

The influence of extramarital sexual relations on marital stability: A case study of the Anglican diocese of Butere, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Extramarital sex [EMS] is a persistent dialogue and an intriguing phenomenon among nouvelle Christians across the globe. The Anglican church remains perplexed and antagonized by the blooming of unstable marriages as a result of EMS practices and is left in a quandary on how to combat them. Christianity emphasizes fidelity in marriage, and biblically EMS is considered sinful. This study sought to establish the influence of EMS on marriage stability among Christians in the Anglican Diocese of Butere, Kakamega, Kenya, and as a way to devise appropriate measures to mitigate the problem. The study specifically examined the biblical and theological teachings on extramarital sex and proposed effective mitigating measures to curb extramarital sex relations in the Anglican Diocese of Butere, Kakamega, Kenya. The utilitarianism theory guides the study. A descriptive research survey design was adopted, and qualitative and quantitative slants were employed in the methodology. Stratified sampling was used to group the 7175 targeted members into the married, clergy, and church leaders. Purposive random sampling was utilized to select the married, while stratified purposive sampling was employed in clergy selection, giving a representative sample of 348 respondents. Primary data was obtained using questionnaires and interviews, while relevant literature was explored to derive secondary data. Inferential and descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of quantitative data. Explanatory variables were discriminated by the categorical principal of component analysis facilitated by SPSS version 20 software. Qualitative data was analyzed and thematically organized. The study was premised on Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism theory. The study found that the biblical teachings on extramarital sex relations were well agreed on, indicating they positively contributed to marital stability, as supported by a coefficient of variation on biblical and theological teachings ($r = .334$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$). This study concluded that there existed a moderate positive relationship between the dependent variable (marital stability) and the independent variables (extramarital sexual relationships). From the conclusion, the study derived both policy and practical recommendations based on the specific objectives. The study recommended that biblical and theological teachings should be harmonized with pastoral guidance and counseling to married couples so as to make them well informed of extramarital sexual relationships and why they are discouraged. On providing solutions to extramarital engagements, discipline and self-control were paramount; hence, teachings, guiding, and counseling among victims; preaching of moral behavior; change in natural behavior; and avoiding lust as well as myths regarding extramarital benefits would be ideal. Church leaders should concentrate on building morals.

Keywords: Anglican Diocese, Biblical and Theological Teachings, Extramarital Sexual Relations, Marital Stability

I. INTRODUCTION

Extramarital sexual relations have taken center stage in most societies of today and bring in their wake devastating consequences both on individual family members and society at large. The study explores how extramarital affairs affect marriage stability using a case study of the Anglican Diocese of Butere, Kakamega County, Kenya. It aims to establish some of the causes and recommend militating against the practice, anchored in biblical, theological, and sociological insights.

Marriage, highly regarded both in Christian doctrine and traditional African society, is based on vows of fidelity. However, despite such a sacred commitment, extramarital relations are increasingly jeopardizing the stability of marriages. According to Gordon and Mitchell (2020), the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic made the situation worse since the increased stress levels became contributing factors to infidelity. Such behavior has wider consequences, influencing not only the couples themselves but also their children and society.

The marital stability may be based on different aspects, including adherence to religion, education, and socio-economic background, as is depicted by the study of Yesmen and Nahid (2002). However, extramarital relations have grown worldwide, as indicated by the Durex Global survey, where 22 percent of the world's population had confessed

to having illicit affairs. The consequences of such affairs are so prevalent, which causes psychological and emotional trauma among the affected spouses, children, and even their close relatives.

Infidelity is also consistently reported by therapists as one of the most challenging issues to work through in therapy. As Klassen *et al.* (1989) have noted, the rates of male and female infidelity have become more equivalent in the U.S.; whereas in the past, men predominantly engaged in affairs, recently women's involvement has increased substantially. This new reality presents different demands on marital therapists and certainly calls for valid intervention.

In addition, several other studies, like Atkins *et al.* (2001), suggest that males are more likely to indulge in extramarital relations as compared to females. However, recent studies, like Scelza (2024), challenge this conventional concept of male promiscuity, presenting a higher number of female cases of infidelity. These studies depict that economic independence, peer influences, and emotional dissatisfaction are some of the social factors for increased instances of infidelity in both males and females.

Indeed, extramarital relations are high in Kenya. According to a report by Mpasho News in 2019, 50% of men who go for paternity tests at the government chemist are not the biological fathers of their children; this is attributed to infidelity. This always leads to conflicts and psychological damage to the children. Oladi *et al.* (2016) believe that extramarital relations contribute to emotional instability, breakdowns in communication, and marital dissatisfaction, which exacerbate the problem.

The current trends have not left behind the Anglican Diocese of Butere. From statistics, an alarming trend shows divorce and separation attributed to infidelity. The church has, to this end, proposed policies to tame extramarital affairs, which include premarital counseling and marital workshops. These focus on nurturing open communication and trust, with a keen adherence to biblical imperatives that are fundamental in mitigating such infidelity. In addition, the church promotes discipline and control as some of the necessary precautions to avoid affairs. Through the clergy members, the church recommends continuous counseling and moral advice to reinstate stability in the marriages.

Despite such attempts, many challenges persist: financial burden, constant separations for indefinite periods, and peer pressure remain some common factors that predispose individuals to extramarital relations, as evidenced in the study by Idoko (2018). However, marital fidelity and stability can be encouraged through interventions involving role modeling and continuous guidance by church leaders. As Lau and Miles state, numerous good examples of role models through the church can help illustrate to couples that faithful and committed relationships will last. Basically, working with the problem of extramarital relations can be a multidirectional activity: limitation of such trauma's influence on family life, stabilization of the institution of marriage with the help of biblical teachings, regular counseling courses, and emphasis on socially important values.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Christianity teaches that married couples are required only to have sexual intercourse with their spouses. Engaging in sexual activities with anyone else is considered a sin as it violates God's commandment against adultery. Regardless of the issues that may arise in marriages, couples should find ways of overcoming them and remaining committed and dedicated to their marriage vows (Otubah, 2023). As the societal moral compass, the church has been threatened over the years by the monster of infidelity among couples wedded in Holy matrimony, and the Diocese of Butere is no exception. This is evident from the recent Diocesan statistics whereby the church recorded 413 divorced/separated couples, 90% of which were a product of infidelity, with 44 married Christians undergoing counseling on infidelity cases (Oyetade, 2020). The practice of extramarital sex among married couples goes against the Anglican biblical teachings, liturgy and policy of marriage which emphasizes on absolute fidelity, love and respect in marriage. The Anglican Church of God (A.C.K) Christian families affected in the Diocese of Butere claim irresponsible, violent partners and financial struggles as some of the contributive factors to the behavior. Affected families have ended up divorced, separated and with children lacking positive role modeling hence ending up psychologically affected in their upbringing (Idoko, 2018). This poses a threat to the future sanctity of marriage the church professes as affected children raised in such families are likely to have a negative outlook of marriage as an institution. Emphasis on marriage preparation inclusive of counseling has not been nurtured from the grassroots but only a few days to the wedding day. Young people are told to remain pure through abstinence until marriage but lack guidance on the foundational Christian values that dictate a stable marriage and serve as a guide in choosing a marriage partner before marriage. Owing to the rising prevalence of extramarital sex relations incidences among Christians in the Anglican Diocese of Butere, minimal efforts have been made in devising measures to mitigate the problem.

1.2 Research Objective

- i. To examine the Biblical and theological teachings on extramarital sex relations.
- ii. To find effective mitigating measures to curb extramarital sex relations on marriage stability in the Anglican Diocese of Butere, Kakamega, Kenya.

1.3 Research Question

- i. What are the Biblical and theological teachings on extramarital sex relations?
- ii. What effective mitigating measures can be employed to curb extramarital sex relations on marriage stability in the Anglican Diocese of Butere, Kakamega, Kenya?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The Utilitarianism Theory guides the study. The theory was developed by Jeremy Bentham (1747-1832) to explain the morality of actions and behavior in society. According to this theory, actions are considered on whether or not they promote the attainment of happiness or pleasure Sinha (2020). Actions or behaviors that promote higher levels of happiness are considered morally correct, while behaviors that promote pain and unhappiness are morally wrong. In extramarital sex, the behavior contributes to pain and unhappiness towards the spouse that has been affected by the behavior and is, therefore, immoral, according to this theory. Since it is immoral to cause pain and unhappiness to another person in a marriage, engaging in extramarital sex is unacceptable in society, and it can have significant adverse impacts on the institution of marriage (Aziz, 2021). According to this theory, infidelity, which also involves extramarital sex, is immoral owing to the pain and suffering that the spouse is exposed to and the resultant outcomes of this behavior on the whole family unit. Extramarital sex is when a married person, in any marriage setup, engages in sexual intercourse with another married or unmarried person other than their spouse. According to Tuelo (2019), extramarital sex is committed by both men and women across the world, even though most of the cases involve men more than their female counterparts. There are various scriptural foundations against extramarital affairs in the Bible, and Christian teachings admonish any engagement in sexual intercourse among people who are not married. In Christian marriage, the husband and wife commit fidelity to each other as long as they live, and this promise is broken when one or both parties engage in sexual activities with people they are not married to.

With less satisfaction in marriages, most partners end their companionship and seek other alternatives, such as getting into other marriages or staying out of marriage. Dissatisfaction in marriage entails being discontented with the partner that the person is married to, which, in turn, can negatively impact intimacy and the level of commitment to each other. Infidelity occurs when one partner is not faithful in marriage and has one or multiple sex partners outside marriage. According to Sabatelli et al. (2020), infidelity significantly undermines the foundation on which marriage is built and sustained. It has been established that extramarital sex negatively affects the quality of intimacy between partners in a marriage, and since intimacy is an essential aspect of marriage, the foundations of marriage are significantly damaged when such practices occur. Hernandez-Kane and Mahoney (2018) reveal that the emotional involvement in extramarital sex by partners also diminishes their levels of commitment to the marriage and their will to stay in the marriage.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 The Biblical and Theological Teachings on Extramarital Sex Relations

The Old Testament teaching on extramarital sexual relations: The beginning chapters of Genesis provide a clear guide map for God's original design of marriage. God's command to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:22, "*Be fruitful and multiply,*" is happily adhered to by the husband and wife after they are enjoined together in marriage; hence, Genesis 2:24 records: "*A man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.*" It is only after the occurrence of marriage that Adam made love to his Wife, Eve, in Genesis 4:1. Sex was, hence, from the onset of the world, reserved to be enjoyed within the confines of marriage.

Dillow et al. (2013) emphasize that God originally intended sex to be naturally enjoyed within the marriage context, sublime and free from troublesome experiences. He, therefore, directly addresses the confusion in the modern world and the frustrations surrounding sex, inclusive of infidelity. It was noted that improvement in sexual relationships between husband and wife will go a long way to improve marital stability by reducing stress and frustrations.

According to Sanger (1926), many modern marriages fail due to ignorance and misuse of sex that is supposed to be enjoyed within the marriage. She emphasizes the central significance of sex in marriage life and as a necessity of keeping the marriage fire alive. Her sentiments are later backed up by Van de Velde (2013), who argues that the forces of mutual attraction in marriage and its sustainability can be improved through evolution and improvement of physiological relationships. He strongly pictures a happy and stable marriage built on discipline, which involves shunning extramarital sexual affairs.

Exodus 20:14 records "*You shall not commit adultery*". Adultery is one of the sins that God warns the Israelites against through the Ten Commandments, which indicates his position on the issue and why every person must abstain from engaging in extramarital sex. In the Old Testament, adultery was punishable by death.

McKeever (2020) opines that extramarital sex is erroneous if it breaks the initial commitment made, especially in monogamous marriages, to be sexually exclusive. Adultery, therefore, is highly condemned due to the unique

significance that the commitment has in the marriage relationship. Adultery hurts and takes the form of deception. Adultery is wrong even if the person cheated on never finds out and so not hurt or finds out but is not hurt because they were also cheating or do not mind.

According to Rokach. *et al.* (2023), cuckoldry not only leads to separation and divorce but could also negatively impact emotional euphoria manifested in the form of low self-esteem and depressive symptoms. This poses an elated risk of the breach of stipulated biblical moral conduct, thus leading to excessive drinking, heightened sexual immorality, and suicidal conduct in response to emotional torture.

Karadzhy and Tsurkan-Saifulina.(2023) noted the betrayal aspect of adultery by the perpetrator to the person who trusted them the most. Women especially find it hard to devise strategies to cope with adultery occurrences in marriage. These include but are not limited to avoidance of their partners, confronting them harshly, and, in extreme cases, opting to walk out of the marriage. Adultery is therefore frowned upon and harshly condemned biblically due to the negative impact that comes along with it and God's intent that marriage lasts until death.

Proverbs 6:32 says, "*But a man who commits adultery has no sense; whoever does so destroy himself.*". In Proverbs 6:27-29, the bible compares a man who goes out with his neighbor's wife to a man who carries fire next to his chest or walks on hot coal. The Bible is evident in its admonition against adultery and warns that one only destroys oneself when one engages in adulterous behavior, which indicates that there are dire consequences for all actions that relate to adultery among married couples.

Barrat (1965) presents a clarifying incident on the possibility of profound adverse effects of adultery on oneself. In a combination of characters, he presents a mixture of guilt and feelings emanating from the betrayal of one's spouse that escalated into suicide. Infidelity seriously alters the solid and happy marriage previously enjoyed by the perpetrator, resulting in them being trapped by their sin and, ultimately, a broken marriage. According to Hunt (2013), drawing from King David's experience with Bathsheba in 2nd Samuel 11, His assertions support that adultery indeed culminates into the heaviness of heart and guilt. Just like King David, the behavior potentially results in sorrow and withdrawal of God's blessings from a marriage formerly ordained and blessed by God. It only takes the intervening mercies of God through prayer and repentance for redemption to rebuild the broken covenant relationship.

According to Kavulavu *et al.* (2020), a lack of exposure to the biblical concepts of marriage and why God designed sex can be a significant reason for individuals to engage in extramarital sex with people outside marriage.

From a Christian perspective, biblical teachings offer a strong foundation on which stable marriages and lasting relationships can be built. Having access to biblical teaching and guidance that is rooted in the Bible and religious beliefs can help individuals resist temptations to sin and, by extension, protect them from engaging in extramarital sex. However, Kwena *et al.* (2022) argue that even some of the people who are well-educated on Christian values still engage in extramarital sex, and it is not enough to teach about adhering to biblical teachings.

The New Testament teaching on extramarital sexual relations: In the New Testament, extramarital sex is considered sinful, and man is admonished against engaging in sex outside marriage. Paul says in Hebrews 13:4,

"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous."

The New Testament does not at any point acknowledge any situations or circumstances where extramarital sex can be justified, which serves to warn Christians not to engage in sex outside marriage, regardless of the temptations or factors that may arise. Oyetade (2020), drawing from the book of Hebrews, pictures marriage as a gift and a blessing from God. However, the constant attack is directed at the honor and sanctity of marriage. Infidelity is a significant problem, proven by heightened divorce rates. God's judgment awaits those who dishonor marriages and maintenance of marital purity. According to Morris (1983), the Bible teaches that God blesses a marriage between one man and one woman. Where possible, it is the will of God that both give birth. Maintaining holiness of thought and flesh desires is vital since both the adulterer and the adulteress will face God's judgment. His assertions are later emphasized by Medeiros (2023), who critically analyses honor as something so precious and possessing exceptional value. Conservation of the marriage bed will ensure the protection of sexual love from perversion. Jesus Christ, in the New Testament (Mathew 26), warns Christians not to fall into temptation that would ruin their relationship with God. Since sex outside marriage is already one of the sins admonished, he warns against it. In 1 Corinthians 7:2, Paul writes,

"Because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband."

This indicates his strong opposition to sex outside marriage and the need for each person only to have one sexual partner to whom they can be faithful. To the people who are not married, Paul also encourages them to marry, and this illustrates why they should not have sexual relations with people who are already married. Paul demonstrates that the only way sex is acceptable is when it occurs within the marriage institution. Christians should not satisfy their sexual passion by having sex with anyone who is not their spouse. Medeiros (2023) compares a house lacking a foundation to a marriage without fidelity. This poses a threat of crumbling down at any unannounced time since the disrespect that comes in the form of infidelity is the impetus for divorce. Marriage partners are advised to stick to each other in honoring their vows and ensuring their marriage stands on a solid foundation.

According to Otubah (2023), most young people no longer appreciate the biblical teachings on sexual purity before and after marriage. Marriage is sacred, and the marital covenant relationship must be exclusive to ensure its permanence. Cheating is highly disapproved from a moral stance. Maddock (2022) present infidelity as the worst transgression that a married couple can make against each other and is often considered a sinful act. Faithfulness is therefore highly emphasized in marriage for the maintenance of peace and, ultimately, stability in the marriage.

Paul teaches in 1Thessalonians 4:3 that

"it is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to control their body in a way that is holy and honorable and not in passionate lust like the pagans who do not know God." In Revelation 14:8, it is written that "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality."

This is an indication of the wrath of God towards men and women who engage in extramarital sex and other forms of sexual immorality. Anderson (2008) equates the husband-and-wife relationship in a marriage setting to the covenant relationship between human beings and God. There are two interrelated reasons why the bible prohibits infidelity. God's plan for the sanctity of human marriage is violated through unfaithfulness. The 'one man and one-woman image is blemished in the occurrence of extramarital sex, thus shattering God's design. Infidelity defaces the loving, pure, and committed image of God's covenant relationship with his people that marriage was designed to portray.

Gary (2015) takes us back to rethink God's original intention of designing marriage. What if marriage was designed to make us holy more than to make us happy? God's wrath is kindled against those who break the vows by engaging in extramarital sex from a biblical perspective since he is more focused on the sacredness of marriage as a covenant and the holiness it is expected to depict. According to Njiru and Purkayastha (2018), sex outside marriage is among the most extensive prohibitions in Christianity because it goes against God's biblical design of marriage and his true intention for sex.

2.2.1 Effective Strategies to Mitigate Extramarital Sex Relations and enhance Marital Stability

The church's role as the custodian of society's moral fiber cannot be overestimated. For ages, the church has been society's moral compass and helped shape values and ethics that continue to hold the moral fabric. Church leaders play a pivotal role in influencing the choices made by members, including their decision to stay faithful to their spouses and refrain from extramarital sex. The church and church leaders are the light of the world according to the bible and, therefore, must ensure that good morals in society are preserved and that the minds of church members are transformed to maintain marital faithfulness and sexual purity.

Counseling: Church leaders acknowledge that the stability of the church depends on the stability of the family, and extramarital sex is a significant threat to the sustenance of the family. The church is, therefore, responsible for preserving families by offering teachings and counseling that enhance stability within the family. Baker (2019) confirms the instrumental role of church leaders in spearheading Christian counseling sessions. These have been noted to have a high positive impact on Christian marriages, thus ensuring stability. Stability, in this case, sums up marriages that are free from extramarital engagements leading to domestic violence, separations, and divorce. There exists a positive response on the side of religious couples when their religious concerns and values are included in their marriage therapy. Church leaders who blend spirituality within their marital therapies, seminars, and build-up classes provide couples with a firm foundation to build their marriage into future sustainability.

According to Silo (2022), Christian counseling is an essential aspect of the church that provides an avenue for Christians to receive guidance on how to remain faithful to their spouses and avoid illicit sexual relations. Premarital counseling is one of the areas that church leaders and counselors are using to prevent the prevalence of extramarital sex among Christians. The provision of premarital counseling helps to lay the desired foundation of values and morals that Christians can rely on in their marriages to avoid sexual infidelity. Premarital counseling by church leaders reminds couples about God's involvement in their marriages, which is aimed at helping them gain the motivation to continue growing together and attaining stability.

According to Kumar (2023), premarital counseling is crucial because it helps couples get their marriages off to a positive start and reduces some of the risk factors for extramarital sex activities. The Christian counselor often advises marriage commitment, the importance of a life-long perspective, and the readiness to make sacrifices. The couples learn the inevitable nature of conflict in marriages, which is healthy when resolved adequately.

Role-Modelling: According to Lau and Miles (2023), role modeling is also a measure that churches worldwide have used to foster unity and commitment of spouses to each other. Role models are described as exceptional people who can be emulated because of their values, ethics, and morals as regards faithfulness in marriage. Church leaders can help address extramarital sex issues through the identification of such exceptional couples and using them as examples that all congregants can emulate. The church leaders also encourage couples to attend church services where they get opportunities to get in contact with monogamous and happily married Christians. Role models in the church setting are usually couples that have been together for several decades and have adequate experience to mentor newly-wed couples. Despite extramarital sex stemming from a variety of causal factors inclusive of personal choices and economic

hardships, among others, the church still stands overestimated on the salient role it plays in ensuring stability in holy ordained marriages propelled by the church leaders.

Seminars and Workshops: According to Robinson et al. (2018), church leadership is uniquely positioned to enhance marriage stability through mentorship programs, well-targeted and intense outreach that ensures healthy relationship modeling, and broad and welcoming access to counseling before marriage. Church leaders can be instrumental in formulating and implementing initiatives to strengthen family relationships.

According to Kumar (2023), Christian marriage seminars and programs organized by the church leadership are also avenues that the church can use to provide relevant guidance to married couples regarding extramarital sex. The Anglican Church and many other churches around the world organize marriage seminars that bring together couples to get teachings on what the bible says about extramarital sex and why they ought to avoid sinful activity. One of the topics taught during most church seminars on marriage is the issue of commitment to the marriage and why spouses are expected to remain faithful to each other at all times. Marriage seminars enhance marriage commitment, ensure the couple has adequate communication skills, and strengthen relationship behaviors to mitigate extramarital affairs. Based on sentiments opined by Dollahite and Lambert (2007), religious guidance facilitated by church leaders in various workshops and seminars within the marriage setting highly contributes to fidelity in marriage in various dimensions. The religious practices and beliefs emphasized by the church leaders contribute to marital sanctification, resulting in high marital quality, thus indirectly enhancing fidelity. Religious teachings emphasize moral values among couples. The strong Godly relationship built in marital therapies organized by church leaders discourages infidelity as an act that displeases God and is punishable.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research design adopted for the investigation is a descriptive research survey because, in conducting an in-depth analysis in regard to how extra-marital relations affect the stability of marriage within the Anglican Diocese of Butere in Kakamega County, Kenya, it combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches. In this approach, one systematically collects detailed information from participants about their experiences and attitudes towards marriage and fidelity without manipulating existing conditions. In-depth interviews were adopted for the qualitative approach, while for quantitative, structured questionnaires were used for data collection.

3.3 Target Population

The target population for the study included 7,175 individuals comprised of married couples amounting to 6,931, 180 church leaders, and 64 clergy in the Anglican Diocese of Butere. These are the targeted groups due to the fact that they have direct dealings with marriage and counseling within the Church Community (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Extramarital relations are most disrupting to married Christians, and this study limits its scope to them, in addition to church leaders and the clergy, who form the most important agents of change.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Stratified, purposive random, and purposive sampling methods were used to establish a sample size of 348 respondents. A stratified random sampling method was used to represent each of the six deaneries in the diocese. The married people were selected using purposive random sampling, while the church leaders and clergy were selected using purposive sampling, bearing in mind that they were in leadership positions and could inform on the response of the church to infidelity. A sample size of 324 married people, 18 church leaders, and 6 clergy was used to represent the variation in perspectives within the diocese.

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

Two main tools were used for data collection: structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides. These questionnaires were administered to married subjects and had statements to which the respondents could indicate their level of agreement or disagreement regarding fidelity, communication, and marital satisfaction using the Likert scale. Semi-structured interview guides were used during the in-depth interviews with church leaders and clergy, exploring sensitive and complex issues regarding extramarital relations and the role of the church in mitigating their effects.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The actual data collection was done for a period of three months after the ethical approval by NACOSTI among other relevant authorities. First, the pilot study was done to determine the reliability and validity of the research instruments through adjustments. The major data collection involved personal face-to-face interviews and administering

questionnaires. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed in participation to ensure candid responses, especially since the subject matter is somewhat sensitive.

3.7 Data Analysis

Frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency were used to analyze quantitative data from the questionnaires. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to ascertain the relationship between extramarital relations and marital stability. An attempt to explore the key variables-for instance, biblical teachings and church policies regarding the subject matter, along with contributive factors to infidelity-was also made through factor analysis.

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using NVivo software in order to find repeated themes and patterns in participant responses. In so doing, the research was able to dig deeper into mitigating factors and the influence of the church on marriage stability.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study followed strict ethical guidelines whereby participants were fully informed of the aim of the study and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequences. Informed consent in writing was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study. The research also ensured cultural sensitivity, particularly in handling sensitive topics such as infidelity, by working closely with church leaders in approaching the subject matter appropriately.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate

The study presents a response rate on questionnaire return rate and interviews responses; this is provided as shown.

Table 1

Response Rate

Questionnaires	Frequency	Percentage
Response	324	100
None response	0	0.0
Total	324	100.0
Interviews		
Church leaders Response	14/18	77.8
Clergy Response	6/6	100

From 324 questionnaires distributed all were filled and returned indicating a response rate of 100%. The study also found that 14(77.8%) Church leaders responded as all clergy responded in interviews.

4.1.1 Biblical and Theological teaching on Extra-marital Sex

The researcher sought to examine the Biblical and theological teachings on extramarital sex relations. A five (5) Likert Scale was used where one (1) implied the least and five (5) the highest positive response (1=Strongly Disagree (SD), 2=Disagree (D), 3=Neutral (N), 4=Agree (A), 5 =Strongly Agree (SA) was used in the analysis of data. The results of the Likert Scale were shown in table 2.

Table 2

Biblical and Theological Teaching on Extramarital Sex

Description	N	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
According to genesis 1&2, God created one man for one to live together till they are separated by death.	324	4 (1.2)	0 (0)	108 (33.3)	66 (20.4)	146 (45)
In Exodus 20:14 Christians should not commit adultery	324	4 (1.2)	16 (4.9)	60 (18.5)	150 (46.3)	94 (29)
Extramarital sex or infidelity can lead to divorce (Mathew 19:9)	324	4 (1.2)	82 (25.3)	74 (22.8)	140 (43.2)	24 (7.4)
Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled (Hebrews 13:4-6)	324	0 (0)	70 (21.6)	100 (30.9)	112 (34.6)	42 (13)

From Table 2, the results showed that 66(20.4%) agreed as 146(45%) strongly agreed that in Genesis 1 & 2, God created one man for one to live together. Regarding whether in Exodus 20:14 Christians should not commit adultery 150(46.3%) agreed as 94(29%) strongly agreed. Results showed that 140(43.2%) agreed 24(7.4%) strongly agreed that extramarital sex or infidelity can lead to divorce (Mathew 19:9), 112(34.6%) agreed as 42(13%) strongly agreed that marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled (Hebrews 13:4-6). The biblical teachings on extramarital sex were well agreed on indicating they positively contributed to marital stability.

This confirms that it was wrong to engage in extramarital sex. Furthermore, most respondents indicated yes that extramarital activities indicated marriage instability. Interviews conducted revealed that teachings based on the bible and theology improved marital stability. One of the church leaders Church Leader (CL) (CL-001) stated

"Even though I give teachings to members some members do not take them seriously contributing to ignorance that leads to certain cases of extramarital sexual relationships being reported among church members,".

A member of the clergy (CL-001) noted that

"I often include teachings on infidelity in my premarital counseling sessions though not so deep but the couple is usually too excited to take them seriously until when it happens to them then they come back crying, stressed and sometimes divorced ".

These findings are in agreement with Proverbs 6:32 which says,

" But a man who commits adultery has no sense; whoever does so destroy himself.

This is evident through clergy and church leaders' statements on the stress and emotional damage caused by infidelity. These findings also support the assertions made by Sanger (1926) that most modern marriages break down due to ignorance and misuse of sex that is supposed to be enjoyed within the marriage context. God hates divorce. The Anglican marriage policy that seeks reference from the bible frowns at infidelity since it serves as a gate pass to divorce. (CL-006) noted that

I cannot advise couples to divorce when conflicts arise or whatever cause. I can only advise forgiveness and change of behavior since Christ also taught we should forgive seventy-seven seven times."

Buthelezi (2021) drawing from Anglicanism and marriage from the ancient times emphasizes the lifelong-defining nature of marriage strongly held by the Anglicans and featured in the constitution as well as the liturgy. Christians specifically married Anglicans in the Dioceses of Butere should therefore go back to the crossroads, look for the ancient path of fidelity, and walk on it. By adhering to biblical teachings on the effects of infidelity and related theological insights, stability will be ensured.

4.1.2 Effective Mitigating Measures to Curb Extramarital Sex

The researcher sought to explore effective mitigating measures to curb extramarital sex in the Anglican Diocese of Butere, Kakamega Kenya. A five (5) Likert Scale was used where one (1) implied the least and five (5) the highest positive response (1=Strongly Disagree (SD), 2=Disagree (D), 3=Neutral (N), 4=Agree (A), 5 =Strongly Agree (SA) was used in the analysis of data. The results of the Likert Scale were shown in table 3.

Table 3

Effective Mitigating Measures to Curb Extramarital Sex

Description	N	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Christian teachings can lower extramarital sex prevalence	324	0(0)	36(11.1)	114(35.2)	146(45.1)	28(8.6)
Societal values and morals can help address EMS(Extra Material Sex)	324	0(0)	56(8.6)	128(19.8)	154(47.5)	78(24.1)
Partners should stay together to avoid engaging in EMS	324	0(0)	28(8.6)	78(24.1)	114(35.1)	104(32.1)
Family members should condemn EMS	324	0(0)	36(11.1)	46(14.2)	150(46.3)	92(28.4)
Extramarital sex should never be justified	324	0(0)	8(2.5)	108(33.3)	164(50.6)	44(13.6)

The study findings in table 3 showed that 146(45.1%) agreed that Christian teachings can lower extramarital sex prevalence, 154(47.5%) noted that Societal values and morals can help address EMS, 114(35.1%) agreed that partners should stay together to avoid engaging in EMS, 150(46.3%) agreed that family members should condemn EMS as 82(50.6%) extramarital sex should never be justified. Ndungu (2017) observed that a few couples could courageously face infidelity cases amongst themselves and find an amicable way of sorting out their differences hence the need to seriously look into the effective mitigating measures against it.

Ghoreishi (2018) observed that individuals whose spouses engaged in infidelity were always made to feel like the offenders by the society. In so doing, the offender is encouraged to continue with the vice at most if it is a male parent involved. If family members and the society stand to condemn infidelity occurrences and emphasize on values and good morals, then this will go a long way to ensure stability in those marriages. The findings also agree with Kavulavu *et al.*(2020) who observed that lack of exposure to biblical teachings on marriage and why sex was designed by God could be a contributive factor to extramarital sex. Christian teachings should be emphasized in pre- and post-marital counseling since sex outside marriage goes against God's original design for marriage and true intention for sex. A church leader (ChL-006)during interviews stated

“When given a platform to preach or teach, sometimes I choose topics related to marriage and biblical texts to back them up, those who frequently attend and are serious don’t report infidelity cases”.

He further stated that

“it was not easy for family or friends to forgive their partners who engage in extramarital sex for the sake of keeping the marriage stable, however, we advise them to do so and when the offender is committed to change, the marriage regains stability”.

A clergy (CL-003) stated that

“I think we can also use examples of thriving couples within the church to speak to others and convince them that fidelity is possible”.

This agrees with Lau and Miles (2023) that Couple role modeling can be used to foster unity and spousal commitment to each other thus avoidance of sex outside marriage.

Another church leader (ChL-009)in his words

“The society and church can advocate for emphasis of good morals and values instilled during premarital and post-marital counseling, seminars and training sessions for married people”.

In attempt to solve extra marital affairs church leaders and clergy reported that discipline and self-control was paramount, provision of teachings, guiding and counseling among victims, preaching of moral behavior, change in natural behavior and avoiding lust as well as myths regarding extra marital benefits could go a long way in ensuring stability in marriages. This supports assertions made by Robinson et al. (2018) that the church leadership has a significant role in ensuring marital stability through mentorship programs, intense outreach focused on healthy couple role modeling and welcoming access to counseling before and after marriage. Counselling therefore should be a continuous process and couples should show willingness and commitment to mentorship and further guidance.

4.1.3 Marital Stability

The researcher sought to assess marital stability of members of Anglican church of Butere, Kakamega County on a 5 Likert scale (where 1=Strongly Disagree (SD), 2=Disagree (D), 3= Neutral (N), 4=Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA) was used in the analysis of data. The results of the Likert were shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Marital Stability

Description	N	SD (%)	D (%)	U (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
There exists a harmonious relationship between me and my spouse	324	64 (19.8)	28 (8.6)	36 (11.1)	84 (25.9)	112 (34.6)
There exist high communication levels between me and my spouse	324	56(17.3)	24 (7.4)	76 (23.5)	92 (28.4)	76 (23.5)
There exist high trust levels between me and my spouse	324	56 (17.3)	16 (4.9)	84 (25.9)	96 (29.6)	72 (22.2)
There are lower divorce chances between me and my spouse	324	0 (0)	8 (2.5)	108 (33.3)	168 (51.9)	40 (12.3)

Based on the study findings in table 4, 112 (34.6) strongly agreed that there existed a harmonious relationship between them and my spouses, 92(28.4%) agreed that there existed high communication levels between them and my spouses,96(29.6%) agreed that there existed high trust levels between them and their spouses, 168 (51.9%) agreed that there were lower divorce chances between them and their spouses. However, looking at responses for agreement it still indicated chances of low marital stability among respondents in Butere Anglican Diocese in Kakamega County, Kenya. The society needs to mold good men and women as the church should avail marital teaching to its members based on interview responses.

In an Interview session, a church leader(ChL-011) noted that

“I indeed give the best however marital stability has been taken as mere theory based on complaints received from married people especially young couples”.

Lack of trust, harmony and communication threatened families to a tune of creating divorce in some of the most perceived strong families. A clergy(CL-005) from one of the churches indicated that *“ACK church has not initiated convincing mitigating measures in curbing EMS”.*A study conducted in Kenya by Kioko (2015) in determining infidelity among 265 men and women who are married discovered gender-specific determinants of extramarital sex which affected marital stability. This is a monster eating both men and women in equal measure. The church therefore as the societal moral compass must stand out to improve and devise more vigorous measures to mitigate extramarital sex and specifically in the Anglican Diocese of Butere, Kakamega, Kenya.

The study avails relationship among study constructs where the extra marital sex is compared to marital stability in relation to the study.

Table 5
Pearson Correlation Analysis

		Biblical theological teachings	Mitigating measures	Marital stability
Biblical theological teachings	Pearson Correlation	1	.306**	.334**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	324	324	324
Mitigating measures	Pearson Correlation	.306**	1	.443**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	324	324	324
Marital stability	Pearson Correlation	.334**	.443**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	324	324	324

Table 5 displays that bivariate correlation coefficients for all the study variables were significant at 5% level of significance (p -values < 0.05); that is, there existed a moderate positive correlation between Marital stability and Extra marital sexual relationship among married faithful of Anglican church in Butere Diocese Kakamega County, Kenya as indicated by; Biblical theological teachings ($r = .334$, p -value = $0.000 < 0.05$); Mitigating measures ($r = .443$, p -value = $0.000 < 0.05$). This study concluded that there existed moderate positive relationship between dependent variable (Marital stability) and independent variables (extra marital sexual relationships). This is further affirmed by Kavulavu *et al.* (2020) who said that lack of exposure to the biblical concepts of marriage and why God designed sex can be a significant reason for individuals to engage in extramarital sex with people outside marriage.

The study examined the regression model for extra marital sexual relationships influence on marital stability. The researcher pursued the testing of the following hypothesis (H01-H02: Table 6 summarizes the results.

Table 6
Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.718 ^a	.515	.503	.70367		
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	82.608	2	20.652	41.709	.000 ^b
	Residual	77.738	157	.495		
	Total	322.346	323			
a. Dependent Variable: Marital stability						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Biblical theological teachings, Mitigating measures						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-1.783	.488		-3.655	.000
	Biblical theological teachings	.255	.076	.202	3.331	.001
	Mitigating measures	.318	.142	.150	2.239	.027

a. Dependent Variable: Marital stability

The model managed to explain R of 0.718 and R Square 51.5% of the variation in the marital stability of Anglican faithful of Butere Diocese. The model gave R Square above 50% indicating the model was deemed fit to express extra marital sexual relationships and marital stability of Anglican faithful of Butere Diocese. Kwena *et al.* (2022) argue that even some of the people who are well-educated on Christian values still engage in extramarital sex, and it is not enough to teach about adhering to biblical teachings.

$F = 41.709$, $P = 0.000 < 0.05$, as per to the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) findings in table indicate of a strong match for dataset by the multiple linear regression model. The p value indicates a significant relationship between extra marital sexual relationships and marital stability. Meaning extra marital sexual relationships affected stability of marriages. Idoko (2018), in his study on the prevalence of extramarital sex among married women in Enugu, Nigeria, asserts that extramarital conduct emanating from a perilous lifestyle has been among the social problems affecting society today concurring with current study. From the discoveries the examination detected that all the variables were significant thus Biblical theological teachings ($r = p$ -value = $0.001 < 0.05$), Mitigating measures (p -value = $0.027 < 0.05$).

The null hypotheses H_{01} - H_{02} were therefore rejected implying extra marital sexual relationship had a statistically significant influence on the marital stability of faithful married people in the Anglican Diocese of Butere, Kakamega County, Kenya. The regression model was as follows:

$$Y = -1.783 + 0.255 X_1 + 0.318 X_2$$

Where: Y= Marital stability, X_1 = Biblical theological teachings and, X_2 = Mitigating measures

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study explored how extramarital sex affected marital stability in the Anglican Diocese of Butere and found some important predictors of infidelity to include emotional dissatisfaction, extended separations, and financial difficulties. Among others, the findings highlighted that counseling, family upbringing, and strict church policies could help reduce extramarital sexual behavior. The church leaders and the clergy insisted on constant guidance and counseling, emphasizing self-control and changes in moral behavior. Disciplinary action taken, for example, included demotion of members who engaged in extramarital relationships; this was also an effective way to control such behavior. Financial empowerment, especially for women, was considered a critical measure to reduce financial-driven infidelity.

This study concludes that even though many factors contribute to the prevalence of extramarital affairs, some focused interventions, such as Christian counseling, tight church policies, and moral teachings, can suppress these behaviors. Churches can help inculcate a culture of fidelity and self-discipline, thus contributing to more stable, fulfilling marriages. It calls for further research on the role of financial empowerment and geographic separation in promoting infidelity, including modern challenges such as digital communication contributing to extramarital affairs. Overall, spiritual guidance, policy enforcement, and economic support are needed to comprehensively address the issue.

5.2 Recommendations

Empowering Premarital and Marital Counseling: The Anglican Diocese of Butere churches should step up their premarital counseling programs to ensure that the couples understand the future implications of extramarital affairs. There should be continued marital counseling, especially on how to communicate, be faithful, and be emotionally present in marriages.

The promotion of the church's policy on discipline: The church should actually continue enforcing its policy regarding members and leadership engaging in extramarital relations with disciplinary action. With that, the church reinforces a culture of fidelity, promoting moral behavior.

Economic Empowerment of Women: Efforts must be made to empower women economically. As the findings of this study showed, low-income earning women are more prone to extramarital relationships. Financial education and opportunities for women can help reduce such vulnerability.

Enhanced Christian Teachings on Fidelity: The moral teachings should be constantly reiterated through homilies and even seminars that would instill self-discipline, self-control, and faithfulness in marriage. The leadership should also be adept at serving as models to show the way to marital fidelity.

These recommendations, if put in place, could actually bring down the incidence of extramarital sex and enhance marital stability in the region significantly.

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