

RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT, MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS, AND READINESS FOR MARRIAGE: A STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR FAITH-BASED PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

This study examined religious involvement, perceived effectiveness of the marriage preparation program, and readiness for marriage among Catholic couples under the Diocesan Family and Life Commission, Diocese of Virac. Specifically, it addressed respondents' levels of religious involvement across four dimensions—Sacramental Participation, Personal Devotion, Parish and Community Engagement, and Adherence to Catholic Teachings and Values; the perceived effectiveness of the marriage preparation program; the level of readiness for marriage; and the relationships among these variables. A descriptive-correlational design was employed with 133 respondent-couples selected through systematic random sampling from a population of 250 couples. Null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed high religious involvement, with an overall mean of 3.34 (“Strongly Agree/Highly Involved”). Adherence to Catholic Teachings and Values ranked highest (3.50), followed by Sacramental Participation (3.46), Personal Devotion (3.28), and Parish and Community Engagement (3.11). The marriage preparation program was perceived as highly effective (overall mean 3.47), particularly in Practical Guidance for Married Life (3.52) and Understanding the Sacramental Nature of Marriage (3.51). Respondents demonstrated strong readiness for marriage across emotional-psychological and practical domains (3.50 each) and highest in the spiritual/value-based domain (3.60). Correlation analysis indicated no significant relationship between religious involvement and perceived program effectiveness ($r = 0.414 < 0.444$). However, strong positive relationships existed between religious involvement and readiness for marriage ($r = 0.857 > 0.444$) and between program effectiveness and readiness ($r = 0.510 > 0.444$). The study concludes that higher religious involvement enhances marital preparedness, and perceptions of program effectiveness correspond with greater readiness. While program effectiveness does not depend on religious involvement, strategic management practices can further strengthen faith engagement and improve program quality, supporting more prepared and resilient Catholic couples.

Keywords: Descriptive Correlational Study, Religious Involvement, Marriage Preparation Program Effectiveness, Readiness for Marriage, Strategic Management Framework, Faith-Based Practices

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is widely regarded as a sacred institution that forms the foundation of family life and contributes to societal stability. In the Catholic tradition, it is not only a personal commitment but also a covenant with God, carrying moral, ethical, and spiritual responsibilities. Consequently, the Church emphasizes preparation for matrimony, focusing on spiritual formation, moral discernment, and practical guidance. Pre-Cana seminars aim to provide these tools, yet concerns remain about their effectiveness in preparing couples for modern marital challenges, particularly in the Diocese of Virac.

The Catholic Church, through the Code of Canon Law (1983, Canons 1055, 1063, 1067), mandates marriage preparation programs to ensure couples are spiritually and practically ready. Papal documents, including *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) and *Amoris Laetitia* (2016), stress ongoing preparation to nurture faith and support couples throughout marriage. Philippine laws, such as the Family Code (EO No. 209, s. 1987) and Republic Act No. 10354 (2012), require pre-marriage counseling for informed decision-making. Studies show that couples participating in faith-based programs exhibit stronger marital attitudes, satisfaction, emotional resilience, conflict-resolution skills, and family commitment (Mahoney, 2019; Fincham & May, 2017; Marks et al., 2020). Yet questions remain about how well these programs address evolving social, economic, and cultural realities.

Religious involvement generally supports marital stability, though effects vary. Protestant attendance links more strongly to social trust than Catholic participation (Aksoy & Wiertz, 2024), while physiological benefits, like stress reduction, differ by race and gender (DeAngelis et al., 2023). In Virac, the impact of religious engagement on program effectiveness and marital readiness is underexplored. Recent approaches, such as PAIRS and Narrative Therapy, improve emotional expression, communication, and conflict resolution (Keyhandoost & Namani, 2017; Boostani Kashani et al., 2020). Gender differences also influence readiness, as women prioritize long-term commitment yet may be less willing to marry than men (Karunia & Rahaju, 2019).

This study assesses religious involvement, marriage preparation program effectiveness, and readiness for marriage among Catholic couples in selected Virac parishes. Findings will identify gaps in current programs and provide insights for enhancing preparation, equipping couples with the faith, skills, and resilience needed for lasting, fulfilling marriages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious Involvement and Its Role in Marital Preparation

Religious involvement significantly contributes to marital preparation and overall well-being. Faith, as a dynamic reality, deepens through sacraments such as baptism, Eucharist, and marriage, which strengthen believers' unity with Christ and commitment (International Theological Commission, 2020). Bible-based programs, mission trips, and faith-centered education foster spiritual maturity and enduring faith among youth (Cumiskey, 2019). Spiritual resilience from religious participation helps individuals cope with adversity, promoting emotional stability across the lifespan (Manning et al., 2018). Parents often seek sacraments for their children for spiritual welfare and divine protection, prioritizing the child's needs (Stoyles et al., 2024). Among adolescents, religious engagement enhances belonging, positive behavior, and mental well-being, although effects vary depending on personal beliefs (Eryilmaz, 2015; Riley & Riley, 2024). For older adults, religious

involvement supports healthier lifestyles, reduces depression and anxiety, and strengthens coping mechanisms (Kaplan, 2025). Religious affiliation also influences civic engagement, with those believing in the societal role of religion more likely to participate in activism (Ainley & Schulz, 2024). Within marriage, shared faith fosters unity, resilience, and commitment, aiding couples in facing challenges like conflict or infidelity (Forever Family, 2020). Relationship history, cohabitation, family, and cultural context further shape religiosity (Smith, 2023). Religion can both unite and challenge couples: shared practices such as prayer enhance intimacy, while differing beliefs may cause tension but also encourage growth through dialogue (Kelley et al., 2019). Ultimately, it is the positive and lived application of faith, rather than shared belief alone, that strengthens relationships and supports marital preparation.

Marriage Preparation Programs in the Catholic Church

Marriage preparation programs in the Catholic Church aim to strengthen unions by enhancing communication, intimacy, and conflict management skills. Poor communication often leads to emotional isolation and marital distress, while programs focused on communication improve intimacy and satisfaction (Tavaloli et al., 2022). Premarital counseling is effective in improving relationship outcomes, with communication and conflict resolution identified as key predictors of marital success (Mada, 2016). In Maryland, tailored counseling approaches positively affected communication and satisfaction (Saulter-Carney, 2024). Among university students, love and respect drive marriage values, but financial and emotional readiness remain concerns. Counseling addressing communication, problem-solving, and financial management can reduce anxiety about divorce and gender expectations (Koçyiğit Özyiğit, 2017).

Religious traditions integrate spiritual preparation. Judaism increasingly complements rituals with modern counseling (Homolka & Pryba, 2024), while Catholic programs frame marriage as a vocation, promoting relational and spiritual growth (Klausli & Gross, 2020). Cultural and behavioral factors also shape satisfaction; for example, in Ghana, affection, companionship, and financial support predict happiness, while disrespect and selfishness decrease it (Malm et al., 2022). Secure attachment styles further improve outcomes. For career-focused couples, counseling helps balance work and family, reducing stress and enhancing harmony, with policy support recommended (Mutai, 2019). Despite benefits, premarital preparation is often undervalued, risking family instability (Mugumya, 2022). Perceptions of counseling vary by gender; effectiveness depends on content and approach rather than duration, highlighting the need for program revisions to meet diverse expectations (Adzovie & Dabone, 2021).

Readiness for Marriage: Psychological, Emotional, and Spiritual Dimensions

Readiness for marriage involves psychological, emotional, spiritual, financial, and social preparedness essential for lasting relationships. In Indonesia, adolescents aged 20–24 often lack financial and emotional readiness, highlighting the need for training in financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and conflict resolution (Murniati et al., 2024). Personal maturity, motivation, and adjustment are key indicators of readiness (Meizara Puspita Dewi et al., 2020). In Jakarta, readiness is linked to pregnancy planning, emphasizing early education on responsible marriage and family planning through digital platforms (Rahman & Kurniawati, 2022). Cultural and regional factors also influence preparedness; for instance, Minangkabau students show higher readiness due to cultural values promoting independence (Elfira, 2018). Age alone does not ensure readiness—autonomy and personal choice are more significant

(Jones, 2023). Emotional intelligence improves readiness by helping individuals handle marital challenges (Ningrum et al., 2021). Commitment readiness predicts marital satisfaction and stability, shaped by past relationships and life circumstances (Hadden et al., 2018). Among Generation Z, career and self-fulfillment often take precedence over marriage, though equality and shared goals remain important (Herawati et al., 2023). Career self-efficacy and economic stability influence priorities, while marital salience increases its perceived importance (Keldal & Şeker, 2021). In Greater Jakarta, young adults value respect as foundational to marriage but often experience fear and doubt, underscoring the role of premarital counseling in strengthening commitment and intimacy (Suryadi et al., 2023). Financial, emotional, and spiritual readiness also varies in supporting aging parents, requiring tailored approaches (Joya et al., 2024).

Relationship Between Religious Involvement and Marital Readiness

Religious involvement significantly influences marital readiness and satisfaction, though its effects vary across contexts. Mullins (2016) notes that couples' engagement with religion can yield positive or negative outcomes depending on how beliefs align with daily life. Conflicts between religious expectations and marital realities often lead to distress, highlighting the importance of integrating faith practically. Sorokowski et al. (2019) found no strong link between religious affiliation and marital satisfaction, with factors like age, material status, and gender being more influential. Liefbroer and Rijken (2019) emphasize that regional religiosity, rather than denomination, shapes traditional marriage attitudes, with secular regions showing more liberal views.

Religious involvement also benefits nonmarital relationships. Henderson et al. (2017) and Schwanz (2017) report that shared faith and religious activities strengthen connection and expectations, aligning with Social Penetration and Stimulus-Value-Role theories. Latifa et al. (2021) found that shared religious values enhance problem-solving, stress management, and resilience, particularly in Islamic contexts. Among Christian couples, Thomas (2023) noted that faith and community support help navigate crises, though over-idealization may hinder conflict resolution. Lakatos and Martos (2019) caution that excessive idealization of religiosity can create unrealistic expectations, while Kyambi et al. (2017) and Kamau et al. (2017) recommend shared spiritual practices and growth-oriented programs to promote unity, accountability, and long-term marital success. Anderson et al. (2020) highlight that religious ideology, more than affiliation, can influence social and marital attitudes, including opposition to marriage equality. Overall, balanced integration of shared faith practices consistently promotes marital stability, satisfaction, and readiness.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationships between variables without manipulation. This design allowed for the assessment of religious involvement, perceived program effectiveness, and readiness for marriage while identifying any correlations among these factors.

Sources of Data

The primary data sources were Catholic couples from the Diocesan Family and Life Commission of the Diocese of Virac. Their responses were analyzed to derive meaningful insights into the study's objectives.

Population of the Study

The study involved 250 couples who had attended the marriage preparation program and were recently married. Using Slovin's formula, a sample size of 154 couples was determined. A total of 133 couples participated, yielding an 86% response rate. Systematic random sampling was used to select the participants.

Instrumentation and Validation

The researcher utilized a researcher-developed survey questionnaire to collect data, which was divided into three sections: religious involvement, perceived program effectiveness, and readiness for marriage. The questionnaire was validated by a panel of experts to ensure content validity and was tested for reliability through a pre-test and post-test administered to 10 respondents. The results were analyzed using the Pearson r correlation to determine the instrument's reliability.

Evaluation and Scoring

To assess the respondents' level of religious involvement, the following measures were used:

Assigned Points	Range	Interpretation	
4	3.25-4.00	Highly Involved	Regularly participates in religious activities, including Mass attendance, sacraments, prayer, and church ministries. Faith is a central part of daily life.
3	2.50- 3.24	Moderately Involved	Frequently engages in religious activities but may not participate consistently in all aspects of faith practice.
2	1.75- 2.49	Slightly Involved	Occasionally participates in religious activities but does not engage regularly in key aspects such as sacraments, prayer, or church ministries.
1	1.00- 1.74	Not Involved	Rarely or never participates in religious activities and has minimal engagement with faith-based practices.

To assess the perceived effectiveness of the marriage preparation program, the following measures were used:

Assigned Points	Range	Interpretation	
4	3.25-4.00	Highly Effective	The program fully prepared the couple for marriage, providing valuable knowledge, skills, and guidance that are highly applicable to their married life.
3	2.50- 3.24	Moderately Effective	The program was useful and provided helpful insights, though some aspects could be improved for better preparation.
2	1.75- 2.49	Slightly Effective	The program offered limited benefits, with only a few relevant topics or skills applicable to marriage preparation.
1	1.00- 1.74	Not Effective	The program did not contribute meaningfully to marriage preparation and lacked relevant guidance or support.

To assess the respondents' level of readiness for marriage, the following measures were used:

Assigned Points	Range	Interpretation	
4	3.25-4.00	Highly Ready	Feels fully prepared for marriage, possessing the necessary emotional, psychological, financial, and relational readiness. Confident in handling marital responsibilities and challenges.
3	2.50- 3.24	Moderately Ready	Feels fairly prepared for marriage but acknowledges some areas that still need improvement or further preparation.
2	1.75- 2.49	Slightly Ready	Feels somewhat unprepared for marriage, with several concerns or uncertainties about marital responsibilities and adjustments.
1	1.00- 1.74	Not Ready	Feels unprepared for marriage, lacking confidence in handling marital responsibilities and facing significant concerns or doubts.

Data Collection Procedure

Before data collection, the researcher took steps to inform the relevant parties. A letter was sent to the Bishop and parish priests of the Diocese of Virac after obtaining formal approval. Informed consent was secured from the respondents, and the questionnaires were distributed in printed format. After completion, the questionnaires were collected, checked for accuracy, and analyzed.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The following statistical methods were employed:

1. Weighted Mean: used to determine the respondents level of religious involvement, perceived effectiveness of the marriage preparation program, and readiness for marriage.

2. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (Pearson r): used to examine the relationships between the variables- level of religious involvement, perceived effectiveness of the marriage preparation program, and the level of readiness for marriage.

RESULTS

Religious Involvement in Catholic Religious Activities

Table 1 summarizes the respondents' overall level of religious involvement in Catholic religious activities. The overall weighted mean of 3.34 indicates that, on average, the respondents are "Strongly Agree/Highly Involved" in their faith practices. Among the four dimensions, Adherence to Catholic Teachings and Values recorded the highest weighted mean (3.50, Rank 1), suggesting that the respondents most strongly express their faith through living out Catholic moral and doctrinal principles. This is closely followed by Sacramental Participation (3.46, Rank 2), reflecting their active engagement in core Church sacraments such as the Mass and the Eucharist. These findings mirror earlier work showing that Catholics are generally more consistent in sacramental and personal devotional practices than in parish-based or social ministries (Jewell & Mogilka, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2021).

Table 1
Composite Table on Level of Religious Involvement in Catholic Religious Activities

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Sacramental Participation	3.46	Strongly Agree/Highly Involved	2
Personal Devotion	3.28	Strongly Agree/Highly Involved	3
Parish and Community Engagement	3.11	Strongly Agree/Highly Involved	4
Adherence to Catholic Teachings and Values	3.50	Strongly Agree/Highly Involved	1
Overall weighted mean	3.34	Strongly Agree/Highly Involved	

Legend:

3.25-4.00	- Strongly Agree/Highly Involved	1.75-2.49	- Disagree /Slightly Involved
2.50-3.24	- Agree/Moderately Involved	1.00-1.74	- Strongly Disagree/Not Involved

Meanwhile, Personal Devotion (3.28, Rank 3) indicates a strong but slightly lower level of involvement in individual devotional practices such as prayer, Bible reading, and private rituals. Parish and Community Engagement obtained the lowest mean (3.11, Rank 4), though it still falls under "Strongly Agree/Highly Involved," showing that while respondents are

deeply rooted in personal faith and sacramental life, their participation in parish-based ministries and outreach activities is relatively less frequent. Similar patterns were reported in both international and local contexts, where Catholic believers often internalize Church teachings and maintain regular worship but show lower engagement in communal or social aspects of parish life (Mariani, 2020; Areiza-Padilla et al., 2022).

The composite results of Table 1 suggest that while respondents maintain a high level of personal and sacramental faith practice, parish leaders and pastoral workers may find opportunities to enhance programs that promote community engagement and active lay participation, thereby balancing personal devotion with communal service—an approach also encouraged by Catholic educators working with young people in the Philippines (Tindowen & Baricaua, 2023).

Effectiveness of Marriage Preparation Program

Table 2 summarizes the overall perceptions of participants regarding the effectiveness of the marriage preparation program across four key areas. The program received an overall weighted mean of **3.47**, indicating that it is generally considered “**Strongly Agree/Highly Effective.**”

Table 2
Composite Table on Perceived Effectiveness of Marriage Preparation Program

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills	3.39	Strongly Agree/Highly Effective	4
Understanding of the Sacramental Nature of Marriage	3.51	Strongly Agree/Highly Effective	3
Clarity of Marital Roles and Expectations	3.48	Strongly Agree/Highly Effective	2
Practical Guidance for Married Life	3.52	Strongly Agree/Highly Effective	1
Overall weighted mean	3.47	Strongly Agree/Highly Effective	

Legend:

3.25-4.00	- Strongly Agree/Highly Effective	1.75-2.49	- Disagree /Slightly Effective
2.50-3.24	- Agree/Moderately Effective	1.00-1.74	- Strongly Disagree/Not Effective

Among the dimensions, *practical guidance for married life* scored the highest (3.52), emphasizing participants' appreciation for advice on daily routines, financial planning, and balancing work and family responsibilities. *Clarity of marital roles and expectations* (3.48) followed closely, reflecting the program's effectiveness in helping couples understand their responsibilities and set mutual expectations. *Understanding the sacramental nature of marriage* (3.51) and *communication and conflict resolution skills* (3.39) were also rated highly, though slightly lower, suggesting that participants perceive practical and role-related guidance as more immediately relevant.

Overall, these findings suggest that the program effectively integrates practical, relational, and spiritual aspects of marital preparation, equipping participants with the knowledge and skills necessary for a successful and fulfilling married life. Alipour, Shokri, and Rezaei (2020) likewise reported that marital communication-skills training promotes satisfaction and psychological health among couples, underscoring the value of integrating communication modules into premarital programs. In the same vein, Larson, Holman, and Dworkin (2017) found that premarital education significantly improves marital satisfaction and stability, while Markman and Rhoades (2016) highlighted the long-term benefits of comprehensive relationship education that covers both practical and interpersonal skills. Evidence from African settings also supports this view: Sang and Mbatia (2020) documented how Christian premarital counseling enhanced marital satisfaction among Kenyan couples. Finally, Ripley, Worthington, Bromley, and Kemper (2022) emphasized the role of spiritual intimacy in reducing marital conflict, reinforcing the importance of including sacramental and faith-based content in marriage preparation.

Level of Readiness for Marriage

Table 3 summarizes the overall level of readiness for marriage. The respondents demonstrate strong readiness for marriage across emotional-psychological (3.50), practical (3.50), and spiritual/value-based (3.60) domains, indicating confidence in communication and emotional coping, household management and financial preparedness, and a solid grounding in Catholic teachings and sacramental commitments. Respondents score highest on items reflecting clear understanding of Church teaching and confident communication with a future spouse, while slightly lower (though still high) scores appear for long-term goal-setting, shared devotional practices, and some aspects of conflict management. These patterns - high readiness in communication, finances, and doctrine combined with modestly lower scores on sustained shared practices and forward-looking planning - mirror findings from premarital and relationship-education research showing that (a) structured premarital programs increase couples' confidence in practical and relational skills (Williamson et al., 2014; Bahrami-Samani et al., 2024), (b) communication-focused training improves marital functioning and psychological well-being (Alipour et al., 2020; Jafari et al., 2021), and (c) religious commitment or strong doctrinal grounding is associated with higher value-based readiness even when parish/community engagement or joint devotional routines vary (Sorokowski et al., 2019). Taken together, the results suggest respondents are well prepared in key, tangible areas for married life while programmatic emphasis on sustained shared spiritual practices, long-term planning, and advanced conflict-management strategies could further strengthen readiness.

Table 3
Composite Table on Level of Readiness for Marriage

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Emotional and Psychological Readiness	3.50	Strongly Agree/Highly Ready	2.5
Practical Preparedness	3.50	Strongly Agree/Highly Ready	2.5
Spiritual and Value-Based Readiness (Catholic Context)	3.60	Strongly Agree/Highly Ready	1
Overall weighted mean	3.53	Strongly Agree/Highly Ready	

Legend:

3.25- 4.00 - Strongly Agree/Highly Ready 1.75-2.49 - Disagree /Slightly Ready

2.50-3.24 - Agree/Moderately Ready 1.00-1.74 - Strongly Disagree/Not Ready

Relationship between the Level of Religious Involvement and the Perceived Effectiveness of the Marriage Preparation Program

Table 4 examines the relationship between the respondents' **level of religious involvement** and the **perceived effectiveness of the marriage preparation program**. The computed Pearson r of **.414** is lower than the critical value of **.444** at the 0.05 level of significance, which leads to the **acceptance of the null hypothesis**. This indicates **no significant relationship** between the respondents' level of religious involvement and their perception of the program's effectiveness. In other words, participants generally evaluated the marriage preparation program positively regardless of how frequently or deeply they practiced their faith. The analysis indicates that the perceived effectiveness of the marriage preparation program is not significantly influenced by participants' level of religious involvement.

Table 4
Significant Relationship between the Level of Religious Involvement and the Perceived Effectiveness of the Marriage Preparation Program

Variables	Statistical Test	Computed Value	Critical Value @ .05	Decision	Interpretation
Level of Religious Involvement vs. the Perceived Effectiveness of the Marriage Preparation Program	Pearson r	.414	.444	Accept Ho	No Significant Relationship

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the level of religious involvement and the perceived effectiveness of the marriage preparation program $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance

This finding echoes research showing that well-designed marriage preparation programs tend to be evaluated positively across varying levels of religiosity because their content addresses universal aspects of communication, role clarity, and practical skills (Markman & Rhoades, 2016). Similarly, Larson, Holman, and Dworkin (2017) reported that couples' satisfaction with premarital education is more strongly associated with program quality than with their prior religious engagement. In the Philippine context, Del Castillo (2019) found that even less religiously active couples benefitted from pre-Cana seminars when the content was practical, skills-based, and inclusive.

Relationship between the Level of Religious Involvement and the Level of Readiness for Marriage after Completing the Marriage Preparation Program

Table 5 presents the relationship between the level of religious involvement and respondents' readiness for marriage after completing the marriage preparation program. The computed Pearson r of **.857** far exceeds the critical value of **.444** at the 0.05 level of significance, resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis. This indicates a **strong positive relationship**

between respondents' religious involvement and their level of readiness for marriage following the program.

Table 5
Significant Relationship between the Level of Religious Involvement and the Level of Readiness for Marriage after Completing the Marriage Preparation Program

Variables	Statistic al Test	Compute d Value	Critical Value @ .05	Decision	Interpretation
Level of Religious Involvement Vs the Level of Readiness for Marriage after Completing the Marriage Preparation Program	Pearson r	.857	.444	Reject Ho	Significant Relationship

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the level of religious involvement and the level of readiness for marriage after completing the marriage preparation program $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance

This pattern reflects research showing that deeper religious involvement fosters stronger marital commitment and readiness by providing shared values, moral frameworks, and community support (Mahoney, 2019). Similarly, Uecker and Stokes (2008) found that religious practice promotes higher relational stability and clearer marital roles among couples. Local findings mirror these results: Del Castillo (2019) reported that Filipino Catholic couples participating in pre-Cana seminars developed greater commitment and preparedness for marital responsibilities, while Reyes and Salazar (2021) observed that diocesan marriage preparation programs in the Bicol Region strengthened participants' confidence in family life management and alignment with Catholic values. Together, these findings affirm that religious involvement acts as a reinforcing factor that enhances the impact of marriage preparation programs on marital readiness.

Relationship between Perceived Effectiveness of the Marriage Preparation Program and the Respondents' Level of Readiness for Marriage

Table 6 shows the relationship between the perceived effectiveness of the marriage preparation program and respondents' readiness for marriage. The computed Pearson r of **.510** exceeds the critical value of **.444** at the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This means there is a **significant positive relationship** between how effective respondents perceive the program to be and their reported readiness for marriage.

This indicates that participants who view the marriage preparation program as highly effective also tend to report a higher level of preparedness for married life. This pattern reflects international findings that structured premarital education enhances couples' communication, conflict management, and long-term relationship satisfaction (Markman & Rhoades, 2016; Larson, Holman, & Dworkin, 2017).

Table 6
Significant Relationship between the Perceived Effectiveness of the Marriage Preparation Program and the Respondents' Level of Readiness for Marriage

Variables	Statistica l Test	Compute d Value	Critic al Value @ .05	Decisio n	Interpretation
Perceived Effectiveness of the Marriage Preparation Program vs the Respondent's Level of Readiness for Marriage	Pearson r	.510	.444	Reject Ho	Significant Relationship

Ho: There is no significant relationship between perceived effectiveness of the marriage preparation program and the respondent's level of readiness for marriage $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance.

Local studies likewise echo this trend: Del Castillo (2019) reported that Filipino Catholic couples attending pre-Cana seminars developed greater understanding of marital roles and a stronger sense of commitment. Similarly, Reyes and Salazar (2021) found that diocesan marriage preparation programs in the Bicol Region increased participants' confidence in managing family life and strengthened their alignment with Catholic values. Together, these findings show how effective marriage preparation programs - especially when culturally attuned - can significantly enhance readiness for marriage.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The significant relationship between the perceived effectiveness of the marriage preparation program and respondents' level of readiness for marriage (Table 6) underscores that well-managed programs can directly influence couples' preparedness. This finding suggests that parish and diocesan leaders can apply strategic management practices to strengthen both religious involvement and program quality. For example, research shows that premarital education linked to ongoing parish activities can increase later relationship stability and help-seeking behaviors (Stanley, Amato, Johnson, & Markman, 2006). In line with this, Catholic parishes in Europe have demonstrated that structured support for engaged couples - such as mentoring, retreats, and follow-up sessions - enhances both spiritual formation and practical skills for married life (Warchoł-Sławińska, 2024). Drawing on these insights, local leaders could:

- (a) develop parish-based small-group activities and retreats that sustain couples' faith participation before, during, and after the preparation program;
- (b) systematically train and supervise facilitators and mentor couples to ensure consistent delivery of Catholic teaching and practical skills;
- (c) institute ongoing feedback and evaluation mechanisms to refine content and methods based on participants' needs; and
- (d) integrate spiritual formation with communication, financial, and family-life topics to create a holistic learning experience.

These strategic management practices, grounded in both empirical evidence and the study findings, can help Catholic couples internalize faith-based values, improve their engagement with the program, and ultimately enhance their readiness for marriage.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

1. Level of Religious Involvement in Catholic Religious Activities

The respondents demonstrated a high level of religious involvement in Catholic activities, with an overall weighted mean of 3.34, indicating they are “Strongly Agree/Highly Involved.” Among the dimensions, **Adherence to Catholic Teachings and Values** obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.50, followed by **Sacramental Participation** at 3.46. **Personal Devotion** recorded a mean of 3.28, while **Parish and Community Engagement** had the lowest mean of 3.11, though all dimensions fell within the “Strongly Agree/Highly Involved” category.

2. Perceived Effectiveness of Marriage Preparation Program

The respondents rated the **effectiveness of the marriage preparation program** highly, with an overall weighted mean of 3.47, reflecting a “Strongly Agree/Highly Effective” perception. Among the dimensions, **Practical Guidance for Married Life** received the highest mean of 3.52, followed closely by **Clarity of Marital Roles and Expectations** at 3.48. **Understanding the Sacramental Nature of Marriage** scored 3.51, and **Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills** had a mean of 3.39.

3. Level of Readiness for Marriage

The respondents’ **level of readiness for marriage** was also high across all domains. The **emotional-psychological** and **practical** domains both had a weighted mean of 3.50, while the **spiritual/value-based** domain scored 3.60. These findings indicate strong confidence in emotional coping and communication, household management, financial preparedness, and adherence to Catholic teachings and sacramental commitments.

4. Relationship between the Level of Religious Involvement and the Perceived Effectiveness of the Marriage Preparation Program

The **relationship between the level of religious involvement and the perceived effectiveness of the marriage preparation program** yielded a computed Pearson r of 0.414, which is lower than the critical value of 0.444 at the 0.05 level of significance, indicating no significant relationship between these variables.

4. Relationship between the Level of Religious Involvement and the Level of Readiness for Marriage after Completing the Marriage Preparation Program

The **relationship between the level of religious involvement and readiness for marriage** after completing the program showed a computed Pearson r of 0.857, exceeding the critical value of 0.444 at the 0.05 level of significance, indicating a strong positive relationship.

5. Perceived Effectiveness of the Marriage Preparation Program and the Respondents’ Level of Readiness for Marriage

The **relationship between the perceived effectiveness of the program and respondents’ readiness for marriage** yielded a Pearson r of 0.510, surpassing the critical value of 0.444 at the 0.05 significance level, showing a significant positive relationship.

6.Strategic Management Practices

The study suggested that **strategic management practices** could be applied by parish and diocesan leaders to strengthen both religious involvement and the quality of the marriage preparation program.

CONCLUSIONS:

Based on the salient findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The respondents demonstrate a high level of religious involvement in Catholic activities, particularly in adhering to Catholic teachings and values, indicating that their faith practices are consistently integrated into their daily lives.
2. The marriage preparation program is perceived as highly effective by the respondents, with practical guidance for married life rated the highest, suggesting that the program provides valuable information on daily routines, financial management, and balancing marital responsibilities.
3. Respondents exhibit a strong level of readiness for marriage across emotional-psychological, practical, and spiritual/value-based domains, reflecting confidence in their ability to manage emotions, household responsibilities, and uphold Catholic teachings in their marital life.
4. The participants' evaluations of the marriage preparation program's usefulness remain generally consistent regardless of how frequently they attend religious activities or the depth of their personal faith practice. This indicates that the perceived value and benefits of the program are recognized by couples across varying levels of religious involvement, suggesting that the program's content is broadly applicable and accessible to all participants.
5. The higher levels of religious involvement are associated with greater preparedness for married life. Couples who actively engage in religious activities and consistently practice Catholic teachings tend to report higher confidence in their emotional, practical, and spiritual readiness for marriage, demonstrating a connection between faith engagement and reported marital preparedness.
6. **Respondents** who perceive the marriage preparation program as highly effective also report a higher level of readiness for marriage. This suggests that when couples recognize the program's guidance and instruction as valuable, they feel more prepared to undertake the responsibilities of married life, reflecting a positive alignment between program evaluation and self-reported readiness outcomes.
7. Strategic management practices can be applied by parish and diocesan leaders to strengthen both religious involvement and the quality of the marriage preparation program, suggesting a potential pathway for improving program implementation and participant engagement.

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