

**AN ASSESSMENT OF CHRISTIANS' PERCEPTION OF CHRISTIAN
MARRIAGE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, OUR LADY OF VISITATION
DEANERY, DIOCESE OF EMBU, KENYA**

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate school in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of Degree of Master of Arts in Religious Studies of
Chuka University**

CHUKA UNIVERSITY

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DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for an award of diploma or conferment of degree in any other University or institution.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my Parents Patrick Mbogo and Jaseline Njoki and my Daughter Blessing Gakii.

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First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Almighty God for good health, sound mind and the golden opportunity to embark and accomplish this work. To Him I give all the honour and glory. For this thesis to be complete, the effort of many has been applied of which without them this work would have been otherwise impossible. Am therefore obliged to express my sincere gratitude to them. My gratitude goes to my entire Family members for always encouraging me throughout this journey, I really thank them for being there for me especially when moral and financial assistance was needed.

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ABSTRACT

Marriage is one of the most important social institutions in the society. In the Catholic Church, it holds a profound religious and social significance. The Catholic Church teaches that marriage is one of the seven sacraments. It emphasizes on monogamy and indissolubility of marriage. There is lack of comprehensive research examining Christian's practice of Christian marriage within Our Lady of Visitation Deanery. This study sought to assess Christians' perception of Christian marriage in the Catholic Church, Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu, Kenya. The study was guided by the following objectives; to examine the role of the church teachings in shaping perception of Christian marriage, to evaluate factors influencing Christians' perception of Christian marriage, to determine strategies for expanding the perception and practice of Christian marriage and to analyze the impact of societal changes on Christian marriage practices in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery. This study adopted structural functionalism theory to provide a better understanding of marriage as a social institution that fulfils key societal functions such as preservation of marital norms and values. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The target population was 5020 people. A sample of 357 respondents including the Clergy, married couples, members preparing to marry and unmarried members were selected through stratified random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. The researcher used questionnaires, interview schedule and focus group discussions to gather information. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 29 to generate descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, while qualitative data from the Clergy and unmarried members was analyzed thematically using coding, categorization and identifying of emerging patterns to interpret meanings and relevance to the research. Key findings of the study showed that most Christians in our Lady of visitation deanery value Church marriage as a sacred covenant that symbolizes faith, love and divine blessing. The study concluded that although church teachings shape Christians perception of church marriage, there is a gap between doctrinal teachings and practice of marriage. It recommended strengthening marriage catechesis and premarital counselling, continuous marriage formation, integration of culture and faith and Community sensitization in order to enhance the practice of church marriage. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on social-anthropological aspect of religion by showing how religion interacts with culture in shaping marriage practices and family relations.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CCC1:	Catholic Church Clergy 1
CCC2:	Catholic Church Clergy 2
CCC3:	Catholic Church Clergy 3
CCC4:	Catholic Church Clergy 4
CCC5:	Catholic Church Clergy 5
CCC6:	Catholic Church Clergy 6
CCC7:	Catholic Church Clergy 7
CUERC:	Chuka university ethics review committee
NACOSTI:	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
SPSS:	Statistical Packages for Social Sciences

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Marriage in Christianity is traditionally understood as a sacred union between a man and woman, instituted by God for companionship, procreation and mutual benefit of the partners. According to the Catholic Church, marriage is considered one of the seven sacraments. Others include baptism, confirmation, Holy Communion, ordination of priests, anointing of the sick and penance. The Roman Catholic Scholar, St. Augustine (354-430AD), defines marriage as an institution created by God, Primarily for the procreation of children and mutual help of the couple. His emphasis that marriage in Christian tradition is a holy act, reflects God's covenant with humanity. This view has been echoed in the Catholic Church's teachings with marriage seen not just as a social contract but a spiritual bond that mirrors Christ's union with the church (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994). Marriage is a covenant not only between the spouses but also involving God. It is a means to demonstrate God's faithfulness and Love (Calvin, 1546/1983).

Grudem (2000) argues that marriage reflects the headship of Christ over the church and that the husband is called to love his wife sacrificially, while the wife is to submit to her husband in a way that mirrors the church's submission to Christ. Marriage in Christianity is viewed as a reflection of God's relationship with His people. The Christian understanding of marriage is grounded in biblical teachings, particularly from the old and new testaments which emphasize commitment, love and sanctity of the union. Ephesians 5:22-23 reflects the relationship between Christ and the church. The church views marriage not only as a religious covenant but also as a social institution, which reflects the spiritual unity between Christ and the church (Francis, 2020).

In the early Christian church, marriage was regarded as a sacred institution. Christian teachings emphasized celibacy and renunciation of marriage as ideal, influenced by Jesus teachings (Matthew 19:12) and the Apostle Paul's letters (1Corinthians 7:7-8), which recommended celibacy for spiritual devotion. Early Christians often followed the civil marriage practices of the Roman Empire, which did not require the church's direct involvement (D'Avray, 2001). By the 5th century, marriage began to take on

greater religious significance within the Christian church. In the 12th century the marriage rite became increasingly formalized in the church, and theologians like Peter Lombard recognized marriage as one of the sacraments, thus elevating it as a sacred Act (D' Avray, 2001). The Council of Trent, convened by the Roman Catholic Church in the mid-16th Century, defined marriage as a sacrament. It emphasized that marriage should be conducted in the presence of a priest, with the exchange of vows between the couple, reinforcing the sacramental nature of the union (Coleman, 1998). Protestant reformers led by Martin Luther and John Calvin rejected the idea that marriage was a sacrament and emphasized that it was a covenant between two individuals and many protestant churches permitted pastors to officiate marriage, contrasting with the catholic emphasis on the priest's role (MacCulloch, 2011).

Globally, many Catholics view marriage as a sacrament, a sacred union that reflects Christ's relationship with the church (Ephesians 5:25-32). This belief makes marriage a highly significant commitment that is not only a social contract but also as spiritual covenant, which is integral to the faith and teachings of the church (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2019). It symbolizes a lifelong commitment, both in the eyes of God and the community, which is seen as important for the couple's spiritual growth. Catholics are generally taught to respect the authority of the church when it comes to matters like marriage. The church's stance on the indissolubility of marriage that is, it cannot be dissolved unless by annulment is widely accepted by believers. This is founded in the Bible (Mathew 19:6) and reinforced by church's teachings on the sanctity of marriage. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2019). However, opinions on this teaching can vary, with some Catholics accepting it, while others especially in regions where divorce is more common may struggle with it.

In many parts of the world, Catholics perceive marriage as an event that transcends personal desires and enters the public and communal life of the church. As such, the ceremony is a sacred event not just for the couple but also for the larger Catholic Community. The marriage ceremony within the church is often seen as a way of publicly committing oneself to the faith through the institution of marriage, making it an essential rite of passage in the lives of many Catholics (Sullivan, 2015). The Catholic Church's teachings on marriage are universal, but the way those teachings are perceived

and incorporated can vary significantly depending on the region. In most conservative regions such as parts of Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, Catholic church marriages tend to follow traditional views where the rite of the family and community is emphasized. In contrast, in western contexts like Europe and North America, Catholics may have a more individualistic view of marriage, with some rejecting certain church doctrines, such as the prohibition of remarriage after divorce (Sullivan, 2015).

There is also a growing debate among catholic globally about the church's approach to issues like divorce, contraception and same sex marriage. Some view the church's stance on these issues as out of touch with modern realities, while others argue for adherence of traditional teachings. The Late Pope Francis, in particular has highlighted the importance of mercy and pastoral care, suggesting a more compassionate approach to couples who may find themselves in difficult circumstances, such as divorce (Francis, 2016).

African Christians' view on church marriage within the Catholic Church vary greatly depending on the cultural, social and theological contexts. Generally, African Christians place a high value on the sanctity of marriage, and Catholic Church's teachings on marriage as a sacrament align with many African traditional views as a covenant. However, the way marriage is viewed can also be influenced by African communal practices, where family involvement is emphasized, and where marriages are often seen as broader social contracts, rather than solely private agreements between two individuals (Mugambi, 2016). In some regions, there is a strong belief in the importance of receiving the church's sacramental blessing for a marriage to be considered fully legitimate. This perception is rooted in the theological teaching of the catholic Church that marriage is both a natural institution and a sacred bond between a man and a woman, which has implications for both personal and social life (Bediako, 2000). However, some African Catholics face tension when traditional marriage customs, such as bride price or other rituals, conflict with church requirements, such as the instance on monogamy and the restriction of certain divorce practices (Asamoah – Gyadu, 2006).

The Catholic Church in Africa has witnessed a growing interest in the role of marriage, especially, as it relates to African social structures, gender roles and family dynamics. According to studies, African Christians' views of marriage are often influenced by convergence of indigenous African marital customs and Catholic teachings, sometimes leading to challenges in reconciling the two (Mugambi, 2010). For instance, while traditional African Societies have long celebrated polygamy, catholic doctrine strictly upholds monogamy as the ideal form of marriage (Kanu, 2013). These discrepancies between cultural practices and religious principles frequently shape Christians' attitudes toward marriage within the church. Furthermore, the global shift towards modernity, especially in the digital age, has introduced new complexities to marriage perceptions. African youth, in particular, are more exposed to western values surrounding marriage, such as the emphasis on individualism and romantic love which may contrast with the communal approach traditionally emphasized in African cultures (Soyinka – Airewele, 2015). These changing views have led to significant shifts in the way Christian marriage is understood, both in terms of its sacredness and its social function.

Furthermore, the understanding of marriage in the Catholic Church can also be shaped by the broader role the church plays in African Society. For many, the church wedding signifies not only a spiritual union but also a social event that has implications for family status and social acceptance. The perception of church marriage among African Christians thus reflects a complex interaction between religious doctrine, cultural expectations and social practices (Sarpong, 2008).

In Kenya, a predominantly Christian nation with a significant Catholic population of about 10 million Kenyans according to the 2019 census, the perception of church marriage and its role in society has evolved over the years, influenced by both traditional customs and contemporary challenges (Mutua, 2018). The Catholic Church's teachings on marriage emphasize the importance of unity, indissolubility and openness to procreation (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994). However, the understanding and practice of these teachings among Kenyan Catholics often diverge from catholic doctrines due to social, cultural and personal factors. Scholars have explored how Kenyan Catholics are questioning the traditional understanding of

marriage, particularly in relation to the Catholic's stance on divorce and remarriage. Njiru further highlights that while the church maintains its traditional positions, many couples experience conflicts between their cultural expectations of marriage and the rigid religious views prescribed by church (Njiru, 2019).

In addition to doctrinal concerns, the socio-economic context in Kenya significantly shapes the perception of marriage. A study by Karanja (2017) found that financial instability coupled with urban migration, has led to changes in dynamics of catholic marriages in Kenya. These issues often contribute to the increasing numbers of couples opting for cohabitation without formal church weddings, leading to an ongoing tension between personal choices and religious expectations (Karanja, 2017). This makes it necessary for a research to be carried out to establish Christians' perception of church marriage in our Lady of visitation deanery. Furthermore, the church's approach to marriage counselling and preparation has been critiqued for not fully addressing the complexities faced by young Catholics. According to Mutua (2018), pre-marriage counselling programs offered by the church often fail to prepare couples for the realities of married life in a rapidly changing society. These gaps in preparation, combined with societal pressures, contribute to shifting perceptions of church marriage among Kenyan Catholics.

Marriage in Embu exists at the intersection of enduring local customs, Christian religiosity and social change producing complex expectations about how unions should be formed, sustained and dissolved. Historical and ethnographic work notes that Embu systems once governed marital norms and dispute resolution, but that these practices have been reshaped since colonial and missionary encounter (Njue, 2001). Contemporary researchers have documented how colonialism and later socio-economic changes affected family stability in Embu, drawing a line from historical disruption to present –day marital pressures. Kaaria et.al (2022) argue that colonial interventions altered household structures and gendered expectations, with long-term implications for marital roles and family resilience in Embu North. This historical perspective suggests that current church marriage practices are embedded in larger structural shifts rather than being purely religious phenomena.

Local Church-based studies indicate that churches in Embu actively respond to marital challenges through pastoral programs, yet problems persist. For example, research among Pentecostal congregants in Embu County found that, despite formal pastoral marital programs, many Christian families continued to experience significant marital challenges (Muriithi, 2018). This highlights that presence of church programs does not guarantee marital stability and points to the need to examine content, uptake and perceived effectiveness of church marriage practices. These studies leave a gap concerning Catholic Church marriage specifically in the Diocese of Embu within our Lady of Visitation Deanery, specifically on how Christians perceive Christian marriage relative to civil and customary alternatives. Addressing this gap will clarify how Catholic marriage rites, pastoral teachings and local expectations interact to shape marital decisions and satisfaction in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery. This study therefore sought to explore how Christians in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery in the Diocese of Embu perceive church marriage.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Roman Catholic Church tradition teaches that marriage is one of the 7 sacraments among others like Baptism, confirmation, anointing of the sick, Holy Communion, penance and ordination of the Clergy. It is a sacred and lifelong covenant reflecting the union between Christ and the church. This sacramental view underscores the church's teachings on the sanctity, indissolubility and divine purpose of marriage. The Catholic Church has continued to promote church marriage through pastoral care, public teachings and counselling. The need to investigate this issue arises because previous studies on marriage in Embu have focused on historical change and Pentecostal Pastoral programs on marriage, leaving a gap in understanding Christians' understanding and appreciation of the sacramental nature of marriage, warranting an assessment of their perceptions. Therefore, this study assessed Christians' perception of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study sought to assess Christians' perception of church marriage in the Catholic Church, Our lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu, Kenya.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

To achieve its main goal, this study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To examine the role of Church teachings in shaping perceptions of Christian marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery.
- ii. To evaluate factors influencing Christians' perceptions of Christian marriages in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery.
- iii. To determine strategies for expanding the perceptions and practice of Christian marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery.
- iv. To analyze the impact of societal changes on Christian marriage practices in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery.

1.5 Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the role of Church teachings in shaping perceptions of Christian marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery?
- ii. What are the factors that influence Christians' perceptions of Christian marriages in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery?
- iii. Which strategies can be put in place to expand the perception and practice of Christian marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery?
- iv. What is the impact of societal changes on Christian marriage practices in our lady of Visitation Deanery?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on social-anthropological aspect of religion by showing how religion interacts with culture in shaping marriage practices and family relations. It highlights how Catholic marriage rites blend with traditional African marriage customs. The study also contributes to the body of knowledge within religious studies by explaining how doctrine, liturgy and pastoral practice influence believers understanding of the sacrament of marriage. Additionally, it provides researchers with a contextual understanding of how cultural values, economic conditions and modern societal trends affect the faithful's response to Church teachings on marriage. This study provides insights into how Christians in the Catholic church perceive church marriage, therefore shedding light on the social values and

attitudes that shape family formation within Our lady of visitation local community. This study therefore guides premarital counselling programs hence, a basis for addressing challenges such as cohabitation, civil marriages without religious recognition and declining participation in church weddings.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study was meant to assess Christians' perception of Christian marriage in the Catholic Church, Our Lady of visitation Deanery, and Diocese of Embu. Marriage is one of the sacraments among others like Baptism, penance, confirmation, Holy Communion, ordination of the Clergy, and anointing of the sick in the Catholic Church. The research aimed to examine the role of the church teachings in shaping perceptions of marriage, to evaluate factors influencing Christian's perception of church marriage, to determine strategies for expanding the perception and practice of church marriage and to analyze the impact of societal changes on church marriage practices in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu, Kenya. The Study was carried out in seven parishes which are Kevote, Kithimu, Nthagaiya, Mbiruri, Kyeni, Karurumo and Kathunguri with a target population of 5,020 members and a sample size of 357 respondents. The study used purposive sampling to select the clergy and stratified random sampling to select married members, unmarried members and those preparing to marry in the church.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study encountered the following limitations:

- i. There was language barrier from some respondents who were not able to read and understand the content of the questionnaire. The researcher sought for assistance from church leaders who interpreted for those respondents and their responses were recorded.
- ii. The study covered a wide area in the 7 parishes of our Lady of visitation Deanery. The researcher employed faster methods of data collection. Some questionnaires were administered on Sundays when congregants had assembled for church services in specific targeted churches.

1.9 Assumptions of the Study

The study was based on the following assumptions:

- i. Some church members in Our Lady of visitation deanery were of different opinion on church marriages despite the emphasis put by the church teachings.
- ii. The Catholic Church teachings play a role in shaping Christians' perceptions of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery.

1.10 Operational Definition of Terms

Clergy	In this study, this refers to ordained ministers in the Catholic Church, including priests and deacons serving in our lady of visitation deanery who are responsible for officiating sacraments including Holy matrimony and offering pastoral guidance on church marriage.
Deanery	This is a group of parishes within the Catholic Church that are organized under the leadership of a dean. In this study, it specifically refers to our lady of visitation deanery, a pastoral unit within the diocese of Embu comprising several parishes.
Diocese	This is an ecclesiastical territory under the pastoral care of a Bishop. The diocese of Embu is the geographical and administrative area in which our lady of visitation deanery is located and under which the study is conducted.
Perception	In this study, perception refers to the views, opinions and understanding held by the Catholic Christians in our lady of visitation deanery regarding church marriage, its significance and its requirements.
Sacrament	This is a visible sign instituted by Christ to give grace. In this study, it particularly pertains to holy matrimony as one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church among others like baptism, confirmation, ordination of priests, anointing of the sick, penance and ordination of priests, emphasizing its spiritual and religious importance to the participants.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Christians' Perception of Christian Marriage

The perception of church marriage among Christians is important because it deeply influences both their spiritual lives and cultural practices. A study by Mukuha et al. (2023) investigates the perception, experiences and challenges of married individuals regarding sacramental marriage in the Catholic Church Archdiocese of Nairobi. The study found that urbanization, poverty, unemployment and western influences have reshaped perceptions of sacramental marriage among Kenyan Catholics. This study looked at Christians' perception of Church marriage in Our lady of visitation deanery which is in a rural area. It did not only involve married individuals only but also the unmarried members and members preparing to marry.

Twene (2019), in his master's Thesis on Christianity and marriage in Africa: The perspective of Christian men in Ghana examines the challenges Ghanaian Christian men face in reconciling traditional African marriage practices with Christian doctrines. This study found that, despite their Christian faith, many men prefer traditional marriage customs over Christian ones. This preference is particularly pronounced among catholic men, who encounter stricter doctrinal challenges. Ghana with different orientation of religiosity may exhibit different views on Christians' perception of church marriage as compared to Kenya. Twene (2019) limited his study to men's perspective on marriage in Ghana but did not look at women's perspective of marriage. This study looked at Christians' perception of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation deanery, Embu Diocese, Kenya.

Pope John Paul II's theological reflections on marriage, particularly in his theology of the body, have greatly influenced the Catholic Church teaching on marriage. He presents marriage as a sacrament, emphasizing the sacred bond between a man and a woman as a reflection of Christ's love for the church. His work emphasizes the dignity of the human person and the moral aspect of marital relationships (John Paul II, 1981). Keane (2009) explored the pastoral dimensions of the catholic view of marriage, specifically focusing on how the church's sacramental theology impacts married couples. His study highlights the pastoral challenges faced by couples in living out their

vows in contemporary society. He observed that the sacramental nature of marriage required a lifelong commitment to faithfulness, which the church views as foundational to living out the vocation of Christian marriage. (Keane, 2009). This demands to carry out a study to explore Christian's perception of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Embu Diocese. Zukowski (2010) addresses the philosophical and theological underpinnings of the church's teachings on marriage. He examines how marriage, as both a social and sacramental institution is perceived within the broader context of Christian ethics. He avers that the church's view of marriage insists on the moral responsibility of spouses to uphold the sanctity of the marital relationship, which is not only a personal commitment but also a reflection of divine love (Zukowski, 2010).

Nweke (2023) explores the tensions between traditional African Wedding customs and Catholic Church ceremonies in Nigeria. He identifies a growing sentiment among younger Nigerians who view church weddings as a western imposition, advocating for the recognition of traditional ceremonies as equally valid. Nweke calls for a resolution that respects cultural identities while maintaining the integrity of church teachings. This research sought to investigate Christian's perception of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Embu Diocese.

Johnson (2007) examines an in-depth historical analysis of Christian views on marriage. He traces the evolution of marriage within the Christian tradition, exploring key theological debates and cultural shifts from early Christianity to modern day perspectives. He examines how marriage has been understood from both the Roman Catholic and protestant viewpoints, highlighting the influence of church doctrines, the reformation and contemporary social changes. A central theme of the book is how Christian teachings on marriage balance theological principles with cultural context and the changing roles of men and women in marriage. This information enabled this study to explore Christians' perception of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu, Kenya.

Balswick and Balswick (2014) explores how marriage functions as a foundational element of the Christian family and how it is understood in both historical and modern

contexts. They emphasize the importance of covenantal love, mutual submission and partnership in Christian marriages. They argue that Christian marriage should not only be seen as a means of personal fulfillment but as a commitment to serve both God and others, reflecting the relationship between Christ and the church. This study sought to investigate Christian's perception of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu.

2.2 Role of the Catholic Church Teachings in Shaping Perception of Christian Marriage

The role of the Catholic Church teachings in shaping perception of marriage has become an important topic in the wave of societal changes. According to Gary et al. (2007), there is a significant gap between official church teachings on marriage and beliefs or practices of lay Catholics in the United States of America. In their study on the United States adult Catholic Awareness and Understanding of church teachings on marriage, they found out that many Catholics value love, companionship and personal commitment over doctrinal definitions. The data suggest that while church teachings shape some views, many Catholics make moral decisions on marriage based on personal experience, cultural and modern societal norms. The study by Gary et al (2007) laid a major focus on Christians' perception of church marriage in our lady of visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu, Kenya.

In his study on the Impact of Christianity on the Luo Traditional marriage system, Obudho (1985) assessed how Christian teachings have influenced traditional Luo marriage practices. He highlights the transformations and continuities within the cultural context, examining how Christian doctrines have altered or reinforced certain aspects of traditional marriage. This study provides a historical perspective on the interaction between Christianity and the Luo marital customs. However, Obudho (1985) did not cover Christians' perception of Church marriage which this study explored.

Gumo (1993), explores the impact of Christianity on the Abanyala Leviratic marriage practice. She discusses how the Catholic Church's stance against levirate unions has influenced the community's attitude and practices regarding marriage. Study found that catholic opposition to levirate marriage practices among the Abanyala led to changes

in community attitudes and practices. The church's stance influenced a shift away from traditional customs towards practices more aligned with Christian teachings.

In Tanzania, Magesa (1977) explores how African spirituality and traditions can be harmonized with Christian doctrines. He discusses the importance of inculturation, advocating for a harmonious integration in African cultural practices with catholic teachings. He emphasizes that understanding and respecting African traditions can enrich Christian marriage practices and make them more meaningful to African believers. Karanja (1998), examines the interaction between the Kikuyu customary marriage practices and Roman Catholic Church teachings. He observed the conflicts between Kikuyu customary marriage practices and catholic teachings particularly regarding polygamy, bride wealth and the role of extended families. Catholic emphasis on monogamy, indissolubility and individual consent contrasted with kikuyu traditions. The Church's rejection of certain customs led to decreased adherence to church marriages among Kikuyu Catholics. The study suggested integrating non-contradictory cultural elements like bride wealth and family involvement into church practices to enhance relevance and acceptance.

Ibe (2018) in his doctoral dissertation on Paul's view on marriage and the teaching of the magisterium on marriage in Nigeria explores the tension between the Catholic church's teaching on marriage and the traditional Igbo understanding, particularly regarding polygamy and procreation. This study advocated for inculturation, suggesting that integrating compatible aspects of Igbo culture into catholic marriage practices could facilitate better acceptable and understanding among the Igbo people. However, the study by Ibe (2018) looked at the tension of Catholic church teaching on marriage and the traditional Igbo understanding but did not look at Christians' perception of church marriage. This study explored Christians' perception of church marriage in our lady of visitation deanery, Diocese of Embu, Kenya. Ndlovu (2021) investigated on how African communal values influence Christian marriages among urban South African couples. The study found that African communal values significantly influence Christian's marriages, with couples integrating cultural practices into their marital lives. The contribution of this scholar was important in this study on Christians' perception of church marriage in our lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu.

Kimuyu (2021) assessed the perception of Christians in heterosexual monogamous marriage in selected churches in Nairobi County on the issue of polygamy. The study also highlights the biblical teachings on heterosexual monogamous marriages and ascertains the reverence of polygamous marriages in selected churches in Nairobi County. In addition, the study sought to determine the perception of Christians on the biblical teachings on one man one woman marriages. The study used the descriptive research design and involved evangelical, Pentecostal and African independent churches in Nairobi County. The findings indicated that 72% of the respondents indicated that some believers, although few are involved in polygamy. The findings further showed that polygamy was not accepted among the church congregants as indicated by 96% of the respondents as they perceived the practice as unbiblical. The study recommends that the church pro-actively teaches and counsels couples to understand God's plan for marriage and family.

2.3 Factors Influencing Christians Perception of Christian Marriage

Studies by Opiyo et al. (2021) on challenges of Christian marriages in contemporary Africa focused on the need for a dialogue between Christianity and African cultures in addressing contemporary marital problems. The study found that Christian marriage practices often clash with African traditions, leading to low uptake of church marriages. Studies by Opiyo et al. (2021) focused on challenges of Christian marriages in contemporary Africa but did not look at Christians' perception of church marriage. This study looked at Christians' perception of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Embu Diocese, Kenya.

Mukuha et al. (2023) explored the perceptions of married individuals regarding sacramental marriage within the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi. They found out that many married individuals view church marriage as important, but also a financial burden due to required formalities and expectations. Cultural practices like dowry, payments, traditional ceremonies and family involvement strongly influence marriage choice. In addition, education, family background and parish support affect whether couples pursue church marriage. This study looked at Christians' perception of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Embu Diocese, Kenya.

Pieper and Henau (1990), in their study on religious concerns regarding marriage in the church investigates the motivations behind church weddings. They revealed that many couples view marriage as a sacred union with God as a witness and source of marital values. The findings highlight the need for clearer articulation of the Christian significance of marriage. Similarly, a study by Businge (2009) on Christian's perceptions of church marriage in Kampala explored why some Christians in Kampala choose church marriages while others do not, considering cultural and personal factors. This study investigated Christians' perception of church marriage in our lady of visitation deanery, Diocese of Embu, Kenya.

Golen et al. (2023) in their study religiosity and understanding of marriage in Kenya explores how religious beliefs and educational backgrounds influence young Catholics understanding of marriage. However, younger generation may exhibit different views concerning church marriage as compared to older generation. This could be well established through a research involving both young and older generation. The study by Golen et al. (2023) focused on the youths hence this study investigated Christians' perception of church marriage in our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu.

Obudho (1985) in his study on the impact of Christianity on Luo traditional marriage assesses how Christian teachings have altered traditional Luo marriage customs, including practices like bride wealth and polygamy. Similarly, Gumo (1993) explores how Christian doctrines have influenced the practice of levirate marriage among the Abanyala community. The contribution of these scholars is important to this study. However, the studies have not sufficiently explored how Christian teachings influence perception of church marriage. This study sought to investigate Christians' perception of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu.

Mbiti (1973) provides a comprehensive understanding of marriage within the African traditional context, describing it as a communal institution that extends beyond the union of two individuals. He observed that marriage is deeply rooted in kinship systems and social structures, serving as a means of ensuring family continuity and communal stability. Love, is viewed not merely as an emotional bond but as a duty and a social responsibility that unites families and upholds societal values. This perspective

contrasts with the Catholic Church's teaching, which defines marriage as a sacrament and a covenant between two baptized persons, founded on mutual love and lifelong commitment before God. Mbiti's analysis is crucial in understanding how African cultural values continue to influence Christians' perception of church marriage today. This study sought to find out whether culture influences Christians' perception of church marriage within the Catholic Church, Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu.

2.4 Strategies for Expanding Perception and Practice of Christian Marriage

In a study conducted in the United States of America, Stankis (2015) analyzed the importance of sacramental marriage. She observed that many catholic couples enter marriage without fully understanding its sacramental nature. Secular cultural influences often shape perceptions of marriage more than church teachings. She highlights that tribunal work reveals a recurring lack of formation among couples whose marriages eventually fail. She proposed the development of a diocesan-wide premarital handbook emphasizing the ecclesial aspect of marriage, aiming to better prepare couples to live their marriage sacramentally. However, United States of America with different orientation of religiosity may exhibit different views on Christians' perception of church marriage as compared to Kenya. Thus, Stankis observation of secular influences shaping perception of marriage may not be applicable in the Catholic Church in Kenya. This study sought to investigate Christians' perception of church marriage in our lady of visitation deanery, Diocese of Embu.

Wojtyla (1981), in his book love and responsibility, he presents marriage as a way of personal development and cooperation with God in the transmission of life. He emphasizes the need for pastoral assistance in educating young people for marriage, supporting young couples and addressing economic and housing difficulties. These scholars have contributed significantly to the understanding and promotion of sacramental marriage within the Catholic Church. This study sought to investigate Christians' perception of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu Kenya.

Mugambi (1995) has contributed significantly to African Christian theology, focusing on the relationship between Christianity and African culture. He critiques the historical approach of missionary Christianity which often dismissed African Cultures. He argues for a theology of reconstruction that reinterprets African myths and traditions in Light of the Gospel. He emphasizes the need for African Christians to develop their own theological narratives that resonate with their cultural heritage. The study by Mugambi (1995) laid a basis for this study on Christians' perception of church marriage in our lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu, Kenya.

Many scholars have collectively highlighted the need of integrating African cultural practices with Catholic marriage doctrines. Magesa (2004), a Tanzanian Catholic theologian has been pivotal in exploring how African cultural practices can harmonize with Catholic teachings. His work delve into the concept of Inculturation, emphasizing the need for the church to integrate African cultural elements into its practices. He identifies area such as worship, leadership and theology where inculturation is necessary. He advocates for new models of being church, including experimental forms of worship and a critique of African Sexual morality, to create a truly African church. Agadjanian (2020) examined the persistence of polygamous marriage in Christian Africa analyzing how religious norms influence marital practices. He highlighted that, while church officially condemn polygamy, in practice, they often tolerate it due to its deep cultural roots.

In a study conducted in Nigeria, Nweke (2023) explores the tensions between traditional and church weddings advocating for a resolution that respects both cultural practices and catholic doctrines. He suggests that integrating traditional elements into church weddings can bridge the gap between the two. Similarly, Mbuya (2023) investigated the impact of inculturation on polygamous families among the Luo community, exploring how the Catholic church integrates traditional practices into its matrimonial theology. His research reveals that many catholic faithful's have a negative attitude towards polygamy and lack understanding of inculturation. He noted that the church has not effectively implemented inculturation strategies, leading to the `exclusion of polygamous families from full participation in church life. This study

explored Christians' perception of church marriage in our lady of visitation deanery, Diocese of Embu, Kenya.

In Kenya, the marriage encounter movement has become a valuable pastoral tool in enhancing both the perception and practice of church marriage within the Catholic Church. Through weekend retreats and ongoing couple support programs, the movement help spouses appreciate the sacredness of the matrimonial covenant and strengthens their commitment to living out their vows in everyday life. Marriage encounter seminars have been instrumental in deepening couples understanding of marriage as a sacrament and lifelong vocation. These encounters offer a space for couples to grow in effective communication, mutual understanding and shared prayer, which are essential for stable Christian marriages (Kenya conference of catholic bishops, 2015). By fostering open dialogue and spiritual renewal, the movement dispels misconceptions about church marriage, particularly those related to dowry, cultural expectations and perceived church rigidity.

Furthermore, it builds a community of witness among couples who inspire others by living out the gospel values of love, fidelity, and forgiveness. Research indicates that such faith based marriage programs contribute to lower rates of marital breakdown and greater participation in church activities (Mwaura, 2013). Therefore, the marriage encounter movement enhances both the theological understanding and practical lived experiences of catholic marriage among Kenyan Christians.

Kisembo et. al. (1998) examines how traditional African views of marriage interact with the Christian and specifically Catholic, understanding of marriage as a sacrament. They argue that marriage in Africa is not merely a private union but a communal and spiritual institution that binds families and sustains social harmony. They highlight the challenges faced by African Christians in reconciling customary practices such as bridewealth, extended family involvement and fertility expectations. Their analysis provides an insight into how African Catholic's perceive and live out church marriage, offering a theological and cultural framework that resonates with contemporary discussions in Kenya.

Ndlovu (2021) theological study sought to explore the influence of African communalism on African Christian marriage. This study sought to define the lived experiences of modern African Christian couples in urban South Africa. The findings suggested that African Christian couples preferred the untraditional nuclear family structure characterized by minimal involvement from the extended family. The findings also suggested that African Christian couples integrated cultural practices with their modern lifestyles and Christian worldview by modifying cultural practices. The value of this study is in reconciling African culture and Christianity, leading a more meaningful Christian practice.

2.5 Impact of Societal Changes on Catholic Church Marriage Practices

Francis (2016) in an Apostolic exhortation – *Amoris Laetitia* meaning the joy of love, addressed the complexities of modern family life, advocating for a more compassionate and inclusive approach to issues like divorce cohabitation and remarriage, reflecting a shift in the church's pastoral practices. He called for pastoral flexibility rather than strict doctrinal application acknowledging that societal changes require the church to reframe how it ministers to families while upholding traditional teachings. He promoted a more inclusive and less judgmental tone. Similarly, second Vatican council (1965) document addressed the church's relationship with modern world, including perspective on marriage and family. This document acknowledged the growing influence of modern values such as individual freedom, equality and mutual love in marriage. It marked a departure from viewing marriage solely as a means of procreation and emphasized the emotional and spiritual partnership between spouses. This was a major turning point, reflecting the church's openness to re-evaluating traditional views in light of contemporary social realities. This study investigated Christians' perception of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu.

Boswell (1994) explored historical Christian practices regarding same sex unions, suggesting that early Christian communities may have recognized such relationships. His work challenges contemporary understandings of traditional marriage within the church. His research sparked major debates, highlighting how societal and theological shifts led to rigidification of heterosexual norms in church doctrine over time. This

information enabled the study to explore Christians' perception of church marriage in our lady of visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu.

Studies by Impicciatore (2012) analyzes how secularization in Italy has impacted marriage practices, including the rise of cohabitation and civil marriages, and how these trends intersect with the Catholic and civil marriages, and how these trends intersect with the catholic Church's teachings on marriage. This study found a strong correlation between secularization and changes in marital behavior in Italy. As religiosity declined, civil marriages and cohabitation rose, while church marriages declined. This shift suggested a weakening influence of the Catholic Church on family life and marriage practices, especially among younger and urban populations. Italy with different orientation of religiosity may exhibit different views on Christians' perception of church marriage as compared to Kenya. This study investigated Christians' perception of Church marriage in Our lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu.

Creary (2011) in his study on African marriage practices and the Catholic Church provides a comparative perspective on how the catholic marriage practices have interacted with societal changes, offering insights applicable to broader discussions on the church's adaptation to evolving cultural norms. He found that the Catholic Church often struggled to reconcile its sacramental understanding of marriage with indigenous marriage customs, many of which were flexible or communal. Although the church attempted to enforce a standardized, western model of marriage, it gradually recognized the need to adapt to local social structures. This mirrors global pattern of tension and adaptation between church doctrines and societal norms. This research provided pertinent information which enabled the study on Christians' perception of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu, Kenya.

Muthamia (2020), examines the formation of Christian marriages in the Catholic Diocese of Meru. He addressed the pastoral challenges faced in sustaining Christian marriages amidst societal changes, emphasizing the need for ongoing formation and dialogue between church teachings and cultural practices, to address these challenges effectively. The contribution of this scholar was important to this study on assessment

of Christians' perception of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation deanery, Diocese of Embu.

Kusner et, al. (2014), indicate that the church has always played an important role in the lives of married people beyond its legal responsibilities. The church has long worked to aid married couples by providing them with pastoral counseling, premarital education and marriage enrichment programs. These efforts have been especially crucial during periods of rapid societal change, when new cultural norms and expectations have added stress to already tense marriage bonds. Historically, the church's impacts on marriage has extended beyond its own members to affect cultural norms and perspectives on the institutions. Church teachings on topics like the sanctity of marriage and the significance of a lifetime commitment have helped shape a cultural norm that places a premium on marriage as an essential part of adulthood (Cherlin, 2009).

Witte, (2015) highlights that topics like divorce, remarriage and same sex marriage, the role of the church in marriage has been a contentious and hotly contested topic in recent years. It has been argued that the church's stances on these topics are no longer relevant or in line with modern ideals, while defenders of the church teachings insist that they reflect internal truths that should continue to inform on perspective of marriage. Despite these differences, many married people still look to their local church as a place to find fellowship and advice as they navigate the ups and downs of married life .the church plays a wide and varied part in marriage, from premarital counselling through marriage counselling to marriage break up. The church has influenced the institution of marriage through its teachings, legislative frameworks and pastoral care in ways that are consistent with its conception of the holy nature and purpose of the relationship. The church traditional position in marriage has changed throughout time and its future function is still up for questions. nevertheless, many married couples and their families still hold a deep respect for the church.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by structural functionalism theory by Emile Durkheim who laid the foundational ideas in the late 19th and early 20th C. This theory is a sociological

theory that views society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote stability and social order (Parsons, 1951). It emphasizes the way in which various parts of a society contribute to the functioning of the whole. Each part of society such as institutions, norms and traditions serve a function that maintains the equilibrium of the system.

Structural functionalism sees society as a structured system made up of interrelated parts each serving a specific function to maintain the whole (Parsons, 1951). Social structures are stable patterns of behavior and relationships such as family, religion and education. These structures shape individual behavior and contribute to the functioning of society (Merton, 1968). Each part of society serves a function that contributes to the system's stability. Functions can be manifest (intended and recognized) or latent (unintended and hidden) (Merton, 1968). Shared norms and values are crucial for social cohesion and integration. It emphasizes the importance of a common value system in maintaining social order (Durkheim, 1893/1997). The theory prioritizes stability and order, suggesting that social change should occur gradually to avoid disrupting the equilibrium of the system (Parsons, 1951). Society tend to seek equilibrium. When one part changes, other parts adjust to restore balance (Parsons, 1951).

Marriage, within this framework, is understood not merely as a personal or emotional relationship but as a social institution that fulfills key societal functions. These include reproduction, socialization of children, emotional support and regulation of sexual behavior (Goode, 1963). The Catholic Church, in particular, frames marriage as a sacrament, imbuing it with spiritual and moral significance that reinforces religious norms and community values (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994).

This theory has been employed by several scholars to explore the role of religious institutions in shaping marital practices and beliefs. For example, Smelser (1995) used functionalist analysis to examine how religion serves to promote social order through rituals and shared beliefs. Alexander (1985) also applied structural functionalism theory to understand how modern religious institutions negotiate tradition and change maintaining their societal rules.

In this study, structural functionalism theory provides a valuable framework for analyzing how the Catholic Church, as a social institution, shapes Christians' perceptions of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation deanery, Diocese of Embu. Liturgical practices and communal expectations influence individual attitudes towards marriage within the church. This theory helped to explain why certain values such as indissolubility of marriage, the importance of sacramental rites and adherence to church doctrine are upheld by catholic believers as essential components of marital life. Furthermore, this theoretical framework supported an investigation into how changes in societal values such as increasing secularism or shifting views on divorce and cohabitation, might challenge or reinforce the church's teaching on marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu. By understanding how the Catholic Church functions to preserve marital norms and values, this study sought to reveal the dynamics between religious doctrine and individual perception among Christians who engage with or are influenced by the institution.

This theory is applied to this study by providing a lens for analyzing how Christians perceive church marriage as a socially stabilizing and morally binding institution. For example, Christians who view marriage as a sacrament may perceive it as essential for maintaining community and moral order. Differences in perception between younger and older Christians can be analyzed in terms of how well individuals internalize church norms and values. The theory helps to identify potential dysfunctions such as rising divorce rates, cohabitations or reduced participation in church weddings as signals of weakened social integration.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Location of the study

This study was conducted in our lady of Visitation in the Diocese of Embu. The choice of the Diocese of Embu was based on socio-economic challenges like unemployment and poverty among the youths which often influence decisions around marriage (Ngungi, 2015). This Diocese is in Embu County which has moderate climate enjoying two rainy seasons. The main economic activities of the area are Agriculture basically cash crop like tea, coffee and macadamia and subsistence farming of maize and beans, trade and livestock keeping. Embu County is in the Eastern Region of Kenya bordering Kirinyaga County to the West, Tharaka Nithi to the North, Kitui to the East and Machakos County to the South. Embu Catholic diocese has four Deaneries, two on the upper side which are, Blessed Aramano and Our Lady of visitation deanery and two on the lower side which are St Augustine and Maria Consolata deaneries. This study concentrated only in our lady of Visitation deanery, Diocese of Embu which had 7 parishes, (Appendix VII).

3.2 Research Design

This study adopted a Descriptive Survey research design to collect data in the field. A descriptive survey is a research method that involves collecting data in order to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon. It is used to obtain an accurate and detailed picture of the existing situation typically involving collection of data through questionnaires or interviews. It describes the features or phenomena being studied without manipulating or influencing them (Kothari, 2004). Descriptive survey allows the researcher to observe and describe existing conditions in an objective manner. This helps in reducing biasness (Creswell, 2014). This design was appropriate for it integrated both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. The researcher sought to present the situation as it was without manipulating the variables. It involved asking questions to the clergy, married and unmarried church members of Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu.

3.3 Target Population

Target Population is the group of people to which the researcher aims to generalize the findings (Creswell, 2014). The 7 parishes of Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, in the Diocese of Embu will be the target population of this study. Statistics obtained from Our Lady of Visitation deanery office in the year 2023 showed that the church members were as follows: Kevote 720, Kithimu 770, Kyeni 745, Mbiruri 910, Nthagaiya 750, Kathunguri 500, Karurumo 625 adding up to approximately 5,020 members. These 5,020 members formed the target population of this study.

3.4 Sampling procedure and sample size

Sampling procedure refers to the process of selecting individuals from a population to study so that the selected group represents the larger group being studied. This ensures that findings can be generalized to the broader population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). On the other hand, a sample size refers to the number of individual units or cases included in a study, which are selected for a larger population to represent the views, behaviours or characteristics of that population (Neuman, 2014). Among these respondents, 7 were priests one from each Parish who were selected using purposive sampling technique since they have adequate knowledge on church marriage. Stratified random sampling was used, where the strata included unmarried members, members preparing to marry and married members. This means that 105 married members were sampled from a population of 1507, 212 unmarried members were sampled from a population of 3012 and 33 members preparing to marry were sampled from a population of 483. The unmarried members formed focus group discussions meaning that, out of the 212 sampled unmarried members, 27 groups were formed each comprising 7 members. This is in line with Kruger and Casey (2015) recommendations that a focus group discussion should have 5 to 8 members. From a target population of 5,020 we get a sample size of 357 respondents according to Kathuri and Pals (1993), (Appendix VI)

Table 1: Sample Size Summary

Strata	Parishes	Population	Sample
Married Members	Kevote	216	15
	Kithimu	231	16
	Kyeni	224	16
	Mbiruri	273	19
	Nthagaiya	225	16
	Kathunguri	150	10
	Karurumo	188	13
	Unmarried Members	Kevote	432
Kithimu		462	33
Kyeni		447	31
Mbiruri		546	39
Nthagaiya		450	32
Kathunguri		300	21
Karurumo		375	26
Members Preparing to Marry		Kevote	70
	Kithimu	74	5
	Kyeni	71	5
	Mbiruri	88	6
	Nthagaiya	73	5
	Kathunguri	48	3
	Karurumo	60	4
	Total		5003

3.5 Research Instruments

Research instruments are tools used to collect information from the intended respondents of the study. This study used both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Primary data was collected directly from the respondents in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery using interview schedule for the Clergy, questionnaires for married couples and members preparing to marry and focus group discussions for unmarried members. On the other hand, secondary data was sourced from literature materials such as academic journals, books and internet. These research instruments were designed in relation to the objectives of the study.

3.5.1 Interview Schedule for Clergy

Creswell and Poth (2018) defines interviews as a method for gathering detailed and in-depth information, interviews contribute to interpretive depth, giving voice to participants and providing nuanced explanations that are often missed in quantitative analysis alone (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). This instrument is found suitable because it allowed the clergy to provide detailed information on Christians' perception of church

marriage. The Clergy have unique Pastoral experience and theological understanding which provided valuable insights into the Church's official position and practical realities surrounding Christian marriage. They facilitated collection of qualitative data rich in details on major themes like preparation for marriage, adherence to church doctrines, pastoral challenges and perceived attitudes of Christians towards church marriage. The researcher visited each Parish and sought permission from the Parish Priest. She booked appointments and met the interviewees at an agreed location and time. In this study, the researcher interviewed one clergy per parish giving a total of 7 respondents in the 7 parishes. (Appendix II).

3.5.2 Questionnaire for Married Couples and Members Preparing to Marry

Questionnaire is a set of questions presented to a respondent for answers. It is a device for securing answers to questions by using a form which the respondent fills in himself. (Kothari, 2004). The structured nature of questionnaires simplifies data management and facilitates quantitative analysis (Creswell, 2014). Questionnaires were administered to married Couples and Members preparing to marry because they enabled efficient gathering of data from a broad sample across the 7 parishes within Our Lady of Visitation Deanery. They also provided uniformity in questions asked, ensuring all respondents were exposed to similar questions. This enhanced reliability and comparability of responses which was vital in assessing and contrasting perceptions between married Christians and those preparing for marriage. The questionnaire employed a Likert scale technique with closed ended questions to enhance quantitative analysis. The Questionnaire contained two sections: Section one sought general information based on the research objectives. 138 questionnaires were distributed and 125(87.6%) returned (Appendix III) and (Appendix IV)

3.5.3 Focus Group Discussion for Unmarried Members

Kruger and Casey (2015) defines a focus group discussion as a carefully planned series of discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. Kothari (2004) mentions that groups interviews are a useful method of collecting data from multiple respondents simultaneously, particularly when the objective is to explore attitudes, feelings and reactions. This generates rich qualitative data due to interaction between participants, which can bring out deeper

insights than individual interviews might. Krueger and Casey (2015) suggest that 5 to 8 participants is a good number, especially for more in-depth discussions as this allows for better engagement and manageable interaction. Focus group discussions were conducted for unmarried members to provide an in depth understanding of their perceptions, attitudes and experiences regarding Church marriage within the Catholic Church. The youths represent a critical demographic in shaping of future of Christian marriage, as they are at a stage of life where they form opinions and make decisions about relationships and family life. It also allowed the researcher to uncover underlying social, cultural and religious factors influencing issues of modern societal pressures and relevance of church teachings in Contemporary relationships. (Appendix V)

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection is an organized process involving the selection of appropriate methods and instruments to gather information from specific sources (Creswell, 2014). The researcher collected both qualitative and quantitative data. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) define qualitative data as the kinds of data that provide rich descriptions of people, events and situations. Quantitative data refers to information that can be measured and expressed numerically. It allows the researcher to identify patterns, test hypothesis and make predictions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, qualitative data was collected using interviews and focus group discussions while quantitative data was collected using questionnaires. The researcher sought for a research permit from the National commission for science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI).

After obtaining the research permit, the researcher contacted the Parish Priests in charge of every Parish and sought for permission to carry out the research in their Parishes. Before proceeding to the field, the researcher booked appointments in each Parish and delivered questionnaires during the Sunday mass and distributed them to members. The researcher discussed with the respondents on the duration of time for filling the questionnaires. Arrangements on when to collect the filled questionnaires at the appropriate time were agreed upon. Focus group discussions were formed and discussion questions administered. The interviews were conducted during the agreed time and date with the Priests. To enhance data credibility, the researcher visited local libraries such as the Chuka University Library to review existing literature on Marriage.

3.7 Data Analysis

Neuman (2014) defines data analysis as examining the data to discover patterns or relationships, think about what the findings means and explain what was learnt. Quantitative data from the questionnaires was analyzed using SPSS version 29 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to ensure accurate statistical computations. Descriptive statistics, including means, percentages, and standard deviations, summarized trends in Christians perception of Christian marriage. Qualitative data from interviews with the clergy and Focus group discussions from the unmarried members underwent thematic analysis, where responses were coded to identify recurring themes related to the role of the Catholic Church teachings in shaping perception of Christian marriage, factors influencing Christians perception of church marriage, strategies for expanding perception and practice of Christian marriage and impacts of societal changes on Christian marriage in the Catholic Church. This mixed-method approach provided a comprehensive understanding of Christian’s perception of Christian marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery in the Diocese of Embu.

Table 2: Summary of Data Analysis Methods

Research questions	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Methods of data presentation
What is the role of Church teachings in shaping perceptions of Christian marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery?	Role of church teachings in shaping perception	Christian marriage	Frequencies Percentages
What are the factors that influence Christians’ perceptions of Christian marriages in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery?	Factors that influence Christians’ perceptions	Christian marriage	Frequencies Percentages
Which strategies can be put in place to expand the perception and practice of Christian marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery?	Strategies that can be put in place to expand perception	Christian marriage	Frequencies Percentages
What is the impact of societal changes on Christian Marriage practices in Our lady of Visitation Deanery?	Impacts of societal changes	Christian marriage	Frequencies Percentages

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained an approval letter from Chuka University Ethics Review Committee (CUERC). An introductory letter was obtained from the director of Graduate School, Chuka University. A research clearance permit and authorization was sought from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) (Appendix IX). The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the integrity of the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses. The research was conducted with respect for the participants' privacy and in accordance with ethical standards for research involving human subjects. Additionally, the research results were analyzed and presented in details and clarity. Further, the researcher acknowledged all sources of information.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF CHURCH TEACHINGS IN SHAPING PERCEPTION OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE IN OUR LADY OF VISITATION DEANERY, DIOCESE OF EMBU, KENYA

4.1 Response Rate

Response rate refers to the number of questioners sent to the field divided by the number of questioners completed and returned. The study intended to collect data in the Catholic Church, Our lady of visitation Deanery, in the diocese of Embu. Out of the 357 respondents, the study managed to obtain 344 respondents, giving a response rate of 96.4%, as shown in the table below.

Table 3: Response rate

Category	Targeted	Response rate		Tools
		Responded	Response rate	
Married members	105	92	87.62%	Questionnaires
Members preparing to marry	33	33	100%	Questionnaires
Unmarried Members	212	212	100%	Focus group discussions
Clergy	7	7	100%	Interview schedule
Total	357	344	96.4	

The results in table 3 above specifically pointed out that the response rate for all target group was above 85%. Response rate for the married members was 87.62%, response rate for members preparing to marry was 100%. The response rate for unmarried members was 100% while those of the clergy was 100%. Data collected from married members and members preparing to marry was through questionnaires while data from unmarried members was through focus group discussion. Data collected from the priests or clergy was through interviews.

4.2 Socio- Demographics of the respondents

This section presents a brief discussion of the background characteristics of the respondents of the study. Demographic responses were collected alongside descriptive analysis of the study variables. Demographic analysis provided summaries through the use of percentages. Demographic information analysis involves analyzing the general demographic statistics of various samples in the study. This demographic analysis was done to provide an important foundation for a detailed discussion of the results based

on the objectives of the study. Demographic information provides sum-ups through the use of frequencies and percentages. The section presents the research bio-data and their general information.

4.2.1 Age of the respondents

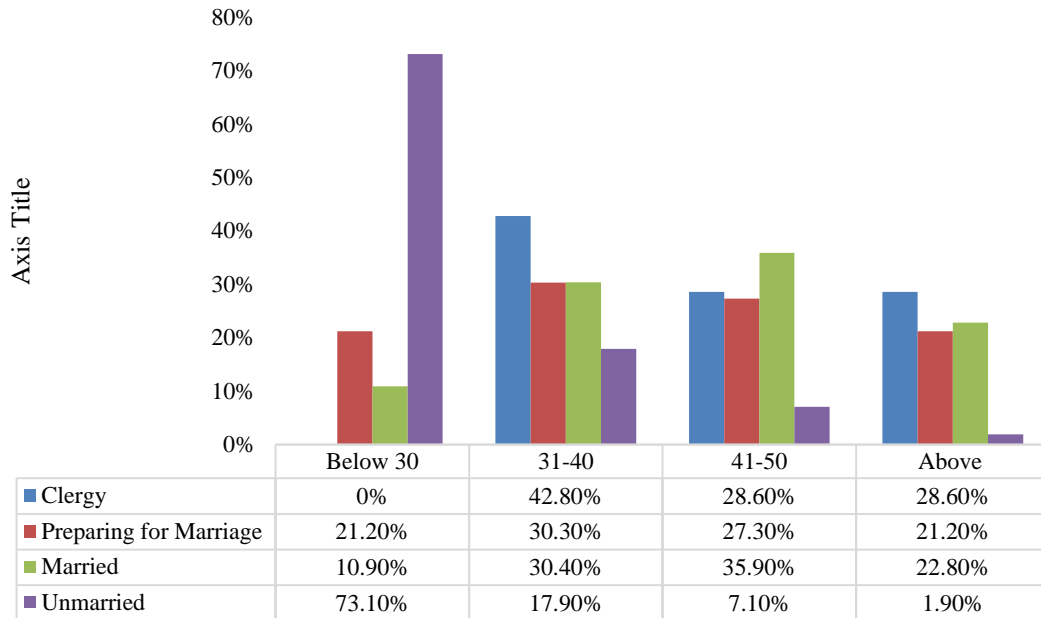


Figure 1: Age of the respondents

Majority (50%) of the respondents in the Catholic Church were below 30 years of age. Results showed that (23%) of the respondent were between 31-40 years. It was also found that (17.2%) were between 41-50 years. The results indicated that (9.8%) were above the age of 50. Age is an important demographic factor because it influences individual's attitudes, experiences and beliefs about marriage. Older Christians may have more traditional views of church marriage, rooted in long-standing religious teachings and cultural norms. Younger Christians, on the other hand, might be influenced by modern social trends, education and exposure to different perspectives on marriage. By analyzing respondents' ages, the study identifies generational differences in perceptions of the relevance, importance and practice of church marriage. This helps in understanding whether perceptions are changing over time and guides the Church in tailoring marriage teachings and pastoral programs to different age groups.

4.2.2 Gender of the respondents

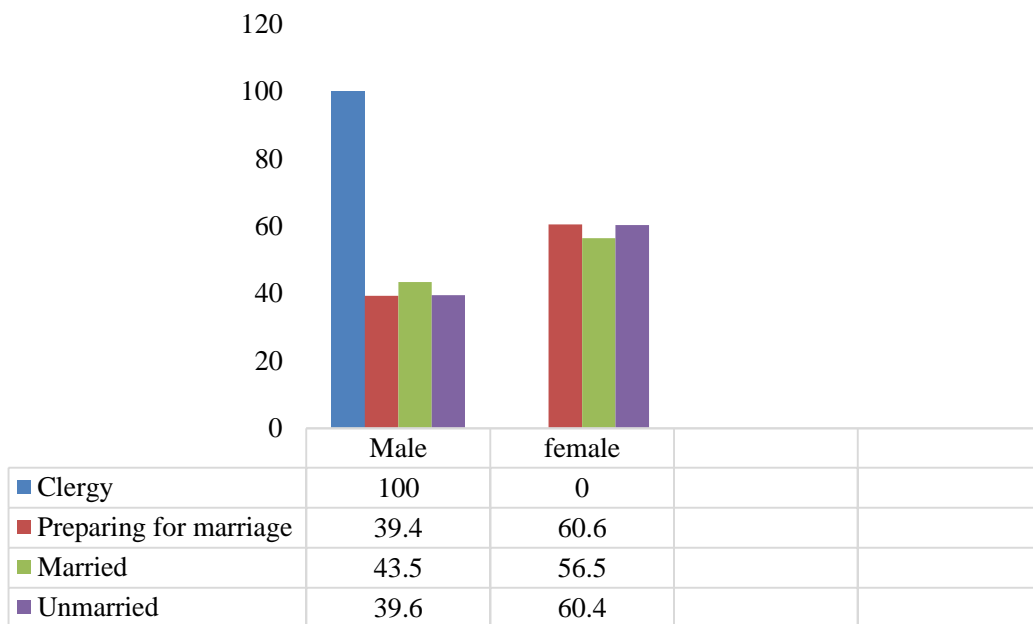


Figure 2: Gender of the respondents.

The results in figure 2 above showed that majority (58.1%) of the respondents were females. Results also showed that (41.19%) were males. Gender plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions and experiences relating to marriage within the Church. Men and women often experience marital expectations differently, both socially and spiritually. In Catholic teaching and practice, gender roles can influence participation in marriage preparation and family life. Understanding gender-based differences in perception helps the Church identify whether both men and women feel equally valued and represented in church marriage teachings. It also helps highlight any gender based misconceptions that may affect participation in sacramental marriage.

4.2.3 Level of education

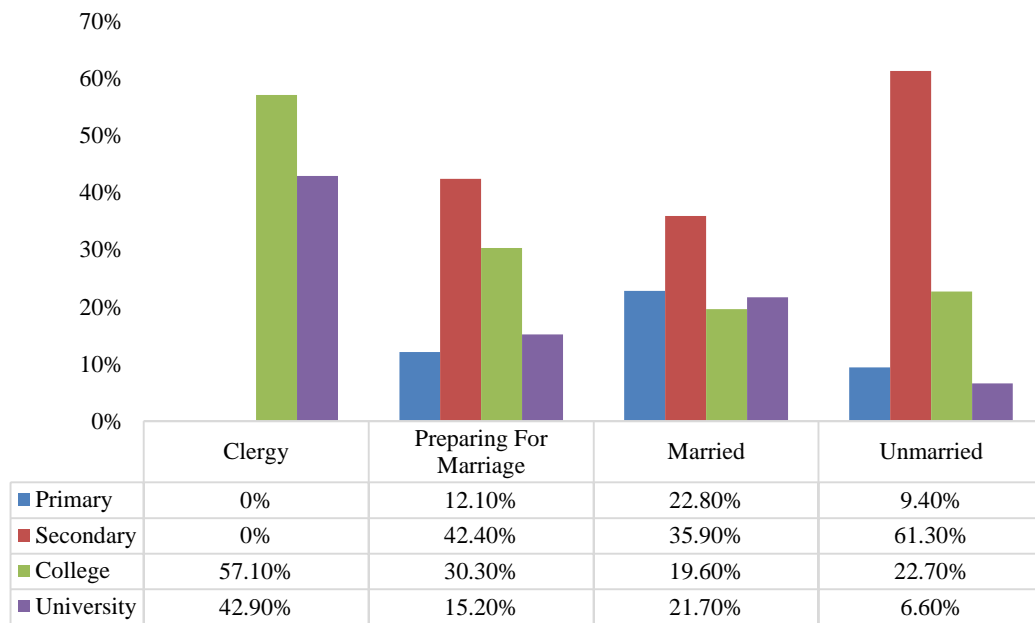


Figure 3: Level of education

Majority (51.5%) of the respondents had secondary school level of education. Results also showed that (23.3%) of the respondents had reached collage level of education. Research also indicated that (12.1%) had university level of education and (13.1%) had attained primary level of education. Golen et al. (2023) in their study religiosity and understanding of marriage in Kenya explores how religious beliefs and educational backgrounds influence young Catholics understanding of marriage. However, younger generation may exhibit different views concerning church marriage as compared to older generation.

Education affects how individuals interpret religious teachings and apply them in daily life. Christians with higher levels of education may critically evaluate church doctrines and may have broader exposure to alternative views on marriage. Those with lower educational levels may rely more heavily on Church authority and traditional teachings. Examining educational background allows the study to assess whether knowledge level influences acceptance, understanding or practice of church marriage. This insight can guide the Church in designing effective catechetical and marriage preparation programs suited to different educational levels.

4.3 The role of church teachings in shaping perception of Church marriage in the Catholic Church, Our lady of Visitation Deanery in the Diocese of Embu

Respondents in this study were asked to indicate their level of agreement with regards to the role of church teachings in shaping perception of marriage in the Catholic Church, Our Lady of Visitation Deanery in the Diocese of Embu, Kenya. In this study, structural functionalism theory provides a valuable framework for analyzing how the Catholic Church, as a social institution, shapes Christians' perceptions of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation deanery, Diocese of Embu.

The findings of the role of church teachings in shaping perception of marriage in our lady of visitation deanery are discussed below. They include:

4.3.1 Understanding the Sacrament of Marriage

Table 4: Level of understanding church teachings on the sacrament of marriage

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	6	18.2
Neutral	1	3.0
Agree	10	30.3
Strongly agree	15	45.5
Total	33	100

Table 4 above shows that 15 (45.5%) of members preparing to marry strongly agreed that they understood the Catholic Church teachings on marriage. 10 (30.3%) of the respondents agreed that they understood the Catholic Church teachings on marriage. 1 (3.0%) were neutral on their understanding of the Catholic Church teachings on marriage. The findings also show that 6 (18.2%) disagreed with the question whether they understood the catholic teachings on marriage. 1(3.0%) Strongly disagreed with the question whether they understood the catholic teachings on the sacrament of marriage.

Interviews from the clergy indicated that members of the Catholic Church are taught on the sacrament of marriage through catechism. Focus group discussions of members preparing to marry indicated that they have received teachings on the sacrament of marriage through catechism.

These findings shows that the Catholic Church in our Lady of Visitation Deanery teaches members on marriage through catechism. This was affirmed by one respondent (CCC3, 2025) who argued that “it is the role of the Catholic Church to teach its members about marriage because it is one of the seven sacraments of church. He further argued that marriage is taken as a sacred institution ordained by God during creation.”

4.3.2 Learning about church teachings on marriage through pre-marital counselling

Members preparing to marry were asked whether they learnt about church teachings on marriage through pre-marital counselling

Table 5: Level of agreement with learning church teachings on marriage through pre-marital counselling

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	2	6.1
Neutral	3	9.1
Agree	16	48.5
Strongly agree	11	33.3
Total	33	100

From the table above, majority of members preparing to marry 16 (48.5%) agreed that they learnt about church teachings on marriage through pre-marital counselling. 11 (33.3%) Strongly agreed that they learnt about church teachings on marriage through pre-marital counselling. 3 (9.1%) were neutral on hearing about church teachings. 2 (6.1%) disagreed with learning church teachings on marriage through pre-marital counselling. On the other hand, 1 (3%) strongly disagreed with learning church teachings on marriage though pre-marital counselling. These findings imply that pre-marital counselling plays a vital role in teaching church members about marriage. This is also evident that pre-marital counselling exists within Our Lady of Visitation Deanery.

4.3.3 Difference between Catholic Church teachings on marriage and secular view

Members preparing to marry were asked whether there is a difference between Catholic Church teachings on marriage and secular view of marriage

Table 6: Level of agreement with the difference between Catholic Church marriage and secular view

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2	6.1
Disagree	2	6.1
Neutral	1	3.0
Agree	17	51.5
Strongly agree	11	33.3
Total	33	100

Table 6 above shows that majority of members preparing to marry 17(51.5%) agreed that there is a difference between church teachings and secular view of marriage. 11 (33.3%) Strongly agreed that there is a difference between the Catholic Church teachings and secular view of marriage. 2 (6.1%) strongly disagreed with the question whether there is a difference between the Catholic Church teachings and secular view of marriage. Further, 2(6.1%) disagreed with the question whether there is a difference between the Catholic church teachings of marriage and the secular view while 1 (3%) were neutral on the difference between catholic church teachings and secular view on marriage.

These findings of the study implies that the Catholic Church has greatly taught her member on the sacrament of marriage and members perceive it with a lot of importance. Church members are able to differentiate the Catholic Church marriage which is monogamous, should be permanent and is also viewed as a sacrament while secular view of marriage shows that it is a contract and can be broken anytime. Focus group discussions of unmarried members showed that marriage in the Catholic Church is different from secular view of marriage because the Catholic teachings emphasize on indissolubility of marriage while secular view is open to divorce and polygamy.

4.3.4 Catholic Church Understanding of Marriage Strengthens Member's Decisions to Marry In the Church

Members preparing to marry were asked whether the catholic understanding of marriage strengthens their decision to marry in the church

Table 7: Level of agreement with catholic understanding of marriage strengthening members' decision to marry in the church

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	1	3.0
Neutral	2	6.1
Agree	19	57.6
Strongly agree	10	30.3
Total	33	100

The findings of the study indicated that 19 (57.6%) of members preparing to marry agreed that the Catholic understanding of marriage strengthened their decision to marry in the church 10 (30.3%) strongly agreed that the catholic understanding of marriage strengthened their decision to marry in the church. On the other hand, 2(6.1%) were neutral on whether the Catholic understanding of marriage strengthened their decision to marry in the church, while 1 (3%) disagreed with the question whether catholic understanding of marriage strengthen their decisions to marry in the church. 1(3%) strongly disagreed with the question whether the catholic understanding of marriage strengthens their decisions of marry in the church. These findings imply that church members in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery see the importance of adherence to doctrinal teachings on marriage. This is because the Catholic Church teachings on marriage influence their decision based on marriage.

4.3.5 Adequate premarital counselling

Members preparing to marry were asked whether the church provides adequate premarital counselling for couples planning to marry

Table 8: Level of agreement with the church provision of adequate premarital counselling

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	8	24.2
Disagree	15	45.5
Neutral	5	15.2
Agree	4	12.1
Strongly agree	1	3.0
Total	33	100

The findings of the study shows that majority of the members preparing to marry 15 (45.5%) disagreed with the question whether the church provides adequate pre-marital

counselling. 8 (24.2%) Strongly disagreed with the question whether the church provides adequate pre-marital counselling. Further, 5 (15.2%) were neutral on whether the church provides adequate pre-marital counselling. 4(12.1%) agreed that the church provides adequate pre-marital counselling while 1 (3%) strongly agreed that the church provides adequate premarital counselling.

These findings implies that although there exists premarital counselling in the Catholic Church, there is no adequate preparation for couples preparing to marry. This may be contributed by the limited timeframe availed by the church to prepare members for marriage. Findings from focus group discussions indicated that the church should organize more interactive pre-marital counselling for church members to freely ask questions concerning marriage and what is expected of them. This is in line with the study by Mutua (2018) who avers that pre-marriage counselling programs offered by the church often fail to prepare couples for the realities of married life in a rapidly changing society. These gaps in preparation, combined with societal pressures, contribute to shifting perceptions of church marriage among Kenyan Catholics.

4.3.6 Guide in making important marital decisions

Members preparing to marry were asked whether church teachings on marriage guided them in making important marital decisions

Table 9: Level of agreement with the church teachings on marriage guiding members in making important marital decisions

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	4	12.1
Neutral	25	75.8
Agree	1	3.0
Strongly agree	2	6.1
Total	33	100

The findings of the study shows that majority of members preparing to marry 25 (75.8%) were neutral on whether church teachings on marriage guided them in making important marital decisions. This shows that marital decisions depend on individuals' choice. 2(6.1%) Strongly agreed that church teachings guided them in making important marital decisions. Further, 1 (3%) agreed that church teachings on marriage guided them in making important marital decisions. 4 (12.1%) disagreed with the

question whether church teachings guide them in making important marital decisions. Lastly, 1 (3%) Strongly disagreed with the question whether Catholic Church teachings on marriage guided them in making important marital decisions. The findings of the study implies that majority of members preparing to marry were not sure whether Catholic Church teachings guided them in making important marital decisions. A respondent (CCC2, 2025) argued that each marriage is unique with partners of different personalities hence the way of doing things may be different. He further asserted that some Members of the church perceive some matters in their marriage private hence should be handled by the couple considering their personal choices.

4.3.7 Willingness to follow church teachings on marriage

Members preparing to marry were asked whether they were willing to follow church teachings on marriage even if they differed from societal norms

Table 10: Level of agreement on willingness to follow church teachings on marriage

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	6	18.2
Neutral	20	60.6
Agree	5	15.2
Strongly agree	1	3.0
Total	33	100

The findings of the study shows that 20(60.6%) of members preparing to marry were neutral in their willingness to follow church teachings on marriage even if they differed from societal norms. 1 (3%) strongly agreed that they are willing to follow church teachings on marriage even if they differed from social norms. 5 (15.2%) agreed that they were willing to follow church teachings on marriage even if they differed from social norms. 6(18.2%) disagreed with the question of their willingness to follow church teachings on marriage even if they differed from societal norms. While 1 (3%) strongly disagreed on their willingness to follow church teachings on marriage even if they differed from societal norms.

These findings implies that members preparing to marry were not sure whether they would still stick to church teachings on marriage always because sometimes it is hard to follow some church teachings. Interviews from the clergy indicated that sometimes

members of the church find it difficult to follow church teachings about marriage for example sticking to one spouse. A respondent supported this by arguing that, “due to emotional reasons, either of the spouse becomes unfaithful and involves themselves in adultery. This goes against church teachings on monogamous marriage and the need to preserve purity even in marriage” (CCC6, 2025). Findings from focus group discussions indicated that with changes in the society, church members may be forced by circumstances to separate and to some extent divorce which is against church teachings on indissolubility of marriage.

4.3.8 Support of the church teachings in the journey towards marriage

Members preparing to marry were asked whether they feel supported by church teachings in their journey towards marriages.

Table 11: Level of agreement with the support of church teachings in the journey towards marriage

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	1	3.0
Neutral	6	18.2
Agree	15	45.5
Strongly agree	10	30.3
Total	33	100

Table 11 above shows that 15(45.5%) agreed that church teachings supported them in their journey towards marriage. 10 (30.3%) Strongly agreed that church teachings supported them in their journey towards marriage. 6(18.2%) were neutral on whether church teachings supported them in their journey towards marriage while 1(3%) disagreed with the question whether church teachings supported them in their journey towards marriage. 1 (3%) Strongly disagreed with the support of church teachings towards their marriage journey. These findings implies that church teachings on marriage greatly shapes the institution of marriage within Our Lady of Visitation Deanery.

4.3.9 Give Hope of Marriage Success

Members preparing to marry were asked whether they believe that following church teachings would help their marriage flourish in the long term

Table 12: Level of agreement on hope of a successful marriage

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2	6.1
Disagree	11	33.3
Neutral	15	45.5
Agree	4	12.1
Strongly agree	1	3.0
Total	33	100

The findings on the study shows that majority members preparing to marry 15 (45.5%) were neutral on whether following church teachings would help their marriage succeed. 4(12.1%) agreed that following church teachings would help their marriage succeed. 1 (3%) strongly agreed that following the catholic church teachings would help their marriage succeed while 11(33.3%) disagreed with the question whether following church teachings would help their marriage to succeed. Lastly 2(6.1%) strongly disagreed with the question whether following church teachings would help their marriage to succeed.

This implies that following church teachings on marriage does not guarantee a successful marriage. The success solely depends on the couple involved and their commitment towards their marriage. This is in line with findings from Muriithi (2018) who noted that, despite formal pastoral marital programs, many Christian families continued to experience significant marital challenges in Embu. This highlights that presence of church programs does not guarantee marital stability and points to the need to examine content, uptake and perceived effectiveness of church marriage practices. Focus group discussions of unmarried members showed that some challenges may arise and force things to fall apart. For instance, unfaithfulness may lead to separation of spouses. It may also lead to marital conflicts hence making the marriage unstable.

4.3.10 Church Teachings have Shaped Understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage

Married members were asked whether church teachings on marriage have significantly shaped their understanding of the sacrament of marriage.

Table 13: Level of Church teachings have shaped understanding of the sacrament of marriage

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	5	5.4
Disagree	10	10.9
Neutral	4	4.3
Agree	56	60.9
Strongly agree	17	18.5
Total	92	100

The findings of the study showed that 56 (60.9%) agreed that church teachings shaped their understanding of the sacrament of marriage. 17(18.5%) strongly agreed while 4 (4.3%) were neutral on their church teachings shaping their understanding of the sacrament of marriage. 10 (10.9%) disagreed while 5 (5.4%) strongly disagreed with the question whether church teachings shaped their understanding of the sacrament of marriage. These findings implies that the church clearly teaches on marriage as one of its sacraments. This is in line with study by Karanja (2016) that suggests that the Catholic faith in Kenya, remains Influential in shaping individual and collective perceptions of marriage, particularly in relation to the church’s sacramental understanding.

Mbiti (1973) noted that Love, is viewed not merely as an emotional bond but as a duty and a social responsibility that unites families and upholds societal values. This perspective contrasts with the Catholic Church’s teaching, which defines marriage as a sacrament and a covenant between two baptized persons, founded on mutual love and lifelong commitment before God. Mbiti’s analysis is crucial in understanding how African cultural values continue to influence Christians’ perception of church marriage today.

4.3.11 Married Members on Marriage Strengthens Commitment Of Spouses

The married members were asked whether the Catholic Church teachings on marriage strengthens their commitments in their spouses.

Table 14: Level of agreement with church teachings on marriage strengthening spouses commitments

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	5	5.4
Disagree	6	6.5
Neutral	8	8.7
Agree	19	20.7
Strongly agree	54	58.7
Total	92	100

Table 14 above shows that 54(58.7%) of married members strongly agreed that the catholic church teachings strengthen their commitment to their spouses. 19(20.7%) agreed that the catholic church teachings strengthen their commitment to their spouses. 8 (8.7%) were neutral on the extent to which the catholic church teachings strengthen their commitment to their spouses 6 (6.5%) disagreed with the question whether the catholic church teachings on marriage strengthens their commitment to their spouses while 5(5.4%) strongly disagreed with the question whether church teachings strengthen their commitment to their spouses. These findings indicates that the Catholic Church teachings on marriage emphasizes on couples practicing faithfulness mutual, love and respect. A respondent supports this by arguing that, “the advice I usually give to married couples in the church is to practice love in order for their marriage to flourish” (CCC7, 2025).

4.3.12 Church Teachings on Marriage Help Married Couples to Solve Problems in their Marriage

The married members were asked whether the Catholic Church teachings on marriage helped them solve problems in their marriage

Table 15: Level of agreement with church teachings on marriage helping married couples to solve problems in their marriage

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	10	10.9
Disagree	9	9.8
Neutral	20	21.7
Agree	7	7.6
Strongly agree	46	50.0
Total	92	100

The findings of table 15 above indicated that 46 (50%) of married members strongly agreed that church teachings on marriage help them solve problems in their marriage. 7(7.6%) of church members agreed that the Catholic Church teachings on marriage helped them solve problems in their marriages.20 (21.7%) were neutral on whether church teachings on marriage helped them solve problems faced in marriage. 9(9.8%) disagreed with the question whether the Catholic Church teachings on marriage helped them solve problems in their marriages. 10(10.9%) strongly disagreed with the question whether the Catholic Church teachings on marriage helped them solve problems in their marriages. These findings shows that church members in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery value church teachings on marriage. A respondent supports this by arguing that, “married couples should always refer to church teachings on marriage when faced with problems in their marriage.” (CCC3, 2025)

4.3.13 Influenced how I approached premarital counselling

Married members were asked whether church teachings on marriage influenced how they approached pre-marital counselling.

Table 16: Level of agreement with church teachings on marriage influence on how married members approached pre-marital counselling

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	7	7.6
Disagree	8	8.7
Neutral	5	5.4
Agree	49	53.3
Strongly agree	23	25.0
Total	92	100

The findings of the study showed that 49(53.3%) agreed with church teachings influencing how they approached premarital counselling. 23 (25%) Strongly agreed that church teachings influences how they approached pre-marital counselling. 5(5.4%) were neutral on whether church teachings on marriage influenced how they approached pre-marital counselling. 8(8.7%) disagreed while 7 (7.6%) strongly disagreed with the question whether the church teachings on marriage influences how they approached premarital counselling. These findings implies that pre-marital counselling is very vital for married couples to better understand marriage.

4.3.14 Feeling Spiritually Guided by Church Teachings During the Process of Getting Married

Table 17: Level of Agreement with Feeling Spiritually Guided by Church Teachings During the Process of Getting Married

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	4	4.3
Disagree	21	22.8
Neutral	45	48.9
Agree	19	20.7
Strongly agree	3	3.3
Total	92	100

Table 17 above indicates that majority of married members 45(48.9%) were neutral on feeling spiritually guided by the church teachings during the process of getting married. This is because it depends with an individual choice. 3(3.3%) strongly agreed that they felt spiritually guided by church teachings during the process of getting married. 19(20.7%) agreed while 21 (22.8%) disagreed about feeling spiritually guided by church teachings during the process of getting married. 4(4.3%) strongly disagreed with feeling spiritually guided by church teachings during the process of getting married.

4.3.15 Church teachings on Marriage Help Strengthen the Relationship between Spouses and their Children

Table 18: Level on agreement with church teachings on marriage helping to strengthen the relationship between spouse and their children

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	6	6.5
Disagree	3	3.3
Neutral	7	7.6
Agree	51	55.4
Strongly agree	25	27.2
Total	92	100

The findings of the study indicates that 51(55.4%) married members agreed that church teachings on marriages help to strengthen their relationship with their spouses and children. 25(27.2%) strongly agreed that church teachings on marriage help to strengthen the relationship with their spouses and children. 7(7.6%) were neutral on whether church teachings strengthened their relationship with their spouses and children. 3(3.3%) disagreed with church teachings on marriage helping to strengthen

their relationships with their spouses and children. 6(6.5%) Strongly disagreed with church teachings strengthening the relationship with their spouses and their children. These findings implies that the Catholic Church teaches on responsible Parenthood and a stable family. The Catholic Church emphasizes that Parents should take up their roles and bring up morally upright children. A respondent supports this by arguing that, “Catholic Church urges its members to emulate the Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph that shows a good example of a Christian family. Parents ought to be role models to their children” (CCC2, 2025).

4.3.16 Church Teachings about Role of Husband and Wife Have Shaped How Married Members Divide Responsibilities Within Their Marriage

Table 19: Level of agreement with Church teachings about role of husband and wife shaping how married members divide responsibilities within their marriage

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	10	10.9
Disagree	19	20.7
Neutral	52	56.5
Agree	7	7.6
Strongly agree	4	4.3
Total	92	100

The findings of the study shows that majority of married members 52 (56.5%) were neutral with Church teachings about role of the husband and with wife shaping how they divided responsibilities within their marriage. This implies that division of labor within a family depends on personal or individual choices. On the other hand 4 (4.3%) strongly agreed that Church teachings on role of husband and wife shaped their division of labor. 7(7.6%) Agreed that church teachings on role of husband and wife shaped their division of labor. 19(20.7%) disagreed while 10(10.9%) strongly disagreed with the church teachings on the role of husband and wife shaping how they divided responsibilities within their marriage.

Focus group discussion of unmarried members showed that the Catholic Church teachings on role of husband and wife is Biblically based on (Ephesians 5:21-25) where wives are required to submit to their husbands and husbands are supposed to love their wives, just as Christ loved the church.

4.3.17 Support of church teachings when faced with marital difficulties

Table 20: Level of agreement with church teachings supporting married couples when faced with marital difficulties

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	15	16.3
Disagree	44	47.8
Neutral	28	30.8
Agree	4	4.3
Strongly agree	1	1.2
Total	92	100

The findings of the study shows that majority of married couples 44(47.8%) disagreed with feeling supported by the church teachings when faced with marital difficulties. This implies that ways of solving family conflicts may be different and depends on the circumstances at hand. 15(16.3%) strongly disagreed with the church teachings supporting them when faced with marital problems. 28(30.4%) were neutral while 4 (4.3%) agreed that church teachings supports them when faced with marital difficulties. Further, the study showed that 1(1.2%) strongly agreed that church teachings supports them when faced with marital difficulties

These findings indicated the need for the church to always guide married members even long after marriage. This is because challenges will always be there. In the changing World, the church needs to avail its services to the faithful more than ever before so that they cannot be carried away by secularism.

4.3.18 Church teachings on marriage sometimes seem disconnected from personal experience

Table 21: Level of agreement with church teachings on marriage sometimes seem disconnected from personal experience

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	7	7.6
Disagree	8	8.7
Neutral	47	51.1
Agree	18	19.6
Strongly agree	12	13.0
Total	92	100

The findings of the study showed that 47(51.1%) of married members were neutral with church teachings on marriage seeming disconnected from personal experiences. This is

because this depends entirely on individual's opinion. 12(13%) strongly agreed that sometimes the church teachings on marriage are sometimes disconnected from personal experiences. On the other hand, 18(19.6%) agreed that sometimes the church teachings on marriage are sometimes disconnected from personal experiences. 8(8.7%) disagreed with the question whether church teachings on marriage sometimes seem disconnected from personal experience. Lastly 7(7.6%) strongly disagreed that church teachings on marriage are sometimes disconnected from personal experiences. These findings are in line with Gary et al (2007) who found out that many Catholics value love, companionship and personal commitment over doctrinal definitions. The data suggest that while church teachings shape some views, many Catholics make moral decisions on marriage based on personal experience, cultural and modern societal norms.

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion this chapter found out that church teachings on marriage in the Catholic Church exists. These teachings guides, blesses and prepares Couples for marriage. They are taught through various ways like catechism and pre-marital counselling. The study further concluded that these teachings shape members perception of church marriage in our lady of Visitation deanery, Diocese of Embu.

CHAPTER FIVE

FACTORS INFLUENCING CHRISTIANS' PERCEPTION OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE IN OUR LADY OF VISITATION DEANERY, DIOCESE OF EMBU, KENYA

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents discussions on Factors influencing Christians' perception of Church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery. Things have greatly changed in modern World including marriage as a social institution. Christians have started viewing marriage in the church in a different angle, which this study wish to evaluate. This was done by distributing questionnaires to married couples and members preparing to marry. Interview guide to clergy and focus group discussions to unmarried members. Respondents in this study were asked to indicate their level of agreement with regards to factors influencing Christian's perception of church marriage. These factors were discussed below.

5.2 Marriage is a Sacred Sacrament in the Christian faith

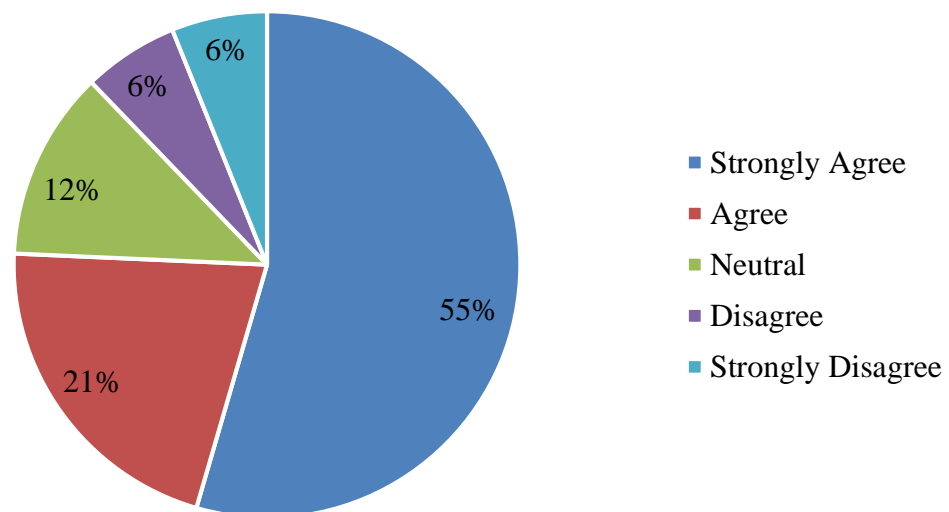


Figure 4: Level of agreement with marriage as a sacred sacrament in the Christian faith

The findings of the study indicates that majority of members preparing to marry 18 (55%) strongly agreed that marriage is a sacred sacrament in the Christian faith. This is affirmed by a respondent who asserted that, "Marriage in the Catholic Church is a sacred Sacrament in which the couple involved receives blessings from God. It is different from all other types of marriages. The Church recognizes only church

marriage which allows its members to partake Holy Communion. The Catholic Church always gives an opportunity to its members to solemnize their marriage through holy matrimony. That’s why those that delays their marriages because of various reasons still have a chance to have a church marriage later in life” (CCC2, 2025).

The study further showed that 7(21%) agreed that marriage is a Sacred Sacrament in the Christian faith. 4 (12%) were neutral on marriage being a sacred sacrament in the Christian faith. 2(6%) disagreed that marriage is a Sacred Sacrament in the Christian faith.2 (6%) strongly disagreed with marriage being a Sacred Sacrament in the Christian faith.

5.3 The Church's view on the Sanctity of marriage aligns with personal beliefs

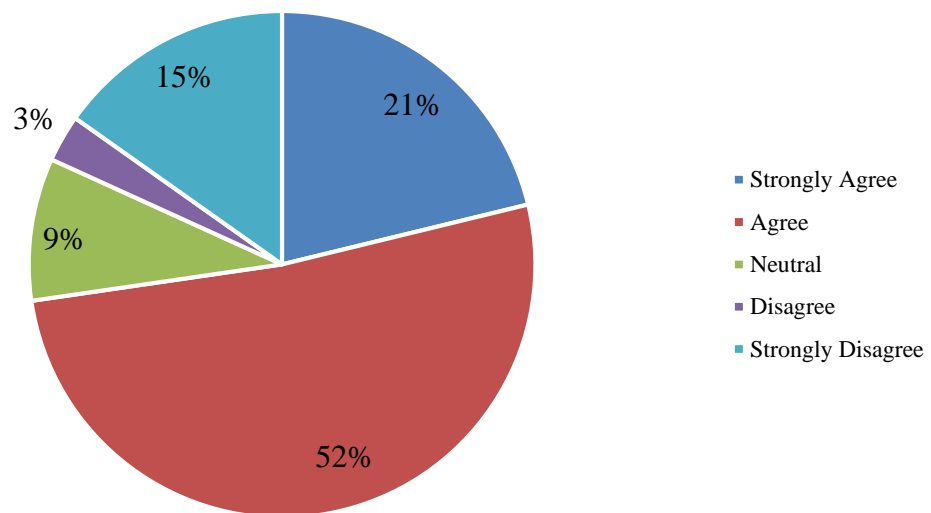


Figure 5: Church's view on the Sanctity of marriage aligns with personal beliefs

The findings of the study indicates that majority of the Members preparing to marry. 17 (52%) agreed that Church's view on the Sanctity of marriage aligns with personal beliefs. This is because Marriage ensures continuity of a family and the church and leads to growth of a Society as a whole. On the other hand, 7 (21%) strongly agreed that the Church's view on the Sanctity of marriage aligns with personal beliefs. 3(9%) were neutral on whether Church's view on the Sanctity of marriage aligns with personal beliefs. 1 (3%) disagreed with Church's view on the Sanctity of marriage aligns with

personal beliefs. Further, the research findings indicates that 5 (15%) strongly disagreed that Church's view on the Sanctity of marriage aligns with personal beliefs.

These findings are in line with a study by Mwaura (2015) who asserts that emphasis on the sanctity of marriage, monogamy and lifelong commitment is fundamental in the catholic marriage doctrine. However, contemporary challenges such as modernization, the influence of secularism and changing societal norms are influencing how Christians' view and practice marriage. These findings contrast with the findings of Mugambi (2016), who noted that, Generally, African Christians place a high value on the sanctity of marriage, and Catholic Church's teachings on marriage as a sacrament align with many African traditional views as a covenant. However, the way marriage is viewed can also be influenced by African communal practices, where family involvement is emphasized, and where marriages are often seen as broader social contracts, rather than solely private agreements between two individuals. In some regions, there is a strong belief in the importance of receiving the church's sacramental blessing for a marriage to be considered fully legitimate. This perception is rooted in the theological teaching of the Catholic Church that marriage is both a natural institution and a sacred bond between a man and a woman, which has implications for both personal and social life (Bediako, 2000).

5.4 The Catholic Church teachings on marriage has influenced views on what constitutes a successful marriage

Table 22: Catholic Church teachings on marriage has influenced views on what constitutes a successful marriage

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3	9.1
Disagree	7	21.2
Neutral	16	48.5
Agree	5	15.2
Strongly agree	2	6.1
Total	33	100

Table 22 above shows that 16 (48.5%) of members preparing to marry were neutral on Whether Catholic Church teachings on marriage has influenced views on what constitutes a successful marriage. This is because the success of a marriage depends on the Couples commitment towards each other. On that other hand 3 (9.1%) strongly

disagreed that Catholic Church teachings on marriage have influenced views on what constitutes a successful marriage. 7 (21.2%) disagreed with the question whether Catholic Church teachings on marriage have influenced views on what constitutes a successful marriage. 5 (15.2%) agreed that Catholic Church teachings on marriage have influenced views on what constitutes a successful marriage. Further 2(6.1%) strongly agreed that the Catholic Church teachings on marriage has influenced views on what constitutes a successful marriage. The findings indicate that following church teachings on marriage like faithfulness, forgiveness, responsibility, respect and mutual love influence Christians’ perception of Church marriage.

5.5 The local culture strongly supports marriage in the church

Table 23: Local culture strongly supports marriage in the church

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	2	6.1
Neutral	2	6.1
Agree	7	21.2
Strongly agree	21	63.6
Total	33	100

The findings of the study shows that majority of members preparing to marry 21(63.6%) strongly agreed that the local culture strongly supports marriage in the church agreed that the local culture strongly supports marriage in the church. 7(21.2%) agreed that the local culture strongly supports marriage in the church. The findings also showed that 2 (6.1%) were neutral on whether the local culture strongly supports marriage in the church. 2 (6.1%)Disagreed with the local culture strongly supporting marriage in the church 1 (3%) strongly disagreed with the fact that the local culture strongly supports marriage in the church.

A respondent asserted that, “the culture within Our Lady of Visitation deanery provides a conducive environment for church marriages to thrive since most of the locals are mainly Christians.”(CCC6, 2025). Members of Our Lady of Visitation Deanery continue to value traditional marriage customs while also participating in sacramental life of the Catholic Church. Magesa et. al.(1998) notes that, African Christians often experience tension between cultural expectations surrounding marriage such as dowry and the church formal teachings on Christian marriage. These findings contradict those

in Our Lady of visitation Deanery. In addition, Some African Catholics face tension when traditional marriage customs, such as bride price or other rituals, conflict with church requirements, such as the instance on monogamy and the restriction of certain divorce practices (Asamoah – Gyadu, 2006).

Ndlovu (2021) noted that African communal values significantly influence Christian’s marriages, with couples integrating cultural practices into their marital lives.

5.6 Societal view about marriage in the church have influenced perception of church marriage

Table 24: Societal view about marriage in the church have influenced perception of church marriage

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3	9.1
Disagree	3	9.1
Neutral	1	3.0
Agree	15	45.5
Strongly agree	11	33.3
Total	33	100

Table 24 above shows that 15 (45.5%) of the members preparing to marry agreed that Societal view about marriage in the church have influenced perception of church marriage. This was affirmed by a respondent who argued that “many catholic church members are influenced so much by society when making decisions to wed in church. Most of them like to have the so called big weddings with many vehicles and many people.” It is like a communal affair or a show off. (CCC4, 2025)

The study further showed that 11(33.3%) strongly agreed that Societal view about marriage in the church have influenced perception of church marriage 1(3%) were neutral on whether Societal view about marriage in the church have influenced perception of church marriage. 3(9.1%) disagreed with the Societal view about marriage in the church have influenced perception of church marriage 3 (9.1%) strongly disagreed with the Societal view about marriage in the church have influenced perception of church marriage.

The findings contradict with those of Mwangi and Ngugi (2019) who pointed out that socio economic factors such as poverty and education also affect Christians' perceptions and choices marriage regarding marriage in the church. In addition, the findings of the study contradicts with those of Mukuha et al (2023) who found out that urbanization, poverty, unemployment and western influences have reshaped perceptions of sacramental marriage among Kenyan Catholics.

5.7 Family

Table 25: Family

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3	9.1
Disagree	4	12.1
Neutral	3	9.1
Agree	14	42.4
Strongly agree	9	27.3
Total	33	100

The findings of the study shows that 14 (42.4%) of members preparing to marry agreed that their family encouraged them to marry in the church, as a necessary step for receiving a blessed union. A respondent supports this by arguing that, “the Catholic Church marriage is a sacrament in which the couple receives blessings.”(CCC3, 2025) He continues to argue that is a family is based in a Christian foundation, it will always encourage its members to wed in the church. Further, the research shows that 9(27.3%) strongly agreed that their families encourages marriage in the church as a necessary step for a blessed union. 3(9.1%) were neutral on whether their families encouraged marriage in the church. 4(12.1%) disagreed with their families encouraging marriage in the church. 3(9.1%) strongly disagreed with whether their families encouraged them to marry in the church. The findings is consistent with research by Mbiti (1973), who points out that traditional African marriage emphasizes the involvement of the extended family and the community. The persistence of these cultural values suggest that the perception of church marriage in Our Lady of visitation deanery is shaped by both Catholic theology and indigenou African understandings of love, family and social responsibility.

5.8 Availability of church wedding services influenced decision to marry in the church

Table 26: Availability of church wedding services influenced decision to marry in the church

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	9	27.3
Neutral	3	9.1
Agree	14	42.4
Strongly agree	6	18.2
Total	33	100

The findings of the study show that 14(42.4%) of members preparing to marry agreed that Availability of church wedding services influenced decision to marry in the church. A respondent argued that, “the catholic Church in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery offers Mass weddings where many couples solemnize their marriage together and it saves on cost and resources required. The other Christians supports these weddings for the good of the church.”(CCC7,2025). On the other hand, 6 (18.2%) strongly agreed that Availability of church wedding services influenced decision to marry in the church. 3(9.1%) were neutral on whether Availability of church wedding services influenced their decision to marry in the church. 1(3%) strongly disagreed with whether Availability of church wedding services influenced their decision to marry in the church. 9(27.3%) disagreed with the Availability of church wedding services influencing decision to marry in the church.

5.9 Requirement for pre-marriage counselling influences decision to marry in the church

Table 27: Requirement for pre-marriage counselling influences decision to marry in the church

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2	6.1
Disagree	1	3.0
Neutral	5	15.2
Agree	18	54.5
Strongly agree	7	21.2
Total	33	100

The findings of the study show that 18(54.5%) of the members preparing to marry agreed that Requirement for pre-marriage counselling influenced decision to marry in the church. this implies that most members of Our Lady of Visitation Deanery really

value pre-marriage counselling as a way of preparing for marriage. 7 (21.2%) Strongly agreed that Requirement for pre-marriage counselling influenced decision to marry in the church. 5(15.2%) were neutral on whether Requirement for pre-marriage counselling influenced decision to marry in the church 1(3%) disagreed with the Requirement for pre-marriage counselling influencing their decision to marry in the church 2(6.1%) strongly disagreed with Requirement for pre-marriage counselling influencing their decision to marry in the church.

5.10 Couples who marry in the church tend to have stronger marital relationships

Table 28: Couples who marry in the church tend to have stronger marital relationships

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2	6.1
Disagree	8	24.2
Neutral	19	57.6
Agree	3	9.1
Strongly agree	1	3.0
Total	92	100

The findings of the study shows that majority of members preparing to marry 19(57.6%) were neutral on whether Couples who marry in the church tend to have stronger marital relationships. 1(3%) Strongly agreed that Couples who marry in the church tend to have stronger marital relationships. Further the study shows that 3 (9.1%) agreed that couples who marry in the church tend to have stronger marital relationships. 8 (24.2%) disagreed with whether Couples who marry in the church tend to have stronger marital relationships. 2 (6.1%) strongly disagreed with whether Couples who marry in the church tend to have stronger marital relationships. These findings implies that the success of marriage depends on an individual spouse involved. There must be total commitment for marriage to thrive. Results from the focus group discussions showed that, it's not a must for a marriage to succeed because it was a church marriage. The discussions argued that couples should expect challenges to be there and find out ways of solving them in order to avoid frustrations of unmet expectations. This was supported by one respondent who argued that, "Couples who are influenced by outside pressures to marry in the church tend to have unstable marriages or even break them so easily."(CCC6, 2025)

5.11 Family Expectation to Marry In Church

Table 29: Family expectation to marry in church

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	4	4.3
Disagree	8	8.7
Neutral	10	10.9
Agree	17	18.5
Strongly agree	53	57.6
Total	92	100

Table 34 above showed that 53(57.6%) of married couples strongly agreed that their families expected them to marry in church as part of their Christian tradition. This is affirmed by Munene (2025, 01) who argued that a Christian based family will expect its members to marry in church through a church wedding. Further, findings show that 17(18.5%) agreed that their families expected them to marry in church. 10(10.9%) were neutral on whether their families expected them to marry in church. 8(8.7%) disagreed with the question on whether their families expected them to marry in church. 4(4.3%) strongly disagreed that their families expected them to marry in church.

5.12 Christian couples are expected to marry in church to be viewed as morally upright in society.

Table 30: Christian couples are expected to marry in church to be viewed as morally upright in society

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	10	10.9
Disagree	13	14.1
Neutral	49	53.3
Agree	16	17.4
Strongly agree	4	4.3
Total	92	100

The findings of the study shows that 49(53.3%) of the married couples were neutral on whether Christian couples are expected to marry in church to be viewed as morally upright in society. This implies that marrying in the church does not guarantee good behaviours. 13 (14.1%) disagreed with the question whether Christian couples are expected to marry in church to be viewed as morally upright in society. 10(10.9%) Strongly disagreed with the question whether Christian couples are expected to marry in church to be viewed as morally upright in society. 16 (17.4%) agreed that Christian couples are expected to marry in church to be viewed as morally upright in society. 4

(4.3%) strongly agreed that Christian couples are expected to marry in church to be viewed as morally upright in society.

5.13 Marriage in the Church Helped to Understand Deeper Meaning of Commitment

Marriage in the church helped to understand deeper meaning of commitment

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3	3.3
Disagree	6	6.5
Neutral	7	7.6
Agree	55	59.8
Strongly agree	21	22.8
Total	92	100

Table 36 above shows that 55(59.8%) of married members agreed that marriage in the church helped them to understand deeper meaning of commitment. This is supported by a respondent who argued that, “the advice the Catholic Church gives to couples preparing to marry and those married in church is that, marriage is a lifelong commitment for better or for worse and there is no room for separation or divorce because this would be allowing the devil to have a chance to destroy the their marriage.”(CCC1,2025). Further, the findings show that 21(22.8%) strongly agreed that marriage in the church helped them to understand deeper meaning of commitment. 7(7.6) were neutral on whether marriage in the church helped them to understand deeper meaning of commitment. 6(6.5%) disagreed with the marriage in the church helping them to understand deeper meaning of commitment. 3(3.3%) strongly disagreed with the question whether marriage in the church helped them to understand deeper meaning of commitment.

5.14 Choice to marry in the church in order to make public declaration of faith

Table 31: Choice to marry in the church in order to make public declaration of faith

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3	3.3
Disagree	6	6.5
Neutral	3	3.3
Agree	60	65.2
Strongly agree	20	21.7
Total	92	100

The findings of the study showed that 60(65.2%) of married couples agreed to have Chosen to marry in the church because they wanted to make public declaration of their faith. This insight align with the findings from Sullivan (2015) that, Catholics perceive marriage as an event that transcends personal desires and enters the public and communal life of the church. As such, the ceremony is a sacred event not just for the couple but also for the larger Catholic Community. The marriage ceremony within the church is often seen as a way of publicly committing oneself to the faith through the institution of marriage, making it an essential rite of passage in the lives of many Catholics. A respondent asserted that, “marriage as a sacrament in Catholic Church is an outside sign of inward grace. That’s why there is the congregation to witness the sacrament.”(CCC4, 2025). The findings, further reveals that 20(21.7%) strongly agreed to have Chosen to marry in the church because they wanted to make public declaration of their faith. 3(3.3%) were neutral with the question whether they have Chosen to marry in the church because they wanted to make public declaration of their faith. On the other hand, 6(6.5%) disagreed with the choice to marry in the church in order to make public declaration of their faith. 3(3.3%) strongly disagreed with the choice to marry in the church in order to make public declaration of their faith

5.15 Consultation with priests or church leaders before making decision to marry in the church

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2	2.2
Disagree	5	5.4
Neutral	9	9.8
Agree	52	56.5
Strongly agree	24	26.1
Total	92	100

The findings of the study indicates that 52 (56.5%) of married couples agreed to have consulted with the priest or church leaders before making the decision to marry in the church. This is in order to get guidance and counselling 24(26.1%).strongly agreed to have consulted with the priest or church leaders before making the decision to marry in the church. 9(9.8%) were neutral on whether they consulted with the priest or church leaders before making the decision to marry in the church. 5 (5.4%) disagreed with Consultation with priests/ church leaders before making decision to marry in the church.

2 (2.2%) strongly disagreed with having Consulted with priests or church leaders before making decision to marry in the church

5.16 The church should adapt its teachings on marriage to reflect contemporary societal changes

The church should adapt its teachings on marriage to reflect contemporary societal changes

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	48	52.2
Disagree	18	19.6
Neutral	6	6.5
Agree	13	14.1
Strongly agree	7	7.6
Total	92	100

Table 39 above shows that 48(52.2%) of married couples strongly disagreed with the question whether the church should adapt its teachings on marriage to reflect contemporary societal changes. This is affirmed by a respondent who argues that, “adapting church teachings to reflect contemporary changes will compromise its teachings. The church should stand firm in its teachings about marriage for members to choose and be a good role model for society to emulate” (CCC1, 2025).

Further, the findings shows that 18(19.6%) disagreed with the church adapting its teachings on marriage to reflect contemporary societal changes. 6(6.5%) were neutral on whether the church should adapt its teachings on marriage to reflect contemporary societal changes. 13(14.1%) agreed that the church should adapt its teachings on marriage to reflect contemporary societal changes. 7(7.6%) strongly agreed that the church should adapt its teachings on marriage to reflect contemporary societal changes.

5.17 Many young Christian couples do not see church marriage as important

Table 32: Many young Christian couples do not see church marriage as important

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3	3.3
Disagree	21	22.8
Neutral	47	51.1
Agree	20	21.7
Strongly agree	1	1.1
Total	92	100

The findings of the study shows that majority of married couples 47(51.5%) were neutral on whether Many young Christian couples do not see church marriage as important. This is because this depends solely on an individual's opinion. 3(3.3%) strongly disagreed with the question of Many young Christian couples not seeing church marriage as important. 21 (22.8%) disagreed with the question of Many young Christian couples not seeing church marriage as important. 20 (21.7%) agreed that Many young Christian couples do not see church marriage as important. 1(1.1%) Strongly agreed that many young Christian couples do not see church marriage as important.

5.18 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter findings indicated that there are many factors influencing Christian perception of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery. They include Catholic Church teachings, personal beliefs, local culture, family, pre-marital counselling and society at large. From the findings above, Christians in our Lady of Visitation Deanery values church marriage.

CHAPTER SIX

STRATEGIES FOR EXPANDING THE PERCEPTION AND PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE IN OUR LADY OF VISITATION DEANERY, DIOCESE OF EMBU, KENYA.

6.1 Introduction

Strategies of expanding the perception and practice church marriage in our Lady of Visitation Deanery are examined in this chapter. Since there are many factors influencing Christians perception of church marriage, there was need to look for strategies for expanding perception of church marriage, in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery.

This was done by distributing questionnaires to married couples and members preparing to marry. Interview guide to clergy and focus group discussions to unmarried members. Respondents in this study were asked to indicate their level of agreement with regards to strategies for expanding the perception and practice of church marriage in our Lady of visitation Deanery.

These factors were discussed below:

6.2 Marriage should be exclusively between a man and a woman as taught by the Catholic Church

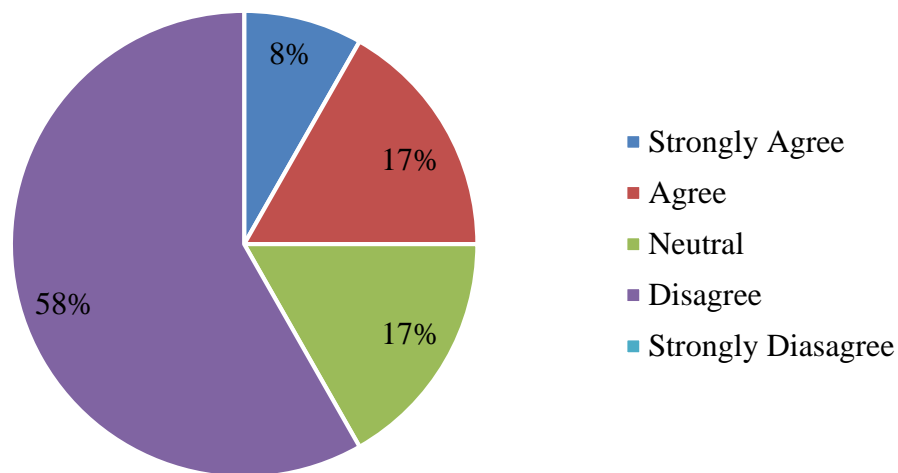


Figure 6: Marriage should be exclusively between a man and a woman as taught by the Catholic Church

The findings of the study shows that of members preparing to marry 21 (63.6%) strongly agreed that Marriage should be exclusively between a man and a woman as taught by the Catholic Church. It enhances procreation which is a command from God. On the other hand 7 (21.2%) agreed that marriage should be exclusively between a man and a woman as taught by the Catholic Church. 2 (6.1%) were neutral on whether Marriage should be exclusively between a man and a woman as taught by the Catholic Church. 2 (6.1%) Disagreed with the question whether Marriage should be exclusively between a man and a woman as taught by the Catholic Church. 1 (3.0%) Strongly disagreed with Marriage should be exclusively between a man and a woman as taught by the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church regards marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman, blessed by God and an essential foundation for the Christian family (John Paul II, 2001).

6.3 The Catholic Church Marriage preparation programs are helpful in preparing couples for marriage

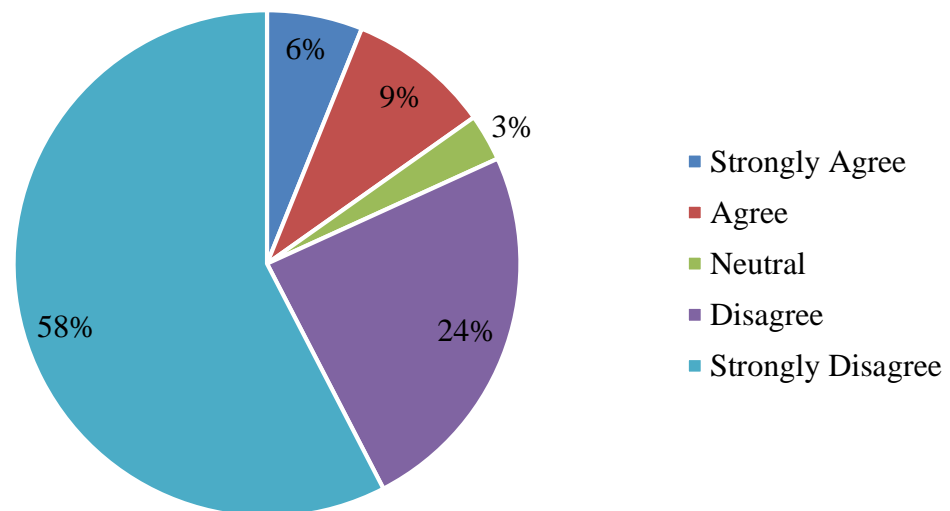


Figure 7: The Catholic Church marriage preparation programs are helpful in preparing couples for marriage

The findings from the figure above shows that 19 (57.6%) of members preparing to marry strongly agreed that marriage preparation programs such as pre-marital counselling are helpful in preparing couples for marriage. This implies that marriage preparation programs are very vital in the Catholic Church. 8 (24.2%) agreed that

marriage preparation programs are helpful in preparing couples for marriage 1 (3.0%) were neutral on whether the Catholic Church marriage preparation programs are helpful in preparing couples for marriage 3 (9.1%) disagreed with the question on whether Catholic Church marriage preparation programs are helpful in preparing couples for marriage 2 (6.1%) strongly disagreed with the question on whether the Catholic Church marriage preparation programs are helpful in preparing couples for marriage. Focus group discussions of unmarried members showed that marriage preparation programs helps the couple to be to know their new roles in marriage and what is expected of them in their new marriage life. These programs prepares members involved on how to solve problems in their marriages.

6.4 More young people should be encouraged to marry in the Catholic Church

Table 33: More young people should be encouraged to marry in the Catholic Church

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	2	6.1
Neutral	3	9.1
Agree	9	27.3
Strongly agree	18	54.5
Total	92	100

The findings of the study indicates that majority of member preparing to marry 18 (54.5%) strongly agreed that many young people should be encouraged to marry in the Catholic Church. This was affirmed by a respondent who argued that, “the youths are the future church and society at large hence should be encouraged to marry in the church through church weddings to enhance growth of the church” (CCC7, 2025). 9 (27.3%) agreed that many young people should be encouraged to marry in the Catholic Church 3 (9.1%) were neutral on whether more young people should be encouraged to marry in the Catholic Church 2 (6.1%) disagreed with the question of more young people should be encouraged to marry in the Catholic Church 1 (3.0%) strongly disagreed with the question of more young people should be encouraged to marry in the Catholic Church.

The findings from focus group discussions showed that many unmarried members in our Lady of Visitation Deanery admire church marriage because those married in the

church per takes Holy Communion and they take up leadership roles in the Church. They also argued that church marriage is a blessed union.

6.5 The church should update its teachings on marriage to better reflect contemporary values

Table 34: The church should update its teachings on marriage to better reflect contemporary values

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	17	51.5
Disagree	8	24.2
Neutral	5	15.2
Agree	2	6.1
Strongly agree	1	3.0
Total	33	100

The findings on the study shows that 17(51.5%) strongly disagreed with the question whether the church should update its teachings on marriage to better reflect contemporary values. 8(24.2%) disagreed with the question whether The church should update its teachings on marriage to better reflect contemporary values 5(15.2%) were neutral on whether the church should update its teachings on marriage to better reflect contemporary values. 2(6.1%) agreed that the church should update its teachings on marriage to better reflect contemporary values 1(3.0%) strongly agreed that The church should update its teachings on marriage to better reflect contemporary values. These findings shows that the church should stand firm in its teachings on marriage to avoid being compromised by contemporary values. This is because most of its teachings are biblically rooted while those of contemporary Society are secular.

6.6 The Catholic Church should offer more resources for couples to understand the significance of marriage as a sacrament

Table 35: The Catholic Church should offer more resources for couples to understand the significance of marriage as a sacrament

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	2	6.1
Neutral	3	9.1
Agree	20	60.6
Strongly agree	7	21.2
Total	33	100

The findings of the study shows that majority of members preparing to marry 20 (60.6%) agreed that the church should offer more resources for couples to understand the significance of marriage as a sacrament. This was supported by the Focus group discussions of unmarried members who indicated that the church should offer human resources for instance older members in the church to guide them understand more about church marriage. They also indicated that the church should organize more seminars and workshops which enhances in depth understanding of marriage through open discussion.

On the other hand 7 (21.2%) strongly agreed that the catholic Church should offer more resources for couples to understand the significance of marriage as a sacrament 3 (9.1%) were neutral on the question whether the Catholic Church should offer more resources for couples to understand the significance of marriage as a sacrament 2 (6.1%) disagreed with the question whether the Catholic Church should offer more resources for couples to understand the significance of marriage as a sacrament 1 (3.0%) strongly disagreed with the question whether the Catholic Church should offer more resources for couples to understand the significance of marriage as a sacrament.

6.7 The Church should create more inclusive and accessible programs that welcomes couples of all backgrounds to learn about the sacrament of marriage

Table 36: The Church should create more inclusive and accessible programs that welcomes couples of all backgrounds to learn about the sacrament of marriage

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	1	3.0
Neutral	2	6.1
Agree	20	60.6
Strongly agree	9	27.3
Total	33	100

The findings of the study shows that of members preparing to marry 20 (60.6%) agreed that The Church should create more inclusive and accessible programs that welcomes couples of all backgrounds to learn about the sacrament of marriage 9 (27.3%) strongly agreed that the Church should create more inclusive and accessible programs that welcomes couples of all backgrounds to learn about the sacrament of

marriage 2 (6.1%) were neutral on whether the Church should create more inclusive and accessible programs that welcomes couples of all backgrounds to learn about the sacrament of marriage 1 (3.0%) disagreed with the question whether the Church should create more inclusive and accessible programs that welcomes couples of all backgrounds to learn about the sacrament of marriage 1 (3.0%) strongly disagreed with the question whether the Church should create more inclusive and accessible programs that welcomes couples of all backgrounds to learn about the sacrament of marriage

6.8 The church should use modern media to promote the idea of marriage in the church

Table 37: The church should use modern media to promote the idea of marriage in the church

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2	6.1
Disagree	1	3.0
Neutral	2	6.1
Agree	11	33.3
Strongly agree	17	51.5
Total	92	100

The findings of the study shows that of members preparing to marry 17 (51.5%) strongly agreed that the church should use modern media e.g. social media, websites and videos to promote the idea of marriage in the church. Focus group discussions indicated the need for the church to embrace modern technology in order to remain relevant in the modern world and especially for young people to be able to learn more about church teachings on marriage. 11 (33.3%) agreed that the church should use modern media to promote the idea of marriage in the church. 2 (6.1%) were neutral on whether the church should use modern media to promote the idea of the church using modern media to promote marriage in the church. 1 (3.0%) Disagreed with the idea of church using modern media to promote the idea of marriage in the church. Further 2 (6.1%) strongly disagreed with the idea of church using modern media to promote the idea of marriage in the church.

6.9 Catholic marriage preparations programs should include more emphasis on practical aspects of married life

Table 38: Catholic marriage preparations programs should include more emphasis on practical aspects of married life

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3	9.1
Disagree	3	9.1
Neutral	1	3.0
Agree	7	21.2
Strongly agree	19	57.6
Total	33	100

The findings of the study showed that majority of members preparing to marry 19 (57.6%) strongly agreed that the Catholic marriage preparations programs should include more emphasis on practical aspects of married life such as finances and conflict resolution. 7(21.2%) agreed that the Catholic marriage preparations programs should include more emphasis on practical aspects of married life such as finances and conflict resolution. 1(3.0%) were neutral on whether the Catholic marriage preparations programs should include more emphasis on practical aspects of married life. 3(9.1%) Disagreed with the question whether the Catholic marriage preparations programs should include more emphasis on practical aspects of married life. 3(9.1%) Strongly disagreed with the question whether the Catholic marriage preparations programs should include more emphasis on practical aspects of married life.

The findings of the study implies that the marriage preparations should teach couples on financial management, conflicts resolutions which are the leading causes of broken families.

6.10 Allowing more flexibility of marriage preparation process would make it more attractive to young people

Table 39: Allowing more flexibility of marriage preparation process would make it more attractive to young people

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	7	21.2
Neutral	15	45.5
Agree	6	18.2
Strongly agree	4	12.1
Total	33	100

The findings of the study shows that 15 (45.5%) were neutral on whether allowing more flexibility of marriage preparation process would make it more attractive to young people. This is because matters concerning marriage are personal to some extent. 7 (21.2%) disagreed with the question whether allowing more flexibility of marriage preparation process would make it more attractive to young people. 1 (3.0%) Strongly disagreed with the question whether allowing more flexibility of marriage preparation process would make it more attractive to young people. 6 (18.2%) agreed that Allowing more flexibility of marriage preparation process would make it more attractive to young people. 4(12.1.1%) strongly agreed that Allowing more flexibility of marriage preparation process would make it more attractive to young people. Kusner et, al. (2014), indicate that the church has always played an important role in the lives of married people beyond its legal responsibilities. The church has long worked to aid married couples by providing them with pastoral counseling, premarital education and marriage enrichment programs. This efforts have been especially crucial during periods of rapid societal change, when new cultural norms and expectations have added stress to already tense marriage bonds.

6.11 The Catholic Church should create support groups for married couples to share experiences and strengthened their marriages

Table 40: The Catholic Church should create support groups for married couples to share experiences and strengthened their marriages

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	1	3.0,
Neutral	2	6.1
Agree	7	21.2
Strongly agree	22	66.7
Total	33	100

The findings of table 50 above shows that 22(66.7%) strongly agreed that The Catholic Church should create support groups for married couples to share experiences and strengthened their marriages. Focus group discussions showed that the Church should create more interactive groups made up of married couples and the young members in order to enhance mentorship.7(21.2%) agreed that the Catholic Church should create support groups for married couples to share experiences and strengthened their marriages. 2(6.1%)were neutral on whether the Catholic Church should create support groups for married couples to share experiences and strengthened their marriages

1(3.0%) disagreed with the question whether the Catholic Church should create support groups for married couples to share experiences and strengthened their marriages. 1(3.0%) strongly disagreed with the question whether the Catholic Church should create support groups for married couples to share experiences and strengthened their marriages.

6.12 The church should place greater emphasis on the spiritual aspects of marriage during counselling

Table 41: The church should place greater emphasis on the spiritual aspects of marriage during counselling

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	5	5.4
Disagree	11	12.0
Neutral	10	10.9
Agree	46	50.0
Strongly agree	20	21.7
Total	92	100

The findings of the study indicates that majority of married members 46(50.0%) agreed that the church should place greater emphasis on the spiritual aspects of marriage during counselling. This is affirmed by a respondent who argued that, “marriage is a covenant with God through the vows taken by the couple. It should be taken seriously since breaking this covenant has great consequences” (CCC3, 2025). This is why the Catholic Church is open with marriage in the church since it gives its members a chance to decide on their own and not coercing its members to engage in church weddings. On the other hand 20 (21.7%)strongly agreed that the church should place greater emphasis on the spiritual aspects of marriage during counselling 10 (10.9%) were neutral on whether the church should place greater emphasis on the spiritual aspects of marriage during counselling 11 (12.0%) disagreed with the question whether the church should place greater emphasis on the spiritual aspects of marriage during counselling 5 (5.4%) strongly disagreed with the question whether the church should place greater emphasis on the spiritual aspects of marriage during counselling.

6.13 Church leaders oftenly provide enough guidance for couples to understand the deeper meaning of marriage

Table 42: Church leaders oftenly provide enough guidance for couples to understand the deeper meaning of marriage

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	10	10.9
Disagree	45	48.9
Neutral	12	13.0
Agree	16	17.4
Strongly agree	9	9.8
Total	92	100

The findings of the study shows that 45 (48.9%) of married couples disagreed with the question whether Church leaders often provide enough guidance for couples to understand the deeper meaning of marriage. This implies that, there is need for church leaders to oftenly provide guidance for couples to understand meaning of marriage and encourage them to stand firm in their marriages.

10 (10.9%) Strongly disagreed with the question whether Church leaders oftenly provide enough guidance for couples to understand the deeper meaning of marriage. 12 (13.0%) were neutral on whether Church leaders oftenly provide enough guidance for couples to understand the deeper meaning of marriage. 16 (17.4%) agreed that Church leaders oftenly provide enough guidance for couples to understand the deeper meaning of marriage. 9 (9.8%) strongly agreed that Church leaders oftenly provide enough guidance for couples to understand the deeper meaning of marriage.

6.14 The church should offer more interactive workshops to help couples understand the significance of marriage

Table 43: The church should offer more interactive workshops to help couples understand the significance of marriage

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3	3.3
Disagree	5	5.4
Neutral	8	8.7
Agree	63	68.5
Strongly agree	13	14.1
Total	92	100

The findings of the study shows that majority of the married members 63 (68.5%) agreed that the church should offer more interactive workshops to help couples

understand the significance of marriage. Focus group discussions supported this idea of interactive workshops involving both newly wedded and the older members in marriage where they can have an open discussion. This will give them knowledge on how to cope in marriage as a Christian.

13 (14.1%) Strongly agreed that the church should offer more interactive workshops to help couples understand the significance of marriage. 8 (8.7%) were neutral on whether the church should offer more interactive workshops to help couples understand the significance of marriage 5 (5.4%) disagreed with the question whether the church should offer more interactive workshops to help couples understand the significance of marriage in the Christian faith 3 (3.3%) strongly disagreed with the question whether the church should offer more interactive workshops to help couples understand the significance of marriage.

6.15 Christian Marriage counselling should address contemporary challenges faced by couples today

Table 44: Christian Marriage counselling should address contemporary challenges faced by couples today

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3	3.3
Disagree	4	4.3
Neutral	10	10.9
Agree	54	58.7
Strongly agree	21	22.8
Total	92	100

The findings of the study shows that 54 (58.7%) of married couples agreed that Christian Marriage counselling should address contemporary challenges faced by couples today. Focus group discussions of unmarried members indicated that the world today is more secular hence need for the church to address such issues brought about by secularism.

21 (22.8%) Strongly agreed that a Christian Marriage counselling should address contemporary challenges faced by couples today 10 (10.9%) were neutral on the question whether Christian Marriage counselling should address contemporary challenges faced by couples today. 4 (4.3%) Disagreed with the question whether

Christian Marriage counselling should address contemporary challenges faced by couples today 3 (3.3%) strongly disagreed with the question whether Christian Marriage counselling should address contemporary challenges faced by couples today

6.16 The church should emphasize the lifelong commitment of marriage in its teachings and ceremonies more explicitly

Table 45: The church should emphasize the lifelong commitment of marriage in its teachings and ceremonies more explicitly

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3	3.3
Disagree	13	14.1
Neutral	20	21.7
Agree	47	51.1
Strongly agree	9	9.8
Total	92	100

The findings from Table 55 above shows that 47 (51.1%) of the married couples agreed that the church should emphasize the lifelong commitment of marriage in its teachings and ceremonies more explicitly. A respondent averred that “marriage in the Catholic Church is a lifelong commitment and the church allows separation in very serious cases and not divorce” (CCC7, 2025). 9 (9.8%) Strongly agreed that the church should emphasize the lifelong commitment of marriage in its teachings and ceremonies more explicitly. 20 (21.7%) were neutral on whether the church should emphasize the lifelong commitment of marriage in its teachings and ceremonies more explicitly. 13 (14.1%) disagreed with the question whether the church should emphasize the lifelong commitment of marriage in its teachings and ceremonies more explicitly. 3 (3.3%) strongly disagreed with the question whether the church should emphasize the lifelong commitment of marriage in its teachings and ceremonies more explicitly. These findings are in line with the observation of Keane, (2009) that the sacramental nature of marriage required a lifelong commitment to faithfulness, which the church views as foundational to living out the vocation of Christian marriage.

6.17 More testimonies from married couples should be shared in church to inspire others about the importance of church marriage

Table 46: More testimonies from married couples should be shared in church to inspire others about the importance of church marriage

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	5	5.4
Disagree	8	8.7
Neutral	7	7.6
Agree	56	60.9
Strongly agree	16	17.4
Total	92	100

The findings of the study show that 56 (60.9%) of married members agreed that more testimonies from married couples should be shared in church to inspire others about the importance of church marriage. These findings indicate that those members wedded in church can greatly impact on young ones to admire church marriages. 16 (17.4%) Strongly agreed that more testimonies from married couples should be shared in church to inspire others about the importance of church marriage. 7 (7.6%) were neutral on whether more testimonies from married couples should be shared in church to inspire others about the importance of church marriage. 8 (8.7%) Disagreed with the question whether more testimonies from married couples should be shared in church to inspire others about the importance of church marriage 5 (5.4%) strongly disagreed with the question whether more testimonies from married couples should be shared in church to inspire others about the importance of church marriage.

6.18 The church should offer support to couples after their marriage ceremony to help them maintain a strong Christian marriage

Table 47: Offer support to couples after their marriage ceremony to help them maintain a strong Christian marriage

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	6	6.5
Disagree	2	2.2
Neutral	1	1.1
Agree	61	66.3
Strongly agree	22	23.9
Total	92	100

The findings of the study shows that 61 (66.3%) of married couples agreed that the church should offer support to couples after their marriage ceremony to help them

maintain a strong Christian marriage. A respondent supports this by arguing that “the pre-marital counselling is not enough to enhance a stable marriage. There is need to follow up these couples and even offer post-marital counselling “(CCC3, 2025). 22(23.9%) Strongly agreed that the church should offer support to couples after their marriage ceremony to help them maintain a strong Christian marriage. 1(1.1%) were neutral on whether the church should offer support to couples after their marriage ceremony to help them maintain a strong Christian marriage. 2 (2.2%) disagreed with the question whether The church should offer support to couples after their marriage ceremony to help them maintain a strong Christian marriage. 6(6.5%) strongly disagreed with question whether the church should offer support to couples after their marriage ceremony to help them maintain a strong Christian marriage.

Wojtyla (1981) noted that marriage is a way of personal development and cooperation with God in the transmission of life. He emphasizes the need for pastoral assistance in educating young people for marriage, supporting young couples and addressing economic and housing difficulties.

6.19 Church leaders should promote the idea that marriage is not just a contract, but a covenant with God

Table 48: Church leaders should promote the idea that marriage is not just a contract, but a covenant with God

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	5	5.4
Disagree	6	6.5
Neutral	8	8.7
Agree	54	58.7
Strongly agree	19	20.7
Total	92	100

The findings of the study shows that 54 (58.7%) of married members agreed that church leaders should promote the idea that marriage is not just a contract, but a covenant with God. This was affirmed by a respondent who argued that, “marriage in the Catholic Church is not a contract which a couple can sign and the next day they part ways” (CCC4, 2025). He also asserted that secularism have brought about the idea of contract and young people are easily influenced by influential people in social media.

These people take marriage as a contract and negatively influence the youths. Marriage should be taken with the seriousness it deserves

On the other hand 19 (20.7%) strongly agreed that Church leaders should promote the idea that marriage is not just a contract, but a covenant with God. 8 (8.7%) were neutral on whether Church leaders should promote the idea that marriage is not just a contract, but a covenant with God 6 (6.5%) disagreed with the question whether Church leaders should promote the idea that marriage is not just a contract, but a covenant with God while 5 (5.4%) strongly disagreed with the question whether Church leaders should promote the idea that marriage is not just a contract, but a covenant with God.

6.20 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter's findings show that members of Our Lady of Visitation Deanery value church marriage and would encourage more members to marry in church. The church has a lot to do to enhance church marriage in a changing world. Leaders of the church should collaborate with the clergy to enhance teachings on marriage and practical guidance relating to marriage and practical guidance relating to practical aspects of married life. Workshops and seminars should be more interactive to enhance members to share their experience in marriage.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE IMPACT OF SOCIETAL CHANGES ON CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE PRACTICES IN OUR LADY OF VISITATION DEANERY, DIOCESE OF EMBU, KENYA.

7.1 Introduction

The impacts of societal changes on traditional church marriage practices in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery are examined in this chapter. The society has greatly changed due to moderation hence increase in secularism. This made it necessary to find out how these changes have impacted the church marriage practices in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery.

Structural functionalism theory supported an investigation into how changes in societal values such as increasing secularism or shifting views on divorce and cohabitation, might challenge or reinforce the church's teaching on marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery, Diocese of Embu. By understanding how the catholic Church functions to preserve marital norms and values, this theory was used to enable the researcher understand the impact of societal changes on traditional church marriage practices. This was done by distributing questionnaires to married couples and members preparing to marry. Interview guide to the clergy and focus group discussions to unmarried members. These impacts were discussed below

7.2 Cohabitation before marriage had become more socially acceptable than in previous generations

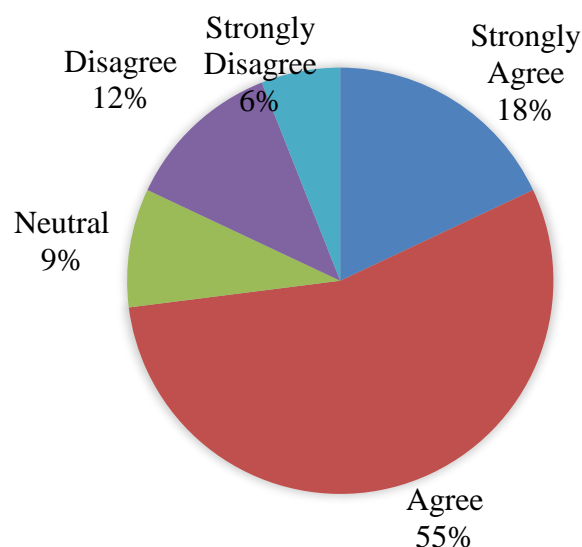


Figure 8: Cohabitation before marriage had become more socially acceptable than in previous generations

The findings of the study indicates that 18 (55%) of the members preparing to marry agreed that cohabitation before marriage had become more socially acceptable than in previous generations. This is supported by a respondent who argued that, “the church emphasizes there should be no sexual intercourse before marriage” (CCC1, 2025). Therefore, cohabitation is illegal in the Catholic Church teachings. He further argues that, with the changing world, many young people practice sex before marriage. 6(18%) Strongly agreed that cohabitation before marriage had become more socially acceptable than in previous generations 3(9%) were neutral on whether cohabitation before marriage had become more socially acceptable than in previous generations 4 (12%) disagreed with the question whether cohabitation before marriage had become more socially acceptable than in previous generations 2 (6%) strongly disagreed with the question whether cohabitation before marriage had become more socially acceptable than in previous generations.

7.3 Same sex marriage laws and societal acceptance have influenced catholic marriage practices

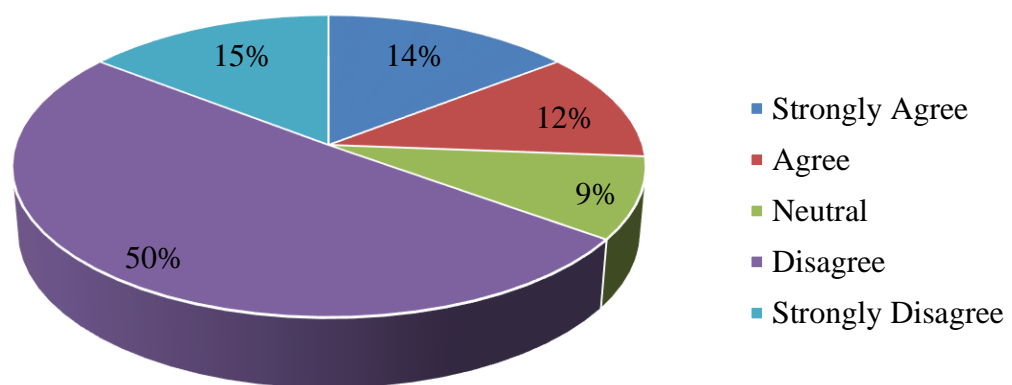


Figure 9: Same sex marriage laws and societal acceptance have influenced catholic marriage practices

The findings of the study shows that 17 (52%) of members preparing to marry disagreed with the same sex marriage laws and societal acceptance have influenced catholic marriage practices. This is affirmed by a respondent who argued that, “the Catholic

Church teachings emphasis on heterosexual marriages between a man and a woman for the purpose of procreation” (CCC4, 2025). He further asserts that with same sex marriage there will be no children hence end of world. 5 (15%) Strongly disagreed with the question of whether same sex marriage laws and societal acceptance have influenced catholic marriage practices 3 (9%) were neutral on whether same sex marriage laws and societal acceptance have influenced catholic marriage practices 4 (12%) agreed that same sex marriage laws and societal acceptance have influenced catholic marriage practices. Finally, 4 (12%) strongly agreed that same sex marriage laws and societal acceptance have influenced catholic marriage practices.

7.4 Changes in family structures such as single parent families affect how people approach marriage in the Catholic Church

Table 49: Changes in family structures such as single parent families affect how people approach marriage in the Catholic Church

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	3	9.1
Neutral	3	9.1
Agree	20	60.6
Strongly agree	6	18.2
Total	33	100

The findings of the study shows that 20 (60.6%) of members preparing to marry agreed that Changes in family structures such as single parent families affect how people approach marriage in the Catholic Church. This was affirmed by a respondent who argued that, “the structure of the family in which young people come from can affect their approach of marriage. The church therefore encourages well based family with father and mother for the children to feel experience love from both parents” (CCC5, 2025). He further asserts that the church discourages birth of children out of wedlock. On the other hand 6 (18.2%)strongly agreed that Changes in family structures such as single parent families affect how people approach marriage in the Catholic Church 3 (9.1%) were neutral on whether Changes in family structures such as single parent families affect how people approach marriage in the Catholic Church 3 (9.1%) disagreed with the question whether Changes in family structures such as single parent families affect how people approach marriage in the Catholic Church while 1 (3.0%)

strongly disagreed with the question whether Changes in family structures such as single parent families affect how people approach marriage in the Catholic Church.

7.5 Catholic couples today are less likely to seek premarital counselling compared to previous generation

Table 50: Catholic couples today are less likely to seek premarital counselling compared to previous generation

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	17	51.5
Disagree	10	30.3
Neutral	1	3.0
Agree	3	9.1
Strongly agree	2	6.1
Total	33	100

The findings of the study shows that 17 (51.5%) majority of members preparing to marry strongly disagreed with the question whether Catholic couples today are less likely to seek premarital counselling compared to previous generation. A respondent argued that, “previous counselling is a requirement for couples to wed in the church. It can be offered in personal level or inform of seminars if the members preparing to marry in the church are many” (CCC6, 2025). On the other hand 10 (30.3%) disagreed with the question whether Catholic couples today are less likely to seek premarital counselling compared to previous generation 1 (3.0%) were neutral on whether Catholic couples today are less likely to seek premarital counselling compared to previous generation 3 (9.1%) agreed that Catholic couples today are less likely to seek premarital counselling compared to previous generation 2 (6.1%)strongly agreed that Catholic couples today are less likely to seek premarital counselling compared to previous generation. The findings from focus group discussions of unmarried members showed that the church can include professional counsellors in their preparation programs in order to relate well with marriage experience. They argued out that priests are not in marriage hence they may not relate well with their problems in certain circumstances.

7.6 Divorce rates in society influence catholic marriage practices and perceptions of sacrament of marriage

Table 51: Divorce rates in society influence catholic marriage practices and perceptions of sacrament of marriage

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	2	6.1
Neutral	3	9.1
Agree	9	27.3
Strongly agree	18	54.5
Total	33	100

The findings of the study shows that 18(54.5%) strongly agreed that divorce rates in society influence catholic marriage practices and perceptions of sacrament of marriage. A respondent argued that, “the stand of the church is on indissolubility of marriage meaning that divorce is not allowed in the Catholic Church. When divorce rates increase in society, it goes against the Catholic Church teachings” (CCC2, 2025). On the other hand 9 (27.3%) agreed that divorce rates in society influence catholic marriage practices and perceptions of sacrament of marriage 3 (9.1%) were neutral on whether divorce rates in society influence catholic marriage practices and perceptions of sacrament of marriage 2 (6.1%) disagreed on the question whether divorce rates in society influence catholic marriage practices and perceptions of sacrament of marriage 1 (3.0%) strongly disagreed on the question whether divorce rates in society influence catholic marriage practices and perceptions of sacrament of marriage.

7.7 Catholic families are increasingly open to nontraditional forms of relationship

Table 52: Catholic families are increasingly open to nontraditional forms of relationship

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	4	12.1
Neutral	6	18.2
Agree	16	48.5
Strongly agree	6	18.2
Total	33	100

The findings of the study shows that 16 (48.5%) of members preparing to marry agreed that the catholic families are increasingly open to non-traditional forms of relationships such as cohabitation before marriage. This is affirmed by a respondent who argued

that, “today, youths are greatly exposed to modernization than before, they tend to copy what is done in the western countries” (CCC1,2025). On the other hand 6 (18.2%) strongly agreed that Catholic families are increasingly open to nontraditional forms of relationship 6 (18.2%) were neutral on whether Catholic families are increasingly open to nontraditional forms of relationship 1 (3.0%) Strongly disagreed on the question whether Catholic families are increasingly open to nontraditional forms of relationship 4 (12.1%) disagreed on the question whether Catholic families are increasingly open to nontraditional forms of relationship.

7.8 Cultural influences such as media and popular culture challenges traditional catholic views on marriage

Table 53: Cultural influences such as media and popular culture challenges traditional catholic views on marriage

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	2	6.1
Neutral	1	3.0
Agree	10	30.3
Strongly agree	19	57.6
Total	33	100

The findings of the study shows that 19 (57.6%) of members preparing to marry strongly agreed that Cultural influences such as media and popular culture challenges traditional catholic views on marriage. Findings from focus group discussions of unmarried members shows that the traditional catholic view on marriage is challenged by modern practices like homosexuality, polygamy, cohabitation, increased divorce rates all that are rampant in modern society. On the other hand 10 (30.3%) agreed that Cultural influences such as media and popular culture challenges traditional catholic views on marriage 1(3.0%)were neutral on whether Cultural influences such as media and popular culture challenges traditional catholic views on marriage 2(6.1%) disagreed on the question whether Cultural influences such as media and popular culture challenges traditional catholic views on marriage 1 (3.0%) strongly disagreed on the question whether Cultural influences such as media and popular culture challenges traditional catholic views on marriage.

7.9 Catholic teachings on marriage as a lifelong commitment are highly respected by young adults today

Table 54: Catholic teachings on marriage as a lifelong commitment are highly respected by young adults today

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	16	48.5
Disagree	8	24.2
Neutral	3	9.1
Agree	5	15.2
Strongly agree	1	3.0
Total	33	100

The findings of the study shows that 16 (48.5%) of members preparing to marry strongly disagreed with the question whether the Catholic teachings on marriage as a lifelong commitment are highly respected by young adults today. A respondent supports this by arguing that, “many young adults today are greatly influenced by modernization which views and portrays marriage as a contract” (CCC4, 2025). On the other 8 (24.2%) disagreed with the question whether Catholic teachings on marriage as a lifelong commitment are highly respected by young adults today 3 (9.1%) were neutral on whether Catholic teachings on marriage as a lifelong commitment are highly respected by young adults today 5 (15.2%) agreed that the Catholic teachings on marriage as a lifelong commitment are highly respected by young adults today 1 (3.0%) strongly agreed that the Catholic teachings on marriage as a lifelong commitment are highly respected by young adults today.

7.10 The growing secularization of society led more Catholics to question the importance of the church in their marriage decisions

Table 55: The growing secularization of society led more Catholics to question the importance of the church in their marriage decisions

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.0
Disagree	2	6.1
Neutral	1	3.0
Agree	19	57.6
Strongly agree	10	30.3
Total	33	100

The findings of the study shows that 19 (57.6%) majority of members preparing to marry agreed that the growing secularization of society led more Catholics to question

the importance of the church in their marriage decision. 10 (30.3%) strongly agreed that the growing secularization of society led more Catholics to question the importance of the church in their marriage decision. 1 (3.0%) were neutral on whether the growing secularization of society led more Catholics to question the importance of the church in their marriage decision. 2 (6.1%) disagreed with the question whether the growing secularization of society led more Catholics to question the importance of the church in their marriage decisions. 1 (3.0%) strongly disagreed with the question whether the growing secularization of society led more Catholics to question the importance of the church in their marriage decision. The findings above shows that secularization has greatly affected the way people perceive marriage in the Catholic Church. Boswell (1994) explored historical Christian practices regarding same sex unions, highlighting that early Christian communities may have recognized such relationships. His work challenges contemporary understandings of traditional marriage within the church. His research sparked major debates, highlighting how societal and theological shifts led to rigidification of heterosexual norms in church doctrine over time.

7.11 Changing societal norms e.g. acceptance of same sex marriage have influenced my views on marriage within the church

Table 56: Changing societal norms e.g. acceptance of same sex marriage have influenced my views on marriage within the church

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	21	22.8
Disagree	51	55.4
Neutral	10	10.9
Agree	8	8.7
Strongly agree	2	2.2
Total	92	100

The findings from table 68 above shows that 51 (55.4%) of married couples disagreed with the question whether changing societal norms e.g. acceptance of same sex marriage have influenced my views on marriage within the church. 21(22.8%)strongly disagreed with the question whether changing societal norms e.g. acceptance of same sex marriage has influenced my views on marriage within the church. 10 (10.9%) were neutral on whether changing societal norms e.g. acceptance of same sex marriage has influenced my views on marriage within the church. 8 (8.7%) agreed that changing societal norms e.g. acceptance of same sex marriage have influenced my views on

marriage within the church. 2 (2.2%) strongly agreed that changing societal norms e.g. acceptance of same sex marriage have influenced my views on marriage within the church.

Stankis (2015) observed that many catholic couples enter marriage without fully understanding its sacramental nature. Secular cultural influences often shape perceptions of marriage more than church teachings. She highlights that tribunal work reveals a recurring lack of formation among couples whose marriages eventually fail. These findings shows that most members in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery value marriage between a man and a woman as taught by the church. the church’s adaptation to evolving cultural norms. Creary (2011) found that the Catholic Church often struggled to reconcile its sacramental understanding of marriage with indigenous marriage customs, many of which were flexible or communal. Although the church attempted to enforce a standardized, western model of marriage, it gradually recognized the need to adapt to local social structures.

7.12 The rise of cohabitation before marriage has made me question the importance of formal church marriages

Table 57: The rise of cohabitation before marriage has made me question the importance of formal church marriages

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	30	32.6
Disagree	42	45.7
Neutral	13	14.1
Agree	5	5.4
Strongly agree	2	2.2
Total	92	100

Table 69 above shows that 42 (45.7%) of married couples disagreed with the question whether the rise of cohabitation before marriage has made me question the importance of formal church marriages. A respondent argues that, “cohabitation is not recognized by the church and couples do not receive blessings of God like that of church weddings” (CCC3,2025). On the other hand 30 (32.6%) strongly disagreed with the question whether the rise of cohabitation before marriage has made me question the importance of formal church marriages 13 (14.1%) were neutral on whether the rise of cohabitation before marriage has made me question the importance of formal church marriages 5

(5.4%) agreed that the rise of cohabitation before marriage has made me question the importance of formal church marriages 2 (2.2%) strongly agreed that the rise of cohabitation before marriage has made me question the importance of formal church marriages. These findings shows that most members of Our Lady of Visitation deanery value church marriage.

7.13 Societal pressure to delay marriages has affected Christian couple’s decision to marry in the church

Table 58: Societal pressure to delay marriages has affected Christian couple’s decision to marry in the church

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	8	8.7
Disagree	3	3.3
Neutral	12	13.0
Agree	13	14.1
Strongly agree	56	60.9
Total	92	100

The findings of the study shows that 56 (60.9%) of married members strongly agreed that Societal pressure to delay marriages has affected Christian couple’s decision to marry in the church. This is affirmed by a respondent who argued that, “there is a lot of pressure in the society for people to have the so called big weddings, a wedding attended by many people and many vehicles” (CCC5, 2025). On the other hand, the church allows the couple to marry by involving only 4 members. Pressures makes many couples to delay their marriage in the church. Further 13 (14.1%) agreed that Societal pressure to delay marriages has affected Christian couple’s decision to marry in the church 12 (13.0%) were neutral on whether Societal pressure to delay marriages has affected Christian couple’s decision to marry in the church 3 (3.3%) disagreed with the question whether Societal pressure to delay marriages has affected Christian couple’s decision to marry in the church 8 (8.7%) strongly disagreed with the question whether Societal pressure to delay marriages has affected Christian couple’s decision to marry in the church.

7.14: The growing acceptance of divorce in society has made the Christian view of lifelong marriage seem less attainable

Table 59: The growing acceptance of divorce in society has made the Christian view of lifelong marriage seem less attainable

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	51	55.4
Disagree	17	18.5
Neutral	3	3.3
Agree	16	17.4
Strongly agree	5	5.4
Total	92	100

The findings of the study shows that 51 (55.4%) of married couples strongly disagreed with the question whether the growing acceptance of divorce in society has made the Christian view of lifelong marriage seem less attainable. 17 (18.5%) Disagreed with the question whether the growing acceptance of divorce in society has made the Christian view of lifelong marriage seem less attainable. 3 (3.3%) were neutral on whether The growing acceptance of divorce in society has made the Christian view of lifelong marriage seem less attainable. 16 (17.4%) agreed that The growing acceptance of divorce in society has made the Christian view of lifelong marriage seem less attainable. 5 (5.4%) strongly agreed that The growing acceptance of divorce in society has made the Christian view of lifelong marriage seem less attainable. These findings shows that the success of a marriage depends on the couple involved and not what others do or say. This observation supports Magesa (1977) who emphasized that understanding and respecting African traditions can enrich Christian marriage practices and make them more meaningful to African believers

7.15 The church should emphasize the importance of commitment in marriage despite societal pressures

Table 60: The church should emphasize the importance of commitment in marriage despite societal pressures

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3	3.3
Disagree	2	2.2
Neutral	4	4.3
Agree	21	22.8
Strongly agree	62	67.4
Total	92	100

The findings of the study show that 62 (67.4%) of married couples strongly agreed that the church should emphasize the importance of commitment to marriage despite societal pressures. These findings shows that marriage us an important social institution. It is the foundation of the society. A respondent asserted that, “a good family makes a good church” (CCC3, 2025). On the other hand 21 (22.8%) agreed that the church should emphasize the importance of commitment in marriage despite societal pressures 4 (4.3%) were neutral on whether the church should emphasize the importance of commitment in marriage despite societal pressures 2 (2.2%) disagreed on whether the church should emphasize the importance of commitment in marriage despite societal pressures 3 (3.3%) strongly disagreed on whether the church should emphasize the importance of commitment in marriage despite societal pressures. These findings supports Zukowski (2010), who avers that the church’s view of marriage insists on the moral responsibility of spouses to uphold the sanctity of the marital relationship, which is not only a personal commitment but also a reflection of divine love.

7.16 I would encourage others to marry in church despite societal shifts in marriage norms

Table 61: I would encourage others to marry in church despite societal shifts in marriage norms

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	4	4.3
Disagree	8	8.7
Neutral	2	2.2
Agree	18	19.6
Strongly agree	60	65.2
Total	92	100

The findings of the study showed that 60 (65.2%) of married couples strongly agreed to encourage others to marry in church despite societal shifts in marriage norms 18 (19.6%) agreed to encourage others to marry in church despite societal shifts in marriage norms 2 (2.2%) were neutral on whether to encourage others to marry in church despite societal shifts in marriage norms 8 (8.7%)disagreed on whether they would encourage others to marry in church despite societal shifts in marriage norms 4 (4.3%) strongly disagreed on whether they would encourage others to marry in church despite societal shifts in marriage norms. Nweke calls for a resolution that respects

cultural identities while maintaining the integrity of church teachings. Pieper and Henau (1990), in their study on religious concerns regarding marriage in the church investigates the motivations behind church weddings. They revealed that many couples view marriage as a sacred union with God as a witness and source of marital values. The findings highlight the need for clearer articulation of the Christian significance of marriage.

7.17 Conclusion

In a nutshell, the findings of this chapter have indicated that secularization, media, societal pressures and changes in societal norms have influenced church marriage practices in Our Lady of Visitation deanery. However, despite all these influences many church members still perceive that church marriage is relevant to them and would encourage others to marry in the church.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

8.1 Summary

This section presents a summary of the findings of the four objectives of this study. The objectives of the study as stated in chapter two of this thesis were as follows: to examine the role of church teachings in shaping perceptions of marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery. To evaluate factors influencing Christians' perception of church marriages in our Lady of visitation deanery. To determine strategies for expanding the perception and practice of church marriages. In our Lord of Visitation Deanery. To analyze the impact of societal changes on traditional church marriage practices in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery. This study's objective one was to examine the role of church teachings in shaping perceptions of marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery. The research findings established that the Catholic Church teachings greatly shape perception of marriage among the faithful's. Majority of the respondents averred that they understood the Catholic Church teachings on marriage which was taught through catechism or during preparation for marriage in the church that is through pre-marital counselling. This is affirmed by a respondent who argued that, "the catholic faithful must undergo catechism in order to receive the 7 sacraments of the church" (CCC3, 2025). Marriage being a sacrament requires one to be taught clearly in order to have a basis of what it is.

The second objective of the study was to evaluate factors influencing Christians' perception of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery. The findings of this study indicate that there are many factors influencing Christians perception of church marriage which includes the catholic church teachings on marriages, societal views, family, biblical teachings, availability of church marriage services within their parishes. The findings also shows that the local culture influence Christians' perception of church marriage. A respondent supported this by arguing that, "for a couple to wed in church, they must fulfil traditional requirements whereby the man in supposed to pay bride wealth as a sign of appreciation to the wife's family. This is a requirement which the church takes with a lot of concern" (CCC5, 2025). The findings further showed that the

family greatly influences Christians' perception of church marriage. Christian based families encourage their family members to marry in church.

The third objective of the study was to determine strategies for expanding for expanding the perception and practice of church marriage in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery. The research findings indicated that the Catholic Church in Our Lady of Visitation deanery offers pre-marital counselling which is helpful in preparing couples who wed in church. The findings further shows that the church need to support married couples more by organizing for them interactive seminars and workshops. It should also provide post marital counselling to support those married in church. More resources for instance finances should be availed in order to support those preparing to wed in the church. The fourth objective of the study was to analyze the impact of societal changes on traditional church marriage practices in Our Lady of Visitation Deanery. The research findings indicates that societal pressures, media and secularization have influenced traditional marriage practices in our Lady of Visitation Deanery.

8.2 Conclusion

After an in-depth analysis of the role of the Catholic church teachings in shaping perceptions of church marriage, the study arrived at several key conclusions. First, it was evident that certain church teachings shape Christians perception of marriage such as monogamy, sacramental nature and indissolubility of marriage. These doctrines influence the faithful to view marriage not merely as a social contract but as a sacred covenant before God. Many Christians choose to solemnize their unions in the Church because they value the spiritual depth, moral guidance and communal recognition that accompany a church marriage. However, the findings also reveal that while these teachings are highly respected, some faithful find them challenging to uphold in practice particularly in situations involving marital conflict, infidelity or economic hardships. This tension between doctrine and lived experience indicates the need for ongoing pastoral support and practical guidance for couples.

The Study also concluded that several influence Christian's perception of Christian marriage within the Catholic Church in Our Lady of visitation deanery. Some of these factors includes family background, cultural practices, societal influences, church

teachings and personal beliefs. Families were found to have a strong influence as parental attitudes and marital modes often determine the value individuals attach to church weddings. Cultural norms and traditions sometimes conflict with church doctrines, leading to mixed perceptions about the relevance and necessity of church marriage. Societal expectations especially concerning status, economic capacity and modern trends also affect Christian's willingness to participate in church weddings. While the Catholic Church emphasize the sacramental and indissoluble nature of marriage, limited catechesis and inadequate pastoral guidance have contributed to misconceptions among believers. Lastly, personal beliefs and individual spirituality shape ones decision to embrace or disregard church marriage depending on one's understanding and level of faith commitment. Therefore, Christian's perceptions of church marriage are multidimensional and deeply rooted in social, cultural and spiritual contexts. There is need for the Catholic Church to strengthen understanding and appreciation of marriage through holistic approach involving families, the clergy and Christian community.

Thirdly, the study concluded that the Catholic Church has put in place several strategies for enhancing church marriage practices such as Catechism before marriage. However, there is inadequate premarital counselling and insufficient preparation of couples for marriage. Many couples enter into marriage without a deep understanding of its spiritual, emotional and social responsibilities, which often leads to marital conflicts and in some cases separation. The Catholic Church should not only focus on the celebration of marriage but also on adequate preparation of couples to live out their marital vocation in faith and love.

Lastly, the study concluded that, contemporary social changes have influenced the perception and practice of church marriage within our lady of visitation deanery. They include secularism, cohabitation, media influence and changing family structures. All these changes have challenged Church's moral and doctrinal teachings. Secularism has contributed to the gradual detachment of many Christians from religious norms hence reduced commitment to church marriage and increased acceptance of civil and informal unions. Cohabitation often perceived as a modern alternative to marriage has weakened the value placed on sacramental marriage leading to fewer couples seeking church

weddings. Furthermore, changing family structures have altered traditional support systems that upheld stable marriages. Therefore there is a gap between belief and practice hence calling upon the Catholic Church to renew Pastoral engagement, Moral guidance and contemporary realities.

8.3 Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

- i. Strengthening marriage Catechesis and premarital counselling: The Catholic church should intensify catechesis on the sacrament of marriage, targeting both the youth and the adults. Premarital counselling should address not only theological aspects but also practical issues such as communication, family planning, financial management and conflict resolution which will help couples to appreciate spiritual and social importance of marriage.
- ii. Continuous marriage formation: Post marriage formation programs should be introduced to support couples after the wedding. Parish –based marriage enrichment seminars and retreats can help sustain couples in their journey and strengthen their relationship.
- iii. Integration of culture and faith. The Catholic Church should continue to dialogue with local cultures. Appreciating positive cultural practices while addressing those that conflict with Catholic marital teachings.
- iv. Community sensitization: The Catholic Church leaders should organize forums and seminars that address societal misconceptions and promote church marriage as a sacred covenant rather than a societal status symbol. Peer mentorship should be promoted by pairing newly married couples with experienced ones to provide guidance and support.
- v. Training of marriage counsellors: The Catholic Church should invest in training and certifying lay and clergy counsellors with professional counselling skills grounded in the catholic doctrine. This will ensure that couples receive relevant, practical and faith based guidance.
- vi. Strengthening youth and family Apostolate: The Catholic Church should engage the youth early through catechesis and youth programs that emphasize the value and responsibilities of Christian marriage. This will help shape positive attitudes towards church marriage.

8.4 Suggestion for further studies

Based on the findings of this study, the research made the following suggestions for further research.

- i. Since this study was limited in our lady of visitation deanery, similar research can be done in other churches particularly mainstream churches for comparison of Christians' perception of church marriage.
- ii. The effects of modernization on church marriage.
- iii. The future of church marriage.
- iv. A comparative study between traditional and modern church marriage.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview Guide for Clergy in the Selected Catholic Churches.

- 1) Could you please introduce yourself and your role in the parish?
.....
.....
- 2) For how long have you been serving in this parish and in what capacity?
.....
.....
- 3) How would you describe the general perception of church marriage among Christians in this parish?
.....
.....
- 4) Are there any specific challenges you have observed regarding the understanding of marriage as a sacrament within the community?
.....
.....
- 5) In your experience, do Christians in the parish view marriage as a lifelong commitment: if not, what factors influence their view?
.....
.....
- 6) Are there any particular traditions or customs that parishioners in this church follow when preparing for marriage and how do these traditions align with or differ from the church's teachings?
.....
.....
- 7) How do societal issues, such as the rise of secularism or modern relationships, affect people's commitment to church marriage?
.....
.....
- 8) What is the role of the clergy in marriage preparation? How does the parish help couples prepare for a sacramental marriage?
.....
.....
- 9) Are there any particular challenges that the clergy face when counselling couples before marriage? What are the most common misconceptions or issues couples present during counselling?
.....
.....
- 10) How do you ensure that the Christian understanding of marriage is communicated clearly to couples during pre-marital counseling?
.....
.....
- 11) Have you noticed any shifts in how young Christians view marriage within the church over the years? What changes, if any, have you observed in terms of commitment or attitudes towards marriage?
.....
.....

- 12) How do you address concerns related to the high rates of divorce, separation, or cohabitation outside of marriage within the Christian community?
.....
.....
- 13) Do you feel that the church's teachings on marriage are relevant to the realities that couples face today? If not, what could be improved in how the church addressed the subject?
.....
.....
- 14) What role do you think the church should play in helping to strengthen marriages, especially given the challenges couples face today?
.....
.....
- 15) What steps is the church taking to support marriages in the modern context, especially considering social and economic pressures?
.....
.....
- 16) What advice would you give to couples who are preparing for marriage in the church?
.....
.....

Appendix II: Questionnaire for Members Preparing To Marry

I am a student at Chuka University, pursuing a Master's Program in Religious Studies. I am conducting a research on: “**An assessment of Christians’ Perception of Church Marriages in the Catholic, Our Lady of Visitation deanery, Diocese of Embu, Kenya**”. The questionnaire attached is meant to facilitate data collection for this study. I therefore kindly request you to answer the questions in the questionnaire to the best of your knowledge by ticking (✓) the appropriate alternative, or write the answers in the spaces provided. Note that you are not required to indicate your name. The information given will be solely used for the purpose of the study and will be treated with absolute confidentiality.

Your honest response and participation will be highly appreciated.

Gladwell Karimi Mbogo

AM/16/39815/18

(Researcher)

Kindly spare Sometime to fill in the questionnaire. All views and ideas will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Please answer all question as we cannot use the questionnaire if it is incomplete.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Put a tick (✓) against the correct choice

1. Gender: Male () Female ()
2. Age: Below 30 years () 31 – 40 () 41 – 50 () Above 50 ()
3. Level of education: Primary () Secondary () College () University ()

SECTION B: The Role of Church Teachings in Shaping Perceptions of Marriage

4. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about the role of the church teachings in shaping your perception of church marriage (Tick the appropriate choice using the scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree))

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
I understand the church's teachings on the sacrament of marriage					
I have learnt about the church's teachings on marriage through pre-marriage counselling					
I believe that Christian marriage, as taught by the church, is different from secular views of marriage					
The Catholic understanding of marriage strengthens my decision to marry in the church					
I feel that the church provides adequate preparation for couples planning to marry					
The church's teachings on marriage guide me in taking important marital decisions					
I am willing to follow the church's teachings in my journey towards marriage					
I feel supported by the church's teachings in my journey towards marriage					
I believe that following the church's teachings will help my marriage flourish in the long term					

SECTION C: Factors Influencing Christians’ Perception of Church Marriage

5. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about factors influencing Christians’ perception of church marriage by choosing one of the options: (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
I believe that marriage is a sacred sacrament in the Christian faith					
I feel that the church’s view on the sanctity of marriage aligns with my personal beliefs					
The Catholic church’s teachings on marriage has influenced my views on what constitutes a successful marriage					
The local culture in this parish strongly supports marriage in the church.					
Societal views about marriage in the church have influenced my perception of church marriage					
My family encourages marriage in the church as a necessary step for a blessed union					
The availability of church wedding services in this parish influenced my decision to marry in the church					
The requirement for pre-marriage counselling influences my decision to marry in the church					
I have observed that couples who marry in the church tend to have stronger marital relationships					

State any other factor that influences Christians’ perception of church marriage

.....

SECTION D: Strategies for Expanding the Perception and Practice of Church Marriage

6. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about strategies for expanding the perception and practice of church marriage by choosing one to the options: (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Marriage should be exclusively between a man and a woman as taught by the catholic church					
The Catholic Church marriage preparation programs e.g. pre-marital counselling are helpful in preparing couples for marriage					
More young people should be encouraged to marry in the catholic Church					
The church should update its teachings on marriage to better reflect contemporary values					
The catholic church should offer more resources for couples to understand the significance of marriage as a sacrament					
The church should create more inclusive and assessable programs that welcomes couples of all backgrounds to learn about the sacrament of marriage					

The church should use modern media e.g. social media, websites and videos to promote the idea of marriage in the church					
Catholic marriage preparation programs should include more emphasis on practical aspects of married life, such as finances and conflict resolution					
Allowing more flexibility of marriage preparation process would make it more attractive to young people					
The catholic church should create support groups for married couples to share experiences and strengthen their marriages					

State any other strategy for expanding Christians' perception of church marriage

.....

SECTION E: The Impact of Societal Changes of Traditional Church Marriage Practices

7. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements on the impact of societal changes on traditional church marriage practices by choosing one of the options: (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Cohabitation before marriage has become more socially acceptable than in previous generation					
Same sex marriage laws and societal acceptance have influenced catholic marriage practices					
Changes in family structures (e.g. single parent families, blended families) affect how people approach marriage in the catholic church)					
Catholic couples today are less likely to seek premarital counselling compared to previous generation					
Divorce rates in society influence catholic marriage practices and perceptions of the sacrament of marriage					
Catholic families are increasingly open to non-traditional forms of relationships, such as cohabitation without marriage					
Cultural influences, such as media and popular culture, challenge traditional catholic views on marriage					
The role of women in marriage, as defined by Catholic doctrine, has been challenged by societal shifts towards gender equality					
Catholic teaching on marriage as a lifelong commitment are highly respected by young adults today					
The growing secularization of society has led more Catholics to question the importance of the church in the marriage decisions					

Thank you for having taken time to respond to the above questions

Appendix III: Questionnaire for Married Couples

I am a student at Chuka University, pursuing a Master’s Program in Religious Studies. I am conducting research on: “**An assessment of Christians’ Perception of Church Marriages in the Catholic, Our Lady of Visitation deanery, Diocese of Embu, Kenya**”. The questionnaire attached is meant to facilitate data collection for this study. I therefore kindly request you to answer the questions in the questionnaire to the best of your knowledge by ticking (√) the appropriate alternative, or write the answers in the spaces provided. Note that you are not required to indicate your name. The information given will be solely used for the purpose of the study and will be treated with absolute confidentiality.

Your honest response and participation will be highly appreciated.

Gladwell Karimi Mbogo
AM/16/39815/18
(Researcher)

Kindly spare sometime to fill up the questionnaire. All views and ideas will be treated with outmost confidentiality. Please answer all question as we cannot use the questionnaire if it is incomplete.

SECTION A: Background Information

Put a tick (√) against the correct choice

1. Gender:
Male ()
Female ()

2. Age:
Below 30 years ()
31 – 40 ()
41 – 50 ()
Above 55 ()

3. Level of education:
Primary ()
Secondary ()
College ()
University ()

SECTION B: The Role of Church Teachings in Shaping Perception of Marriage

4. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement on the role of church teaching in shaping perception of marriage by choosing one of the options: (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree).

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Church teachings on marriage have significantly shaped my understanding of the sacrament of marriage					
The teachings of the church have helped me to strengthen my commitment to my spouse					

The idea of marriage as a sacrament, as taught by the church has helped me navigate challenges in my marriage					
Church teachings on marriage have influenced how I approached premarital counselling					
I felt spiritually guided by the church's teachings during the process of getting married					
The church's teachings on marriage help strengthen the relationship between spouses and their children					
Church teachings about the role of husband and wife have shaped how we divide responsibilities within our marriage					
I feel supported by church's teachings when faced with marital difficulties					
While church teachings on marriage are valuable, they sometimes seem disconnected from personal experience.					

State any other role of church teachings in shaping perceptions of marriage

.....

SECTION C: Factors Influencing Christians' Perception of Church Marriage

5. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements of factors influencing Christians' perception of church marriage by choosing one of the options: (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
My family expected me to get married in the church as part of our Christian tradition					
Christian couples are expected to marry in the church to be viewed as morally upright in the society					
Marriage in the church helped us to understand the deeper meaning of commitment					
I chose to marry in the church because I wanted to make a public declaration of my faith					
My spouse and I consulted with the priest or church leaders before making the decision to marry in the church					
The church should adapt its teachings on marriage to reflect contemporary societal changes Many young Christian couples do not see church marriage as important					

State any other factor influencing Christians' perception of church marriage

.....

SECTION D: Strategies for Expanding the Perception of Practice of Church

6. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements on strategies for expanding the perceptions and practice of church marriage by choosing one of the options: (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree).

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
The church should place greater emphasis on the spiritual aspects of marriage during counselling					
Church leaders often provide enough guidance for couples to understand the deeper meaning of marriage					
The church should offer more interactive workshops to help couples understand the significance of marriage in the Christian faith					
Christian marriage counselling should address contemporary challenges faced by married couples today					
The church should emphasize the lifelong commitment of marriage in its teachings and ceremonies more explicitly					
More testimonies from married couples should be shared in church to inspire others about the importance of church marriage					
The church should offer support to couples after their marriage ceremony to help them maintain a strong Christian marriage					
Church leaders should promote the idea that marriage is not just a contract, but a covenant with God.					

State any other strategy for expanding the perception and practice of church marriage

.....

SECTION E: The Impact of Societal Changes on Traditional Church Marriage Practices

7. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements on the impact of societal changes on traditional church marriage practices by choosing one of the options: (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Changing societal norms e.g. acceptance of same sex marriage have influenced my views on marriage within the church					
The rise of cohabitation before marriage has made me question the importance of formal church marriages					
Societal pressure to delay marriage has affected Christian couples' decision to marry in the church					
The growing acceptance of divorce in society has made the Christian view of the roles within a marriage					
The internet and online resources have made church marriages more accessible to couples today					
The church should emphasize the importance of commitment in marriage despite societal pressures					

Thank you for having taken time to respond to the above questions

Appendix IV: Focus Group Discussion Questions for Unmarried Members

Kindly take your time and discuss the questions stated below. Your discussion will be handled with confidentiality.

SECTION A: General Information

Please indicate the correct answer

1. Gender:
Number of Males ()
Number of Females ()
2. Highest Level of education attained in numbers:
Primary ()
Secondary ()
College ()
University ()

SECTION B: Interview Questions

3. How important do you think marriage is in the context of the catholic teachings?
.....
.....
.....
4. What is your understanding of the role of the Catholic Church in marriage?
.....
.....
.....
5. Do you think the Catholic Church's view of marriage align with modern day society's view? Why or why not?
.....
.....
.....
6. What are your thoughts on the idea that marriage is a lifelong commitment, as emphasized by the church?
.....
.....
.....
7. How much influence do you think the church has on an unmarried person's decisions to get married?
.....
.....
.....
8. Do you believe that being married in the church is a necessary step for couples, or is it more of a tradition?
.....
.....
.....
9. How do you feel about the idea that couples must go through premarital counselling or other church programs before marriage?
.....
.....
.....
10. Do you think the Catholic Church's view on marriage conflicts with contemporary societal changes e.g. cohabitation, same sex marriage etc? If so how?
.....
.....
.....

11. Are there any challenges you think unmarried Catholics face when it comes to getting married in the church?

.....
.....

12. Do you think there are enough resources or support for unmarried Catholic's considering marriage, or do you feel it could be improved?

.....
.....

13. How do you think the church can better address the needs and concerns of unmarried individuals when it comes to marriage?

.....
.....

Appendix V: Introduction Letter to the Parish

Gladwell Karimi
P.O Box 1359
Embu.

The Parish Priest
.....
Dear Sir

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH WITHIN YOUR PARISH

I am a postgraduate student in Chuka University pursuing a master’s degree in religious studies. I am collecting data on Christians’ perception of church marriage in the Catholic Church within our lady of visitation deanery. Your parish has been selected to help in this study.

I therefore seek permission to distribute the attached questionnaires and conduct interviews and focus group discussions in order to get the required information.

I look forward to your positive reply. Thank you

Yours faithfully
Gladwell Karimi

Appendix VI: Sample Size Determining Table

<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	100000	384

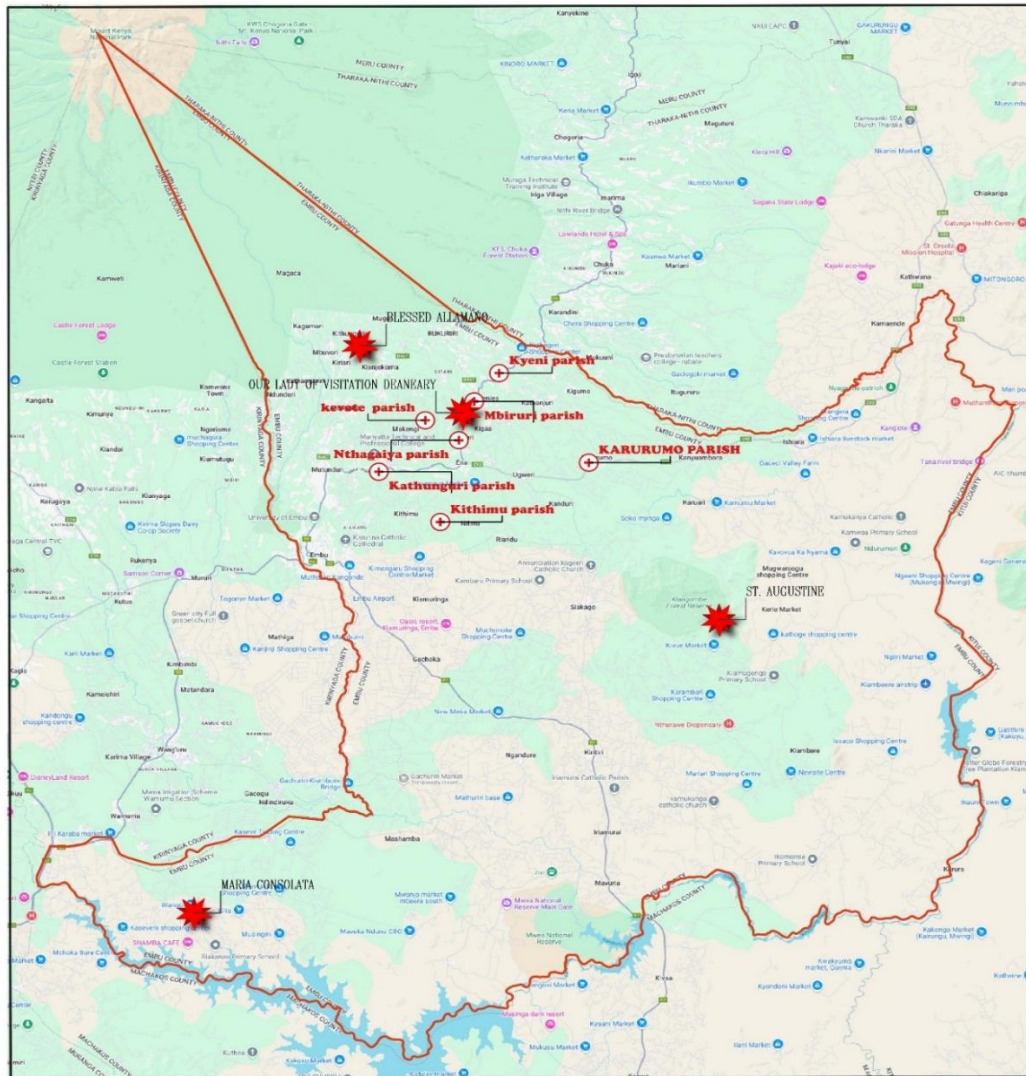
Note.—*N* is population size. *S* is sample size.

Source: Krejcie & Morgan, 1970

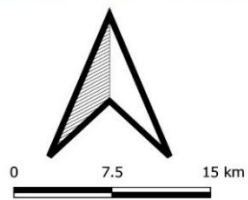
Appendix VII: Key Informants

NAME	PROFESSION	PARISH	DATE OF INTERVIEW
CCC1	Priest	Kithimu	30/06/2025
CCC2	Priest	Kevote	30/06/2025
CCC3	Priest	Karurumo	02/07/2025
CCC4	Priest	Nthagaiya	05/07/2025
CCC5	Priest	Mbiruri	13/07/2025
CCC6	Priest	Kyeni	25/07/2025
CCC7	Priest	Kathunguri	25/07/2025

Appendix VIII: Map of the Catholic Church, Diocese of Embu Showing the Location of Our Lady of Visitation Deanery




- DEANERIES
- PARISHES
- EMBU_COUNTY
- GOOGLE MAP IMAGE
- Band 1 (Red)
- Band 2 (Green)
- Band 3 (Blue)




Coordinate System:WGS 1984 UTM Zone 36N
 Projection:TransverseMercator
 Datum:WGS1984
 Units:Meter

AUTHOR:gladwellkarimi80@gmail.com


Appendix IX: National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI) Research Permit


REPUBLIC OF KENYA


**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION**

RefNo: **644038** Date of Issue: **30/June/2025**

RESEARCH LICENSE




This is to Certify that Miss.. GLADWELL KARIMI MBOGO of Chuka University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Embu on the topic: AN ASSESSMENT OF CHRISTIANS' PERCEPTION OF CHURCH MARRIAGE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, OUR LADY OF VISITATION DEANERY, DIOCESE OF EMBU, KENYA for the period ending : 30/June/2026.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/25/4176090**

644038
Applicant Identification Number

Gladwell Karimi MboGO
Deputy Director
**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY &
INNOVATION**

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