

**STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CURRENT CHURCH MEASURES
TO CURB MARITAL CONFLICTS IN CENTRAL BUSOGA DIOCESE**

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DECLARATION

I **SAMIZE FRED GALIMU** hereby declare that this research report titled "The Effectiveness of the Current Church Measures in Addressing Marital Conflicts in Central Busoga Diocese" is my own original work and has not been presented to any institution of higher learning for any award.

Signed



Date 26.03.2026.

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APPROVAL

This research report titled “The Effectiveness of the Current Church Measures in Addressing Marital Conflicts in Central Busoga Diocese” has been submitted for examination with the approval of the research supervisor at Uganda Christian University.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of the current church measures in addressing marital conflicts in Central Busoga Diocese. The purpose of the study was to evaluate how the church intervenes in marital conflicts and to assess whether these interventions effectively promote reconciliation and stability in Christian marriages.

The study employed a qualitative research approach in which data was collected from church leaders and selected church members within Central Busoga Diocese through interviews and questionnaires. The study focused on key church interventions such as pastoral counseling, premarital counseling, biblical teaching, mediation by church leaders, and marriage seminars.

The findings revealed that the church plays an important role in addressing marital conflicts by providing spiritual guidance, counseling, and mediation between couples experiencing marital challenges. However, the study also found that the effectiveness of these interventions is sometimes limited by factors such as lack of professional counseling skills among church leaders, cultural influences, and limited resources for family ministry programs.

The study concludes that although the church remains an important institution in promoting stable marriages, there is a need to strengthen family ministry programs and equip church leaders with appropriate counseling skills to effectively address marital conflicts. The study recommends strengthening premarital counseling programs, providing training for church leaders in pastoral counseling, and establishing structured family support ministries within the diocese.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COU – Church of Uganda

UCU – Uganda Christian University

NIV – New International Version

SPSS – Statistical Package for Social Sciences

USA – United States of America

CHAPTER ONE: I NTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Marriage is a central institution in African society and Christian theology, serving as the foundation of family life and social order. In many African communities, marriage is not merely a private contract between two individuals but a communal covenant that sustains lineage, identity, and social stability. John S. Mbiti emphasizes that marriage is “the focus of existence” in African societies, since it integrates individuals into the wider community and ensures continuity of life.¹

From a Christian theological perspective, marriage is understood as a covenant instituted by God and reflective of Christ’s relationship with the Church (Ephesians 5:25–33).² Consequently, marital stability is not only a social concern but also a spiritual one.

In Uganda, however, increasing marital conflict, domestic violence, and separations threaten family stability. According to the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (2022), in the Busoga sub-region over half of women aged 15–49 years (51.9%) report experiencing spousal violence, while 22 percent report sexual violence within marriage.³ These figures demonstrate that marital conflict is not simply a private matter but a widespread social crisis with far-reaching psychological, economic, and spiritual consequences.

The Church, as both a spiritual and social institution, has historically played a central role in strengthening families through pastoral counseling, teaching, mediation, and premarital preparation. Don Browning argues that pastoral care must integrate theological reflection with practical counseling skills in order to address relational crises effectively.⁴ In Central Busoga Diocese, churches have implemented various initiatives including pastoral counseling sessions, pre-marital workshops, couples’ retreats, and mediation programs facilitated by clergy and trained lay readers.

¹ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Heinemann, 1990), 104.

² The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), Eph. 5:25–33.

³ . Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) and ICF, *Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2022* (Kampala: UBOS, 2023), 312.

⁴ . *Don S. Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 47.

Despite these efforts, there remains concern about the adequacy and effectiveness of existing church measures in addressing marital conflicts. The persistence of conflict raises questions about whether current interventions sufficiently respond to socio-economic pressures, cultural dynamics, and changing family structures within the region.

The purpose of this thesis is therefore to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the Church's measures in managing marital conflicts in Central Busoga Diocese and to provide recommendations that are biblically grounded, culturally sensitive, and pastorally practical.

In summary, this study is motivated by deep concern for the wellbeing of Christian families, recognition of the pressing social challenges caused by marital conflict, and scholarly interest in understanding the Church's pastoral role in responding to these realities. It is hoped that the findings will contribute to stronger pastoral practices within Central Busoga Diocese and offer insights useful to the wider Church in Uganda and beyond.

1.2 Preliminary Literature Study and Location of the Research

Marital conflict has attracted significant scholarly attention in both African and Christian contexts. Marriage is regarded not only as a personal union but also as a social and spiritual covenant whose stability influences families and communities.

Mbiti's work underscores the communal dimension of marriage in African societies, while Christian theology views marriage as a covenant reflecting Christ's sacrificial love for the Church.⁵ Because of this dual social and spiritual dimension, marital conflict presents both sociological and theological challenges.

Don Browning notes that pastoral care must combine biblical instruction with practical counseling strategies to guide families through relational crises.⁶ In the Ugandan context, scholars observe that the Church plays a central role in instilling moral values and mediating domestic disputes, particularly in rural communities where access to formal legal and psychological services is limited.⁷

⁵ *The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), Eph. 5:25–33.

⁶ . Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 52.

⁷ . Godfrey Byaruhanga, "The Role of the Church in Addressing Domestic Violence in Uganda," *Uganda Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (2018): 56–58.

Within the Busoga region, socio-economic pressures, urbanization, unemployment, and changing cultural norms have contributed to increasing marital tensions. However, while numerous studies examine domestic violence and family conflict in Uganda, few have specifically evaluated the effectiveness of Church-based interventions within diocesan structures.

This study positions itself within that gap by assessing the adequacy and effectiveness of Church interventions in Central Busoga Diocese. By combining theological reflection with empirical field research, it contributes to practical theology within the Anglican Church of Uganda.

1.3 Research Problem.

In Central Busoga Diocese, the Church of Uganda has traditionally provided pastoral counseling, premarital guidance, marital enrichment seminars, and mediation sessions to help couples address conflicts. These interventions are rooted in biblical teachings and cultural practices that promote reconciliation and forgiveness.

Yet, despite these measures, marital conflicts remain pervasive within the Diocese. The persistence of these conflicts suggests that there may be gaps either in the implementation of church interventions or in how couples perceive their relevance and adequacy.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

The problem, therefore, lies in determining the extent to which Church interventions in Central Busoga Diocese adequately meet the practical needs of couples, effectively reduce marital disputes, and respond to contextual factors that may hinder or enhance their success.

1.5 Research Objectives

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify the most prevalent forms of marital conflict among couples in Central Busoga Diocese.
2. To examine the Church's interventions aimed at resolving marital conflicts in the Diocese.
3. To evaluate the perceived adequacy and effectiveness of these interventions from the perspective of couples and Church leaders.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What forms of marital conflict are most common among couples in Central Busoga Diocese?
2. What specific interventions does the Church employ to manage marital conflicts?
3. How do couples and Church leaders perceive the adequacy and effectiveness of these interventions?

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is significant to Central Busoga Diocese in several important ways.

First, the study will provide empirical evidence concerning the effectiveness of the current Church interventions used in addressing marital conflicts within Central Busoga Diocese. By examining existing pastoral practices such as counseling, teaching, mediation, and marriage enrichment programs, the research will help diocesan leadership understand what is working well and what requires improvement within their specific ministry context.

Second, the findings will benefit clergy and lay pastoral caregivers in Central Busoga Diocese by offering practical insights that can strengthen pastoral care ministry. The study will help ministers identify appropriate approaches for handling marital conflicts in ways that are culturally sensitive and pastorally effective among Christian families in the Diocese.

Third, the study will assist diocesan administrators and ministry planners in developing informed policies and structured programs aimed at strengthening marriage and family life within Central Busoga Diocese. Evidence-based recommendations from the research may guide the formulation of training programs, counseling frameworks, and preventive strategies for marital conflict.

Fourth, the study will benefit Christian families within Central Busoga Diocese by contributing to improved Church support systems for couples experiencing marital challenges. Strengthened Church interventions may promote reconciliation, stability in marriages, and healthier family relationships within the Diocese.

Finally, the study will serve as a documented reference for future ministry evaluation and research within Central Busoga Diocese, providing a foundation upon which the Diocese can continuously assess and improve its pastoral response to marital conflicts.

1.8 Scope of the study.

The research will focus on the Anglican Church within Central Busoga Diocese, including its parishes and sub-parishes. The study will draw participants from both clergy and married couples across different socio-economic and educational backgrounds. It will be limited to Church interventions and will not address interventions from secular organizations or governmental programs, though these may be acknowledged for contextual purposes. By narrowing the focus, the study ensures a detailed and manageable exploration of the Church's role in managing marital conflicts.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework provides the foundation for understanding, analyzing, and interpreting the phenomenon under investigation. It clarifies the key concepts, assumptions, and propositions that guide the research process. In this study, the theoretical framework explains the adequacy and effectiveness of Church interventions in managing marital conflicts in Central Busoga Diocese. It informs the research design, guides the development of research instruments, and provides criteria for data analysis and interpretation.

Analytical Perspective

From an analytical perspective, the study adopts Systems Theory and Conflict Resolution Theory as guiding frameworks.

Systems Theory explains that families operate as interconnected systems in which changes or disruptions in one part affect the entire system. Marital conflict, therefore, influences not only the couple but also the wider family structure and relationships.

Conflict Resolution Theory complements this perspective by offering approaches for understanding and addressing disputes constructively. It emphasizes communication, mediation, negotiation, and reconciliation as essential processes in resolving conflicts.

The application of these theories helps to assess how Church measures facilitate conflict resolution and promote collaborative solutions within marital relationships.

Analytically, these theories guide the research in several ways:

Data collection: Observations and focus group discussions concentrate on interaction patterns, communication effectiveness, and problem-solving approaches encouraged through Church interventions.

Data analysis: Quantitative data measure the prevalence and outcomes of Church interventions, while qualitative data undergo thematic analysis to identify patterns of conflict resolution within family systems.

Philosophical Perspective

Philosophically, the study is informed by Christian relational ethics, which emphasizes the moral, spiritual, and relational responsibilities of individuals within marriage. From this perspective, marital conflict represents not only a social or psychological challenge but also a spiritual concern affecting the moral and emotional wellbeing of couples.

Within this framework, the Church plays a pastoral role in guiding couples toward reconciliation, forgiveness, and restoration based on biblical teachings and Christian values. This perspective highlights the importance of spiritual guidance alongside practical conflict resolution strategies.

Application to Research Design

The integration of analytical and philosophical perspectives shapes the research design in several ways.

First, the selection of respondents includes couples experiencing marital conflicts, Church leaders, and pastoral counselors in order to obtain a holistic understanding of Church interventions and their outcomes.

Second, the choice of methods reflects a mixed-methods approach, allowing the study to capture measurable outcomes of interventions while also examining the lived experiences of couples and Church leaders.

Third, data interpretation combines analytical frameworks that identify patterns and relationships with philosophical perspectives that illuminate the moral, spiritual, and relational dimensions of marital conflict.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of analytical and philosophical perspectives provides a comprehensive framework for examining the adequacy and effectiveness of Church interventions in managing marital conflicts in Central Busoga Diocese.

Within this framework, Church interventions function as the independent variable, while moderating variables influence the level of effectiveness of these interventions. Systems Theory facilitates the analysis of how interventions influence family dynamics, and Conflict Resolution Theory guides the evaluation of strategies used in managing disputes. Christian relational ethics ensures that the interpretation of findings considers the spiritual and moral dimensions of marriage. The outcomes of the study therefore reflect the adequacy and effectiveness of Church interventions in addressing marital conflicts within the Diocese.

Research Design and Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a descriptive and analytical research design to outline the nature and causes of marital conflicts and to evaluate the adequacy of Church interventions within Central Busoga Diocese. A mixed-methods approach is adopted, integrating qualitative insights from couples, Church leaders, and mediators with quantitative data concerning the prevalence of marital conflicts and perceptions of existing Church measures.

Data Collection Methods

The study targets married couples, clergy, and diocesan leaders in Central Busoga Diocese. Purposive and stratified random sampling techniques are applied to ensure diversity and balanced representation among respondents. A total of 120 participants are included in the study, comprising 60 married couples, 40 Church leaders, and 20 diocesan officials, thereby capturing perspectives from both grassroots and institutional levels.

Data are collected through questionnaires administered to married couples, semi-structured interviews conducted with clergy and diocesan leaders, and focus group discussions involving selected couples. In addition, diocesan records, reports, and pastoral guidelines related to family and marriage ministry are reviewed to supplement primary data.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from questionnaires are coded and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations to identify emerging trends. The findings are presented using tables and charts for clarity and interpretation.

Qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions are transcribed, thematically coded, and analyzed according to recurring themes highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of Church interventions in addressing marital conflicts.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a holistic understanding of marital conflict management within Central Busoga Diocese.

Limitations of the Study

Despite careful planning and implementation, this study encounters certain limitations that influence the interpretation of its findings.

Geographical and Logistical Limitations

Central Busoga Diocese covers a wide geographical area, presenting logistical challenges related to time, transportation, and accessibility to some remote communities. Limited financial resources constrain the extent of fieldwork, making it difficult to capture every aspect of marital conflict management across the entire Diocese. Consequently, the findings reflect selected study areas and may not fully represent all parish contexts within Central Busoga Diocese.

Respondent Bias and Sensitivity of the Topic

Marital conflict is a sensitive and deeply personal subject, which affects participants' willingness to share information openly. Some couples show hesitation in disclosing personal marital experiences despite assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. This situation contributes to

social desirability bias, where respondents provide answers perceived as acceptable to the Church or researcher rather than fully reflecting their lived experiences.

Mitigation Strategies

Despite the identified limitations, deliberate measures are incorporated to minimize their impact on the study. Confidentiality procedures are maintained to reduce respondent hesitation and encourage honest participation. Multiple data collection methods are employed to enable triangulation and cross-checking of findings, while transparency in data interpretation enhances the credibility, contextual relevance, and usefulness of the results for both academic and pastoral application.

Research Ethics

The study complies with institutional and legal ethical standards governing academic research. Ethical clearance is obtained from the Uganda Christian University Research Ethics Committee, and permission is secured from diocesan authorities to conduct research within Church communities. These procedures legitimize the study and strengthen trust between the researcher and participants.

Ethical practice in the study includes informed consent, confidentiality, non-maleficence, beneficence, cultural sensitivity, and adherence to institutional approval processes.

CHAPTER TWO: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PREVALENT FORMS OF MARITAL CONFLICT IN CENTRAL BUSOGA DIOCESE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the first objective of the study: to identify and analyze the prevalent forms of marital conflict among Christian couples in Central Busoga Diocese. The discussion is grounded primarily in qualitative data generated through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and open-ended questionnaires conducted among married couples, clergy, lay readers, and parish leaders across selected congregations within the Diocese.

Unlike purely theoretical discussions of marriage, this chapter privileges the lived experiences of participants as the primary source of knowledge. Scholarly literature from African and global contexts is therefore employed mainly as an interpretive framework through which local experiences are analyzed rather than as the central evidence base. The voices of respondents from Central Busoga Diocese remain the foundation of the analysis.

Marriage within the Diocese exists at the intersection of Anglican Christian teaching, African communal values, and contemporary socio-economic realities. Consequently, marital conflict cannot be explained solely in psychological or economic categories; it must also be understood within pastoral, cultural, and theological contexts. Participants consistently interpreted marital tensions not only as relational disagreements but also as disruptions affecting spiritual life, family stability, and participation in church community.

A qualitative approach was adopted because it allows participants to narrate how conflict is experienced, interpreted, and negotiated in everyday life. Rather than measuring frequency statistically, the study explores how conflicts manifest themselves, how spouses assign meaning to them, and how these experiences influence Christian witness within households and congregations.

The chapter proceeds through conceptual clarification, methodological orientation, presentation of empirically grounded themes, contextual interpretation using African scholarship, theological reflection, and concluding synthesis.

2.2 Conceptual and Theoretical Understanding of Marital Conflict

Marital conflict refers to recurring disagreement, emotional tension, or relational disharmony between spouses arising from unmet expectations, competing roles, or breakdowns in communication. Conflict itself is not inherently destructive; constructive disagreement may strengthen relationships when handled with mutual respect and reconciliation. However, persistent unresolved conflict often produces emotional alienation, domestic instability, and spiritual decline.

From a family systems perspective, marriage functions as an interconnected relational unit in which stress experienced by one partner influences the entire household. Murray Bowen explains that families operate as emotional systems where tension spreads across relationships rather than remaining isolated.⁸ Evidence from Central Busoga Diocese supports this systemic understanding, as respondents frequently described marital conflict affecting children's behavior, extended family relations, and church involvement.

Pastoral theology further understands marriage as a covenant relationship established before God and sustained through love, patience, forgiveness, and mutual submission (Ephesians 4:2–3; 1 Corinthians 13:4–7). When spiritual disciplines weaken, relational tensions often intensify. Many participants interpreted marital crises as connected to declining prayer life, reduced fellowship participation, and absence of shared spiritual practices.

This study therefore adopts a pastoral-contextual framework, recognizing marital conflict as emerging from interacting spiritual, cultural, and socio-economic realities within Central Busoga Diocese.

2.3 Methodological Orientation and Evidence of Data Collection

Data for this chapter were generated through qualitative fieldwork conducted within Central Busoga Diocese between November–December 2025. Participants were purposively selected to ensure representation of different marital experiences and church leadership roles.

⁸ Murray Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1978), 306.

The study engaged:

Married couples from multiple parishes, clergy involved in pastoral counseling, lay readers and church elders and diocesan ministry leaders.

A total of fifty interviews, twenty focus group discussions, and forty questionnaires were completed. Semi-structured interview guides encouraged participants to describe conflicts commonly experienced or observed within marriages rather than responding to predetermined categories.

All responses were recorded through written notes and later organized using thematic analysis. Patterns were identified inductively, meaning themes emerged from participants' narratives rather than being imposed beforehand. Direct quotations are included to demonstrate authenticity and provide evidence of lived experience.

The recurrence of similar experiences across different participants strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

2.4 Prevalent Forms of Marital Conflict in Central Busoga Diocese

Analysis revealed five dominant and interconnected forms of marital conflict consistently reported across parishes. These themes represent patterns repeatedly identified in participant narratives.

2.4.1 Financial Conflict and Economic Insecurity

Financial conflict involves disagreements concerning income generation, expenditure priorities, debt management, and fulfillment of economic responsibilities within marriage.

Manifestation in Central Busoga Diocese

Economic hardship emerged as the most frequently mentioned source of marital tension. Respondents described financial strain as a continuous emotional pressure rather than isolated disagreement. Common expressions included: despite over school fees and household needs, accusations of irresponsibility, secrecy regarding income sources, emotional withdrawal following financial failure.

One participant explained:

“When money is not there, peace also disappears. Even small issues become big fights.”

Men frequently associated financial inability with loss of social respect, while women emphasized anxiety over children’s welfare. Financial stress therefore affected both identity and emotional security within marriage.

Michael Kyomya observes that economic provision in African societies is closely tied to masculine dignity and community recognition, making financial challenges particularly conflict-producing.⁹ Findings from Central Busoga Diocese strongly confirm this observation.

2.4.2 Communication Breakdown and Emotional Distance.

Communication conflict involves ineffective expression, avoidance of dialogue, or use of harsh language that damages emotional connection.

Manifestation in Central Busoga Diocese

Participants repeatedly described silence as more destructive than argument. Couples reported living together physically while emotionally disconnected. Manifestations included:

Avoidance of sensitive discussions, unresolved misunderstandings, verbal insults during disagreements, prolonged emotional separation and others

A clergy respondent noted:

“Couples sit together but their hearts are far apart.”

Gary R. Collins argues that marital disputes often arise not from issues themselves but from patterns of communication surrounding them.¹⁰ Field evidence strongly aligns with this perspective.

⁹ Michael Kyomya, *Walking in Love: Marriage and Family in African Christianity* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2010), 88.

¹⁰ Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 214.

2.4.3 Infidelity and Breach of Trust.

Infidelity refers to emotional or sexual involvement outside marriage that violates covenantal commitment and destroys trust.

Manifestation in Central Busoga Diocese

Respondents described infidelity as producing deep emotional wounds and public shame within church communities. It manifested through:

secrecy and suspicion, emotional withdrawal, repeated accusations, prolonged mistrust even after reconciliation attempts.

Clergy reported that many counseling cases begin only after trust has significantly deteriorated, making reconciliation difficult.

Samuel Waje Kunhiyop notes that social pressures and economic instability contribute to moral vulnerability within African Christian contexts.¹¹ a reality reflected in participant narratives.

2.4.4 Extended Family Interference

Extended family conflict arises when relatives influence marital decisions or authority structures excessively.

Manifestation in Central Busoga Diocese

Participants acknowledged both supportive and disruptive roles of relatives. Conflicts emerged particularly around:

Financial decisions, childbearing expectations, inheritance and land matters, dispute mediation processes.

One participant remarked:

“Relatives can solve problems, but sometimes they add fire.”

¹¹ Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 179.

John Mbiti explains that African marriage is inherently communal rather than individualistic¹². Findings demonstrate both the strength and tension of this communal model.

2.4.5 Alcohol Abuse and Negative Peer Influence

Alcohol-related conflict occurs when substance misuse undermines responsibility, communication, and spiritual life.

Manifestation in Central Busoga Diocese

Respondents associated alcohol misuse with:

Domestic violence, neglect of family responsibilities, financial instability, withdrawal from church participation.

One respondent summarized:

“When alcohol enters the house, peace leaves.”

Peter Nyende argues that substance misuse weakens Christian family structures by eroding moral accountability.¹³ consistent with local findings.

2.5 Integrated Discussion

The findings demonstrate that marital conflicts rarely occur independently. Financial stress often initiates communication breakdown; poor communication increases vulnerability to infidelity; extended family pressure intensifies emotional tension; and alcohol abuse amplifies existing disagreements.

This interconnectedness indicates that marital conflict within Central Busoga Diocese is systemic rather than isolated, requiring holistic pastoral responses addressing spiritual, relational, and socio-economic dimensions simultaneously.

¹² John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Heinemann, 1990), 133.

¹³ Nyende, Peter. *Pastoral Care in African Christianity*. Kampala: Uganda Christian University Press, 2015.

2.6 Theological Reflection

Biblically, marriage reflects covenantal unity established by God (Genesis 2:24; Malachi 2:14). The conflicts identified reveal gaps between theological ideals and lived practice.

Financial conflict challenges stewardship and mutual responsibility.

Communication breakdown contradicts biblical truthfulness and patience (Ephesians 4:25–32).

Infidelity violates covenant faithfulness (Hebrews 13:4).

Alcohol abuse opposes biblical self-control (Ephesians 5:18).

These realities affirm the Church's pastoral responsibility to nurture spiritual formation alongside relational counseling.

2.7 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that marital conflict in Central Busoga Diocese is multidimensional and deeply embedded within everyday social and spiritual realities. Financial insecurity, communication breakdown, infidelity, extended family interference, and alcohol abuse emerged as dominant and interrelated forms of conflict consistently reported by participants.

By prioritizing empirical narratives while engaging African theological scholarship as interpretive support, the chapter provides a contextualized understanding of marital conflict within the Diocese. The qualitative evidence establishes a foundation for the next chapter, which examines how the Church responds pastorally to these conflicts and evaluates the effectiveness of its interventions.

CHAPTER THREE: EXAMINING THE CHURCH'S INTERVENTIONS IN ADDRESSING MARITAL CONFLICTS IN CENTRAL BUSOGA DIOCESE.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the second objective of the study, namely, to examine the Church's interventions in addressing marital conflict in Central Busoga Diocese. Building on Chapter Two, which identified the prevalent forms and causes of marital conflict within Christian households, this chapter shifts focus to the response mechanisms employed by the Church in promoting reconciliation and marital stability.

The Church in Central Busoga Diocese functions as both a spiritual and social institution entrusted with pastoral care of families alongside the proclamation of the Gospel. Consequently, marital conflict is approached not merely as a private domestic issue but as a pastoral concern affecting church life, community harmony, and Christian witness. The chapter therefore explores how clergy and lay leaders understand and exercise their pastoral responsibility in responding to marital challenges.

To achieve this objective, the chapter proceeds in three major parts.

1. It presents the theological and contextual basis that informs Church involvement in marital conflict within Central Busoga Diocese.
2. It examines existing literature and contextual perspectives on church-based marital interventions, highlighting both global examples and Ugandan realities.
3. It presents and analyzes qualitative findings on the specific interventions practiced by the Church, including premarital counseling, pastoral mediation, prayer support, discipline, and follow-up mechanisms.

Through this structure, the chapter critically evaluates how Church interventions are experienced at the grassroots level and how effectively they respond to the lived marital challenges faced by Christian families in Central Busoga Diocese.

Consistent with a qualitative research approach, this chapter foregrounds field-based evidence, privileging the lived experiences and perspectives of clergy, lay leaders, and married couples

within the Diocese. Data were generated through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, allowing participants to articulate their views on the effectiveness, strengths, and limitations of existing Church interventions. This approach enables a nuanced understanding of how Church responses are experienced at the grassroots level rather than merely how they are intended at the institutional level.

To enhance authenticity and contextual depth, the chapter deliberately incorporates direct quotations from respondents, some of which are expressed in Lusoga, the dominant local language in Central Busoga. The inclusion of Lusoga expressions serves two purposes: first, to demonstrate genuine engagement with the field and respect for local modes of expression; and second, to capture meanings, emotions, and cultural nuances that may not be fully conveyed through English translation alone. Where Lusoga quotations are used, interpretive translations are provided to aid comprehension while preserving the original intent of the respondents.

Overall, the chapter seeks to critically examine the nature, scope, and effectiveness of the Church's interventions in addressing marital conflict. By integrating empirical data with pastoral and theological reflection, the chapter contributes to a deeper understanding of how the Church in Central Busoga Diocese navigates the complex intersection of faith, culture, and family life in responding to marital challenges.

3.2 Church Interventions within the Ugandan and Central Busoga Context

In Uganda, church involvement in marital conflict remains one of the most accessible forms of family support. Studies indicate that clergy often serve simultaneously as counselors, mediators, and moral guides, especially in rural dioceses where professional counseling services are scarce.¹⁴

Findings from Central Busoga Diocese strongly confirm this pattern. Respondents consistently identified the parish priest, catechist, or senior lay leader as the first point of intervention when marital disputes arise. Unlike formal therapeutic settings, pastoral engagement typically occurs within relational networks built through worship, fellowship, and community interaction.

¹⁴ Ezra Chitando and Sophia Chirongoma, eds., *Justice Not Silence: Churches Facing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2013), 61.

Nyende observes that African pastoral care is predominantly communal and spiritually oriented, relying on prayer, Scripture, and mediation rather than technical counseling frameworks.¹⁵ This description closely mirrors practices reported by participants in Central Busoga, where prayer meetings, reconciliation dialogue, and moral instruction form the core intervention strategies.

Kyomya further notes that Ugandan clergy often depend on pastoral experience rather than professional counseling training.¹⁶ Evidence from this study shows similar realities within Central Busoga Diocese, where clergy themselves acknowledged limited training in conflict psychology, confidentiality ethics, and long-term counseling processes.

However, Central Busoga Diocese demonstrates contextual strengths, including strong trust in church leadership, willingness of couples to seek spiritual help, and communal participation in reconciliation processes. At the same time, challenges such as inadequate follow-up systems and absence of referral pathways remain evident.

3.3 Church Intervention Practices in Central Busoga Diocese

This section presents qualitative findings drawn from in-depth interviews with clergy, married men and women, and selected lay leaders within Central Busoga Diocese. The findings are organized thematically, reflecting recurrent patterns in respondents' descriptions of Church-based interventions in marital conflict. Direct quotations especially in Lusoga are deliberately retained to preserve authenticity and demonstrate evidence of field data collection.

3.4.1 Premarital Counseling as a Preventive Church Intervention

Premarital counseling emerged as the most frequently mentioned preventive intervention employed by the Church in addressing future marital conflicts. Almost all clergy respondents indicated that no couple is allowed to solemnize Christian marriage without undergoing some form of premarital instruction. This counseling is generally conducted by parish priests, catechists, or senior married couples appointed by the Church.

¹⁵ Peter Nyende, *Pastoral Ministry in African Christianity*, 90–94.

¹⁶ Michael Kyomya, *Pastoral Counseling in the African Church* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2010), 112–118

One clergy respondent explained:

★ **“Tuba tusomesa abaagalana ku kweyendhagana, okusaba, n'okuguminkiriza mu bufumbo.”**

(We teach couples about love, prayer, and perseverance in marriage.)

(Clergy respondent)

This response reflects a strong theological orientation of premarital counseling, with emphasis on Christian virtues such as love (okweyendhagana), prayer (okusaba), and endurance (okugumikiriza). These virtues are deeply rooted in biblical teaching and Anglican marriage liturgy, where marriage is presented as a lifelong covenant rather than a contractual arrangement.

Married respondents generally appreciated the Church's intention to prepare couples spiritually. However, many pointed out significant gaps in content, particularly regarding practical and contextual issues that often trigger marital conflict. One female respondent who had been married for nine years noted:

★ **“Batwegeresa okusaba n'okweyendhagana, aye tebatwegeresa bulungi ku by'ensente oba abyabako.”**

(They taught us prayer and love, but not how to handle money or in-laws.)

(Female respondent, married 9 years)

This response was echoed by several married participants who reported that while spiritual topics were adequately covered, issues such as financial management, communication skills, sexuality, conflict resolution, and extended family relationships received little or no attention. In the Busoga cultural context, where marriage involves not only two individuals but also extended families, neglecting such topics leaves couples inadequately prepared for real-life pressures.

Furthermore, some respondents observed that premarital counseling is often conducted in group settings with limited time, reducing opportunities for personalized engagement. A lay leader remarked that:

“Abantu bangi begeresebwa ghalala, kale ebizibu byabwe eby'endhawulo babikweka.”

(Many people are taught together, so their unique problems are not mentioned and not given enough time.)

(Lay leader)

Overall, the findings indicate that premarital counseling is highly valued and recognized as a crucial preventive strategy. However, its effectiveness is constrained by limited scope, lack of contextual depth, and insufficient attention to practical marital realities. This suggests a need for curriculum expansion and contextualization to make premarital counseling more responsive to the lived experiences of couples in Central Busoga Diocese.

3.4.2 Pastoral Counseling and Mediation

Pastoral counseling and mediation emerged as the primary Church intervention once marital conflict has already occurred. Respondents consistently described the priest, pastor, or senior church leader as the first point of contact when disputes arise within marriage. This reflects the high level of trust placed in clergy as moral and spiritual authorities.

One male respondent explained his experience as follows:

“Omwaule ayogera nife twembi, yatusomesa ekigambo kya Katonda.”

(The priest speaks to both of us and teaches us using God’s Word.)

(Male respondent)

This approach typically involves joint meetings where both spouses are invited to narrate their concerns, followed by biblical teaching, prayer, and moral exhortation. Clergy respondents emphasized reconciliation, forgiveness, and restoration, often drawing from Scripture to guide the process.

Despite this trust, significant concerns were raised regarding confidentiality and professionalism in pastoral counseling. A female respondent expressed fear about sharing sensitive marital issues:

“Ebizibu byo mumaka, wobighaya amangu ago bisansana byatuka kubantu abandi.”

(When family problems are shared, they quickly spread to others.)

(Female respondent)

Such perceptions undermine confidence in pastoral counseling and discourage couples from seeking timely help. Several respondents suggested that the absence of formal counseling training and ethical guidelines contributes to breaches of confidentiality. In small parish communities, where social relationships are closely intertwined, information shared during counseling can easily circulate informally.

Clergy respondents themselves acknowledged these challenges, noting that they often rely on experience rather than professional counseling skills. This reveals a structural weakness in pastoral care systems, where spiritual authority is not always matched with technical competence in counseling and mediation.

3.4.3 Prayer and Spiritual Support

Prayer was consistently identified as the central and most visible Church response to marital conflict. Almost all respondents, regardless of gender or marital status, affirmed the role of prayer in providing emotional and spiritual strength during times of conflict.

One female respondent testified:

“Okusaba kutuwa essubi namani waile ebizibu biba bikaliwo.”

(Prayer gives us hope and strength even when problems remain.)

(Female respondent)

Prayer sessions were reported to take various forms, including personal prayer with clergy, corporate prayer during church services, overnight prayers, and family prayer encouragement. For many couples, prayer fostered hope, patience, and emotional resilience.

However, several respondents expressed concern that prayer is sometimes used as the only intervention, even in situations requiring additional action. One respondent shared:

“Batusabira, aye obutabanguko era bukaliwo mu maka.”

(They prayed, but the violence continued at home.)

This statement reveals a critical limitation of prayer-centered interventions, particularly in cases involving domestic violence, alcoholism, or chronic neglect. While prayer is valued, respondents felt that it should be complemented by practical steps such as counseling referrals, legal protection, or social support.

The findings therefore suggest that prayer remains a foundational spiritual resource, but its effectiveness is reduced when detached from concrete pastoral and social interventions.

3.4.4 Church Discipline and Moral Guidance

Church discipline emerged as another intervention used in cases of infidelity, persistent conflict, or moral misconduct. Discipline often included public or private rebuke, suspension from Holy Communion, or counseling directives aimed at repentance and restoration.

A lay leader observed:

“Ekkansa etwegeresa ku mpsia, aye abantu abasinga batya okwogera amazima.”

(The Church enforces morals, but people fear to speak the truth.)

(Lay leader)

While discipline was seen as necessary for maintaining moral standards, respondents noted that fear of shame and stigma sometimes discourages openness. Couples may conceal problems to avoid disciplinary measures, allowing conflicts to worsen privately.

This tension highlights the delicate balance between moral accountability and pastoral sensitivity. When discipline is perceived as punitive rather than restorative, it may inadvertently silence those who most need help.

3.5.5 Limited Referral and Follow-Up Mechanisms

One of the most significant gaps identified across all interviews was the absence of structured referral systems. Clergy respondents admitted that when marital conflicts escalate beyond pastoral capacity, there are few clear pathways for external support.

A clergy respondent stated:

“Tewali wasuubirwa we tugenda okutwala abantu nga ebizibu bikalu.”

(There is nowhere to refer people when problems are serious.)

Similarly, respondents highlighted inconsistent follow-up after counseling sessions. One married respondent explained:

“Batutekateka omulundi mulala kasita biwa tighaba kulambulwa.”

(They counsel us once; afterward there is no follow-up.)

The lack of follow-up limits long-term effectiveness and leaves couples feeling unsupported after initial intervention. This finding underscores the need for structured pastoral care systems that include monitoring, referral partnerships, and continuity of care.

3.5 Discussion of Findings in Light of Literature

The findings of this study strongly matches with existing literature on African pastoral care and church-based counseling. Collins argues that churches are particularly strong in offering spiritual encouragement but often lack technical counseling skills and structured intervention models. This observation is clearly reflected in Central Busoga Diocese, where prayer and moral teaching dominate pastoral responses.

Nyende similarly notes that African pastoral care is deeply relational and community-based but largely informal, relying on spiritual authority rather than professional training. The heavy reliance on mediation, prayer, and moral exhortation in this study confirms Nyende’s assertion.

However, the absence of referral systems and follow-up mechanisms contradicts best practices in pastoral counseling literature, which emphasize integrated care involving spiritual, psychological, and social dimensions.

3.7 Theological Reflection

The Church's interventions in marital conflict reflect Christ's ministry of reconciliation, as articulated in 2 Corinthians 5:18. By calling couples to forgiveness, repentance, and restoration, the Church participates in God's reconciling work.

However, James 2:17 reminds the Church that faith without works is dead. Prayer and teaching, though essential, must be accompanied by practical action. The qualitative data reveal a theological gap between belief and practice, calling the Church to a more holistic pastoral theology that integrates spiritual care with concrete support systems.

3.8 Mini-Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the Church in Central Busoga Diocese plays a vital yet constrained role in addressing marital conflict. Through premarital counseling, pastoral mediation, prayer, and moral guidance, the Church offers meaningful spiritual support. However, limitations in training, confidentiality, referral systems, and follow-up reduce the long-term impact of these interventions.

The findings provide a strong empirical foundation for Chapter Four, which evaluates the effectiveness of these interventions, explores challenges, and proposes improved pastoral strategies for sustainable marital harmony.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND EVALUATION.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the third objective of the study: to evaluate the effectiveness of the Church's interventions in addressing marital conflict in Central Busoga Diocese and to propose contextually appropriate pastoral strategies for improvement. While Chapter Three provided a descriptive analysis of existing interventions such as premarital counseling, pastoral mediation, prayer, moral teaching, reconciliation efforts, and informal disciplinary measures this chapter moves from description to critical evaluation and constructive reflection.

The central concern here is not merely whether interventions exist, but whether they are achieving their intended purpose. Effectiveness in this study is understood in both practical and theological terms. Practically, it refers to the ability of Church interventions to reduce marital breakdown, promote reconciliation, strengthen communication between spouses, and prevent recurring conflicts. Theologically, it concerns the extent to which these interventions embody the Church's biblical mandate of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18), pastoral care, and covenantal support for marriage as a sacred institution ordained by God.

The evaluation presented in this chapter is grounded in qualitative data collected from clergy, catechists, lay leaders, and married couples within Central Busoga Diocese. Their lived experiences provide insight into how Church programs function at the grassroots level. This perspective is important because pastoral interventions are not measured only by theological correctness but also by their lived impact within specific cultural and socio-economic contexts.

Furthermore, this chapter engages pastoral theology and contextual theology as interpretive frameworks. Pastoral theology emphasizes reflective practice integrating Scripture, tradition, lived experience, and social realities in responding to human brokenness. Contextual theology, on the other hand, insists that effective ministry must take seriously the cultural dynamics of Busoga society, including extended family influence, gender expectations, economic pressures, and traditional dispute resolution mechanisms. By interpreting field findings through these theological lenses, this chapter provides both critical insight and constructive direction.

The chapter is structured into four main sections. First, it evaluates the strengths of current Church interventions, identifying areas where the Diocese has demonstrated pastoral effectiveness. Second, it critically examines existing gaps and limitations, including structural, theological, and practical challenges that weaken long-term impact. Third, it analyzes sustainability and community perceptions regarding the continuity and reliability of Church-based marital support systems. Finally, it proposes contextually appropriate pastoral strategies aimed at strengthening the Church's response to marital conflict in Central Busoga Diocese.

The purpose of this chapter is therefore both evaluative and constructive. It seeks not simply to critique existing systems, but to contribute toward the development of a more holistic, integrated, and sustainable pastoral model one that addresses not only spiritual dimensions of marital conflict but also relational, psychological, economic, and cultural realities. In doing so, the study aims to support the Church in fulfilling its prophetic and pastoral responsibility to nurture stable Christian marriages as foundational units of both ecclesial and social life.

4.2 Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Church Interventions in Addressing Marital Conflict

This section critically evaluates the effectiveness of the Church's interventions in addressing marital conflict in Central Busoga Diocese. While Chapter Three described the various pastoral approaches employed such as premarital counseling, pastoral mediation, prayer and spiritual guidance, moral instruction, and informal disciplinary measures—this section assesses how well these interventions achieve their intended pastoral and theological objectives.

Effectiveness in this study is measured through three key indicators:

Restorative impact the extent to which interventions lead to reconciliation and reduced conflict recurrence.

Preventive capacity the ability of interventions to equip couples before serious conflicts emerge.

Sustainability and long-term transformation whether the interventions produce lasting behavioral and relational change.

The evaluation is based on qualitative findings from clergy, lay leaders, and married couples, interpreted through pastoral-theological reflection.

4.2.1 Effectiveness of Premarital Counseling

Premarital counseling emerged in Chapter Three as the most structured and widely practiced intervention within the Diocese. The evaluation reveals that it has significant preventive strengths, yet also notable limitations.

Strengths

First, premarital counseling provides theological grounding for Christian marriage. Couples are taught that marriage is a covenant before God, not merely a social contract. This theological emphasis strengthens commitment and discourages divorce, especially among couples who actively internalize the teaching.

Second, participants reported that premarital sessions help clarify expectations about communication, roles, financial management, and faith practices. For many couples, this is their first structured opportunity to discuss sensitive issues before marriage. Clergy noted that couples who attended counseling tend to seek pastoral help earlier when conflicts arise, suggesting a positive preventive effect.

Third, premarital instruction reinforces moral responsibility and spiritual discipline, including prayer, forgiveness, and mutual respect. These spiritual tools often function as stabilizing factors during marital tension.

Limitations

However, despite these strengths, several weaknesses reduce overall effectiveness.

One major limitation is short duration and limited depth. Many respondents indicated that premarital counseling is sometimes conducted within a short timeframe often just weeks before the wedding. This restricts thorough engagement with deeper psychological and relational issues.

Another challenge is theoretical orientation without contextual application. While biblical principles are taught, couples may not receive adequate training on practical conflict-resolution skills. For example, communication techniques, anger management, and economic planning are sometimes addressed superficially.

Additionally, premarital counseling often lacks systematic follow-up after marriage. Once the wedding is completed, structured support decreases significantly. This gap weakens long-term preventive impact.

Thus, while premarital counseling demonstrates moderate preventive effectiveness, its transformative impact would increase with extended duration, practical skill-building components, and structured post-marital follow-up.

4.2.2 Effectiveness of Pastoral Mediation and Counseling

Pastoral mediation is frequently used when conflicts escalate. Clergy intervene by listening to both parties, offering biblical guidance, and facilitating reconciliation.

Strengths

One major strength is accessibility. In Central Busoga Diocese, clergy are respected and trusted figures. Couples often approach them before seeking external solutions. This cultural trust enhances the Church's authority as a reconciliatory agent.

Second, mediation grounded in Scripture emphasizes forgiveness, repentance, and reconciliation. Many couples testified that pastoral guidance helped de-escalate conflicts and restore dialogue.

Third, pastoral mediation often prevents immediate separation by creating a neutral environment where both spouses are heard. The spiritual authority of the clergy can reduce hostility and encourage humility.

Limitations

Despite these strengths, effectiveness varies significantly.

First, clergy often lack professional training in psychological counseling. While spiritually competent, some pastors feel ill-equipped to handle complex issues such as trauma, domestic violence, addiction, or severe communication breakdown. This limits the depth of intervention.

Second, mediation tends to be reactive rather than proactive. The Church usually intervenes after conflicts have intensified. Early warning systems or structured marital enrichment programs are limited.

Third, some couples perceive mediation as biased, particularly in patriarchal settings where gender expectations influence advice given. If not carefully managed, this perception can reduce trust and compliance. Therefore, pastoral mediation is effective in crisis stabilization but less effective in addressing root causes of recurring conflict without additional training and support systems.

4.2.3 Effectiveness of Prayer and Spiritual Interventions

Prayer, fasting, and spiritual exhortation are central components of the Church's response to marital conflict.

Strengths

Spiritual interventions reinforce dependence on God, cultivate humility, and promote forgiveness. Many respondents emphasized that prayer softened hardened attitudes and encouraged reconciliation. In a highly religious context such as Busoga, spiritual practices carry significant psychological and communal power.

Moreover, prayer gatherings sometimes mobilize community support, reducing isolation for struggling couples.

Limitations

However, reliance solely on spiritual solutions may unintentionally oversimplify complex marital problems. When economic hardship, trauma, or psychological distress underlie conflict, prayer alone may not sufficiently address structural causes.

Some respondents expressed concern that over-spiritualization may discourage couples from seeking professional counseling where necessary.

Thus, spiritual interventions are emotionally and spiritually supportive but require integration with practical and professional approaches to maximize effectiveness.

4.2.4 Effectiveness of Informal Discipline and Moral Teaching

The Diocese occasionally applies informal disciplinary measures, especially in cases involving adultery or public scandal.

Strengths

Disciplinary action reinforces moral accountability and upholds the sanctity of marriage. It communicates that certain behaviors contradict Christian teaching and community standards.

Such measures can deter repeated misconduct and preserve the Church's prophetic integrity.

Limitations

However, discipline without restorative follow-up can produce shame rather than transformation. Some respondents reported that public exposure may escalate conflict rather than resolve it.

Additionally, disciplinary approaches often address symptoms rather than underlying relational dysfunction.

Therefore, while moral discipline upholds theological standards, its effectiveness depends heavily on restorative pastoral accompaniment.

4.2.5 Overall Assessment of Effectiveness

Overall, Church interventions in Central Busoga Diocese demonstrate moderate effectiveness. They are spiritually grounded, culturally respected, and accessible to the community. They successfully prevent some marital breakdowns and promote reconciliation in many cases.

However, their effectiveness is constrained by several systemic factors:

Limited professional counseling training

Lack of structured follow-up mechanisms

Over-reliance on reactive crisis intervention

Minimal integration of psychological and socio-economic considerations

Absence of formal evaluation systems to measure long-term outcomes

Theologically, the Church faithfully embodies its reconciliation mandate. Practically, however, its interventions would benefit from greater institutional coordination, skill development, and contextual adaptation.

The findings suggest that while the Church plays a crucial and irreplaceable role in marital conflict resolution, a more holistic and integrated pastoral model is necessary to enhance sustainability and long-term transformation. This calls for strategic capacity-building, interdisciplinary collaboration, and structured marital enrichment programs.

These criteria are informed by pastoral theology and Christian counseling literature, particularly the integrative model advocated by Gary Collins, who emphasizes that effective Christian counseling must address the whole person rather than merely spiritual symptoms.

4.3 Structural and Theological Gaps in Church Interventions

While the Church in Central Busoga Diocese demonstrates commitment to addressing marital conflict, the findings reveal several structural and theological gaps that limit the overall effectiveness and sustainability of its interventions. These gaps are not necessarily signs of pastoral failure but rather indicators of areas requiring institutional strengthening and theological refinement. This section critically examines these weaknesses under four main dimensions: structural limitations, theological reductionism, gender and cultural tensions, and sustainability challenges.

4.3.1 Structural Limitations in Pastoral Care Systems

One of the most significant gaps identified in the study is the absence of a formalized and coordinated pastoral care framework for marital conflict. Although clergy and lay leaders actively respond to crises, interventions are often informal and dependent on individual initiative rather than diocesan policy.

Pastoral care, as understood in contemporary pastoral theology, requires intentional structures that integrate prevention, intervention, and follow-up. Don S. Browning argues that practical theology must move beyond ad hoc responses and develop coherent frameworks that link theological reflection with structured practice.¹ In Central Busoga Diocese, however, most marital interventions occur reactively, with little documentation, monitoring, or evaluation.

Furthermore, the Diocese lacks specialized counseling units or referral systems. Complex cases involving trauma, domestic abuse, substance dependency, or severe psychological distress are often handled solely by clergy without professional collaboration. Emmanuel Lartey emphasizes

that effective pastoral care must be interdisciplinary, incorporating psychological and social-scientific insights while remaining theologically grounded.² The absence of such interdisciplinary integration weakens the Church's capacity to address deep-rooted marital dysfunction.

Another structural limitation is inadequate training. Many clergy receive theological formation but minimal professional counseling training. While spiritually competent, they may lack skills in conflict analysis, active listening techniques, trauma-informed care, and mediation strategy. This gap does not negate their pastoral authority, but it constrains the depth of their intervention.

The findings therefore suggest the need for institutionalized pastoral training, structured marital support programs, and diocesan-level coordination mechanisms.

4.3.2 Theological Reductionism and Over-Spiritualization

A second gap concerns theological imbalance, particularly the tendency toward spiritual reductionism. While spiritual resources such as prayer, repentance, and forgiveness are central to Christian pastoral care, some interventions rely almost exclusively on spiritual remedies without adequately addressing psychological and socio-economic dimensions.

Stephen Pattison cautions that pastoral care becomes ineffective when it spiritualizes problems that have complex human causes.³ Marital conflict often involves communication breakdown, financial stress, cultural expectations, emotional trauma, or power imbalance. When such issues are addressed only through prayer and exhortation, deeper structural roots may remain unresolved.

Similarly, Daniel Louw's pastoral hermeneutics stresses that caregiving must integrate spiritual meaning with existential and emotional realities.⁴ The findings in Central Busoga Diocese reveal that although clergy strongly emphasize forgiveness and reconciliation, there is sometimes insufficient exploration of emotional wounds or relational patterns that perpetuate conflict.

Additionally, some respondents indicated that theological teaching on submission and authority may unintentionally reinforce silence among affected spouses, particularly women experiencing injustice. When biblical texts are applied without careful contextual interpretation, they may discourage open dialogue about abuse or inequality.

Thus, while the Diocese faithfully upholds biblical teaching on marriage, a more holistic theological approach one that integrates justice, mutuality, and emotional healing is necessary for long-term effectiveness.

4.3.3 Gender and Cultural Tensions

Marital conflict in Busoga is deeply embedded within cultural systems, including extended family structures, bride price expectations, and gender role definitions. The Church operates within this socio-cultural framework, and sometimes its interventions unintentionally mirror prevailing patriarchal norms.

The study revealed perceptions among some married women that pastoral mediation occasionally prioritizes marital preservation over personal safety or emotional well-being. While clergy strongly condemn overt abuse, subtle gender bias may influence conflict resolution processes.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye argues that African ecclesial practice must critically evaluate cultural traditions in light of the Gospel, rather than simply baptizing them.⁵ If the Church does not consciously interrogate harmful cultural elements, it risks reinforcing inequalities rather than transforming them.

Moreover, extended family involvement can complicate pastoral mediation. In Busoga culture, marital disputes often involve clan elders. While this communal approach can provide support, it may also intensify pressure on couples and undermine confidential pastoral processes.

The gap, therefore, lies not in cultural engagement itself but in the absence of a clearly articulated contextual theology of marriage that critically engages culture while remaining biblically faithful.

4.3.4 Weak Follow-Up and Sustainability Challenges

A further limitation concerns continuity and sustainability. Many interventions are event-based rather than process-oriented. Premarital counseling ends at the wedding. Mediation often concludes once immediate peace is restored. Structured follow-up sessions are rare.

Richard Osmer's model of practical theology emphasizes that effective ministry requires ongoing reflection and evaluation.⁶ Without follow-up mechanisms, it is difficult to measure long-term transformation or recurrence of conflict.

Additionally, clergy workload presents a structural barrier. With limited personnel serving large parishes, consistent marital support becomes difficult to sustain. Lay leaders could potentially assist in marital mentorship programs, but such systems are not yet fully developed within the Diocese.

Economic constraints also affect sustainability. Financial hardship is a recurring cause of marital tension. However, the Church's interventions focus primarily on spiritual reconciliation without systematically addressing economic empowerment or financial literacy.

Consequently, while short-term reconciliation is often achieved, long-term resilience remains uncertain.

4.3.5 Summary of Identified Gaps

In summary, the evaluation reveals four major categories of gaps:

Institutional and structural weaknesses – lack of coordinated pastoral systems and professional training.

Theological imbalance—over-spiritualization without sufficient psychological integration.

Cultural and gender tensions – insufficient critical engagement with patriarchal norms.

Sustainability limitations – absence of follow-up and long-term monitoring mechanisms.

These gaps do not diminish the Church's central role in marital conflict resolution. Rather, they highlight opportunities for theological deepening, institutional strengthening, and contextual adaptation. Addressing these weaknesses will enable the Diocese to move toward a more holistic, sustainable, and contextually responsive pastoral model.

The next section will propose constructive and contextually appropriate strategies for strengthening the Church's interventions in Central Busoga Diocese.

4.4 Proposed Contextually Appropriate Pastoral Strategies for Strengthening Marital Conflict Intervention

In light of the identified structural, theological, and contextual gaps discussed in Section 4.3, this section proposes practical and contextually appropriate pastoral strategies for strengthening the Church's interventions in addressing marital conflict within Central Busoga Diocese. These recommendations are not intended to replace existing practices but to deepen, systematize, and contextualize them in order to enhance long-term effectiveness and sustainability.

The proposals are structured under five key strategic areas: (1) institutional strengthening of pastoral care systems, (2) capacity building and professional training, (3) development of holistic theological frameworks, (4) contextual engagement with gender and culture, and (5) establishment of sustainable follow-up and preventive programs.

One of the most urgent needs is the establishment of a structured diocesan pastoral care framework for marriage and family ministry. Currently, interventions are largely reactive and dependent on individual clergy initiative. A formalized system would provide coherence, accountability, and continuity.

The Diocese could develop a Marriage and Family Ministry Desk at diocesan level, tasked with coordinating premarital counseling, marital enrichment programs, crisis mediation, and referral services. This desk would also standardize counseling materials and develop guidelines for handling sensitive cases such as domestic violence or chronic conflict.

Don Browning emphasizes that practical theology must move from isolated responses to organized ecclesial practice grounded in reflective methodology.¹ A structured diocesan framework would embody this principle by linking theology, pastoral experience, and community needs.

Furthermore, the Diocese could implement standardized documentation systems for counseling sessions (while maintaining confidentiality). This would enable monitoring of recurring issues and evaluation of long-term outcomes.

Institutional strengthening would therefore transform marital intervention from an informal activity into a recognized pastoral ministry with clear procedures and accountability.

4.4.2 Capacity Building and Professional Training

Another crucial strategy involves equipping clergy and lay leaders with professional counseling and mediation skills. While theological training provides spiritual foundations, contemporary marital conflict often requires psychological insight and conflict-resolution techniques.

Training workshops in areas such as:

Basic marriage counseling skills

Trauma-informed pastoral care

Conflict analysis and mediation techniques

Gender-sensitive pastoral approaches

Financial literacy counseling would significantly enhance pastoral effectiveness.

Emmanuel Lartey argues that pastoral care must integrate theological wisdom with social-scientific competence.² Without undermining spiritual authority, clergy can benefit from interdisciplinary exposure that equips them to address complex relational dynamics.

Additionally, the Diocese could identify and train selected lay couples as marriage mentors. Experienced Christian couples who model healthy marriages could accompany younger couples during the early years of marriage. This peer-support approach would reduce clergy workload and create community-based support systems.

Capacity building would therefore ensure that interventions are not only spiritually grounded but also professionally competent.

4.4.3 Developing a Holistic Theological Framework for Marriage

The study revealed a need for theological expansion beyond spiritual exhortation toward holistic pastoral theology. While forgiveness and prayer remain essential, the Church must articulate a theology of marriage that integrates justice, emotional healing, mutuality, and shared responsibility.

Daniel Louw's pastoral hermeneutics emphasizes that caregiving involves interpreting human suffering in light of God's compassionate presence.³ Applying this framework to marriage would mean addressing emotional wounds, communication breakdown, and power imbalances alongside spiritual reconciliation.

The Diocese could develop teaching materials that emphasize:

Marriage as covenant and partnership

Mutual submission and shared dignity

Responsible stewardship of finances

Emotional intelligence and communication

Non-violence and respect

Such theological enrichment would correct potential reductionism and provide a more comprehensive pastoral response.

Moreover, sermons and teaching programs should incorporate contextual examples relevant to Busoga society, addressing real-life issues such as economic pressure, extended family interference, and generational expectations.

A holistic theological framework would ensure that interventions move beyond moral correction to transformational discipleship.

4.4.4 Contextual Engagement with Gender and Culture

Effective pastoral strategy must critically engage local culture while remaining biblically faithful. Marital conflict in Central Busoga Diocese is deeply intertwined with cultural norms regarding bride price, male authority, and clan involvement.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye insists that African churches must evaluate cultural practices in light of the liberating message of the Gospel.⁴ This does not mean rejecting culture, but discerning which elements promote life and which perpetuate injustice.

The Diocese could therefore:

Facilitate dialogue forums on Christian marriage and cultural expectations

Offer gender-sensitive pastoral training

Encourage shared decision-making models within marriage

Establish confidential reporting mechanisms for abuse cases

By addressing cultural realities openly, the Church would enhance credibility and ensure that marital preservation does not come at the expense of personal dignity or safety.

Additionally, collaboration with clan leaders and community elders—while maintaining pastoral autonomy could harmonize traditional and ecclesial dispute-resolution processes.

Such contextual engagement would allow the Church to function both prophetically and pastorally within Busoga society.

4.4.5 Establishing Sustainable Follow-Up and Preventive Programs

The research findings highlight the need for long-term sustainability. Many interventions currently end once immediate peace is restored. To strengthen resilience, the Diocese should implement structured follow-up mechanisms.

Possible initiatives include:

Annual marital renewal retreats

Quarterly couples' fellowship meetings

Post-wedding follow-up sessions during the first two years of marriage

Marriage enrichment seminars integrated into parish calendars

Richard Osmer emphasizes that practical theology must include continuous reflection and evaluation.⁵ Follow-up programs would allow clergy to assess progress, identify recurring patterns, and provide ongoing encouragement.

In addition, integrating economic empowerment discussions within marital programs could address financial stress—a recurring cause of conflict. Workshops on budgeting, savings, and income planning could be incorporated into marriage seminars.

By combining spiritual growth, relational skill-building, and economic awareness, the Church would foster durable marital stability.

4.4.6 Toward a Holistic and Sustainable Pastoral Model

The strategies proposed above collectively point toward a holistic pastoral model characterized by:

Structured institutional coordination

Professional competence

Theological depth

Cultural sensitivity

Long-term accompaniment

Such a model would move beyond crisis management toward transformative discipleship within marriage. It would position the Church not merely as a mediator of conflict, but as an ongoing companion in the covenant journey of Christian couples.

Ultimately, strengthening marital stability contributes not only to ecclesial health but also to social cohesion within Central Busoga Diocese. Stable families form the foundation of Christian witness and community development.

The Church, therefore, is called to renew its pastoral imagination integrating theology, culture, and professional skill to nurture marriages that reflect God’s reconciling love.

4.5 Summary

This chapter set out to evaluate the effectiveness of the Church’s interventions in addressing marital conflict in Central Busoga Diocese and to propose contextually appropriate pastoral strategies for improvement. Moving beyond the descriptive analysis presented in Chapter Three,

the focus shifted toward critical assessment, theological reflection, and constructive pastoral development.

Section 4.2 examined the practical effectiveness of existing interventions, including premarital counseling, pastoral mediation, prayer-based support, moral instruction, and informal discipline. The findings revealed that the Church plays a significant and respected role in marital reconciliation within the Diocese. Its interventions are spiritually grounded, culturally accessible, and often effective in crisis stabilization. Premarital counseling provides theological orientation and preventive instruction. Pastoral mediation facilitates reconciliation in many cases. Prayer and spiritual guidance reinforce humility, forgiveness, and covenantal commitment.

However, the evaluation also demonstrated that effectiveness is moderate rather than comprehensive. While short-term peace is frequently achieved, long-term transformation and systemic prevention remain limited. Interventions are largely reactive, addressing conflict after escalation rather than proactively cultivating relational resilience.

Section 4.3 critically identified structural and theological gaps that constrain effectiveness. Structurally, the Diocese lacks a formalized pastoral care framework, standardized procedures, and coordinated follow-up systems. Counseling efforts often depend on individual clergy initiative without institutional continuity. Professional training in counseling and mediation remains limited, particularly for handling complex cases involving trauma, economic distress, or domestic violence.

Theologically, the study identified tendencies toward reductionism, particularly overspiritualization of marital conflict. While prayer and forgiveness are indispensable elements of Christian pastoral care, they are sometimes emphasized without sufficient attention to emotional healing, psychological dynamics, and socio-economic realities. Additionally, the interaction between biblical teaching and patriarchal cultural norms requires deeper critical engagement to ensure that pastoral practice promotes justice, dignity, and mutuality within marriage.

Section 4.4 then proposed constructive and contextually appropriate strategies aimed at strengthening marital intervention within Central Busoga Diocese. These recommendations included institutional strengthening through the creation of structured marriage and family ministries, capacity building for clergy and lay leaders, development of holistic theological

frameworks, contextual engagement with gender and culture, and implementation of sustainable follow-up and preventive programs. The proposed model emphasized integration—bringing together theology, pastoral practice, cultural awareness, and professional competence.

Taken together, the chapter demonstrates that the Church in Central Busoga Diocese is deeply committed to addressing marital conflict but requires systemic enhancement to increase long-term effectiveness and sustainability.

4.5.2 Theological Implications

The findings of this chapter have important theological implications. First, they reaffirm the Church's biblical mandate as a ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18). Marriage, as a covenantal relationship reflecting Christ's love for the Church (Ephesians 5:25), is not merely a private contract but a theological reality requiring ecclesial support.

Second, the study highlights the need for a holistic pastoral theology that integrates spiritual, relational, psychological, and social dimensions. True reconciliation involves not only cessation of conflict but transformation of attitudes, healing of wounds, and restructuring of unhealthy relational patterns. A theology of marriage must therefore include justice, mutual respect, accountability, and compassion.

Third, contextual theology remains essential. The Church does not minister in abstraction but within the lived realities of Busoga society. Cultural structures, extended family systems, economic pressures, and gender norms all influence marital dynamics. A contextually faithful theology discerns what to affirm, what to transform, and what to challenge in culture in light of the Gospel.

Thus, strengthening marital intervention is not simply a matter of program development but of deepened theological reflection and pastoral imagination.

4.5.3 Practical Implications for Central Busoga Diocese

Practically, the chapter underscores several urgent priorities for the Diocese:

Institutionalization of marriage and family ministry structures.

Continuous training for clergy and lay leaders in counseling and mediation.

Development of preventive programs rather than exclusive reliance on crisis response.

Implementation of follow-up systems to ensure long-term marital stability.

Integration of economic awareness and relational skill-building into pastoral teaching.

If these strategies are implemented, the Church's interventions could shift from reactive crisis management to proactive relational formation.

Moreover, empowering lay couples as mentors and facilitators would expand pastoral capacity and strengthen communal responsibility for marital health. The Church would thereby function not only as mediator of disputes but as cultivator of resilient Christian families.

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated that the Church in Central Busoga Diocese occupies a central and indispensable role in addressing marital conflict. Its interventions are spiritually rooted, culturally trusted, and pastorally motivated. Many couples experience reconciliation and renewed commitment through ecclesial involvement.

However, the evaluation also reveals that existing interventions require structural coordination, professional enhancement, and theological deepening in order to achieve sustainable transformation. Without systematic follow-up, professional training, and contextual theological engagement, the long-term impact of these interventions remains limited.

The future effectiveness of the Church's ministry in marital conflict resolution depends on its willingness to integrate spiritual care with relational competence, cultural discernment, and institutional support. By adopting a holistic and contextually grounded pastoral model, Central Busoga Diocese can strengthen Christian marriages, reduce recurring conflict, and enhance its witness as a reconciliatory community.

Ultimately, stable Christian families form the foundation of ecclesial vitality and social harmony. Strengthening marital ministry is therefore not a peripheral concern but a central dimension of the Church's mission in Central Busoga Diocese.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions, recommendations, and areas for further research arising from the study on the effectiveness of the Church's interventions in addressing marital conflicts in Central Busoga Diocese. The chapter synthesizes insights generated from qualitative data collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and questionnaires involving clergy, church leaders, and married couples within the Diocese.

The purpose of this chapter is not merely to restate earlier discussions but to interpret the findings and propose practical actions that can strengthen the Church's pastoral response to marital conflicts. The recommendations offered are therefore grounded in empirical evidence gathered during the study and informed by pastoral theology and African Christian experience.

Marriage remains a foundational institution within both Christian theology and African society. Stable marriages contribute to spiritual growth, social harmony, and effective Christian witness.¹⁷ Consequently, the Church carries a pastoral responsibility to support families through intentional teaching, counseling, and continuous pastoral care.

The study generated several key findings regarding marital conflict and the Church's response within Central Busoga Diocese.

1 The research established that marital conflicts among Christian couples commonly arise from financial insecurity, communication breakdown, infidelity, extended family interference, and alcohol abuse. These conflicts are interconnected and often escalate when early pastoral intervention is absent.

2 The findings revealed that the Church plays a significant role in addressing marital conflicts through pastoral counseling, biblical teaching, prayer ministry, and mediation by clergy and church elders. Many respondents indicated that couples frequently seek help from church leaders because the Church is perceived as a trusted spiritual authority.

¹⁷ Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 45.

3. Mediation emerged as one of the most widely practiced intervention methods. Church leaders facilitate dialogue between spouses, encourage forgiveness, and promote reconciliation based on biblical principles of love and covenant commitment.

4. Premarital counseling and marriage seminars were identified as preventive strategies used by the Church to prepare couples for marriage. Participants acknowledged that such programs help couples understand expectations of Christian marriage and basic conflict-management skills.

However, the study also identified significant limitations affecting effectiveness. These include inadequate professional counseling training among church leaders, limited structured follow-up after counseling sessions, cultural expectations that sometimes contradict biblical teachings, and insufficient diocesan programs dedicated specifically to family ministry.

Overall, the findings indicate that while the Church is actively engaged in addressing marital conflicts, existing interventions remain largely informal and require strengthening through structured pastoral systems.

Based on the findings, several conclusions can be drawn.

1. The Church continues to serve as a central institution in addressing marital conflicts within Central Busoga Diocese. Couples rely on spiritual guidance and pastoral mediation as primary sources of conflict resolution.

2. Current church interventions have contributed positively to reconciliation and restoration of some marriages by promoting forgiveness, dialogue, and commitment to Christian marital values. Christian teaching understands marriage as a covenant relationship grounded in mutual love and faithfulness before God.¹⁸

3. Despite these positive contributions, the effectiveness of church measures is constrained by structural and capacity-related challenges. Many church leaders depend primarily on personal pastoral experience rather than formal counseling training, limiting their ability to address complex marital issues such as domestic violence, trauma, or severe emotional conflict. African

¹⁸ Stanley J. Grenz, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 87.

Christian scholars emphasize that pastoral ministry must address both spiritual and social dimensions of family life.¹⁹

4. Marital conflicts within the Diocese are influenced not only by spiritual factors but also by socio-economic pressures and cultural expectations. Effective intervention therefore requires an integrated pastoral approach that addresses spiritual, relational, and social realities simultaneously.

The study therefore concludes that strengthening institutional support for family ministry and equipping church leaders with practical counseling skills would significantly enhance the Church's effectiveness in addressing marital conflicts.

5.1 Recommendations

Drawing from the research findings, this study proposes the following practical recommendations indicating actions that should be implemented to improve the Church's response to marital conflicts in Central Busoga Diocese.

5.1.1 Strengthening Premarital Counseling Programs

The Diocese should develop standardized premarital counseling curricula to ensure that all couples receive consistent preparation before marriage. Programs should include communication skills, financial management, conflict resolution, and spiritual formation.

5.1.2 Training Church Leaders in Pastoral Counseling

The Diocese should organize regular training workshops for clergy, lay readers, and church elders in pastoral counseling and conflict mediation. Equipping leaders with basic counseling competencies would enable them to address marital conflicts more effectively and responsibly.

5.1.3 Establishment of Structured Family Ministry Departments

Each parish should establish an active family ministry team responsible for organizing marriage seminars, follow-up counseling sessions, and mentorship programs for couples at different stages of marriage.

¹⁹ Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 201.

5.1.4 Continuous Pastoral Follow-Up

Church interventions should move beyond one-time counseling sessions. Structured follow-up visits and periodic check-ins should be introduced to monitor progress and prevent recurrence of conflicts.

5.1.5 Collaboration with Professional Counselors

The Church should collaborate with trained Christian counselors and social workers to handle complex marital cases requiring specialized psychological or therapeutic intervention.

5.1.6 Contextual Teaching Addressing Cultural Challenges

The Diocese should intentionally teach biblical perspectives on marriage while engaging cultural practices constructively, helping couples harmonize Christian faith with African communal values.

5.4.7 Promotion of Marriage Enrichment Programs

Regular marriage enrichment retreats and workshops should be introduced to strengthen already stable marriages and prevent conflicts before they arise.

Areas for Further Research

This study focused on evaluating the effectiveness of church interventions in addressing marital conflicts in Central Busoga Diocese. Future research may explore: the influence of cultural practices on Christian marriages in Busoga, the long-term impact of premarital counseling on marital stability, youth preparation programs and their role in preventing future marital conflict, comparative studies between different dioceses within the Church of Uganda.

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APPENDIX 1: TURNITIN REPORT



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