INFLUENCE OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT COUNSELING ON MARRIAGE STABILITY OF COUPLES IN PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES IN KAMPALA, UGANDA. A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY.

Grace Kyokuhaire Nyamahunge*, Kiyingi Frank Pio, PhD
School of Arts and Social Sciences, Uganda Martyrs University.

Abstract
Background
African Traditional Societies systematically initiated boys and girls which prepared them for adulthood experiences like marriage. The study aims to assess the Influence of conflict management counseling on marriage stability of couples in Pentecostal Churches in Kampala, Uganda.

Methodology
A cross-sectional research design using quantitative approaches to collect data from different categories of respondents at a single point in time. The study employed a descriptive correlation study to determine the relationship between pre-marital counseling and the marriage stability of couples.

Results
Based on the aggregate mean, conflict management scored a very high aggregate mean of 4.65 and a standard deviation of 0.67. This means that pre-marital counseling in terms of conflict resolution counseling is provided to couples in Pentecostal churches at a very high level. Conflict management counseling has a weak, positive, and significant influence on the marital stability of couples in a Pentecostal church in Kampala City, $r = 0.440**$ which means that conflict management counseling had a positive, weak, and significant influence on marital stability. When the provision of conflict management counseling increases by one unit, the marital stability of couples in Pentecostal churches also changes positively or increases by one unit.However, at a weak level. The fact that the P-value was lower than the significance level $(0.000 < 0.05)$ when $r2$ was calculated, 0.193 (100), means that conflict management counseling influences positively the marital stability of couples in Pentecostal church in Kampala, Uganda at 19.3%.

Conclusion
Conflict management counseling had a weak, positive, and significant influence on the marital stability of couples in the Pentecostal church in Kampala

Recommendations
Churches should continue sensitizing the public on the benefits of pre-marital counseling as the church remains the biggest institution that provides these services to couples.

*Corresponding Author: Grace Kyokuhaire**
Email:justdawayyouaregirl@gmail.com
School of Arts and Social Sciences, Uganda Martyrs University.

Background
African Traditional Societies systematically initiated boys and girls which prepared them for adulthood experiences like marriage. This was a way of preparing young adults for everyday life tasks of society moral instruction, social responsibility clarifying their calling in life such as marriage (Howe, 2011). In most African societies, one could only get married only after having been initiated. This was often the time that young people received information and instruction regarding marriage, sex, family life, and procreation (Ansah-Hughes et al., 2015). Initiation rites varied from community to community. The elders tested and taught young adults preparing them for adulthood (Halford & Bodenmann, 2013).

In Uganda, pre-marital counseling was in existence even before the colonialists came. Due to the increased separation of couples in catholic churches, the Church of Uganda advanced ways of harmonizing satisfaction in marriage, and this led to the emergence of premarital counseling (Kabura et al, 2005). Pre-marital counseling was advanced to ensure that divorce is reduced through improving communication, attitude formation, and patience (Senyonyi, Ochieng & Sells, 2012). The study aims to assess the Influence of conflict management counseling on

marriage stability of couples in Pentecostal Churches in Kampala, Uganda.

Methodology
Research Design
A cross-sectional research design was used by the researcher to collect data from many different categories of respondents at a single point in time. Quantitative approaches were used. The study employed a descriptive correlation research design. Descriptive design was used because the study aimed at describing the various pre-marital counseling and marriage stability of couples in a Pentecostal church located in Kampala City. Correlation design helped the researcher to establish the degree to which premarital counseling and marriage stability of couples in a Pentecostal church located in Kampala City relate or determine the relationship between pre-marital counseling and marriage stability of couples in a Pentecostal church located in Kampala City and predict a subject's score on one variable given his score on another variable. This method involved the collection of data that determined to what extent a relationship existed between the independent and the dependent variable

Study Area
The study was carried out in Pentecostal churches within Kampala, the capital and largest city of Uganda. Kampala Districts is a District in Uganda that is coterminous with the country's capital and largest city Kampala, which has an annual population growth rate of 4.03 percent. The city is divided into the five political divisions of Kampala Central Division, Kawempe Division, Makindye Division, Nakawa Division, and Rubaga Division. Kampala City consists of the city proper and the neighboring Wakiso District, Mukono District, Mpigi District, Buikwe District, and Luweero District.

Population of the Study
The study population included 288 couples (both officially married by religious authorities and cohabiting) (Uganda Demographic and Household Survey, 2021) that had ever attended or not attended pre-marital counseling in Pentecostal churches around Kampala City between 2010 and 2022. Secondly, Pentecostal religious leaders and counselors involved in providing pre-marital counseling in the Pentecostal churches were also targeted for this study. The officially married couples were selected because they had attended some pre-marital counseling while the cohabiting couples were selected because it is thought that probably not all of them had attended counseling before their living arrangements. On the other hand, the counselors and Pentecostal religious leaders were chosen because of their knowledge and are expected to provide more insight into the study questions.

Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion
The study included both officially married by religious authorities and cohabiting couples that had ever attended or not attended marital counseling in Pentecostal churches around Kampala City between 2010 and 2022. It also included religious leaders and counselors providing pre-marital counseling in the Pentecostal church within Kampala.

Exclusion
The study excluded unmarried, single parents, widows, widowers, and divorced people in the Pentecostal church.

Sample Size
The sample size of the study was 167 married and unmarried couples belonging to a Pentecostal church located in Kampala City. The calculation of the sample size was based on the Yamane (1967:886) formula that is used to determine the sample size. A 95% confidence level and P = 0.05 is assumed for the equation

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

Where:
n = Sample size
N = Study population
e = Level of Significance which was 0.05

$$n = \frac{288}{1 + 288 * (0.05)2}$$

$n = 167.44 \approx 167\ respondents$

Sampling Technique
The study made use of both probabilistic and non-probabilistic sampling techniques.

Probabilistic Sampling Techniques
The study used a simple random sampling technique to select the sample. This technique was used to minimize sampling bias (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The simple random sampling technique was used to select random representatives from the study population. The researcher waited outside the churches and after mass or service approached married couples, introduced herself, and asked for a few minutes of their time to participate in a short research being done. The researcher also visited couple's associations during their weekly meeting and administered the questionnaire for them to be answered. This technique was preferred for this study because it ensured that each member of the target population had an equal and independent chance of being included in the sample. It produces a random sample.

Non-probabilistic Sampling Techniques
From the existing non-probabilistic sampling techniques, purposive sampling was employed to select Pentecostal religious leaders and counselors who were targeted due to their perceived knowledge arising out of the known

experience. The researcher consciously decided who to include in the sample. This technique was employed following the postulate that if sampling is to be done from smaller groups of key informants, there was a need to collect very informative data, and thus the researcher needed to select the sample purposively at one's discretion (Sekaran, 2003). It was used to collect focused information and select useful cases only thus saving time and money.

Table 1; Sampling Frame

N⁰	Category	Population	Sample	Sampling Technique
1	Couples	288	167	Simple Random Sampling
2	Church Leaders	5	5	Census
3	Church Counselors	5	5	Census

Data Sources

Primary data and secondary data sources were employed to obtain reliable information about the relationship between pre-marital counseling and how it contributes to the marriage stability of couples in Pentecostal Churches in Kampala, Uganda.

Primary Data Source

The primary data were collected from the couples that had participated in premarital counseling as well as the counselors that provided the same. This data formed a basis for analysis in the proceeding chapter.

Secondary Data Source

Secondary data on the other hand were collected by reviewing books, journals, and other material and formed a basis for the first two chapters

Data Collection Methods and Measurement of Instruments
Data Collection Methods

To acquire statistical data, the researcher made use of questionnaire surveys and key informant interviews because it is time, and cost-effective, and offers an experience of physical evidence.

Research Instrument
Questionnaire Survey

The main tool of data collection used by this study was the questionnaire administered to the respondents for filling by hand. This was designed with both closed-ended and open-ended statements. The closed-ended statements followed a 5-point Likert scale. The tool was selected because of the need to collect sufficient quantities of data while minimizing interviewer bias. Advantages of questionnaires include increased speed of data collection, low or no cost requirements, and higher levels of objectivity compared to many alternative methods of primary data collection. However, questionnaires have certain disadvantages such as the selection of random answer choices by respondents without properly reading the question. Moreover, respondents could not usually express their additional thoughts about the matter due to the absence of a relevant question.

The questionnaire instrument was divided into three sections: A, B, and C. Section: A covered the bio-data in terms of sex, age, and level of education. Section: B, covered variables on pre-marital marital counseling, and section C was about the marriage stability of couples in the Pentecostal church adopted from the ENRICH MaritalStability Scale. It contained closed-ended and open-ended questions which were based on the Likert scale where code 5 stood for strongly agree, implying a very high mean (4.20-5.00), code 4 stood for agreeing, implying a high mean (3.414.20), code 3 stood for sometimes implying a moderate mean implying average mean (2.61-3.40), code 2 stood for disagreeing, implying a low mean (1.81-2.60) and code 1 stood for strongly disagree, implying a very low mean (1.00-1.80) as shown in Table2

Table 2: Likert Scale

Questionnaire Scale	Value	Mean Range	Interpretation
Strongly Agree	5	4.21 -5.00	Very high
Agree	4	3.41- 4.20	High
Not Sure	3	2.61- 3.40	Moderate
Disagree	2	1.81- 2.60	Low
Strongly Disagree	1	1.00- 1.80	Very low

Adopted from Renis Likert (1932)

Key Informant Interview Guide

An interview guide was drafted for the key informants (counselors and religious leaders) as a qualitative data collection tool. This was because of the need to obtain judgmental and humanistic reasoning on the relationships between the variables under study. Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information about a topic. Interviews are useful as a follow-up to certain respondents to questionnaires, for instance, to further investigate their responses. The interview is an important data-gathering technique involving verbal communication between the researcher and the subject. Interviews are commonly used in survey designs and exploratory and descriptive studies.

Data Quality Control
Training of Research Assistants
Given the geographical width of the study areas, the researcher required some research assistants to ground and collect data in the shortest time possible. Thus, two research assistants who were graduates with experience in questionnaire data collection were recruited and trained for three days. All assistants recruited were taken through the training which covered the aims of the study, terms used, the sampling procedures used in the field, interview skills, how to use the research instruments, and the easier way to collect data from respondents. The training focused mainly on how to fill out the questionnaire which was conducted. The issues relevant to the study such as confidentiality of the information, and seeking informed consent were also part of the training. During training the principal investigator endeavored to take the enumerators through every question in the structured questionnaires. This was important for the familiarization of the assistants with the research goal, questions, and procedures and gave them enough experience in collecting information in the field.

Pretest
Before the study, the developed questionnaire was pre-tested among 25 couples, one church leader, and 1 counselor in a catholic church. The researcher pretested the questionnaires in an area where the targeted people have similar characteristics to those in the main study to ensure clarity of questions and consistency in methods of questioning and data collection procedures. The pretest helped to ensure feasibility and clarify questions, words, and sentences that were found to be unclear or requiring explanations. Furthermore, it allowed the researcher to determine whether the intended data analysis could be carried out and whether the data could help achieve the research objectives. After the pretest, slight modifications were made to the questionnaire including deletion of questions that required similar responses. The data that were obtained from the pretest were not used in the main study but were used to inform quality assurance before the main study was done. The pretest sample was not also resampled in the main study.

Field Editing and Supervision
Field supervision is one of the most emphasized quality control techniques that was used during the study. Although the researcher took part in the interview process, the researcher also took on a supervisory role. At the end of each field study day, the researcher sat down with the supervisor and went through the field questionnaires to look out for any missing responses, skipped questions, and inappropriate responses to questions. If any was found, the tool would be discarded and compensated for the following data during the field exercise.

Validity of the Instrument
The validity of the questions was determined by advisors were suggestions were used to ultimately formulate the average score that could reap the predicted applicable data. The questionnaire was also subjected to a rating and Content Validity Index using the following formula

$$CVI = \frac{Total\ Number\ of\ Relevant\ Items}{Total\ number\ of\ items} = \frac{28}{33} = 0.848$$

The instrument was considered valid for data collection since the value of the CVI (0.848) was higher than 0.60 as suggested by Amin (2005).

Reliability of the Instrument
Reliability means the degree of consistency and precision that the measuring instrument demonstrates. To ascertain the reliability, a pre-test was conducted on 25 questionnaires administered to 25 couples from the catholic church in Kampala City because it has similar characteristics to the Pentecostal church and was not part of the study. After collecting the data from the respondents, the data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Socio-Scientists (SPSS IBM version26) to determine Cronbach's Alpha whereby the recommended minimum value is 0.70 and above. If the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient is above 0.7 the tool was considered for data collection (Amin, 2014).

Table 3: Reliability Results

Reliability Statistics		
Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Pre-Marital Counselling	0.939	15
Marital Stability	0.750	13
Overall	**0.936**	**28**

For pre-marital counseling, a Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of 0.939 was obtained which is higher than the recommended value of 0.7 meaning the respective items were reliable. For marital stability, a Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of 0.750 was obtained which is higher than the recommended value of 0.7 meaning the respective items were reliable. An Overall Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of 0.936 was obtained which is higher than the recommended value of 0.7 meaning the respective items were reliable.

Procedure of Data Collection

Data collection refers to the process of gathering information to serve or prove some facts (Oso and Onen, 2008). The researcher acquired an introductory letter from the University authorities and presented it to the leaders of Pentecostal churches where the study was conducted before the actual/real-time of the study and sought permission from Pentecostal church authorities. Research instruments were prepared by the researcher and were presented to the respondents targeted to supply authentic information to the researcher. These included both married and cohabiting couples, church leaders, and counselors providing pre-marital counseling.

Data Processing, Analysis and Presentation

Data were gathered by the use of a questionnaire administered to the couples (any available). Data processing was done by sorting the questionnaires (removing half-filled or wrongly filled questionnaires). Entry of data collected was done manually with the use of MsExcel to form an Excel file. Entry of data collected by the key informants was done manually by generating themes and into MsWord.

Quantitative analysis, on the other hand, was done using simple descriptive methods (frequency tables and charts). Descriptive statistics helped facilitate data visualization. It allows for data to be presented in a meaningful and understandable way, which in turn, allows for a simplified interpretation of the data set in question. Secondly, inferential analysis (Pearson's correlation and regression using IBM SPSS 26) was used to analyze objectives 1, 2, and 3 and also test the hypothesis based on the *p-value*. The demographic characteristics were analyzed using descriptive statistics that is frequency and percentages.

Ethical considerations

The researcher presented an approved letter to the respondents proving the academic intent of the proposed study to the respondents. Further, the researcher asked for consent from the respondents about their inclusion. A positive response was that the researcher administered the questionnaire to the respondent and collected the required information. The researcher avoided asking life-pinning questions in a bid to keep the perspectives of the respondents within the positive values of the study intent. Anonymity, the researcher did not use the respondents' real names in the report. Confidentiality, the researcher kept the information of the respondents in the study for only study purposes and did not share it with others. Honesty, the researcher strived for honesty in all aspects while carrying out this study. Right from data collection, coding, analysis, and report writing

honesty was observed. The researcher also avoided fabrication, falsifying, or misrepresenting of data.

Results
Demographic Characteristics

Table 4. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Items	Description	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	49	30.8
	Female	110	69.2
Age (years)	20 - 30	23	14.5
	31 - 40	45	28.3
	41 - 50	78	49.1
	51 and Above	13	8.2
Level of Education	Primary Level	3	1.9
	Secondary Level	6	3.8
	Diploma	24	15.1
	Degree	117	73.6
	Others	9	5.7

N = 159

Source: Primary **data** *2024*

Gender of the Respondents

In this study, female respondents accounted for 110 (69.2%) while male respondents accounted for only 49 (30.8%). These demographic results on the gender of the respondents show that both female and male respondents were considered in the study to avoid discrimination. It also shows that the responses were dominated by the views of female respondents. This might be because many women in Uganda and Africa at large are more involved in church activities than men.

Age of the Respondents

Majority of the respondents were in the respondents were in the age bracket of 41 to 50 years 78 (49.1%) followed by those who were in the age bracket of 31 to 40 years 45 (28.3%). Next were those in the age bracket of 20 to 30 years23 (14.5%) and lastly, those in the age bracket of 51

years and above 13 (8.2%). These demographic results on the age of the respondents portray that all the respondents considered in the study were mature with enough experience regarding the problem under investigation. However, the results were dominated by the views of respondents in the age bracket of 41 to 50 years.

Educational Level of the Respondents

Those who had a degree level of education dominated the study 117 (73.6%) followed by those who had a diploma level of education 24 (15.1%). Next were those who had another level of education such as PhD 9 (5.7%) followed by those who had a secondary level of education 6 (3.8%) and lastly, those who had a primary level of education 3 1.9%). This might be due to the factor that the research was conducted in a town setting, the majority of the respondents are learned which helps them in getting jobs within the town.

Conflict Management Counselling

Table 5: ConflictManagement Counselling

Items Rated	μ	SD
I was taught how to avoid situations where I expect heated controversy	4.56	0.75
I was counseled on how to identify, modify, and enhance tolerance of negative emotions	4.69	0.63
I was helped to learn to detect and evaluate the appropriateness of my thoughts	4.66	0.71
During the CBCT, I was given sound counseling on effective spousal communication	4.66	0.69
I was counseled on acceptance and tolerance of differences between my behaviors and those of my partner	4.72	0.57
Aggregate Mean and Standard Deviation	4.65	0.67

N = 159 Sources: Primary Data
Legend 3: 4.20-5.00, (Very High), 3.40-4.19, (High), 2.60-3.39 (Moderate), 1.80-2.59 (Low), 1.00-1.79 (Very Low)

Table 5, Based on the aggregate mean, conflict management scored a very high aggregate mean of 4.65 and a standard deviation of 0.67. This means that pre-marital counseling in terms of conflict resolution counseling is provided to couples in Pentecostal churches at a very high level. This means that couples in a Pentecostal church in Kampala city are helped to learn to detect and evaluate the appropriateness of their thoughts; are counseled on how to identify, modify, and enhance tolerance of negative emotions; and are counseled on acceptance and tolerance of differences between their behaviors and those of their partners. In conclusion, the provision of pre-marital counseling to couples in the Pentecostal church, Kampala, is done at a higher. This might be due to different reasons such as making it

compulsory, a better understanding of each other, finding out about the family dynamics many others. This was also confirmed through the qualitative data collected using the structured interview with the key informants where the key informants had the following comments or responses:
"...couples seek pre-marital counseling because it is a prerequisite and they see it as a must..." (**Source: Key Informant1-Pentecostal Church**).
Another one had this to say:
"...couples seek pre-marital counseling to look for genetic makeup and find out about family dynamic..." (**Source: Key Informant 2-Pentecostal Church**).
Still on the pre-marital counseling provision, the third key informant had this to say: *"... Couples are provided pre-marital counseling to get information because they are*

entering a new stage of life; therefore, need a better idea of what to expect in marriage. In addition to that, they need it to build a strong foundation for marriage…" **(Source: Key Informant 3-Pentecostal Church).**

Finally, the fourth key informant told the researcher that:

"...couples are provided marital counseling to learn communication skills and problem-solving skills to better handle conflict in their marriage…" **(Source: Key Informant 4- Pentecostal Church).**

Table 6: Influence of Conflict Management Counselling on MarriageStability of Couplesin Pentecostal Churches in Kampala

Description	Measure
Pearson Correlation (r)	0.440^{**}
P – Value	0.000
Coefficient of Determination (r²)	0.193
N	159
** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).	

Sources: Primary Data (2024)

Legend:
- Conflict Management Counselling (Predictor)
- Marital Stability (Dependent variables) [-1.00-0.00]: Negative effect

[0.00-0.25]: Positive and very weak effect [0.25-0.50]: Positive and weak effect [0.50-0.75]: Positive and strong effect

[0.75-1.00]: Positive and very strong effect

In Table 6, the findings indicate that conflict management counseling has a weak, positive, and significant influence on the marital stability of couples in a Pentecostal church in Kampala City, r = 0.440** which means that conflict management counseling had a positive, weak and significant influence on marital stability in a Pentecostal church in Kampala city, Uganda. It also means that

when the provision of conflict management counseling increases by one unit, the marital stability of couples in Pentecostal churches also changes positively or increases by one unit. However, at a weak level. The fact that the P-value was lower than the significance level (0.000 < 0.05) when r2 was calculated, 0.193 (100), means that conflict management counseling influences positively the marital stability of couples in Pentecostal church in Kampala, Uganda at 19.3%.

The findings revealed that conflict management and marriage stability relate in the sense that prior preparations for marriage in terms of conflict management enhance positive perception in the relationships of partners. There was a significant relationship between conflict management and the marriage stability of couples in Pentecostal churches in Kampala City. The findings also indicated that conflict management counseling is an important tool for a successful and stable marriage and therefore the researcher opines partners to embrace conflict management counseling as they settle in marriage. In addition, service providers to be adequate for the in-depth provision of conflict management counseling services. This would help many couples to get well equipped as they also get their marriage safe by attaining knowledge and skills for a successful marriage.

Discussion

conflict management counseling had a weak, positive, and significant influence on the marital stability of couples in a Pentecostal church in KampalaCity, the P-value was lower than the significance level (0.000 < 0.05), and when r2 was calculated, 0.193 (100), it was observed that conflict management counseling influences positively marital stability of couples in a Pentecostal church in Kampala, Uganda at 19.3%. Marital stability is affected by conflict management counseling that partners use within their relationship. Certain conflict management counseling (avoiding conflict, being competitive, or putting one's feelings/opinions before those of others) is negatively associated with marital stability. In addition, Karney and Bradbury (1995) also reported that couples that feature less negatively toned conflict counseling (accommodation and problem-solving) enjoy higher levels of marital happiness than couples that feature more negatively toned conflict counseling (criticism & stonewalling). Couples are more likely to engage in positively toned conflict management when their relationship status is secure, after a prolonged period of cohabitation, and when the couple has sufficiently agreed upon a common set of life goals.

This supports the findings of the study where it was also observed that marriages or couples in the Pentecostal church in Kampala city are stable and the level of conflict management counseling provision is also high. This might not be the case only for marriage life but even in another segment of life where conflict management brings harmony among people and promotes peace. when the provision of conflict management counseling increases by one unit, the marital stability of couples in Pentecostal churches also changes positively or increases by one

unit.However, at a weak level. The fact that the P-value was lower than the significance level (0.000 < 0.05) when r2 was calculated, 0.193 (100), means that conflict management counseling influences positively the marital stability of couples in Pentecostal church in Kampala, Uganda at 19.3%. Conflict management and marriage stability relate in the sense that prior preparations for marriage in terms of conflict management enhance positive perceptions in the relationships of partners. There was a significant relationship between conflict management and the marriage stability of couples in Pentecostal churches in Kampala City. Conflict management counseling is an important tool for a successful and stable marriage and therefore the researcher opines partners to embrace conflict management counseling as they settle into marriage. In addition, service providers to be adequate for the in-depth provision of conflict management counseling services. This would help many couples to get well equipped as they also get their marriage safe by attaining knowledge and skills for a successful marriage.

Hypothesis Three Testing

A P-value of 0.000 which was less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the researcher rejected the first null hypothesis stating that there is no significant influence of conflict management counseling on marriage stability of couples in Pentecostal Churches in Kampala, Uganda, and accepted the alternative one. This implies that there was a significant influence of conflict management counseling on the marriage stability of couples in Pentecostal Churches in Kampala, Uganda.

Conclusion

Conflict management counseling had a weak, positive, and significant influence on the marital stability of couples in the Pentecostal church in Kampala. The fact that the P-value was lower than the significance level, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative one.

Recommendation

Churches should continue sensitizing the public on the benefits of pre-marital counseling as the church remains the biggest institution that provides these services to couples.

The government should put down policies and guidelines to be followed by the church that are taking couples through pre-marital counseling.

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PUBLISHER DETAILS