

**PREMARITAL COUNSELING AND FAMILY STABILITY IN ANGLICAN
CHURCHES IN NKUNGU PARISH, NORTH ANKOLE DIOCESE. BY**

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DECLARATION

I, ARIHO HERBERT, hereby declare that this work is original and has never been submitted to any other institution of learning for any academic award.

Signature 

Date: 17 / 06 / 2025

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APPROVAL

This proposal has been done under my supervision and is now submitted for examination with my approval

Signature 

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this proposal to my wife, children and the North Ankole whose support through prayer and resources made me complete this study.

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DEFINITION OF KEY TERM

Premarital counseling: This pertains to a distinct kind of systemic counseling designed to support couples contemplating marriage or interventions that involve recognizing and enhancing the premarital individual and couple interactional elements that can impact both the quality and durability of the marital bond.

Marital stability: This was considered a mental condition that represents an individual's assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of marriage concerning intimacy, commitment, and passion.

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ABSTRACT

Determining the impact of premarital counseling on family stability was the main goal of the study, which focused on couples from Nkungu parish in the North Ankole Diocese. This included investigating the relationship between couples' family stability and emotionally focused counseling, the relationship between couples' family stability and cognitive behavioral counseling, and the relationship between couples' family stability and relationship counseling based on the Guttmann model in Nkungu Parish, North Ankole Diocese.

In order to investigate the effect of premarital counseling on the stability of families in Nkungu parish, North Ankole, this study used a cross-sectional design and combined quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Counselors and religious leaders were chosen using the purposive sampling technique, while couples were chosen using simple random sampling.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

This study will investigate the effects of premarital counseling on marital stability, with a focus on married couples from Anglican churches in Nkungu Parish, North Ankole Diocese. This chapter describes the study's background, problem statement, purpose, objectives, research questions, scope, significance, justification, conceptual framework, and operational definitions of terms examining how Christian premarital counseling (CPC) attendance affects family stability and the experiences of married couples who took part in CPC. Married couples who took part in CPC using Olson and Olson's Prepare/Enrich program will have their experiences examined by the researcher (1999).

The following three questions will also be attempted to be addressed in this chapter: First research question: How does family stability in Anglican churches get impacted by emotionally focused counseling? Research Question 2: What is the impact of cognitive behavioral therapy on marital stability? Question for research: 3 How does Guttmann's relationship counseling affect Anglican couples' ability to maintain a stable family? In order to investigate a subset of couples who have taken part in Christian premarital counseling using the Prepare/Enrich curriculum, the researcher will employ both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Olson and Olson (1999) developed a premarital curriculum called Prepare/Enrich. The Prepare/Enrich program is founded on the idea that premarital relationships might predict the quality of familial relationships. . Therefore, in order to guarantee marital stability, premarital counselors must identify relational components that improve the quality of marriage (Olson & Olson, 1999).

In order to comprehend the couple's individual experiences as well as the impact of CPC on their spiritual growth and marital stability, the researchers will collect information from participant interviews.

Background to the study

1.1.1 Historical Background

One important aspect of family life is marital stability, and marital quality has a big impact on life happiness in general (Waite, 1995). According to Cummings and Davies (2010), the stability of a family affects not just the couples' physical and emotional health but also the children's growth, well-being, biological functioning, academic achievement, social skills, and relationships.

When the apostle Paul gave marriage advice to Christians in Corinth and Ephesus in 80 A.D., premarital counseling and marriage preparation became popular throughout the world. Since then, premarital couples have probably been receiving these teachings on a regular basis (I Corinthians and Ephesians in the New Testament).

According to Stahmann and Hiebert (1987), marriage was a recognized sacrament in the church by 1164, and priests had a big influence on couples' premarital life. Clergy emphasized the value of marriage as a sacred union between a man and a woman, signifying the start of a fresh relationship with God and each other. Notably, family therapy became a recognized profession, and clergy members counseled couples for many years. Additionally, according to Stahmann and Hiebert (1987), premarital counseling offered by clergy in the early 1900s included teaching on the Christian nature of marriage, the place of religion in the home, and wedding ceremony customs. Before the 1950s, psychologists were not allowed to interview people who had struggled with

their relationships with others. Since problems were thought to be caused by neurotic or psychotic people in the relationship, they were unable to meet with each individual separately. In a 1928 paper published in *The Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, premarital counseling was first mentioned as being advantageous for both mental and physical health. Writings on premarital physical examinations were produced from that time until the middle of the 1950s (Stahmann and Hiebert, 1987).

Boys and girls were systematically initiated in old African communities. In order to teach the young initiates the manners of adulthood, they often removed them from the community and everyday issues. This included teaching them about social taboos and rules, moral guidance and social obligations, and a deeper understanding of their life's purpose, which included marriage (Howe, 2011). Children gained more understanding of their purpose or life mission and taught critical life skills such as problem-solving, social responsibility, society norms and taboos, and appropriate behavior for both genders. A "coming out ceremony" or reintroduction to the community was often held to publicly celebrate the successful attainment of adulthood (Kalkan, 2010).

One of the key responsibilities and benefits of completing initiation was marriage (Ansah-Hughes et al., 2015). In reality, initiation served as preparation for matrimony. It is accurate that initiation was a prerequisite for marriage in many African societies. Young individuals were often given guidance on marriage, sexuality, family life, and reproduction during this period. Each community had its own unique initiation ceremony, although they generally followed a similar structure. In the initial phase, a group of young participants was separated from their usual environment and sent to a

remote rural area.

Elders taught them there and assessed their abilities (Halford & Bodenmann, 2013). These assessments typically involved showing intelligence, mental strength, and physical endurance—skills considered important for marriage. This was also the time when females underwent female genital mutilation and males were circumcised. They were expected to endure the process without displaying any signs of discomfort or fear.

Premarital counseling was used in Uganda before colonialists arrived. Premarital counseling was established as a result of the Church of Uganda's efforts to improve marital satisfaction due to the increasing rates of divorce among Anglican couples (Kaburu et al., 2005). By improving communication, influencing attitudes, and cultivating patience, premarital counseling was advocated as a way to avoid divorce (Senyonyi, Ochieng & Sells, 2012). In the 1970s, the Church of Uganda's clergy and marriage specialists became more interested in getting couples ready for marriage.

The aunts, locally referred to as "ishenkazi" (the bride's father's sister), provided prenuptial counseling in central Uganda. She was, and still is, expected to advise her niece on what to expect in marriage, how to be a good wife, and how to be a nurturing mother after the children are born. Additionally, the "ishenkazi" was also meant to discuss sex and how to please the husband. The bride-to-be greatly benefited from this form of education, although the groom-to-be was not considered, making the counseling session one-sided.

According to Senyonyi, Ochieng, and Sells (2012), the groom was often left alone in the hope that he could easily form a long-lasting marriage or turn into the perfect husband on his own. Therefore, this study will focus on couples from Anglican churches in Nkungu Parish, Nkungu Archdeaconry, and North Ankole Diocese in order to ascertain whether programs encouraging premarital counseling for both men and women have had an impact

on family stability in Uganda.

1.1.2 Theoretical perspectives

It is crucial to recognize the evolution of theoretical counseling perspectives during the mid-20th century. Before the 1950s, the psychodynamic perspective was the main framework for premarital counseling and psychotherapy (Poulton & Andrews, 1992). In the 1950s, the emergence of the client-centered and existential approaches introduced significant challenges within and between mental health disciplines, competing with the traditional medical model rooted in psychodynamic theory (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1987). In the 1960s, the rise of cognitive, behavioral, and transactional perspectives led to a fragmented and often rigid search for the "correct approach." In the 1970s, systems and transpersonal approaches emerged as alternative frameworks (Markman et al., 1987). Recently, a more integrated trend has appeared in the literature on premarital counseling, aiming to combine various viewpoints. Although Reiss' (1964) model of premarital sexual permissiveness is one of the existing frameworks for counselors to choose treatment strategies, it lacks information on other factors influencing marital stability. These limitations have prompted the use of behavioral theories to explain how premarital therapy might impact marital stability.

Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) research is the origin of four behavioral theories of marriage, including social exchange. Intrapersonal elements are central to social exchange theory. It is believed that each person's evaluation of alternatives and attractions—which are perceived as "elements of perception, not behavior" (Gottman, 1982 & Newcomb & Bentler, 1981)—determines marital satisfaction. The theory focuses on the exchange of specific behaviors between individuals, even though rewards and costs are essential components of

behavioral theories of marriage. According to the idea that rewarding or affirmative behaviors enhance general perceptions of the marriage, while punishing or negative actions can have adverse effects, studies within this framework have concentrated on interactions that occur during problem-solving conversations (Markman, 1981; Wills, Weiss, & Patterson, 1974). This foundational framework has been broadened to include the attributions that partners assign to each other's behaviors (Bradbury & Fincham, 1991). The behavioral model suggests that cognitive responses influence marriage by shaping future interactions. The accumulation of experiences during and after interactions is thought to gradually influence how partners perceive the quality of their relationship (Gottman, 1993a). Therefore, behavioral theory suggests that improving marital stability can be achieved by helping couples understand each other's behaviors. Then, marital therapists teach couples how to accept and modify these behaviors for the better (Smith, Vivian, & O'Leary, 1990). This approach suggests a framework to explain how opinions about marital satisfaction evolve over time. Partners specifically determine whether they are in a fulfilling relationship through their interactions and the subsequent assessments (Bradbury & Fincham, 1991). Each pleasant interaction for happy couples reinforces continued pleasure, increasing the likelihood of five more positive interactions. On the other hand, a couple's inability to resolve disagreements may be the main cause of marital distress. However, this model's strong emphasis on interactions may also be seen as a drawback.

1.1.3 Conceptual background

The two key concepts of the study were marriage stability and premarital counseling. According to Halford and Bodenmann (2013), premarital counseling is a form of systemic counseling aimed at assisting couples who are considering marriage. Its main objective is to help them understand and enhance factors related to individual and couple interactions

that affect the quality and satisfaction of their marriage.

Nameni et al. (2014) describe premarital counseling as a knowledge and skill-based training process that provides couples with advice on improving their relationships after marriage. Premarital counseling emphasizes a proactive approach to engage couples and help them maintain high levels of functioning (Shasih et al., 2011).

Premarital therapy, as per Stahmann (2000), is a process intended to strengthen and improve premarital relationships in order to promote more stable, satisfying marriages and reduce divorce rates.

Similarly, Russell and Lyster (1992) noted that marriage preparations offer couples an opportunity to examine key aspects of their relationship and develop communication and negotiation skills in areas vital to the development of intimacy.

Marital stability, also referred to as marital quality, relates to the happiness and satisfaction experienced in one's relationship with their partner, along with the extent to which one believes their spouse meets their needs (Booth, Johnson, and Granger, 2005; Peleg, 2008).

According to Roach, Frazier, and Bowden (1981), it is also defined as "a degree of more or less positivity regarding one's own marital relationship."

The Encyclopedia of Social Psychology (2006) defines marital stability as a psychological state that reflects a person's perception of the benefits and drawbacks of marriage.

This implies that couples who are more aware of the benefits and less concerned about the

drawbacks tend to be happier (Halford & Bodenmann, 2013).

People often experience lower satisfaction in their marriage and relationships when their partner's financial burdens increase. Conversely, their contentment with the marriage and partner improves as they perceive more benefits from the relationship (Emily, Stone and Todd, Shackelford, 2000). Several factors contribute to marital stability, including sexual satisfaction, communication, shared values and beliefs, family engagement, concerns about infidelity, past conflicts, and the dynamics of social exchange, among others. In this study, marital stability was measured through aspects such as general functioning, problem-solving, effective communication, affectionate responsiveness, and clear role definitions.

Contextual Background

Premarital counseling for Christians offers a biblical foundation for marriage, equipping couples for the rewarding yet humbling role of being husband and wife, as noted by Lopang & Bakadzimoeti (2018). It also provides a safe environment for discussing past or current relationship challenges. Furthermore, couples can explore and align their marital expectations through church-based premarital therapy. Tambling and Glebova (2013) highlight that 1 Peter 2:5 and 9 establish that all Christians are part of the universal priesthood of believers and are called to serve one another in order to grow in maturity in Christ (Ephesians 4). Sauerheber and Bitter (2013) stress the significance of identifying lay counseling as a distinct form of ministry. Paul instructs all Christians to engage in a ministry of restoration or bearing burdens for others in Galatians 6:2 (Egbo, 2012). Similar calls to encourage, support, and correct one another are found in other scriptures, such as Romans 15:14, Colossians 3:16, and 1 Thessalonians 5:14. Christian churches globally require premarital counseling for engaged couples based on these teachings and numerous

supporting scriptures. In light of Proverbs 24:3-4, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Isaiah 55:11, Matthew 14:15-21, and many other texts related to marital guidance, the Anglican Church mandates premarital counseling for couples planning to marry. While marital instability is widely documented on a global scale, there is a lack of specific regional data. However, Ugandan police have documented numerous cases of violence and divorce within couples. Many cases, however, remain unreported, indicating the need for further research and efforts to expand the existing body of knowledge..

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As a result of marital instability, Uganda has experienced an increase in divorce and domestic abuse cases over the years. According to the Uganda Police Force's annual crime report (2016), reported and investigated domestic violence cases rose by 4%, from 38,651 to 40,258, between 2015 and 2016. Hill Uganda (2017) notes that, in the four years prior to 2016, 7% of Ugandans went through divorce or separation. Anglican churches have introduced various measures, including premarital therapy, based on the behavioral theory of premarital counseling. It is anticipated that these efforts will lead to a significant reduction in both domestic violence and divorce rates.

Despite the emphasis on premarital counseling as a key strategy for reducing family instability, the situation has worsened.

According to Uganda Police figures (2020), 7.6% of married Ugandans have divorced or plan to divorce, and domestic violence has increased by over 20% between January and April (Kasirye, 2020). The impact of premarital counseling on marital stability may be limited in Nkungu, Uganda, as police statistics from 2022 indicate a 30.6% rise in domestic violence since 2016, alongside a 11.2% (Hill Uganda, 2021) and 26% (UDHS, 2021) increase in actual

and intended divorce rates during the same four-year period.

This study will examine the impact of premarital counseling on family stability among married couples in Anglican churches in Nkungu Parish, North Ankole Diocese, in order to enhance understanding of the relationship between these factors and to assess its significance.

1.1.3 Objectives of the study

1.1.4 General Objective of the study

The general objective of the study is to investigate the relationship between premarital counseling and family stability using a case study of couples in Nkungu Parish, North Ankole Diocese.

1.1.5 Specific Objectives

- i. To explore the relationship between Emotionally Focused Counseling and family stability of couples in Nkungu Parish, North Ankole Diocese.
- ii. To find out the relationship between Cognitive behavioral Couples Counseling and family stability of couples in Nkungu Parish, North Ankole Diocese.
- iii. To establish the relationship between Gottman's relationship counseling and family stability of couples in Nkungu Parish, North Ankole Diocese.

1.2 Significance of the study

Clergy may be more equipped to assist couples in their preparation according to the research. Additionally, the study may help families and couples improve the stability of their marriages.

The church will probably improve its premarital counseling practices as a result. The study will be important in examining how premarital counseling attitudes and preparedness before marriage have enhanced family stability. The study will look at how the church may take on the duty of preparing couples to build strong marriages that last from the beginning to the end. This will help the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development because many modern marriage and family therapists do not consider premarital therapy to be a routine part of their therapeutic job (MOGLSD) in determining the most effective ways for the church to enhance marital stability.

The study will look into clergy members' opinions and beliefs on premarital counselling. We'll look at the clergy's opinions on the value, importance, and necessity of premarital counselling for the members of their local faiths and churches.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This will include the content, geographical and time scope;

1.3.1 Content Scope

Family stability will be the dependent variable and premarital therapy will be the independent variable in this study. Three components will be the main focus of premarital counseling: Guttman's relationship counseling, cognitive-behavioral couples therapy, and emotionally focused therapy.

1.3.2 Geographical Scope

The research will be conducted in Nkungu Parish, Nkungu Archdeaconry, North Ankore Diocese. Province of Church of Uganda Nkungu Parish has six sub parishes or sister churches which include Nkungu C. O. U, Kataraza C. O. U. Nshunga C. O. U, Rucumu C. O. U, Byarumanya C.O.U and Akafunjo C.O.U thirteen zones. Nkungu Parish borders

with four other parishes that is Kajuzya, Kashasha, Omuntebe, and Kagaramira Parishes which make up Nkungu Archdeaconry.

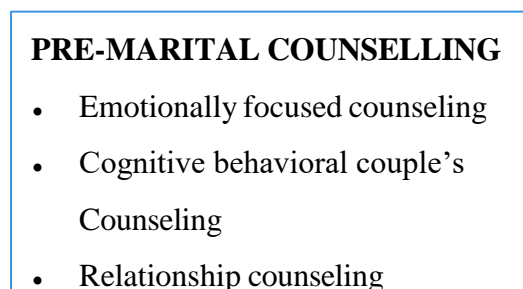
1.3.3 Time Scope

The study's time range was from September 2024-June 2025. This time frame was selected since it is thought to be adequate for all the adjustments and changes that the examiners and supervisors would have needed.

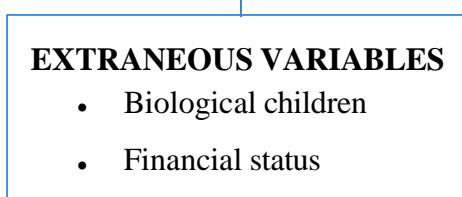
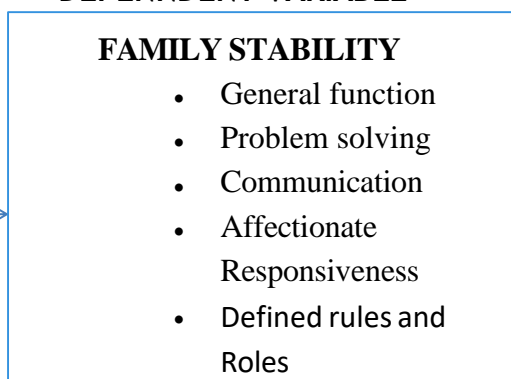
1.4 Conceptual framework

The following diagram presents a conceptual framework on the effect of premarital counseling on family stability.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE



DEPENNDENT VARIABLE



Premarital counseling, emotionally oriented counseling, and Cognitive Behavioral Couple Counseling were used to define the Independent Variable (IV), which was identified as premarital counseling within the conceptual framework presented in Figure 1.1. The Dependent Variable (DV), referred to as family stability, included elements such as general functioning, problem-solving, effective communication, emotional responsiveness, and the presence of clearly defined roles and responsibilities within a marriage. The independent variable, premarital counseling, is considered a causal factor, implying that changes in premarital counseling and its components influence the dependent variable, family stability. Premarital therapy is essential for family stability, as noted in the study by Olson

& Olson (2000).

1.8 Summary of the Chapter

The concepts of marital stability and premarital counseling were introduced in this chapter. Premarital therapy was considered to be a significant factor affecting family stability in this case. The study's purpose and problem were investigated: to ascertain whether premarital counseling and family stability are related. The chapter concluded with discussing the significance of the research and its extent.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The chapter examines the pertinent literature concerning the issue being investigated, organized by chosen themes relevant to the research. This chapter therefore outlines the theoretical framework and literature concerning the connection between premarital counselling assessments, premarital education, premarital counselling, and family stability

2.1 Emotionally focused counseling on family stability

One approach to marital counselling is Emotionally-Focused Therapy for Couples (EFT). According to Havaasi, Zahra-Kaar, and Mohsen-Zadeh (2017), emotionally-focused therapy is a structured and efficient method of couple counseling grounded in clear ideas about marital issues, emotional understanding, adult love, and emotional reactivity. Due to the fact that prior research findings rely on qualitative assessments and are difficult to verify empirically, there is a need for more quantitative studies.

From this perspective, widespread negative emotions and attachment traumas, neglect of personal needs and desires, harmful interaction styles, and negative emotional experiences are the primary causes of marital difficulties that persist over time (Johnson and Greenberg, 1985).

The absence of effective and dynamic marital strategies led to the development of emotionally-focused couple therapy in the early 1980s (Johnson and Greenberg, 1985). In the last decade, emotionally-focused therapy has surpassed other marital counselling approaches. Emotionally-focused therapy helps partners form a strong, stable bond. Because past studies depend on qualitative methods and are hard to evaluate

empirically, a research approach based on quantitative methods is necessary.

Emotionally-focused therapy aims to restore fundamental attachment feelings while identifying harmful relationship patterns and unresolved trauma (Falahzade, Sanai-Zaker & Farzad, 2013).

Intense negative emotions and behaviors such as criticism, hostility, anger, tension, jealousy, feelings of abandonment, and defensiveness overwhelm couples in unhealthy relationships, as shown by a significant body of evidence. Since these claims are based on qualitative analysis and are difficult to assess empirically, more quantitative research is needed.

In their study on using emotionally-oriented therapy to help couples heal from attachment trauma, Raisi et al. (2018) found that committed couples have a deeper emotional experience and stronger connection than less committed couples.

They also make progress in terms of forgiveness and satisfaction. Even when qualitative analyses are conducted, these results support the resolution method for attachment trauma and show that emotionally-focused couples therapy is highly beneficial for partners.

The impact of empirical approaches focusing on problem-solving versus emotional attention in addressing marital conflicts was examined by Zuccarini et al. (2013). The results indicated that emotionally-focused treatment had a more significant effect on couples' adjustment, intimacy, and complaints compared to problem-solving counseling. Couples in the emotionally-focused group demonstrated higher scores on the adjustment scale during the pursuit phase than those in the problem-solving group.

The current study addresses the gap left by the previous researchers' lack of information regarding the variability in the impact on marital stability.

In their 2019 study, "The Impact of Emotionally-Focused Couple Counseling on Improving Communication Patterns in Combat-Related PTSD Veterans and Their Wives," Rathgeber et al. found that couples receiving emotionally-focused couple counseling were more likely to utilize mutually constructive communication patterns and less likely to resort to mutually avoidant patterns and abandonment expectations.

Although the researchers did not specify the extent of the impact on mental health and ultimately marital stability, it was observed that the increased use of mutually beneficial communication patterns positively influenced mental health.

According to Soltani, Mahmudi, and Hosseini (2012), who studied the effects of behavioral and emotion-focused couple therapies on couples' distress, integrative couple counseling and focusing on providing couples' perspectives through marital counseling may be more effective than behavioral couple counselling.

This study supports the need for replication and suggests that couples' discomfort gradually decreases with emotionally-focused relationship therapy. Furthermore, the effectiveness of emotionally-focused marital counselling is not enhanced by combining it with cognitive counselling. Ultimately, emotionally-focused couple therapy may have a greater impact than integrative systemic therapy or a lesser impact than problem-solving therapy. A more quantitative investigation is needed as these conclusions are based on qualitative evaluations and are difficult to assess objectively.

Sayadi et al. (2017) found that emotionally oriented couples therapy significantly increased the posttest average scores for marital commitment and its subscales (i.e., personal commitment, moral commitment, and structural commitment) in their multivariate analysis of covariance.

In several areas, the effects of emotionally focused counseling have been shown to be advantageous with regard to the various facets of marital stability. However, the results vary, with some revealing inconsequential results and others indicating positive significant discoveries. Second, the legitimacy of previous academic research in Uganda is limited because none of the aforementioned studies have been carried out in an African or Ugandan environment.

2.2 Effect of Cognitive Behavioral Couple counseling on marital stability

The concept of the distance isolation cascade, introduced by Guttman (1999), highlights how a relationship can evolve into an emotional environment characterized by more negative feelings and attributions. As a result, couples may prefer to settle disagreements separately and continue living apart.

Guttman (1999) also identified various techniques to assist couples in resolving conflicts and enhancing their relationships, including improving both verbal and nonverbal communication skills.

Moreover, the Guttman approach identifies the "Four Horsemen"—criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling—as behaviors that indicate relational distress (Hawkins et al., 2012).

The Gottman model focuses on examining ways to enhance love relationships by promoting better self and mutual understanding in areas such as personal, emotional, cognitive,

philosophical, intellectual, interest, and taste.

Dillon et al. (2015) argue that the model seeks to address concerns and improve each partner's understanding of the other, both in terms of cognitive comprehension and emotional awareness. However, the findings from previous studies are based on qualitative assessments and are not easily subjected to empirical testing, indicating a need for more quantitative research.

Premarital counselors often use this method to teach practical techniques for enhancing love, respect, and effective communication between partners, as noted by Goudarzi & Boustanipour (2012).

This includes fostering pleasant emotions, cultivating gratitude, understanding partners' strengths and weaknesses, exploring the history and philosophy of marriage, and developing a more positive perspective towards the spouse. However, despite their implementation, the link between these practices and marital stability has frequently been limited, creating a need to address this information gap.

2.3 Effect of Guttman method on family stability

The distance isolation cascade was developed by Guttman (1999) and refers to the shift in a relationship toward more negative attachments and attributions. At this stage, couples tend to prefer solving issues separately rather than together, leading to separate lifestyles.

Additionally, Guttman (1999) has introduced various techniques, including verbal and nonverbal communication skills, to help couples manage conflict and improve their relationships.

Furthermore, the Gottman approach identifies the "Four Horsemen"—criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling—as key behaviors indicating relational distress (Hawkins et al., 2012).

The aim of the Gottman model is to explore ways to enhance romantic relationships by broadening couples' understanding of each other in areas such as interests, tastes, cognitive, philosophical, emotional, and personal aspects.

According to Dillon et al. (2015), the model seeks to enhance each spouse's cognitive understanding of the other and improve comprehension of the emotional world and issues faced by the partner. A more quantitative analysis was needed because previous research relied on qualitative assessments and were difficult to test experimentally.

Premarital counselors use this approach to provide couples with practical strategies to improve love, respect, and positive interactions, as well as to revive their connection.

In addition to the scholars mentioned above, Bean (2019) noted that the model helps couples focus on emotional intimacy and closeness, enhance communication skills, and develop strategies to attract and maintain the partner's affection. Finally, it helps couples recognize and address the factors that cause emotional distance. However, the experts' insights are relevant to Ugandan contexts but do not clarify whether the learned skills can significantly improve marital stability. The model is commonly used to teach about the importance of accepting one's spouse, involving them in decision-making, and appreciating their opinions and feelings, as well as how men avoid making decisions with their wives, how to strengthen emotional bonds, and how to embrace acceptance (Slatcher, Selcuk &

Ong, 2015). According to Negash et al. (2015), this model gives prospective couples ways to deal with problems, identify conflicts, teach coping mechanisms, pay attention to their body language during conversations, experiment with different relaxation techniques, and find answers for particular problems. Similar to earlier claims, there exists a knowledge gap concerning the limitations of previous scholars, who were restricted by the qualitative aspect of their research, highlighting the need for the present study to fill this gap.

Through exercises for dream exploration, addressing cases that have reached a wall, soothing one another, and reconciling with insurmountable difficulties, couples are given strategies to navigate permanent and unbreakable challenges (Mirecky et al., 2013).

Although it does not show the extent of their influence on marriage overall, the Gottman model, according to the researchers, helps couples create a shared understanding in their married life by helping them develop an inner life together and activities that aim to achieve common ground and values through the examination of symbols, rituals, roles, objectives, and family traditions. As an all-encompassing approach, the Gottman Method for Healthy Relationships helps couples manage their marital relationships and improve their problem-solving skills. These skills help couples become more flexible in their relationship and help them achieve a high degree of emotional equilibrium and a calm life. As a result, the aforementioned adjustments will have a favorable effect on couples' closeness, compatibility, and marriages. According to Davoodvandi et al. (2018), the Gottman method is an effective intervention for enhancing intimacy, compatibility, and marital relationships, all of which contribute to greater family resilience. Furthermore, According to Lahiji, Behzadipour, and Besharat (2016), Gottman's theory-based training significantly ($\alpha=0.05$) reduced marital discord and family instability among married

couples. However, this effect was not observed in countries like Uganda, which have limited quantitative research on the topic, making this study relevant. This is because Gottman's theory-driven intervention significantly reduced marital conflict and related issues. Furthermore, Afarin, Daneshpour, and Robertson (2019) found that the Gottman method improved verbal and non-verbal communication skills and reduced emotional divorce. A limitation of these studies is that they were conducted in jurisdictions where Shariah law is prominent, which may not be applicable in non-Muslim contexts such as Uganda. Despite this, Nikounejad & Naderi (2016) reported that training based on Gottman's principles did not significantly enhance marital satisfaction but positively influenced subscales such as emotional connection, trust in sexual relationships, compromise, and commitment. Due to the discrepancies between these findings and previous studies, there is a growing need to thoroughly examine the role of such training in marital stability using larger and more diverse samples in non-Muslim countries like Uganda.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology that will be used in the research. It covers the research framework, target population, sample size and selection criteria, sampling methods and processes, data gathering techniques, data gathering tools, pretesting, data collection process, data analysis, and the assessment of variables.

3.1 Research design

The study design is cross-sectional, focusing on analyzing data collected from a population or a representative subset.

This research employed the study design as it enables a comprehensive examination, according to Sekaran (2003). The correlation coefficient, which measures the degree and direction of the linear relationship between two variables, will be calculated using data on the research variables. Correlation, as noted by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), is exploratory and aims to understand people's views, reactions, and behavioral patterns. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches will be used. To better understand, describe, predict, and control the phenomenon of interest, quantitative data will be collected. Since the quantitative approach emphasizes objectivity and its findings are easily generalizable, it will be used (Creswell, 2003). The qualitative approach is frequently used to gain understanding of both how things are and why they exist.

3.2 Study Population

The research sample consisted of 168 couples, either officially married

through religious authorities or cohabiting, as noted in the Uganda Demographic and Household Survey, 2021, who have either participated or not participated in premarital counseling at Anglican Churches in Nkungu Parish, North Ankole Diocese between 2008 and 2025.

Furthermore, this study w also focused on religious leaders, priests, and counselors who offer premarital counseling in the church. Officially married couples will be selected based on their participation in premarital counseling, whereas cohabiting couples will be selected based on the assumption that not all of them have received counseling before beginning their living arrangements. Conversely, the counselors, priests, and religious leaders will be selected due to their expertise and are expected to provide deeper understanding of the research questions.

3.3 Sample size and determination

According to Gott and Duggan (2003), a sample is a subset of a larger group of interest with a specified size.

The results of the analysis of the sample are often applicable to the wider population from which the sample was drawn (Trochim, 2002). In order to determine an appropriate sample size from the target population that results in a trustworthy representative sample for accurate results, the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) formula will be applied.

$$\chi^2(1-P)$$

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

Where; n is the sample size

e is the permissible sampling error ($e = 0.05$); N is the population ($N = 218$). P is the population's percentage (if unknown = 0.5). With a 95% confidence level of 3.841 and χ^2 (the chi square of degree of freedom 1), the sample of 165 married and cohabiting couples from the study area is based on the population that was chosen.

4.1 Sampling Techniques

The study will utilize both probabilistic and non-probabilistic sampling techniques.

3.4.1 Probability Sampling Techniques

To select the sample, the study employed a simple random sampling technique.

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), this technique was chosen to reduce sampling bias. Random representatives were selected from the research population through the simple random sampling method. After mass or service, the researcher approached a married couple outside the church, introduced himself, and requested a few minutes of their time to participate in a small study. Additionally, the researcher randomly visited different households and asked couples encountered whether they were willing to assist and answer research questions. This approach ensures that each member of the target population has an equal and independent chance of being included in the sample, and it was selected for this study as it allows for an efficient random selection.

3.4.2 Techniques for Non-Probability Sampling

Purposive sampling, one of the existing non-probabilistic sampling techniques, will be used to identify priests, reverends, and counselors based on their perceived expertise and acknowledged experience.

3.5 data collection methods

The selection of participants for the sample will be done deliberately by the researcher. This method follows the idea that when sampling from smaller groups of important informants, highly valuable data must be collected, which necessitates the researcher to use their own judgment in purposively selecting the sample (Sekaran, 2003). It will be employed to collect specific information. It will be used since it selects only favorable cases, thus saving time and money.

One of the current non-probabilistic sampling methods, purposeful sampling, will be used to identify priests, reverends, and counselors who have been selected based on their acknowledged experience and perceived skills.

The researcher will deliberately select the participants for the sample. This strategy adheres to the notion that when drawing from smaller groups of significant informants, extremely valuable data must be obtained, requiring the researcher to use their own judgment to purposively choose the sample (Sekaran, 2003). It will be employed to gather specific data. It will be utilized as it selects only favorable cases, saving time and money.

Research Instruments

The questionnaire provided to the respondents, completed manually, served as the primary data collection tool for this study. Both closed-ended and open-ended questions were

incorporated into the questionnaire. In comparison with other primary data collection methods, questionnaires offer advantages such as faster data collection, low or no cost, and greater objectivity. However, surveys face certain challenges, such as respondents making random choices without fully understanding the topic. In addition, the lack of clear topics may hinder respondents from expressing their viewpoints adequately.

An interview guide was developed as a qualitative data collection tool, used primarily with key informants such as religious leaders and counselors.

This was necessitated to obtain more human-centered, subjective insights regarding the relationships between the variables under investigation. In particular, interviews enable researchers to uncover the underlying stories of participants' experiences.

For certain questionnaire respondents, interviews serve as a follow-up to dig deeper into their answers. An essential data collection method is the interview, which involves a dialogue between the participant and the researcher. Observation is another key data collection technique that allows researchers to observe and understand events, relationships, and behaviors in their natural settings. It provides crucial insights into real-world scenarios and processes while involving careful observation and understanding of phenomena in natural or controlled environments.

An essential data collection technique is observation, which allows researchers to better comprehend how a program or activity functions.

It enables them to witness and evaluate elements that residents or participants may not frequently discuss in interviews.

3.6. Source of Data

The study incorporated both primary and secondary data sources.

In addition to primary data, secondary data sources were utilized to support and enhance the findings. These included published materials obtained from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) reports, textbooks, journals, newspapers, radio programs, the internet, magazines, and pamphlets focused on the issue under investigation.

3.7 Validity of Research Instruments

To illustrate the relationship between the information being tested and the related test items, this study will utilize content validity (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). The research instrument will be reviewed and evaluated by the researcher's supervisor to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire items.

3.8. Reliability of Research Instruments

The reliability of the study is upheld by the extent to which a measurement method produces consistent outcomes across multiple trials (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

Conversely, reliability also involves whether the research procedures can be replicated in different studies and yield similar results. In qualitative research, this can sometimes be difficult, but it is recommended to create a database for participants (Onzima, 2013).

3.9 Data Processing and Analysis

The researcher will ensure accuracy in the transcription of all data at the end of each working day.

By presenting data collected from the field through narratives and descriptive statistics,

the researcher will focus on qualitative approaches in data analysis.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

As the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the head of the department of theology and divinity, the study followed all necessary procedures.

Furthermore, the researcher sought consent from each participant to take part in the interview, assuring them of the confidentiality of their data and the purpose of the study.

Additionally, the researcher took notes during the interviews to document participants' thoughts. This enabled the respondents to freely express their opinions.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Background information, findings, data analysis, presentations, and results interpretations are provided in this chapter. The study was conducted in the Kazo and Kiruhura Districts of the North Ankole Diocese, specifically in Nkungu Parish and Nkungu Archdeaconry. The focus was on family stability within the Anglican Churches and premarital counseling.

The research aimed to investigate the relationship between couples' family stability and emotionally focused counseling (EFC) in Nkungu Parish, North Ankole Diocese.

It also sought to explore the cognitive conduct of couples in the same parish and diocese. Additionally, it aimed to determine the relationship between couples' family stability and premarital counseling in Nkungu Parish, North Ankole Diocese.

Data from 168 married participants was planned to be used, but only 123 surveys were correctly filled out and returned, representing a 73.9% response rate.

This chapter presents an examination of the findings regarding the effect of premarital counseling on family stability in Nkungu Parish, North Ankole Diocese.

Respondents' demographic characteristics are analyzed in the subsection below. The tables provide an overview of the respondents' demographic traits, including age, gender, education level, marital status, and tenure.

4.2 Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

This subsection presents an analysis of the respondents' demographic characteristics, including age, gender, education level, marital status, and tenure, as shown in the tables

below.

Table 4.1: Age of Respondents

Years	Frequency	Percent
20-30 years	21	16.5
31-40 years	58	47.4
41-50 years	34	27.9
Over 50 years	10	8.2
Total	123	100.0

According to the information in table 4.1, 58 (47.5%) of the participants were between the ages of 31 and 40. Second, of the participants, 34 (27.9%) were between the ages of 41 and 50, 20 (16.4%) were between the ages of 20 and 30, and 10 (8.2%) were beyond the age of 50.

Table 4.2: Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	58	46.7
Female	65	53.3
Total	123	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Of the respondents, 58 (46.7%) were men and 65 (53.3%) were women, according to the statistics in table 4.2. According to the results, the women were replaced with consenting male respondents in a number of cases since they were quite reluctant to provide the required information. However, the study found no discernible variations in responses according to gender classification.

4.3 Explaining the Stability of Families

This served as the study's dependent variable, and the tables below show the descriptive analyses of the responses from the various family stability subcomponents.

Table 4.3: Descriptive Results for Family stability

	Agree	Disagree
The members of our marriage are open and honest to each other	13	64
In our marriage, some members forgo their own wishes in order in order to advance other family members	50	71
In our marriage, the members, the members are always tolerant of each other's problems	30	80
If a member in our marriage becomes physically or mentally ill, others will help him or her	46	59

Source: Primary Data

According to the current research, one component of marital stability was gaining understanding of the whole function of marriage. According to Mirecki et al. (2013),

experts have long considered qualities like desires, tolerance, honesty and transparency, and unwavering support to be crucial components of a successful marriage.

64 respondents disagreed that the 13 people were a part of their marriages, according to the study's findings. According to the study's findings, 71 percent of participants didn't agree with the claim that 50 family members gave up their personal preferences in order to support the advancement of other family members. Third, it is reported that 80 percent of the respondents did not feel that others would help a spouse who becomes physically or mentally ill. Lastly, it is shown that 59 of the respondents disagreed with the statement that the 46 members continuously demonstrate tolerance for one another's problems.

Table 4.4: Descriptive method for problem solving

we usually use all possible means to solve marriage problems	26	80
In solving Family problems all the views of the members are taken into consideration before the solution is got	11	92
When making marital and family decision all the members are respectful of each other	21	89
If we do not find a solution in the problem of the members of the family, we accept the reality and move on	9	96

Source: Primary data

The problem-solving abilities of couples are another aspect related to family stability. Descriptive statistics highlight the responses regarding conflict resolution in marital

relationships. The study findings reveal that 80% of the participants disagree with the notion that all possible methods are typically used to address marital issues. It was also found that 92% of the respondents do not agree that failing to resolve family issues is acceptable. Additionally, 89% of the participants disagree with the idea that decisions about marriage and family matters should not be resolved. Lastly, it is shown that 96% of the respondents disagree regarding the resolution of marital issues.

4.5, Describing pre-marital counselling

This served as the study's independent variable, and the table below presents the descriptive analyses of responses related to premarital counseling subcomponents.

Table 4.5 Descriptive Results for relationship counseling

	Agree	Disagree
	%	%
I was individually counseled on how to accept and manage my partners influence in the marriage	63.9	31.2
I was individually counseled on how to have dialogue about problems in marriage	50.0	51.6
I was counseled on how to create a shared meaning in the marriage with my spouse	63.9	41.8
I was counseled on how to know and accommodate my partners other world in our marriage	41.8	44.3

I was counseled on how to share fondness and admiration for my partner express appreciation and respect	56.6	41.8
I was counseled on positive approach to problem solving and the success of repair attempt	45.9	48.4

I was counseled on the how to state my needs ,be aware of bids for connection and respond to turn against them	33.6	62.3
I was counseled on how t to create an atmosphere that encourages each person to talk honesty about his or her hopes, values and aspirations	33.6	62.3

Source: Primary Date

A method utilized by church counselors in premarital counseling is relationship guidance. The table above presents a descriptive analysis of couples' satisfaction scores regarding relationship counseling in the study area.

The survey revealed that 31.2% of respondents felt they did not receive guidance on how to manage and accept their partner's influence in the relationship. According to the feedback, the participants conveyed dissatisfaction with how this aspect of relationship counseling was managed.

In addition, it was observed that 51.6% of participants did not concur that they received guidance on how to address marital issues. The feedback indicated that the handling of this aspect of relationship counseling left the participants feeling unsatisfied. Additionally,

it is indicated that 41.8% of participants disagreed that they received guidance on establishing a shared understanding in their marriage with their partner. The feedback indicates that the participants were not completely pleased with how this aspect of relationship counseling was addressed.

Additionally, it indicates that 44.3% of participants opposed the idea that they received guidance on understanding and adjusting to their partner's external world within the marriage. From the feedback, it seems that the participants were somewhat dissatisfied with how this aspect of relationship therapy was managed. Additionally, 41.8% of the participants indicated that they did not get guidance on expressing appreciation and respect to their partners, along with sharing affection and admiration for them. The participants expressed discontent with how the relationship counseling aspect was managed.

Furthermore, it reveals that 62.3% of participants felt they were not provided with guidance on articulating their requests, recognizing connection attempts, and addressing (turning towards) them.

According to the feedback, the participants expressed satisfaction with the way this relationship counselling component was handled. pertaining to respondents' contentment with relationship counselling. demonstrating that the majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the way they received Guttman's premarital counselling.

Table 4.6 Descriptive Results Cognitive Behavioral Couples Counseling

I was counseled on how to broaden and diversify sexual behaviors in marriage	38.5	59.0
I was counseled on how to identify, modify and enhance tolerance of negative emotions acceptance and tolerance of negative behaviors and emotions	51.6	43.4

During the Cognitive Based Counseling Training CBCT,I was given sound counseling on effective spouse communication	37.0	50.8
I was helped to learn to detect and evaluate the appropriateness of my thoughts	41.0	51.6
I was counseled on acceptance and tolerance of differences between my behaviors and those of my partner	32.0	60.7
I was counseled on the best possible problem-solving skills in marriage	41.8	48.6

Cognitive behavioral couples counselling is the second of several techniques employed by church counsellors in premarital therapy. The table above shows the evaluation of responses based on the level of satisfaction that couples in the study area experienced with Cognitive Behavioural Couples Counselling.

The survey revealed that 59.0% of respondents reported not having received advice on expanding and varying their sexual experiences within the marriage. Feedback

indicated that the participants were unhappy with how this aspect of cognitive behavioral couples counseling was managed. Additionally, it indicates that 43.4% of participants disagreed that they received guidance on recognizing, altering, and enhancing their tolerance for negative emotions.

Based on the participants' feedback, they felt uncertain about how this element of cognitive behavioral couples therapy was addressed. Additionally, it was discovered that 51.6% of participants disagreed that they received assistance in identifying and assessing the suitability of their ideas. Based on the feedback, the participants felt uncertain about their satisfaction with the management of this section of cognitive behavioral couples counseling. Additionally, it was discovered that 50.8% of participants disagreed with the notion that they ought to receive counseling on effective communication with their spouses. The feedback indicated that the participants were unhappy with how this aspect of cognitive behavioral couples therapy was managed.

It also shows that 60.7% of participants disagreed with the notion that they received guidance on accepting and tolerating the differences between their partner's actions and their own. According to the feedback, the participants voiced discontent with how this aspect of cognitive behavioral couples counseling was addressed.

Table 4.7 Descriptive Results for emotionally focused counseling

	Agree	Disagree
We were taught on identifying negative interaction patterns that contribute to conflict	39.3	52.5

We were taught on identifying negative emotions related to attachment issues	38.5	58.2
With EFT, each partner learnt to share their emotions and show acceptance and compassion for each other	50.0	49.2
We were taught to work on new communication strategies and practicing skills when interacting with each other	44.3	49.2
We were taught how to better see how insecurities and fears may be hurting their relationship	42.6	50.8
We were taught to learn to be emotionally available, empathetic, and engaged with each other	33.6	52.5
During the EFT counseling, we were taught to become more responsive to their partner's needs	38.7	58.7

The third strategy utilized by church counselors in premarital therapy is counseling focused on emotions. The table above presents a descriptive analysis of the satisfaction levels of couples with emotionally focused counseling in the research area.

The study reveals that 52.5% of participants claimed they were not provided with guidance on recognizing negative interaction patterns that lead to conflict. The feedback indicated that the participants were unhappy with how this aspect of emotionally focused therapy was managed. Secondly, it demonstrates that 58.5% of participants disagreed about receiving guidance on recognizing unpleasant emotions

related to attachment problems. The feedback indicated that the participants were not satisfied with how this aspect of emotionally focused counseling was managed.

Furthermore, it is indicated that 49.3% of participants contended that both spouses failed to learn how to express their emotions and demonstrate acceptance and empathy for each other. The participants expressed dissatisfaction with the management of this aspect of emotionally focused counseling.

Additionally, it was found that 49.1% of the participants were opposed to the idea that they received guidance on practicing new communication methods and tactics during their interactions. Based on the feedback, the participants expressed some dissatisfaction with the way this aspect of emotionally focused counseling was managed.

It also indicates that 50.8% of participants disagreed that they received guidance on recognizing how their fears and anxieties might be damaging their relationship.

Comments indicated that participants were unhappy with how this aspect of emotionally focused counseling was managed. Nonetheless, it has been demonstrated that 52.5% of the participants disagreed that they received guidance on how to be more engaged, understanding, and emotionally accessible to each other. Based on this reply, the participants were uncertain

Table 4.8 Descriptive Results for rules and roles

	Agree	Disagree
When it comes to housework, the members are very cooperative	50	61
The responsibilities in our marriage and family are properly distributed among members and we are satisfied	47	53
If one of our family members arrive at home late, he or she will be held accountable and they accept it	32	76
We have rules and regulations for using social media such as virtual networks, satellite services networks	51	59

The roles and norms of marriage presented in the table above formed the last element of marital stability in this research. The study's findings indicate that 61 participants felt that members lack extreme cooperation regarding household duties. This is backed by the common belief among couples that they hired maids to carry out this type of work.

The study's findings reveal that 53 participants expressed discontent with how responsibilities are distributed among the members of their marriage and family.

This stems from the consistent laziness of some members and their continuous focus on work matters at home.

Third, it is indicated that 76 respondents believed family members are not responsible and should not be penalized for their lateness. The recognition that some individuals can be

challenging to hold responsible, even if they are not at fault, influenced the response.

Finally, it was found that 59 of the participants did not concur with the notion that they have guidelines for utilizing social media and mass media platforms like satellite services, online networks, etc.

The discovery that the partners sometimes collaborated online and that one partner couldn't assist reinforced this reaction. The descriptive analyses indicated that the couple scores regarding the rules and roles aspect of marital stability were low. In summary, the responses regarding all aspects of marital satisfaction in the research area are fairly low, suggesting that numerous marriages there are unstable. This reinforces the issue outlined in the initial chapter of this report by offering a rationale for the significant number of recorded domestic violence incidents.

CHAPTER FIVE: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a theological examination of the connection between premarital counseling and family stability for couples in Nkungu Parish, North Ankole Diocese. It analyzes the three particular counseling methods outlined in the research: Emotionally Focused Counseling, Cognitive Behavioral Couples Counseling, and Gottman's Relationship Counseling. These are examined through four main categories: the Biblical Perspective (Old and New Testaments), Theological Thinkers (e.g., Ellen G. White), Early Church Leaders (e.g., Origen, Clement of Hippo), and Orthodox Christian Perspectives

5.1 Biblical View

5.1.1 Old Testament Perspective

The Old Testament provides foundational teachings on marriage and family stability. Genesis 2:24 sets the tone for marital unity, stating, "As a result, a man will separate from his parents and join his wife, becoming one flesh with her. This poem emphasizes the emotional and spiritual bond that marriage entails. The Song of Songs presents marital love as both emotional and physical, celebrating affection and mutual desire. Proverbs also offer practical wisdom on marital harmony, especially in verses like Proverbs 18:22 says, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord."

The New Testament Perspective

By using the examples of Christ and the Church, the New Testament expands on our understanding of marriage. Ephesians 5:25-33 emphasizes spiritual cooperation, emotional connection, and respect, drawing a comparison between the husband-wife relationship and Christ's selfless love for the Church. According to 1 Corinthians 13, love is gentle, patient, and enduring—qualities that are crucial for a stable marriage. In Matthew 19:6, Jesus teaches, "What God has joined together, let no man separate," which upholds the integrity and permanence of marriage. Premarital counseling that promotes emotional preparedness, behavioral awareness, and spiritual unity is encouraged by these texts.

5.2 Theological Scholars

Ellen G. White, a prominent theological scholar, provided detailed guidance on marriage and family life. In "The Adventist Home" (1952), she emphasizes that marriage must be approached with prayer, emotional maturity, and divine guidance. She writes, "True love is not a strong, fiery, impetuous passion. It is calm and deep in its nature."

She also warned against hasty unions and underscored the need for premarital preparation to avoid future instability. Her teachings support emotionally focused and cognitive behavioral approaches by encouraging couples to understand each other's thoughts, emotions, and values.

Other scholars have echoed these sentiments. Gary Chapman's "Five Love Languages" suggests that understanding emotional needs contributes to long-lasting relationships. These insights affirm the need for structured premarital counseling as a means of

reducing future marital conflict.

5.3 Early Church Fathers

5.3.1 Origen

Origen viewed marriage as a reflection of the relationship between the soul and God. In his "Commentary on the Song of Songs," he described love in marriage as purifying when rightly directed. He supported the idea that marriage must be rooted in spiritual intimacy and mutual understanding. His emphasis on internal transformation aligns with cognitive and emotionally focused counseling. Clement of Hippo; Clement emphasized spiritual preparation before major life commitments like marriage. He promoted the importance of pastoral instruction and communal discernment in guiding couples. He advocated for moral reasoning and spiritual maturity, both of which are crucial in premarital counseling. His thoughts reflect what is now practiced through Cognitive Behavioral Couples Counseling.

5.4 Orthodox Christian View

The Orthodox Church views marriage as a sacrament and a path to sanctification. It is not just a legal or emotional contract but a divine journey. The Orthodox theology of *theosis* (union with God) means that marriage is part of the spiritual process of becoming holy. The marital union is a symbol of Christ and the Church, echoing Ephesians 5:32.

In Orthodox tradition, premarital counseling is embedded in the Church's liturgical and pastoral life. The couple undergoes spiritual mentorship, prayer, and fasting to prepare

for marriage. This reflects the principles of the Gottman Method, which emphasizes structured communication, shared meaning, and emotional connection.

Additionally, Orthodox teachings promote *nepsis* (watchfulness) to help individuals guard their hearts and minds. This aligns with the goals of Cognitive Behavioral Couples Counseling, which targets the transformation of negative thoughts and behaviors in relationships.

5.5 Summary

The Bible, theological scholars, early Church Fathers, and Orthodox traditions all support the value of premarital counseling in strengthening marital stability. Emotionally Focused Counseling is rooted in biblical teachings on love and unity; Cognitive Behavioral Counseling aligns with Scripture's call for mental renewal and discipline; and the Gottman Method reflects the practical and spiritual rhythms of Orthodox family life. Collectively, these theological perspectives advocate for the Church to actively prepare couples for the sacred and lifelong covenant of marriage

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

Domestic abuse as well as An overview of the findings and conclusions that can be drawn, as well as recommendations for further research, are given in this chapter. The recommended subjects for further study are also highlighted in this section. the Ugandan divorce rate.

6.1 Overview of results

One useful and crucial tool for improving the durability of marriages is premarital counseling. The objectives of the study are the basis for the organization of this section. This study confirms that premarital counseling is an essential spiritual and relational basis for happy and secure marriages, rather than just a contemporary psychological invention. Premarital counseling, which has its roots in both modern psychology theories and biblical wisdom, gives couples the skills they need to deal with the emotional, behavioral, and interpersonal difficulties that frequently occur in marriage. The results are examined in light of the goals of the study:

6.0.1 The Relationship between relationship counseling and marital stability

In the study area, a moderate, positive, and noteworthy correlation existed between relationship counseling and family stability. The study showed a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation between Emotionally Focused Counseling (EFC) and the stability of marriages among couples in Nkungu Parish. EFC focuses on the emotional

connections that partners develop and how attachment styles influence communication and the dynamics of their relationship. Couples who participated in this form of counseling indicated improved skills in expressing emotions, listening empathetically, and fostering emotional security. Emotionally focused sessions identified repeating emotional patterns, particularly those stemming from early life experiences or unresolved trauma, allowing couples to interact with compassion and understanding

These results affirm biblical teachings on emotional unity, such as in Genesis 2:24 and Ephesians 5:25, and resonate with Ellen G. White's emphasis on spiritual and emotional preparedness before marriage. Emotional intimacy is foundational to marriage, and EFC helps nurture this sacred bond.

6.0.2 The Relationship between emotionally focused counseling and marital stability

The study area exhibited a strong, positive, and significant correlation between emotionally focused counseling and family stability. The research revealed a strong, positive, and significant relationship between Cognitive Behavioral Couples Counseling (CBCC) and the stability of marriage. CBCC emphasizes the impact of thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions on emotions and behaviors within relationships. By using this method, couples could recognize and modify flawed thought processes, enhance communication, and cultivate realistic expectations about marriage

Participants noted enhanced problem-solving abilities and a better understanding of each other's needs. Couples also learned to manage conflict respectfully and constructively, avoiding reactive behaviors that could harm the relationship. These outcomes align with Romans 12:2, which speaks about the transformation of the mind,

and reflect early Church Fathers' teachings on reason, moral maturity, and discipline—especially as emphasized by Clement of Hippo.

CBCC offers a structured and disciplined method that empowers couples to take responsibility for their relational behaviors, echoing the biblical principle of self-control and the Orthodox emphasis on *nepsis* (watchfulness).

The Relationship between cognitive behavioral couple counseling and marital stability
There was a high, positive and significant positive relationship between cognitive behavioral couples' counseling and family stability in the study area. The Gottman Method also demonstrated a high, positive, and significant association with marital stability. This research-based approach provides couples with tools to manage conflict, strengthen friendship, build shared meaning, and foster emotional intimacy. Participants who engaged in Gottman-style counseling showed improvements in day-to-day interactions, a reduction in negative communication cycles (such as criticism, defensiveness, and stonewalling), and an increase in expressions of affection and appreciation.

The Gottman Method's emphasis on rituals of connection and shared goals parallels Orthodox Christian teachings on marriage as a sacred union for the purpose of mutual sanctification. It also reflects the relational depth taught in 1 Corinthians 13, where love is described as kind, enduring, and not self-seeking.

Furthermore, early Church Fathers like Origen understood marriage as a spiritual journey that shapes the soul toward holiness—an idea mirrored in Gottman's concept of marital growth through intentional effort and shared meaning.

6.1 Conclusions

In conclusion, Premarital therapy is essential for fostering family stability within the Christian context. Emotionally Focused Counseling equips couples to understand and manage deep emotional needs and attachments. Cognitive Behavioral Couples Counseling strengthens communication by reshaping negative thought patterns and fostering constructive dialogue.

The Gottman Method offers proven, practical tools that support emotional intimacy and conflict resolution. This study has demonstrated that these approaches, when properly implemented, offer significant spiritual, emotional, and relational benefits to couples. Theologically, they resonate with biblical teachings, affirm the insights of early Church Fathers, align with Orthodox practices, and support the call by scholars like Ellen G. White to uphold marriage as a sacred institution.

Thus, it is recommended that churches, especially those in the North Ankole Diocese, encourage and establish thorough premarital counseling programs that are grounded in the Bible and enhanced by psychological knowledge. In addition to preparing couples for marriage, this will also protect families against emotional pain, violence, and divorce. Studies looked at how premarital counseling affected marriage stability. Through a case study of couples in Nkungu Parish, North Ankole Diocese, the goal was to investigate the relationship between premarital counseling and family stability.

Investigating the effect of premarital counseling programs on family stability is crucial because of the data from FIDA and the Ministry of Gender showing that, even after formally entering into marriage, couples frequently do not get the level of family

stability they had hoped for. Relationship counseling, emotionally focused counseling, and cognitive behavioral couple counseling were the three groups into which premarital counseling was separated in this study. For couples in the study area, emotionally focused treatment had the biggest effect on family stability out of the three. Overall, premarital counseling had a considerable and beneficial impact on family stability in the research region. The results collectively indicate that premarital counseling through these three methods—Emotionally Focused Counseling, Cognitive Behavioral Couples Counseling, and Gottman’s Relationship Counseling—significantly contributes to developing enduring and stable marriages. These approaches are grounded in evidence and align with fundamental theological principles concerning human nature, emotional connections, and the divine purpose of marriage

By equipping couples with emotional intelligence, cognitive clarity, and practical relational skills, premarital counseling becomes a sacred preparation for the lifelong covenant of marriage. Churches and pastoral leaders in Nkungu Parish and beyond are encouraged to adopt and contextualize these counseling models to enrich their marital ministries and strengthen the family institution.

6.2 Recommendations

The subsequent suggestions are provided based on the analysis and findings of the research:

The study primarily suggests that couples be motivated to engage in emotionally focused couple counseling due to its greater impact on family stability. When partners participate in this evaluation, there will be transparency in the relationship. Moreover,

importance needs to be placed on having couples share profound secrets to prevent surprises.

Enhance Church-Based Premarital Counseling Programs: Churches ought to create organized counseling sessions that integrate Emotionally Focused, Cognitive Behavioral, and Gottman methods, alongside biblical teachings.

Training for Clergy and Lay Counselors: Equip pastors and lay leaders with the necessary skills to deliver effective counseling, including basic psychological and emotional intelligence training. **Create Supportive Follow-Up Systems:** Establish post-marital support groups and mentorship programs to ensure continued guidance and accountability for married couples.

Integrate Theological and Psychological Resources: Encourage the use of theological writings (e.g., Ellen G. White) and psychological models in counseling materials to promote holistic support.

Conduct More Contextual Research: Encourage further studies in different dioceses and parishes to explore how premarital counseling affects various cultural and theological contexts in Uganda and beyond.

Promote Awareness and Access: Churches should raise awareness about the importance of premarital counseling and ensure that it is accessible to all intending couples, regardless of economic status.

Policy Formulation and Monitoring: Diocesan leadership should create clear policies to ensure mandatory and standardized premarital counseling in every parish.

In order to develop problem-solving skills for attaining marital and family pleasure, the research recommends that couples participate in thorough cognitive behavioral pair counseling sessions.

Thirdly, the research suggests that premarital therapists enhance their interactions with couples to promote a greater decrease in misunderstandings between them. The premarital counseling must delve significantly deeper into the couple's issues, ineffective communication skills, feelings of discovering the unfulfilled wants of the persons, unresolved childhood needs, and the root causes of the difficulties the couple is facing, as well as whether they are trapped or separated. Only after realizing this and exhibiting personal strategies like self-reparenting if necessary or dealing with these ingrained problems by going to anger management classes or getting addiction treatment among others, can the client's behavior or character potentially improve. The partner will likewise be better equipped to understand his or her partner and therefore more capable of being patient with the partner encountering these difficulties. Since the pair would have gotten counseling on handling their own concerns, this will improve the stability of the marriage. Furthermore, because the Church is the largest organization providing premarital counseling to couples, the study recommends that churches continue to educate the public about the benefits of this service.

Ultimately, the research insists that the government must establish policies and guidelines for churches that provide premarital counseling to couples. It ought to be mandated that all couples planning to marry participate in premarital counseling facilitated by their places of worship, which would enhance the likelihood of marital

stability and consequently decrease issues such as Uganda's divorce rate and domestic violence.

6.3 Topics for additional study

The study suggests conducting investigations in the additional areas mentioned below to enhance the literature and offer solutions for problems affecting marital stability.

Impact of premarital counseling on the durability of marriage.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

I, ARIHO HERBERT M22/BBUC/BD/010 a student of Uganda Christian University, Bishop Barham University pursuing a Degree in DIVINITY. I am carrying out a study on “PREMARITAL COUNSELING AND FAMILY STABILITY IN ANGLICAN CHURCHES IN NKUNGU

PARISH, NORTH ANKOLE DIOCESE”. You have been selected to participate in this study because the contribution you make is central to the kind of information required. The information you provide is solely for academic purposes and will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Kindly spare some of your valuable time to answer these questions. Your name may not be required Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Instructions:

Please tick an option you consider the most appropriate to you.

Section A: Bio Data

1) Sex of respondent

a) Male

b) Female

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

2) Age group

a) 20-30 years

- b) 31-40 years
- c) 41- 50 years
- d) 50 years and above

3) Level of Education

a) Degree

b) Diploma

c) Secondary level

d) Primary level

e) Others specify

Section one: Pre-marital counseling

1. Thinking about pre-marital counseling, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your understanding of the premarital counseling in this area? 1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = Dissatisfied, 3 = neutral, 4 = satisfied, 5 = very satisfied

No		1	2	3	4	5
	Relationship counseling					
1	I was individually counseled on how to accept and manage my partner's influence in the marriage					

2	I was individually counseled on how to have dialogue about problems in the marriage					
3	I was counseled on how to create a shared meaning in the marriage with my spouse					
4	I was counseled on how to know and accommodate my partner's other world in our marriage					
5	I was counseled on how to Share Fondness and Admiration for my partner, express appreciation and respect					
6	I was counseled on how to state my needs, be aware of bids for connection and respond to (turn towards) them					
7	I was counseled on the positive approach to problem solving and the success of repair attempts					
8	I was counseled on how to create an atmosphere that encourages each person to talk honestly about his or her hopes, values, convictions and aspirations					
	Emotionally Focused Counseling					

1	We were taught on identifying negative interaction patterns that contribute to conflict					
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2	We were taught on identifying negative emotions related to attachment issues					
3	With EFT, each partner learnt to share their emotions and show acceptance and compassion for each other					
4	We were taught to work on new communication strategies and practicing skills when interacting with each other					
5	We were taught how to better see how insecurities and fears may be hurting their relationship					
6	We were taught to learn to be emotionally available, empathetic, and engaged with each other					
7	During the EFT counseling, we were taught to become more responsive to their partner's needs					
	Cognitive behavioral Couples Counseling					

1	I was counseled on how to broaden and diversify sexual behaviors in the marriage					
2	I was counseled on how to identify, modify and enhance					
No		1	2	3	4	5
	Relationship counseling					

	tolerance of negative emotions					
3	I was helped to learn to detect and evaluate the appropriateness of my thoughts					
4	During the CBCT, I was given sound counseling on effective spousal communication					
5	I was counseled on acceptance and tolerance of differences between my behaviors and those of my partner					
6	I was counseled on the best possible problem-solving skills in marriage					

Section Two: Family stability

2. Thinking about Family stability, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your understanding of the Family stability in this area?

1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = Dissatisfied, 3 = neutral, 4 = satisfied, 5 = very satisfied

No		1	2	3	4	5
	General function					

1	The members of our marriage are open and honest to each other					
2	In our marriage, some members forgo their own wishes in order to advance other family members					
3	If a member in our marriage becomes physically or mentally ill, others will help him or her					
4	In our marriage, the members are always tolerant of each other's problems					
	Problem solving					

1	We usually use all possible means to solve marriage problems					
2	If we do not find a solution to the problems of the family, we accept the reality and move on					
3	In solving marital problems, all views of the members are taken into consideration before a solution is obtained					
4	When making marital and family decisions, all the members are respectful of each other					
	Communication					

1	The individuals in our marriage sincerely discuss their true feelings					
2	We talk to each other to resolve disagreements and misunderstandings					
3	We try hard to find out why another spouse in the marriage is upset					
No		1	2	3	4	5
	General function					

4	In our marriage, we do not keep any secrets from each other					
	Affective responsiveness					
1	The members of our marriage are able to express their affection towards each other					
2	In our marriage, attention is paid to children's feelings and emotions					
3	After a prolonged physical or mental illness of a spouse, we do not get tired of taking care of him or her					

4	It is difficult for our family members to be detached away from the family					
	Roles and Rules					
1	When it comes to housework, the members are very cooperative					
2	The responsibilities in our marriage and family are properly distributed among members and we are satisfied with it					

3	If one of our family members arrives home late, he or she will be held accountable and they accept it					
4	We have rules for using social and mass media such as virtual networks, satellite services, etc					