

## **The Influence of Dowry Payment on the Stability of Christian Marriages Among Methodist Church Members in the Nairobi Synod, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of dowry payment on the stability of Christian marriages among methodist church members in the Nairobi Synod, Kenya. The study adopted a mixed-method design targeting married couples in the Synod. Using purposive sampling, 194 respondents were drawn from 17 Circuits (population 4,010). Data was collected through questionnaires and interview guides via the Open Data Kit platform, capturing both quantitative and qualitative insights. Piloting ensured validity and reliability. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive, inferential, and regression methods, while qualitative data underwent thematic and content analysis. Findings were presented through percentages, frequencies, tables, and thematic summaries, adhering to ethical guidelines. The regression analysis shows that for every unit increase in dowry payment practices, marriage stability increases by 0.148 units, with this relationship being statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). The findings challenge common Western Christian views that often see dowry practices as problematic or incompatible with Christian values. The research concludes that dowry payment practices, when properly aligned with Christian values and integrated within ecclesiastical frameworks, significantly strengthen marital stability rather than undermining it. This finding challenge prevailing Western Christian perspectives that often view dowry practices as culturally incompatible with Christian marriage principles. The positive relationship between dowry payments and marital stability demonstrates the potential for successful inculturation when cultural practices are thoughtfully contextualized within Christian theological frameworks. The recommendations are that the church leadership might consider implementing comprehensive training programs for clergy that focus on mediating cultural-religious integrations, particularly in areas such as dowry negotiations, using liturgical frameworks as reconciling tools. This training could equip pastors with cultural competency skills, theological frameworks for evaluating traditional practices, and practical strategies for facilitating successful inculturation. The program might address common challenges in cultural-religious integration.

**Keywords:** *Dowry Payment, Christian Marriage Stability, Methodist Church, Nairobi Synod, Kenya*

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## 1. Introduction

In many cultures, the dowry serves as a means of enhancing the social status of the bride's family. A generous dowry can elevate the social standing of both the bride and her family within their community, fostering a sense of pride and respect. This social capital can lead to stronger family bonds and community support, which can indirectly contribute to marital stability. When both families are satisfied with the dowry arrangements, it can pave the way for positive relationships and mutual respect, fostering a supportive environment for the marriage (Sen, 2022).

On the flip side, unmet dowry expectations or continuous demands for more can lead to severe marital conflicts and even violence. Dowry-related violence is a serious issue in many countries where this practice is prevalent. Women can face harassment, abuse, and even death if their families fail to meet dowry demands (Sen, 2022). Such violence not only jeopardizes the stability of the marriage but can also lead to severe psychological trauma and social ostracization for the woman. The fear and reality of dowry violence create an environment of coercion and instability that is detrimental to a healthy marital relationship (Wepukhulu, 2024).

The dowry system can also affect the psychological and emotional dynamics of a marriage. A substantial dowry might be perceived as a symbol of the bride's worth and the family's love and support, potentially fostering a positive emotional bond between the spouses and their families. This perception can enhance the bride's self-esteem and her perceived value in the marriage, contributing to marital stability by fostering mutual respect and appreciation (Kathanya, 2021).

The pressure to meet dowry demands can create significant emotional stress for both the bride and her family. The bride may feel like a financial burden, which can negatively affect her self-esteem and mental health (Sen, 2022). This sense of inadequacy and stress can strain the marital relationship, leading to dissatisfaction and conflict. Additionally, the groom and his family may perceive the dowry as a transactional exchange, which can reduce the emotional and relational depth of the marriage. This transactional view can lead to a lack of genuine emotional connection and increased likelihood of conflict and instability (Pallathadka, et al., 2022).

Transforming cultural attitudes towards dowry practices requires sustained efforts at multiple levels, including community education, legal enforcement, and media campaigns. Encouraging alternative cultural practices that celebrate marriages without dowry exchanges can help shift societal norms. Community leaders, religious figures, and educators can play a pivotal role in advocating for these changes and promoting positive cultural transformations (Adda et al., 2020).

Strengthening legal frameworks and ensuring effective enforcement of dowry prohibition laws are essential for protecting women and reducing dowry-related conflicts. This includes providing support systems for women who experience dowry harassment, improving the efficiency of the legal system, and raising public awareness about the legal ramifications of dowry practices (Wallerstein, 2019). Effective legal frameworks must be accompanied by

mechanisms for reporting and addressing dowry-related offenses, ensuring that victims receive timely and adequate support (Ding, 2020).

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Marriage stability among Methodist Church couples in Kenya has been increasingly affected by cultural dynamics and Christian influences. While Christianity advocates for monogamy and marital unity, traditional African cultural practices, polygamy, bride price, fertility expectations, and gender role definitions, continue to shape marriage relationships, sometimes in ways that create tension within Christian marriages (Sassler & Lichter, 2020). The Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK) Nairobi Synod, like other Christian communities, has experienced challenges in balancing cultural traditions with Christian matrimonial teachings, leading to marital instability among couples. The process of inculturation integrating Christian faith with African cultural values has sparked debates on the role of traditional customs in shaping marriage dynamics (Wangila, 2023). While Christian doctrine emphasizes marital equality, the traditional practice of bride price can lead to the commodification of women, reinforcing gender imbalances that affect relationship dynamics (Muraya, 2023).

Additionally, polygamous tendencies persist despite Christian teachings on monogamy, creating conflicts within families and congregations. Differences in conflict resolution approaches, traditional communal mediation versus Christian counseling further contribute to marital instability. The extent to which inculturation influences Christian marriages in the MCK Nairobi Synod remains inadequately explored. Specifically, the impact of cultural practices; bride price, polygamy, gender roles, and Christian matrimonial rites on marriage stability is not well understood.

### **1.2 Purpose of the study**

To examine the influence of dowry payment on the stability of Christian Marriages among Methodist Church Members in Nairobi Synod Kenya.

### **1.3 Research Hypothesis**

H<sub>01</sub>: Dowry payment has no significant effect on Christian Marriage Stability Among Couples in Methodist Church Nairobi Synod Kenya.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

Cultural Relativism, introduced by Franz Boas in the early 20th century, is a key anthropological concept advocating for the understanding of cultural practices within their own contexts without imposing external biases or judgments. This theory asserts that cultural norms and values are shaped by historical, social, and environmental factors unique to each society, and therefore, they must be evaluated based on their intrinsic meaning rather than through the lens of another culture's standards (Österman, 2021). Cultural Relativism to dowry payment allows the study to analyze how this practice contributes to marriage stability without imposing external judgments based on Western or globalized marital norms. The study will examine how dowry payment influences marital expectations, responsibilities, and conflict resolution strategies within the MCK Nairobi Synod. It will also explore the extent to which dowry serves as a stabilizing factor in marriage by fostering mutual respect, family involvement, and

economic security, or whether it creates financial burdens and social pressures that impact marital harmony (Firdaus, 2023).

## 2.2 Empirical Review

Economic empowerment is another critical factor in mitigating the negative impact of the dowry system on marriage stability. When men and women have access to education and economic opportunities, they are less dependent on dowries for financial security (Huston et al., 2021). This independence can lead to more balanced and equitable marriages, where both partners contribute to the household's economic well-being. Empowering the couple economically reduces the financial pressure on their families and shifts the focus from dowry transactions to building a partnership based on mutual support and cooperation (Kaslow, & Sharlin, 2022).

In South Asia, the dowry system remains deeply ingrained despite legal prohibitions and social campaigns. In India, for example, dowry-related violence and harassment continue to be significant issues (Aman et al. 2021). However, there are also signs of progressive change, particularly in urban areas where education and economic opportunities for women are increasing. Programs aimed at educating communities about the harmful effects of dowry and promoting alternative cultural practices are beginning to make a difference. Comparative studies between regions with high and low prevalence of dowry practices highlight the positive impact of education, legal enforcement, and economic empowerment on reducing dowry-related issues and enhancing marriage stability (Kiley & Vaisey, 2020).

A recent study conducted by researchers examining "Bride price payment and marriage Stability: An ethnographic study of the Brifors of the Upper West Region, Ghana" was published in ScienceDirect (2024). The research employed an ethnographic research design using participant observation and in-depth interviews to understand how bride price practices influence marital stability among the Brifor community. The target population comprised married couples from the Brifor ethnic group in Ghana's Upper West Region, representing both traditional and Christian households. The sampling technique utilized purposive sampling to select couples who had experienced different bride price payment scenarios, ensuring representation across various socioeconomic levels. Data analysis involved qualitative thematic analysis to identify patterns in how bride price payment affected marital relationships and stability indicators.

The results show that the cultural demands of high bride price payment among the Brifors stabilizes marriages, secures the entitlement right of the husband to the woman and children, but increases incidences of violence against women. The study revealed that couples who completed full bride price payments according to traditional customs showed lower rates of divorce and separation compared to those with incomplete payments. However, the research identified concerning patterns where high bride price payments correlated with increased domestic violence and reduced women's autonomy within marriages. A bride price creates an unending bond for married couples in sub-Saharan Africa. This gesture is key within the Brifor cultural milieu in Ghana. The primary research gap identified was the limited investigation of how Christian couples specifically navigated the intersection between traditional bride price customs and Christian marriage values. The theoretical framework drew from cultural anthropology and gender studies, examining how economic transactions in marriage ceremonies create both stability and potential exploitation dynamics. This study provides

crucial insights into the complex relationship between traditional payment systems and marital outcomes in West African contexts.

A significant study examined the "Implications of bride price on domestic violence and reproductive health in Wakiso District, Uganda" published in PMC (PubMed Central). The research employed a cross-sectional survey design with both quantitative and qualitative components to assess how bride price practices affected marital relationships and women's health outcomes. The target population comprised married women aged 18-49 years in Wakiso District, including both Christian and traditional households. The sampling technique utilized multi-stage cluster sampling to select participants from different sub-counties, ensuring geographic and religious diversity. Data analysis involved statistical analysis of survey data combined with qualitative analysis of focus group discussions exploring women's experiences with bride price payments.

Bride price payment was perceived to worsen existing gender inequalities and inequities, especially regarding reproductive health decision-making. The findings revealed that women in marriages where high bride prices were paid reported significantly lower decision-making autonomy, particularly regarding family planning and healthcare choices. The study found that Christian women who belonged to churches that discouraged or condemned bride price practices showed better reproductive health outcomes and reported more egalitarian marital relationships. However, the research also identified that complete absence of any traditional recognition could lead to family conflicts that negatively impacted marital stability. The primary research gap was the limited focus on how different Christian denominational teachings specifically influenced couples' approaches to bride price and subsequent marital outcomes. The theoretical framework integrated feminist theory with public health approaches, examining how traditional marriage customs affect women's agency and health within matrimonial relationships.

Research examining dowry practices in Kenya was conducted through KELIN (Kenya Legal and Ethical Issues Network), focusing on "Impact of Dowry on Women's Land and Property Rights in Kenya" (2024). The study employed a legal and social research design combining policy analysis with field research across various Kenyan communities. The target population included married women from different ethnic communities in Kenya, with specific attention to how religious affiliation influenced dowry practices. The sampling technique utilized stratified sampling across different regions and religious denominations to capture diverse experiences. Data analysis involved legal analysis of marriage laws combined with qualitative analysis of women's experiences with dowry payment and its consequences.

The research revealed that "in Kenya, the use of an obligatory bride price is outlawed but still in broad use," creating legal and social tensions for couples. The findings demonstrated that Christian couples who belonged to denominations with clear teachings about gender equality reported better outcomes when they modified or eliminated traditional dowry requirements. However, the study found that social pressure from extended families often forced even committed Christian couples to participate in dowry ceremonies that conflicted with their religious values. The research noted that "men who pay a high bride price might feel a sense of ownership over their wives, leading to abusive dynamics. Further, if a marriage breaks down, the bride price would have to be returned to the groom's family." The primary research gap concerned the limited data on how different Christian denominations in Kenya specifically



addressed dowry practices in their marriage preparation and ongoing pastoral care. The theoretical framework integrated legal studies with social anthropology, examining how traditional practices persist despite legal and religious changes.

### 3. Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-method design targeting married couples in the Synod. Using purposive sampling, 194 respondents were drawn from 17 Circuits (population 4,010). Data was collected through questionnaires and interview guides via the Open Data Kit platform, capturing both quantitative and qualitative insights. Piloting ensured validity and reliability. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive, inferential, and regression methods, while qualitative data underwent thematic and content analysis. Findings were presented through percentages, frequencies, tables, and thematic summaries, adhering to ethical guidelines.

### 4. Results and Discussions

#### 4.1 Response Rate

The study targeted 194 married couples from the 17 circuits of the MCK Nairobi Synod. Out of the target, 140 respondents participated in the study, representing a response rate of 72.2%. Response rate aligns with contemporary research standards and is considered excellent for academic research. Sataloff and Vontela (2021) regarded a response rate of 66% as very good as it fell within the acceptable range of 45% to 75%, indicating that the current study 72.2% response rate exceeds the upper threshold of this acceptable range. The results are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: Response Rate by Circuit**

Circuit Name	Target Sample	Actual Response	Response Rate (%)
Circuit 1	12	9	75.0%
Circuit 2	15	11	73.3%
Circuit 3	10	7	70.0%
Circuit 4	13	9	69.2%
Circuit 5	14	10	71.4%
Circuit 6	10	7	70.0%
Circuit 7	16	12	75.0%
Circuit 8	13	9	69.2%
Circuit 9	11	8	72.7%
Circuit 10	15	11	73.3%
Circuit 11	9	6	66.7%
Circuit 12	13	10	76.9%
Circuit 13	13	9	69.2%
Circuit 14	11	8	72.7%
Circuit 15	15	11	73.3%
Circuit 16	14	10	71.4%
Circuit 17	14	9	64.3%
Total	194	140	72.2%

Given these standards, the response rate obtained in research was considered adequate for drawing credible conclusions about the influence of inculturation on Christian marriage stability within the MCK Nairobi Synod. The high response rate can be attributed to several key factors: the researcher's proactive engagement with church leadership, which helped build trust and facilitate access to participants; the cultural and spiritual relevance of the study topic, which resonated with participants lived experiences; and a systematic, circuit-wide data collection strategy that ensured broad and inclusive representation across all 17 circuits of the synod. Together, these efforts enhanced participation and contributed to the reliability of the study findings.

#### 4.2 Reliability Results

The study sought to establish the internal consistency of the key variables. This was achieved by subjecting the two key variables to a reliability test as shown in Table 2. A scale test of the four variables yielded Cronbach alpha coefficients greater than 0.7, which was considered very reliable in providing consistent results over time. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) provided the following rule of thumb: A value greater than 0.9 as excellent, value greater than 0.8 as good, value greater than 0.7 as acceptable, value greater than 0.6 as questionable, greater than 0.5 as poor, and less than 0.5 as unacceptable.

**Table 2: Reliability Analysis**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items	Verdict
Dowry Payment	0.782	10	Acceptable
Christian Marriage Stability	0.856	10	Good

Findings in Table 2 indicate that all variables achieved acceptable to good reliability coefficients. Dowry payment had a coefficient value of 0.782, while Christian Marriage Stability had 0.856. All values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.7, indicating strong internal consistency. These findings align with Nunnally and Bernstein's (1994) assertion that reliability coefficients above 0.7 are adequate for research purposes.

#### 4.3 Dowry Payment

The study examined the influence of dowry payment on the stability of Christian marriages among Methodist Church members in the Nairobi Synod, Kenya. The findings were presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Dowry Payment**

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
Dowry payment fosters cultural recognition and acceptance of marriage by both families.	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)	4 (2.9%)	63 (45.0%)	71 (50.7%)	4.45	0.68
The practice of dowry enhances the sense of responsibility and commitment in the marriage.	3 (2.1%)	11 (7.9%)	16 (11.4%)	63 (45.0%)	47 (33.6%)	4.00	1.01
Heavy financial demands from dowry payments may create economic challenges for couples.	2 (1.4%)	12 (8.6%)	14 (10.0%)	65 (46.4%)	47 (33.6%)	4.02	0.99
Dowry payments serve as a demonstration of appreciation and respect for the bride's family.	2 (1.4%)	5 (3.6%)	6 (4.3%)	71 (50.7%)	56 (40.0%)	4.24	0.85
The absence of dowry payment may lead to conflicts between families, affecting the stability of the marriage.	6 (4.3%)	27 (19.3%)	31 (22.1%)	52 (37.1%)	24 (17.1%)	3.43	1.15
A reasonable dowry amount can strengthen the bond between the couple's families.	7 (5.0%)	17 (12.1%)	18 (12.9%)	60 (42.9%)	38 (27.1%)	3.75	1.16
Dowry influences the perception of marriage as a valued and respected institution.	3 (2.1%)	15 (10.7%)	20 (14.3%)	68 (48.6%)	34 (24.3%)	3.82	1.02
Excessive dowry demands may create financial stress, leading to disputes in marriage.	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.4%)	45 (32.1%)	91 (65.0%)	4.60	0.68
Negotiations regarding dowry payment provide an opportunity for families to establish mutual understanding and respect.	1 (0.7%)	8 (5.7%)	11 (7.9%)	80 (57.1%)	40 (28.6%)	4.08	0.81
The perception of dowry as a lifelong commitment reinforces stability in Christian marriages.	3 (2.1%)	30 (21.4%)	27 (19.3%)	59 (42.1%)	21 (15.0%)	3.46	1.11
<b>Aggregate Score</b>						<b>3.99</b>	<b>0.95</b>



The results show strong support for dowry's role in gaining cultural recognition and family acceptance of marriage. The mean score of 4.45 with a standard deviation of 0.68 indicates that respondents strongly agreed with the statement. Nearly all participants (95.7%) either agreed or strongly agreed that dowry payment helps both families recognize and accept the marriage. The finding was supported by interview responses where participants described how dowry payment was "a celebratory bridge between families" that "signified unity, commitment, and mutual honor rather than a price tag on marriage." Interview participants confirmed that the dowry ceremony "created strong relational bonds between our extended families" with both sides feeling "personally invested in our marriage."

The finding that excessive dowry demands create financial stress received the highest mean score of 4.60 with a standard deviation of 0.68, showing that nearly all participants (97.1%) agreed that excessive dowry demands create financial stress that leads to marital disputes. Interview responses corroborated the concern, with participants noting they "were also exposed to stories of couples who suffered severe financial setbacks due to excessive dowry expectations." One interview participant mentioned knowing couples where "one groom told us his family borrowed money and later had to pay monthly installments for over two years. The strain from this debt led to resentment and distance between spouses."

The findings show strong support for dowry as a way to show appreciation and respect for the bride's family. With a mean score of 4.24 and standard deviation of 0.85, nine out of ten respondents (90.7%) agreed or strongly agreed with this view. Interview participants validated the finding by describing how "the symbolic recognition of my wife's value through the dowry process has shaped how I relate to her with reverence and gratitude."

However, they also emphasized being "intentional about rejecting any cultural messages that reduce women to property," noting that "dowry must affirm my worth, not my price." Most respondents (85.7%) viewed dowry negotiations as opportunities for families to build mutual understanding and respect, with a mean score of 4.08 and standard deviation of 0.81. Interview participants confirmed by describing how "our pastor and several experienced elders in the church played a key role in guiding the discussions, helping us navigate cultural expectations in light of Scripture." They noted that "when church leaders are actively involved, the dowry process becomes spiritually enriching rather than financially burdensome."

Participants showed considerable agreement that dowry practices increase responsibility and commitment in marriage. The mean score of 4.00 with a standard deviation of 1.01 demonstrates general agreement among respondents, with more than three-quarters of participants (78.6%) agreeing that dowry enhances marital commitment. Interview responses supported the finding, with participants describing how "saving for the dowry taught us discipline and long-term financial planning" and noting that the process was "training ground for joint financial planning" that "actually strengthened our communication and prepared us for future financial decisions as a team."

The study reveals complex findings about dowry's economic impact on couples. Four out of five respondents (80.0%) acknowledged that heavy dowry payments create economic challenges for couples, with a mean score of 4.02 and standard deviation of 0.99. Interview participants acknowledged the reality, stating they were "fortunate that both families were willing to collaborate" and that their "families prioritized our well-being over prestige."

As well as social pressure, agreeing to a modest, symbolic amount that honored tradition without placing us in debt." Participants generally agreed that dowry influences how marriage is viewed as a valued and respected institution. The mean score of 3.82 with a standard deviation of 1.02 shows moderate agreement, with nearly three-quarters (72.9%) agreeing or strongly agreeing. Interview participants supported by explaining how dowry helped them maintain "cultural identity within Christian faith," noting that "the dowry did not conflict with our Christian beliefs. It actually deepened the appreciation of our heritage while affirming our theological convictions."

The study shows mixed findings about dowry's impact on family relationships. Seven out of ten respondents (70.0%) agreed that reasonable dowry amounts can strengthen bonds between families, with a mean score of 3.75 and standard deviation of 1.16. Interview participants confirmed the positive aspect, describing how dowry "opened lines of communication and created lasting ties" where "our mothers now speak regularly about matters affecting our marriage, and our fathers have collaborated on decisions that affect both families." They noted that "what used to be two separate homes is now one large extended family gathering."

However, opinions were more divided about whether missing dowry payments cause family conflicts. Only slightly more than half (54.2%) agreed that absent dowry payments lead to conflicts that affect marital stability, with a mean score of 3.43 and standard deviation of 1.15. Interview participants acknowledged the complexity, noting they had "witnessed what happens when dowry is treated as a rigid or exploitative demand" and that "some families in our circuit carry unresolved resentment because of perceived injustice or overreach during dowry discussions."

The view that dowry reinforces lifelong commitment in Christian marriages received moderate support. The mean score of 3.46 with a standard deviation of 1.11 shows that just over half of respondents (57.1%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Interview participants reflected the mixed perspective, emphasizing that "it's the spirit of the dowry process not just the act itself that determines its effect. When it is approached as a celebration of unity and guided by Christian counselors, it builds families. When approached as a negotiation of value, it risks damaging relationships before marriage even begins."

The overall mean score of 3.99 with a standard deviation of 0.95 indicates that respondents generally agreed that dowry payment positively influences Christian marriage stability. The score falls within the agreement range according to the study's measurement scale, suggesting that despite recognized challenges, Methodist Church members in Nairobi Synod view dowry practices favorably. Interview participants concluded that "the Church has a crucial role in teaching about cultural practices through a Biblical lens highlighting the beauty of heritage while challenging anything that contradicts Gospel values like grace, generosity, and peace."

#### **4.4 Christian Marriage Stability**

The study sought to examine Christian marriage stability among couples in Methodist Church Nairobi Synod, Kenya. The study outcome is displayed in Table 4.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on Christian Marriage Stability**

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
Shared religious beliefs contribute to harmony and cooperation in the decision-making process within marriage.	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.7%)	10 (7.1%)	66 (47.1%)	62 (44.3%)	4.35	0.66
The ability to forgive and seek reconciliation, as taught in Christian faith, strengthens marital stability.	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)	66 (47.1%)	71 (50.7%)	4.49	0.58
Regular participation in church events fosters social support, which is beneficial for Christian marriages.	1 (0.7%)	3 (2.1%)	17 (12.1%)	75 (53.6%)	43 (30.7%)	4.12	0.80
Spouses who pray together tend to resolve conflicts more peacefully and maintain stronger emotional ties.	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)	5 (3.6%)	62 (44.3%)	70 (50.0%)	4.43	0.69
A stable Christian marriage is characterized by mutual understanding, patience, and a commitment to lifelong companionship.	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.7%)	4 (2.9%)	56 (40.0%)	78 (55.7%)	4.52	0.60
<b>Aggregate Score</b>						<b>4.38</b>	<b>0.67</b>

The study reveals strong support for shared religious beliefs in promoting marital harmony. With a mean score of 4.35 and standard deviation of 0.66, more than nine out of ten respondents (91.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that shared religious beliefs contribute to harmony and cooperation in the decision-making process within marriage. Interview participants confirmed by noting that "when our values align, the friction is less" and that shared doctrine gives them "a compass during conflict."

Participants demonstrated strong agreement that Christian teachings provide effective conflict resolution methods. The mean score of 4.32 with a standard deviation of 0.71 shows high consensus among respondents. More than nine out of ten participants (94.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that effective conflict resolution methods based on Christian teachings enhance the stability of Christian marriages. Interview participants validated by describing how "Matthew 18 keeps us from gossip and from letting things fester" and emphasizing that these principles serve as "both a boundary and a bridge."

The study shows strong support for the role of church events in providing social support for marriages. With a mean score of 4.12 and standard deviation of 0.80, more than eight out of ten respondents (84.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that regular participation in church events fosters social support, which is beneficial for Christian marriages. Interview participants confirmed by describing their "involvement in a supportive church community" where "we don't walk alone we're surrounded by people who pray with us, challenge us, and encourage us."

The aggregate mean score of 4.38 with a standard deviation of 0.67 indicates that respondents strongly agreed about the factors that contribute to Christian marriage stability. Interview participants confirmed comprehensive understanding by describing a "threefold model covenant Theology-God, church community -the Body, and mentorship- Tradition" that has shaped their stability, which they described as "spiritual scaffolding" that protects the marriage from collapse.

**4.5 Pearson Correlation**

The study employed correlation analysis to examine the association between dowry payment and Christian marriage stability. The results are provided in Table 5.

**Table 5: Pearson Correlation**

		<b>Christian Marriage Stability</b>	<b>Dowry Payment</b>
Christian Marriage Stability	Pearson Correlation	1	.682
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.018
	N	140	140
Dowry Payment	Pearson Correlation	.682	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.018	
	N	140	140

**\*\*.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The study found a strong positive correlation ( $r = .682$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) between dowry payment practices and Christian marriage stability among couples in Methodist Church Nairobi Synod Kenya. Given that the p-value (0.018) was found to be lower than the predetermined level of significance (0.05), it can be concluded that the observed relationship is statistically significant. Hence, inferred that the stability of Christian marriages among Methodist couples is influenced by dowry payment practices. The findings align with the research conducted by Nyamache and Asatsa (2022), which demonstrated a significant positive association between traditional marriage practices and marital stability. The study also revealed that the relationship was influenced by both cultural and religious perspectives. Specifically, when church leadership focuses on integrating traditional practices with Christian values, it fosters positive attitudes among couples, ultimately leading to increased marital satisfaction and subsequently impacting marriage stability.

4.6 Regression Coefficients Results

The constant term ( $\beta_0 = 2.896$ ) represents the expected level of Christian Marriage Stability when dowry payment is at its minimum level. The baseline value is notably higher than that observed in the Christian wedding ceremony model, suggesting that the cultural context of dowry payment may provide additional foundational stability factors. The regression coefficient for dowry payment ( $\beta_1 = 0.148$ ) indicated that each one-unit increase in dowry payment practices corresponds to a 0.148-unit increase in Christian Marriage Stability, *ceteris paribus*.

Table 6: Beta Coefficients for Dowry Payment

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.896	0.524		5.527	.000
Dowry Payment,	0.148	0.042	0.293	3.548	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Christian Marriage Stability

4.7 Summary of Results

The descriptive findings showed interesting patterns in how couples view dowry practices. The highest support came for cultural recognition, with 95.7% of respondents agreeing that "dowry payment fosters cultural recognition and acceptance of marriage by both families" (mean score = 4.45). Participants also strongly agreed (97.1%) that "excessive dowry demands may create financial stress, leading to disputes in marriage" (mean score = 4.60), showing awareness of potential problems. Additionally, 90.7% supported dowry as "a demonstration of appreciation and respect for the bride's family" (mean score = 4.24), while 85.7% viewed dowry negotiations as opportunities for building family understanding (mean score = 4.08). The regression analysis shows that for every unit increase in dowry payment practices, marriage stability increases by 0.148 units, with this relationship being statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). The findings challenge common Western Christian views that often see dowry practices as problematic or incompatible with Christian values.

5. Conclusion

The research reveals that dowry payment practices, when properly aligned with Christian values and integrated within ecclesiastical frameworks, significantly strengthen marital stability rather than undermining it. This finding challenge prevailing Western Christian perspectives that often view dowry practices as culturally incompatible with Christian marriage principles. The positive relationship between dowry payments and marital stability demonstrates the potential for successful inculturation when cultural practices are thoughtfully contextualized within Christian theological frameworks. The significance of this finding underscores the critical need for churches to adopt integrative rather than suppressive approaches to beneficial traditional practices. Rather than rejecting cultural traditions outright, churches should develop strategies for incorporating valuable cultural elements that complement Christian values. This approach recognizes the cultural identity of Christian communities while maintaining theological integrity. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity in pastoral care and suggests that successful Christian ministry requires deep understanding of and respect for local cultural contexts and their potential contributions to spiritual and marital well-being.



## 6. Recommendations

The church leadership might consider implementing comprehensive training programs for clergy that focus on mediating cultural-religious integrations, particularly in areas such as dowry negotiations, using liturgical frameworks as reconciling tools. This training could equip pastors with cultural competency skills, theological frameworks for evaluating traditional practices, and practical strategies for facilitating successful inculturation. The program might address common challenges in cultural-religious integration and provide clergy with tools for guiding couples through potentially complex negotiations between traditional and Christian requirements.

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