

An Investigative Study On Communication, Financial Management, Personal Growth, And Future Planning On Marriage And Family Success Among Millennials In Kitui County (1–38 Years Of Marriage)

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Abstract

This study investigated marital expectations among Christian couples at the East Africa Pentecostal Church (EAPC) in Kitui Township, Kenya. Grounded in biblical foundations and contemporary relationship theories, the research explored how faith, gender roles, and socio-cultural norms shape marital dynamics. Using a qualitative, gender-stratified approach with 38 participating couples, the study identified both shared and distinct expectations. Men emphasized respect, contentment, and fair in-law relations, while women prioritized emotional intimacy, decision-making involvement, and communication transparency. Despite differences, both genders agreed on core values such as mutual respect, spiritual growth, and shared responsibilities. These findings align with the Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model and recent literature on marital satisfaction. The study highlighted how Christian marriages can thrive when rooted in open communication, emotional maturity, and spiritual accountability. By integrating faith and psychosocial insights, the research offered practical guidance for building resilient, God-centered relationships in a changing world.

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I. Introduction

Couple formation stands as a key foundation of human society where love, trust, and shared motives are anchored. Biblically instituted in Genesis 2:24, marriage is portrayed as a sacred union in which "a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." This intimate partnership serves not only for companionship and procreation but also as the primary space where individuals are shaped in character and values that ripple through society. Within dynamic couples, values like patience, forgiveness, and sacrifice are nurtured, providing moral and emotional groundwork for raising children, supporting each other, and contributing meaningfully to the broader community. Contemporary studies highlight the complexities couples face. Grobbelaar and Alsemgeest (2016) established poverty, poor communication, and unmet expectations are major stressors in young marriages, underscoring the necessity of honest dialogue and emotional resilience. Supporting this, a 2024 Technical Report on relationship indicators in Australia revealed that while 61% of Australians consider their partners the most important individuals in their lives, challenges such as emotional discouragement, loneliness, and perceived relational fragility persist. Despite this, 78% reported feeling safe and secure in their unions, affirming the enduring emotional and societal significance of marriage. Against this backdrop, the present study conducted on April 20, 2025, at the East Africa Pentecostal Church (EAPC) in Kitui Township, Kenya seeks to explore marital expectations within a Christian-faith-based context. While looking at both husbands and wives, this study aims at examining how marriage expectations align with biblical teachings, relationship theories, and the socio-cultural realities facing Christian couples today. Ultimately, the study aspires to illuminate the foundational elements of God centered relationships and propose pathways for fostering harmonious, resilient Christian marriages.

II. Methodology

The research was conducted using a qualitative approach to capture the depth and nuance of marital expectations among married couples within the East Africa Pentecostal Church (EAPC) Kitui Township. A purposive sampling method was used to select 38 couples who were deemed to be active members of the congregation. Out of invited couples, 27 participated, resulting in a 71.05% participation rate. To ensure the facilitation of open and honest discussions, participants were divided into two gender-specific cohorts: one for husbands and another one for wives. This approach allowed participants to freely express their marital expectations without the influence of the opposite gender. Each group independently discussed and documented

their marital expectations, focusing on key aspects such as emotional support, communication, family roles, and conflict resolution. The findings from both groups were presented in a plenary session, followed by a moderated dialogue with a panel of family life counselors. The counselors, drawing from biblical teachings and psychosocial frameworks, provided expert insights that further enriched the discussion. This method encouraged mutual reflection, allowing couples to explore shared expectations and address potential areas of conflict. The gender stratified discussions also illuminated the diverse challenges and desires that men and women bring to the marital relationship.

Findings Of the Study

The study established distinct but complementary marital presupposition for both men and women, underlining the ubiquitous values of respect, emotional connection, and shared responsibility. From the men's perspective, several key themes emerged, Husbands emphasized the need for wives to exhibit gentleness, respect, and support particularly in all settings putting emphasis on public settings. This includes avoiding quarrelsome behavior and public criticism, which could diminish intimacy and respect. They again emphasized the importance of wives to be morally upright and refrain from comparing their families with others. In this regard, husbands appreciated wives who were content with their family's resources and did not idealize other families' material wealth. This expectation underscores the importance of mutual respect and contentment in marital harmony. The men highlighted the need for wives to maintain cleanliness and hygiene within the household, ensuring a healthy and organized environment for the family. Husbands emphasized balancing of love between children and husbands, included on this was aspect of feeding where emphasizes where put on planning for both and not sided menu which does not favor one party. Another key theme was the fair management of in-law relationships. Husbands expressed the importance of wives balancing relationships with both their families and their husband's family, ensuring that no one side was given undue preference, empathizing on this issues, over dependency syndrome came in, couples agreed in long run the need for established families and the creation of sustainable wealth where training on life after work was proposed. These findings align with contemporary theories of marital quality, such as the Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation (VSA) Model by Karney and Bradbury (1995), which emphasizes the importance of communication and adaptability in marriage. The husbands also expressed a desire for wives to manage the balance between their professional roles and family duties effectively, ensuring that neither role compromised the other.

The wives emphasized the need for emotional intimacy, transparency, and involvement in key family decisions. They expressed the desire for their husbands to consult them in matters of family investment, child-rearing strategies, and financial planning. Women also sought verbal affirmation and regular quality time with their husbands, highlighting that emotional intimacy is central to a fulfilling marital relationship. These findings resonate with studies such as those by Orthner et al. (2023), which suggest that couples who engage in shared leisure activities and make decisions together report higher levels of marital satisfaction. Wives also underscored the importance of sexual exclusivity and transparency in communication. They expressed frustration with secretive behavior, especially regarding phone use, and emphasized the need for openness in all aspects of their relationship. Wives also indicated the importance of understanding their changing emotional and physical needs over time, calling for their husbands to embrace these changes with love and understanding, issue to do with threat to dissolution of the marriage were discouraged where husbands were advised not to compare their wives with other ladies either at work place and other social set ups as this demeans their wives and act as show of disrespect and devaluing which is highly discouraged in a Christian family set up, this was mostly witness in newly wed couples and rare on mature couples. These findings aligns with findings by Roberts and David (2022), who identified the detrimental effects of digital distractions, such as "phubbing," on marital intimacy, the wives also indicated need for husband to communicate to their wives' on valid expectations of their extended families as they also over protection to their wives against unwarranted targeting, Husbands were taken as key pillar for the family security provision. The study established cultural barriers to growing together of the couples as there seems to be perception on fit ability of the wives in the new family set up immediately after marriage vows are exchanged. Wives indicated that intimacy should not be mistaken for forgiveness in cases of couple's conflict, proper mechanism should be employed to solve issues and not by the way of creating assumptions. The husbands were seen not to seek forgiveness instead maintain it at silence which was highly discouraged as it risks marriage relationship and open door for negative thought and imagination amongst wives. Abusive languages in cases of bitterness were reported by wives to surround men, for amicable solution of family issues bitterness and abusive language should be highly refrained. In case of mistake, the husband should embrace the use of friendly and choose their word wisely and likewise. Both men and women agreed that maintaining family privacy was paramount, and emotional maturity was essential to navigating conflict in a respectful manner. During the plenary session, both genders expressed agreement on several core values for a successful marriage. These included shared parenting responsibilities, open communication, and mutual respect for each other's roles. Both husbands and wives also emphasized the importance of building a foundation based on biblical teachings, spiritual growth,

and the regular practice of prayer. The family life counselors provided expert insights on the importance of fostering an environment where both partners can freely communicate, embrace changes in their relationship, and maintain spiritual accountability.

III. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal several important themes about marital expectations within the Christian context. Both men and women expressed the need for mutual respect and emotional connection, with a shared commitment to the well-being of the family. The expectations related to communication, family roles, and emotional support reflect broader trends observed in relationship studies. The emphasis on transparency and emotional maturity is consistent with contemporary psychosocial frameworks that highlight the role of emotional regulation and adaptive coping mechanisms in sustaining healthy relationships. A critical aspect of the findings is the alignment of both genders on key relational values, despite the gender-specific ways in which these values are expressed. While men emphasized respect and moral uprightness, women focused on the need for emotional intimacy and involvement in decision-making. These findings indicate that while men and women may have different ways of expressing their expectations, they share common values such as trust, loyalty, and emotional support. The gender-specific discussions also revealed the impact of social and cultural norms on marital expectations. The importance of in-law relationships and the management of family resources reflect deep-rooted cultural values, while the emphasis on emotional intimacy and transparency points to changing gender dynamics in contemporary marriages.

The study reaffirms the importance of effective communication in sustaining marital satisfaction. The VSA Model (Karney & Bradbury, 1995) highlights that couples who engage in open, constructive communication and can adapt to challenges are more likely to experience long-term marital satisfaction. This study also supports the idea that emotional regulation and mutual support are critical in preventing conflict and fostering intimacy. The role of digital distractions and secretive behaviors, highlighted by Roberts and David (2022), further underscores the need for transparency and trust in modern relationships.

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study conducted at East Africa Pentecostal Church (EAPC) in Kitui Township underscores the importance of mutual respect, emotional intimacy, and shared responsibilities in building strong Christian marriages. While distinct gender-specific expectations were expressed, both men and women emphasized core values such as respect, emotional connection, and mutual support. The findings suggest that successful marriages require open communication, adaptability, and a commitment to spiritual growth. These conclusions are supported by both biblical teachings and contemporary relationship theories, reinforcing the idea that marriages built on mutual understanding and emotional resilience are more likely to thrive. This study highlights the evolving nature of marital relationships, particularly as gender roles and social dynamics continue to shift. The importance of continuous engagement, prayer, and spiritual accountability is essential for sustaining joyful and God centered marriages. The findings contribute to the growing body of research on marital satisfaction, offering practical insights for couples seeking to strengthen their relationships. By integrating biblical teachings with modern relational frameworks, couples can create lasting, fulfilling marriages that honor both their faith and their emotional needs.

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