

The Prevalent Attachment Styles in the Early Stage of Marriage Among Couples in Selected Baptist Assemblies in Nairobi North Baptist Association Zone

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ABSTRACT

This study examines attachment styles among couples in the early stage of marriage among selected Baptist assemblies in Nairobi North Baptist Association Zone. Using a pragmatic paradigm and a mixed method approach for data collection, the study sought to investigate the way attachment patterns; secure, anxious, and avoidant manifest within early marriage settings in faith-based communities. The study addresses the following objectives: to investigate the predominant attachment styles among couples in the early stages of marriage and to identify potential recommendations for counseling and support interventions aimed at enhancing couples' attachment styles within selected Baptist Assemblies in Nairobi North Baptist Association Zone. The literature review was based on attachment theory. The researcher used both purposive sampling for questionnaire respondents and random sampling for the focus group discussion participants. The population of the couples who got married in the Baptist Churches within the period of 2019-2023 consisted of 145 couples and using the Yamane formula the sample size of 106 couples was derived. A total of 10 participants were purposefully selected for the focus group discussion from within the four Baptist Assemblies. The researcher collected data using standardized questionnaire. The Adult Attachment Scale Questionnaire was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 29 and presented using inferential and descriptive statistics while the Focus Group Discussion responses were recorded and then transcribed. The research findings of this study will be used for creating a better foundation and intervention for quality adjustment and healthy attachments in marriage. The Mean of the adult attachment scores was 49.34, the Median was equal to 48.00 indicates a

slight skew in the data while the Standard Deviation was equal to 8.557 suggesting that while most scores were clustered around the mean, there are notable differences among individual scores. The recommendations for couples in the early stage of marriage from the selected Baptist Churches included marriage and family therapy, training in communication and Psychoeducation on healthy attachment among others.

Keywords: attachment styles, secure attachment, insecure anxious, insecure avoidant

1.0 Introduction and Background

Attachment theory arose from the psychoanalytic field. The British psychoanalysis expert John Bowlby developed it from his clinical practice with emotionally troubled children mainly distressed from separation from care providers (Cassidy & Shaver, 2018). He observed that children were not merely troubled by hunger but also by their desire to form and retaining their emotional ties. While working with the World Health Organization in 1951 (Cassidy & Shaver, 2016) Bowlby made conclusions that warmth, intimacy, and constant intrapersonal relationship with a mother-figure or biological mother was necessary for the child's mental wellbeing. He affirmed that attachment is an adaptive system which is evolutionary by nature, organically automated to guarantee the survival of the infant- care provider at close proximity. Bowlby also came up with attachment and loss trilogy (Holmes, 2024) setting the foundation for the 20th and 21st century attachment research and theorizing. Holmes (2024) highlights the main findings of the attachment and loss trilogy as; the operating dynamics, the influence of trauma on the events of life, self-protective exclusion, loss and grief, and finally the continuous effects of the internal working models. In the 1970s Mary Ainsworth a protégé of Bowlby carried out the strange situation experiments with Ugandan children and their care providers and came up with the characteristics of the three categories of attachment styles (Ainsworth et al., 1978). The markers of secure attachment were that the child was miserable at separation and consoled at reunion while the avoidant attachment were indifference at both departure and return of the care giver. The anxious attachment was marked by high distress at separation, uncertainty upon the return of the care-giver (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Main & Solomon, 1986; Voges et al., 2019).

Other researchers (Main & Solomon, 1986) extended the theory into investigating attachment styles in later adult life. They established the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI), connecting initial exposures to adult attachment configurations. They added an extra attachment style known as the disorganized attachment which was related to exposure to abuse or negligence. Main and Solomon (1986) further observed that the applications of the attachment theory had diversified to inform assorted grounds of education and practice such as adult love relationships, clinical practice in Psychology, learning, training, and trauma treatment. In further advancement saw the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) by Hazan and Shaver (1987). The AAS maps romantic

relationships using attachment styles analogy namely: secure, anxious, and avoidant, similar to those identified as operational in childhood. In summary, the main concepts of the attachment theory are the inherent system to seek for closeness to a dependable care-giver who can provide conducive environment to empower the care receiver to discover the world. The other key concepts that were observed were internal working models as the formation of the conceptual pictures of one-self and others premised on initial life experiences and configurations of interactive mannerisms and prospects based on early ties developing all the way into adulthood.

Specific research in Africa indicates that traditional culture norms and practices are crucial in forming the attachment styles. Miller et al. (2015) illustrated in their findings that in numerous African cultures, the systems of the extended and communal approach care providing contributed to attachment styles that were uniquely African causing different behaviors from the one observed in the west. For example, Kyeremateng-Amoah et al. (2019) confirmed that Ghanaian children displayed secure attachment even though they are raised by many care providers because culturally Africans have a general acceptance towards collective nurturing of children. Kyeremateng-Amoah et al. (2019) demonstrated adaptive and culture-embedded nature of attachments observing that insecure behavior in the West could be perfectly normal in Africa a notion also shared by Keller, (2013).

In another regional study in Ethiopia, Ayenew (2016) examined how attachment contributes to marital satisfaction using 309 participants and found out that couples with low scores in ambivalent and anxious attachment styles experienced higher marital satisfaction (Ayenew, 2016). He also cited the scarcity of research on individual characteristics that contribute to satisfaction in marriage. In Nairobi Kenya a study was carried to measure the relationship between attachment and marital satisfaction among religious couples who attend The All Saints Cathedral Church (Hongo, 2019). The researcher observed that the relationship between marital satisfaction and some adult attachment styles is negative and that this differs in a significant way depending with the attachments (Hongo, 2019). Therefore, Hongo (2019) recommended further research among couples from other denominations in the country. This confirms what Frias et al. (2015) argued; that measures of attachment continue evolving in terms of revision, expansion, extension and translation. In addition to Hongo's findings, a study among Pentecostal Church couples in Embakasi Nairobi, (Njeru et al. 2021) identified the causes of conflicts among 600 Christian couples below the age of 45 years. The researchers also found out the conflicts contributed to anxiety and depression leading to reduced work performance and a corrosion of faith.

In synthesizing the findings on adult attachment Fraley (2019) argues that adult attachment becomes weak and unpredictable across different measurement areas. The researcher also observed that inflexible adult attachments lead to irregularities in the social and choice selection

domains concluding that the foundations of attachment styles based on early childhood experiences is not the sole determinant of the adult attachment styles. Fraley (2019) further stipulates that future research necessitates further examination of relationship-specific attachment patterns. Therefore identifying the factors that contribute to the dyadic adjustment of marriage is viewed as crucial for marriage therapy assessment (Pourshahbaz et al. 2020).

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The study sought:

1. To investigate the predominant attachment styles among couples in the early stages of marriage within selected Baptist Assemblies in Nairobi North Baptist Association Zone.
2. To identify potential recommendations for counseling and support interventions aimed at enhancing couples' relationship based on couples' attachment styles within selected Baptist Assemblies in Nairobi North Baptist Association Zone.

1.2 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following question:

1. What are the predominant attachment styles identified among couples in the early stages of marriage in selected Baptist Assemblies of Nairobi North Baptist Association zone?
2. What specific therapeutic strategies can be developed to address attachment-related issues for newly married couples in these Baptist Assemblies?

1.3 Research Problem

Multiple global studies have been conducted in diverse populations of the world highlighting the roles of attachment in marital satisfaction (Vollman et al. 2019; Yahya et al. 2017). However, these studies have been conducted mainly in the Western and Asian countries where the populations are educated and living in more industrialized countries. Escalating from the universal viewpoint, studies in Africa have started to shed light on how different the African setting is due to social customs and communal constructs that impact attachment and relationship outcomes. Additionally, in many African civilizations, the marital union goes beyond two people and becomes a social contract involving families of origin and the communities they came from. For example, Ayenew (2016) in his study among Ethiopians observes that secure attachment lead to marital satisfaction but also observes the scarcity of African literature on attachment among couples.

The problems cited among couples in Africa and Kenya in particular include verbal abuse, dysfunctional communication, disapproval and unresponsiveness ((Ayenew, 2016; Njeru et al., 2021) imply that couples have underlying issues that may be related to avoidance and anxious attachment styles. Exploring attachment styles among young couples in selected Baptist Churches will shed light into how the couples interactive attachment styles may help them resolve their conflicts and also shed light on how the Churches can tailor make intervention strategies that would help couples build lasting marriages.

2.0 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 The Attachment Theory

Attachment theory is built upon several foundational concepts that explain how early relationships influence an individual's emotional and social functioning throughout life. At its core are attachment figures, typically primary caregivers such as parents, who provide a sense of security, comfort, and a safe haven for the child (Bowlby, 1969/1982). These early interactions lead to the development of distinct attachment styles: secure, anxious, avoidant, or disorganized that shape how individuals perceive themselves and others in relationships. These styles are encapsulated in internal working models, which are mental representations of the self and others. These models guide expectations and behaviors in future relationships, influencing how individuals seek support, handle intimacy, and manage conflict (Ainsworth, 1989; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

A key concept in attachment theory is the idea of a secure base and safe haven. Attachment figures provide a secure base that allows individuals to explore the world confidently, and a safe haven where they can retreat during times of distress. This dynamic fosters feelings of safety and trust, which are essential for healthy emotional development (Bowlby, 1988). Another important aspect is proximity maintenance or the desire to stay close to attachment figures for reassurance and from separation distress or the anxiety experienced when apart from them. These concepts highlight the importance of consistent, responsive caregiving in shaping attachment patterns (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

As individuals mature, these early attachment patterns tend to persist and influence their adult relationships. The continuity of attachment suggests that the way one relates to caregivers in childhood often translates into how they relate to romantic partners. In adulthood, attachment styles become particularly relevant in understanding how individuals seek, maintain, or avoid intimacy, how they handle conflict, and how they manage trust and dependency (Simpson & Rholes, 2017). The concept of internal working models plays a crucial role in shaping how couples interact and maintain their relationships. Internal working models are mental

representations of the self and others, developed through early attachment experiences with primary caregivers (Bowlby, 1969/1982). These models serve as cognitive schemas that influence expectations, perceptions, and behaviors within adult romantic relationships.

In couples, internal working models affect how individuals interpret their partner's actions, respond to intimacy, and handle conflict. For instance, a person with a secure internal working model tends to view themselves as worthy of love and trusts that their partner will be responsive and supportive. This often leads to healthier communication, effective conflict resolution, and greater relationship satisfaction (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018). Conversely, individuals with insecure internal working models such as those with anxious attachment—may perceive threats to the relationship even when none exist, leading to clinginess, jealousy, or heightened sensitivity to perceived rejection (Hazan & Shaver, 1987)

Similarly, those with avoidant internal working models may de-emphasize emotional intimacy, withdraw during conflicts, or keep emotional distance to protect themselves from perceived vulnerability. These patterns can hinder closeness, reduce relationship satisfaction, and increase the likelihood of separation or divorce (Mardani et al., 2021)

Overall, internal working models shape how couples interpret each other's behaviors, influence their emotional responses, and determine the strategies they use to seek support or manage disagreements. Recognizing and understanding these mental schemas can be vital in couple therapy, as addressing maladaptive internal working models can facilitate healthier relationship dynamics and foster secure attachment behaviors (Feeney & Karantzas, 2017). Thus, internal working models are fundamental in understanding the stability and quality of romantic relationships, as they underpin expectations and interactions that sustain or undermine intimacy and trust.

Studying attachment styles in married heterosexual couples is crucial because these styles profoundly impact relationship satisfaction, stability, and overall functioning. Understanding attachment patterns helps explain why couples experience enduring intimacy and support, while others face persistent conflicts or emotional distance. By examining these styles, researchers and clinicians can better identify relationship dynamics and develop targeted interventions to promote healthier, more resilient marriages. Ultimately, attachment theory provides a vital framework for understanding the emotional underpinnings of couple relationships, emphasizing the importance of early relational experiences in shaping adult romantic bonds (Feeney & Karantzas, 2017)

2.2 General Literature Review

As developed by John Bowlby (1907-1990) in his practice and Mary Ainsworth (1913-1999) his protégé in her clinical and laboratory observations, adult attachment originates from primary life care-giving involvements. John Bowlby (1907–1990) was the pioneer British psychiatrist and psychoanalyst responsible for fundamentally altering the understanding of human relations by developing the attachment theory. Bowlby concentrated on the critical ties molded between children and their principal caregivers, usually mothers, emphasizing the way these initial relations are vital for emotional well-being and social growth and development. Bowlby (1907–1990) supposed that people are naturally wired to pursue close proximity to the care givers for security and refuge, which aids children in discovering their surroundings with self-confidence. Whenever the early attachments are dependable and nurturing, children cultivate the feeling of trust and safety that influences their future relationships in apposite way. Equally, inconsistencies in caregiving results in insecure attachments leading to complications in believing other people, creating healthy relations, and handling emotional sensations later on in life. Drawing depictions from the annotations of human beings and animal conduct, Bowlby (1907–1990) argued that attachment behavior is an evolutionary adaptation which increases the possibility of continued existence by keeping a child in close proximity with its caregiver Bowlby (1958). Bowlby (1907–1990) presented the notion that primary capability in early childhood created *internal mental models* which are forms of images of how one perceives himself and other people which in turn shapes how each individual relates to other people during their lifespan. Bowlby (1907–1990) challenged the predominant outlooks of his time, accentuating the significance of emotional ties over exclusively natural or intuitive pushes. Generally, Bowlby (1907–1990) work call attention to the observation that secure attachments early in life are essential for emotional health and that comprehending these ties is indispensable when it comes to promoting wellbeing and growth across one’s lifespan (Bowlby ,1958).

Mary Ainsworth (1913–1999) in following the footsteps of Bowlby; was a noticeable progressive psychologist who contributed to further elaboration of attachment theory especially in early childhood(Ainsworth et al., 1978). Building on the foundation of Bowlby’s ideas, she created groundbreaking methods to discern how toddlers form emotional ties with their care providers. One of the outstanding contributions is the "*Strange Situation*" experiment, which was a carefully planned practice whereby she observed how children responded through transitory partings from and get-togethers with their parents (Voges et al., 2019). Ainsworth (1913–1999) observations concluded that infants have a tendency to developing varying attachment styles based on tend to develop different attachment the care providers responsiveness. She recognized three major patterns: secure attachment, where the infant feels confident and consoled by their care provider; insecure-avoidant attachment, where the infant avoids closeness; and insecure-ambivalent (or anxious) attachment, where the infant demonstrated clinginess and pain. Later on, other theorists and researchers added another type known as disorganized attachment. Ainsworth

(1913–1999) established that thoughtful, responsive care providing nurtures secure attachments, which is critical for emotional cum social growth and development (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Voges et al., 2019). Ainsworth (1913–1999) studies demonstrated that initial ties impact how people trust others, deal with their emotions, and create relationships through life. Ainsworth (1978), although primarily focused on childhood, provided the initial framework for understanding how early attachment relationships develop and persist into adulthood. Her work suggested that early interactions with caregivers create internal working models that influence how individuals relate to romantic partners later in life. This idea has been echoed and expanded upon by others who see attachment as a lifelong process shaping romantic dynamics (Ainsworth, 1989). Generally, her investigation provided a comprehensive understanding of the nature in which initial experiences with care providers shape character and communal behavior, accentuating the significance of nurturing and receptive parenting.

In following the footsteps of the founders in the field of the theory of attachment there have been other researchers who have comprehensively engaged with adult romantic relationships under the lens of primary attachment styles. Hazan & Shaver (1987). Their proposal was hinged on three types of attachment: secure, anxious, and avoidant. They observed that these three types of attachment style are responsible for shaping how couples view the intimate aspects of their relationship, how well they trust or not trust each other, and their emotional bonding in romantic settings. Their groundbreaking research became the foundation for assessing adult romantic relationships in the settings of attachment styles, underscoring that the relationship between a child and its care giver relational experiences impacts relationship mannerism and conduct throughout life (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Building on the above, Mikulincer and Shaver (2016) broadly studied the way attachment impacts adult romantic relationships across the lifespan of the partners. In their later comprehensive work (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018), they argued that secure attachment nurtures healthier mutual communication, better emotional closeness, and advanced gratification, whereas the insecure style of attachment namely anxious or avoidant styles may lead to hitches such as lack of trust, skirmishes, and displeasure. Mikulincer & Shaver (2018) further explored how attachment styles affect the way couples resolve their disagreement and how hardy they can be during tough times, highlighting that attachment safety offers a steady basis for circumnavigating relationship difficulties (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016).

Mikulincer & Shaver (2016) also delved into how attachment behaviors affect emotional regulation within romantic relationships. They highlighted that securely attached individuals tend to be better at managing conflicts and providing support, whereas insecurely attached partners may struggle with expressing needs or may become overly anxious about the relationship's stability. This insight underscores the importance of attachment security for relationship

durability and satisfaction. Researchers like (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2020), have demonstrated that attachment styles influence key aspects of romantic relationships, including communication patterns, emotional support, and conflict management. Their studies suggest that understanding a partner's attachment style can help explain why some couples experience more harmony while others face recurring difficulties. These researchers have deeply engaged with attachment theory to explore how early attachment patterns shape adult romantic behaviors and outcomes (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2020). Their collective work underscores that attachment is not only fundamental for understanding relationship dynamics but also offers pathways for improving relationship quality through targeted interventions that promote secure attachment styles (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016).

Fraley (2019) asserts that the forming of attachment initializes at infancy and is solidified in the first six years. The aim of attachment is to keep the caregiver close to meet the need of a child through provision and to form a secure haven base. However, adult attachment style results may not necessarily be based on early childhood experiences but close proximity and distance factors can lead to the development of adult attachment styles (Fraley, 2019). The attachment theory stipulates that satisfying relationships between romantic partners promote physical wellbeing, psychological and emotional health and general outlook of life satisfaction (Fraley & Roisman, 2019). The nature of adult attachment also plays a vital role in predicting marital satisfaction (Baghkhasi et al. 2020a). Vollmann et al. (2019) defines attachment as the internal working models that people embrace as they relate with intimate others. Internal working models comprise how someone conceptualizes himself/herself and others. Internal working models are therefore seen as the foundation of self-understanding and understanding of others (Vollmann et al. 2019b). This framework guides the expectations that one has in regard to their partners and also guides social interfaces and practices (Vollmann et al. 2019b).

The conceptualization of attachments in adult relationships is divided into attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety (Fraley, 2019). Fraley (2019) stated that Hazan and Shaver were the first researchers to contextualize Bowlby's theory within romantic relationships in 1987. He affirmed that secure couples feel safe near each other in terms of physical contact and intimacy. They also feel insecure when either of them is inaccessible (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018). Similarly, partners who score high in attachment avoidance and/or anxiety exhibit insecure attachment while those who score low in the avoidance and anxious categories are seen as securely attached (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2019). In synthesizing the findings of studies undertaken by (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2019; Vollmann et al. 2019; Yahya, et al. 2017) the researcher has deduced that attachment between couples begins , evolves and shapes the dyadic relationship either positively

or negatively. In addition, both internal factors such as Internal working models (Vollmann et al. 2019b) and ecology (Baghkhasi et al. 2020b) contribute to how couples attach and adjust.

In this current study, the researcher used the attachment theory because attachment in adult romantic relationships has been highlighted in terms of empirical studies (Murdiana, 2018; Simpson & Steven Rholes, 2017; Team, 2021; Vollmann et al., 2019b). This enabled the researcher to form a basis for discussing the converging and diverging views from the studies that have already been done. In addition, attachment-focused therapy is part of the intersystem approach that targets the transformation of the internal representations of married couples schemata to more secure, adaptive depictions by therapeutic work addressed to human intellect, feelings, and conduct. The therapeutic bearing is mounted on the assessment of each spouse internal working models of attachment (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018), which are then depicted using the internal models map that are premised one's view of others as trustworthy, view of self as valuable and self-view as effective while interacting with others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018).

In spite the achievements that scholars and theorist have achieved through the study and experiments of attachment theory, there are limitations. The attachment theory proponents are silent in regard to identifying the intensity of the influence of social economic status, sexual role, spirituality, ethnicity, and culture on personality development (Stephanides, 2023). These factors, independent of a spousal attachment, are significant in the early stage of marriage when it comes to adjustments. The attachment theory may not be complete as a stand-alone and therefore, the researcher therefore chose to add the interpersonal theory of personality to complement the theoretical underpinnings of the attachment theory. This is because it is founded on the conviction that people's senses of affiliation order their feelings of security, self-identity sense, and the energy that motivate their conduct.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

Globally the attachment theory, developed by Bowlby and Ainsworth, posits that early interactions with caregivers shape individuals' expectations and behaviors in adult relationships. Hazan and Shaver's formative study established an approximate 56% prevalence of securely attached 25% exhibited avoidant attachment style and 19% were anxiously attached (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). They conclude that secure attachment is linked to better relationship satisfaction, while insecure attachment styles correlated with challenges in relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

In African settings, social standards and socio-economic factors impact attachment styles to a great extent. Secure attachment was found to correlate with marital satisfaction positively, while avoidant and anxious styles showed negative correlations (Ariyo et al., 2023). A study in Nigeria

found, “12.2% of participants with strong close attachment, 75.6% with moderately close attachments, and 12.2% with weak attachment. Correspondingly, 13.2% exhibited strong anxiety attachment, 73.1% moderate anxiety attachment, and 13.7% had weak anxiety attachment” (Ariyo et al., 2023). Research in East Africa, particularly Kenya, also presented findings on attachment styles amid couples focusing on adults who were raised in children's homes in Kenya. The researchers established that, “42.9% had moderate secure attachment, 78% had low avoidant attachment, and 15.6% had a high anxious attachment style.” These findings suggested that initial care-giving surroundings meaningfully influence adult attachment. they recommended that organizational support for care givers (Ahmed et al., 2023). Another study by Hongo (2019) that investigated married Christian couples in Nairobi found a positive correlation between secure attachment and better marital satisfaction. The study established “a negative correlation between insecure attachment styles and marital satisfaction ($r = -0.067$, $p = 0.589$), though this was not statistically significant (Hongo, 2019)

3.0 Research Methodology

The study utilized the Interpretivist paradigm implying that the participant is the expert of their marital experience in the case of this study. The respondent then becomes the best placed person to attach meaning to their attachment styles and dyadic adjustment. The researcher was also a central player in the application of the pragmatist paradigm approach in the sense that the researcher got involved in the process of data collection and interpretation by presenting the insights of the respondents perspectives through narration and description (Alele & Malau-Aduli, 2023). This study also used a mixed method research design. Mixed method research includes both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Bryman & Bell, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In this research, the Independent variable was attachment styles divided into categories, including: secure attachment, avoidant and anxious attachment styles. The moderating variables in this study were religious commitment and cultural norms (Murdiana, 2018).The researcher selected Nairobi which is the capital city of Kenya and four Baptist Churches in Nairobi North Association Zone in Nairobi who have been married since 2019 to 2023 to cater for the early marriages.

3.1.1 Population

This study targeted married couples in Ridgeways, Ruaraka, Kahawa Sukari and Kahawa West Baptist Churches which had a total of 145 couples marrying from January 2019 to December 2023 (Baptist Church Registers 2019-2023).

Table 1 Population target from selected Baptist Assemblies in Nairobi North Association Zone

CHURCH/ YEAR	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Totals no. of Couples
Ridgeways Baptist	28	26	14	14	20	102
Ruaraka Baptist	3	3	1	0	1	8
Kahawa Sukari Baptist	9	3	3	3	5	23
Kahawa West Baptist	0	1	5	2	4	12
TOTAL	40	33	23	19	30	145

The four Baptist assemblies were purposively selected from the Nairobi North Baptist Association (NNBA) which is a Baptist zone administrative area.

3.1.2 Sample size

The Yamane formula was used to calculate the sample :

Yamane's formula: $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$

The variables in this formula are:

n = the sample size

N = the population of the study

e = the margin error in the calculation

The sample Size Calculation Using Yamane Formula

Table 2 Sampling frame

Church/Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	No of Couples	Sample Frame
Ridgeways Baptist	28	26	14	14	20	102	74
Ruaraka Baptist Church	3	3	1	0	1	8	6
Kahawa Sukari Baptist	9	3	3	3	5	23	17
Kahawa West Baptist	0	1	5	2	4	12	9
Total	40	33	23	19	30	145	106

3.1.3 The Data Collection Instrument

The data collection instrument used was the adult attachment standardized tool. The Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) was developed in 1990 but based on the works of Hazen & Shaver (1987) and Levy & Davis (1988). The inventors converted the initial three archetypal descriptions (Hazen & Shaver, 1987) to 18 items, to form the AAS scale. The 18 items were designed to assess different dimensions of adult attachment styles. The questionnaire captures the complexities of attachment by looking at secure, anxious, and avoidant styles. The AAS aims to identify the attachment styles of adults, which generally fall into categories such as secure, anxious, and avoidant (Adult Attachment Scale (AAS), 1990; Maranges et al., 2022; Mardani et al., 2021; Sagone et al., 2023). The three attachment styles were scored using the following categorization: Secure (S); sensing of ease in reliance upon others, trusting others to support whenever in need of help, not worrying about abandonment, being at ease while being close to others, not often worrying whenever others get close and item deriving comfort in others asking for help ("Adult Attachment Scale (AAS)," 1990; Maranges et al., 2022; Mardani et al., 2021; Sagone et al., 2023).

Avoidant (Av): struggling about relying on others, believing that people are never there when one needs them, finding it difficult to be able to trust other people completely, sensing the hesitation of to be as close as one needs them, and when often, affectionate partners desire the person to be close that they feel comfortable with, observing that one's craving to merge every now and then alarms people and they flee ("Adult Attachment Scale (AAS)," 1990; Maranges et al., 2022; Mardani et al., 2021; Sagone et al., 2023); Anxious (Ax): the uncertainty of whether one can continuously rely on others to be present for them, frequently worrying that the partner may not truthfully love them, wanting to merge entirely with the partner and, often worrying that one's partner does not want to stay with the him/her, feeling a bit apprehensive about being close to other people, being nervy whenever any person gets very close. In summary, the categorizations of the AASQ were: Secure (S): items 1, 5, 6, 11, 12 and 14; Avoidant (Av): items 2, 7, 8, 13, and 16; and Anxious (Ax): 3,4,9,10,15,17,and 18, ("Adult Attachment Scale (AAS)," 1990; Maranges et al., 2022; Ripardo et al., 2019).

3.1.3.1 Reliability

The Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) has the reliability coefficient (alpha) of 0.70 or higher. In regard to the FGD test-retest reliability was done. The same FGD interview guide was administered twice to the same respondents in a space of two weeks. It is believed that the space of two weeks is sufficient enough to avoid an exact duplication of respondents and short enough to avert substantial alteration in respondents' variables (Kabir, 2016). The responses for both tests were found to be similar.

3.1.4 The data collection procedure

The data collection procedure constituted questionnaires that were administered directly by the researcher or research assistants. Another set of data was collected through Focus group discussion consisting of 10 participants. The respondents in the focus group were issued a guide and moderated by one of the research assistants in an interactive discussion while a second one was recording. The responses were then transcribed for analysis..

3.1.5 The Data Processing and Analysis

The data processing and analysis was done through summarizing data from the initial stage then coding and keying into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 29 for interpretation and analysis. Regarding the qualitative data analysis the researcher used thematic analysis by coding the data from focus group discussions and interviews to identify recurring themes related to attachment styles and relationship dynamics. In addition, the researcher also did content analysis of the verbal content from discussions and interviews for patterns that emerge in relation to attachment styles and dyadic adjustment. This also involved giving meaning to the mass information collected by organizing the data and creating categories and themes.

4.0 Research Findings and Interpretation

The response rate was a total of 104 couples out of the target sample of 106 couples participated in the study in responding to the Adult Attachment Scale. The focus group discussion had 10 participants representing the selected Baptist assemblies in Nairobi North Baptist Association Zone thereby achieving a100% response rate.

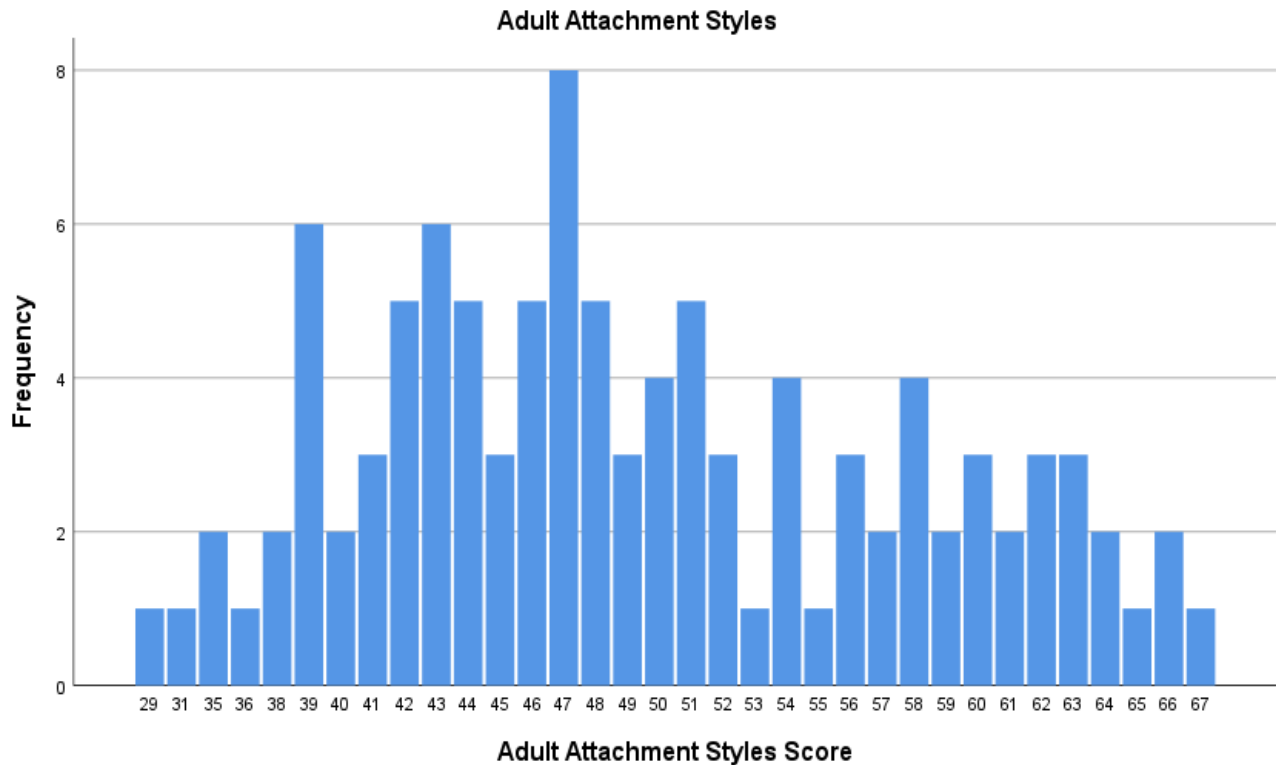
4.1.1 The demographics of the respondents

There were 46 (44%) male respondents and females respondents were 58 (56%) of which 14 (13.5%) were 41-50 years old followed by 21-30 year olds who were 32 (30.7%) and 31-40 year olds who were 58 (55.8%).

4.1.2 The Adult Attachment Scale

Combined Adult Attachment Styles Scores

Figure 1 Combined Adult Attachment Scores



The data presented on Figure 1 represents a rate of the recurrence of scores distribution of Adult Attachment Scale. The breakdown of the interpretation based on the frequency and distribution of scores indicate total responses of 104 valid participants. The score distribution ranges from 29 to 67 out a possible highest score of 69. The distribution features varied frequencies for different scores, with some scores appearing more frequently than others. The common scores observed was 47 with 8 instances (7.7% of respondents).The other notable scores include 39 and 43, each with 6 instances totaling to 5.8% while 42 and 46, each frequenting 5 times equivalent to 4.8%.

The cumulative percentages indicate that by the 46th score, 40.4% of participants have a score of 46 or lower, which reflects a significant lower levels of secure attachment which conversely means a higher levels of anxiety/avoidance in relationships. By the 52nd score, roughly 67.3% of

participants are included, implying that a majority fall under an attachment style below this score.

Levels of Adult Attachment Scores

Table 3 Combined Adult Attachment Styles Scores

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	29	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
	31	1	1.0	1.0	1.9
	35	2	1.9	1.9	3.8
	36	1	1.0	1.0	4.8
	8	2	1.9	1.9	6.7
	39	6	5.8	5.8	12.5
	40	2	1.9	1.9	14.4
	41	3	2.9	2.9	17.3
	42	5	4.8	4.8	22.1
	43	6	5.8	5.8	27.9
	44	5	4.8	4.8	32.7
	45	3	2.9	2.9	35.6
	46	5	4.8	4.8	40.4
	47	8	7.7	7.7	48.1
	48	5	4.8	4.8	52.9
	49	3	2.9	2.9	55.8
	50	4	3.8	3.8	59.6

51	5	4.8	4.8	64.4
52	3	2.9	2.9	67.3
53	1	1.0	1.0	68.3
54	4	3.8	3.8	72.1
55	1	1.0	1.0	73.1
56	3	2.9	2.9	76.0
57	2	1.9	1.9	77.9
58	4	3.8	3.8	81.7
59	2	1.9	1.9	83.7
60	3	2.9	2.9	86.5
61	2	1.9	1.9	88.5
62	3	2.9	2.9	91.3
63	3	2.9	2.9	94.2
64	2	1.9	1.9	96.2
65	1	1.0	1.0	97.1
66	2	1.9	1.9	99.0
67	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	104	100.	100.0	

Table 3 further illustrates the numerical distribution of the scores which is divided into three levels bellows:

Low Scores (29-39): The scores in this range was a reflection of insecure attachment styles characterized by anxiety or avoidance. For example, a score of 29, although only captured once, indicates a potential for extreme attachment-related anxiety. A total of 13 participants had low scores in attachment styles amounting to 12.5%.

Moderate Scores (40-50): The scores in this range characteristically reflect a mix of secure and insecure attachment traits. Participants in this category might exhibit average levels of anxiety and avoidance. The moderate category constituted a total of 49 participants which is equivalent to 47.1%.

Higher Scores (51-67): The higher scores tend to be indicative of more secure attachment styles, with individuals likely exhibiting fewer fears regarding abandonment or closeness. The higher scores in this dataset are limited, but they represent personalities who are more confident in their inter-personal relationship abilities. The higher scores had 42 participants comprising of 40.5 %.

In Figure 1 the bar graph Creating visually illustrate the spreading of the scores with 47 scores being the peak occurring around the mid-range suggesting that there is a somewhat normal distribution with a slight tendency towards lower attachment scores. The majority of the scores falling between the mid-40s and low 50s which shows a prevalence of moderate attachment styles within the sample.

4.1.3 The general Interpretation of the Adult Attachment Scale Responses

The securely attached participants posted higher aggregate scores on the secure category and low on anxious and avoidant categories. The high scores in the secure attachment style category may not mean one should take for granted that spousal relationships will be easy. While a pair of securely attached spouse are in a relationship, begin from a better position, the relationships still requires work. The anxiously attached participants scored higher aggregate scores on anxiety category and moderate average scores on secure and avoidant. The anxiously attached partner can be viewed as “clinging,” “destitute” or lacking trust. People with an anxious attachment style can obsess with fear of being abandoned. They seek regular assurance from their partners which may wear their spouses of. This may trigger more anxiety and partner surveillance or finding soothing in other behaviors. The anxiously attached partner(s) can benefit from ‘rituals of separation,’ whereby the spousal partners settle n kissing before they depart from each other and text during the day (Cleveland Clinic, 2022).

The avoidant attached participants had higher scores in the avoidant category and low aggregate scores on secure and anxious category. Grown-ups who have the avoidant attachment style may be viewed as self-sufficient, confident and emotionally fortified. They may also neither seek emotional security form their partners nor comprehend how to comfort their marital partner grown-ups with the avoidant attachment styles always create a distance from their spouses with the assumption that they will disappoint them. An active self-observing of personal patterns of emotions and bearing in mind the way they pull away from their spouses can be an eye-opener on how to invite their partner in their world and an effort to contributing in their partner’s world.

5.0 Summary of FDG's findings

5.1. The Predominant Adult Attachment Styles

The first objective of this study was to investigate the predominant attachment styles among couples in the early stages of marriage within selected Baptist Assemblies in Nairobi North Baptist Association Zone. The distribution of scores for adult attachment styles oscillated between a low of 29 to a high of 67, with the maximum possible score being 69.

The results indicated a notable prevalence of insecure attachment styles, suggesting higher levels of anxiety and avoidance in relationships. Approximately 67.3% of participants fell below the inception of secure attachments, inferring that the bulk of the sample exhibited attachment styles concomitant with insecurity. Overall, 13 respondents (12.5%) of respondents scored below 40. The moderate range (40-50), reflected a blend of secure and insecure attachment personality traits, whereby participants display average levels of anxiety and avoidance. This group embodied a noteworthy share of the sample, with 49 participants (47.1%). Conversely, the higher scores (51-67) indicated additional secure attachment styles, with low scores in both the anxious and avoidant attachment styles. The participant who scored between 51-67 accounted for 42 participants, (40.5%) of the total sample.

5.2 Findings on Positive Things That Help In Building a Bond in the Early Stages of Marriage

In summary, the results findings indicated that a merger of effective communication, pooled activities, reciprocal support, alignment of values, effective conflict management approaches, and robust pre-marital therapy favorably underwrite in building a long-lasting marital union. Participants credited their experiences and practices in the initial stages of marriage as instrumental in fostering a foundation stronghold for the dyadic adjustment. The other dominant theme was creating support and cooperation through helping each other with the family roles and responsibilities. In addition, the FGD results showed that shared values and conflict management was a significant contributor to dyadic harmony in the early stage of marriage relationship. Robust premarital counseling program was also said to add value to marital adjustment.

5.3 Challenges Couples Face in the Early Marriage Stage

The first theme highlighted in the challenges faced by couples in early marriage was adjustment to the marriage lifestyle, followed by financial constraints challenge accompanied by the stress that come with budgeting and debt management, breakdown in communication, family of origin dynamics, personality differences and varying relationship dynamics emerged as themes that

affect dyadic adjustment in the early stage of marriage. These findings highlight the complex dynamics that can have emotional impact on dyadic adjustment and stability as spouses navigate their married life together.

5.4 Coping Strategies for Early Marriage Challenges

The predominant theme that emerged under coping strategies in early marriage was deliberate effort towards growing together and keeping an open stance towards the other spouse coupled with clear and open communication also stood out as a helpful approach towards coping with challenges in early stage of marriage. The other themes that emerged in handling challenges were humility and compromise. The FGD participants also cited the effectiveness of a functional support system. Finally, spousal focus on long term commitment helped the couple become a better version of them. The findings in regard to coping with challenges in the early stage of marriage indicated that spouses employ an assortment of self-reflection, open communication, and communal support to circumnavigate marriage's initial difficulties. The emphasis on humility and compromise imply that interpersonal relationship skills require critical emphasis during this adjustment period.

5.5 The Church Support in terms of Teaching on Attachment Styles

There was both limited awareness and focus in this area. One respondent said that, "I have not experienced any this far." Another participant said that "Attachment styles were not really taught in Church." Therefore, this exposes a gap in either knowledge or commitment to educate couples on attachment styles. This lack of knowledge in turn creates blind spots on relational patterns which also lead to disconnection and failure to adjust in a satisfying. However, one participant stated that encouragement of healthy interactions in Church contributes directly or indirectly to healthy attachments even though they may not be referred to as attachment styles. The respondent said that "Emphasis on forgiveness encourages healthy attachments." Therefore while there exist a gap in unambiguous teaching on attachment styles, the church's emphasis on clemency and grace cultivates healthier interpersonal relationships ultimately impacting attachment dynamics.

Two participants echoed that the Church was instrumental in their journey of healing from adverse childhood traumas which were perpetrated on them, the Church counsellors pointed out how this would not only affect attachment styles but also adjustment and the quality of a relationship. In this regard the FGD participants appreciated the counselling sessions offered in Church because it helped them become aware of the insecurities they were bringing into their marriage.

The participants' responses reveal the acknowledgement that while the church may not unequivocally impart knowledge about attachment styles, the fundamental values of forgiveness and empathic support are a great foundation for strong attachments. The opportunity to enhance programs that integrate teachings on attachment styles is available.

5.6 FDG's Suggestions for Marital Support by the Church

The FGD participants suggested that the Church can organize seminars to address the following topics: embracing teamwork as a couple, healthy communication, partner appreciation, marriage friendly habits, changing from 'I' to 'WE'. The FGD participants also suggested more forums for where newlywed couples have interactions with older experienced couples and having an accountability group with two or three couples married around the same time. The other additional recommendations were related with more structured premarital classes with a well thought out curriculum, strong couples fellowships, and biblical teaching. Another suggestion was to take time before having children in order to have time to know one another and build a lasting bond.

The FGD group discussed importance agreeing on several areas during premarital counselling; family planning, functional expectations, family and friends boundaries, development of supportive relationships; accountability couples, couple therapy et cetera. The FGD group also said that couples should plan on engaging in spiritual practices together, such as attending Church services, praying together, or participating in communal service. Additionally the Church should be encouraging young couples to develop book reading culture and listening to podcasts on marriage.

The FGD group suggestions on the marital adjustments also included creating structured programs and support groups, enhancing premarital education and counselling and mutual engagement in spiritual practice and communal engagements. The FGD respondents suggested that the Church should create more forums for the new and experienced couples alike in order for the older couple to guide the younger ones. Another subtheme that dominated the discussion was enhancing premarital education and counselling. Couple workshops, seminars and fellowships should be done in order to share sound biblical teachings on how to establish strong foundations on marital attachments and adjustment. The members proposed that family Pastors and best couples should engage the young couples in therapy sessions among other.

6.0 Discussion and Conclusions

6.1 Discussion

The results from this study indicated that 13 (12.5%) participants had low level scores indicating presence of abidance and anxious attachment styles while Ariyo et al.,(2023) found 13.2% exhibited strong anxiety attachment styles. This study found 49(47.1%) medium level attachment scores while Ariyo et al., (2023) found 73.1%. moderate anxiety attachment. The high level scores in this study totaled 42(40.5%), and Ariyo's study had 13.7% participants exhibiting weak anxiety attachment. Research also presented findings on attachment styles focusing on adults who were raised in children's homes in Kenya in which they established that, "12.9% had moderate secure attachment, 78% had low avoidant attachment, and 15.6% had a high anxious attachment style." These findings suggested that initial care-giving surroundings meaningfully influence adult attachment. they recommended that organizational support for care givers (Ahmed et al., 2023). Another study by Hongo (2019) that investigated married Christian couples in Nairobi found a positive correlation between secure attachment and better marital satisfaction. The study established "a negative correlation between insecure attachment styles and marital satisfaction ($r = -0.067$, $p = 0.589$), though this was not statistically significant (Hongo, 2019).

Other researchers (Baghkhiasi et al. 2020; Feeney and Karantzas, 2017; Li et al. 2021; Minuchin, 1974; Mutiso, 2020; Yahya et al. 2017) converge with the finding of this study in terms of challenges that are faced by young couples citing poor communication affecting the foundation of a strong marriage leading to instability (Mutiso, 2020). Secondly, there are budgetary issues that are rooted in a variety of other problems and negotiating how to go about it on the onset may be helpful (Li et al. 2021). There are matters to do with dyadic sexual satisfaction (Lampis et al. 2019) . In-laws also have a lasting effect on the marital dyad and a functional relationship with the in-laws contributes to marital stability or the lack of it. conflict resolution: couples should strive to have healthy conflict management (Feeney and Karantzas, 2017). The responsibilities in marriage; Minuchin (1974) argued that a family structure has a code of interaction of expected behavior that guides interaction to enhance harmony. Families need an internal organization that dictates how, when, and with whom to relate. The FGD in this study highlighted all the above challenges although in a different setting with varying cultural and religious backgrounds.

6.2 Conclusion

The study has established the prevalence of attachment styles among couples in the early stages of marriage with low, moderate and high level scores at 12.5%/ 47.1% and 40.5% respectively. The study also sought to identify potential recommendations for counseling and support

interventions aimed at enhancing dyadic adjustment based on couples' attachment styles within selected Baptist Assemblies in Nairobi North Baptist Association Zone. The recommendations for couples in the early stage of marriage from the selected Baptist Churches included marriage and family therapy, training in communication and Psychoeducation on healthy attachment and marital adjustment among others.

7.0 Recommendations and Suggestions on Further Studies

7.1 Recommendations

Although the results are clear and findings are in agreement with some of the studies that have been done in the past; it is important to note that the study could not have exhaustively addressed all aspects of the dyadic adjustments, secure and insecure attachments. Therefore, there is need for the following recommendations to put in place.

Marriage and Family therapy Interventions: marriage therapy can be valuable, particularly for individual with anxious and avoidant attachment styles. Marriage and family therapy will equip the partners in understanding their spouse's attachment styles, develop communication, and learn skills for emotional regulation.

Spousal communication skills training: can be provided by the Church for couples with gearing towards enhancing communication which may likely lead to improved relationship quality thus achieving healthy dyadic adjustment. The communication skills including attentive listening and articulating physical, emotional, spiritual needs efficiently is likely to mitigate the damaging impact of insecure attachment styles.

Pairing young couples with older couples in the churches: this will serve as a source of inspiration through modelling. Modeling secure attachment behaviors that nurture trust and foster emotional availability, predominantly couples with anxious or avoidant tendencies thereby improving dyadic adjustment.

7.2 Areas or Future Studies

Future studies on the relationship between attachment styles and dyadic adjustment in Kenyan couples could explore several areas among them but not limited to:

Cultural Contextualization of attachment style considering the ethnical diversity of Kenya: future studies could investigate deeper into how specific ethnical values and norms might impact the expression and influence of attachment styles on relationships. One might consider a topic such as; the role of family structures in shaping the expression of attachment styles within the spousal subsystem.

The influence of socioeconomic factors on attachment styles among Couples: this could examine the interaction of the participants' socio economic status with attachment styles and how it impact couple interpersonal relationship quality in Kenya. This is crucial, as socioeconomic challenges can significantly influence stress levels and coping mechanisms within a relationship.

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