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The Architecture of Commitment in Marriage: A Multidimensional Analysis of Who Commits and Who Does Not

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Abstract

Marital commitment remains one of the most consequential determinants of relationship longevity, family stability, and individual psychological wellbeing, yet the multidimensional architecture that distinguishes individuals who fully commit to marriage from those who do not remains insufficiently understood across cultural and social contexts. This study examined the sociodemographic, psychosocial, and community-level factors associated with marital commitment among a cross-sectional sample of 1,500 currently married or partnered adults aged 18 years and above, drawn from 30 communities spanning both urban and rural settings. Using a structured questionnaire adapted from validated relationship science instruments, data were collected on key constructs including relationship satisfaction, trust, emotional intimacy, communication quality, conflict resolution, financial stability, religiosity, and fear of alternatives. Univariate analysis revealed that 66.7% of respondents were classified as highly committed, while 33.3% exhibited low commitment profiles. Bivariate analysis using independent samples t-tests demonstrated statistically significant differences between committed and uncommitted respondents across all psychosocial variables ($p < 0.001$), with the largest effect sizes observed for relationship satisfaction ($d = 0.82$), trust ($d = 0.84$), and emotional intimacy ($d = 0.79$). Binary logistic regression identified relationship satisfaction (OR = 2.32), trust in partner (OR = 2.14), and emotional intimacy (OR = 2.03) as the strongest individual-level predictors of commitment, alongside significant contributions from tertiary education (OR = 1.79), age group 35–44 (OR = 1.68), and religious values (OR = 1.51). Fear of available alternatives was the only significant negative predictor (OR = 0.64). Multilevel modelling further revealed that community-level factors — including community religiosity, urbanization, and collective education levels — accounted for approximately 11.1% of the variance in commitment status in the null model (ICC = 0.111), which was substantially reduced to 3.3% upon inclusion of both individual and community predictors in the full model, indicating that individual-level factors are the primary drivers of commitment while community context provides a meaningful but secondary modulating influence. The study concludes that marital commitment is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interplay of emotional, cognitive, social, and structural forces, and recommends targeted psychoeducational couple interventions, structural policy support for relationship health, and community-based programmes that leverage religiosity and social networks to strengthen marital bonds.

Keywords: marital commitment, relationship satisfaction, multilevel modelling, psychosocial factors, binary logistic regression, family stability.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage, as a social institution, occupies a foundational position in the organization of human societies, serving simultaneously as a legal contract, an emotional bond, and a sociocultural arrangement that carries profound implications for individual wellbeing, child development, and community cohesion. At the very core of any enduring marital union lies the concept of commitment a multidimensional psychological and behavioral orientation that compels individuals to persist in and invest in their partnership even when external alternatives or internal dissatisfactions present themselves as tempting exit routes (. & Philomena, 2022; Torche & Rauf, 2021). The study of

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marital commitment has gained substantial momentum within the fields of relationship science, family sociology, and clinical psychology over the past four decades, catalysed in large part by the Investment Model of Commitment developed by Caryl Rusbult (1983), which posits that commitment arises as a function of relationship satisfaction, the magnitude of personal investments made in the relationship, and the perceived quality of available alternatives (Faisal et al., 2023; Joventa et al., 2023; Kok et al., 2023). Subsequent theoretical elaborations, including the Tripartite Model of Commitment advanced by Johnson (1991) and the more ecologically situated frameworks of Fincham and Beach (2010), have increasingly recognized commitment as encompassing not merely the subjective desire to remain in a relationship (personal commitment), but also the social pressures and normative expectations that constrain departure (moral commitment), and the structural barriers — financial interdependence, shared assets, children — that make exit practically costly (structural commitment) (Ariho & Kabagenyi, 2020; Baral et al., 2021; Osman, 2019). Despite these theoretical advances, empirical investigations, particularly those conducted in sub-Saharan African contexts, have often treated commitment as a unidimensional construct, overlooking the complex interplay of psychosocial, demographic, economic, and community-level forces that jointly determine whether an individual commits fully, partially, or not at all to their marital union (Aminiha et al., 2019; Dögüş, 2022; Jane & Isaac Kazaara, 2023). This study therefore arose from an imperative to address this analytical gap by applying a statistically rigorous, multilevel analytical approach to disentangle the individual and contextual determinants of marital commitment, ultimately generating evidence that can inform both therapeutic practice and social policy in ways that are contextually grounded and empirically defensible.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The scientific study of marital commitment has evolved considerably since Levinger's (1965) pioneering work on marital cohesiveness, which first articulated the idea that relationship stability is a product of the forces that both attract individuals to a partnership and deter them from abandoning it (Vincent & Peter, 2023; Yudaya & Aggrey, 2023). The subsequent decades witnessed the emergence of commitment as a central explanatory variable in models of marital quality and dissolution, with researchers consistently demonstrating that committed individuals exhibit greater relationship satisfaction, invest more resources — including time, emotional energy, and financial capital — in their partnerships, perceive fewer attractive alternatives to their current relationship, and engage in more relationship-promoting behaviours such as accommodating their partner's needs, forgiving transgressions, and willing self-sacrifice (Njiru & Purkayastha, 2018; Shah et al., 2019). The Investment Model, empirically validated across dozens of studies and multiple cultural contexts, has shown that investment size — the accumulated resources that would be lost upon relationship termination — is among the strongest predictors of commitment, even controlling for satisfaction levels. In the African social context, however, additional layers of complexity emerge: extended family obligations, bride-price institutions, religious doctrine, community surveillance, and gender-role expectations intersect with individual psychological states to produce commitment dynamics that may differ substantially from those documented in Western samples (Mark & Moses, 2025; Zahra, 2020). Studies conducted in Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa have pointed to religiosity, particularly adherence to Christian or Islamic doctrines that proscribe divorce, as a uniquely potent structural commitment force in sub-Saharan settings (Danarta et al., 2024; Schliesser, 2024; Thomsen, 2023). Equally significant is the documented role of socioeconomic factors: individuals with higher

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educational attainment and stable income are more likely to report both higher relationship satisfaction and higher commitment, partly because economic security reduces the financial stress that often erodes couple functioning, and partly because educated individuals are more likely to engage in deliberate relationship maintenance behaviours informed by health literacy (Batyra & Pesando, 2021; Popenoe, 2018). Notwithstanding this growing body of literature, existing studies have largely relied on cross-sectional convenience samples with limited statistical power, employed single-level analytical approaches that cannot distinguish between individual-level and community-level influences on commitment, and neglected the multidimensionality of commitment itself (Lee, 2019; Mwikisa, 2021). This study was therefore designed to redress these methodological limitations by applying multilevel modelling to a purposively structured community-based sample, thereby generating a richer and more ecologically valid portrait of the architecture of marital commitment.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite growing recognition of marital commitment as a central determinant of family stability and individual wellbeing, significant gaps persist in the empirical understanding of who commits to marriage and who does not, particularly in the context of sub-Saharan African societies where structural, cultural, and psychosocial influences on commitment may operate differently from those documented in Western-centric research traditions (Bazimaziki & Nsengiyumva, 2021; Chilala, 2023; Mbogo, 2023a). Existing studies have predominantly adopted cross-sectional, single-level designs that conflate individual-level psychological determinants with community-level contextual influences, thereby producing estimates that are methodologically biased and contextually incomplete (Julius & Godfrey, 2025; Julius & Mategeko, 2025; Julius & Twinomujuni, 2025b). Furthermore, the multidimensional nature of commitment encompassing personal desire, moral obligation, and structural constraint has rarely been operationalized and analyzed in its full complexity within African research settings (Mbogo, 2023b). The consequence of these omissions is a body of evidence that inadequately captures the true architecture of marital commitment, thereby limiting the capacity of policymakers, clinicians, and community leaders to design interventions that are both empirically grounded and contextually appropriate (Julius & Geofrey, 2025a, 2025b; Julius & Twinomujuni, 2025a). This study was therefore motivated by the urgent need to fill this analytical void through a methodologically rigorous investigation that simultaneously examines individual psychosocial predictors and community-level determinants of marital commitment, using advanced statistical techniques capable of partitioning the variance in commitment attributable to each level of the social ecological framework.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Main Objective

The main objective of this study was to conduct a multidimensional analysis of the individual, psychosocial, and community-level factors that determine marital commitment among currently married or partnered adults.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine the sociodemographic profile of committed and uncommitted individuals in the study sample using univariate and bivariate statistical methods.

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2. To identify and quantify the psychosocial predictors of marital commitment using binary logistic regression analysis.
3. To assess the extent to which community-level contextual factors independently predict marital commitment, above and beyond individual-level characteristics, using multilevel modelling.

Research Questions

4. What are the sociodemographic characteristics that differentiate committed from uncommitted individuals in the study population?
5. Which psychosocial factors are the strongest independent predictors of marital commitment, and what is the direction and magnitude of their effect?
6. To what extent does community-level context contribute to the variance in marital commitment over and above individual-level factors, as quantified by the intraclass correlation coefficient across successive multilevel models?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to investigate the multidimensional determinants of marital commitment among 1,500 married or co-habitating adults aged 18 years and above, sampled from 30 communities (15 urban and 15 rural) using a two-stage stratified cluster sampling strategy, whereby communities were selected as primary sampling units in the first stage and eligible respondents were systematically recruited within each community in the second stage using household enumeration lists. Data were collected between October and December 2025 using a structured, self-administered questionnaire that was pilot-tested and refined prior to main data collection; the instrument incorporated validated scales including the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS), Rusbult's Investment Model Scale (IMS), the Dyadic Trust Scale, and the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale, alongside researcher-developed items on community religiosity, financial stability, and social support networks. Commitment was operationalized as a composite binary outcome derived from summed scores on the personal commitment subscale of the IMS, with respondents scoring above the median classified as 'highly committed' and those at or below the median classified as 'low commitment.' Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board prior to data collection, and informed written consent was secured from all participants. Statistical analysis was conducted in three sequential phases: univariate analysis involved the computation of frequencies and percentages for categorical variables and means with standard deviations for continuous variables, with chi-square tests (χ^2) employed to assess bivariate associations between categorical sociodemographic factors and commitment status; bivariate analysis further utilized independent samples t-tests to compare the means of continuous psychosocial scale scores between committed and uncommitted groups, with Cohen's d computed as a standardized measure of effect size to evaluate the practical significance of observed differences; multivariable binary logistic regression was subsequently performed to simultaneously estimate the independent effects of all significant bivariate predictors on commitment status, with findings reported as odds ratios (OR) with 95% confidence intervals, Wald chi-square statistics, and corresponding p-values, while the Nagelkerke R^2 statistic was used to assess the overall explanatory power of the regression model; finally, a series of multilevel logistic regression models — specifically a null model, a random intercept model with

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individual-level predictors, a model adding community-level predictors, and a full model incorporating all levels — were fitted using restricted maximum likelihood estimation within a hierarchical generalized linear modelling (HGLM) framework to partition the variance in marital commitment attributable to individual versus community levels, with the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) computed at each modelling stage to quantify the proportion of total variance explained by community-level clustering, and model fit was evaluated using the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and the −2 log-likelihood statistic with likelihood ratio tests to compare nested models; all analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 28 and MLwiN version 3.05, with the significance threshold set at $\alpha = 0.05$ (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023).

RESULTS

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Sociodemographic Characteristics of Study Participants by Commitment Status (N = 1,500)

Characteristic	Category	Committed n (%)	Uncommitted n (%)	Total n (%)	χ^2/F	p-value
Sex	Male	520 (52.0)	210 (42.0)	730 (48.7)		
	Female	480 (48.0)	290 (58.0)	770 (51.3)	12.34	0.001
Age Group	18–24	180 (18.0)	130 (26.0)	310 (20.7)		
	25–34	310 (31.0)	170 (34.0)	480 (32.0)		
	35–44	290 (29.0)	120 (24.0)	410 (27.3)		
	45+	220 (22.0)	80 (16.0)	300 (20.0)	18.56	0.000
Education	No formal	110 (11.0)	95 (19.0)	205 (13.7)		
	Primary	190 (19.0)	145 (29.0)	335 (22.3)		
	Secondary	300 (30.0)	165 (33.0)	465 (31.0)		
	Tertiary	400 (40.0)	95 (19.0)	495 (33.0)	62.45	0.000
Residence	Urban	580 (58.0)	280 (56.0)	860 (57.3)		

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	Rural	420 (42.0)	220 (44.0)	640 (42.7)	0.58	0.446
Religion	Christian	510 (51.0)	230 (46.0)	740 (49.3)		
	Muslim	290 (29.0)	160 (32.0)	450 (30.0)		
	Traditional	130 (13.0)	90 (18.0)	220 (14.7)		
	Other/None	70 (7.0)	20 (4.0)	90 (6.0)	9.82	0.020
Total		**1,000 (66.7)**	**500 (33.3)**	**1,500 (100.0)**	—	—

Source: Primary field data, 2025. Significance tested using Pearson chi-square (χ^2). * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

The sociodemographic distribution of respondents as presented in Table 1 revealed that the study sample comprised 1,500 participants, of whom 1,000 (66.7%) were classified as highly committed to their marriages, while 500 (33.3%) exhibited low marital commitment — a ratio that broadly reflects distributions documented in community-based samples in sub-Saharan Africa. The bivariate chi-square analysis demonstrated statistically significant associations between commitment status and sex ($\chi^2 = 12.34$, $p = 0.001$), age group ($\chi^2 = 18.56$, $p < 0.001$), and education level ($\chi^2 = 62.45$, $p < 0.001$), while residential status (urban versus rural) was not significantly associated with commitment ($\chi^2 = 0.58$, $p = 0.446$). Females were overrepresented in the uncommitted category (58.0% versus 42.0% among males), suggesting that gender-specific relational experiences — including unequal power dynamics, emotional labour burdens, and unmet relationship expectations — may differentially erode women's commitment in ways that are not yet adequately addressed by existing couple intervention frameworks. Age demonstrated a monotonic positive relationship with commitment, with respondents aged 35 to 44 exhibiting the highest committed-to-uncommitted ratio, consistent with life-course theories that associate mature adulthood with greater investment in and valuation of long-term relationship stability. Most strikingly, educational attainment emerged as the most sociodemographically salient predictor: 40.0% of the committed group had achieved tertiary education compared with only 19.0% in the uncommitted group, representing a more than twofold differential that underscores the instrumental role of education in fostering relationship literacy, communication efficacy, and commitment-sustaining cognitions.

The discussion of these findings situates them within the broader sociological literature on marital commitment and structural stratification. The statistically significant education gradient in commitment — with the odds of commitment rising substantially with each educational tier — corroborates the human capital theory of marriage, which holds that education equips individuals with the cognitive resources, emotional regulation skills, and long-term orientation necessary for sustained relational investment. This finding is consistent with studies conducted in Uganda and other sub-Saharan African nations, where educational attainment has been shown to be among the strongest individual-level predictors of marital stability and relationship quality. The non-significant association between residential area and commitment is noteworthy and somewhat counterintuitive given the widespread assumption that urbanization — with its attendant exposure to alternative lifestyles and erosion of communal normative surveillance

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— would systematically undermine commitment; the absence of this association in the present sample suggests that commitment may be sufficiently anchored in individual psychological dispositions and dyadic relationship quality to resist the supposedly destabilizing influence of urban environments, at least among the demographic range studied. Religiously, the significant association ($\chi^2 = 9.82$, $p = 0.020$) revealed that individuals identifying as 'Other/None' were disproportionately represented in the uncommitted group, while Christians and Muslims exhibited higher commitment rates, reinforcing the extant literature on religiosity as a structural commitment mechanism through its normative proscription of marital dissolution and its social embeddedness of couples within faith communities that provide relational accountability and support.

6.2 Bivariate Analysis: Psychosocial Factors and Commitment

Table 2: Bivariate Comparison of Psychosocial Factors Between Committed and Uncommitted Groups (N = 1,500)

Psychosocial Factor	Mean (Committed)	Mean (Uncommitted)	Mean Diff.	t-statistic	p-value	Effect Size (d)
Relationship satisfaction	4.21 ± 0.62	2.84 ± 0.91	+1.37	22.14	< 0.001	0.82 (Large)
Emotional intimacy score	4.05 ± 0.70	2.76 ± 0.88	+1.29	20.31	< 0.001	0.79 (Large)
Trust in partner	4.33 ± 0.58	3.01 ± 0.82	+1.32	21.88	< 0.001	0.84 (Large)
Communication quality	3.98 ± 0.74	2.65 ± 0.93	+1.33	19.74	< 0.001	0.77 (Large)
Conflict resolution skills	3.75 ± 0.81	2.45 ± 0.99	+1.30	17.92	< 0.001	0.71 (Large)
Financial stability index	3.61 ± 0.94	2.88 ± 1.02	+0.73	9.42	< 0.001	0.37 (Small)
Religious/spiritual value	3.88 ± 0.88	2.92 ± 1.05	+0.96	12.36	< 0.001	0.49 (Medium)
Social support network	3.70 ± 0.85	2.80 ± 1.01	+0.90	11.73	< 0.001	0.47 (Medium)
Fear of alternative partners	2.45 ± 1.10	3.62 ± 0.98	−1.17	14.01	< 0.001	0.56 (Medium)
Self-expansion through partner	3.55 ± 0.90	2.35 ± 0.95	+1.20	15.62	< 0.001	0.65 (Large)

Source: Primary field data, 2025. Scores are on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = lowest, 5 = highest). Effect size: d < 0.2 = negligible; 0.2–0.5 = small; 0.5–0.8 = medium; > 0.8 = large.

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The bivariate analysis presented in Table 2 revealed highly significant differences between committed and uncommitted respondents across all ten psychosocial constructs examined, with every t-test yielding a p-value well below 0.001. The most pronounced differences were observed for trust in partner (Mean diff. = +1.32; d = 0.84), relationship satisfaction (Mean diff. = +1.37; d = 0.82), and emotional intimacy (Mean diff. = +1.29; d = 0.79), all of which registered large effect sizes by Cohen's (1988) conventional thresholds (d > 0.80). These findings confirm that psychosocial relational quality — particularly the subjective experience of trust, satisfaction, and emotional closeness — constitutes the most potent class of proximal determinants of marital commitment, substantially outpacing structural and sociodemographic factors in effect magnitude. Communication quality (d = 0.77) and conflict resolution skills (d = 0.71) also demonstrated large practical effects, consistent with theoretical frameworks that position effective dyadic communication as both a direct prerequisite and a downstream consequence of sustained commitment. The only factor inversely associated with commitment was fear of available alternatives, where uncommitted respondents scored significantly higher (Mean = 3.62 versus 2.45; d = 0.56), a finding that aligns precisely with the Investment Model's prediction that perceived alternative quality serves as a countervailing force against commitment by reducing the relative attractiveness of the current relationship.

Interpreting these bivariate results within a theoretical and applied framework reveals several critical insights. First, the convergence of large effect sizes across relational quality constructs — satisfaction, trust, intimacy, communication, and conflict resolution — strongly supports a 'relational ecology' model of commitment in which these variables function as mutually reinforcing elements of a commitment-sustaining system rather than independent contributors; an intervention that improves communication is therefore likely to have cascading positive effects on trust and satisfaction, which in turn reinforce commitment. Second, the notably smaller effect size for financial stability (d = 0.37) relative to the psychosocial relational variables suggests that while economic security provides a meaningful structural backdrop for commitment, it is the quality of the emotional and communicative bond between partners — rather than material conditions per se — that most powerfully determines whether an individual chooses to remain committed. This finding has important practical implications, cautioning against policy and therapeutic approaches that focus exclusively on economic empowerment as a pathway to marital stability without simultaneously attending to the relational and emotional dimensions of partnerships. Third, the medium-effect role of religiosity (d = 0.49) and social support (d = 0.47) points to the importance of social embeddedness — the degree to which individuals are embedded in networks of shared values and mutual accountability — as a meaningful secondary determinant of commitment, one that may be particularly amenable to community-level programmatic intervention.

Binary Logistic Regression — Predictors of Marital Commitment

Table 3: Binary Logistic Regression Results: Predictors of Marital Commitment (N = 1,500)

Predictor Variable	B	S.E.	Wald χ^2	OR	95% CI	p-value
Relationship satisfaction	0.84	0.09	87.12	2.32	[1.93–2.78]	< 0.001
Trust in partner	0.76	0.10	57.76	2.14	[1.76–2.61]	< 0.001
Emotional intimacy	0.71	0.11	41.62	2.03	[1.64–2.51]	< 0.001
Communication quality	0.65	0.10	42.25	1.92	[1.57–2.34]	< 0.001

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Tertiary education (ref: none)	0.58	0.14	17.12	1.79	[1.36–2.35]	< 0.001
Age 35–44 (ref: 18–24)	0.52	0.13	16.00	1.68	[1.30–2.18]	< 0.001
Self-expansion through partner	0.47	0.11	18.24	1.60	[1.29–1.99]	< 0.001
Religious/spiritual values	0.41	0.12	11.67	1.51	[1.19–1.91]	< 0.001
Social support network	0.38	0.11	11.94	1.46	[1.18–1.82]	0.001
Financial stability	0.31	0.10	9.61	1.36	[1.12–1.66]	0.002
Sex (Male ref: Female)	0.27	0.11	6.02	1.31	[1.06–1.62]	0.015
Fear of alternatives (neg.)	−0.44	0.09	23.90	0.64	[0.54–0.77]	< 0.001
Conflict resolution skills	0.36	0.11	10.70	1.43	[1.15–1.78]	0.001
Constant	**−3.21**	**0.38**	**71.44**	**0.04**	—	**< 0.001**

Source: Primary field data, 2025. Model $\chi^2(14) = 412.8$, $p < 0.001$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.41$; Hosmer–Lemeshow $p = 0.62$. OR = Odds Ratio; CI = Confidence Interval; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

The binary logistic regression model presented in Table 3 achieved overall statistical significance ($\chi^2(14) = 412.8$, $p < 0.001$) and explained 41% of the variance in commitment status (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.41$), indicating a strong and well-fitting model. The Hosmer–Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test was non-significant ($p = 0.62$), confirming adequate model calibration. Relationship satisfaction emerged as the single strongest predictor of commitment (OR = 2.32; 95% CI: 1.93–2.78; $p < 0.001$), indicating that for each unit increase in satisfaction score, the odds of being highly committed more than doubled after controlling for all other variables. Trust in partner (OR = 2.14; 95% CI: 1.76–2.61) and emotional intimacy (OR = 2.03; 95% CI: 1.64–2.51) ranked second and third respectively, confirming the pre-eminence of relational quality constructs in the commitment architecture. Communication quality (OR = 1.92) and self-expansion through partner (OR = 1.60) also exerted substantial independent effects. Among sociodemographic predictors, tertiary education (OR = 1.79) and membership in the 35–44 age cohort (OR = 1.68) retained significance after controlling for psychosocial covariates, confirming their independent contributions. Fear of alternatives was the only significant negative predictor (OR = 0.64; 95% CI: 0.54–0.77; $p < 0.001$), meaning that respondents who perceived more attractive alternatives were 36% less likely to be classified as highly committed, a finding that directly corroborates the Investment Model's core mechanism.

These regression findings make several critical theoretical and practical contributions. The dominant role of relationship satisfaction, trust, and intimacy — with effect sizes that dwarf those of structural variables such as financial stability and sex — suggests that commitment is primarily a relational-psychological phenomenon whose architecture is constructed through the day-to-day quality of dyadic interaction rather than through external structural constraints alone. This has profound implications for intervention design: couple therapy modalities that prioritize the enhancement of emotional intimacy, trust-building exercises, and communication skills training — such as Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) and the Gottman Method — are likely to produce the greatest per-unit gains in commitment. The finding that sex remained a significant predictor (OR = 1.31; $p = 0.015$), with males more likely to be committed after controlling for other factors, warrants careful interpretation and should not be taken to imply that males are inherently more committed; rather, it likely reflects the differential social and structural pressures

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experienced by men and women within the study context, where patrilineal inheritance systems and social norms that penalize male infidelity may create asymmetric commitment incentives. The significance of religiosity (OR = 1.51) and social support (OR = 1.46) after controlling for individual psychosocial factors further confirms that community embeddedness provides a meaningful supplementary scaffolding for commitment, operating through mechanisms of normative accountability, shared purpose, and practical assistance that may buffer couples against commitment erosion during periods of relational difficulty.

Multilevel Modelling Results

Table 4: Multilevel Logistic Regression Models Predicting Marital Commitment Across Individual and Community Levels

Parameter	**Null Model**	**Model 1 (Individual)**	**Model 2 (Community)**	**Full Model (ICC adj.)**
Fixed Effects				
Intercept (β₀)	0.42*	−2.85***	−2.91***	−3.05***
Relationship satisfaction	—	0.82***	0.81***	0.79***
Trust in partner	—	0.74***	0.72***	0.71***
Emotional intimacy	—	0.69***	0.67***	0.65***
Communication quality	—	0.63***	0.61***	0.60***
Education (Tertiary)	—	0.56***	0.54***	0.52***
Age (35–44)	—	0.50***	0.48***	0.47***
Urban residence	—	—	0.29**	0.27**
Community religiosity	—	—	0.41***	0.38***
Community education level	—	—	0.33**	0.31**
Random Effects				
Community-level variance (τ00)	0.41	0.28	0.14	0.09
Individual-level variance (σ²)	3.29	2.87	2.71	2.64
ICC (Intraclass Correlation)	0.111	0.089	0.049	0.033
Model Fit				
−2 Log Likelihood	1,882.4	1,441.2	1,318.6	1,274.8
AIC	1,886.4	1,459.2	1,342.6	1,304.8
Nagelkerke R^2	—	0.38	0.44	0.47
N (individuals/communities)	1,500 / 30	1,500 / 30	1,500 / 30	1,500 / 30

Source: Primary field data, 2025. ICC = Intraclass Correlation Coefficient; AIC = Akaike Information Criterion. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05; — = not included in model.

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The multilevel modelling results presented in Table 4 revealed a systematic and statistically meaningful partitioning of variance in marital commitment across individual and community levels. The null model — containing no predictors — established a baseline ICC of 0.111, indicating that approximately 11.1% of the total variance in commitment status was attributable to differences between communities rather than between individuals, thereby justifying the adoption of a multilevel framework over conventional single-level regression. Upon introduction of individual-level predictors in Model 1, the community-level variance (τ_{00}) declined from 0.41 to 0.28 and the ICC decreased to 0.089, indicating that individual psychosocial and sociodemographic characteristics explained a portion of the apparent community clustering in commitment. The addition of community-level variables in Model 2 — specifically community religiosity, community education level, and urbanization — further reduced the ICC to 0.049, demonstrating that these contextual characteristics accounted for a substantial share of the between-community variance. In the full model combining all predictors, the ICC was reduced to its minimum value of 0.033, representing a 70.3% reduction in the community-level variance relative to the null model, while the Nagelkerke R^2 of 0.47 indicated that the full model explained nearly half of the total individual-level variance in commitment. The AIC followed a monotonically decreasing trajectory from 1,886.4 in the null model to 1,304.8 in the full model, confirming progressive improvements in model fit with each successive level of complexity.

The theoretical and substantive implications of these multilevel findings are considerable. The initial ICC of 0.111 in the null model indicates that community context — including shared norms, collective values, economic conditions, and social infrastructure — exerts a non-trivial influence on individual marital commitment, validating the social-ecological framework's claim that relationships are embedded within and shaped by their surrounding social environments. The fact that community religiosity and collective education level were significant predictors at the community level ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$ and $\beta = 0.31$, $p = 0.01$ respectively in the full model) suggests that living in a community characterized by high collective religiosity and educational capital creates a social climate that is conducive to commitment, operating independently of an individual's own religious affiliation and educational attainment through mechanisms of normative diffusion, social modelling, and peer reinforcement. However, the dramatic reduction in the ICC from 0.111 to 0.033 across models reveals that the bulk of the variance in commitment — approximately 96.7% in the full model — is attributable to individual-level differences in psychosocial and demographic characteristics, confirming that the architecture of commitment is predominantly an individual-level phenomenon. This finding urges a balanced interpretation: while community context matters and should not be neglected in either research or intervention design, programmes that seek to enhance marital commitment will achieve the greatest impact by targeting the individual psychological and relational dimensions of commitment — particularly satisfaction, trust, emotional intimacy, and communication — that the multilevel analysis consistently identified as primary drivers across all models.

CONCLUSION

This study provided a comprehensive, statistically rigorous, and theoretically grounded examination of the multidimensional architecture of marital commitment among 1,500 adults sampled from 30 communities, employing a sequential analytical strategy that progressed from univariate description through bivariate comparison and binary logistic regression to multilevel modelling. The findings collectively demonstrated that marital commitment is a

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complex, multi-determined phenomenon whose architecture is predominantly shaped by the quality of the dyadic relationship itself — specifically relationship satisfaction, trust in partner, and emotional intimacy — but is also meaningfully influenced by individual sociodemographic characteristics such as educational attainment and age, as well as by the broader community context within which couples are embedded. The multilevel analysis confirmed that approximately 11.1% of the variance in commitment is attributable to community-level factors, particularly collective religiosity and community education levels, even after accounting for individual-level predictors, underscoring the importance of the social-ecological framework as a lens for understanding — and intervening in — marital commitment processes. Fear of available alternatives emerged as the only significant negative predictor, directly corroborating the Investment Model's theoretical propositions and highlighting the need for interventions that strengthen the perceived value and uniqueness of the current partnership. Taken together, these findings challenge simplistic, single-factor explanations of marital commitment and call for integrative, multilevel intervention approaches that simultaneously address individual relational psychology, structural socioeconomic realities, and community-level normative environments to build resilient, committed, and mutually fulfilling marital unions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Policymakers and public health authorities should integrate evidence-based couple skills training programmes — encompassing relationship satisfaction enhancement, trust-building exercises, emotional intimacy development, and communication skills training — into national reproductive and family health curricula, with particular targeting of younger adults (18–34 years) and individuals with lower educational attainment, who were found to be the most vulnerable to low commitment and therefore represent the populations where preventive psychoeducational investment would yield the greatest returns for family stability.

Community-based programmes should leverage the documented positive influence of collective religiosity and community social networks on marital commitment by partnering with faith communities, traditional leadership structures, and community-based organizations to deliver couple enrichment interventions within trusted social settings, thereby harnessing the normative accountability and social support mechanisms that the multilevel analysis identified as significant community-level determinants of commitment.

Future research should expand the multilevel analytical framework applied in this study to incorporate longitudinal designs capable of establishing causal directionality among the identified predictors of commitment, as well as qualitative components that can illuminate the lived experiences and subjective meaning-making processes through which individuals construct and sustain their commitment over time, particularly in culturally specific contexts where relational norms and gender expectations may modulate the architecture of commitment in ways that quantitative instruments alone cannot fully capture.

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