

The Effect of Forgiveness on Marital Quality in Kenya: A Case of the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of forgiveness on marital quality among married individuals in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. A mixed method design (parallel convergent design) was employed in measuring the correlational levels among the study variables. From the qualitative data, 56.5% of the respondents indicated that forgiveness improved the quality of their marriage while the quantitative analysis established that the level of forgiveness was low ($0.917 > p = 0.05$). The calculated significance level of forgiveness was $0.917 > p = 0.05$ which meant acceptance of the null hypothesis that indicated no significant relationship with marital quality. Additionally, regression analysis showed that the strength of relationship between independent variable (forgiveness) and dependent (Marital quality) is low and weak. This study concludes that the levels of forgiveness was low and insignificantly influenced quality of marriage among married individuals in the Archdiocese of Nairobi.

Keywords: Forgiveness; Marital quality; Married individuals; Psychological well-being

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a union between two willing people recognized by law; it is a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law or a life-long union between a man and woman who are freely and knowledgeably bound by selfless love for each other [1,2]. Marriage fits the analogy of a ship in a stormy sea. Just as a ship navigates through the rough waters, so does marriage in uncertain marital conditions. The ability of the ship to steadily float depends with the captain's ability to focus and correct simple errors that may turn costly. This is the same scenario in a marriage. The researcher was interested in exploring whether the ship is sustaining the pressure of the storm. Your guess is as the researcher's. Marriage is experiencing turmoil.

The definition of marriage suggests it is destined for unity and pleasure because it is a union between two willing people recognized by law; consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law and a life-long union between a man and woman who are freely and knowledgeably bound by selfless love for each other [1,2]. As a union of two 'strangers' with different personalities, social foundations, values, and humanistic views, disagreements are inevitable.

Marriage fits the analogy of a ship in a stormy sea. Just as a ship navigates through the rough waters, so does marriage in an

uncertain marital condition. The ability of the ship to steadily float depends with the captain's ability to focus and correct simple errors that may turn costly. This is the same scenario in a marriage. The researcher was interested in exploring whether the ship is sustaining the pressure of the storm. Your guess is as the researcher's. Marriage is experiencing turmoil.

Currently, marriage institution is at crossroads due to diminishing happiness between the married individuals where incidences of assault leading to physical, verbal and psychological problems from either party in the marriage have become issues of great concern because of their effect on marital quality. Negative issues in marriages defy the findings of Tat, Arokiasamy and soon which suggested that marriage is a source of physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing. Analysis of previous studies and statistics portray a worrying trend of low quality relationships and marriages. Vashisht, Singh and Sharma, opine that the quality of a marital relationship is characterized by psychosocial stability and streamlined distress management skills between the partners such that there is little or no disruption caused by emotional instabilities.

Couples tend to associate satisfaction with a balance in emotional, social and economic benefits from the partner [3]. Failure to provide the partner with these benefits results to physical, verbal, and psychological problems such as emotional detachment, outburst, insults, domestic violence, separation and even divorce.

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Received: May 25, 2021; **Accepted:** June 09, 2021; **Published:** June 16, 2021

Citation: Kamau KP, Mbugua S, Gichure P, Macharia E (2021) The Effect of Forgiveness on Marital Quality in Kenya: A Case of the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. *J Psychol Psychother.* 11:408.

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For instance, when COVID-19 hit the world from December 2019, containment measures were put in place including lockdowns. The spouses had limited financial resources and expected to work in unfamiliar arrangements. Together with extra parenting responsibilities occasioned by closure of schools exposed their stress and emotional intelligence incapability evident in increase in the number of marital conflicts. Still, in a healthy marriage both partners are free to express their feelings and emotions, but if one individual in the marriage has low levels of emotional intelligence they express their maladaptive emotions through behaviors that are unhelpful [4].

Statement of the problem

It is common knowledge that the quality of marriages and families is escalating in Kenya and across the World. In Kenya, 15 percent of marital unions end in divorce and Nairobi County alone records 21,573 cases of divorce, 34,272 separations and 71 homicides in the first quarter of 2018 [5].

The family life and counseling office in the Archdiocese of Nairobi meets many married individuals who are unhappy in their marriages and they are almost helpless and hopeless about it. Mostly, victims of low quality of marriage report unforgiving partners, verbal threats, infidelity, harassment, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and physical and emotional assault from their partners. Although the church fundamentally prefers non-divorce solutions of solving these marital conflicts, some of the dissatisfied couples file legal divorce suits and civil courts grant dissolution of their unions but only in a legal sense. Based on the stated facts affecting the quality of marriages in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, it was imperative to explore the impact of forgiveness on marital quality among married Church Individuals in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya.

General objective

To determine the effect of forgiveness on marital quality among married individuals in Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya.

HYPOTHESIS

H01: There is no statistically significant relationship between forgiveness and marital quality among married individuals in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical frame work

The study was guided by Positive Psychology Theory

Positive psychology theory

Positive Psychology refers to the scientific study of the human strengths and traits that enable individuals, families and communities to flourish holistically. It is much focused on character strengths and human behavior and how purpose and meaning of life is achieved.

Martin Seligman is undoubtedly the father of Positive Psychology Theory. During his tenure as the President of the American Psychological Association (APA) in the inaugurated the positive psychology movement which with focused on harnessing positive character, positive experiences, positive emotions and personal strengths and positively enabling institutions. Seligman was interested in finding an answer to the fundamental questions on what gives life meaning and purpose and how happiness is achieved

in life.

This Theory is grounded on Value in Action Inventory (VIA) developed by Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman. The VIA has 24 character strengths that everyone has at different levels. These are contained in six core/broad values acceptable by religious thinkers and moral philosophers with each having its components as follows; Temperance: Forgiveness, Humility, Prudence, Self-Regulation; Wisdom: Creativity, Curiosity, Judgment, Love of learning, Perspective; Courage: Bravery, Perseverance, Honesty, Zest; Humanity: Love, Kindness, Social Intelligence; Justice: Teamwork, Fairness, Leadership; Transcendence: Appreciation of beauty of excellence, Gratitude, Hope, Humor, Spirituality. Therefore, the author of the current study finds this theory and the 24 character strengths relevant and applicable in the study because all of these traits can be associated with the dimensions of forgiveness and has interplay in marriage and life in general. For instance, forgiveness is a variable of this study which is an integral aspect of positive Psychology expected to enhance quality of life.

The strength of the concept and theory of Positive Psychology in its entirety argues that there are many virtues and character strengths that need to be captured and cultivated in order for the human person to flourish such as forgiveness, Love, Justice, Courage and emotional management among others. Additionally, Positive Psychology highlights how forgiveness is enhanced in order to reinforce the human person in his/her life and why each person needs to develop it. Seligman emphasizes that strength of Positive Psychology lies in its role of providing a theoretical basis as well as practical life solutions such as forgiving, gratitude and others which have enabled people and positive institutions such as families to improve both mental and physical wellbeing.

However, the theory has also been criticized by Scholars such as Ivtzan, Lomas, Hefferon, and worth. They are concerned with Seligman's over emphasis on Positives, deliberately ignoring the power of negatives in life. Advocates of the second wave, popularly known as second wave of Positive Psychology (PP2.0) claim that first wave of Positive Psychology (PP 1.0) lacked a balance between positive and negative emotions and tended to suppress negative emotions instead of addressing them as a means of cultivating the genuine happiness. Therefore, they suggest an approach that is sensitive to all cultural and ethnic alignments and geographical variables that cut across the world as captured in (PP 2.0.)

Relationship between the dimensions of forgiveness and marital quality among married individuals

Ferch notes that forgiveness is a person's ability to discern own mistakes, to be sorry for the faults in response to pursue an apologetic path. Ferch's definition envisions the humans being are natural capacity to do evil or good, to harm and to protect, to trespass and revenge or forgive and reconcile [6]. Conducted a correlational study to establish if Compassion and Forgiveness predict marital satisfaction among young couples in Tehran India. It sampled out 200 couples aged between 20-40 years and married for at least 10 years. The characteristics of its sample and sampling methods were identical to the current study. However, the data collection instruments differ. Findings of this study indicated forgiveness and self-compassion among married individuals boosts quality of marriage especially among young couples aged 20-40 years; with men scoring high on family forgiveness scale compared to women.

Shola, conducted an identical study to investigate the influence

of forgiveness as an instrument in strengthening marital stability among married undergraduate students of the National Open University of Nigeria. The sample size was 1000 respondents selected randomly. The findings show that forgiveness significantly predicts better quality of marriage and marital stability and also enhance romantic bond. The study recommends that married individuals should embrace as much as possible to improve the psychosocial wellbeing.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

A research design is a scientific research process of collecting and analyzing data considering the structure that best fits the problems under investigation and analyzing data [7]. The researcher used a mixed method design (parallel convergent design) adopted from Demir and Pismek [8]. The mixed approach integrated quantitative and qualitative data to achieve comprehensiveness. In this regard, quantitative techniques collected empirical data in relation to forgiveness and quality of marriage while qualitative techniques collected in-depth information about the respondent's personal experiences and perceptions of the variables. The relationship among these two variables was investigated to determine the strength of their relationship.

Study population

The study population consisted of individuals married in Church in the six Deaneries of Archdiocese of Nairobi [9]. According to the records obtained from Archdiocese of Nairobi Pastoral Office, there were two hundred and eighty-four (284) mixed marriages for the year 2019. (A mixed marriage is a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic Christian performed in a Catholic Church) (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1: Study population.

Deanery	Number of marriages
Central	80
Outering	50
Gatundu	26
Kiambu	60
Thika	31
Limuru	37
Total	284

Table 2: Target population distribution per parish within the six deaneries.

Deanery	Parish	Number of marriages
Central	Holy Family Basilica	13
	St. Paul's Chapel	4
	St. Peter Claver	10
	St. Francis Xavier, Parklands	3
	Our Lady Queen of Peace-South B	9
	St. Catherine of Alexandria-South C	8
	St. Catherine of Siena-Village market	4
	St. Austins	4
	Don Bosco Upperhill	6
	Consolata Shrine-Westlands	12
	Holy Trinity-Kileleshwa	4
	Our Lady of Rosary-Ridgeways	3

	Subtotal	80
Outering	St. Jude Parish-Donholm	7
	Assumption of Mary-Umoja	5
	Divine Mercy -Kariobangi	4
	Holy Cross -Dandora	3
	Holy Trinity -Kariobangi	4
	Holy Innocents-Tassia	3
	Subtotal	26
Gatundu	Our Lady of the Annunciation-Gatitu	4
	Martyrs of Uganda-Gatundu	10
	Ituuuru	3
	Karinga Parish	5
	Kiganjo Parish	5
	Archangel Gabriel-Mutomo	4
	Mutunguru Parish	6
	Mary Help of Christians-Ruiru	7
	St. John the Baptist- Munyu-ini	6
	Subtotal	50
Kiambu	St. Stephen Parish-Gachie	6
	St. Joseph Parish Gathanga	6
	St. Martin de Porres-Karuri	7
	St. Peter & Paul-Kiambu	9
	Our Lady of Victories-Lioki	8
	All Saints Parish Riara	11
	Our Lady of Victories Parish Ting'ang'a	8
	Holy Rosar-Ikinu	5
	Subtotal	60
	Thika	St. MatiaMulumba
St. Patrick's-Thika		2
Maria Madgalene-Munyu		5
St. Augustine Juja		4
Presentation of the Lord Juja Farm		3
St. Teresa's, Kalimoni		2
Immaculate conception-Kilimambogo		6
St. Bernadette-Ngoigwa		2
St. Francis of Assisi -Ruiru		3
St. Lucia Membley-Ruiru		0
St. Peter Kwihota		5
St. Christopher Kembo-Ruiru		2
Subtotal		37
Limuru	Ngarariga parish	3
	Kereita Parish	3
	St. Joseph-Limuru	6
	St. Francis-Limuru	4
	St. Charles Lwanga- Kamirithu	5
	Githirioni Parish	6
	St. Andrews- Rironi	4
	Subtotal	31
	TOTAL	284

Sampling procedure and sample size

The deaneries targeted were; Central, Outer ring, Gatundu,

Kiambu, Thika, and Limuru. The researcher considered these deaneries as experiencing high number of couples seeking marriage counseling and other familial interventions for their concerns related to the quality of their marriages. The information about these issues in parishes was obtained from parish offices and from the Nairobi Archdiocesan department of family life. The Deaneries were categorized into three strata namely 'Urban', 'Peri-urban', and 'Rural'. This stratification was because the researcher aimed to achieve a holistic sample of married individuals from high, medium and low social economic status. To get the sample size the researcher used Taro Yamane's sample size formulae given as

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

Where n is the sample size, N is the population size and e is the level of precision.

Thus substituting N=284 and e=0.05

The sample size was thus gotten using the following computation

$$n = \frac{284}{1 + 284(0.05)^2}$$

n= 166

The researcher then used stratified random sampling to ensure inclusion of the subgroups which were 'Urban', 'Peri-urban', and 'Rural'. The sample size for each stratum was calculated as follows

$$\text{sample size of stratum} = \frac{\text{population size in the respective stratum}}{\text{total population size}} \times \text{expected sample size}$$

Thus the calculated sample sizes are indicated as follows (Tables 3 and 4).

Data collection instruments

Heartland forgiveness scale: This is an 18-item scale with four scores used to measure dispositional forgiveness. It is scale initially

Table 3: Sample size.

Deanery	Sample size
Central	47
Outering	29
Gatundu	15
Kiambu	35
Thika	18
Limuru	22
Total	166

Table 4: Sample size distribution per parish.

Deanery	Parish	Number of marriages
Central	Holy family basilica	13
	Don bosco upperhill	6
	Our lady queen of peace-south b	9
	St. Catherine of siena-village market	4
	Consolata shrine-westlands	12
	St. Francis xavier, parklands	3
	Subtotal	47
Outering	St. Jude parish- donholm	7
	Holy innocents-tassia	3
	Assumption of mary-umoja	5
	Subtotal	15

Gatundu	Our lady of the annunciation- gatitu	4
	Martyrs of uganda-gatundu	10
	Archangel gabriel-mutomo	4
	Mary help of christians-ruiru	8
Subtotal		26
Kiambu	St. Stephen parish-gachie	6
	Our lady of victories parish ting'ang'a	8
	St. Martin de porres-karuri	7
	St. Peter & paul-kiambu	9
	Holy rosar-ikinu	5
Subtotal		35
Thika	St. Bernadette-ngoigwa	2
	St. Augustine juja	4
	Maria madgalene-munyu	5
	Immaculate conception-kilimambogo	6
	St. Peter kwihota	5
Subtotal		22
Limuru	St. Charles lwanga- kamirithu	5
	Kereita parish	3
	St. Andrews- rironi	4
	Githirioni parish	6
Subtotal		18
TOTAL		166

developed in 1998 that went through in-depth scientific adjustment to arrive to the current version published in 1999. The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) was published in Positive Psychological Assessment: A Handbook of Models and Measures in a chapter by Laura, Thompson and Snyder. In 2005, Thompson et al. published an article in the Journal of Personality. The 2005 article included the HFS and a series of six studies regarding the psychometric properties of the HFS. Either source can be cited for the HFS. The article contains the psychometric data. Internal consistency reliability on Cronbach alpha coefficients ranges between 0.71 and 0.82.

Marital quality scale: This is a multidimensional measure of marital quality which has been found to give global and specific scores. It was developed by Shah A and standardized with the Indian population. The scale has an internal reliability of 0.91 and a retest score of 0.83. The scale involves following 12 factors to assess overall quality of marital life (1) Understanding (2) Rejection (3) Satisfaction (4) Affection (5) Despair (6) Decision- Making (7) Discontent (8) Dissolution-Potential (9) Dominance (10) Self disclosure (11) Trust and (12) Role functioning.

Data collection procedures: Primary data was collected using these two tools, Enright forgiveness scale and Marital Quality Scale, MQS. The study was conducted after getting approval from the Postgraduate Studies Committee of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. A letter of approval to collect data was issued by the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) upon review of the proposal.

Permission to conduct the study was also be sought from Priests'-in-charge of the parishes from which the researcher sought responses from. Eight meetings with married individuals, two per deanery, were organized by the researcher. The purpose of the study, the methods of data collection and the time frame for the study was explained to the respondents at the meetings. Informed consent letters and questionnaires were hand-delivered by the researcher to

the prospective respondents who filled them onsite.

Data analysis and presentation: In the analysis of the relationship between forgiveness and marital quality among married individuals within Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, forgiveness was treated as the independent variable while level of marital quality was the dependent variable. The returned questionnaires formed the basis for the analysis. The questionnaires were cleaned, verified, coded and tallied according to the themes. The researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 25 (SPSS v.25) to analyze quantitative data from the questionnaires with the help of descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data was analyzed based on themes extracted from the questionnaire through content analysis. Descriptive statistics was presented in the forms of tabulation, diagrams, graphs and certain numerical procedures such as means, percentages and tallies all which aimed at summarizing the material in a form which displayed its distinctive features that aid analysis. Inferential statistics, on the other hand, is a branch of statistics mostly concentrates on data analyzing and inferring meaning [10].

RESULTS

The relationship between forgiveness and marital quality was determined through Pearson’s correlation and regression analysis (Tables 5 and 6).

Source: Survey data (2021)

Relationship of the dependent and independent variables was determined using regression model given as

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$$

Where: Y is marital quality; β_0 is the constant or the intercept of the regression line; β_1 is the regression coefficient for predictor variable; X_1 is forgiveness, ϵ is the error term.

$$Y = 119.348 - 0.007 X_1 + \epsilon$$

Hypothesis testing

The following hypothesis had been stated and which was tested;

H01: There is no statistically significant relationship between

forgiveness and marital quality among married individuals in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi.

The significance level associated with forgiveness is $0.917 > p = 0.05$. We therefore accept the null hypothesis and conclude that the level of forgiveness has no significant relationship with marital quality.

DISCUSSION

The specific objective of the study was to determine the relationship between the dimensions of forgiveness and marital quality among married individuals in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. The calculated significance level of forgiveness from quantitative data was $0.917 > p = 0.05$. This resulted in acceptance of the null hypothesis that the level of forgiveness is not statistically related to marital quality. This findings concur with Makena who also established low levels of forgiveness among married individuals in Nairobi County in a study she conducted among Christians of Christ is the Answer Ministries [11].

(CITAM) valley road. Similarly, these findings also agree with an argument given by Strelan, Karremans and Krieg (2016) who established that there are other factors other forgiveness that determines success of marriage. For instance in a study to establish factors that influence quality of life among married individuals in Makrudi, Nigeria, it was ascertained that happiness and hope determined quality of marital relationships and not forgiveness [12].

However, according to the qualitative results, the perception of the majority of the respondents (56.5%) was that forgiveness was a critical component that promotes the quality of their marriage. This was based on their respondents on thematic areas addressing issues related to forgiveness and quality of marriage. For instance, 96.9% of the respondents stated that think they understood their partner’s mistake or failures and accepted the mistake and talked it out with intention of seeking for apology/reconciliation with an aim of safeguarding the status of their marriage. Another 82.2% of the respondents highlighted that they found it easy to let go after being offended by their partners and this they said was through accepting that human beings have weakness and thus need to be forgiven for life to move on. Therefore, the qualitative findings

Table 5: Pearson correlation.

	Marital quality Forgiveness	
Marital quality		
Pearson Correlation	1	-0.084
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.28
N	166	166
Forgiveness		
Pearson Correlation	-0.084	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.28	
N	166	166

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Results indicate that there is no significant correlation between marital quality and forgiveness ($r = -0.084$) at $\alpha = 0.05$.

Table 6: Regression coefficients table.

Model	Coefficients ^a				Sig.	95.0% confidence interval for B	
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
1. (Constant)	119.348	8.552		13.955	0	102.46	136.235
Forgiveness	-0.007	0.063	-0.009	-0.104	0.917	-0.13	0.117

^aDependent variable: Marital quality.

agree with Fahimdanesh, Noferesti and Tavakol who found that forgiveness among married individuals boosts quality of marriage [13-22].

CONCLUSION

From quantitative data results the study concludes that forgiveness statistically insignificant to marital quality among married individuals in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. However when it comes to qualitative data results, the study concludes that forgiveness has a significant effect on marital quality among married individuals in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study recommends a comparative study to be done to determine the effect of forgiveness on marital quality in other Catholic Archdioceses in other Counties to enable understand its impact in different geographical backgrounds.

This study further recommends a study to be done on effect cultural setting on marital quality. This will help understand cultural dynamics that may affect the quality of marriage so that appropriate intervention can be administered to married couples.

This study also recommends other studies to be conducted to establish other factors that positively contribute to quality of marriage as the present study has shown that there are other factors that promote the quality of marriage other than forgiveness.

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