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## INFLUENCE OF ETHNICITY ON MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG COUPLES IN INTERCULTURAL MARRIAGES, KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA

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### Abstract:

Intercultural marriages are on the rise. Similarly, heterosexual, monogamous, intercultural couples may face exclusive constraints originating from divergent ethnicity. The purpose of this study was to find out the influence of ethnicity on marital satisfaction among couples in intercultural marriages in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study was hitched on Bowen Family System Theory and Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT). The research design adopted in this research was convergent mixed methods research design. Target population for the study was 11,028 individuals in intercultural marriages. The Snowball sampling was applied to select 99 participants. Pertinent items were adapted from Multiple Heritage Couple Questionnaire (MHCQ). Quantitative data in this study was analysed through descriptive statistics to attain means and standard deviation. Inferential statistics used linear and multiple regression analysis. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 25.0 assisted to analyse data fast and efficiently. Qualitative data was simultaneously analysed thematically. Authority to embark on the study was sought from Institutional Review Board, National Council for Science and Technology and Kiambu County Government, Kenya. Results showed that ethnicity has a positive, significant influence on marital satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.402$ ,  $p = 0.040$ ) among couples in intercultural marriages. This implies that an increase in satisfaction with ethnicity positively increases marital satisfaction by 0.402. This study recommended that policy makers cultivate strategies that escalates visibility and awareness of mental health services. The study further recommended more research by mental health scholars on the influence of ethnicity on marital satisfaction among intercultural couples to enhance understanding that is essential for couples' marital management which

augments satisfaction.

**Keywords:**

Ethnicity, Marital Satisfaction, Intercultural Marriages

**Introduction**

The importance of marriage to a couple is its success and satisfaction in their relationship (Tavakol et al., 2017). Omolayo et al. (2013) observe that marriage is significant in human relationships and offers the main structure to form a family and rearing the upcoming generation. According to Ngazimbi et al. (2017), being in a satisfying marriage provides specific benefits, such as, longer life, support, fewer mental and behavioural health problems. Sorokowski et al. (2017) indicate that marital relationships are heavily guided by culturally determined norms, customs and expectations causing distinct challenges to intercultural couples. The term intercultural marriage as defined by Skowronski et al. (2014) refers to a union between partners from dissimilar racial or ethnic backgrounds. Suyemoto et al. (2020) assert that ethnicity is a complex concept which advances and supports relations through communities coming together, consequently, the need to comprehensively understand its influence on marital satisfaction is noteworthy.

Crespin-Boucaud (2019) observes that inter-ethnic marriages are on the rise. This paper focused on the influence of ethnicity on marital satisfaction among couples in intercultural marriages. According to Dewi et al (2019), a partner who emerges from divergent ethnic group has unique challenges that may develop from adjusting to a partner with a differing background, and couples in Kiambu County are no exceptions. Sabbe et al. (2019) assert that intercultural challenges among couples are shaped by complex dynamics that have close association with ethnicity. Miles (2018) observes that available data on inter-ethnic couples is scarce and inconsistent which showed a need for more studies in this area to realize comprehensive information. Consequently, the predominant question this research sought to respond to was “What is the influence of ethnicity on marital satisfaction among couples in intercultural marriages in Kiambu County, Kenya?”.

The study is substantial to researchers with augmented information which is useful for further research on related field. This study is significant to families and couples with enhanced information that is useful for effective marital management, which is critical in marital satisfaction. The guidance of this study using Bowen Family System Theory and Cognitive Behavioral Theory is relevant for future application with diverse cultures in Kiambu County, Kenya. The application in this study of The Multiple Heritage Couple Questionnaire (MHCQ) developed by Henriksen et al. (2007) is valuable with future application with population drawn from diverse cultures in Kiambu County, Kenya.

**Literature Review*****Ethnicity and Marital Satisfaction***

According to Nelson (2015), ethnicity refers to a group of people with a common heritage and share common cultural values and customs. Pereira (2020) observes that ethnicity point to a collective group of people that shares common beliefs and practices. Koos and Neupert-Wentz (2020) add that demographically separated communities or tribes have their own set of cultural or traditional values which guide them in life. Kibuthu (2016) observes that couples experience challenges of adaptation to new cultural practices and managing in-laws which may influence

their marital satisfaction (MS). According to Suyemoto et al. (2020), ethnicity is a multifaceted, dynamic concept that advances and supports relations through communities coming together around cultural connection. Suyemoto et al. continues to add that ethnicity influences and affect individuals and groups' thinking, emotions and behavior. This is in line with Cognitive Behavioral Theory which acknowledges the interaction between cognitions, behaviours and emotional response (Epstein and Zheng, 2017). For instance, the thinking about conflicting divergent ethnic practices, negative emotions the thinking may elicit and the couples' behavior that follows may influence their MS.

According to Bystydzienski (2011), indicators of inter-ethnic marriages depict that people have become more diverse worldwide in terms of race, ethnicity and culture than it has ever been before. Gaily (2017) observes that ethnic differences have taken an ascending trend in today's world. Bandyopadhyay and Green (2018) assert that average rate of interethnic marriages in Africa is 22.3%. Dulani et al. (2018) add that there is lack of systematic organization of data across Africa on inter-marriages, however, estimation from a large sample of 23 African countries portray median country-level as 21%. Dulani et al. continues to add that 13% of marriages in Kenya are inter-marriages. These statistics showed existence of inter-ethnic marriages that bear unique challenges and the need to comprehensively understand them for effective management.

According to Cohen and Kitayama (2019), individualist value aspect is inclined to prioritize the needs of the individual over the group, while collectivist value dimension subordinates the individual's desires to those of the group. Ngazimbi et al. (2017) observe that there are significant variances between marriages in USA-born and Sub-Saharan African immigrants. USA marriages are based on love and individual satisfaction while the Sub-Saharan African marital unions despite being based on love encompass marriage negotiations and family commitments in form of dowry settlements. Ngazimbi et al. continue and indicate that USA married couples depend on each other for emotional support, while Sub-Saharan African couples include extended family members for emotional support. However, USA marriages and Sub-Saharan African marriages, both anticipate marital happiness. Couples from the two dissimilar cultural practices are inclined to conflict with influence on their MS.

Tien (2013) indicates that when partners from dissimilar cultures decide to commit to each other, they may expect their families to bless their marriage. However, this may differ with practices in two cultures of nuclear and extended families. For instance, a partner from a culture that embraces extended family, acceptance by all the members of spouses' family is very substantial. While a partner from a culture that embraces nuclear family does not expect family members to participate much in his or her marriage. This may create disharmony within the couples' marital relationship. Further, disharmony may outspread to the extended family members' relationships causing strained marital relationships that may influence couples' marital satisfaction. According to Kim and Lawrie (2017), family relationships are carriers of such culture-specific practices. Papero et al. (2018) observe that Bowen Family System Theory (BFST) triangling appears in a relationship when tension develops between twosome, and one or both partners may involve an extended family member, which in the long run may influence couples' MS.

Hu et al. (2014) examined how couples interdependently influence relationship between family-of-origin triangulation and marital satisfaction. Findings showed that family of origin

triangulation was strongly negatively associated with marital satisfaction across two family life stages with cross-cultural consistency.

Miles (2018) indicates that inter-ethnic couples have less marital satisfaction because of their expectations disparity, such as, supportive spouse and in-laws' relationships. According to Nympha et al. (2015), marital contentment is based on the expectations that one has and how they match with experiences. Helms et al (2014) observe that misunderstandings may occur from differing expectations, for instance, lack of marital support, which may have influence on MS when not actualized. Tavakol et al. (2017) add that positive support from family members is essential for stability of couples' marriage to realize marital satisfaction. Supportive family relationships take a central position in couples' marital satisfaction however, this depends on partners' cultures of origin. According to Goldstein (2015), interference is a major complaint among couples in a marital relationship with regards to in-laws and it may influence MS. Mother-in-law has been singled out as the most troublesome in-law for both husbands and wives. Further, problems between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law have been identified. However, research that examines couples' relationships with their in-laws is relatively scarce and conflicting which calls for continued research. This concern formed part of the current study.

Genc and Baptist (2018) carried out a study to explore the nature of conflicts between parents-in-law and couples among Muslims in Turkey. Findings indicated that conflicts with parents-in-law seemed gendered. They stemmed from unmet marital expectations and family roles. Daughters-in-law tendered to remain silent to overcome conflicts. Conversely, sons-in-law took the blame to circumvent conflicts. In-laws of opposite sex appeared to have a more contemptuous relationships compared to in-laws of the same gender. This shows a necessity for appropriate decisions and adjustment for couples to deal with extended members of their newly formed families to attain their yearnings of marital happiness. Genc and Baptist study was carried out outside Kenya among Muslims in Turkey, which showed a need to carry out a similar study in Kenya at Kiambu County.

Goldstein (2015) indicates two models of support and interference, that explain in-laws' influence on couples' MS. In support model outside actions help couples to build a satisfying marriage. For instance, positive remarks that the spouse's partner is good and loving. Emphasizing that the couples are able to work things out together, which exerts strength effect on couples. Conversely interference model exerts destructive effect on the couples' relationship. The influence is experienced through directly or indirectly criticizing a spouse's partner, persuasion that the partner is a bad person and dangerous. Suggestions that only coercion, threats or abandoning the partner can solve marital problems influences couples' MS. Conversely, Tolorunleke (2014) argues that couples experience marital struggle from inability to fulfill each other's diverse needs. Kalai (2016) adds that marital counseling is essential in an intimate relationship to handle challenges.

Kamatu and M'arimi (2017) observe that marriages at Ruiru in Kiambu County experience low MS with alarming rate of separation soon after marriage. Kamatu and M'arimi study at Ruiru Sub-county in Kiambu County, Kenya, used mixed methods research to examine parental influence on couples' marital relationships. Findings revealed that parents strongly contribute to their children's low levels of MS through physical. interference and their philosophies. The study recommended further research on the same topic in the County of Kiambu to confirm their findings.

According to Semenya (2014) there are different behaviours and practices in marriages that may pose challenges to couples without proper adjustment, for instance, practices in traditional marriages and contemporary. Kariuki (2018) observes that contemporary marriages are more prevalent within the educated and urban elites. Mutai (2019) indicates that marriages in Kenya are largely between families more than individuals, therefore, there are different expectations on partners from both sides of the extended family members. Couples from the two cultures may experience challenges in their relationships, which may influence marital contentment. According to Nelson and Kohli (2017), diverse issues to be considered in intergenerational process as found in BFST include decision-making and culture. For instance, couples make their personal decisions on ethnic practices and adapt those that work in their marriages.

Ng'ang'a' (2010) carried out a research on the changes of traditional practices among urban Agikuyu in Nairobi. The study used both qualitative and quantitative approach with 100 participants. The study showed divergent practices between Kenyan urban elite bearing contemporary marital practices. The practices differ from rural traditional marital practices and may conflict and have some influence on couples' marital satisfaction. For instance, bride gift practice among Agikuyu is a valued practice and has been in existence for many generations. However, this has changed as life is more individualist among urban elite families than collectivist in traditional rural families, which may be the situation in Kiambu County. The two divergent practices are inclined to conflict which may influence couples' MS.

Crippen (2011) observes that numerous cultural values remain hidden until couples become parents then issues emerge concerning which values on parenting to adopt. One main issue prone to influence couples' marital satisfaction is defining the roles on parenting. For instance, individualistic cultures view parenting as the responsibility of immediate family members, that is the nuclear family. While the other partner, from collectivist culture views parenting as the responsibility of the entire family, which includes extended family members and neighbours that is prone to conflict and influence couples' MS. According to Brown (2010), multigenerational transmission process signifies transfers of patterns of behaviors, for instance, transmitted divergent child rearing practices may conflict and influence MS. Brown continues to add that differentiation of self (DoS) indicates the capacity of an individual to function autonomously by making self-directed choices, while remaining emotionally connected to significant relationships. For instance, inter-ethnic couples make their own parenting decisions that work in their marriages.

Kapure (2015) observes that support is a component of satisfaction within a marital life. The extent of shared support specifically by spouse assists to process marital difficulties and struggles and results in improved health outcomes. Spousal support indicates an intimate marital environment and atmosphere, which produces feelings of care in a healthy and happy marital relationship. For instance, husband's support in parenting or domestic activities, which may culturally be regarded as wife's domain, in some cultures, may communicate feelings of care. However, when marital expectation of marital support is not met, may cause frustrations with influence on couples' marital satisfaction. According to Yoruk (2016), marital support can be in many forms, such as, partner's physical and emotional support during demanding situations in child rearing. Marital support is one of the concepts that is highly correlated with psychological well-being and plays a pivotal role during stressful life events. Increased emotional support from a spouse predicts increased wellbeing of the other partner, which results in increased marital satisfaction.



Zaker and Boostanipoor (2016) indicate that there are cultural differences in the patterns of marital and family relationships. A couple's ethnicity involves unique practices, such as, parenting and a feeling of ethnocentrism. Divergent beliefs of cultural common bonds, may cause distress in couples' marital relationship. For instance, in the African set-up a child belongs to the community, implying that the child may never go hungry because there are many care-givers around. However, currently educated people get employment in urban centres and get acculturated. DeVito (2013) observes that acculturation takes place when the original culture becomes influenced by the host culture and progressively values, beliefs and ways of behaving of the urban culture overtakes rural culture. This indicates that urban couples move away from traditional practices and get inclined to individualistic practices. Consequently, the child is never allowed to visit rural grandparents or other extended family members, with the belief that the child might not get good care and may get sick. This becomes a challenge between couples and their extended family members, which may have an influence on couples' marital contentment. According to Tien (2013), child raising practices in individualist and collectivist cultures may be an issue and may cause tension in couples' marital relationship. Child rearing in collectivist cultures involve extended family members, for instance, grandparents may play a pivotal role in naming a child and performing other traditional newborn rituals. While in individualist cultures extended family members are never given much attention with regards to couples' relationships. This indicates that couples' and their families in the two cultural practices are predisposed to tension that may influence couples' MS. Kenyan marriages across different cultures are no exception as they may experience marital challenges (Kibuthu, 2016).

Inmam et al. (2011) argue that diversity enhances marital relationship as it assists couples to gain different perceptions about other people and their backgrounds. Skowronski et al. (2014) add that diversity enriches marital relationships and benefits couples in intermarriages to gain different perspectives of other people. Diversity in marital relationships further encourages partners to discover more of their individual cultures and also develop a sense of belonging in partners' cultures. Therefore, diversity may be supportive to couples in inter-ethnic marriages to attain marital satisfaction. Dobrowolska et al. (2020) contend that majority of cultural variables on marital satisfaction had previously been examined, however, in Western countries excluding non-Western countries, such as, Kenya and Kiambu County. Miles (2018) assert that available literature on inter-ethnic couples is scarce and inconsistent signifying a need for further studies. Dulani et al. (2018) add that there is lack of systematic organization of data across Africa on inter-marriages which includes Kenya and Kiambu County. Consequently, the mentioned arguments specified the need for the study to establish influence of ethnicity on marital satisfaction among couples in heterosexual, monogamous, intercultural marriages in Kiambu County, Kenya.

### **Research Methodology**

The study involved convergent mixed methods research design. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), convergent mixed methods research design is beneficial to a study. The quantitative approach helps to generalize findings of the study to the target population, for instance, intercultural marriages in Kiambu County. The qualitative approach is suitable to collect participants' descriptions of experiences in their marriages.

### **Study's Population**

Study's population involved individuals in intercultural marriages. Age range was between 25

to 51 years old and marital age was between 5 to 22 years. This population had adequate expertise in marital life to yield essential information useful in the study. Target population was 11,028 participants and Nassiuma (2000) formula was used to realise a sample size of 99 participants. According to National Council for Population and Development (NCPD) (2013), Kiambu county is 40% rural and 60% urban. Hence, location of the study was in urban set-up where high numbers of intercultural marriages were bound to be found. Kikuyu and Limuru urban centres were purposively selected. There were differences in the rates of intercultural marriages in urban centres which compelled ratio calculation that yielded 67 participants in Kikuyu and 32 participants in Limuru urban centres. Snowball sampling is used when samples with the required characteristics are not easily identified, for instance, inter-ethnic couples in this study. According to Govindan (2014), early identified samples in Snowball sampling refer other participants.

### ***Data Collection***

Paradis et al. (2016) indicate that questionnaires are important in data collection. This study adapted items from The Multiple Heritage Couple Questionnaire (MHCQ). Item 5 on family context and item 7 on children were found relevant but were modified to collect required data. According to Henriksen et al. (2007), MHCQ questionnaire be answered independently which was observed in this study by giving each participant separate questionnaire to respond independently. The questionnaires involved open and closed ended items to concurrently yield both quantitative and qualitative data. Tien (2013) observes that MHCQ has been used before and found reliable.

The researcher was the key investigator with 4 research assistants who were trained to administer the instruments appropriately to yield the necessary data. The team agreed on suitable days, time and duration of data collection. Time-frame for collecting data was 4 weeks. As data was collected it was simultaneously keyed in the computer pending analysis.

Creswell (2014) observes that there are benefits attained from pilot testing the study as it ensures that the measurement tools applied are reliable. Pilot testing for this study was done with 10% of the study's population of 99 participants which was 9 rounded up to give 10 participants. The pilot test was based in Ruiru urban centre in Kiambu. Participants and information collected in the pilot testing did not form part of the sample of the real study.

### ***Validity and Reliability of The Instrument***

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to determine the internal consistency of the items in the instrument. Taber (2018) observes that threshold of 0.7 is considered acceptable. This study considered instrument's reliability acceptable with coefficient of 0.7.

Price et al. (2015) assert that content validity shows the extent in which an instrument covers all relevant parts of the construct of interest. Validity of the instrument for this study was ascertained through vigorous consultations with senior research supervisors who are professional psychologists. In addition, continuous review of previous related literature enhanced content validity of the instrument.

### ***Data Analysis Plan***

Mugenda and Mugenda (2019) observe that descriptive statistics is useful to summarize research data. Therefore, quantitative analysis applied descriptive statistics that included means

and standard deviation. Inferential statistics that was helpful in this study included linear and multiple regression analysis to identify and evaluate relationship between ethnicity and marital satisfaction. Rahman and Muktadir (2021) observe that Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software is supportive to analyse data fast and efficiently. Consequently, SPSS Version 25.0 assisted in data analysis. Qualitative data was simultaneously analysed thematically. Results were presented in tables and participants' narratives of their marital experiences.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), it is paramount for researchers to have their research plans authorized by accredited institutional review board (IRB). Authority to undertake this study was obtained from Institutional Review Board, The National Council for Science and Technology and Kiambu County Government, Kenya. The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) Code of Ethics (2015), indicate ethical standards against which a family therapist is judged, such as confidentiality and informed consent. Participants were provided with full details pertaining to the study and willingly provided permission to participate. Their identities were protected by substituting their names with codes to maintain confidentiality.

### Findings: Influence of Ethnicity on Marital Satisfaction

**Table 1: Ethnicity and Marital Satisfaction**

Level of Satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low Level	26	26.3	6	30	20.08	6.433
Moderate Level	19	19.2				
High Level	54	54.5				
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100.0</b>				

From Table 1, 54.5% of the participants had a high level of marital satisfaction with ethnicity, 26.3% had a low level of satisfaction, while 19.2% had a moderate level of satisfaction with ethnicity. The minimum score attained was 6, while the maximum score attained was 30. The marital ethnicity mean score was 20.08 (SD = 6.433), indicating that on average, the participants had a moderate level of satisfaction with their marital ethnicity.

**Table 2: Ethnicity on Marital Satisfaction by Components**

Level of Satisfaction with In-laws						
	Frequency	Percentage	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low Level	35	35.4	3	15	9.16	3.263
Moderate Level	26	26.2				
High Level	38	38.4				
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100.0</b>				
Level of Satisfaction with Child-rearing						
	Frequency	Percentage	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low Level	18	18.2	3	15	10.92	3.658
Moderate Level	17	17.2				
High Level	64	64.6				
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100.0</b>				



As shown on Table 2, 38.4% of the participants had a high level of satisfaction with in-laws. The minimum score attained for satisfaction with in-laws was 3, while the maximum score attained was 15. The mean score was 9.16 (SD = 3.263), indicating that on average, the participants had a moderate level of satisfaction with in-laws. 64.6% had a high level of satisfaction with child-rearing. The minimum score attained for satisfaction with child-rearing was 3, while the maximum score attained was 15. The mean score was 10.92 (SD = 3.658), indicating that on average, the participants had a high level of satisfaction with child-rearing.

### Hypothesis Testing

The study sought to test the following null hypothesis.

H<sub>01</sub>: Ethnicity has no statistically significant influence on marital satisfaction among couples in intercultural marriages in Kiambu County, Kenya.

A linear regression was computed to determine the influence of ethnicity on marital satisfaction. The summary of findings is presented in the subsequent tables.

**Table 3: Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.207 <sup>a</sup>	.043	.033	12.297	1.628

a. Predictors: (Constant), Ethnicity

b. Dependent Variable: Marital satisfaction

From Table 3, ethnicity accounted for 3.3% of the variation in marital satisfaction as shown by the adjusted R square value.

**Table 4: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	653.933	1	653.933	4.324	.040 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	14668.390	97	151.221		
	Total	15322.323	98			

a. Dependent Variable: Marital satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Ethnicity

As shown in Table 4, the regression model was a good predictor for marital satisfaction from ethnicity,  $F(1, 97) = 4.324$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .

**Table 5: Regression Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Beta	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error					Lower Bound	Upper Bound

1	(Constant)	38.502	4.070		9.460	.000	30.424	46.580
	Ethnicity	.402	.193	.207	2.080	.040	.018	.785

a. Dependent Variable: Marital satisfaction

The findings in Table 5 indicate that ethnicity had a positive, significant influence on marital satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.402$ ,  $p = 0.040$ ); the influence was considered significant since the p-value was less than the selected level of significance (0.05). The findings imply that an increase in satisfaction with marital ethnicity will positively influence marital satisfaction by 0.402. Based on the findings, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted.

A multiple regression was further computed to determine the influence of ethnicity components on marital satisfaction. The summary of findings is presented in the subsequent tables.

**Table 6: Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.286 <sup>a</sup>	.082	.063	12.106	1.652

a. Predictors: (Constant), Child-rearing, in-laws

b. Dependent Variable: marital satisfaction

As shown in Table 6, satisfaction with child-rearing and in-laws explained 6.3% of the variation in marital satisfaction as indicated by the adjusted R square value.

**Table 7: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1252.086	2	626.043	4.271	.017 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	14070.237	96	146.565		
	Total	15322.323	98			

a. Dependent Variable: marital satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Child-rearing, in-laws

From Table 7, the regression model was a significant predictor of marital satisfaction from the components of ethnicity,  $F(2, 96) = 4.271$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .

**Table: 8: Multiple Regression Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Mode	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	38.920	4.012	9.701	.000	30.956	46.884
	In-laws	1.435	.546	.374	.010	.352	2.518
	Child-rearing	-.504	.487	-.147	.303	-1.470	.463

a. Dependent Variable: Marital satisfaction

Findings from the multiple regression established that satisfaction with in-laws statistically significantly influenced marital satisfaction ( $\beta = 1.435$   $p = 0.010$ ). This implies that satisfaction with in-laws had a significant positive influence on marital satisfaction. Therefore, an increase in satisfaction with in-laws resulted to an increase in marital satisfaction by 1.435.

## Discussions

### *Ethnicity and Marital Satisfaction*

The results on the influence of ethnicity on marital satisfaction (MS) revealed that majority of participants (54.5%.) had high levels of satisfaction with their marital ethnicity as shown in Table 1. Ethnicity mean score was 20.08 (SD = 6.433), indicating that on average, the participants had a moderate level of satisfaction with their marital ethnicity. Govindan (2014) indicates that early identified sample in Snowball sampling refer other known people with similar characteristics. Consequently, inclination towards referrals of respondents with similar characteristics in this study could have prompted having the high levels of satisfaction with marital ethnicity.

Response from participant (FKK59) indicated that “My spouse has not introduced much of cultural practices to our relationship. We have agreed on charting our culture forward. We have agreed on how far we bring in cultural practices like burial rites that to me are not extreme. My spouse and I have taken time to explore the differences in our cultures and chosen to move with what is positive and leave out the negatives”.

The findings from participant (FKK59) showed that the respondent had embraced spouse’s divergent culture, which she agreed was not extreme. Participant and spouse explored their divergent cultures. Hence, gained awareness of their different cultural practices and decided to form one that worked in their marital relationship. The findings were in line with Bystydzienski (2011) that people have become more diverse in ethnicity and culture than ever before, which showed recognition of inter-ethnic marriages. This is supported by Gaily (2017) that ethnic diversity has taken an ascending trend in today’s world, which portray that individuals have acknowledged its existence. The findings further showed Differentiation of Self (DoS) in this marriage. The participant and her spouse decided to chart individual culture in their marital relationship. This was supported by Brown (2010) that DoS is the capacity of an individual to function autonomously by making self-directed choices.

There were different participants’ responses in the study who supported Zaker and Boostanipoor (2016) that couples have learnt to identify with cultural values and biases of their families of origin, which are likely to have significant bearings on couples’ MS. For instance, participant (FKK2) shared that “Cultural practices will always be with us especially being with

our old parents. At some point my spouse being the head, I chose to agree not to cause too much conflict with our parents. However, I don't agree with my parents shaving our children and has caused so much conflict and misunderstanding, at some point MS just fades away and get too crowded by the extended family”.

The participant's response showed that divergent practices in ethnicity were influencing her MS. For instance, cultural practices of parents shaving grandchildren's hair caused conflicts and misunderstandings with influence on MS. There was an indication of conflict of individualism versus collectivism practices in the marriage, as participant narrated that her marriage was crowded by the extended family members. This was in line with Cohen and Kitayama (2019) that individualist value aspect prioritizes individual needs, while collectivist value dimension subordinates the individual's desire. The findings were supported by Suyemoto et al. (2020) that ethnicity affects behavior through learned experiences of cultural practices with influence on individuals and groups' thinking, emotions and behavior. This concurs with Epstein and Zheng (2017) that Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT) recognizes interaction between cognitions, emotional response and behaviours.

### **Influence of Ethnicity on Marital Satisfaction by Components**

#### ***In-laws and Child-rearing***

Findings on in-laws from participants' responses showed that 38.4% had high level of satisfaction with in-laws. The mean score was 9.16 (SD = 3.263), indicating that on average, the participants had a moderate level of satisfaction with in-laws. Participant (FKK20) responded that “my parents and in-laws have been good friends hence I learnt that they even schooled together. They have been good friends. Can't complain about naming our children because we agreed on how to do it. We have family gathering mostly, so we meet and enjoy together. We agree in every decision making”. The participant's response showed that the couple had embraced each other's divergent cultures. They had also invested in making agreed upon decisions, which overcame eminent divergent cultural conflicts. The findings were supported by Skowronski et al. (2014) that diversity enriches marital relationships that benefit intercultural marriages. The respondent showed acquired curiosity to learn the origin of parents' friendship. This resulted in encouragement in marriage by discovering that both parents were old school mates, that enhanced a sense of belonging in partner's divergent culture. This resonated well with Inmam et al. (2011) that diversity enhances MS as it assists couples gain divergent perspectives about other cultures. The respondent brought out good relationship between in-laws, which was an indicator that they were supportive. This is in line with Tavakol et al. (2017) that positive support from family members is essential for stability of couples' marriages to attain MS.

Findings of the study revealed differing responses from respondents that had contrary experiences and disclosed that ethnicity influenced their MS. For instance, participant (MKK42) responded that “My wife's family are always in our family trying to solve our small differences. They want my wife and I to attend to all their functions, which exhausts me. If we do not take our children to stay with them over holidays becomes war in my house”. The findings revealed that most likely there was triangulation in this marital relationship. The reason being that in-laws from spouse's family were always in respondent's marriage trying to solve couple's marital issues. This was in line with Papero et al. (2018) who indicate that triangulation appears in a relationship when tension develops between two individuals then a third person is introduced to reduce the tension. This was further supported by Hu et al. (2014)

study that showed that family of origin triangulation was strongly negatively associated with marital satisfaction. The findings concurred with Goldstein (2015) that interference is a major complaint among couples in marital relationships with regards to in-laws that influence MS. Mother-in-law was singled out as the most troublesome in-law for both husbands and wives. However, research that examine couples' relationships with their in-laws is relatively scarce.

Findings from the study showed that 64.6% of participants had a high level of satisfaction with child-rearing practices as indicated in Table 2. The mean score was 10.92 (SD = 3.658), indicating that on average, the participants had a high level of satisfaction with child-rearing practices. Participant (FLM20) described that "Our cultural practices sometimes may affect our marriage but since we live in town areas it doesn't affect us that much. Decision to take our children to 'shugs' (meaning country-side) does not please me".

The findings revealed that probably the participant's life is inclined to individualism than collectivism cultures. Consequently, family of origin seemed not to have major influence on their child rearing practices. This allowed participant and the spouse to make personal decisions in own marital relationship, which brought them closer to each other resulting in enhanced MS. This concurred with Ng'ang'a (2010) study on the changes of traditional practices among urban Agikuyu in Nairobi. The findings showed divergent practices between Kenyan urban elite who had contemporary marital practices and rural traditional marital practices. This resonated with DeVito (2013) assertions that acculturation takes place when the original culture becomes influenced by host culture and progressively values, beliefs and ways of behaving of the urban culture overtakes rural culture.

The study revealed different participants' responses that showed that their experiences with child rearing practices influenced their MS. For instance, respondent (FKK51) described that "The most contagious issue is the naming process, which has affected our relationship because I didn't name our girls according to their culture. To me a child's name is a determining factor of how/who they will turn out to be and I cannot name a toxic person to make them happy at the expense of my children's long-term happiness. Character is key to me". The findings showed an indication of conflicts between individualism and collectivism cultures. The participant preferred selecting names for her children while the family had their practice of naming. This was in line with Tien (2013) that child raising practices in individualism and collectivism cultures may be an issue and may cause tension among couples' marital relationship. Further, child-naming rites appeared to be an intergenerational practice, which indicated a trans-generational issue. This is supported by Nelson and Kohli (2017) that among diverse issues to be considered in intergenerational process include decision-making and culture. Child rearing is likely to be learnt from the family of origin and transferred to intercultural couples' relationship, which may need discussions and agreement between couples to realise MS.

## Conclusions

The study's results indicated that majority of participants (54.5%) had high level of satisfaction with marital ethnicity. The study revealed that ethnicity had a positive, significant influence on marital satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.402$ ,  $p = 0.040$ ). The influence was considered significant since the p-value was less than the selected level of significance (0-05). The results indicate that an increase in satisfaction with ethnicity result to positively influence on marital satisfaction by 0.402. Consequently, the findings answered the predominant research question by establishing that there is influence of ethnicity on marital satisfaction among couples in intercultural



marriages in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Findings from the multiple regression revealed that satisfaction with in-laws statistically significantly influenced marital satisfaction by ( $\beta = 1.435$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ). This indicates that an increase in satisfaction with in-laws results to an increase with marital satisfaction by 1.435. The findings supported the study that there is influence of ethnicity on marital satisfaction among couples in intercultural marriages in Kiambu County, Kenya.

### Recommendations

The study recommended that policy makers put in place strategies that create visibility and awareness of mental health services. The acquired information is significant in making the mental health services known and easily accessible which is crucial in enhancing marital satisfaction among couples in heterosexual, monogamous, intercultural marriages in Kiambu County, Kenya.

The study also recommended further research by mental health scholars on the influence of ethnicity on marital satisfaction to realise factual information which is crucial for improvement of mental health services.

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