

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH MARRIAGE AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF  
MARRIAGE: A CASE OF ARUA URBAN ARCHDEACONRY, MADI-WEST NILE DIOCESE,  
UGANDA**

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**RS20M02/009**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTER DEGREE OF ARTS IN ORGANISATIONAL  
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**

**April, 2024**



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
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## Declaration

I Nasser Godfrey, to the best of my Knowledge declare that this Research Report represents my own work, which has not been submitted for a Master Degree at Uganda Christian University or any other institution of higher learning for academic award, where work of other people has been used, acknowledgement has been done.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nasser Godfrey', with a horizontal line drawn through the middle of the signature.

Nasser Godfrey

## Approval

This Research Report entitled “RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH MARRIAGE AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF MARRIAGE: A CASE STUDY OF ARUA URBAN ARCHDEACONRY” has been under my supervision and is hereby approved for submission.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Owor', is positioned above the name of the supervisor.

**Dr. Joseph Jakisa Owor**

(Supervisor)

## Dedication

I dedicate this work to the Rt. Rev. Charles Collins Andaku, the 7<sup>th</sup> Bishop of the Diocese of Ma'di, West Nile for giving me the opportunity to undertake this transformational study, and to CAF ECC for the scholarship awarded to me to benefit from as a board member to build my capacity. May the good Lord richly bless and reward you all.

## Acknowledgements

My appreciation goes first and foremost to the Almighty God who has enabled me to undertake this study and bringing me this far in this academic journey, to which I give Him all the glory and honour. May his blessings continue to abound for ever and ever - Amen.

Secondly, I wish to acknowledge and honour my dear Supervisor Dr. Joseph Owor, for his tireless support in supervising, nurturing and guiding me appropriately in this work and ensuring I did the right thing, May the good Lord Richly bless and reward you.

Thirdly I remain very grateful to all my lecturers for the unlimited practical and theoretical knowledge they have imparted in me, while through the different modules, May God bless you all. Not forgetting my COHORT UG-UCU-21 for team spirit exhibited to ensure we walked this journey through together successfully.

I owe a lot of gratitude to my family, especially my wife, Mrs. Bacia Scovia who gave me all the moral and spiritual support always encouraging me not to give up, you are very special. Not forgetting my family at work place, especially the team leader Rt. Rev Charles Collins Andaku, who ensured from the start that I should be able to study this course, madam Jesca Mungulemisaru, who stood for me whenever I was out of office for the studies and finally Canon Joseph Mutebi who introduced me to this MAOL course, may the Lord enrich and enlarge your territories.

I appreciate all the respondents who gave their time to give me feed- back during the data collection process, and ensuring I was able to get the rightful information required. And also, to all who helped me in one way or the other, not forgetting all others who have undertaken such similar studies from whom I was able to quote their work.

To God be the Glory.

## Abstract

This study investigates the connection between Church marriage and the sustainability of marital relationships within the context of Arua Urban Archdeaconry, Madi-West Nile Diocese, Uganda. The central research question explores the extent to which Church marriage influences the longevity and quality of marital unions in this region. Four subsidiary insight questions guide the inquiry, delving into theological, doctrinal, institutional, ritualistic, and socio-cultural dimensions.

The background section contextualizes the study within the historical, cultural, and religious frameworks, emphasizing the significance of marriage within societal stability and the surge in church marriages in contemporary times. The methods section outlines a descriptive cross-sectional survey design, utilizing quantitative data collection methods including surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions.

Findings from the study suggest a strong influence of church teachings on marital values and behaviors, with significant involvement of religious institutions and clergy in guiding married couples. Rituals and practices associated with Church marriage play a vital role in strengthening marital bonds. Cultural background appears to have minimal influence on marital approaches within the Church context.

The study highlights the pivotal role of Church involvement in nurturing enduring and fulfilling marital relationships, advocating for the promotion of religious education, support for religious institutions, encouragement of shared religious practices, cultural sensitivity in counselling, and continued research for refining intervention strategies. These recommendations aim to enhance the sustainability and cohesion of marital relationships within the Church, acknowledging the complex interplay between faith, tradition, and culture.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Introduction to the study**

This study looked at the "Relationship Between Church Marriage and the Sustainability of Marriage" A Case Study of Arua Urban Archdeaconry. This chapter covered the Situation description which gives a background to the problem. We looked at the Action Question, Central Research Question, Subsidiary Insight Questions, that helped the research generate discussions along the topic and eventually look at similar studies done through Literature Review.

### **Background and context**

Marriage has been a fundamental institution in societies across the globe, serving as the cornerstone of family structures and societal stability (Cherlin, 2009), within this landscape, Church marriage holds a distinct and significant place, often accompanied by religious rituals, vows, and sacred commitments. The intersection of religious faith and marriage is a dynamic and complex terrain that has attracted the interest of scholars, theologians, and social scientists for decades (Mahoney et al., 1999).

In recent years the rate at which couples have embarked onto having church marriage has increased tremendously, couples who intend to marry for the first time and also those who have stayed together as husband and wife for some time, all take this direction to ensure their marriage gets blessings from the Church through wedding, However, Christine (2005) reported in a New vision Article publication that, church marriage has become a big trend in many circles, this is witnessed by the frequent media reports and publications on marriages, that take

place almost every Saturday in all parts of the country, region, city and community.

Scholars Henslin, (1995) have had specific focus on defining marriage as a group approved mating arrangement usually undertaken by rituals of some wedding to indicate the couple's new public status. Church marriage is approved by God in the Bible especially in the book of Genesis 2:18- 25, (NIV )

Marriage is a gift of God in creation through which husband and wife may know the Grace of God, it is normally given that as man and woman grow together in love and trust, they shall be united with one another in heart, body and mind as Christ is united with His bride, the church. Marriage is given as a foundation of family life in which children are born and nurtured.

The sustainability of marriage, defined as the ability of a marital union to endure and thrive over time, has garnered considerable attention in contemporary society (Amato & James, 2010) . Amid shifting cultural norms, changing gender roles, and evolving family dynamics, questions about the role of religious institutions, particularly the Church, in shaping the longevity and quality of marriages have become increasingly pertinent (Mahoney et al., 2001).

We have also noticed that the Government of Uganda has embarked on registering marriages through a clear procedure which people should follow in case they want to register their marriages whether it was done traditionally, civil or in the church, and this has been pegged to situations like travels, registrations for documents like passports or National Identity cards where your marital status is asked and you need to show prove of the marriage. Of recent also we noted that in the

parliament of Uganda there was a succession (Amendment) bill 2021) Alp (Advocates, 2022) which seeks to accord equal rights between men and women under the succession law in terms of domicile, property, residential holdings, maintenance, guardianship, etc.

During the taking of the vows in church the couple have often pledged to “have and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worst, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health to love and to cherish till death do us part, according to Gods Holy Law, and they say in the presence of God I make this Vow”. This is meant to bond the couple together forever together, meaning that the Marriage is to last till death do them part.

According to Lydia, (2009), Church marriage has been considered to be strictly monogamous unlike other types of marriages such as traditional marriage, or civil marriage, that have room for polygamy. Hence church marriage is meant to be permanent, issues of divorce, separation, are not considered,

Church marriage, is supposed to be based on love and it encourages equality, companionship of both the man and the woman in which children born in such marriages are considered as Gods Blessings Psalms 127:3 to which I do attest and confirm that, children in marriage is often looked at as a big blessing, and families that fail to get such reward of the fruit of the womb still continue to trust in the Lord for the right time, but not going into a second marriage.

During church marriages, the couple often make strong vows, with such vows made during marriage, it's expected that marriages will be sustainable but in

some cases this may not be the case, we need to understand why after making all the efforts to spend a lot on the weddings, involve relative's friends and many others in the preparatory process to undertake wedding. It's worth creating a mutual ground for the growth and sustenance of families in mutual love and respect to the Glory of God. That is why we seek to look at the impact of church weddings on the sustainability of marriages in our community.

This study seeks to delve into the intricate relationship between Church marriage and the sustainability of marriage. It aims to explore how religious beliefs, practices, and the involvement of religious institutions impact the resilience of marital unions (Marks & Dollahite, 2001). This research will investigate not only the role of Church marriage in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors within marriages but also how it interacts with broader societal factors, such as divorce rates, social support networks, and marital satisfaction (Amato, 2000).

Throughout history, the institution of marriage has been influenced by religious beliefs and practices, with the church playing a significant role in shaping marital norms and values. The historical perspective on the relationship between church marriage and the sustainability of marriage highlights the evolution of religious teachings, societal changes, and cultural contexts, this was exhibited by the early Christianity placing great emphasis on marriage as a sacred covenant and lifelong commitment. The teachings of Christianity, based on biblical scriptures, emphasized the importance of marital fidelity, mutual love, and commitment between partners (Smith, 2002). For instance, Ephesians 5:22-33 emphasizes the ideal of selfless love and the unity within the marital relationship (New International Version). The researcher noted that Emphasis was also made during

the medieval period, the Catholic Church, through canon law, formalized its regulation of marriage. Canon law established rules and requirements for the consent, public ceremony, and sacramental nature of marriages within the church (Goffman, 1959). This institutional control over marriage ensured the ecclesiastical oversight and validation of marriages, strengthening the sustainability of the marital bond (Davis & Moore, 1945).

Meanwhile, the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century brought significant changes to the relationship between church marriage and marital sustainability. Protestant reformers, such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, challenged the authority of the Catholic Church and emphasized the spiritual equality of marriage partners. They advocated for greater individual agency in choosing a spouse and emphasized love, companionship, and mutual consent as foundational to a sustainable marriage (Gutierrez & Martinez, 2017). With the rise of the Enlightenment and increasing secularization, the influence of the church began to diminish in regulating marriage. Civil authorities assumed a larger role in overseeing marriages through legal frameworks and civil ceremonies (Homans, 1961). This transition marked a decline in the direct impact of the church on the sustainability of marriages, as marriages were increasingly viewed as legal and social contracts rather than solely religious unions.

In contemporary times, the relationship between church marriage and the sustainability of marriage varies across different cultures and religious traditions. Some religious communities continue to prioritize church-sanctioned marriage as a means of promoting commitment, shared faith, and marital sustainability. However, changing societal attitudes, increasing secularization, and the

acceptance of alternative forms of partnership have led to diverse interpretations and practices of marriage across religious and cultural contexts (Giddens, 1992).

The study is motivated by the examining of this multifaceted relationship, which we aim to shed light on whether Church marriage, with its spiritual and moral foundations, contributes to stronger, more sustainable marriages or whether it encounters challenges and conflicts within the context of modern society (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006). This study is an invitation to embark on a journey into the intricate interplay between faith, tradition, and the institution of marriage, with the ultimate goal of better understanding the factors that influence the sustainability of marriages within the Church.

### **Rationale for the study**

The rationale for conducting a study on the relationship between church marriage and the sustainability of marriage will be driven by the following reasons:

Under Sociocultural significance, the rationale of the study is that, Marriage being a fundamental institution in societies worldwide, the sustainability of marriages can have implications for individuals, families, and communities. Understanding the influence of church marriages on marital longevity will therefore provide valuable insights into the role of religion in shaping and maintaining healthy relationships.

Religious influence: Religion often plays a significant role in individuals' lives, including their beliefs, values, and behavioral patterns. Investigating the relationship between church marriage and marital sustainability acknowledged the

potential impact of religious teachings, practices, and community support on couples' relationships.

Psychological and emotional well-being: Marriage is an important aspect of many individuals' lives, and a stable and satisfying marriage contributed to overall psychological and emotional well-being. Exploring the connection between church marriage and marital sustainability which then helped identify factors that promote healthier and more sustainable relationships, which can, in turn, enhance individuals' and families' well-being.

Counseling implications: Many religious institutions offer pre-marital counseling and support to couples getting married. Understanding whether and how these interventions influence the sustainability of marriages which have implications for counseling and support services provided by religious organizations.

Comparative analysis: Comparing the longevity of church marriages to secular or non-religious marriages shed light on whether the religious aspect of the ceremony provides added benefits or influences the sustainability of marriages differently. This comparative analysis provided important insights into the impact of religious beliefs and practices on marital outcomes.

By conducting research in this area, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of the relationship between church marriage and the sustainability of marriage, which then helped inform individuals, families, religious institutions, professionals, and policymakers involved in fostering healthy and lasting relationships.

### **Purpose statement**

The purpose of this research was to examine the "Relationship Between Church Marriage and the Sustainability of Marriage" **A Case Study Of Arua Urban Archdeaconry**

The study aimed at exploring the influence of religious beliefs, practices, community support, and counselling on the stability, satisfaction, and overall well-being within marriages in Arua Urban Archdeaconry, Arua City.

**Central Research Question:**

"To what extent does Church marriage influence the sustainability of marital relationships in Arua Urban Archdeaconry, Arua City?"

**Subsidiary Research Questions:**

1. What are the key theological and doctrinal aspects of Church marriage, and how do they shape the values, expectations, and behaviors of individuals within marital relationships?
2. How does the involvement of religious institutions and clergy impact the longevity and quality of marriages within the context of Church marriages?
3. What role do religious practices and rituals associated with Church marriage play in strengthening or potentially straining marital relationships, and how do they interact with secular influences on marriage?
4. What are the social, cultural, and demographic factors that mediate or moderate the relationship between Church marriage and marital sustainability, and how do these factors vary across different religious denominations and regions?"

**Significance of the study**

Academia: Research on the relationship between Church marriage and the sustainability of marital relationships will yield significant findings that will provide insights into the dynamics of marriages within religious contexts. While findings may vary depending on the specific study and the religious traditions examined, this study will benefit the academia in terms of acquiring new knowledge which will enhance understanding of the subject matter.

Families: from this study, it is prudent to know that, the families will gain a lot by knowing the gaps within their marriage so as to attain Higher Marital Satisfaction, especially for those who have Church marriages which will be compared to those in secular marriages. The sense of commitment, shared values, and spiritual connection will contribute to greater satisfaction as postulated by (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006).

Another area of significance to the family is that, there will be Lower Divorce Rates: Research has shown that Church marriages are associated with lower divorce rates. The religious commitment and support systems within religious communities will serve as protective factors against marital dissolution (Mahoney et al., 1999).

Church marriages are often characterized by a strong sense of commitment and devotion. Couples who engage in religious practices and rituals tend to view divorce as less acceptable and will be more committed to working through marital challenges (Wilcox, 2004).

Religious Institutions: from this study, the Religious institutions involved in undertaking these marriages will be able to generate knowledge on the Positive

Impact of Religious Practices through which Participation in religious activities, such as attending religious services together or engaging in prayer, by the wedded couples in the church will be linked to greater marital stability. These practices will promote communication and bonding within the marriage as enumerated by Mahoney et al., (2001). The researcher to some extent believes that this may not be a justifiable position which may need to be determined through this study.

It's important to also note that, though we have Variation Among Religious Denominations, the impact of Church marriage on marital sustainability will be influenced by the specific doctrines, teachings, and practices of a particular religious group (e.g., Stack & Eshleman, 1998).

Family and Community Support, Church marriages often come with built-in social support networks. The involvement of the religious community and extended family will provide resources and assistance to couples, contributing to the sustainability of marriages (e.g., Wilcox & Wolfinger, 2008).

It's important to note that while these findings will offer valuable insights, the relationship between Church marriage and the sustainability of marriage is complex and multifaceted. Individual experiences within Church marriages will vary widely, and the impact of religion on marriage will depend on a range of factors, including personal beliefs, cultural context, and the specific religious tradition in question. Researchers will continue to explore this topic to gain a deeper understanding of these dynamics.

## **Scope of the Study**

The Scope of the study is in terms of Geographical, time and content scope as described below: The Research will be carried out in Arua Urban Archdeaconry, Diocese of Ma'di West Nile, located in Arua city, which is in West Nile region, 520km from Uganda's Capital City Kampala, the study will not focus on a specific period but will mainly focus on the extent to which Church marriage influences the sustainability of marital relationships in contemporary society.

The study will also be Examining the influence of religious beliefs and practices on the stability and satisfaction within marriages by Investigating the role of community support and guidance provided by the church in fostering healthy and sustainable marriages.

It will also be Analyzing the impact of pre-marital counseling and religious teachings on marital satisfaction and conflict resolution skills, Comparing the longevity of marriages among couples who had church weddings versus those who had secular or non-religious weddings, and then we will be exploring the potential psychological and emotional benefits of religious participation on marital well-being.

## **Limitations of the Study**

The researcher will base his studies on the relationship between Church Marriages and sustainability of marriages, hence we will focus on the central research questions, "to what extent does Church marriage influence the sustainability of marital relationships in contemporary society?" as such the researcher anticipates the following Limitations to this study:

There may be aspect of Generalizing the outcomes and yet the study may be limited to specific religious contexts or denominations, as different religious traditions have varied beliefs and practices regarding marriage.

The researcher may also be confronted with the aspect of Selection bias, in which the research may suffer from self-selection bias, as individuals who choose religious ceremonies will differ in certain ways from those who opt for non-religious ceremonies.

Another limitation to this study may be Ethical considerations, in this, Privacy and confidentiality concerns might arise when collecting data on sensitive topics such as marital satisfaction and conflict.

It is therefore essential to acknowledge these potential limitations to ensure the research remains focused and provides accurate results for the chosen topic.

## **CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

There are diverse definitions and perceptions that people have concerning marriage, many scholars have given their own definitions, but the ultimate aim of this study will be to understand the available and existing but related literature which will be sought and reviewed and determined to ascertain the relationship between church Marriage and sustainability of Marriages, According to Eggebeen & Daniel A. Cornell, (2018) the study explores how religious affiliation and participation influence the formation and sustainability of marriages in the United States, focusing on assortative mating patterns within religious communities, as the Researcher,

In this section the Researcher will review existing and related literature on the "Relationship Between Church Marriage and the Sustainability of Marriage" A Case Study of Arua Urban Archdeaconry, this review will be done in relation to the research questions.

### **What Marriage is all about**

Marriage is defined differently, and by different entities, based on cultural, religious, and personal factors. A commonly accepted and encompassing definition of marriage According to (Stritof, 2021). Is that, Marriage is a formal union, social and legal contract between two individuals that unites their lives legally, economically, and emotionally. The contractual marriage agreement usually implies that the couple has legal obligations to each other throughout their lives or until they decide to divorce. As the researcher, I do concur with this definition,

since legality in marriages can foster and support church marriages since the churches handle marriages on behalf of Government by doing the registration with Government, what the researcher will seek to understand more is to what extent does the legality of marriage sustain the marriage?

Traditionally, marriage is often viewed as having a key role in the preservation of morals and civilization. the church is also very keen on issues of moral preservation, that is why issues of chastity are often emphasized, in my own view as the researcher, I concur with this definition to a greater extent, as we look at the obligations that come up, what I noted keenly in this definition is that marriage is a legal contract between two individuals, though done traditionally or through civil marriage, in all the church strongly advocates for marriage in church as a binding factor for the couple.

There are diverse definitions and perceptions that people have concerning marriages, many scholars define it as legal union between a man and a woman which is often aimed at forming a family. But for purpose of this study, the researcher will interest himself with Church Marriage and its impact on sustainability of families.

In the Institution of Marriage, there are other types of such marriage which is often termed to be a contract between a man and a woman, notably some of the types of marriages include: Civil marriage which is often conducted by the state, traditional Marriage in which the two families come together to sit and have negotiations on issues of bride price which of recent many end up in pomp celebrations in which the man is introduced to the lady's family, which some tribes in Uganda call "Kwanjula". There is also cohabitation where by two people just

agree to stay together before taking a step of formalizing with their clans their stay together. The other type of marriage considered is church marriage, where the couple bring their marriage to church for blessing. Which the researcher, in this study, will focus on.

### **The key theological and doctrinal aspects of church marriage**

The researcher will be interested to see what the key theological and doctrinal aspects of church marriage are and how they shape the values, expectations and behaviour of individuals within marital relationships, and it is noted that these will vary depending on the denomination and theological tradition. However, there are some common themes that many Christian churches share regarding marriage. Some of these key theological and doctrinal aspects noted reputedly include, Many Christian denominations view marriage as a sacrament, a sacred and visible sign of God's grace. For example, in Catholicism, marriage is considered one of the seven sacraments instituted by Christ. It is seen as a symbol of the relationship between Christ and the Church, and those who undertake this sacrament often cherish and value this so much, their way of behaviour and beliefs are aligned towards keeping this vow and their expectations are geared towards chastity, the researcher will therefore not underscore this aspect but take a keen interest in understanding the relationship of marriage being taken as a sacrament and the sustainability of the marriage.

The theological understanding of marriage is often grounded in biblical teachings, especially in passages like Genesis 2:24, where it is stated, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." This brings in a strong aspect of establishing a covenantal relationship between a man, a woman, and God. This covenant involves mutual vows,

promises, and commitments to love, honor, and cherish one another for life. As such, this understanding highlights the unity and permanence of marriage. But in the Sunday vision of March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013, Kenneth Lubogo (2013) gave his opinion on comments raised by Pastor Solomon Male and Bishop Paul Luzinda saying “Yes Church wedding is Not Biblical” his argument was that the early church split because of practices which became law/ customs yet they were not stated in the bible, notably is that it’s not clear in the bible that marriage is not made holy by the ceremonies in church but ones faith, he quotes 2 Chronicles 24: 1-3, 16 about Jehoiada getting two wives for Joash and the bible says Johoiada did what is right before God and for this reason he was buried among the kings yet he was not a king, this study will undertake to understand the validity of this statement.

Many Christian traditions emphasize the procreative aspect of marriage and the importance of family life. When children are therefore born into the family, this creates a strong bond, the family is seen as the fundamental unit of society and the primary context for the nurturing and upbringing of these children, in which the father and mother figure are very key, hence leading to mutual Submission and Love which the New Testament teaches mutual submission and sacrificial love within marriage, as exemplified in Ephesians 5:21-33, where husbands are called to love their wives as Christ loved the church, and wives are called to submit to their husbands. The research will therefore undertake to understand the validity of this tradition emphasis of procreation, and mutual submission as aspects that strengthen the relationship between church marriage and sustainability of the marriage.

While there are differences among denominations, many Christian traditions uphold the indissolubility of marriage, viewing it as a lifelong commitment that should not be broken except under certain circumstances such as adultery or abandonment.

**Role of the Church:** The church often plays a significant role in the celebration and solemnization of marriages. It provides pastoral care, counseling, and support to couples as they prepare for marriage and throughout their married life.

Marriage is seen as a witness to the world of God's love and faithfulness. The way couples love and serve one another within the context of marriage can be a powerful testimony to the transformative power of God's grace.

These theological and doctrinal aspects of church marriage are based on the teachings of the Bible and the theological traditions of various Christian denominations.

### **Factors that mediate or moderate the relationships between church marriage and marital sustainability**

Under the church Marriage, the family is ordained of God as such we look at the impact this will create on families for its sustainability which include: Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bounds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honour marital vows with complete fidelity.

From the beginning, the sacred nature of marriage was closely linked to the power of procreation. After creating Adam and Eve, God commanded them to “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,” and they brought forth children, forming the first family. Only a man and a woman together have the natural

biological capacity to conceive children. This power of procreation - to create life and bring God's spirit children into the world - is divinely given. Misuse of this power undermines the institution of the family, which may break the family hence not fostering strong and sustainable families.

For millennia, strong families have served as the fundamental institution for transmitting to future generations the moral strengths, traditions, and values that sustain civilization. In 1948, the world's nations issued the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, affirming that "the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society."

Marriage is far more than a contract between individuals to ratify their affections and provide for mutual obligations. Rather, marriage is a vital institution for rearing children and teaching them to become responsible adults. Throughout the ages, governments of all types have recognized marriage as essential in preserving social stability and perpetuating life.

Regardless of whether marriages were performed as a religious rite or a civil ceremony, in almost every culture, marriage has been protected and endorsed by governments primarily to preserve and foster the institution most central to rearing children and teaching them the moral values that undergird civilization. This is very true, since the researcher has noted that, In Uganda, the Uganda Registration Bureau (URSB) which is an arm of Government is responsible for the registration of Marriages, all the other stakeholders like the church, for church marriage, Hindu Marriage, Islamic Marriage, Civil Marriage, or traditional marriage all undertake marriage ceremonies on behalf of the Government and this impacts a lot on sustaining a family since you become known by the Government that you

are a couple hence fostering strong and sustainable marriages among the communities.

Religious Attendance and Participation: Regular attendance at religious services and active participation in religious communities have been linked to higher marital satisfaction and stability. Religious involvement provides social support, shared values, and spiritual guidance, which can enhance marital quality and longevity (Brown & Orbuch, 2013).

Based on the above analogy, it's worth noting that in the Church marriage, the issue of divorce is not to be heard of, during the wedding ceremony, the Main Celebrant takes the couple through the vows which they make to each other. "I take you ..... to be my lawful wedded ... to hold and to cherish till death do us part, before God the father, this is my solemn vow to you." The Bible is very particular about marriage issues, in which Divorce is not allowed. Jesus answered the Pharisees who came to test him on whether it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason "Haven't you read, he replied that at the beginning the creator made them male and female, and said, for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh so they are no longer two but one flesh, therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matthew 19:4-6, NIV). the Researcher agrees with this notion and is very particular about this statement in which we need to look at marriage as a long life venture in which we don't have excuses to quit. This would make the families to be sustainable.

Booth and Johnson (1988) presented four models of the way in which premarital cohabitation may affect marital quality, these are examined using interview data

from a national probability sample of married persons. The idea that cohabitation improves mate selection and marital training is rejected. Cohabitation is negatively related to marital interaction and positively related to marital disagreement, proneness to divorce, and the probability of divorce in nonminority populations. From this study, the researcher asserts that Church marriage guarantees the church supports and fosters a strong and sustainable marriage since it preaches against cohabitation, and divorce.

Marital Communication and Conflict Resolution is paramount, having an Effective communication and conflict resolution skills are essential for marital sustainability. Religious couples may benefit from religious teachings and values that promote forgiveness, empathy, and humility, which can facilitate constructive communication and resolution of conflicts (Fincham et al., 2007).

According to Noller (1996), “love that supports marriage and the family, or the type of love that is related to high levels of satisfaction in relationships, to the psychological well-being of family members and to stable family relationships”. Literature is reviewed that explores the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of both mature and immature love, and I conclude as the researcher, that all three aspects of love can be either mature or immature. Given that love is socially constructed, I note that it can be strongly affected by the beliefs about love that are present in the culture, and that these beliefs can be either functional or dysfunctional. Particularly dysfunctional beliefs include those emphasizing that love is blind, external, and beyond the control of the lovers. Behaviors characteristic of mature and immature love are also explored. It seems that mature love may be best conceptualized as creating an environment in which both

the lovers and those who depend on them can grow and develop. This type of love supports marriage and family life.

Its important to note that, contextual factors such as cultural norms, socioeconomic status, and family background can shape the relationship between church marriage and marital sustainability. For example, couples from religious traditions that emphasize gender equality and egalitarian values may experience different dynamics in their marriage compared to couples from more traditional or patriarchal religious backgrounds (Wilcox, 2010).

In conclusion, These factors interact in complex ways to influence the relationship between church marriage and marital sustainability. Therefore, it's worth stating that from the literatures reviewed, the researcher will learn that when we enumerate the issues that affect our families, it's important to make sure that the key and essential literatures cited are to foster a strong and sustainable marriage among the communities with particular reference to issues of, religious involvement, love, sex, child bearing among others which can contribute to marital satisfaction and stability, its effects may vary depending on individual, relational, and contextual factors.

### **Involvement of Religious Institutions and clergy on the longevity and quality of marriages within the context of church marriage.**

The involvement of religious institutions and clergy in marriage has been associated with various positive impacts on longevity and overall well-being. While it's challenging to pinpoint causation, several studies suggest correlations between religious involvement in marriage and longer-lasting relationships. Religious communities often provide a strong social support network for couples. Regular

attendance at religious services allows couples to connect with like-minded individuals who share similar values and beliefs. This social support can help couples navigate challenges and strengthen their relationship over time Elizabeth (2019), the researcher compares this to the fact that couples who are more involved in religious institutions like fathers Union, Mothers union or Christian Union Fellowship or other groups are more likely to live longer in their marriage than those who are not involved in any institution this is often linked to the moral, spiritual, Psychosocial, mental and physical support accorded to the team .

Religious institutions and clergy emphasize the importance of shared values and beliefs in marriage. Couples who share a common faith often report higher levels of marital satisfaction and commitment. This shared foundation can contribute to a sense of unity and cohesion within the relationship, promoting longevity.

Clergy members often provide pre-marital counseling and guidance to couples before they get married. These counseling sessions can help couples identify potential areas of conflict and develop effective communication and conflict resolution skills. By addressing potential issues early on, couples may be better equipped to navigate challenges and sustain their marriage in the long term.

Religious institutions and clergy offer spiritual support to couples throughout their marriage. This support may include prayer, encouragement, and guidance during difficult times. For many couples, faith provides a source of strength and resilience during challenging periods, helping them overcome hash weather and storms hence emerging stronger together.

Religious teachings often emphasize the sacred nature of marriage and the importance of honoring marital vows. Couples who are actively involved in

religious communities may feel a stronger sense of obligation to uphold their commitments to each other, contributing to greater marital stability and longevity.

In religious communities, marriages are often viewed as sacred commitments not only between the couple but also within the larger community. This sense of accountability to one's religious community may motivate couples to work through difficulties and seek support when needed, thereby promoting longevity in their marriage.

While these factors suggest a correlation between religious involvement and longevity in marriage, it's important to recognize that individual experiences may vary. Additionally, other factors such as socioeconomic status, education level, and cultural background also play significant roles in shaping marital outcomes.

### **The Role Religious practices and rituals associated with church marriage play in strengthening / straining marital relationships**

The Role Religious practices and rituals associated with church marriage play in several marriages are important roles, both in the context of the ceremony itself and in the broader spiritual and communal aspects of the union.

Religious practices and rituals emphasize the sacred nature of marriage as a covenantal relationship between the couple and God. Through rituals such as vows, exchange of rings, prayers, and blessings, the couple publicly commits to uphold the values and responsibilities of marriage within the context of their faith, and these public pronouncements of the vows is a religious ritual which distinctively sets you apart and connects you to your spouse for life, though some people have ended up breaking this vows, the researcher seeks to understand the important

role this ritual of making vows publicly plays in sustenance of these marriages, and whether this can be justified.

Religious rituals are rich in symbolism, imbuing the marriage ceremony with layers of meaning. Symbols such as the wedding rings, the exchange of vows, the lighting of candles, and the pronouncement of blessings carry deep theological significance, reflecting spiritual truths about love, commitment, and divine grace. Mashau (2011) explored the rising trend in which Marriage is always associated with some civil and religious ceremony. This social and religious ceremony provides validity to marriage. Though modern marriages are performed in courts, it still requires certain religious or customary practices. Which is often associated with certain symbols like ring, vermillion, special cloths, special sign before the house etc. the researcher interests himself with Church marriage for this study which is associated with special symbols like wearing rings. therefore, these characteristics play a significant role in ascertaining the level of sustainability in the families.

The marriage ceremony is often conducted within the context of a religious community, with family members, friends, and fellow believers in attendance. The presence of the community serves as a witness to the couple's commitment and provides support and encouragement for their journey together. That is why couples often send out invitation cards to friends, relatives etc to come witness this public declaration they are making before God and before man, such community witness and support is an aspect of binding the couple together for life in that some preachers have ended up saying if the couple want to separate or divorce, they should invite all this congregation to witness the divorce which

practically may not be possible hence a big aspect of sustaining the marriage, the researcher will hence find out the validity of this statement.

Blessing and Sanctification is a Religious ritual believed to confer blessings and sanctify the marriage union. Through prayers and invocations, the couple seeks God's grace and guidance as they embark on their life together. The act of blessing acknowledges the spiritual dimension of marriage and invites divine presence into the relationship.

Religious practices associated with marriage often include pre-marital counseling, spiritual reflection, and preparation. Couples may engage in discussions about faith, values, and their shared vision for the future, guided by clergy or mentors within their religious community. This process helps strengthen the foundation of the relationship and fosters spiritual growth. In order for church marriages or weddings to have impact, Andaku, (2021) notes that, it's important to take the couple through a premarital counselling which is aimed at: promoting Christian faith in the sphere of marriage and family life, to help prepare couples for the challenges of life in a way that will please and honor the Lord Jesus Christ and allow you to fully enjoy His love and plans for your life until death.

It's worth noting that, the reason for having such Marriage retreats are among others: to help the couple learn about God's plan for marriage to lead each partner to Christ or towards spiritual maturity, for the couple to Set goals in Marriage, to help each partner learn to know himself or herself better, to build and sustain good, strong, and successful Christian marriage until death, to help the couple learn to know each other better, to help the couple(s) clarify whether they are the right partners for each other and whether the timing is right for marriage.

Such elaborate publications by Andaku brings out a clear understanding of why people should go into marriage and sets better grounds which most types of marriages may not handle except the Christian Marriage/ Wedding. Hence making one conclude that this can be a better option for one to have a sustainable family life.

This study will therefore attempt to understand the relationship established by the role this religious practices of undertaking premarital counselling for couples intending to be joined in to holy matrimony plays to the sustenance of the marriages.

Overall, religious practices and rituals associated with church marriage serve to elevate the ceremony beyond a mere social or legal contract, infusing it with spiritual significance, communal support, and divine blessing. They provide a framework for couples to express their faith, deepen their commitment, and seek God's presence in their life together, we have witnessed couples who have stayed together in marriage for years rededicating their marriage by bringing it to church for blessings this confirms that its elevating this marriage to infuse in a spiritual significance, since socially people have known they are husband and wife and already have children, but that church component of elevating the spiritual aspect was missing hence coming to church, therefore such a decision taken after many considerations and experiences, should in practice be able to justify the relationship between church marriage and sustainability of the marriages.



## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the methods and procedures the researcher used in the process of data collection, this clearly brings out the nature and pattern the researcher followed in collecting and analysing the data.

### **Research design and approach**

This study was undertaken by the use of quantitative data collection approaches in which the data collected was described in the way they are collected to give a better understanding, in which the findings on the views expressed by the respondents was tabulated and expressed in frequencies and percentages which in turn was used for better interpretation of the data.

The study adopted three research designs and these included descriptive, which is mainly to help understand the study Amin (2005), and also helped in generalization of the findings, then we also had the cross sectional design since we had questionnaires from cross section of people Amin, (2005) and then the third design to be adopted was the correlation, which we employed so as to establish the relationship between the study variables Oso & Onen (2008).

### **Data collection methods**

The most appropriate methods that the researcher put in use for data collection were: survey Questionnaires, Interviews, Observation and focus group Discussions. In this study, both primary and secondary data was collected.

### **Survey Questionnaires**

While primary data was collected using questionnaires with both open and closed ended questions, these included a written set of questions that were administered to the participants who included couples that have been married for at least a period of 5 years and above, The Open-ended questions enabled the researcher to get detailed information from the respondents whereas closed-ended questionnaires helped in getting responses with utmost precision. The questionnaires were developed on a five point Likert scales measuring from “Great Extent” as response 5 to “Not at all” as response 1. All questions were arranged in one direction and all the constructs operationally defined. The Researcher then personally self-administered the questionnaires as the chief data collection tool since the target population comprised of respondents who are literate and considerably educated in the subject matter and those who were able to fill the questionnaire. This helped to reduce interviewer bias as well as the data collected was then easily analyzed. ( Olle & Katarine2005).

### **Validity and Reliability**

#### **Validity**

The validity of the research instruments was ascertained by first discussing the test instruments with the supervisor, there after by doing a pre-test so as to obtain valid information. The researcher set 10 questionnaires for conducting a factor analysis so as to ascertain the truth that the instruments don't mean the same thing ( Field 2007) and this helped to refine the instrument, out of these 8 questions were marked signifying that the instrument was valid.

#### **Reliability**

The reliability of the instruments was established by pre-test method where the 10 questionnaires were administered to 10 respondents from different categories, this was done through triangulating the information and using variety of data collection instruments such as interviews, questionnaires and written information for handling Focus group discussions.

### **Interviews**

The researcher purposed to interview 20 participants, though we ended up with 13 participants who were interviewed due to the time frame, in which a set of interview questions were designed to aid in this process. This method was very handy and advantageous in that the researcher was able to have a face to face interaction with the respondents in which he was able to prompt for further details in cases where he didn't understand some areas.

### **Focus Group**

Focus group discussion was held depending on the situation on ground, looking at the category of the subjects, we held one focus group discussion with about 8 participants. The main focus was on married members in the church and targeting those who are in associations like mother's union, and fathers Union, and also those who are not in any association in the church since these are members who have had some experience and impact in church work and also family life.

However, the researcher was also able to read Journal Articles, Books, and News Articles, enumerated in the population to extract relevant information to enhance the study. And then the responses are then arranged in a manner that the researcher was able to get the mean range using a five point Likert scale where 5= Very high, 4= high, 3= Moderate, 2= Low and 1= Very low

## **Sampling procedures**

The Researcher used simple random sampling and purposive sampling procedures. The simple random sampling was used to get the couples who participated in this study from the different unions, and churches, whereas the Questionnaires were given to the participants at random hence only those who have willingly accepted to undertake the study were then selected to participate in this study. In the same vain, purposive sampling was used on church leaders based on the fact that they often have critical information which may be relevant to this study.

## **Data analysis techniques**

The data collected was properly managed before it was analysed, the management process therefore involved, collection of the data by use of the questionnaires, for all the available respondents, this was then subjected to serial numbering of the questionnaires, this was then followed by going through each data carefully as we keep on noting the various themes raised which was then summarized by tallying any important quotations that portrayed certain experiences in a vivid manner as was given by the respondents to liven the data. Inspection and editing involved deleting of items that were not generating the desired information.

## **Ethical considerations**

Before the researcher could undertake the data collection process, he had to seek for permission for technical approval from the lecturer / Supervisor by submitting the research proposal, so as to follow the approved procedures. Being well aware that participants freely offer to divulge information and they can opt in or out freely, no participant was forced or compelled to participate in the data collection process.

The researcher also offered high level of anonymity and confidentiality by assuring the respondents that the information's given were strictly to be used for purposes of this study but not any other purpose, as such the details of the respondents will never be divulged and any information given will be handled with high level of confidentiality.

Since the results of the study strictly came from the data collected, the researcher was not involved in any plagiarism, any secondary data used was mainly referenced for purposes of recognition, the researcher then assured the respondents that he would handle any potential harms that may come in the cause of the study for instance psychological harms in which sensitive information's may be handled with utmost confidentiality and anonymity.

In situations pertaining Bias, while undertaking the study, the research promised not to deviate from the truth, to avoid distorting the results and coming up with wrong conclusions. The researcher noted that bias could come at any stage of the research, during the data collection, the researcher then ensured that information bias would not affect the results of the study this majorly depended on special considerations which were made on how to ask questions during the interview, we also ensured that there were no issues of poor interviewing skills hence making us to avoid biasness. In case there was any likelihood of any key bias that we think might have emerged in the course of the data collection, as such we got a representative sample of the respondents from the churches so that there is Equal Consideration of Interests.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

This Chapter presents and discusses the findings which were presented, analysed, and interpreted using the stated objectives.

### **2.0 Data gathering process**

The focus area for the researchers was within Arua Urban Archdeaconry. The Researcher then had to make use of the Authorization letter given from the University to seek for permission from the Archdeaconry to allow him undertake the study in some selected Parishes and among the Christians, I was then able to share the Questionnaires with the various couples randomly and also able to get the respondents for the Interviews and the focus group discussions held.

The Researcher used Microsoft excel throughout: from the data compilation process up to data analysis. I created a data set which enabled me to categorize the data under different headings while capturing the number of occurrences of the responses of the various respondents. After compilation of the data, it was easy to generate Tables, bar graphs and pie charts to present the data.

### **Background Information of the Respondents**

The Descriptive statistics were used to analyse demographic data of respondents in terms of gender, age, education level, and occupation. The frequencies and percentages were meant to establish the most frequent occurring responses and the least occurring response. The demographic characteristics of respondents were established and the table below displays the results:

**Table 1: Gender of Respondents**

S/No	Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Male	19	54.3
2.	Female	16	45.7
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 above shows the respondents in terms of gender, 19 (54.3%) of the respondents were male, and 16 (45.7%) of the respondents were female. The difference is not very remarkable, implying both male and female were more or less proportionately represented in the study.

**Table 2: Age of Respondents**

S/No	Age	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	20-25	2	5.7
2.	26-30	3	8.6
3.	31-35	8	22.8
4.	36-40	10	28.6
5.	40 and above	12	34.3
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

From Table 2 above, 62.9% of the respondents are in the age bracket 36 and above, meaning the majority of the respondents were mature enough to give independent responses and they entered into marriage in full knowledge and understanding the facts and importance of getting into marriage.

**Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Education Level**

S/No	Education Level	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	No Formal Education	3	8.6
2.	Primary Level	2	5.7
3.	Secondary Level	7	20
4.	University Level	18	51.4
5.	Others	5	14.3
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

In the table 3 above, the results showed that 18 (51.4%) of the respondents attained Degree Level of Education, we also have 5(14.3%) of the respondents attaining other levels of Education that included mainly Master’s Degree (2), Diploma (2) and certificate (1). This demonstrates that majority of the respondents 23(65.7%) are high levels of education which makes them able to read, write and understand and internalize the subject matter.

**Table 4: Category of respondents by occupation**

S/No	Category	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Self Employed	6	17.2
2.	Civil servants	11	31.4
3.	Church workers	14	40.0
4.	Others	4	11.4
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 above shows that 14 (40%) of the respondents are Church workers who have had significant time in the church and understand the importance of Church

Marriage, and they know the successes and failures of sustaining families that undertook church marriages in Arua Urban Archdeaconry, and 11(31.4%) of the respondents are civil servants. This shows that, three-quarters of the respondent's occupation are church workers and civil servants, hence have significantly influence on the decisions.

#### **Findings as per the Subsidiary Research Questions:**

##### **Theological and doctrinal aspects of church marriage that shape the values and behaviours of individuals within marital relationships:**

The researcher was interested in answering the first research Question which dwelt on seeing what the key theological and doctrinal aspects of church marriage are and how they shape the values, expectations and behaviour of individuals within marital relationships, and its noted that these varied depending on the denomination and theological tradition. This majored on looking at how church teachings on marriage influence one's values in regard to marriage, how often spouses / partners engage in religious activities or practices related to church teachings on marriage, they were also able to describe specific teachings or beliefs regarding marriage, and how these church doctrines have influenced one's decision making within marital relationships.

From the study undertaken, a question on how much do you agree with the statement that your church teachings on marriage have influenced your values regarding marriage? the researcher used a five point Likert scale where 5= Extremely Often, 4= Some How, 3= No Idea, 2= Not very Much and 1= Not at all. This is illustrated in the table 5 below:

**Table 5: Extent to which one agrees on the statement that church teachings on marriage have influenced your values regarding marriage.**

S/No	Response	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Not at All	2	5.7
2.	Not very Much	4	11.4
3.	No Idea	4	11.4
4.	Some How	8	22.9
5.	Extremely often	17	48.6
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

It's true, the theological understanding of marriage is often grounded in biblical teachings, this is justified from the above analysis that about 25 (72%) of the respondents when summed up, agreed that church teachings on marriage influence their values regarding marriage.

From the interviews held, there was a clear testimony from respondent X on the church teachings on marriage and the influence on the values regarding marriage as below:

“In the early years of our marriage, all looked to be rosy, during the wedding day we had a lot of gifts and support, we began the journey with high enthusiasm, along the way, we noticed some slight differences from what we expected, my husband being a silent man, many times would just act, this was affecting our marriage, when we got into a marriage seminar organized by the Mothers Union in our church, this influenced my values to

respect, forgive and honour my husband, and eventually we developed a healthy communication which has made our family to thrive, so far we have lived for 27 years in marriage now”

**Table 6: How often spouses/ partners engage in religious activities or practices related to your church teachings on marriage.**

S/No	Response	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Not at All	1	2.9
2.	Not very Much	2	5.7
3.	No Idea	2	5.7
4.	Some How	11	31.4
5.	Extremely often	19	54.3
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

From the table above, over 85% of the respondents agreed that they extremely often engaged in religious activities or practices related to the church teachings they have been getting on marriage as a couple.

From the study also, the respondents were able to outline some of the specific teachings or beliefs within the church regarding marriage that have had significant impact on one’s marriage as below:

S/No	Common Responses on specific teachings	Frequency
1.	Communication in marriage	6
2.	Have your marriage blessed in church	6

3.	Conflict resolution in marriage	5
4.	How to handle in-laws	3
5.	How to handle Finances in Marriage	4
6.	Marry only one partner	3
7.	Faithfulness in Marriage	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

From the above analysis, its crystal clear that the above subject matters have commonly been shared by majority of the respondents. It could be noted that among the issues raised, the common teachings the respondents have got are on issues of handling communication in marriage, having your marriage blessed in church, conflict resolution, handling in-laws, and handling the topic of how to manage finances in marriage among others. From the interviews held, a testimony was shared by one of the respondents, about how from these church teachings they have now been able to open a joint bank account as a family:

**“.....in one of the teachings we had at church, a particular issue that caught my attention was the issue of handling finances together to grow the family, .... We then opened a joint account...”**

Marital Communication and Conflict Resolution is paramount, having an Effective communication and conflict resolution skills are essential for marital sustainability. This was evident in the study. Religious couples benefit from religious teachings and values that promote forgiveness, empathy, and humility, which can facilitate constructive communication and resolution of conflicts (Fincham et al., 2007).

In the study, we also noted that 31 (88.6%) of the respondents agreed that there has been instances where their church doctrines on marriage have influenced their decision making within their marital relationship, and they were able to bring out some of the examples of decision makings influenced by the church doctrines as below:

S/No	Church Doctrines out lined	Decisions made	Frequency
1.	First wed before living together	We had to wait till the right time	4
2.	No sex before marriage	Waited till the right time and has made us faithful to each other	4
3.	Marriage is till death do us part	No divorce	5
4.	Monogamy is key & a must	Stick to your partner only	4
5.	Faithfulness in Marriage	Made us to Trust each other	3

it's worth stating that from the analysis above, the researcher has learnt that when we enumerate the issues that affect our families, it's important to make sure that the key and essential doctrines cited are to foster a strong and sustainable marriage among the communities, and couples can make decisions with particular reference to issues of having faithfulness in marriage, having a monogamous marriage leads to improved love, quality sex, child bearing among, this is in line with the view raised by Balswick (1989) in his book *The Family*, that Church doctrines highly influence peoples decisions to direct them think, work and do things in a particular way so as to bring transformation in the family.

**Involvement of religious institutions and clergy on longevity and quality of marriages in the church.**

Under the church Marriage, the family is ordained by God, as such we look at the impact this has created on families for its sustainability.

The church often plays a significant role in the celebration and solemnization of marriages. It provides pastoral care, counselling, and support to couples as they prepare for marriage and throughout their married life.

The researcher also noted that 29 (82.9%) of the respondents said “Yes” they have ever sought for marriage counselling or guidance from religious clergy or leaders, this is to give them a better footing in their marriage.

The researcher was able to use the Likert scale to determine the involvement of religious institutions and clergy and its impact on longevity and quality of your marriage as below:

**Table 7: Extend of involvement of Religious institutions and clergy/ leaders on longevity and quality of marriages in the church.**

S/No	Response	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Strongly disagree	7	20
2.	Disagree	2	5.7
3.	No idea	6	17.1
4.	Some How Agree	9	25.7
5.	Strongly Agree	11	31.4
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

From table 7 above, we see that 20 (57.1%) of the respondents agreed that the involvement of the religious institutions or the clergy play a significant role in the longevity of marriages and also improves on the quality of marriages within the church. One of the respondents R3 clearly stated specific instances where clergy / religious leaders like bishops, have performed sacraments to their children and also given them an olive branch invitation to their homes:

“Most notably is the sacrament they perform for our children, like baptisms, dedications, .....one-time Bishop Alphonse (now late) visited us home and held our son in his hands and prayed for him...”

such support from high level clergy men does not go un noticed and this plays a significant role on impacting on longevity and quality of marriage one has engaged in hence sustainability.

Religious institutions and clergy emphasize the importance of shared values and beliefs in marriage. Couples who share a common faith often report higher levels of marital satisfaction and commitment. This shared foundation can contribute to a sense of unity and cohesion within the relationship, promoting longevity.

Clergy members often provide pre-marital counselling and guidance to couples before they get married. These counselling sessions can help couples identify potential areas of conflict and develop effective communication and conflict resolution skills. By addressing potential issues early on, couples may be better equipped to navigate challenges and sustain their marriage in the long term.

Religious institutions and clergy offer spiritual support to couples throughout their marriage. This support may include prayer, encouragement, and guidance during difficult times. For many couples, faith provides a source of strength and resilience

during challenging periods, helping them overcome harsh weather and storms hence emerging stronger together.

Religious teachings often emphasize the sacred nature of marriage and the importance of honouring marital vows. Couples who are actively involved in religious communities may feel a stronger sense of obligation to uphold their commitments to each other, contributing to greater marital stability and longevity.

In religious communities, marriages are often viewed as sacred commitments not only between the couple but also within the larger community. This sense of accountability to one's religious community may motivate couples to work through difficulties and seek support when needed, thereby promoting longevity in their marriage.

We can note that over 97% of the respondents alluded that involvement of religious leaders has influenced their perception of the institution of marriage and their commitment to it. One of the Interviewee's R3 brings it better by saying "... The religious leaders oil it"

**Role religious practices and rituals associated with church marriage play on strengthening or straining marital relationships and its interaction with secular influences on marriage.**

The third question being answered here is about the role religious practices and rituals associated with church marriage play on strengthening marital relationships and its interaction with secular influence on marriage, as such involvement of religious institutions and clergy in marriage has been associated with various rituals, and practices that positively impacts on longevity and overall well-being.

While it's challenging to pinpoint causation, several studies suggest correlations between religious involvement in marriage and longer-lasting relationships.

From the study, it was noted that the couple expressed their views on the role religious practices and rituals associated with church marriage play in strengthening or sustaining marital relationships,

**Table 8: How often Spouses/ Partners participate in religious rituals or**

S/No	Response	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Not at all	0	0
2.	Not very much	1	2.9
3.	No idea	1	2.9
4.	Some How	10	28.5
5.	Extremely Often	23	65.7
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

**practices together.**

From the table 8 above, its noted that over 33(94%) of the respondents acknowledge

that they have often participated in religious rituals or practices together.

**Table 9: How much one believes that religious rituals have contributed to the strength of your marriage.**

S/No	Response	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Not at all	0	0

2.	Not very much	1	2.9
3.	No idea	1	2.9
4.	Some How	8	22.9
5.	Extremely often	25	71.3
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

From the above table 9, we noted that over 95% of the respondents agreed strongly that religious rituals have contributed significantly to the strength of their marital relationship. This coincides with the views raised by Noller (1996), saying: ... “love that supports marriage and the family, or the type of love that is related to high levels of satisfaction in relationships, to the psychological well-being of family members and to stable family relationships is nurtured through the support from church leaders”. Such Literature was reviewed so that to explore the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of both mature and immature love. The researcher therefore agrees with this preposition, that religious practices and rituals associated with church marriage play a big role in strengthening marital relationships.

Symbols such as the wedding rings, the exchange of vows, the lighting of candles, and the pronouncement of blessings carry deep theological significance, reflecting spiritual truths about love, commitment, and divine grace. Mashau (2011)

Religious communities often provide a strong social support network for couples. Regular attendance at religious services allows couples to connect with like-minded individuals who share similar values and beliefs. This social support can help couples navigate challenges and strengthen their relationship over time

Elizabeth (2019), the researcher compares this to the fact that couples who are more involved in religious institutions like fathers Union, Mothers union or Christian Union Fellowship or other groups are more likely to live longer in their marriage than those who are not involved in any institution this is often linked to the moral, spiritual, Psychosocial, mental and physical support accorded to the team . one of the respondents R3 clearly stated specific instances where clergy / religious leaders like bishops, have performed sacraments to their children and also given them an olive branch invitation to their homes:

“Most notably is the sacrament they perform for our children, like baptisms, dedications, .....one-time Bishop Alphonse (now late) visited us home and held our son in his hands and prayed for him...”

such support from high level clergy men does not go un noticed and this plays a significant role on impacting on longevity and quality of marriage one has engaged in hence sustainability.

Religious institutions and clergy emphasize the importance of shared values and beliefs in marriage. Couples who share a common faith often report higher levels of marital satisfaction and commitment. This shared foundation can contribute to a sense of unity and cohesion within the relationship, promoting longevity.

Clergy members often provide pre-marital counselling and guidance to couples before they get married. These counselling sessions can help couples identify potential areas of conflict and develop effective communication and conflict resolution skills. By addressing potential issues early on, couples may be better equipped to navigate challenges and sustain their marriage in the long term.

Religious institutions and clergy offer spiritual support to couples throughout their marriage. This support may include prayer, encouragement, and guidance during difficult times. For many couples, faith provides a source of strength and resilience during challenging periods, helping them overcome harsh weather and storms hence emerging stronger together.

We can note that over 97% of the respondents alluded that involvement of religious leaders has influenced their perception of the institution of marriage and their commitment to it. Interviewee R3 brings it better by saying “... The religious leaders oil it”

It’s worth stating that from the literatures reviewed, I have learnt that when we enumerate the issues that affect our families, it’s important to make sure that the key and essential literatures cited are to foster a strong and sustainable marriage among the communities with particular reference to issues of Love, Sex, Child bearing among others.

**Factors that mediate or moderate the relationship between church marriage and marital sustainability**

The forth question tackles the factors that moderate the relationship between church marriage and marital sustainability, the table 9 below illustrates the analysis made from the respondents about their views on the subject matter raised,

**Table 10: Extend to which your cultural back ground has influenced your approach to marriage within the church.**

S/No	Response	Frequency	Percentage %
------	----------	-----------	--------------

1.	Not at all	2	5.7
2.	Not very much	18	51.4
3.	No idea	0	0
4.	Some How	10	28.6
5.	Significantly	5	14.3
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

From the study above, we note that over 51% of the respondents said cultural background does not have very much influence on their approach to marriage within the church. This is notable in the view raised by Smith D (2002) that Marriage in the church is an ideal plan which shouldn't be influenced by customs or culture. To which the research agrees to a greater extent.

**Table 11: level to which religious rituals have contributed to the strength of your marriage.**

S/No	Response	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Not at all	1	2.8
2.	Not Very Much	7	20
3.	No idea	3	8.7
4.	Some How	9	25.8
5.	Significantly	15	42.7
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

Religious practices and rituals emphasize the sacred nature of marriage as a covenantal relationship between the couple and God. Through rituals such as weddings where vows are exchanged, pre wedding retreats, fellowships, prayers, and blessings, the couple publicly commits to uphold the values and responsibilities of marriage within the context of their faith, and these public pronouncements of the vows is a religious ritual which distinctively sets you apart and connects you to your spouse for life

The researcher was also able to justify / ascertain through the interviews that, marriage ceremony is often conducted within the context of a religious community, with family members, friends, and fellow believers in attendance. The presence of the community serves as a witness to the couple's commitment and provides support and encouragement for their journey together. that is why couples often send out invitation cards to friends, relatives etc. to come witness this public declaration they are making before God and before man, out of the 20 respondents interviewed, 18 (90%) of the respondents alluded to the question that "Couples who participate in church marriage ceremonies are more likely to stay together than those who do not" and such community witness and support is believed to be an aspect of binding the couple together for life. They also testified that, some preachers have ended up saying if the couple want to separate or divorce, they should invite all this congregation to witness the divorce which practically may not be possible hence a big aspect of sustaining the marriage.

From the interviews, the 15 respondents were able to give the following responses to the interviewer:

Results of 9 out of the 15 respondents interviewed said their marriage is wonderful, in spite of challenges that come to couples, this is what they desired and prayed for, notably one of the interviewees was able to testify that, “I live to remember each and every moment we have had in the last 27 years of our marriage, God gave me a great companion with whom we have blended very well....” Such testimonies can be equated to what a respondent said that “Obedience to God was also mentioned as another reason that can foster a strong and sustainable marriage which makes you to have respect and honor for one another.

Another area where the respondents spoke clearly was on the issue of ways in which a church marriage differs from a secular or civil marriage ceremonies and how they impact on sustainability of the marriage, among the 15 respondents, 12 of the respondents were able to say that; the church can foster a strong and sustainable family through her teachings and social networkings for which the church can continuously promote monogamy as opposed to secular, or traditional marriages where polygamy is allowed, this indicates that where a man has more than one wife, the family may not be sustainable due to struggles and fights among the co-wives, this agrees with J.N.K & Nasimiyu Wasike A, (1999) “who said in Africa, the issue of polygamy still rages, should polygamists be accepted in the church?” for the African man the idea of polygamy and having many children is very key hence encouraging him to have multiple sexual relations, this will hinder him from going for church marriage which is opposed to the issue of having multiple sexual partners. The member said a church marriage ceremony differs from other traditional ceremonies in the aspect of church ceremonies are full of

pomp and style, the whole world comes to hear and know of your marital status, though in other traditional or civil marriages only few people come to know or hear of this.

The couple also confessed that things like looks, the voice, the dimples, the sports, the spirituality of their spouses was able to make them get attracted to their partners, one of the respondents confessed that.....”my wife was a real athlete in school, when ever she sprints, that moved my heart, and this attracted me to her a lot....”

Another reason given for the attraction was the fact that my spouse was very particular on the aspect of handling finances in harmony as a couple if they marry, this was evident through the importance of allowing the church to teach families the aspect of financial literacy to empower the families economically and socially this seems to agree with the concept shared by Riedner & Andreas Jenny , (2007)

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Introduction:**

This chapter looks at the conclusions drawn from the results after the analysis and then the Recommendations given for further studies.

### **Summary**

The study was carried out on the Relationship between church marriage and the sustainability of marriage, the study findings were analysed using descriptive statistics.

The findings show that both genders were proportionately well represented in the study, both views were got and majority of the respondents were mature enough, showing that their responses are from an informed point of view, it's also noted that over 60% of the respondents are educated to a higher level of diplomas, and degrees.

The finding indicated that from the first question on how theological and doctrinal aspects of church marriage shape the values, expectations and behaviours of individuals within marital relations, the study showed that 72% of the respondents agreed that church teachings on marriage have influenced their values regarding marriage, with the respondents bringing out the values that impacted on them a lot, this led to 85% of the respondents confessing that this stems out from their frequent engagement in religious activities / practices related to the church teachings, which developed from a strong biblical/ religious up-bringing hence acknowledging that theological and doctrinal aspects of church marriage shape the

values, expectations and behaviours of individuals in marriage. To which the researcher strongly agreed.

The study also showed that, through the involvements of religious institutions and clergy / leaders impacted on the longevity and quality of their marriages in the church.

The study findings also show that 82.9% of the respondents said, yes, they have ever sought for counselling and guidance from religious clergy/ leaders in their marriage, this is evidenced by the fact that 92.1% of the respondents agreeing that involvement of religious institutions play a significant role in longevity of marriages in Arua Urban Archdeaconry. 97% of the respondents agreed to religious leaders being involved and influencing their perception of the institution of marriage.

94% of the respondents acknowledged that they have often participated in religious rituals or practices together, notably including: going to church or for wedding ceremonies together, hence contributing to 95% of the respondents agreeing that religious practices and doctrines have contributed significantly to the strength of their marital relationship.

The findings of the study on the question on factors that mediate or moderate the relationship between church marriage and marital sustainability, over 55% of the respondents said cultural background does not very much influence their approach to marriage within the church, but, it's also prudent to say that, 62.9% of the respondents said cultural background did not affect the interpretation of the church teachings on marriage. This brings out the element that, there may be differences considering how other religions and strong adherence to cultural or ethical values which may influence church marriage, with 18 (90%) of the

respondents alluding to the question that “Couples who participate in church marriage ceremonies are more likely to stay together than those who do not” and such community witness and support is believed to be an aspect of binding marriage relationships.

### **Conclusions:**

In regard to the findings, it was concluded that, individual respondents in a marriage who got church teachings on marriage were able to actively participate and also engage their spouses in religious activities related to the church teachings, and these teachings significantly influenced their decision making within the marital relationship.

From the study, it was also concluded that, involvement of religious institutions, or clergy / leaders in the couple’s marriage life and their quest to often seek for counselling and guidance from these religious clergy/leaders plays a significant role in influencing their perception of the institution of marriage hence leading to the improved quality and longevity of marriages.

The study also concluded that, the respondents who acknowledged participating in religious rituals or practices together with their spouses / partners had the opportunity for these practices to significantly contribute to their marital relationship, and they confessed that despite the intersections from the secular world, this has not so much created tension in their marital relationship, hence the marriage being sustainable due to these frequent involvements in the religious practices.

The study also concluded that, factors like cultural background does not so much mediate or moderate the relationships between church marriage and marital

sustainability, and it cannot influence their approach to marriage within the church- though there may be other factors that may moderate their marital relationship.

In conclusion, the study has shown that, to a greater extent (over 95%) the study clearly brings out that, church marriage significantly influences the sustainability of marital relationships in Arua Urban Archdeaconry and the contemporary society.

### **Recommendations:**

The Church should inculcate into parents, and children constant teachings on marriage and family issues and be able to show the importance of having church marriage, this will foster the relationship among the spouses, the children and the entire families members so as to grow up knowing that they need to honor God and their spouses through bringing the marriages to church for prayers and blessings which is the right thing to do, to ensure sustainability of the families this can be through having it at parish levels or archdeaconry levels and all levels for easy accessibility of the services of the church leaders hence creating impact.

Apart from religious institutions, clergy or leaders being involved in influencing the decisions and perceptions of individuals in marital relationships, hence leading to longevity of marriage life, we need to subject couples on other factors like social or economic or political involvement and its effect on longevity of marital relationships since marriages are ordained by God.

Families can only be sustained if the couple foster a great relationship among themselves, therefore the researcher recommends that, families need to be

empowered either internally or through the church to establish a strong bond of love respect and trust so as to grow together in mutual love and respect and have sustainable families.

This study only looked at one aspect which is church marriage as the factor that moderates or mediates the relationship with marital sustainability, it's worth undertaking other factors like cultural, social political or economic that may be able to influence the marital relationship hence leading to marital sustainability.

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- b) Not very much
- c) No idea
- d) Some how
- e) Extremely often

2. How often do you and your spouse/partner engage in religious activities or practices related to your Church's teachings on marriage?
- 1. Not at all
  - 2. Not very much
  - 3. No idea
  - 4. Some how
  - 5. Extremely often

**Section B1(b)**

1. Can you describe any specific teachings or beliefs within your Church regarding marriage that have had a significant impact on your marriage?  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....
2. Have there been any instances where your Church's doctrines on marriage have influenced your decision-making within your marital relationship? Please provide examples.....  
 .....  
 .....

**Subsidiary Research Question 2: *Involvement of religious institutions and clergy and its impact on longevity and quality of marriages in the church***

**Section B2(a)**

1. Have you sought marriage counseling or guidance from religious clergy or leaders? (Yes/No)
2. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree," rate the impact of your Church's involvement on the overall quality of your marriage.
- 1. Strongly Disagree
  - 2. Disagree
  - 3. No idea
  - 4. Somehow Agree
  - 5. Strongly Agree

**Section B2(b)**

1. Can you describe any instances where your religious institution or clergy played a significant role in resolving conflicts or providing support in your

marriage?

.....  
.....  
.....

2. How has the involvement of religious leaders influenced your perception of the institution of marriage and your commitment to it?.....

.....  
.....

**Subsidiary Research Question 3:** *Role religious practices and rituals associated with Church marriage play in strengthening or straining marital relationships, and its interaction with secular influences on marriage*

**Section B3(a)**

1. How often do you and your spouse/partner participate in religious rituals or practices together?

- 1) Not at all
- 2) Not very much
- 3) No idea
- 4) Some how
- 5) Extremely often

3. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Not at all" and 5 being "Significantly," how much do you believe that religious rituals have contributed to the strength of your marriage?

- 1) Not at all
- 2) Not very much
- 3) No idea
- 4) Some how
- 5) Significantly

**Section B3(b)**

1. Can you describe any specific religious rituals or practices that you believe have had a positive impact on your marriage?.....

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2. Have there been any instances where the intersection of religious and secular influences created tensions within your marriage? Please provide examples.....  
.....  
.....

**Subsidiary Research Question 4: *Factors that mediate or moderate the relationship between Church marriage and marital sustainability,***

**Section B4(a)**

1. To what extent do you believe your cultural background has influenced your approach to marriage within the Church?  
1. Not at all  
2. Not very much  
3. No idea  
4. Some how influenced  
5. Significantly

2. Are there any significant differences in the sustainability of Church marriages that you have observed across different regions or religious denominations? (Yes/No).....

If, Yes  
Explain.....  
.....  
.....

**Section B4(b)**

1. How has your cultural background affected your interpretation of Church teachings on marriage?  
1. Not at all  
2. Not very much  
3. No idea  
4. Some how  
5. Significantly

2. Can you share any insights on how Church marriages are practiced and perceived differently in various regions or within different religious denominations? Please provide examples.....  
.....  
.....

**Thank you**

## Appendix 2.

### Interview Guides for 20 couples

Dear Respondent, My Name is Nasser Godfrey, who is pursuing a Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership from Uganda Christian University Mukono. Am carrying out a study on “Relationship Between Church Marriage and the Sustainability of Marriage” A Case Study Of Arua Urban Archdeaconry” I wish to kindly seek for your consent to provide me with information which is relevant for this study. All the information provided will be for academic purposes only, as such, it will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thank you for accepting to spare your time to respond to these interview

#### Section A: Background Information

Instructions: this is to be facilitated by the researcher

- a) Male [ ]                      b) Female [ ]
1. Age  
a) 20 - 25 [ ]    b) 26- 30 [ ]    c) 31- 35 [ ]    d) 36 - 40 [ ]    e) 40 and above [ ]
  2. What is your Educational Status? .....
  3. What is your Occupation? .....
  4. For how long have you been married? .....
  5. What attracted you to your spouse? .....
  6. How would you describe your marriage to someone who has just met you?  
.....  
.....
  7. What role does the institution of marriage play within your religious or spiritual beliefs?.....  
.....
  8. In what ways does a church marriage ceremony differ from a secular or civil marriage ceremony, and how might these differences impact the sustainability of the marriage?.....  
.....
  9. How does the religious or spiritual foundation of a marriage contribute to its long-term sustainability?.....  
.....  
.....
  10. Do you believe that couples who participate in church marriage ceremonies are more likely to stay together than those who do not? Why or why not?  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

11. How do religious values and teachings influence marital dynamics and conflict resolution within a marriage?

.....  
.....

12. Can you discuss any specific rituals or practices within your religious tradition that are aimed at strengthening marital bonds and promoting sustainability?

.....  
.....

13. What challenges, if any, do couples in church marriages face that are unique compared to couples in secular marriages?

.....  
.....

14. How does the community support provided by a religious congregation impact the sustainability of marriages within that community?

.....  
.....

15. Are there any particular teachings or doctrines within your faith that address the sanctity and permanence of marriage?

.....  
.....  
.....

16. How might societal changes and shifts in attitudes towards marriage affect the relationship between church marriage and the sustainability of marriage?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Thanks a Lot for your Time.**

### Appendix 3:

#### Focus Group Discussion Questions

for 2 Focus Group containing 5 participants each targeting both church workers and married couples.

Dear Respondent, My Name is Nasser Godfrey, who is pursuing a Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership from Uganda Christian University Mukono. Am carrying out a study on “Relationship Between Church Marriage and the Sustainability of Marriage” A Case Study Of Arua Urban Archdeaconry” I wish to kindly seek for your consent to provide me with information which is relevant for this study. All the information provided will be for academic purposes only, as such, it will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thank you for accepting to spare your time to join in this focus group discussion

#### 1. Bio Data

S/No	1. Age	2. Educational Level	3. Gender	4. Marital Status	5. Occupation
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					

#### Topics for Discussion:

1. What are the key theological and doctrinal aspects of Church marriage, and how do they shape the values, expectations, and behaviors of individuals within marital relationships?
2. How does the involvement of religious institutions and clergy impact the longevity and quality of marriages within the context of Church marriages?
3. What role do religious practices and rituals associated with Church marriage play in strengthening or potentially straining marital relationships, and how do they interact with secular influences on marriage?

4. What are the social, cultural, and demographic factors that mediate or moderate the relationship between Church marriage and marital sustainability, and how do these factors vary across different religious denominations and regions?"

**Thanks a Lot for Your Time**

<b>Demographic</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Description</b>
Age	18-25, 26-35, 36-45, etc.	Groups respondents by age ranges
Gender	Male, Female, Other	Identifies respondents' gender identity
Religion	Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, etc.	Indicates respondents' religious affiliation
Marital Status	Single, Married, Divorced, Widowed, etc.	Identifies respondents' current marital status
Education Level	High School, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, etc.	Indicates respondents' highest level of education
Length of Marriage	Less than 1 year, 1-5 years, 6-10 years, etc.	Indicates the duration of respondents' marriages
Church Attendance	Regularly, Occasionally, Rarely, Never	Indicates how often respondents attend church services
Cultural Background	Western, Eastern, African, etc.	Indicates respondents' cultural background
Research Questionnaires for field surveys	50 Respondents	Subject members to questionnaires for qualitative and quantitative results
Interview Guides	20 participants	Subject respondents to Interviews to be administered by the Researcher and other research Assistants
Focus group Discussions	2 groups 5 participants each	Subject respondents to two groups called focus group discussions with 10 respondents each