on financial decisions in the family reflects the one who has more power, be it the husband or the wife. The situation where power dynamics comes into play is risky and if couples don't agree on this, it could endanger the viability of the marriage leading to marital instability. Although Obi-Keguna et al. (2019) did astudy in Nigeria and it revealed that budgeting enhanced marital stability, it is critical to look at who was involved and who had more say when preparing the budget. This creates a research gap which has to be addressed.

A study in Kenya by Wairimu (2021) found out that close to 81% of the respondents in a premarital counselling program said that budgeting was an important element in financialmanagement. In spite of the available premarital counselling programs on joint couple budgeting, Christian couples have not been spared of marital conflicts, separation or marital dissolution (Barongo & Onderi, 2018). Studies have shown that budgeting is one of the key topics that is embedded in many Christian counseling programs (Baker, 2019; Munyiri, 2018;Waruiru et al., 2019). Anaana et al. (2019) proposed that proper financial management practices should be discussed during premarital counseling sessions as one ways of reducing perpetual financial conflicts that tend to be associated with marital instability. Anaana et al. (2019) concludes by stating that money has the power to create unity or division between the couple. Thus, the way a couple handles money has the potential of causing marital instability if the conflicts are not resolved.

The foregoing studies have established existence of direct linkage between budgeting, spending, and marriage. Spending is the action of letting someone have your money in exchange of goods or services (Cambridge, n.d.). Spending is different from budgeting in that in spending money is given to someone for whatever one needs from the other person either goods or services. However, in budgeting, one plans how to spend. Sound financial management requires planning before spending. It also requires that one spends according to the budget so prepared. Having looked at how budgeting influences marital stability, following is how spending influences marital stability.

Income-Expenditure Balance

One of the factors influencing spending behaviours in couples is income-expenditure balance. Balancing income and expenditure is an important consideration for a family because it shows whether there exists a probability of the family to slide into financial distress. Shraberman (2018) observed that if the income – expenditure gap is big, for instance if the difference between the expenditure and the income is big as a result of higher expenses, it strains the current budget. The bigger the negative gap, the higher the probability of a family to sink into debt. Consequently, Dew et al. (2017) documented that this imbalance can triggerstrains that expose the marriage to higher intensity of conflicts and instability.

When there is not enough money to cover basic needs or fulfill shared goals due to a negative income- expenditure gap, couples may experience increased conflict and resentment. This can lead to blaming each other for the financial situation and feeling unsupported or misunderstood. Financial stress resulting from the imbalance can cause emotional strain and impact mental health. Worrying about money and struggling to make ends meet can lead to increased stress,anxiety, and depression, which in turn can strain the relationship.

Spending Discipline

Spending discipline is the ability to resist temptation and overcome first impulse buying (Silaya et al., 2018). It is to the ability to prioritize the things people buy, preventing the purchase of things just to satisfy the urge of buying them or purchase for enjoyment purposes. Lee et al. (2020) documented that, financial conflicts related to impulse buying tend to heighten emotional pain and antagonistic behaviours between couples, consequently depressing positive interplay and heightening marital instability. From the findings of Silaya et al. (2018) and Lee et al. (2020), it can be argued that self-control assists the couple in the management of money when exercised to create a planned budget. Thus, if self-control is exercised, the couple is likely to experience reduced conflicts. In fact, self-control diminishes marital conflicts, which in essence, leads to a stronger marital stability. In a research done in the US, Benli and Ferman (2019) reported that the spending behavior of one spouse directly influenced their relationship satisfaction. The researchers further observed that some people spend a lot because they are suffering from Compulsive Buying Disorder (CBD). Such people lose control over their spending behavior which can affect different aspects of their lives including marital stability.

One of the factors influencing debt is materialism. Rahman et al. (2020) postulated that materialistic people are spenders, while those with low degrees of materialism are savers who invest in things like stocks. People with high degrees of materialism are susceptible to spend beyond their means. They experience the demand to purchase more physical stuff in order to be happy. The increased goods they buy makes them get involved with more responsibilities, claims and fees resulting into higher amounts of debt (Matos et al., 2019). As well, materialism is capable of promoting an inclination to spend more money than a person earns, by purchasing branded stuff in order to get other people's attention. This can lead to surplus debt resulting to financial stress (Lutfi et al., 2022).

Related to compulsive buying is drug addictions, which is the lack of ability to stop consuming psychologically or physically harmful substances, can drive the spending behavior of individuals (Webster, 2022). According to Nyaktsikwa et al. (2021), majority of people who gamble use moderate quantities of finances when gambling, problem gamblers use finances extravagantly and disproportionately. This happens because problem gamblers are unable to restrain themselves from excessive spending leading to diverse costs such as loss of productivity, curative costs and lower quality of life. Tobacco and alcohol addiction can have an impact on the marriage. Addicts, according to a study in the United Kingdom, tend to reduce spending on household necessities like healthy foods or appropriate housing.

Grable et al. (2021) conducted an examination with the intention of ascertaining whether the way individuals perceive their partner's spending and saving tendencies within a marriage or cohabitation setting could provide insights into their own subjective sense of financial contentment. In late 2019, information for this research was gathered through an online survey conducted among 313 adult residents of the United States. The survey sample was facilitated by Dynata using the Qualtrics platform. To qualify for participation, respondents had to be 18 years of age or older and currently involved in a romantic relationship through marriage or cohabitation with a significant other. Furthermore, the study aimed to explore, ina preliminary manner, whether perceptions of spending and saving behaviors within couples differed based on gender. Survey participants were sorted into three distinct groups: (a) those who perceived their partner as inclined towards spending, (b) those who perceived their partner as inclined towards saving, and (c) those who perceived their partner's inclinations assomewhere in between spender and saver. The outcomes revealed that associating one's partner with a propensity for spending was not linked to personal financial satisfaction. In contrast, perceiving one's partner as someone who saves exhibited a positive correlation withthe financial contentment of the individual making the assessment. This finding suggests thatspending discipline potentially predicted marital stability. However, the research was conducted in a developed economy context not comparable to Kenya, hence presenting a contextual gap. The study was also not directed to Christian couples hence perceptions may have been different from those held by Christians.

In Mombasa County, Kenya, a study of drug addiction revealed that drug addicts spend a lot of money to buy addiction drugs, thereby leading to fighting between spouses, detachment, marital instability, and finally divorce (Abdulrahman, 2020). Another study conducted in Trans-Nzoia and Imenti North Counties, Kenya, by Njoroge and Lwangale (2022) found that financial problems such as careless spending caused marital conflicts. In Trans-Nzoia, it was observed that spiritual values of the couples did not seem to have a big impact in controlling the problem despite the fact that the values played a critical role in molding societal lifestyles. The research attempted to establish why marital conflicts occurredamong Christian households. Results showed that majority of the couples disagreed on financial issues like spending, paying bills, paying school fees and debts. The study did not however state whether or not couples attended pre-marital counseling provided by churches to furnish them with financial management skills. The study incorporated aspects to check whether such programs exist in churches that were studied in Embakasi East, Nairobi County.

In Imenti North, Meru County, Kenya, Kirimi (2019) established that the most challenging problems couples faced causing conflicts were expensive lifestyle demands and husbands' tyranny on how money should be spent. This was in addition to squandering money on alcohol and financing infidelity. Such spending is not appropriate as alcoholism could lead to addictions resulting to marital instability. Wasteful spending of money on luxury items could also lead to debts and if not properly managed, this eventually leads to instability in marriages.

In Embu County, Kenya, a research showed that financial problems lead to marital instability (Muriithi, 201). The study established that spending behaviours leading to instability included the absence of discussions by couples on how to spend or save their money. The study suggested that it would be beneficial if the couples came up with spendingpolicies. Policies on how to make financial decisions and spend can forestall disagreements. The study was carried out among Christian couples in selected in Embakasi East, Nairobi County, Kenya.

Spending Preferences

Individual personality types is also a factor that affects the relationship of a married couple and hence can affect their financial management practices. Research has shown that individuals are likely to marry spouses who possess different spending preferences (Polina, 2022). The different spending approaches and attitudes often produce conflicts likely to impact on marital satisfaction (Greenberg & Hershfield, 2018). Olson and Rick (2022) expounded that the greater the difference between those who are frugal and those who are spendthrifts, the more deeply they disagree over finances. If the conflict is severe, it can evenlead to divorce.

One of the issues couples need to discuss is the aspect of how they spend their finances (Muhammad & Ahmad, 2019). According to Cai et al. (2020), insensible spending or overspending can ignite tension especially if the couple is experiencing financial strain concurrently. In their study in the US, Addo and Zhang (2020) found that if couples argued about the way they spend their money, it caused a strain on how they related to each other. They noted that even though financial problems were not the main cause of divorce in the US, finances were a cause of marital conflicts. Couples with such conflicts would find themselves developing negative impressions of each other, which affected their relationship.If the negative impressions were allowed to thrive, thoughts about divorce may creep in leading to marital instability.

Garbinsky et al. (2020) stated that when couples disagree on spending decisions, it can lead to financial infidelity. According to the authors, marital infidelity is a situation where couples hide from their spouses the things they buy, the money they have borrowed, and the savings they have made. This can spark conflicts and since financial conflicts are usually recurrent and challenging, can cause of marital instability. Ross et al. (2019) corroborated that when spouses differ on how to spend money, such arguments can become agonizing and lead to animosity and hostility between the spouses. The effect is a decrease in marital stability which is a threat to the viability of the marriage.

It is important to spend money on preventive and curative health care. This is because treating diseases is more expensive than prevention. The World Health Organization (2020) notes that by doing activities that improve health, people can prevent or postpone expensive curative health care. This fact improves the efficiency of spending on health, prevents people from dying and promotes life expectancy. Additionally, spending on things like health insurance cover is key for preventing finances from depletion by unplanned or emergency situations. An array of financial risks can take place in one’s future due to life situations like accidents, health issues or aging. For instance if the main provider of household income dies or sustains permanent disability, it may leave the family devastated, with little or no source of income (Astari & Kismiantini, 2018). This results into financial instability, which is not good for the stability of the marriage.

According to King et al. (2022), spending on buying cars may be seen as a luxury in some countries, but in the US, purchasing cars is very important. The price of not having one may be bigger than the price of owning. Households that do not have cars usually live in spaces where roads are inaccessible by driving. The scholars continued to explain that low- income earners, have realized this and they have devised ways of turning any improvement in spending power into a means of saving to purchase an automobile. This is because cars assist them to access employment and improve their income. This relationship between car ownership and financial outcomes seem to be getting stronger with each passing day. Therefore, spending on various items can be termed as luxury in one country and a necessity in another country. Hence, before someone is judged as a spendthrift, the nature of the item bought should be identified according to the context of that country. Professionals dealing with financial therapy have to consider this as they counsel a client on sound financial management practices.

Food is another very important item to spend on because it is a basic need. Seivwrite et al. (2020) explain that households that are unable to spend more of their income on food have experienced food insecurity in their families. Seivewrite et al. (2020) held that households experience food insecurity when they do not have reliable access to an appropriate amount of a balanced diet, usually because of increases in the price of food. Equally important, a family will experience food insecurity because food is termed as the most flexible component of the low-income household budget. This means that it is usually the household budget category that is sacrificed to meet other expenses like loans or unplanned household bills. However, if couples are able to prevent plundering the food category of the budget during times of emergency or unplanned expenses, they will in essence prevent themselves from experiencing depression due to money-related reasons. According to Kim et al. (2019), depression is one of the factors that could lead to marital instability.

A study in Europe showed that one of the reasons households change their spending behavior is spending preferences (Hodbod et al., 2021). As relates to fashion products, shoppers usually spend money according to their personal tastes and preferences. This usually happens in products like clothing (Lee, 2020). Similarly, people usually spend money on food items depending on their tastes or flavours (Kushwa et al., 2019; Maniriho et al., 2020; Pulcini et al., 2020; Raggioto et al., 2018). A research done on Italy showed that one ofthe driving forces of people eating fresh aquatic food was its taste (Pulcini et al., 2020).

Another reason people spend money on household items is because of preferences. For instance, besides taste, people spend their money to buy food because they are health conscious. Like in Bangladesh, more people are spending money to purchase healthy foods like dairy milk as opposed to any other type of milk (Hoque et al., 2018). If a couple can spend on healthy consumables, they can live a healthy life, which will strengthen their marital relationship.

A study by Tasew and Koye (2021) showed that there was a surge in the pervasiveness of conflict in marriages among Ethiopians. It revealed that one of the factors contributing to conflicts was financial problems. Majority of the research participants explained that challenges on finances arose when spouses could not agree on how to spend their money. Tasew and Koye (2021) added that frequently, husbands spent more money thantheir wives without their approval. Such disagreements often result into marital dissolution, separation and single-parenthood. The findings reinforced the fact that the capacity of maritalpartners to spend their finances responsibly, regardless of the amount of income, is a means to dynamic marriages (Effa & Nwogu, 2019). However, this study did not document if responsible spending influences marital stability. Hence, the need for more research to establish this concept.

Kamardin and Suib (2021) undertook a phenomenological study on the effect of spending behaviour on relationship quality among Millennial in Malaysia. Interviews were conducted with 6 participants. Results showed that engaging in uncontrolled and unplanned spending patterns can result in neglecting familial and romantic responsibilities, leading to conflict and instability in a marital set up. Such spending habits also invite negative feedback from family, friends, and romantic partners, thereby straining relationships. Within the context of a marriage, this behavior can diminish feelings of intimacy, as one partner grapples with negative emotions and excessive rumination over the repercussions of their spending choices. However, the use of a pure qualitative methodology limited the study in that the effect size of spending behavior on marital stability could not be quantified. This presented a methodological gap that the proposed study seeks to bridge using quantitative research design. Furthermore, the study relied on a modest sample size and focused on millennials,hence the reliability of the findings and conclusions may be questionable. The study also focused on both newlywed couples and middle aged couples.

Clearly, studies on spending behavior have demonstrated that it affects marital relationships. In particular, it affects the way couples behave towards each other when handling their money. Still, scholars have suggested that more attention be given to not only understanding the effect of spending behaviours but also financial decision-making on marital stability (Olson & Rick, 2022). Since there has been no study yet done on how spending influences marital stability in Nairobi County,Kenya and especially among the middle-aged or the newly-wed couples, this presents a gap. The study therefore examined the influence of spending, as an aspect of financial management, on marital stabilityamong couples in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya.

Effect of Couple Investments on Marital Stability

The Oxford dictionary describes investment as the activity or method of investing finances in order to gain a return. It involves placing finances into something or a business, whereby something is risked for the sake of gaining profit or with the hope of acquiring an earning. According to Berge (2020), investment includes qualities like dedication of capital, the anticipation of rewards and the acceptance of risk. Similarly, Mahrani and Saputra (2021) documented that investment is a process of forfeiting something in order to get rewards or profits eventually. Still yet, Marisi and Charisse (2019), stated that investment is the transfer of capital which leads to the creation of profits during a specific period of time. A slightly different definition of investment is that, it refers to every type of asset possessed or managedby a person whose intention is to get money, and the asset is owned directly and sometimes indirectly (Ansari & Raisi, 2018).

Investments usually assist in the healthy operation of the marriage relationship. They actually improve the quality of life of the couple (Baryla-Matejczuk et al., 2020). Specifically, investments help in cementing commitment between the couple. The key psychological role of commitment is creating the attachment for the devoted, romantic couple. At all times, this is what couples seek in their marital union, a straight-forward, sound dedication that can strengthen a feeling of confidence in the relationship and safety about the current state of the relationship and also the future (Stanely & Markman, 2020). A study done in Canada called attention to the fact that commitment forecasted marital satisfaction and also marital stability (Leonhardt et al., 2020).

According to Mahrani and Saptura (2021), there are two types of investments, namely: real investments that includes gold, the solid part of the earth and structures on the land; and financial assets investment. The later refers to shares, money kept in a bank or bonds. Both affect the relationship of the couple but in different ways. This study used a broader definition referring to investment as any type of assets owned by someone for the creation of profits or rewards to be gained after a specific period. The gain could be financial or real investments.

Real Investment

Sassler and Lichter (2020) reiterated that having assets such as home ownership is one of the indicators associated with couples becoming married partners and it also helps the partners to stay in marriage. The assets bond the couple together and reduces the chances of thinking about leaving the relationship. When wives own homes, it increases their bargaining power at home and so they will be able to push their issues during financial discussions. A study done by Gaddis et al. (2022) revealed that the entire family stands to benefit including the children as they are able to be given better nutrition and education when the lady has more money, leading to increased marital stability. However, the gender of the person who owns the home can affect the marital stability of the marriage. According to a study done in Germany by Krapf and Wagner (2020), when the home owner is the wife, people could interpret her home ownership as a way of her stating that she desires financial independence.In reality, it could mean that she is building capacity so that in the event the relationship becomes dissatisfying, she may easily leave the marriage. On the other hand, if the man owns the home, people interpret it as him taking his role as the breadwinner of the family which aligns with what is normally accepted by the society. Hence, male home ownership could likely result into marital stability than female home ownership. The ideal should be joint home ownership.

The economic state of a family is likely to be strongly related to how happy the family members are (Rosifah et al., 2019). According to Ettman et al. (2020), having investments promotes psychological health and the increased amount of money gained from the investments is related to lower incidences of depression. This money also provides a way to gain physical resources, diminishes the impact of stressors including monetary stressors. For instance, being a home owner is related to a lesser susceptibility to depression. Moreover, according to Ettman et al. (2022), a study showed that those who did not have any home or savings possessed 2.15 times of the chances of experiencing depression as compared to people who had homes with $ 5000 of savings. It is a fact that investments are capable of safeguarding the family against poor psychological health. Home ownership promotes marriage and by extension, marital stability and the desire to marry facilitates the action of purchasing a home.

Property has the ability to increase marital durability. Krapf and Wagner (2020) opined that couples who had invested in homes had increased marital stability than thosecouple who rented homes. It was also established that the number of rooms in the owned house had effects on marriage owing to the related financial implications. The higher the number of rooms in a house the higher the marital stability and vice versa. When a house is spacious, the family members have room for doing different activities in different rooms.

This prevents a situation where a marriage partner gets into the ‘personal space” of the other partner especially when a partner is not in the mood of interacting with other people like during meditation or personal prayer time. Many rooms in the house improves the quality of life because guests can also be invited to sleep over and thus the couple can have ample time to talk with the guests. If the guests are the ones who add value to their lives, increased marital stability becomes a possibility through improved marital quality. These findings were consistent with the assertion that joint investments have been associated with durability of marriage (Obersneider et al., 2018).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, when wives own homes, it was established that this increases their bargaining power at home and enables them to push their issues during financial decision-making (Gaddis & Li, 2018). Additionally, ownership by women also provides them with a safety net. The ownership of investments by women has also been reported to have positive outcomes for children. Gaddis et al. (2022) observed that it leads to an increased expenditure on children’s needs, health, and education. In particular, the family receives dietary diversity and the young babies get optimal feeding practices. When the children are thriving, the overall mood of the house improves and the prevailing atmosphere is joyous and positive. Jones et al. (2019), who stated that economically empowered pregnant women strongly influenced budgetary allocations to improve the nutrition of their baby, further reported this. Consequently, good health of the family will result to a higher marital quality and satisfaction and consequently marital stability.

According to Najjar et al. (2020), gender roles are able to affect and even provide information of who runs investments in the house and its effects on marriage.

For instance, a study in Egypt showed that whoever controls the investment in a family is a serious issue. Women in that country who had land ownership usually gave their husband control over it. The study reported that when women owned land, couples experienced marital conflicts. In fact, men declined to stay in houses or till land whose owner was the wife. For example, a divorced wife stated that her decision to own land was a tool she used to get out of her difficult marriage. From this discussion, we could see that traditions and values contribute to marital instability. Specifically, it is worth noting that the study was carried out in a predominantly Islamic country.

Women investments does seem to have a negative effect on marital stability. Tonnessen (2019) observed that women who have acquired their own personal investments have a stronger voice and thus are able to leave their marriage at will, such as when it becomes abusive. This happens because when women cannot stand being beaten or violated against and yet they are able to fend for themselves and some for their entire family. They just cannot see how to endure hardship while their financial empowerment provides a route for escape. The study continues to report that when investments have joint ownership, the woman's standing in the marital relationship is improved. Overall, the marriage partner with more say in relation to investments is in a greater power place in the event of a divorce (Hoehn-Velasco & Penglase, 2021). In joint ownership investments, both the husband and the wife have increased capacity to contribute to the betterment of the marriage or otherwise. This increases the overall marital satisfaction because no one feels under pressure to stay in a bad marriage as both have their hands on the steering wheel of their marriage – their relationship is mutual.

Investments are some of the resources that families could rely on during periods of crisis. For instance, according to Katongole (2020) study showed that the Karamoja in Uganda had invested in agriculture, which help to sustain them during disastrous times. The research revealed that about 28.4% of the families had invested in agriculture. They had kept cattle, sheep, goats and chicken. Not only could they eat these animals, but they could also benefit from them by selling them during scarce times to assist them purchase other food items and to provide for other family needs. This made the families healthy and with a reduction in financial strain, which could have led them into marital instability, had they not invested in agriculture.

In Kenya, there is scarcity of information about the influence of investments on marital stability. However, a study done in Meru County by Kirimi (2019) revealed that the financial dedication to family investment was absent among married individuals. This became a source of marital instability in the area. A separate study carried out in Nairobi City County, Kenya (Omoro, 2018) focusing on the causes of divorce pointed out that couples feared marital dissolution because of what may happen to family investments. Consequently, the family experienced a form of marital stability albeit having no marital satisfaction. This kind of marital stability is not desirable so the researcher did a study on marital stability that arises due to marital satisfaction. The study therefore investigated the influence of couple investments on marital stability among Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East sub-county, Nairobi County, Kenya.

Studies have shown that several factors tend to influence the couples' investment behaviours. These factors include personality types, risk taking, emotions, information, and, financial status (Aren & Hamamci, 2019; Kumar & Kumar, 2020; Marcus, 2020). Aren and Hamamci (2019) identified two types of traits in respect of financial behaviours: openness and conscientiousness. Financial behaviours are human activities associated with financial management like savings and debts (Rahman et al., 2021). People whose personality trait is openness possess several positive traits. This particular trait is related to taking loans and obtaining financial wealth. Such individuals are also predicted to engage in risky investments. Married people with open personality, according to the authors, usually purchase more stocks and tend to make long-term investments. In contrast, people with conscientious personality are careful in making investments, and gravitate to safe investments. Couples with opposite personalities are therefore likely to balance each in respect of approaches to investments.

The second factor includes the level of risk that couples may find necessary to take. Investments usually involve taking financial risks. According to Kumar and Kumar (2020), certain people delight in making risky financial ventures, while others are reluctant. The authors advanced that risk comprises of the level of the variety of profits which an individual investing has the capacity to withstand. It was observed that women generally differ from men in their ability to make risky decisions. According to Kumar and Kumar (2020), on average, women are less likely to make risky decisions than men family hence are less likely to invest than men are. In addition, women have less finances than men, which they could use to invest, thus, the little they have, they hold on to it and if they have to invest it, they do so cautiously. This therefore means that it is important for the couple to make joint financial investments so that they can protect them from too many risky investments that sometimes could lead to loss of income. The loss of income could result into financial strain and consequently marital instability.

During investment decision-making, investors have to take a totally rational approacheven though they may not openly accept that they are affected by their emotions (Marcus, 2020). However, some scholars report instances where individuals have lamented of their poor decision-making due to their emotional-based decisions (Ullah & Sepasgozar, 2020). Joint decision-making during investment purchasing is therefore critical to marital stability. It ensures that the emotional marriage partner is tempered and the one too logical, has his or herstand softened. This is possible when decisions are reached through compromise by both partners. When the decisions are made jointly, couples would be able to reap the benefits ofrational decision-making that enhances their marital stability.

Financial Asset Investment

Financial investments in a marital relationship including joint resources serve as one of the factors that enhances marital stability. Studies show that although it will not particularlyprevent disintegration of the marriage, it actually delays the process of dissolution (Janicka &Syzmczak, 2019). A study done in Britain revealed that men usually experienced mental wellness when the couple combines their resources and share household investments (Perelli-Harris & Styra, 2018). Furthermore, Gibson-Davis et al. (2018) also stated that acquiring a combined bank account may show that the husband is totally committed to the relationship, withholding nothing. Joint ownership of investments is accepted in most places worldwide.Meinzen-Dick (2019) indicated that evaluations of the different aspects of joint ownership are still coming out, but notes that joint and sole ownerships have different implications.

However, little is known about how women respond to joint investment. What research reveals is that husbands and wives have conflicting views regarding joint ownership of investments like land and houses. During a study done in the US, men and women provided different responses concerning asset ownership but the real reasons were not stated. This provides a situation that needs future research (Ambler et al., 2021).

Dew's (2016) review of empirical literature revealed that actions considered as effective financial management by financial professionals have a positive correlation with the quality and stability of marriages. For instance, he made reference to longitudinal research which indicates that financial assets are linked to improved marital stability. From the findings, it can be surmised that there is a potential link between financial asset investment and marital stability. However, the findings were based on theoretical literature review rather than original research, hence, presenting a methodological gap. This was addressed in the present study by undertaking primary research among Christian couples in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya.

Effect of Debts on Marital Stability

Something is referred to as a debt if an individual or organization is obliged legally or ethically to give another person money presently or in future (Lea, 2021). According to Collins Dictionary (n.d.) a debt is the total amount of money that someone has given another but the person given has not yet given back to the giver. Similarly, a debt comprises of finances given to an individual by another individual through some kind of loan which is supposed to be paid back in future (Francis – Devine, 2022). Another definition of debt is thatit is the quantity of finances a person is obligated to give to another individual, corporation, country or other establishments and as they give it back, they are supposed to give with interest (Cambridge, n.d.). Debt definitions are diverse in different texts. For instance, they can include loans or overdrafts. There are different types of family debts such as housing debts, automobile debts, education debts, student loans, personal loans, loans from close friends and other loans. Other loans mean debts for big purchases (Amit et al., 2020; Xiao & Yao, 2020). According to this proposal, the definition of debt shall refer to money that a person is owed by another person or any establishment, and the person is obligated to pay with or without interest as mutually agreed.

Credit Card Debt

Credit serves an important part in the life of an individual. It is required to ensure smooth consumption during periods of financial hardship (Bialowolski & Weziak- Bialowolska, 2021). In developed countries like the US, credit cards are now an importantway of purchasing goods and services (Chen et al., 2023). The uncertainty of using cash attracts many people to use credit cards. Sometimes some brands offer special discounts to cards because they are able to pay for their daily expenses without many limitations. Additionally, they enable the consumer to purchase first and pay later for the goods and services acquired. A study in the US by Atlas et al. (2019) provided evidence suggesting that sound credit card usage when combined with financial knowledge can lead to general financial satisfaction. Financial satisfaction is linked to financial well-being (Atlas et al., 2019).

Credit card debt affects many married couples. For instance, in Finland, debts from credit cards affect married couples more than singles (Hohnen & Hansen, 2021). Debt can destroy a marriage despite the socio-economic status of the couple involved (Totenhagen et al., 2019). It can lead to problems with financial wellness, increased vulnerability to depression, anxiety and other diseases. It also damages a couple's utility putting a strain in the marital relationship due to conflict (Cai et al., 2019). In Germany, studies showed that rising consumer debt due to lack of self –control is associated with higher levels of disagreements between couples and even separation (Kapelle & Baxter, 2021). An absenceof self-control makes debts to rise through enabling people to spend money impulsively (Fernandez –Lopez et al., 2023). Impulse buying predicts overspending and also high debts(Achtziger, 2022). A study in South Africa reported that some nurses took loans to meet theneeds of their family members and household needs too resulting in discontentment and instability in their relationship. Some of the nurses felt that their contribution was not appreciated in the family and they felt trapped (Cohen & Venter, 2020).

Individuals with hedonic lifestyles who focus on experiencing pleasure can result intoa life of consumption, wastefulness, destruction and impulse decision-making. The person may have to borrow in order to satisfy the demands of the lifestyle. If this attitude is not changed, it could lead a person to accumulate debts (Mulfikhati, 2023). Families pile up debtto maintain and enhance the lifestyles which other individuals display. Copying other people's modern lifestyles encourages families to amass debt. A rise in family debt is mainlyas a result of desiring a higher standard of living and copying the lifestyle of high-class people (Herispon, 2019).

A study by Yunchao et al. (2020) in Malaysia documented that consumer debt causesa rise in financial pressure which increases chances of financial disagreements. The researchers stated that consumer debts are positively linked to divorce and that a rise in thesedebts was linked to marital instability. In the same country, Diniyya et al. (2020) found that the same type of debt affected marital stability but indirectly. It first causes marital dissatisfaction. It lowers the time couples spend together because they have to work more hours to pay for the debts. Consequently, this raises the frequency of financial conflicts and increases the perception of unfairness between the couples leading to marital dissatisfaction.

Addo and Zhang's (2020) in the United States found that outstanding debt is positively linked to marital conflict and it increases the likelihood of divorce. This is made worse when debt accumulation is combined with financial infidelity. They explained that forcouples who maintained separate accounts, unsecured debt for consumption goods could beamassed and handled privately without the other spouse knowing. However, those with combined accounts but in possession of separate cards experienced financial conflicts as theresult of the debt balance accrued or the debt behavior of the other partner. Another study inthe US by Kelly et al. (2022) found that debts forecast lower degrees of satisfaction in a marriage, lower quality of the marriage and higher levels of heartache and divorce.

Dew et al. (2017) noted that couples who reported to have good marriages usually stayed away from debts. However, if there was a necessity to acquire debts, the couple cleared them as fast as they could, which resulted into diminishing marital disagreements, promoting a stronger commitment and stability of marriage. On the other hand, Diniyya et al.(2020) had a different view. The authors stated that acquiring debt is not necessarily something negative. What is key is how to understand it and manage it. This difference of opinion presents a research gap to establish whether or not debt leads to marital stability ornot. However, it is important to note that uncontrolled debt can lead to more financial conflicts and thereby threatening marital satisfaction leading to marital instability.

Baryla-Matejczuk et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between credit management and marital quality in Poland. To explore the dynamics between partners, various measurements were employed, including the Financial Management Behaviour Scale.To unearth the correlations between variables, artificial neural networks analysis were employed. The investigation involved a sample of 500 couples comprising 384 married couples and 116 cohabitating couples. The outcomes indicated that credit management and insurance-related behaviors held considerable importance in influencing the quality and stability of relationships between partners. The research underscored that financial management behaviors wield an influence not only on relationship quality and but also the dynamics of their partnerships, which includes its stability. The research was however conducted in a developed country. Hence the findings were not generalizable to an economically constrained country like Kenya. This presented a contextual gap that necessitated the present research.

A study done in South Africa showed that families there acquire debt because they want to meet social requirements, so they buy sophisticated household appliances or furnitureon credit. Some use debt to send money to their relatives in the village to make a house for them or to meet school fees obligations. These activities create “household stability” but it is not clear if it creates marital stability. In Kenya, studies have been done concerning debts in the marriage and their effects. Njoroge and Lwangale (2021) undertook a study in Trans-Nzoia county, Kenya and observedthat majority of couple conflicts related to debts, among other factors. This was echoed by a separate study by Munyiri (2018) expounding that in order to prevent financial conflicts, couples needed to spend money according to their budget, or spend less than what was budgeted. The researcher opined that couple conversations should include financial issues such as debts accrued and suggested that debt repayment should remain a priority. In both studies, the researchers did not however explain whether or not the conflicts experiencedaffected marital stability. This presents a gap which this study seeks to fill.

Mortgage Debt

Mortgage debt has become the chief means of financing homeownership particularly to young adults who are not economically endowed or do not have an inheritance (Raviv, 2021).For instance, a study in the UK showed that the levels of divorce increased because couples had mortgage debts (Kim et al., 2022). Consequently, it can be argued that debt is a pervasivefactor that influences the stability of many marriages. A study by Azeez and Akhtar (2021) in Spain revealed that when one person falls into debt using family resources, it may lead to conflict. These financial conflicts could then lead to financial stress which consequently lowers the financial satisfaction level in the couple (Aguiar-Diaz & Zagal-Jimenez, 2021).

A study by Ngulya et al. (2021) in Malaysia observed that one of the factors that causes friction among Muslims is debt. Similarly, Kadir (2021) documented that the rising debt among families has led to stress and marital dissolution. Consistent with this, Cai et al.(2020) found that debt had a negative effect on the marriage of the couples in Malaysia. Besides a lower marital satisfaction, debt affected the financial well-being of the family. It also made them vulnerable to depression, anxiety and enabled them to have challenges withtheir health. Debt has been found to cause a strain in the couple's relationship because it heightens the proclivity to disagree as a result of the debt incurred.

Financial Literacy

Financial literacy is a measure of the competence of having an idea and making decisions about daily financial issues such as budget, income and expenses, as well as investment instruments, pension plans and so on. (Aren & Hamamci, 2019, p. 9). It comprisesof information, skill, and conduct that is required, to enable an individual to make sound decisions regarding finances and eventually achieve personal financial well- being (Aguiar-Diaz & Zagal-Jimenez, 2021). It also encompasses financial awareness of the financial products or services available for the consumer (Fanta & Mutsonziwa, 2021). The better a person's knowledge about financial literacy, the more effective the person's ability tomanage debt (Mulfikhat, 2023). The lower the financial literacy, the higher the chances of creating negative financial decisions which after some time may lead to debts. According to Ouachani et al. (2020), there is lack of a standard way of measuring financial literacy becauseit is not a concept that has been accepted worldwide. Therefore, the measurement of financialliteracy needs to be customized to meet a particular country’s needs. Following are the indicators of financial literacy:

Financial Knowledge

Financial knowledge consists of the comprehension and awareness of money, financial merchandise and concepts which people can use during financial decision-making (Al Chat for Scientific PDF, n.d.). Couples with little financial knowledge put their families intodifficult positions. For instance, a study done in Jakarta revealed that knowledge about finances is key because it can determine the degree of financial satisfaction a person may experience (Adiputra, 2021). Financial satisfaction is associated with marital satisfaction.

Couples with financial satisfaction experience a higher level of marital stability (Baryla- Matejczuk et al., 2020). In Ghana, few researches have been done to investigate financialknowledge. Instead a related study in that country showed that financial literacy has an important role in people during the financial management process (Baidoo et al., 2020). Another study in Kajiado county, Kenya documented that acquiring financial knowledge is importantbecause it helps the individual to manage finances, enhances the process of decision-making while averting financial mistakes (Gichuhi & Mwangi, 2021). This prevents marital disagreements from flaring up until they reach levels where the marriage cannot hold together. Financial knowledge enhances marital stability.

Financial Skills

Financial skills comprise of people’s characters which help them relate efficiently andin unity (people’s skills) and the ability to accomplish a task (technical skills) which enable people to govern and negotiate during financial decision-making (Gibson, 2022). A study in Poland by Baryla-Matejczuk et al. (2020) showed that financial skills especially spending money wisely on a daily basis results in satisfaction of basic needs. This leads to satisfaction with life which is key for marital quality. In South Africa, a researcher did a study on sub- Saharan Africa which documented that financial skills are considerably associated with people saving more money, borrowing more money as well as having a higher chance of beginning a new enterprise (Thaddeus et al., 2020). In Kenya, a study suggested that increasing a person’s financial skills and knowledge is capable of boosting the confidence of a person. This will eventually result in a situation where the person is able to meet their financial responsibilities (Lone & Bhat, 2022). Consequently, this leads to marital satisfactionwhich leads to marital stability.

Financial Behavior

Financial behavior is demonstrated in the way a person manages their budget, expenses and savings. Activities associated with money management are regarded as financial behaviour and they include managing income, savings, investments and debts (Rahman et al., 2021). A study done in Malaysia indicated that wise financial behaviour doesnot always result in better ways of planning their finances (Nga & Yeo, 2021). In the same country, a study reported that if people have positive financial behaviours like good saving behaviours, they will experience positive financial outcomes. They will also be able to overcome financial shocks and sudden losses of income (Magli et al., 2020). In Ghana, a research was done which revealed that financial behavior is one of the principal factors influencing financial satisfaction (Owusu, 2021). Yet another study on financial literacy in Kenya showed that exposing people to financial literacy could assist in improving financial behavior of the people like improving people's saving behavior. The researcher recommended that more research should be done on financial literacy and also financial behaviours like savings (Mwangi, 2020). Thus, this study investigated financial literacy and more specifically, how it moderates the relationship between financial management and marital stability

The foregoing discourse signals a direct role of financial literacy in sound financial management. Financial management is "the determination, acquisition, allocation, and utilization of financial resources, usually with the aim of achieving some particular goals orobjectives" (McMenamin, 1999, p. 9). It comprises of behaviours that are associated with "consumption, cash management, savings and investments, and credit management" (Le Baron et al., 2019, p. 1). It is one of the most frequently cited causes of conflict between couples (Delatorre & Wagner, 2018; Effa & Nwogu, 2019; Garbinsky et al., 2020; Mohlatlole et al., 2018; Renanita & Setiawan, 2018). However, the sources of financial issuesare not generally related to money (Ford et al., 2019). In addition, it has been established thatcouples who are newly married are definitely susceptible to marital instability as a result of financial conflicts (Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2019). For example, a study done in the US showed that a one-point rise in financial responsibility was related to 49% lesser chance of reporting marital instability for husbands (Arocho & Purtell, 2020). Since an increase in financial responsibility is linked to lesser risk of divorce, then financial responsibility could lead to marital stability (Arocho & Purtell, 2020).

On the other hand, financial management practices are the activities done during financial management in order to achieve organizational goals – in this case, family goals likefinancial reporting (Muchiri, 2017). Studies have associated financial management with marital stability (Alola et al., 2019; Callegari et al., 2020; Nadolu et al., 2020). For instance, Yunchao et al.'s (2020) investigation of the relationship between shopping, debts, and divorce reported that every one-unit rise in shopping debt was linked to a 7% - 8% rise in marital instability. These findings are supported by other studies that revealed a positive association between money management and marriage stability among newly married couples in Malysia (Dew & Xiao, 2011; Obiagel, 2009; Sawai et al., 2018).

The level of financial literacy that an individual possesses can moderate the effect of financial management on marital stability. It is critical to acknowledge the benefit of sound financial management practices on relational outcomes (Ross et al., 2019). Financial literacy empowers and improves the community's quality of life. It is profitable to families in terms of the ability to enhance relationships and more specifically, it contributes to considerable marital stability (Matey et al., 2020). When an individual possesses financial knowledge, financial management capacity and ability to manage financial issues, financial literacy will enable the person to deal better with financial issues and eventually attain financial satisfaction (Farida et al., 2021). Research has revealed that people who had financial satisfaction reported higher levels of marital stability (Ross et al., 2019). According to Godinic et al. (2020), for people who lack financial literacy, a variety of negative financial scenarios develop during periods of economic uncertainty, such as when the Covid -19 pandemic struck. This leads to financial dissatisfaction and inability to manage the financial situations, hence, strained marriages.

The degree of financial literacy is a factor to be considered by people, in both the way the individuals view financial risk and the way they assess investment instruments. The more the individual has knowledge about investment instruments, the more the person is able to take risk and invest in risky businesses (Aren &

Hamamci, 2019). An individual with a high level of financial literacy will act wisely and responsibly when making the decisions to invest. Additionally, financial literacy will assist the person to give a proper explanation and comprehension of the individual's way of reasoning about the investment in both sensible and emotional aspects. A sound comprehension of financial knowledge is predicted to raise the insight and awareness of institutions dealing with finances, financial merchandise and also services. Consequently, the person becomes capable of providing for his financial needs and also promote his or her own financial welfare (Putri & Simanjuntak, 2020). When the needs of the household and the welfare are met, the couples experience marital satisfaction and consequently marital stability.

Dew et al. (2020) explored the link between effective financial management behaviours and the quality of marriages. They employed three consecutive waves of longitudinal data involving 279 married couples over a three-year span in in the northwestern region of the United States. Longitudinal path analysis revealed that, effective financial management behaviors were directly linked with reduced instances of marital conflict. The relevance of the finding is inherent in the implied moderating role of financial literacy. However, this was not explicit in the study, thereby, creating a conceptual gap. This gap was empirically addressed in the present study by investigating the moderating effect of financial literacy on the relationship between financial management and marital stability among Kenyan couples.

Saxey et al. (2021) examined the connections between financial management behaviors, perceptions of economic strain, and predictors of marital stability among newlywed couples in the United States. Data was gathered from a sample of 1,447 couples and analyzed using structural equation modelling technique. The results highlighted that financial literacy enhanced marital stability through reduced economic strain accruing from effective financial management behaviors. While the study provides empirical evidence of the potential interaction between financial literacy and sound financial management, the generalizability of the research results is limited to a developed country context. This created a contextual gap that was addressed by the present study.

Copur and Eker (2014) observed that the manner in which an individual manages their personal finances has been revealed to play a substantial role in shaping marital contentment or discontentment. Notably, possessing adept financial management skills has been proposed to mitigate the likelihood of disagreements within marriages, whereas, the absence of such skills might contribute to the emergence of crises. Copur and Eker (2014) thus explored the nexus between financial management behavior and marital relationships. The study's participant pool encompassed 302 public sector employees in Ankara, Turkey, with 149 women and 153 men. The study identified a noteworthy correlation between financial management and the quality of the marital relationship, implying that there is a relationship between financial literacy, financial management behavior, and marital stability. The gap left in the study is conceptual in that the study did not demonstrate the interaction between financial literacy and financial management behaviors, with implications on marital stability. This gap was closed in the present study by conceptualizing financial literacy as amoderating factor between financial management and marital ability in Kenya.

Outside the western world, a growing body of research has been interested in the relationship between financial management and marital stability. For instance, Sawai et al. (2018) explored the connection between financial literacy and financial management, as well as their impact on both marital contentment and the endurance of marriages in Malaysia. The study involved 278 individuals who were married and had been in their marriage for up to 5 years. In terms of data gathering, the study utilized standardized tools such as In Charge Financial Distress/Financial Well-Being (IFDFW) Scale, Financial Management Behavior Scale (FMBS), Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS), and Marital Instability Index (MII). Pearson correlation was employed for data analysis. The results indicated a noteworthy correlation between financial strain, financial management practices, marital satisfaction, and marital stability. Furthermore, a significant relationship emerged between financial management practices and marital satisfaction. Overall, the findings underscore the significant role that financial literacy plays in influencing both the satisfaction and long-term stability of a marriage. The research was however conducted in Asia; hence, the findings may not be generalizable to marriages in Kenya. This presented a contextual gap that warranted the present study.

Another study in Asia was conducted by Firmansyah et al. (2021) who investigated the moderating influence of financial literacy on the relationship between financial management and family welfare in East Java, Indonesia. The study was carried out by surveying 270 participants located in East Java. Primary data for this research were gathered through the distribution of online questionnaires. The research approach employed was explanatory, establishing connections between variables by means of hypothesis testing. Path analysis was utilized to explore the moderating influence of the financial literacy factor. The findings of the study demonstrate a significant connection between the manner in which household finances are managed and the economic well-being of households, with potential implications on marital stability. Notably, a strong level of financial literacy among homemakers can amplify the positive impact of effective financial management on enhancing family welfare and marital stability. However, a conceptual gap was noted in the study in that the study did not distinguish which set of financial management behaviors had the strongest effect. The present study addressed this conceptual gap by investigating the effect of spending, debt, and investment management on marital stability, and whether this varied by financial literacy.

Baisden et al. (2018) undertook a phenomenological inquiry into the relationship between financial management and marital quality. Through qualitative investigation, the research involved six couples in their initial marriage phase, each with at least one child aged 18 or younger. The main goal was to gain insights into how the financial histories of these couples impact their current financial management methods and how these methods, in turn, influence their relationships. Results showed that the ways in which couples handle their financial matters are diverse, just as the effects on their relationships vary. The couples' financial histories contribute to an array of management strategies, shaped by factors such as financial stress, communication patterns, and shared values. The study thus demonstrates thatthe potential relationship between financial management and marital stability is complex, with potential mediators and moderators. This finds support from Sawai et al.'s (2018) study in Malaysia to find out how financial management affected marital stability in newly married couples. The researchers found out that financial behavior like budgeting and tracking expenses can create differing opinions in the marriage and so affecting marital stability. The researchers however relied on qualitative methodology, thereby, creating a methodological gap that the present research addressed using quantitative design.

In Africa, research on the nexus between financial management and marital stability is also burgeoning. For instance, Obi-Keguna et al. (2019) carried out a study in Nigeria and reported that financial management was a critical problem that ruins marriages. Majority of the respondents said that financial management and financial scarcity were the main cause of broken marriages. It provides an environment where there is frequent disagreements on how money was spent. Differences may ensue in the cause of the arguments which if not controlled may escalate to conflicts, fights, instability and divorce at worst.

Extending research into the Kenyan context, Waruiru et al. (2019) did a study on the effects of financial management on marital stability in Nakuru County, Kenya. The researchers documented that conflict usually began when wives overestimated debts, while husbands overestimated income. Even in cases where finances were not the cause of couple disagreements, arguments associated with finances were more widespread, difficult to deal with, regular in occurrence, and often went without being resolved. Financial conflicts, they stated, take a long duration and can lead to depression, physical hostility like shouting, pushing and even hitting each other. This study was conducted in Nairobi City County, Kenya which has different demographic and the socio-economic features from Nakuru. Collectively, the reviewed empirical literature has demonstrated that a relationship potentially exists between financial management behaviors, financial literacy, and marital stability. They are connected in one way or the other. They also affect each other. However,there are inconsistencies in the research results, with most studies reporting a significant connection. The literature review has revealed various contextual, conceptual, and methodological gaps that the present study addressed.

Relationship between Financial Literacy, Financial Management, and Marital Stability

Marriage is a lifetime relationship. When a couple in a marriage relationship remains together instead of separating or divorcing, they are said to enjoy marital stability (Priyadharshini & Gopalan, 2019). Scholars have identified five major indicators of marital stability which include; intimacy, mutual support, conflict resolution, beliefs and expectations, and attachment (Oyetunji-Alemede, 2022; Oyegunwa et al., 2019; Pinto, 2022; Taremi, 2019). These factors are explored further below:

Intimacy

Intimacy involves a relationship where a person is close to someone through friendship or sexual relations (Cambridge, n.d.). It is the principle reason for the establishment of a marital relationship. It relieves stress, helps in the functioning of a marriage, is a component of commitment and it also helps in enhancing the physical and psychological aspects of a couple. It enables marriage partners to bond and also improves marital quality (Reyhani et al., 2022). Intimacy involves two parts where a person discloses pertinent self-revealing information or behavior to another person and the other person responds in the same way. Their speech and responses must be understanding, caring, embracing and validating (Priyadharshini & Gopalan, 2019).

Historically, research has shown that intimacy has a positive effect on marital satisfaction and it enhances marital stability. This was reported from a study held in Iran (Bean et al., 2020). In Ghana, another study revealed similar results, that intimacy influencedmarital satisfaction. They further found that intimacy makes attachment and bonding possible (Udofia et al., 2021). In Kenya, Obure et al. (2021) found that couples world-wide experienced marital problems due to intimacy challenges. The struggle with intimacy happens because couples are unable to merge their values and desires to help keep their marriage functioning. In the end, the couples experienced botched intimacy leading to marital instability.

Attachment in Marital Relationship

Galbis and North (2022) define attachment as “ a deep and enabling emotional bond between two people in which each seeks closeness and feels more secure when in the presence of the attachment figure” (p.1). There exists three attachment styles in adults. They include; secure attachment, insecure-anxious attachment, and insecure-avoidant attachment. They are explained as follows. In secure attachment, people believe that their marriage partners are going to be responsive and within reach (Han et al., 2021). They have warm relationships with their partners and they tend to have a positive perspective of people including themselves (Momeni et al., 2022). Insecure-anxious attachment occurs among people who expect and see threats in their relationships. They are usually inclined to fear rejection and being left by their spouse (Han et al., 2021). They tend to lean so much on others. They have a false belief that people do not want to develop intimate relationships with them (Momeni et al., 2022). Finally, in insecure-avoidant attachment, people expect and see threats in their marriage. They could experience discomfort with intimacy and have a strong feeling of independence(Han et al., 2021). They also feel uneasy with close relationships and find it difficult to trust(Momeni et al., 2022).

Marriage partners with the same attachment style regardless of the level of attachment insecurity, have less problems in their marriages than those with different attachment styles, the reason being they acknowledge and understand the other partner’s way of controlling emotion. This predicts the stability of their relationship (Conradi et al., 2021). A research done in Brazil indicated that the attachment styles of marriage partners affects the partners especially during conflict resolution. Insecurely-anxious and insecurely avoidant spouses demonstrate a low degree of adjustment to marriage, challenges in communication and damaging conflict resolution plans. On the contrary, securely attached spouses go to their partners during challenging or distressful times. Additionally, they are able to experiment with different approaches of resolving conflict. They also deal with conflicting situations in a flexible way and demonstrate resilience during difficult times in their relationship (Costa & Mosman, 2020).

Another study done in Ghana revealed that attachment leads to marital satisfaction which will eventually lead to marital stability (Udofia et al., 2021). In Kenya, a study done in Westlands, Nairobi County, revealed that the early bond between a father and adaughter has a significant effect on the daughter’s ability to trust, to be grateful and to have healthy relationships with other men who form part of her life including her husband. (Maina et al., 2021) The researchers further found that children from divorced parents are more susceptible to experience divorce because they lack interpersonal skills necessary to sustain a relationship and they tend to see separation as a practical answer to their marital problems, such children experience marital instability due to attachment issues and poor modelling of a marriage (Maina et al., 2021).

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution refers to a situation where couples are able to find a way of resolving their problems (Shork, 2023). Mohammadi et al. (2020) argued that conflict resolution positively affects marital stability. The researchers observed that if couples were able to agree on financial budgets, this improved their relationship. They argued that the key was the couples’ focus on their ability to regulate emotions. Emotional regulation was found to help increase intimacy and eventually marital stability. A study in the US revealed that financial stress resulted into more conflicts between couples (Luetke et al., 2020). Another study done in South Africa showed that financial management problems due to poor budgeting resulted into disagreements between couples (Mahlangu et al., 2022). The study established that conflicts were at times so severe that lack of resolution resulted into physical violence. A study done in Kenya by Chebet and Muturi (2024) revealed that poor financial management was one of the sources of family conflicts. The above studies done in South Africa and Kenya did not however state whether poor financial management affected marital stability. This study examined the effect of financial management on marital stability.

Beliefs and Expectations in Marriage

People's actions are impacted by their beliefs (Cortázar et al., 2024). Collins (n.d.) identified beliefs as feelings or acceptance that something is true, while expectations are a kind of belief that one will get their desires fulfilled. Results of a study done in Iran showed that beliefs were one of the sources of marital conflict (Poorheidari et al., 2021). In Rwanda,another study revealed that traditional beliefs concerning men affected their decision-making(McLean et al., 2019). The study showed that men had the final say over all economic decisions in the home and women were not expected to challenge that position. This belief is indeed also held as true among Pentecostal Christians, drawing justification from several verses in the Bible. For instance, a common scripture is Ephesians 5:22, which says, “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband has authority over his wife just as Christ has authority over the church”. (Good News Bible Translation). Such beliefs can influence financial management practices of a couple.

McLean et al. (2019) observed that a common lament in their research was that men were spending more money on luxuries like alcohol to the detriment of the family, leaving insufficient income for the family. This becomes a recipe for conflict and instability in the family. To remedy the situation, the study proposed a training program to transform cultural beliefs. The research however did not document the effects of the changed beliefs on marital stability. In a study by Chebet and Muturi (2024) in Kenya, one of the major causes of marital conflict was found to be poor financial management. This was however attributed to the fact that wives expected their husbands to fully provide for household needs. However the study did not say if the conflict led to marital stability. This presented a gap which this study addressed.

Mutual Support

Mutual support is a situation where marriage partners give each other support during times of need (Thomeer & Clark, 2021). It is one of the main pointers of satisfaction in a marriage (Bedair et al., 2020). Mutual support is at the heart of an appropriately functioning marriage because most of the rights and responsibilities shared between marriage partners areembedded more on mutual support than on equality. This was the case in a study of Muslim couples in Iran (Nawaz et al., 2021). Research in Nigeria showed that mutual understanding leads to effective communication which enhances conflict resolution, but research did not touch on mutual support (Adegboyega, 2021). A study done in Kenya among the clergy and their spouses revealed that mutual support was one of the factors that assist a family to acceptand adjust to trouble when it strikes. This is further addressed with the help of support groups(Emusugut, 2023). The study did not show if mutual support leads to instability in the marriage, a gap to be filled by the present study. The part turns to the summary of research gaps.

Summary of Research Gaps

The literature review has revealed various contextual, conceptual, and methodological gaps that the present study sought to address in examining the interplay between financial management, financial literacy, and marital stability. The relationship between financial management and marital stability, particularly among married couples, remains underexplored. Studies have employed varying conceptualizations, measurements, and interrelationships for these constructs, leading to inconsistencies in findings (Achtziger, 2022; Addo & Zhang, 2020; Allsop et al., 2023; Baisden et al., 2018). While prior research (Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2023; Baryła-Matejczuk et al., 2019; Callegari et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2023) has often focused on related outcomes like marital satisfaction and happiness, few studies have treated marital stability as a dependent variable. Even where marital stability has been examined, researchers have used diverse measures, and the methodologies and research designs have varied widely (Grable et al., 2021; Garbinsky et al., 2020; Lazuardi & Puspitawati, 2022). Additionally, there is a lack of clarity on the dynamics of family budgeting, including who in a family setting participates in and influences budget decisions.

Moreover, the moderating role of financial literacy in the relationship between financial management and marital satisfaction has received limited and inconclusive attention. Existing studies have been conducted in diverse contexts, making it difficult to generalize findings to specific populations (Kulic et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2020; Maunula et al., 2019; Naess et al., 2020; Peiró et al., 2019; Taipale, 2019). In particular, there is a need for empirical research addressing how financial management and literacy can mitigate marital challenges among distinct groups, such as newlywed and middle-aged Christian couples in Kenya. This gap highlights the necessity of contextually relevant investigations to inform interventions aimed at promoting marital stability through improved financial practices and literacy.

Theoretical Framework

A theory is an abstract description of a set of logically related propositions expressing the relationships among constructs, which informs the understanding of a phenomenon (Varpio et al., 2020). It actually shows how the different variables are interrelated. A theoretical framework provides a structured way to approach research by grounding it in established theories and concepts, helping researchers make informed decisions throughout the research process. In this study, Couple and Finances Theory and Bowen's Theory was be used.The theories have been used in other related studies (Ford, 2019; Kiara, 2019; Waruiru,et al.,2019).

Couple and Finances Theory

Kristy Archuleta developed the Couple and Finances Theory (CFT) in 2008. The objectiveof the theory was to help people recognize the association between couples who are married (of different genders and earning an income) and their finances. Following are the concepts of the theory: "individual couple characteristics, couple relationship characteristics (CRC), marital quality (MQ), and the financial process including financial behaviours (inputs), financial management practices (FMP), and financial satisfaction (FS)" (Archuleta, 2008, p. 29). Allsop et al. (2023) explains that this theory is about financial and couple process, which they postulate, are interlinked. For instance, if a couple has a financial burden, may be they have overspent on a particular item or service, this financial burden is able to influence the quality of life of the couple. Quality of life could include aspects of a marriage partner's ability to cope with problems, mood or ability to communicate. This, if lowered by the financial burden or debt, could threaten the couple's marital stability.

According to Sorenson (2016), CFT is grit grounded on an ecological structure and most of its assumptions are derived from systems theory. Ecological structure comprises of environmental aspects like education, tribe, income, economy, age, gender, association, culture and society. Ford et al. (2019) posits that systemic factors like how couples handled money in their family of origin and relational-financial issues are related to the dynamics of couples and their finances. Both ecological and systemic factors influence the financial management behavior of the couple thus influencing the marital stability. For instance a study by Callegariet al. (2020) found that the culture of the Swedish people affected their financial management practices. Men were expected to be breadwinners and women homemakers. In the event of financial strain or debt, women are given the responsibility of managing the debt. This has negative ramifications on the woman causing her to feel stressed and resulting into reducedcommitment to the marriage. This lack of equality in debt management and gender- stereotypic strategy in a household decreases marital satisfaction and leads to marital stability.

A major assumption of CFT is that challenges related to money are associated with difficulties in the relationship of the couple. Sorenson (2016) documented that there is a positive link of financial difficulties in marriage with a lower level of quality in marriage. Ford et al. (2019) stated that the way family finances are managed and how financial practices are displayed is a common cause of disagreements in couples. These disagreements influence marital satisfaction. For instance, newly married couples are most vulnerable during such conflicts, which negatively affects the stability of their marriage.

The Couple and Finances Theory provides an ideal lens to examine the interconnections of financial management in a marriage set up (Ford et al., 2019). It helps in understanding that the quality of a marriage is an active occurrence that possesses the power to change as the financial circumstances change. Since financial mismanagement, as informed by systemic and environmental factors, has been found to causemarital disagreements, solving financial management conflicts is indeed a complex matter.

The reasons for its complexity are the numerous factors affecting the financial- relationship processes and also the fact that financial management disagreements are usually more problematic, recurrent and extensive (Baryla-Matejczuk et al., 2023). As Ford et al. (2019) documented, it is critical that financial therapists enquire about the factors that influence anindividual’s financial management practices, like what one may have observed from their parents on handling money.

In summary, Couple and Finances Theory is suitable for the study because it provides an ideal lens to examine the interconnections of financial management in a marriage set up (Ford et al., 2019). This concept helps in understanding that the quality of a marriage is an active occurrence that possesses the power to change as the financial circumstances change. On the other hand, Bowen theory is specifically important in understanding marital stability. According to Waruiru et al. (2019), this theory is critical in the study of marriage because it explains the behavior of individuals and particularly couples, the separated, and the divorced,and points at elements responsible for marital instability. In terms of application, the present study focused on financial management dimensions of CFT (spending, investment, and debt) and how they influence marital stability in Kenya.

Bowen Theory

The proponent of Bowen Theory is Murray Bowen who developed the theory betweenthe 1940s and 1950s. The concept of the Bowen Theory most relevant for this study is the concept of differentiation of self and so it was the one used. Bowen believed that self- differentiation is significantly associated with a person’s family life, and that an individual’s degree of differentiation of self, shows the person’s ability to judge emotions and thoughts, when the person is undergoing stressful situations. Differentiation of self also gives a person the capacity to regulate emotions including comforting oneself during times of anxiety, hence, helps a person not to feel overwhelmed by anxiety caused by other people (Bridge, 2019). The theory therefore shows that differentiation of self is important in relationships where people relate with one another for a long time (Br.

A study done in China reported that most couples are often unsure of financial management and they struggle on how to communicate about their concerns in order to resolve their problems. This may result into dissatisfaction and conflicts (Godinić & Obrenovic, 2020). These conflicts need to be handled well but then it depends on the level of differentiation of the couple. A highly differentiated partner usually remain calm, flexible and able to resolve the problem objectively. On the contrary, the spouse who has low differentiation of self becomes overwhelmed by their feelings, during conflict. They also react to the problem by trying to solve it selfishly or by creating a physical or emotional distance with their partner (Lampis et al., 2019). If a couple is trying to resolve a financial issue and one of them has low differentiation of self, the implication is that the conflict could worsen leading to marital instability.

This theory is specifically important in understanding marital stability as the dependent variable. According to Waruiru et al. (2019), this theory is of critical in the study of marriage because it explains the behavior of individuals and particularly couples, the separated, and the divorced, and points at elements responsible for marital instability. In particular, the theory's core construct is self-differentiation, which Calatrava et al. (2022) describes as "the capacity to maintain emotional objectivity amidst high levels of anxiety in asystem while concurrently relating to key people" (p.2). The theory is specifically targeted to assist in understanding how different couples behave during conflict resolution. Different people act differently during conflict situations according to their level of self-differentiation.

Marriage partners who are highly self-differentiated have more trust and security in their relationship (Bagheri et al., 2021). The degree of trust among couples influence sharing behaviours. As the relationship evolves and trust grows, couples continue to share their things like joint accounts and later make co-investments together (Lin et al., 2021). Since self- differentiation signifies the emotional maturity of a person, highly self-differentiated couples create stable relationships because of their calm emotional response during stress. This aspectof self-differentiation is critical to couple's financial management such as during times of financial strain. Kiara (2019) stated that the differentiation of self that begins from the family of origin makes one capable of taking personal responsibility in their dysfunction in order to avoid feeling like judging themselves whenever they do something wrong. This helps to prevent marital instability.

The study employed the concept of self-differentiation to explain how financial management influences marital stability. According to Mehrabi andVeshki (2021), self-differentiation is the principal characteristic in the Bowenian theory. The author defined self-differentiation as a person's capacity to distinguish between emotional and intellectual process. He posits that one's level of self-differentiation indicates the degree of success the individual has when planning. In couple budgeting, a spouse with high self-differentiation would succeed in the process without being led by emotional triggers from the other spouse. On the other hand, Mehrabi and Veshki (2021) explain that individuals with low self- differentiation possess poor financial management behaviours. For instance, when it comes tospending, such people will easily purchase a product without considering the budget or affordability of the item.

This is because such people are driven by emotions, are easily excited, and make hurried decisions.

According to Waruiru et al. (2019), this theory is critical in the study of marriage because it explains the behavior of individuals and particularly couples, the separated, and the divorced,and points at elements responsible for marital instability. Accordingly, the present study utilized Bowen's theory to explain marital stability among Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub-County of Nairobi County, Kenya. Christian couples with low self-differentiation may experience higher levels of anxiety particularly during financial conflicts or periods of financial distress which can lead to behaviors like avoidance, emotional distancing, or even seeking reassurance from outside the marriage, which is a recipe for marital instability. Conversely, couples with higher levels of self-differentiation are more likely to engage in constructive discussions and work together to address financial challenges.

Conceptual Framework

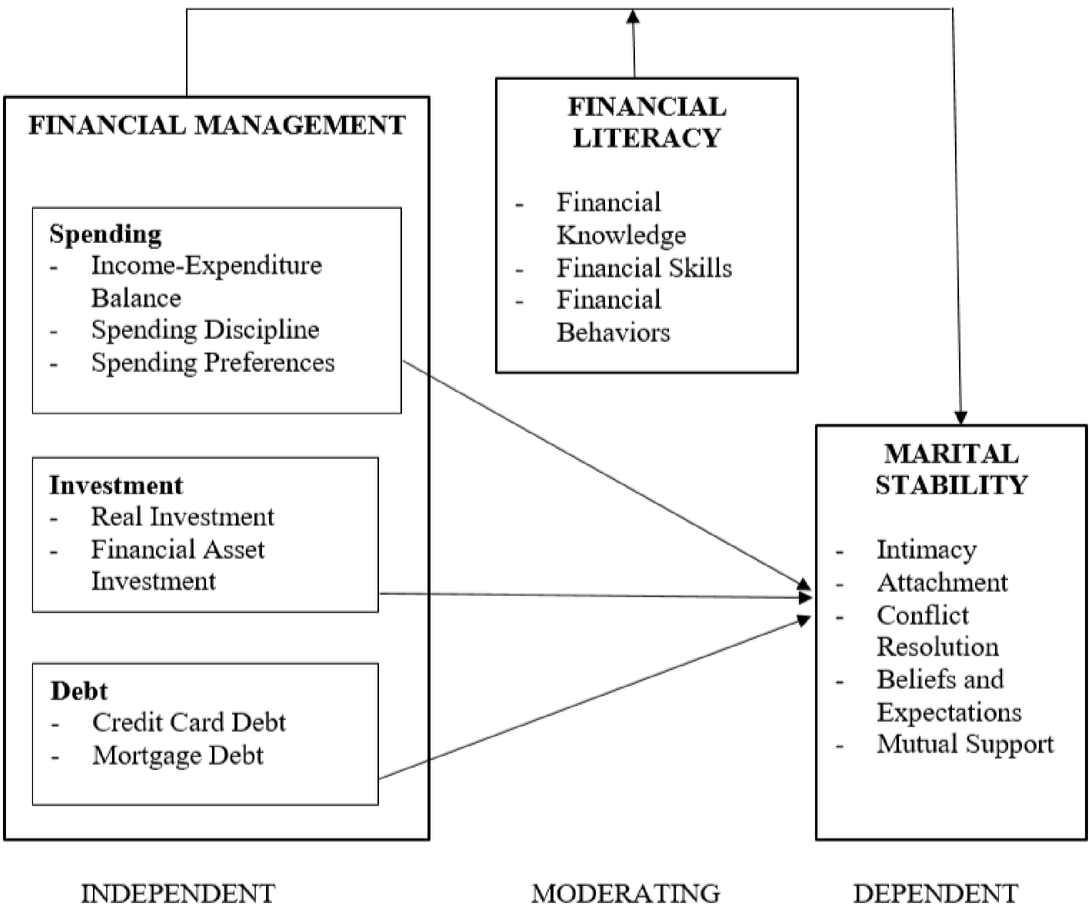
A conceptual framework comprises of the sum, logical position and relationships of all the things that make up the fundamental arrangement, designs, ways and execution of a given research project (Kivunja, 2018). It depicts the interplay between the independent variable, the dependent variable and the moderating variable. The independent variable is financial management, while the dependent variable is marital instability. The moderating variable is financial literacy.

As depicted in Figure 1, it is proposed that when there are positive financial management behaviors in a marriage including budgeting, spending (discipline, preferences,income-expenditure balancing), investing (real and financial asset) and debt management (credit card, digital credit, mortgage), this will result to marital stability. Conversely, the financial literacy (which equips couples with positive financial awareness and skills) is depicted as a moderator of the relationship between financial management and marital stability. Marital stability is a multidimensional construct measured through conflict resolution, intimacy, mutual support, beliefs and expectations, and attachment strength.

The independent variable (financial management) has been explained by the Couple and Finance Theory. It explains how the environmental and systemic factors affect financial management behaviours of the couple which could influence the relationship positively or negatively. The dependent variable (marital stability) is addressed by the Bowen Theory. It explains how the concept of differentiation of self, influences the way couples behave when there is conflict due to poor financial management which could also affect the relationship positively or negatively. The interplay of the dependent variable and the independent variableis influenced by the presence of the moderating variable. Figure 1 shows the framework to be used for the study.

Figure 1:

Conceptual Framework



Source: Author (2025)

Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed empirical literature on the main study variables as well as identifying the main theories. Specifically, the Bowen Theory and the Couple & Finance Theory were considered the key theories underpinning the study. Finally, the conceptual framework has been provided showing financial management as the independent variable, marital stability as the dependent variable, and financial literacy as the moderating variable. The research methodology is discussed in the next Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This section explains how the research objectives were met. It includes the research design, the location of the study, the target population, and the sampling procedures. It also explains the instruments used for data collection and how the data was analyzed. Piloting of the instruments is included in the discussion, along with the determination of the validity and reliability of the instruments. Research procedures are described, including data analysis. Finally, the section highlights the ethical considerations the researcher adhered to during the research process.

Research Design

The study used a quantitative correlational research design. Correlational design was suitable for this study because the researcher sought to establish the level of association between the dependent and independent variable (Muiga, 2018). This research design is normally used if the aim of the study is to find out particular outcomes from one variable arising from another variable which operates as a predictor (Mohajan, 2020). Correlational research design aided in the investigation of the relationship between the independent, dependent, and moderator variables (Muhaise et al., 2020). The independent variable was financial management (spending, investing, and debt management), the dependent variable was marital stability, while the moderator variable was financial literacy. Using this research design, the researcher was able to measure the effect size of each variable.

Target Population

The population targeted for this study was married couples who congregated five selected churches in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi City County. The five churches were AIC, CITAM, Gospel Evangelistic Ministries, Deliverance Church and

Baptist Church). This sub-county was chosen because it had a population with a diversity of socio-economic statuses. Consequently, the target population was deemed a suitable representation of the larger population of Nairobi County. According to the national housing census conducted in 2019, Embakasi had a male population of 492,476 and a female population of 496,270 (Waliaula, 2020).

Sample Size

A sample size is a set of research subjects selected to represent the total population (Sawai et al., 2018). This study employed the sample size calculation method outlined by Mugenda and Mugenda (2019), using a precision error of 0.05. The desired sample size (n) was determined using the formula:

$$n = z^2 \times (p) \times (q)/d^2$$

In the above formula, *n* represents the required sample size; *z* denotes the critical z-value corresponding to the chosen confidence level (e.g., at 0.05 significance level, z =

+1.96); *p* represents the estimated proportion of the target population exhibiting the characteristics under study. Here, *p* is set to 0.5 due to the absence of an available estimate; *q*equals 1 – p; *d* represents the level of statistical significance (e.g., 0.05). By substituting the provided values into the formula, the sample size was computed as follows:

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times (1 - 0.5)}{0.05^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3.8416 \times 0.5 \times (1 - 0.5)}{0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{3.8416 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{3.8416 \times 0.25 \times 10000}{0.0025 \times 10000}$$

$n =$ 3.8416 x 100

$n =$ 384.16

n= 384

Table 1 shows how the sample was distributed across the selected churches.

Table 1:

Sampling Matrix

Selected church	Sample size	Percent
Christ Is The Answer Ministries	130	34%
Deliverance Church	69	18%
Gospel Evangelistic Ministries	84	22%
Africa Inland Church	58	15%
Baptist Church	43	11%
Total	384	100%

Sampling Method

A combination of purposive sampling and stratified sampling methods was used. Purposive sampling technique was used to select church members who were in a marital relationship (Bhardwaj, 2019). This is because the goal was to understand the relationship between financial management and marital stability within this subset of the population in Nairobi County. Subsequently, stratified sampling method was applied to ensure adequate representative of respondents from across the five churches (Oribhabor & Anyanwu, 2019). The steps used to select respondents from the five churches is as follows: In each church, the respondents were proportionately distributed as follows: Christ Is The Answer Ministries (130), Deliverance Church (69), Gospel Evangelistic Ministries (84), Africa Inland Church (58), and Baptist Church (43). Since it was not possible to determine in advance who was newly-wed or middle-aged, all selected couples were first included in the study, and categorization was done during data collection based on marital duration. Individuals who had been married for five years or less were classified as newly-weds, while those married for more than five years were categorized as middle-aged.

Types of Data

Primary data was collected. This involved gathering data first-hand from the respondents. Primary data was used because the research tool had been specifically designed to help in comprehending and resolving of the research problem. It was thus able to meet the researcher's needs (Benedictine University Library, 2024).The data was of quantitative nature, involving the use of research instruments that are predetermined to ensure objective measurements for consistency and reliability (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2019). Quantitative data collection instruments were used because data is easily measureable and thus can also be easily analyzed and interpreted.

Data Collection Methods

A questionnaire was used in this study. A questionnaire is a measuring instrument used to gather information from the research population, after which it is changed into numerical data during data analysis. It gives the opportunity for the respondents to answer questions and the answers to those questions are used to provide information for research(Oben, 2021). This method of data collection is advantageous because it provides the chance for the researcher to collect data from respondents using little time and it is inexpensive (Schrepp & Thomaschewski, 2019).

The researcher used a questionnaire that was self- developed based on information gathered from past related studies. Information gathered from the respondents can easily be collected, analyzed, explained and anonymity of the participants can be preserved (Borgobello et al., 2019).

The questionnaire was divided into six brief sections beginning with a section on demographic profile of respondents. This section elicited demographic data such as gender, income or single income. The second section was a 7-item Likert scale measured on a 4- point scale from 1=Never; 2=Sometimes; 3=Often; and 5=Always. Respondents were required to tick where appropriate if they had been involved in the stated spending behaviours in the last 6 months. The third section comprised of a 5-item Likert scale also measured on a 4-point scale from 1=Never; 2=Sometimes; 3=Often; and 5=Always.

Respondents were required to tick where appropriate if they had been involved in the stated investment behaviors in the last six months. The fourth section, in the same manner, comprised a 7-item Likert scale measured on a 4-point scale from 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, and 5 = Always. Respondents were required to tick where appropriate if they had been involved in the stated debt management behaviors in the last six months. The fifth section constituted a 9-item Likert scale comprising responses on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 corresponded to "Strongly Disagree" and 5 corresponded to "Strongly Agree." Respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement with each statement regarding their financial literacy by selecting the appropriate response. The last section comprised nine statements, each requiring respondents to answer "yes" or "no" regarding the stability of their marriage.

Instrument Pre-testing

Pre-testing a research tool is a process that permits the researcher to assess the different variables and examine them in detail for the possible problems that may arise, before the researcher can do the actual research (Kapur, 2018). Muiga (2018) stated that for pre-testing, more than 2% of the total sample size is a suitable percentage. For this purpose, the instrument was pilot-tested on 8 participants drawn from a church in Kasarani Sub-County.This process enabled the researcher to gauge the robustness of the instruments in terms ofspeed, efficiency, and completeness. The findings from the pilot test was used to make further refinement of the instruments before undertaking the actual study. This includedevaluating the validity and reliability of the instruments.

Instrument Validity

Validity is how accurate the study was able to measure the intended variables (Taherdoost, 2016). It is when the instrument is able to measure what it is required to measure. In order to ensure validity, the researcher has formulated the questionnaire with items associated with financial management and marital stability (Kapur, 2018). This has been informed by a thorough review of theoretical and empirical literature to ensure that themeasurements truly capture the theoretical concepts under investigation and cover the full range of the concept being studied (Oben, 2021). This was reviewed by the researcher’s appointed supervisor as subject matter expert to further validate the instrument (Yusoff, 2019).

Instrument Reliability

Reliability is the consistency of the instrument generating the same results (Daud , 2021). The most frequently use measure of internal consistency is Cronbach Alpha coefficient and the same was applied in the present study (Kapur, 2018). Cronbach's alpha is a statistic that provides a coefficient ranging from 0 to 1, where higher values indicate greater internal consistency (Taherdost, 2016). This approach was used because the researcher designed the questionnaire using the Likert scale, hence making it suitable for assessing the internal consistency of the items in the scale (Schrepp. 2020). As recommended by Hair et al. (2020), a minimum score of 0.6 is considered sufficient for establishing acceptable reliability. Table 2 presents the reliability statistics

Table 2:

Reliability Statistics

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Spending Behavior	0.814	7
Investing Behavior	0.246	5
Debt Management Behavior	0.869	7
Financial Literacy	0.606	9
Marital stability	0.810	9

The reliability statistics show that Spending Behavior (α = .814, 7 items), Debt Management Behavior (α = .869, 7 items), and Marital Stability (α = .810, 9 items) demonstrated high reliability while Financial Literacy (α = .606, 9 items) showed acceptable reliability level, suggesting that the scales had adequate reliability thereby supporting its use in the study (Hair et al., 2020). However, Investing Behavior, with five items, demonstrated low internal consistency, indicated by an alpha of 0.246, suggesting a need to revise these items. After simplifying responses to a yes/no format, Investing Behavior yielded an acceptable alpha of 0.633 if “Life insurance/education” item is deleted. The item was deleted accordingly. Scrutiny of the Item-Total Statistics (annexed to this report) showed that deletion of the item “I am comfortable creating and following a personal budget-how to spend my income “would significantly increase the reliability coefficient to 0.804. Hence, this item was also deleted.

Research Procedures

The researcher commenced by obtaining various institutional clearances and permits, as discussed under ethical considerations, before collecting data from respondents. The participants were briefed about the questionnaire and were asked to fill out the informed consent form as part of the requirements for participation. After obtaining their consent, the researcher explained to the participants what was required of them. The researcher allowed respondents to ask any questions or seek clarification. Respondents were given time to fill out the questionnaire, after which they submitted it back to the researcher. The data collection exercise lasted for one month.

Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis process began by first entering the data into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27. Descriptive statistical techniques such as percentage frequencies, mean, and standard deviation scores were used to aggregate and summarize the data so as to get an impression of how the data is distributed (Sawai et al., 2018). Afterwards, the relationship between the study variables were tested using correlation technique. The coefficient measurement ranges from -1 which means the relationship is a perfectly linear negative relationship, to +1 which means the relationship is aperfectly linear positive relationship (Rudvik & Mansson, 2018). Subsequently, multiple regression analysis technique was applied to assess the predictive power of financial management variables on marital stability when holding other factors constant (Muiga, 2018). The following regression formula was used to establish the effect of the predictor variables (financial management) on the outcome variable (marital stability) while accounting for the moderating effect of financial literacy.

$$MST=\beta_0 + \beta_1 x SPN + \beta_2 x INV + \beta_3 x DBT + \beta_4 x\ (FLT x FMT) + \square$$

Where:

MST = Marital stability composite score

β_0 = Marital stability index at zero financial management

β_1 to β_4 = Regression coefficients

SPN = Spending behavior composite score

INV = Investing behavior composite score

DBT= Debt management composite score

FLT = Financial literacy composite score

FMT = Financial management aggregate score

$\square$ = Error term

FLT*x*FMT = Interaction term for the moderating effect.

The results of the study were presented using appropriate figures and tables. This included scatter diagrams, histograms, pie charts, and bar graphs for ease of visualization and interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations include institutional clearances and other ethical measures to safeguard the integrity of the research (Ndonye, 2023). Institutional clearances entailed obtaining an ethical clearance certificate from the Pan Africa Christian University (PAC) Ethics Review Committee (Appendix C). The researcher then obtained a research authorization letter from PAC University (Appendix D), which assisted in acquiring a permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) (Appendix E). Subsequently, the researcher wrote letters to church pastors seeking authorization to conduct the study in their churches (Appendix F). After completing this process, the researcher began data collection.

Before gathering data from actual respondents, the researcher issued them an informed consent form (Appendix A). This form briefly explained the purpose and goals of the study, clarified the researcher’s role and affiliation, and provided an overview of the objectives, research questions, and methods. It described the procedures participants underwent during the research and detailed the potential risks participants might encounter as a result of participating, as well as how these risks would be mitigated. It also outlined the potential benefits of participating in the study and explained how participant data would be collected, stored, and protected to ensure confidentiality. The form emphasized that participation was voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any time without facing negative consequences. It highlighted participants' rights, including the right to ask questions, the right to decline participation, and the right to have their questions addressed. Additionally, it clarified that participants could withdraw at any time before or during the data collection process. The form included contact details for the researcher(s), such as a phone number and email address, for participants to ask questions or voice concerns.

The researcher ensured that research ethics were strictly adhered to in order to mitigate any ethical risks (Navalia, 2020). Respondents were assured that the information they provided would be held in confidence. Their identities were not revealed, and respondents were asked not to write their names on the questionnaires. Similarly, the names of the churches where the research was conducted were not disclosed. Data was stored in soft copy in confidential files requiring passwords for access. Both physical and electronic data will be destroyed within five years upon completion of the study.

Chapter Summary

The research methodology has been explained in this chapter. A quantitative research approach was used, and specifically, a correlational research design. The population, location of the study, the sampling technique, research instrument, which underwent validity and reliability checks, including instrument pre-testing are presented. Data was then collected and recorded before analysis. Ethical considerations followed have been detailed. The next chapter presents and discusses the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

This chapter commences by presenting the response rate and demographic analysis. The rest of the chapter presents and discusses the study findings in light of the four objectives of the study. These were: to explore the effect of spending behaviours on marital stability among newly-weds and middle aged Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub- County, Nairobi City County, Kenya; to establish the effect of couple investments on marital stability among newly-weds and middle aged Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub- County, Nairobi City County, Kenya; to determine the effect of debts on marital stability among newly-weds and middle aged Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi City County, Kenya and; to investigate the moderating effect of financial literacy on the relationship between financial management and marital stability among Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Response Rate and Demographic Analysis

This section contains the analysis of key variables, including the response rate, gender distribution, age distribution, education level, family size, household income category, years in marriage, availability of premarital counseling in church, and attendance of financial management counseling.

Response Rate

Table 3 illustrates the response rate for the study.

Table 3

Response Rate

Respondent category	Frequency	Percent
Responded	270	70%
Non-respondents	114	30%
Total	384	100%

Out of the total sample size of 384 respondents, 270 participants responded to the survey, representing a response rate of 70%, while 114 participants did not respond, accounting for 30% of the sample. This response rate of 70% is considered acceptable in social science research as it surpasses the minimum threshold of 60% recommended by Holtom et al. (2022) for survey-based studies. It ensures the data collected is representative and allows for reliable analysis and generalization of the findings to the target population.

Gender Distribution

Table 4 presents the gender distribution of the respondents in the study.

Table 4

Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	130	48.1%
Female	140	51.9%
Total	270	100%

A total of 130 participants were male, representing 48.1% of the sample, while

140 participants were female, accounting for 51.9%. This nearly balanced gender distribution is significant because it ensures that both male and female perspectives are adequately represented in the study. Such a distribution aligns with the recommendations of Upchurch (2020), who emphasizes the importance of gender inclusivity in research. By incorporating diverse gender perspectives, studies are more likely to reflect the varied experiences and viewpoints within a population. This inclusivity not only enhances the richness and depth of the findings but also contributes to the generalizability of the study's results, making them more applicable to the broader population. A balanced gender representation is crucial for obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the factors being investigated, particularly in subjects such as marital stability where gender-related dynamics may influence the outcomes.

Age Distribution

Table 5 presents the age distribution of the respondents in the study.

Table 5

Distribution of Respondents by Age Bracket

Age bracket	Frequency	Percent
Less than 20 years	7	2.6%
21-30 years	57	21.1%
31-40 years	92	34.1%
41-50 years	73	27.0%
51-60 years	33	12.2%
Above 60	8	3.0%
Less than 20 years	7	2.6%
Total	270	100.0%

The majority of participants were aged 31-40 years, comprising 34.1% of the sample, followed by those aged 41-50 years at 27.0%. Respondents aged 21-30 years made up 21.1%, while those aged 51-60 years constituted 12.2%. A smaller proportion of respondents fell into the less than 20 years (2.6%) and above 60 years (3.0%) age brackets. This distribution reflects a diverse age range and provides a balanced perspective, with significant representation from middle-aged groups. This agrees with a study by Kridahl and Duvander (2023) which highlight the importance of capturing age diversity in marital and financial management research to account for life stage-related differences in experiences and perspectives. Such diversity strengthens the generalizability and relevance of the findings.

Education Level

Table 6 presents the distribution of respondents by education level.

Table 6

Distribution of Respondents by Education Level

Education level	Frequency	Percent
Primary education	25	9.3%
Secondary education	34	12.6%
College education	105	38.9%
University	106	39.3%
Total	270	100.0%

The majority of the respondents had attained university education (39.3%) or college education (38.9%), highlighting a predominantly well-educated sample. The respondents with secondary education accounted for 12.6%, while those with primary education made up 9.3% of the total. This educational profile indicates a skew toward higher education levels, which aligns with the results of a previous study by Wanjiku (2022) which reported similar skewness.

Distribution of Respondents by Family Size

Table 7 provides descriptive statistics for family size among respondents, measured as the number of people living in their households.

Table 7

Family Size

			Statistic	Std. Error
What is your family size (the number of people living in your household)	Mean		4.61	.101
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.41	
		Upper Bound	4.80	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.57	
	Median		5.00	
	Variance		2.747	
	Std. Deviation		1.657	
	Minimum		1	
	Maximum		14	
	Range		13	
	Interquartile Range		2	
	Skewness		.660	.149
	Kurtosis		3.307	.296

The mean family size was 4.61 (SD=1.657), with a median of 5.00, indicating that half of the respondents had households of five or more people. The range of family sizes varied widely, from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 14. The distribution was moderately skewed to the right (skewness = 0.660), suggesting that a small number of respondents reported relatively large household sizes. This finding is marginally higher than the national average reported in an analytical report on household and family dynamics by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2019) that puts the average household size at 4 heads. This may be explained by population growth since the census data. It is also possible that some of the respondents were living with visiting relatives, given that the research was conducted during school break.

Distribution of Respondents by Household Income

Table 8 presents the distribution of respondents by household income category.

Table 8

Household Income Category

Are you a dual-income household or a single income household?	Frequency	Percent
Dual income (both husband and wife earning income)	175	64.8%
Single income (either husband or wife earning income	95	35.2%
Total	270	100.0%

The majority (64.8%) were in dual-income households, where both spouses earned an income, while 35.2% were in single-income households, where only one spouse contributed financially. This distribution underscores the prevalence of dual-income households in the sample, reflecting broader societal trends of increasing economic participation by both partners in marital relationships. Recent research highlights that dual-income households tend to exhibit different financial management practices and marital dynamics compared to single-income households, often due to shared financial responsibilities and decision-making (Johnson & Carter, 2020). This variation in income categories enriches the study by capturing diverse household financial structures.

Years in Marriage

Table 9 provides descriptive statistics for the respondents' years in marriage.

Table 9

Respondent's Years in Marriage

			Statistic	Std. Error
How long have you been married in years	Mean		13.26	.550
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	12.17	
		Upper Bound	14.34	
	5% Trimmed Mean		12.82	
	Median		12.00	
	Variance		81.723	
	Std. Deviation		9.040	
	Minimum		1	
	Maximum		40	
	Range		39	
	Interquartile Range		13	
	Skewness		.651	.148
	Kurtosis		-.367	.295

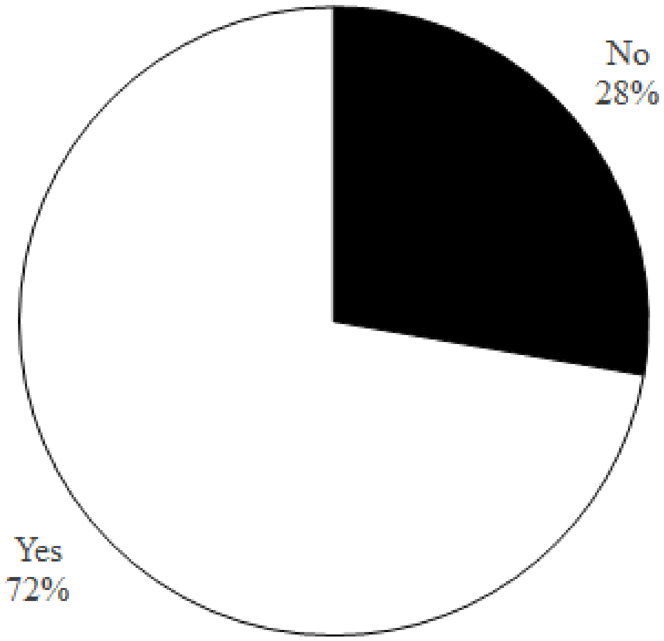
The mean duration of marriage was 13.26 years (±9.04), with a median of 12 years, indicating that half of the respondents had been married for 12 years or less. The range extended from a minimum of 1 year to a maximum of 40 years, with an interquartile range of 13 years, reflecting substantial variability in marital durations. The distribution was moderately skewed to the right (skewness = 0.651), suggesting that more respondents were in the earlier years of marriage. The kurtosis value of -0.367 indicates a relatively flat distribution compared to normal. This diversity in the length of marriage is consistent with the findings of a study by Wanjiku (2022) which reported similar spread in marital status across different age brackets. This broad range of marital durations provides a comprehensive view of how financial management impacts couples at different stages of marriage.

Availability Premarital Counselling in Church

Respondents were asked whether their church provided premarital counselling. Figure 2 displays the distribution of responses.

Figure 2

Premarital Counselling in Church



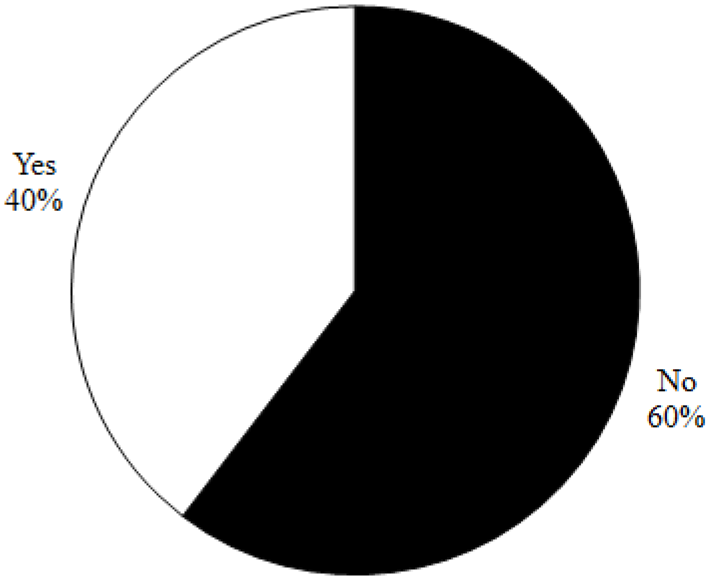
The findings in Figure 2 reveal that the majority, 72.3%, indicated "Yes," while 27.7% reported "No." The finding is consistent with empirical observation by Watenga et al. (2023) which established that many churches in Nairobi have pre-marital counselling programs. These results suggest that most churches recognize the value of preparing couples for marriage by addressing foundational issues such as communication, conflict resolution, and shared values. Additionally, it highlights the growing recognition of the role of the church in guidance in strengthening marital foundations. This trend reflect a broader shift toward prioritizing holistic support for couples in navigating the challenges of marriage.

Attendance of Financial Management Counselling

The study examined whether respondents attended financial management counseling during their premarital counseling sessions. Figure 3 shows the findings.

Figure 3

Whether Respondents Attended Financial Management Counselling



The findings show that 39.6% of respondents attended financial management counseling, while a majority of 60.4% did not. This finding is in contrast with the study results by Amoah-Saah (2023) which instead flipped the ratio at 65% among those who attended premarital counselling against 35% who did not among a sample of married individuals in Seventh Day Adventist Churches (SDA) in the Central Region of Ghana. This difference may be explained by two potential reasons. Firstly, the level of acceptance of counselling services in general and pre-marital counselling in particular may differ from one country to the next. Secondly, the study by Amoah-Saah (2023) did not document the distribution of respondents who attended financial management counselling, although 93% of the respondent in her study who attended premarital counselling identified financial management in marriage as part of the content of premarital counselling. The percentages in the present study highlight a possible gap in addressing financial literacy and planning in premarital counseling programs among the studied churches in this study. The implied absence of such guidance for the majority of couples suggests a missed opportunity to equip them with critical skills for managing joint finances, which is a common source of conflict in marriages.

Spending Behavior and Marital Stability

The first objective of the study was to explore the effect of spending behaviours on marital stability among newly-wedsand middle aged Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub- County, Nairobi City County, Kenya. This section presents both descriptive and inferential analysis of the study variables.

Descriptive Analysis of Spending Behavior

Table 10 presents descriptive statistics for respondents' self-reported spending behaviors, measured on a 4-point scale where 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, and 4 = Always.

Table 10

Item Statistics for Spending Behavior

Spending behavior items	Mean	Std. Deviation
We plan to use our money together with my spouse	2.46	1.107
We discuss with my spouse how to spend money before I do	2.34	.978
We keep aside money to be used for emergency purposes	2.30	1.073
We spend our money according to how we have planned in our budget	2.30	.929

We have written down somewhere, how we are going to spend our monthly income	2.15	1.049
I cannot control the desire to buy things we have not budgeted for.	1.95	.900
I spending money on things I enjoy but not the necessities of the house	1.59	.797

The highest-rated spending behavior was "We plan to use our money together with my spouse" (M = 2.46, SD = 1.107). This indicates that couples sometimes engage in joint financial planning, which reflects a moderate level of collaboration. This finding agrees with Putriani et al. (2020), who emphasized that joint financial planning enhances marital satisfaction and stability. It means that consistent collaboration in financial planning can strengthen marital stability by promoting trust and mutual understanding. Such practices are important for fostering trust and unity in marital relationships.

The statement, "We discuss with my spouse how to spend money before I do" had a mean of 2.34 (SD = 0.978), suggesting that discussions about financial decisions happen occasionally. This finding aligns with Ramadhani et al. (2020), who noted that open communication about budgeting reduces conflicts. It implies that enhancing financial dialogue can improve marital stability by reducing misunderstandings and fostering teamwork. Improved communication in this area can lead to better alignment on financial priorities and minimize conflicts stemming from uncoordinated spending.

The item "We keep aside money to be used for emergency purposes" also had a mean of 2.30 (SD = 1.073). While this indicates occasional saving for emergencies, more consistent practices in this area could help couples navigate unexpected financial challenges, reducing marital stress. This finding agrees with Diniyya et al. (2020), who emphasized that saving for future crises enhances marital stability. It means that consistent emergency saving practices can provide financial security, reducing stress and supporting a stable marital environment. Similarly, "We spend our money according to how we have planned in our budget" (M = 2.30, SD = 0.929) suggests that couples adhere to their budgets sometimes but not always. This finding is consistent with Nawi (2018), who highlighted the importance of budget adherence for financial stability. It suggests that improving budget discipline can minimize financial disputes and contribute positively to marital stability. Budget discipline is crucial for achieving financial stability and avoiding disputes over unplanned expenses.

The statement, "We have written down somewhere, how we are going to spend our monthly income" had a mean of 2.15 (SD = 1.049). This indicates that few couples document their monthly budgets, which may hinder financial transparency and accountability in the marriage. This finding agrees with Marjerison and Kim (2022), who noted that written budgets enhance transparency and financial management. It implies that promoting budget documentation could improve transparency and foster marital stability by reducing financial misunderstandings.

The statement, "I cannot control the desire to buy things we have not budgeted for" scored a mean of 1.95 (SD = 0.900). This relatively low rating suggests that impulsive spending is infrequent, which is a positive indicator for financial stability in marriage. This finding aligns with Lee et al. (2020), who reported that impulsive spending can heighten marital instability. It means that maintaining low impulsive spending helps ensure financial harmony and marital stability. However, occasional lapses could still create friction if not managed.

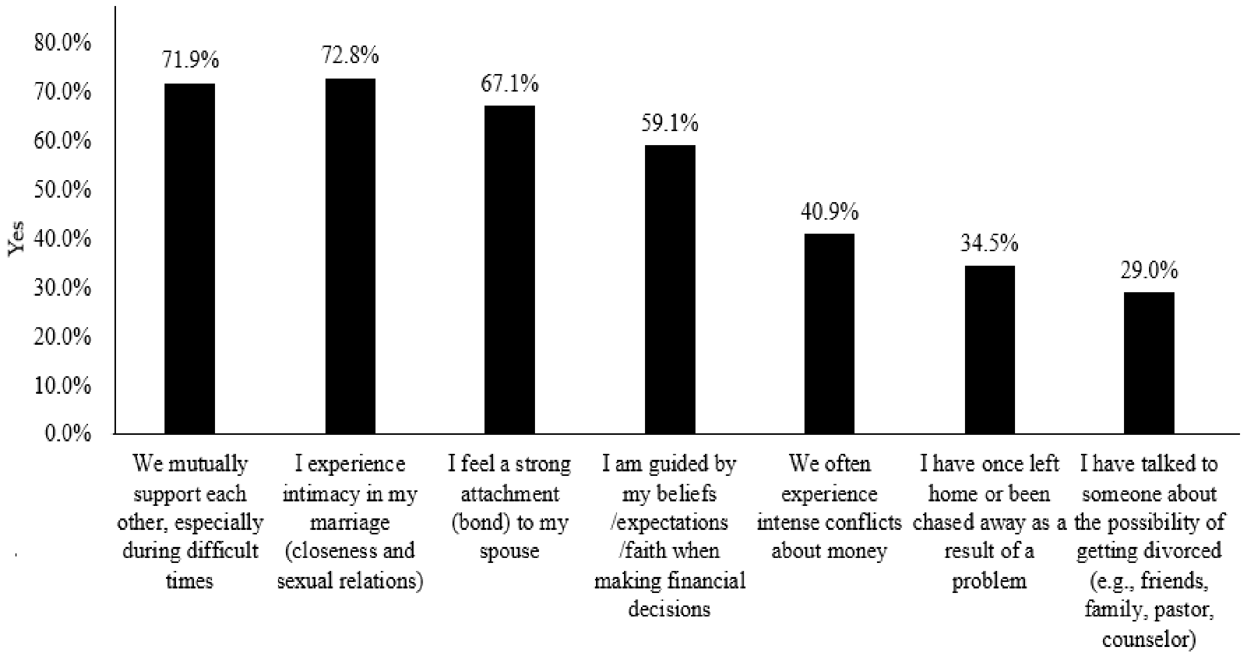
The lowest-rated item, "I spend money on things I enjoy but not the necessities of the house," had a mean of 1.59 (SD = 0.797). This indicates that respondents rarely prioritize personal enjoyment over household needs, which demonstrates a commendable focus on shared priorities in their marriages. This finding aligns with studies by Totenhagen et al. (2019), which link financial collaboration with marital stability. It underscores the importance of joint financial practices in fostering a stable and supportive marital relationship.

Descriptive Analysis of Marital Stability Items

Figure 4 presents the marital stability items, with respondents' evaluations providing insights into various aspects of their marriages. These items reflect the dynamics of support, intimacy, emotional attachment, and financial decision-making within the relationship.

Figure 4

Percentage Responses to Marital Stability Statements



A significant 71.9% of respondents reported mutual support with their spouses, especially during difficult times, indicating a strong foundation of emotional support in their marriages. This finding is consistent with Thomeer and Clark (2021), who emphasized mutual support as a central pillar of marital satisfaction. It suggests that fostering mutual support can enhance resilience in relationships, thereby strengthening marital stability. This mutual support is a key factor in marital satisfaction, contributing to overall stability in relationships.

Similarly, 72.8% of respondents reported experiencing intimacy in their marriages, which encompasses both emotional closeness and sexual relations. This finding aligns with Reyhani et al. (2022), who found that intimacy is a critical factor for marital satisfaction and bonding. It implies that maintaining intimacy helps in creating a fulfilling relationship, which is essential for sustaining marital stability. The prevalence of intimacy reflects its importance in maintaining a connected and fulfilling relationship, which is critical for marital stability.

Regarding emotional attachment, 67.1% of respondents stated that they feel a strong bond with their spouse, suggesting a moderately high level of emotional connection. This finding agrees with Han et al. (2021), who highlighted secure attachment as foundational to marital satisfaction. It indicates that strengthening emotional bonds can help couples navigate challenges together, contributing positively to marital stability. Such attachment is essential for the long-term stability of the marriage, as it strengthens the relationship and helps couples navigate challenges together.

When it comes to financial decision-making, 59.1% of respondents indicated that they are guided by their beliefs, expectations, or faith. This finding supports the observations of McLean et al. (2019), who noted that beliefs significantly influence decision-making within marriages. It suggests that aligning financial decisions with shared values can reduce potential conflicts and enhance marital stability. While this suggests that many couples incorporate their values into financial decisions, a slightly lower percentage indicates that some couples may experience challenges in aligning their financial choices with shared beliefs, which could lead to conflicts.

Financial disagreements were noted by 40.9% of respondents, indicating that some couples experience frequent conflicts about money. This finding aligns with Luetke et al. (2020), who found that financial stress is a major source of conflict in marriages. It implies that addressing financial disagreements proactively is crucial to maintaining harmony and promoting marital stability. Such disputes can undermine marital stability, as financial stress is a well-known source of dissatisfaction within relationships. Addressing these issues is crucial to maintaining harmony in the marriage.

A smaller proportion, 34.5%, reported having once left home or been chased away due to a problem in the marriage. While less common, this response indicates that some couples face significant relationship distress, which may signal potential threats to marital stability. This finding is consistent with Maina et al. (2021), who observed that attachment issues can lead to significant marital distress. It highlights the need for early interventions to address severe conflicts, which could otherwise threaten marital stability.

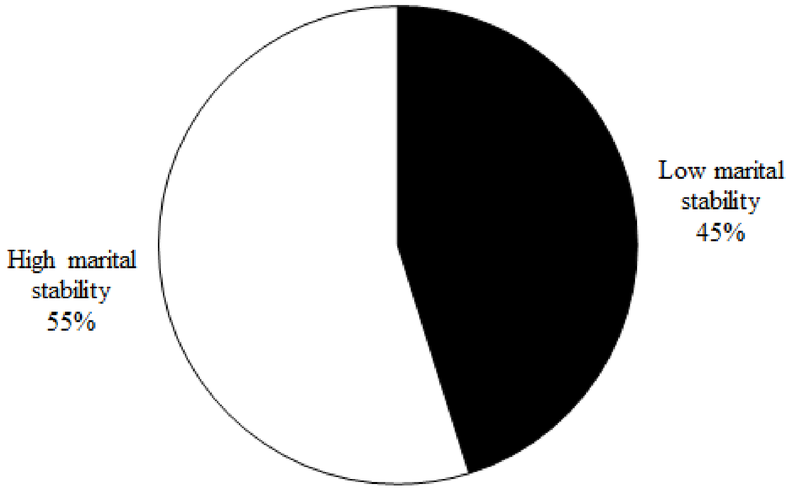
Finally, 29.0% of respondents mentioned discussing the possibility of divorce with others, such as friends, family, or a counselor. This suggests that some couples have experienced severe issues that have led them to contemplate separation, highlighting areas where intervention or improved communication could prevent further deterioration of the marriage. This finding agrees with Obure et al. (2021), who noted that marital problems often lead couples to consider separation. It suggests that providing better communication tools and support systems could help prevent relationships from deteriorating to this point, thereby safeguarding marital stability.

Descriptive Analysis of Respondents' Overall Marital Stability

Respondents' marital stability scores were aggregated using a two-level index, categorizing respondents into "Low marital stability" and "High marital stability." Figure 5 shows the results.

Figure 5

Distribution of Respondents by Level of Marital Stability



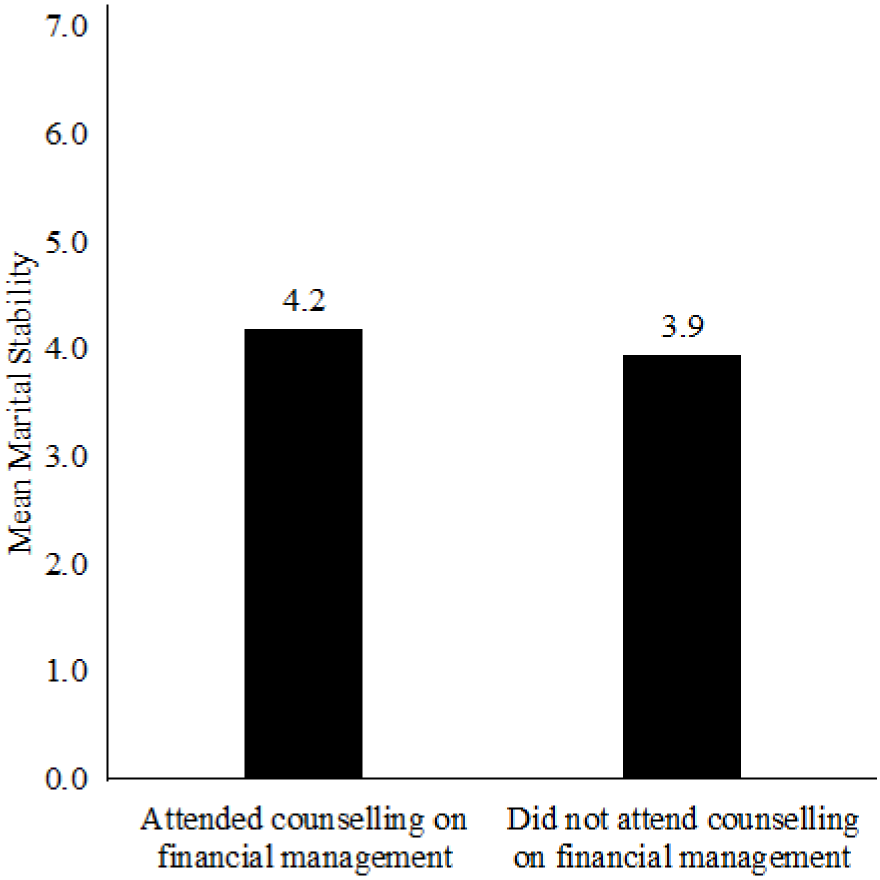
The findings reveal that a small majority of respondents (54.8%), enjoyed high marital stability while 45.2% fell into the low marital stability category, implying that nearly 1 in every two marriages were unstable. This means that while more than half of the couples demonstrate high marital stability, a substantial proportion still struggles to achieve stability. This is consistent with past research in Kenya by Mburu (2023) and Obure et al. (2021) who identified that marital instability is a growing problem in Kenya, with cases of separation and marital dissolution on the increase.

Comparison of Marital Stability Index by Attendance Counselling Attendance

Figure 6 compares the mean scores for marital stability based on whether respondents attended financial management counseling during their premarital counseling.

Figure 6

Mean Marital Stability Comparison



The findings reveal that the respondents who attended financial management counseling reported slightly higher marital stability (M = 4.2) compared to those who did not receive such counseling (M = 3.9). These results suggest that financial management counseling during premarital preparation may play a role in enhancing marital stability by helping couples address financial conflict, which are a common source of stress in marriages. This finding is consistent with Abdulrahman (2020) and Njoroge and Lwangale (2022), who highlighted that financial literacy programs can mitigate financial disagreements, thereby reducing marital conflicts. It indicates that incorporating financial counseling into premarital programs can foster healthier communication about money, reducing conflict and enhancing marital stability.

Correlation Between Spending Behavior and Marital Stability

Table 11 presents the Spearman's rho correlation between marital stability and spending behavior.

Table 11

Correlation between Spending Behavior and Marital Stability

Spearman's rho		Marital Stability	Spending Behavior
Marital Stability	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.149*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.017
	N	270	270
Spending Behavior	Correlation Coefficient	.149*	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	.
	N	270	270

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results indicate a statistically significant positive correlation between marital stability and spending behavior ($r = 0.149$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that as spending behavior improves (e.g., couples engage in more joint financial planning and budgeting), marital stability tends to increase. While the strength of the correlation is weak, the significance level indicates that spending behavior does have a measurable effect on marital stability. This highlights the importance of financial collaboration and discipline in fostering a stable and supportive marital relationship. This finding aligns with the studies by Lee et al. (2020) and Grable et al. (2021), which emphasize the role of disciplined spending in reducing emotional strain and fostering satisfaction in marital relationships. It underscores that financial collaboration and discipline are essential for building a stable and supportive marital partnership.

Investing Behavior and Marital Stability

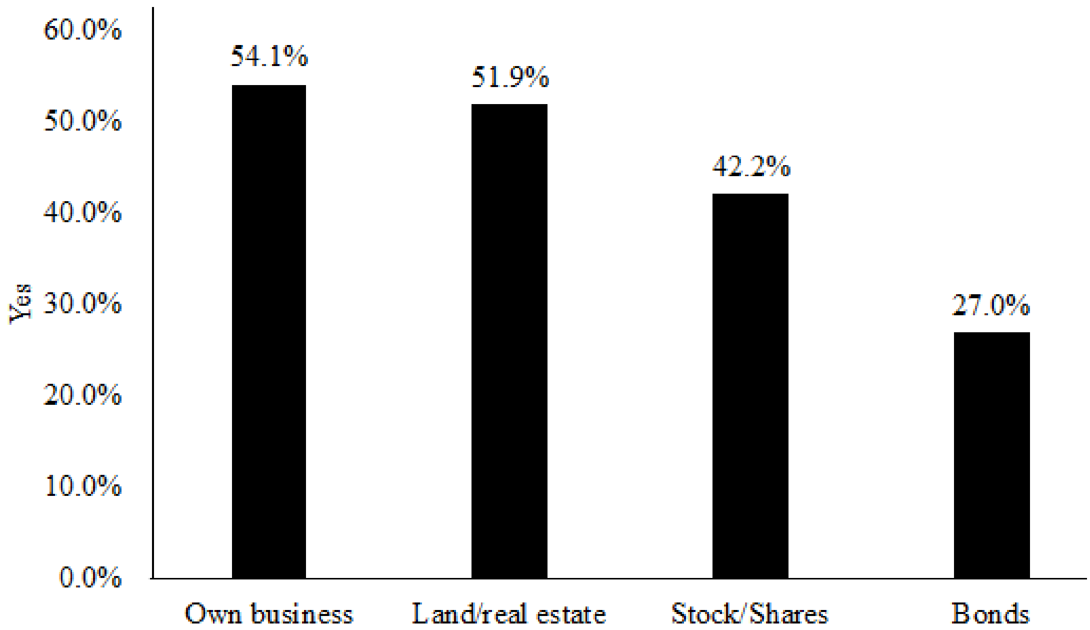
The second objective of the study was to establish the effect of couple investments on marital stability among newly-weds and middle-aged Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub- County, Nairobi City County, Kenya. In this section, descriptive analysis of couple investment is first presented, followed by inferential analysis to test the effect of couple investment on marital stability.

Descriptive Analysis of Couple Investment

Figure 7 presents the distribution of couple investment behaviors among respondents.

Figure 7

Distribution of Respondents by Couple Investment



The results indicate that 54.1% of couples have invested in their own business, demonstrating a significant number of couples engaging in entrepreneurial ventures. Land or real estate investments were reported by 51.9% of respondents, reflecting another popular investment choice among couples. In terms of financial assets, 42.2%

of couples have invested in stocks or shares, while 27.0% have chosen bonds as an investment option. These findings suggest that many couples in the sample are actively investing their money in a variety of financial assets, indicating an effort to secure long-term financial stability. Such investments can contribute to marital stability by providing a sense of shared financial goals and mutual commitment to future growth. While investments such as businesses, real estate, and financial assets have the potential to contribute positively to financial security, these findings indicate the need for a nuanced approach to financial counseling, where couples are encouraged to align their financial goals and work collaboratively to achieve them. This aligns with Baryla-Matejczuk et al. (2020) and Krapf and Wagner (2020), who highlighted the importance of joint financial planning in fostering stability. It suggests that investments should be viewed as part of a broader strategy to enhance marital quality and stability.

Correlation Between Couple Investment and Marital Stability

Table 12 presents the Spearman's rho correlation between marital stability and investing behavior.

Table 12

Correlation between Couple Investment and Marital Stability

Spearman's rho		Marital Stability	Investing Behavior
Marital Stability	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.050
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.425
	N	270	270
Investing Behavior	Correlation Coefficient	-.050	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.425	.
	N	270	270

The results indicate no significant correlation between marital stability and investing behavior ($r = -0.050$, $p > 0.5$). This suggests that, within this sample, the couples' investing behaviors, such as investing in business, land, stocks, or bonds, do not have a significant impact on marital stability. The lack of a significant relationship indicates that other factors, beyond financial investments, may play a more central role in influencing marital stability. It implies that investing behavior, in this context, does not strongly affect the quality or stability of the marriage. This finding disagrees with Baryla-Matejczuk et al. (2020) and Krapf and Wagner (2020), who emphasized that investments enhance marital stability by reducing financial stress and fostering commitment. It suggests that in the study context, investments may not be the primary determinant of stability, highlighting the need to explore additional influencing factors.

Debt Management Behavior and Marital Stability

The third objective of the study was to determine the effect of debts on marital stability among newly-weds and middle aged Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi City County. In this section, descriptive analysis of respondents' debt and debt management behavior is analyzed, followed by inferential analysis to determine the relationship between debt management and marital stability.

Descriptive Analysis of Debt

Respondents were asked to indicate all loan types they currently had. Figure 8 presents the distribution of loan types held by respondents.

Figure 8

Different Loans Held by Respondents

The most common loan type is mobile loans, reported by 43.0% of respondents. Sacco loans are the second most prevalent, held by 32.2% of respondents, indicating a significant reliance on cooperative savings and credit societies for financial support. Mortgage loans were reported by 25.6% of respondents, reflecting long-term financial commitments in home ownership. Credit card loans were the least common, reported by 24.8% of respondents, suggesting a lower reliance on revolving credit in the sample. These findings highlight the varied ways in which couples manage debt, with mobile and Sacco loans being the most accessible. The prevalence of loans underscores the importance of financial literacy and debt management in maintaining marital stability, as excessive or poorly managed debt can strain relationships.

Descriptive Analysis of Debt

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were involved in various debt management behaviours in the last 6 months. Table 13 presents the mean and standard deviation scores on a 4-point scale from 1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, and 4=Always.

Table 13

Item Statistics for Couple Debt Management Behavior

Couple debt management behavior	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel confident in our ability to manage and eventually eliminate our household debt	3.04	1.095
We are able to make monthly payments for the debts/loans we have	2.87	1.099
We keep track of our outstanding debts and loans regularly	2.83	1.144
My spouse knows all the loans we have	2.82	1.187
We have a well-defined budget that includes provisions for debt for repayment	2.48	1.098
We actively seek opportunities to reduce interest rates or negotiate better terms on my debts	2.37	1.116
We have experienced financial distress due to loans we have	2.07	.977

The highest-rated behavior was confidence in managing and eventually eliminating household debt, with a mean score of 3.04 (SD = 1.095). This indicates that couples often feel optimistic about their ability to handle debt, which may serve as a positive factor for marital stability. This aligns with the findings of Dew et al. (2017), who suggested that couples who manage debt well experience stronger marital satisfaction and stability.

Meeting monthly debt obligations was also reported often, with a mean score of 2.87 (SD = 1.099). While many couples manage to make payments regularly, the score suggests that some do so only sometimes, pointing to potential financial inconsistencies. This is consistent with Baryla-Matejczuk et al. (2020), who found that irregular financial management can disrupt marital quality and stability.

Tracking outstanding debts and loans was rated similarly, with a mean of 2.83 (SD = 1.144), showing that couples often keep track of their debt. However, the variation suggests that others only sometimes monitor their financial obligations, which may hinder effective debt management. This finding is consistent with Yunchao et al. (2020), who observed that poor tracking of debt contributed to financial stress and marital discord.

The awareness of loans within the household received a mean score of 2.82 (SD = 1.187). This indicates that spouses often know the extent of their debt, but there are instances where this knowledge is shared only sometimes, which could lead to misunderstandings. This finding is aligned with the work of Addo and Zhang (2020), who identified a lack of transparency in debt awareness as a key factor in marital conflict.

Having a budget that includes provisions for debt repayment was reported sometimes, with a mean score of 2.48 (SD = 1.098). This suggests that structured budgeting for debt is not a consistent practice for many couples, potentially affecting their financial stability. This is in agreement with Munyiri (2018), who highlighted that the absence of a structured financial plan can lead to financial stress and marital dissatisfaction.

Actively seeking better loan terms or lower interest rates was also reported sometimes, with a mean of 2.37 (SD = 1.116). This shows that couples are not regularly taking steps to reduce the cost of borrowing, which could delay debt repayment. This finding is consistent with the work of Cai et al. (2020), who found that a lack of proactive debt management leads to increased financial strain in marriages.

Experiencing financial distress due to loans was the least frequent behavior, with a mean score of 2.07 (SD = 0.977), indicating that couples sometimes face financial hardships caused by debt. While this is less common, it still highlights an area of concern for marital well-being. This aligns with the findings of Kim et al. (2022), who observed that financial distress due to debt was a significant contributor to marital instability, particularly when it was not properly managed.

Correlation between Debt Management Behavior and Marital Satisfaction

The relationship between marital stability and debt management behavior is presented in Table 14.

Table 14

Correlation between Debt Management Behavior and Marital Satisfaction

Spearman's rho		Marital Stability	Debt Management Behavior
Marital Stability	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.175**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.006
	N	270	270
Debt Management Behavior	Correlation Coefficient	.175**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.
	N	270	270

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

Correlation coefficient revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between the couple debt management and marital stability ($r = 0.175$, $p <$

0.05). This result indicates that higher engagement in effective debt management behaviors is associated with greater marital stability. The findings suggest that when couples consistently engage in practices such as budgeting for debt repayment, tracking outstanding debts, and making timely payments, their marital stability improves. These behaviors may foster financial harmony and reduce conflicts, highlighting the importance of sound debt management practices for maintaining a stable marital relationship. This finding is consistent with Dew et al. (2017), who concluded that effective debt management promotes marital stability by reducing financial conflicts.

Moderating Effect of Financial Literacy

The fourth objective was to investigate the moderating effect of financial literacy on the relationship between financial management and marital stability among Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi City County, Kenya. The first part of this section constitutes descriptive analysis of respondents' financial literacy. This is followed by correlation analysis of between financial literacy and marital stability. The last part of this section presents the output of moderated regression analysis to test the effect of financial literacy on the relationship between financial management and marital stability.

Descriptive Analysis of Respondents' Financial Literacy

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with various statements about financial literacy on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Not Sure, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Table 15 presents the mean and standard deviation scores, highlighting the degree to which respondents perceive themselves as financially literate.

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics for Financial Literacy Items

Financial literacy items	Mean	Std. Deviation
I manage my debts well, keeping them under control	3.93	1.034
I feel confident in my ability to make informed judgments and decisions about financial products and services	3.83	.940
I feel confident to skillfully negotiate financial decisions	3.78	.957
I follow a plan of making savings and investments	3.75	1.100
I relate well with other people when making financial decisions	3.73	1.006
I feel confident of my ability to appropriately use financial products available in the market	3.67	1.008
I am familiar with financial concepts used in financial decision making	3.63	1.093
I am familiar with financial products in the market	3.45	1.048

The highest-rated item was confidence in managing debts effectively, with a mean score of 3.93 (SD = 1.034). This suggests that respondents often agree they are able to keep their debts under control, a critical factor in achieving financial stability. This aligns with the findings of Baryla-Matejczuk et al. (2020), who observed that financial knowledge in managing debts significantly contributes to both financial satisfaction and marital stability. For marital stability, managing debt effectively can reduce financial stress and prevent disagreements, fostering a healthier relationship dynamic.

Confidence in making informed financial judgments and decisions followed closely, with a mean of 3.83 (SD = 0.940). This indicates that many respondents feel capable of evaluating financial products and services effectively, which can contribute to sound decision-making. This is consistent with the findings of Baidoo et al. (2020), who found that couples with better financial knowledge and decision-making skills experience higher marital satisfaction and stability. Making informed financial decisions can prevent misunderstandings and build trust, which are crucial for maintaining a stable marriage. Confidence in negotiating financial decisions skillfully was rated similarly, with a mean score of 3.78 (SD = 0.957). Respondents often agreed that they possess the negotiation skills necessary for favorable financial outcomes. This agrees with the findings of Gibson (2022), who emphasized that financial negotiation skills are crucial for achieving favorable financial outcomes and maintaining marital harmony. Effective negotiation in financial matters can strengthen cooperation between spouses and contribute to marital stability.

Following a plan for savings and investments scored a mean of 3.75 (SD = 1.100), showing that respondents often agree with the importance of structured financial planning to build wealth over time. This aligns with the findings of Baryla-Matejczuk et al. (2020), who noted that financial planning is essential for marital stability, as it promotes long-term financial security and mutual goals. A well-structured savings plan can help couples work toward common financial goals, reducing conflicts and increasing marital stability. Relating well with others during financial decision-making scored a mean of 3.73 (SD = 1.006), suggesting that respondents frequently consider their interpersonal skills an asset in joint financial matters. This affirms the findings of Thaddeus et al. (2020), who found that interpersonal financial skills, such as effective communication and collaboration, play a critical role in marital satisfaction and stability. Good interpersonal skills during financial decision-making help couples avoid conflicts and foster a positive, cooperative environment for managing finances.

Confidence in appropriately using financial products available in the market received a mean score of 3.67 (SD = 1.008), reflecting a moderate to high level of self-assurance in navigating financial tools effectively. This aligns with the findings of Msomi and Olarewaju (2021), who suggested that financial awareness and knowledge of financial products are essential for making informed choices and avoiding financial pitfalls. For marital stability, a good understanding of financial products ensures couples can make decisions that support long-term financial well-being and avoid detrimental financial choices.

Familiarity with financial concepts used in decision-making scored a mean of 3.63 (SD = 1.093), indicating that respondents are often knowledgeable about key financial principles necessary for informed decision-making. This result is in accord with the findings of Gichuhi and Mwangi (2021), who observed that understanding financial concepts enhances decision-making abilities and marital satisfaction. A solid understanding of financial concepts can prevent misunderstandings and foster mutual respect in financial discussions, contributing to marital stability.

Lastly, familiarity with financial products in the market received the lowest mean score of 3.45 (SD = 1.048), suggesting that respondents sometimes feel less informed about the variety of financial products available, highlighting an area for improvement in financial literacy. This aligns with the findings of Kamau et al. (2023), who found that lack of financial awareness often leads individuals to make poor financial decisions, which can cause marital conflict and instability. Increasing familiarity with financial products can help prevent poor financial decisions that may lead to strain on the relationship.

Correlation between Financial Literacy and Marital Stability

The relationship between marital stability and financial literacy is summarized in Table 16.

Table 16

Correlation between Financial Literacy and Marital Stability

Spearman's rho		Marital Stability	Financial Literacy
Marital Stability	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.128*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.040
	N	270	270
Financial Literacy	Correlation Coefficient	.128*	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.040	.
	N	270	270

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Correlation analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between financial literacy and marital stability ($r = .128$, $p< .05$). This indicates that higher levels of financial literacy are modestly associated with greater marital stability. These findings suggest that couples who demonstrate stronger financial knowledge and skills – such as managing debts, making informed financial decisions, and planning for savings and investments – are more likely to experience stable marriages. The finding aligns with the findings of Gichuhi and Mwangi (2021), who noted that financial knowledge and skills are crucial for marital stability. Financial literacy helps prevent financial disagreements and enhances the ability to navigate challenges together, supporting marital stability. Financial literacy may play a critical role in reducing financial stress, enhancing mutual understanding of financial matters, and fostering cooperation, all of which contribute to marital harmony.

Regression of Marital Stability on Financial Management and Financial Literacy

Moderated regression analysis was performed to test the moderating effect of financial literacy on the relationship between financial management and marital stability. Table 17 shows the results.

Table 17

Moderated Regression Analysis

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.110[a]	.012	.000	1.93784

a. Predictors: (Constant), Interaction Term, Financial Literacy, Financial Management

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.678	3	3.893	1.037	.377[b]
	Residual	950.073	253	3.755		
	Total	961.751	256			

a. Dependent Variable: Marital Stability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Interaction Term, Financial Literacy, Financial Management

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	4.575	2.323		1.969	.050
	Financial Management	-.660	1.066	-.199	-.619	.537
	Financial Literacy	-.201	.620	-.080	-.325	.746
	Interaction Term	.200	.279	.314	.718	.473

a. Dependent Variable: Marital Stability

The overall model, which included financial management, financial literacy, and their interaction term, yielded a small and non-significant coefficient of determination, R^2=.012, indicating that the predictors explained only 1.2% of the variance in marital stability. The finding suggests that the model did not improve on predicting marital stability beyond what would be expected by chance. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that the regression model as a whole was not statistically significant, $F(3,253)=1.03$, $p>.05$. The finding disagrees with the findings of Baryla-Matejczuk et al. (2020), who found that financial literacy strengthens the relationship between behavioral biases and financial decisions, suggesting that individuals with higher financial literacy are better able to navigate biases. This discrepancy may be explained by the fact that only 39.6% of respondents in this study attended financial management counseling while 60.4% did not. Those who attended counseling may have a more developed understanding of financial literacy, which could act as a moderator in their financial decision-making and, by extension, marital stability. The majority who did not attend counseling may have lower levels of financial literacy, potentially reducing the moderating effect of financial literacy on marital stability. This difference in financial education could explain why financial literacy did not show a significant moderating effect.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented both descriptive results and inferential analysis of the study findings. The findings for each objective has been discussed and compared with existing empirical and theoretical literature. The results have been visually presented using tables, pie charts, and graphs. In the next chapter, key findings are summarized, and implication discussed.

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

Introduction

This final chapter begins by summarizing the key study findings for each objective. This is followed by a critical discussion of the theoretical implications of the study. Conclusions are then drawn and practical recommendations are proposed. The contribution of the study to knowledge is also discussed. The last section of the chapter identifies the limitations of the study, which provides ground for the future research areas that are outlined.

Summary of Findings

The first objective of the study was to explore the effect of spending behaviours on marital stability among newly-weds and middle-aged Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub- County, Nairobi City County, Kenya. The highest-rated spending behavior was moderate joint financial planning, with couples occasionally engaging in the practice of using money together ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.107$). Discussions about spending decisions before acting also occurred from time to time ($M = 2.34$, $SD = 0.978$). While couples occasionally saved for emergencies ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.073$) and followed their budgets ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 0.929$), fewer couples documented their financial plans ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 1.049$). Impulsive spending was infrequent ($M = 1.95$, $SD = 0.900$), and respondents rarely prioritized personal enjoyment over household necessities ($M = 1.59$, $SD = 0.797$). A small majority of respondents (54.8%), enjoyed high marital stability while 45.2% fell into the low marital stability category, implying that nearly 1 in every two marriages were unstable. There was a statistically significant positive correlation between marital stability and spending behavior ($r = 0.149$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that as spending behavior improves, marital stability tends to increase.

The second objective of the study was to establish the effect of couple investments on marital stability among newly-weds and middle-aged Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi City County, Kenya. The findings showed that 54.1% of respondents had invested in their own business, demonstrating a significant number of couples engaging in entrepreneurial ventures. Land or real estate investments were reported by 51.9% of respondents, reflecting another popular investment choice among couples. In terms of financial assets, 42.2% of couples invested in stocks or shares, while 27.0% also invested in bonds. However, there was no significant correlation between marital stability and investing behavior ($r = -0.050$, $p > 0.5$), suggesting that the couples' investing behaviors, such as investing in business, land, stocks, or bonds, do not have a significant impact on marital stability.

The third objective of the study was to determine the effect of debts on marital stability among newly-weds and middle-aged Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi City County, Kenya. The most common loan type is mobile loans, reported by 43.0% of respondents. Sacco loans are the second most prevalent, held by 32.2% of respondents, indicating a significant reliance on cooperative savings and credit societies for financial support. Mortgage loans were reported by 25.6% of respondents, reflecting long-term financial commitments in homeownership. Credit card loans were the least common, reported by 24.8% of respondents, suggesting a lower reliance on revolving credit in the sample. The highest-rated behavior was confidence in managing and eliminating household debt ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.095$), followed by regular payment of monthly debt obligations ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.099$). Couples often tracked outstanding debts ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.144$)

and were generally aware of loans (M = 2.82, SD = 1.187). Budgeting for debt repayment occurred inconsistently (M = 2.48, SD = 1.098), as did actively seeking better loan terms (M = 2.37, SD = 1.116). The least frequent behavior was financial distress due to loans (M = 2.07, SD = 0.977). Correlation coefficient revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between the couple debt management and marital stability ($r = .175$, $p < .05$), implying that higher engagement in effective debt management behaviors is associated with greater marital stability.

The fourth objective was to investigate the moderating effect of financial literacy on the relationship between financial management and marital stability among Christian couples inselected churches in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi City County, Kenya. Descriptive analysis showed that the highest-rated item was confidence in managing debts effectively (M = 3.93, SD = 1.034), followed by confidence in making informed financial decisions (M = 3.83, SD = 0.940) and negotiating financial decisions (M = 3.78, SD = 0.957). Respondents often followed a savings and investment plan (M = 3.75, SD = 1.100) and felt they related well with others during financial decision-making (M = 3.73, SD = 1.006). Confidence in using financial products (M = 3.67, SD = 1.008) and familiarity with financial concepts (M = 3.63, SD = 1.093) were also high. The lowest-rated item was familiarity with financial products (M = 3.45, SD = 1.048). Correlation analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between financial literacy and marital stability ($r = .128$, $p< .05$), meaning that higher levels of financial literacy are modestly associated with greater marital stability. However, regression analysis revealed that there was no significant moderating effect of financial literacy on the relationship between financial management and marital stability, R^2=.012, $F(3,253)$=1.03, $p>.05$.

Implications

The findings of this study have significant theoretical implications. From a Couple Finance Theory perspective, the relationship between spending behavior and marital stability aligns with the theory's core idea that financial practices, such as joint planning, budgeting, and saving, directly influence marital quality (Archuleta, 2008). The study's finding that moderate joint financial planning is the highest-rated spending behavior among couples indicates a positive link between shared financial practices and marital stability, supporting CFT's proposition that financial behaviors are integral to the quality of marital relationships. Moreover, the significant correlation between marital stability and spending behaviors suggests that improved financial management, as described by CFT, can foster greater marital satisfaction, which ultimately enhances stability. Financial difficulties, such as impulsive spending or failure to adhere to budgets, have been shown to cause marital strain (Ford et al., 2019), and the present study's low levels of impulsive spending and the rarity of prioritizing personal enjoyment over household needs further reflect the positive role of sound financial practices in sustaining marital stability.

The lack of a significant correlation between investing behaviors and marital stability may suggest that while financial practices are crucial, they are not the sole determinants of marital quality. CFT emphasizes the importance of financial behaviors, including investments, in maintaining a healthy relationship. However, the results indicate that investment decisions, whether in business, real estate, or financial assets, do not directly translate to improved marital stability. This finding reflects that other financial dynamics, such as joint financial planning, budgeting, and saving, potentially play a more influential role in marital satisfaction and stability. It also suggest that financial investments alone, without effective communication and alignment between partners, do not necessarily strengthen the marital bond. As Allsop et al. (2023) note, financial burdens or disagreements about money often threaten marital quality, indicating that the quality of financial management, rather than the type of investments, may be more critical in influencing marital stability.

The positive correlation between debt management behaviors and marital stability suggests that effective financial management, particularly concerning debt, plays a critical role in maintaining marital quality. The study findings supported the notion by Ford et al.(2019) that proper debt management may alleviate the financial burdens that can otherwise strain relationships, as financial issues are often a source of marital conflict. The fact that couples who engage in consistent debt management practices demonstrate higher marital stability suggests that financial stability, or at least the perceived control over financial obligations, can enhance relationship satisfaction and protect against the adverse effects of financial stress as also observed by Allsop et al. (2023). The importance of managing debt, as opposed to avoiding or ignoring it, aligns with the CFT principle that financial well-being directly impacts marital quality and stability.

The positive relationship between financial literacy and marital stability suggests that couples with greater financial knowledge and confidence in managing their finances tend to experience more stable marriages. This supports the CFT concept that financial behaviours, including decision-making, debt management, and savings, directly impact marital stability. Respondents who were confident in managing debts, making informed decisions, and negotiating financial matters demonstrated better marital stability, aligning with Ford et al.(2019) idea that couples who effectively manage their finances are likely to experience fewer conflicts and greater satisfaction in their relationships. However, the lack of a significant moderating effect of financial literacy on the relationship between financial management and marital stability challenges the assumption that financial literacy, by itself, is enough to significantly alter the impact of financial management behaviors on marital outcomes. This is an indication that while financial literacy is a beneficial factor in marital stability, other factors may play a more substantial role in how financial behaviors influence marital quality.

From the Bowen Theory perspective, the role of mutual support, intimacy, and emotional attachment in marital stability emphasizes the importance of emotional processes in relationships. Bowen’s theory posits that self-differentiation – the ability to manage one's emotions and maintain objectivity during stressful situations – is key to relationship stability (Mehrabi & Veshki, 2021). The high percentage of respondents reporting mutual support and emotional attachment suggests that couples with strong emotional connections are more likely to navigate financial challenges and other marital difficulties effectively. This is consistent with Bowen's view that couples with a high level of emotional maturity and differentiation tend to handle conflicts, including financial disagreements, more constructively, contributing to greater marital stability (Lampis et al., 2019). On the other hand, the 40.9% of couples who reported financial disagreements and the 29% who contemplated divorce indicate that for some couples, emotional distress during financial conflicts may lead to instability. Bowen's theory suggests that couples who struggle with emotional reactivity during conflicts, particularly around sensitive issues like money, are more likely to experience instability.

Conclusions

The study concluded that spending behaviors such as joint financial planning, discussions about spending decisions, and efforts to save for emergencies contribute positively to marital stability among couples. Improvements in spending discipline contributed positively the marital stability of couples. However, while many couples engage in investments, such as in businesses, land, and financial assets, these investment behaviors do not significantly influence marital stability. Despite the presence of substantial investment activity, the lack of a significant correlation between investing behavior and marital stability indicates that factors other than financial investment likely play a more significant role in determining marital stability.

Effective debt management practices, such as tracking debts, making regular payments, and managing financial obligations, are positively associated with marital stability. The positive correlation between debt management and marital stability highlights the importance of managing financial stress to maintain a stable marriage. However, inconsistent behaviors such as irregular budgeting for debt repayment and seeking better loan terms suggest that financial stress and mismanagement of debts could undermine marital stability if not properly addressed. However, while financial literacy is positively correlated with marital stability, it does not significantly moderate the relationship between financial management and marital stability. This indicates that while financial knowledge and confidence are important, they do not materially alter the impact of financial management practices on marital stability.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, practical recommendations are proposed as follow:

1. Marriage and family therapists should incorporate financial counseling into their therapeutic practices, emphasizing the importance of joint financial planning, communication around spending, and effective debt management. They should guide couples in developing healthy financial behaviors and conflict-resolution strategies

related to money, particularly as impulsive spending and financial mismanagement can contribute to marital instability.

2. Premarital counselors should focus on preparing couples for financial aspects of marriage by fostering open discussions about financial expectations, budgeting, and joint financial planning. Given that spending behaviors like planning together and saving for emergencies correlate with marital stability, counselors should encourage couples to set financial goals, create a budget, and establish clear communication about financial priorities. Premarital counseling should also include strategies for managing debt and investing in shared financial goals, which will support long-term marital stability.
3. Members of the clergy should consider offering financial education as part of marriage enrichment programs, recognizing the impact that financial behaviors, such as debt management and joint financial planning, have on marital stability. By fostering a church environment where couples feel encouraged to discuss finances, clergy can help reduce financial stress and conflict within marriages.
4. Married couples should prioritize open communication and joint financial planning to enhance marital stability. They should work together to establish a clear budget, save for emergencies, and manage debts effectively. Given the positive relationship between spending behaviors and marital stability, couples should actively engage in discussions about spending decisions before acting, and avoid impulsive spending. Couples are also encouraged to seek financial literacy resources, as increased financial knowledge is linked to greater stability, and consider consulting with financial advisors to optimize their financial management strategies.
5. Personal financial advisors should recognize the critical role of financial management in marital stability and work with couples to develop comprehensive financial plans

that align with both their financial goals and relationship needs. Advisors should educate couples about the importance of joint financial planning, budgeting, debt management, and investing, with an emphasis on fostering transparent communication about finances.

Contribution of the Study to Knowledge

The findings of this study has advanced knowledge in the field of marriage and family therapy by illuminating the interplay between financial management behaviors and marital stability. The findings reveal that positive spending behaviors, such as joint financial planning and saving for emergencies, are critical to fostering stable marital relationships, aligning with the Couple Finance Theory's assertion that shared financial practices enhance marital quality. Moreover, the study has underscored the role of effective debt management, highlights the importance of equipping couples with practical strategies to manage their financial obligations. These insights have the potential to equip therapists and counselors with evidence-based approaches to address financial issues in therapy.

Areas for Further Research

In light of the study findings and limitations, future research directions are proposed as follows:

1. This study focused on specific financial behaviors and their impact on marital stability but did not explore the mechanism that linked financial management to marital stability. Future research should investigate how factors such as emotional intelligence, trust, and communication styles intersects with financial behaviors to influence marital stability.
2. The study was limited to couples in selected churches in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi City County, Kenya, which may not represent the broader diversity of couples

across different regions or cultures. Future research should extend the study to include couples from different geographical areas or cultural contexts to provide a more generalized understanding of how financial behaviors affected marital stability across various settings.

3. This study adopted a purely quantitative approach to estimate effect sizes. Future research should incorporate mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or focus groups to gain deeper insights into couples' financial behaviors and marital stability.
4. The present study established weak effect sizes of the different financial management dimensions on marital stability, suggesting that other factors excluded from the study played a more critical role. Therefore, a future study should examine the relative explanatory power of financial management of marital stability in light of the broader gamut of factors underpinning marital stability among newlyweds and middle-aged couples.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

Introduction and Purpose: My name is Christine Arunga. I am a student at the Pan Africa Christian University pursuing a Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy. In fulfilmentof the requirement for the course, I am undertaking an academic research titled: *Influence of Financial Management on Marital Stability among Christian Couples in Selected Churches in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya."* The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between financial management practices and marital stability among Christian couples attending selected churches.

Your involvement: If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a self-administered structured questionnaire. The questionnaire will include questions about your perceptions of marital stability. Your responses will contribute to understanding of financial management as a factor in the determination of marital stability among Christian couples. Your participation will involve completing the questionnaire, which will take just but a few minutes. You will be given the questionnaire, and you can complete it at your ownpace and in a private location of your choosing.

Risk and Benefits: There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. Somequestions might evoke personal feelings or memories related to financial matters, which could cause temporary discomfort. However, you are not required to answer any questions that you find uncomfortable. The benefit of participating is that your insights will contribute to the knowledge about the factors affecting marital stability among Christian couples.

Confidentiality: Your responses will be kept strictly confidential. All data will be stored securely and reported in aggregate form, so your individual responses will not be identifiable.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your relationship with the researcher or anyorganization. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time before or during theresearch without any consequences.

Contact Information: If you have any questions about the study or need further information, please contact the me on 0721 498 990 or write to ethicsreview@pacuniversity.ac.ke

Consent: I have read and understood the information provided above regarding the study. Iunderstand that my participation is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw at any time withoutany penalty. I consent to participate in the study.

Participant's Signature:__________________________Date: _________________

Appendix II: Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

The aim of this questionnaire is to find out how financial management behaviours affect the stability of a marriage. This questionnaire has 6 sections which will require your time and honest responses as you fill. Kindly answer the questions according to the instruction for the given section knowing that the information you give will be treated with confidentiality. Donot write your name anywhere in the paper. The information you give will be used for this research only and no other use. All answers will be accepted as the truth and will be valid.

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. GenderMale ☐

   Female ☐

2. Age in years

   Less than 20 ☐

   21 – 30 ☐

   31 – 40 ☐

   41 – 50 ☐

   51 – 60 ☐

   Above 60 ☐

3. Your highest level of education?

   Primary education ☐

   Secondary education ☐

   College education ☐

   University education ☐

4. What is your family size (i.e. the number of people living in your house)? _

5. Are you a dual-income household or a single income-household?

   Dual income (both husband and wife earning income)

   □

   Single income (either husband or wife earning income)

   □

6. How long have you been married in years? ____________________

SECTION B: SPENDING BEHAVIOUR

7. Please tick where appropriate if you have been involved in the following financial

Statement	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
a. We have written down somewhere,how we are going to spend our monthly income				
b. We keep aside money to be used foremergency purposes				
c. We plan how to use our money together with my spouse				
d. We spend our money according to how we have planned in our budget.				
e. I like spending money on things I enjoy but not the necessities of thehouse.				
f.We discuss with spouse how to spendmoney before I do				
g. I cannot control the desire to buythings we have not budgeted for.				

SECTION C: INVESTING BEHAVIOUR

8. Please tick where appropriate if you have been involved in the following financial management behaviours in the last 6 months

We have invested in the some of ourmoney on the following	Yes	No
a. Stock/Shares		
b. Bonds		
d. Own business		
e. Land/real estate		

SECTION D: DEBT MANAGEMENT BEHAVIOUR

Which of the following loans do you currently have? (Please tick all that apply)

Mobile loan □

Credit card loan □

Mortgage loan □

Sacco loan □

Other (Please specify ______________________________

9. Please tick where appropriate if you have been involved in the following financial management behaviours in the last 6 months

Statement	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
My spouse knows all the loans wehave				
We are able to make monthly payments for the debts/loans we have				
We have experienced financialdistress due to loans we have				
We keep track of our outstandingdebts and loans regularly.				
We have a well-defined budget thatincludes provisions for debt repayment.				
We actively seek opportunities toreduce interest rates or negotiate better terms on my debts.				
I feel confident in our ability to manage and eventually eliminate ourhousehold debt.				

SECTION E: FINANCIAL LITERACY

10. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement regarding your financial literacy by selecting the appropriate response on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 corresponds to "Strongly Disagree" and 5 corresponds to "Strongly Agree."

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly agree
a. I am familiar with financial concepts usedin financial decision- making					
b. I am familiar with financial products inthe market					
c. I relate well with otherpeople when making financial decisions					
d. I feel confident to skillfully negotiate financial decisions					
e. I feel confident in my ability to make informed judgments and decisions about financial products andservices.					
f.I feel confident of my ability to appropriately use financial productsavailable in the market					
g. I follow a plan of making savings and investments					
h. I manage my debts well, keeping themunder control					

SECTION F: MARITAL STABILITY

11. Please answer yes or no to the following statements regarding the stability of your marriage. There is no right or wrong answer.

Statement	YES	NO
a. We mutually support each other especially during difficult times.		
b. I am experience intimacy in my marriage (closeness andsexual relations.		
c. I feel a strong attachment (bond) for my spouse.		
d. I am guided by my beliefs/expectations/faith when makingfinancial decisions.		
e. We often experience intense conflicts about money		
f. I have talked to someone about the possibility ofgetting divorced e.g., friends, family pastor, counsellor		
g. I have once left home or chased away as a result ofproblem.		
h. Does your church provide pre-marital counseling?		
i. Did you attend counseling on financial management duringthe premarital counseling?		

~~Thank you for your time and cooperation ~~

Appendix III: Ethics Review Committee Clearance

Pan Africa Christian University

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

REF: PAC/ISERC/55/09/24 Date: 30/9/2024

TO:
CHRISTINE ARUNGA
PAC UNIVERSITY

Dear Madam,

RE: THE INFLUENCE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT ON MARITAL STABILITY AMONG NEWLY WEDS AND MIDDLE AGED CHRISTIAN COUPLES IN SELECTED CHURCHES IN EMBAKASI EAST SUB-COUNTY, NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

This is to inform you that PAC_ *ISERC* has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is PAC/ISERC/55/09/24. The approval period is 30th September 2024 – 30th September 2025.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

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

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

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Jane Kinuthia

Chair, ISERC

Where Leaders are Made

Appendix IV: Pac University Research Authorization

Pan Africa
Christian University

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

2nd October 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER FOR CHRISTINE ARUNGA REG. NO: MMFT/8492/0/16

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

She is at the final stage of the programme and she is preparing to collect data to enable her finalize on the thesis. The thesis title is ***"The Influence of Financial Management on Marital Stability Among Newly Weds and Middle-Aged Christian Couples in Selected Churches in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya"***

We kindly request that you allow her obtain a research permit so as to proceed and collect data from Selected Churches in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya.

Warm Regards,

PAN AFRICA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
REGISTRAR
P.O. Box 56875 - 00200.
TEL: 0721 932050 0734 400694
NAIROBI, KENYA

Dr. Lilian Vikiru
Registrar Academic Affairs
Pan Africa Christian University
Lumumba Drive, Roysambu, off Kamiti Rd, off Thika Rd
P.O Box 56875-00200, Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: +254 721-932050/726-595863/734-400694
Email: registrar.aa@pacuniversity.ac.ke
Website: www.pacuniversity.ac.ke

Appendix IV: NACOSTI Permit

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **301785**

Date of Issue: **17/October/2024**

RESEARCH LICENSE

This is to Certify that Ms.. Christine Arunga 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: The influence of financial management on marital stability among newly weds and middle aged Christian couples in selected churches in Embakasi East sub-county, Nairobi county, Kenya for the period ending : 17/October/2025.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/24/41089**

301785

Applicant Identification Number

Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Verification QR Code

NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.

See overleaf for conditions

Appendix V: Permission Letter to Participant Churches

Christine Arunga
Pan Africa Christian University
Nairobi

October 31, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: REQUEST FOR RESEARCH PERMISSION

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Christine Arunga. I am a student at the Pan Africa Christian University pursuing a Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy. In fulfilmentof the requirement for the course, I am undertaking an academic research titled: *Influence of Financial Management on Marital Stability among Christian Couples in Selected Churches in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya."* The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between financial management practices and marital stability among Christian couples attending selected churches.

To conduct this research, I kindly request your permission to administer questionnaires to church members who fit the criteria. The questionnaires are designed to be respectful of the respondents' time and will be administered physically to church members at a date and time most convenient the church. All information collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. Participants will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and their anonymity will be preserved throughout the research process.

Attached are relevant institutional clearances and permits that authenticate this study. I would be grateful for the opportunity to discuss this study further and to explore how we can work together to facilitate the participation of your church members. If you require any additional information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 0721 498 990.

Thank you for considering this request. I look forward to your positive response.

Warm regards,

Christine Arunga

Student ID: MMFT/8492/0/16

Pan Africa Christian University