

The Big Five Personality Traits and Marital Satisfaction Among Couples in Kilungu Deanery in Catholic Diocese of Machakos in Makueni County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Marital satisfaction is a key indicator of happiness and stability in marriage, yet modern family life faces significant challenges, including rising divorce rates, declining marriage prevalence, increased cohabitation, and the complexities introduced by same-sex marriage legalization. This study examines the Big Five personality traits and their relationship with marital satisfaction among couples in Kilungu Deanery, Catholic Diocese of Machakos, Makueni County, Kenya. The research objectives included assessing the prevalence of these traits, evaluating marital satisfaction levels, identifying factors affecting satisfaction, and exploring ways to enhance it. Grounded in the Five-Factor model of personality and Bowenian family systems theory, the study utilized a correlational research design with a sample of 178 married individuals (90 males and 88 females) aged 30 to 67, each married for at least five years. Data were collected using the Big Five Inventory and the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale, and analyzed with SPSS version 25. Findings revealed that Extraversion correlated positively with the Idealistic Distortion scale but showed no significant correlation with marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Agreeableness and Conscientiousness were positively associated with marital satisfaction and negatively with dissatisfaction. Conversely, Neuroticism was negatively correlated with marital satisfaction and positively with dissatisfaction. Openness correlated positively with marital satisfaction but not significantly with dissatisfaction. The study recommends that government and religious organizations offer family life counseling and premarital education to improve partner compatibility and reduce failed marriages.

Keywords: Marital Satisfaction, Big Five Personality Traits, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness, Marriage Dynamics, Family Counseling, Relationship Quality

INTRODUCTION

Marital satisfaction is experienced by couple when their marital relationship is consistent with their expectations. Since marriage is union between two people with different personalities, personality traits of each partner influence marital satisfaction of the couple. Different aspects of personality are described using five factor model. The challenges experienced by partners in married union may be associated with personality traits of the couples. Research results have indicated that couples with high scores in neuroticism have strained marital relationship. The happiness in life for individuals with high scores of neuroticisms is reduced to feelings of sorrow, anger and dissatisfaction with self. They are likely to be moody, irritable and have negative attitudes to events in life. Couples with high scores in neuroticism have negative interactions with each other. They have negative interpersonal behavior during conflict and have lower levels of sexual satisfaction, (Caughlin et al, 2000). These factors have negative implication on marital relationship among implied married partners

Couples with high scores in conscientiousness have high levels of marital satisfaction (Claxton et al, 2012). Conscientious people are self-disciplined and principled. They are able to handle marital issues effectively and experience high levels of marital satisfaction. According to Engel et al (2002) conscientiousness is the best predictor of couples intimacy and commitment in men. Such men are able to maintain successful relationships because they have higher levels of intimacy in their relationships

According to Shiota et al. (2007), couples with high scores in extraversion and conscientiousness have high levels of marital satisfaction. The research results also confirmed that couples with high scores in agreeableness and conscientiousness have high levels of marital satisfaction. The research results indicate that extraversion, conscientiousness and agreeableness contribute to happiness among married partners. The research findings of Gattis et al (2004) indicate that low levels of marital satisfaction is associated with low conscientiousness and high neuroticism. Individuals who are low in conscientiousness resort to alcohol and physical aggression to resolve marital stressors. This affects marital satisfaction of the married partners (Flowers et al, 1993). The study results indicate that high levels of neuroticism have negative implication to marital satisfaction.

According to Birditt at el (2017), marital tension is a contributing factor to the quality of happiness among married partners. Marital tension includes overall feelings of negativity in marriage. It includes negative emotions such as feeling tense, resentful, and irritated about marital relationship. These emotions occur due to irritations, disappointment, disagreement and conflict in marriage. According to enduring dynamic model, marital quality is relatively stable over time. (Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000). The partners are able to maintain certain interpersonal characteristic and patterns established during courtship, throughout the course of marriage. The interpersonal characteristic and patterns including awareness of each other's positive and negative qualities, including their shortcomings. The partners decide to marry despite being aware of their incompatibilities. The emergent distress and disillusionment model presumes that, the success or failure of marital union is determined by the ways in which couples resolve their differences. Partners who do not create constructive problem- solving context may express more negative reactions. Increase in marital conflict and negative behavior contribute to marital dissatisfaction and divorce. The disillusionment model also presumes that couples are overly happy in the early years of their marriage due to idealized notions of one another and high unrealistic expectations (Huston & Houts, 1998). Marital tension increases with time due to disappointment and frustrations over unrealized expectations. The accommodation model presumes that, the newly married can experience and accommodate problems experienced during the first years of their married life. Initial marital problems cause difficulties and disappointments, but the partners learn to adapt their expectations and accommodate each other, hence improving their marital relationship (Huston & Houts, 1998; Rusbult, Yovetich, & Verette, 1996). Marital tension has been considered as a significant cause of increased marital instability and divorce among newlywed years through middle age of married union (Birditt, Brown, Orbuch, & McIlvane, 2010; Matthews, Wickrama, & Conger, 1996; Stanley, Markman, & Whitton, 2002).

Abedi et al. (2016) postulate that, there are several researches that have provided numerous factors that contribute to marital satisfaction. The factors include the desire for a partner, good temperament, trustworthiness, love and faithfulness, intimacy, showing interest in a partner and empathy. The absence of such factors and incompatibility of personality could jeopardize a marriage. A meaningful relationship is a fundamental aspect of marriage and without it, marital commitment will be in danger of extinction (Abedi et al., 2018). The breakdown of marital union has adverse impact on the partners. It is possible that partners would experience depression, loneliness, isolation, low self-esteem, and financial constraints. The children from such a broken families would also experience emotional, social and psychological turmoil (Soltani, 2015).

The contribution of personality difference among married partners may hardly be refuted. Personality traits of married partners influence marital happiness. Compatibility in personality traits of married partners enhances marital happiness. Partners whose personality traits are not compatible have high possibility of constant conflicts and experience of dissatisfaction in marital union, and chances of divorce and separation are high in such relations (Engel et al, 2002). There has been rising divorce and separation cases which are indicators of marital distress among the married people in Kenya (Benoit, 2019).

The "Big Five" personality theory maintains that, there are five main domains that explain differences within an individual. The behavior and personality of an individual is predicted by use of the scores obtained from the Big Five questionnaire. According to the Five Factor Model, personality of an individual consists of five components which include conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience and extraversion (Taylor, 2020). Conscientiousness: Conscientious people have the following characteristics: They are self-disciplined. (Sayehmiri, Kareem, et al, 2020). They have sense of duty and never careless in their undertakings. They are task focused and orderly (Soto & Jackson 2020). They are competent and efficient. They are detail oriented. They are motivated by desire to achieve their goals. Conscientious people are not impulsive (John & Srivastava,

1999). With regards to agreeableness, this is the disposition for peacefulness. People who have high score of agreeableness have the following characteristics: They have selfless concern for the well-being of others and believe the best about others. They are able to understand and share the feelings of others hence empathetic. They are caring and honest in their dealing with others. They are kind, generous and ready to forgive (John & Srivastava, 1999). They are polite and readily cooperate with others in any task (Soto & Jackson 2020). They are always ready to help out and are straightforward. . They easily comply and are not proud (John & Srivastava). Opposite of agreeableness is antagonism. Antagonistic people have characteristics that are socially unpleasant.

According to Widiger & Oltmanns (2017), Neuroticism is characterized by negative emotions. People with high scores in neuroticism have the following characteristics: They are always anxious and tense because they respond poorly to environmental stress. They have mood swings. They experience depression and are hostile. They are self-conscious and shy. They have low self-esteem because they lack self-confidence. They feel vulnerable and insecure. Neuroticism disposes clients to health conditions such as anxiety, mood, eating disorders, occupational failure, effects to immune system among others. Openness is one of the big five personality traits. Openness is characterized by sense of curiosity about others and the world. Individuals with high scores in openness have the following traits: They are curious and enjoy exploring new horizons. They have broad range of interests. They are sensitive to art and beauty. They are creative and have good imagination. They prefer alternative experience or approach than normal routine (Soto & Jackson, 2020). There is also extraversion. Extraversion is the orientation of a person's interests and energies towards the outer world of people and things rather than enclosure to inner personal experiences (APA). Extravert people have the following characteristics: They are outgoing and easy to make friends and enjoy company of others. They are social and friendly to everyone. They seek excitement and adventure. They are assertive and have confidence to speak their mind. They have much emotional energy to express themselves (APA, 2014).

METHODS

The study was carried out in Kilungu Deanery. It is one of the Deaneries in the Catholic Diocese of Machakos in Makueni County. Kilungu Deanery is located in the eastern part of Kenya, around 95 km South-East of Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. The Deanery is comprised of three wards namely, Kiima Kiu / Kalanzoni, Mukaa and Kasikeu, and eight catholic parishes which include Kilungu parish, Wautu parish, Kasikeu parish, Sultan Hamud parish, Kiongwani parish, Uvete Parish, Kyale parish and Nguluni parish. All the parishes are within Kilome constituency. The sample size for this study was 178, determined by Yamane's formula. Participants were selected using simple random sampling method.

Measures

The Big Five Inventory

The Big Five Inventory is a 44-item questionnaire which is based on 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (John, Donahue & Kentle, 1991). It was developed by John and Srivastava (1999). It is used to assess the Big Five Personality Domains which include Neuroticism, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Openness. The 44-item inventory measure an individual on the Big Five Factors of personality. Each of the factors is divided further into personality facets. John and Srivastava (1999), provided the explanation for the Big Five Personality facet. The personality facets for Extraversion are sociability, Assertiveness, energetic, adventurous, enthusiastic and outgoing. Personality facets for Agreeableness include, forgiving, straightforwardness, warmth, compliance, modest, sympathetic. Personality facets for Conscientiousness are competence, organized, dutifulness, thorough, self-disciplined, not impulsive. Neuroticism has the following personality facets, tension, irritable, depression, shy, moody, vulnerability. Personality facets for openness include curiosity, imaginative, artistic, wide interests, excitable and unconventional.

The Big Five Inventory questionnaire is used as guide to discover a person's personality traits according to the research of McCrae and Costa (1995). Each of the statement is read, and the person circles the score that most accurately indicates the extent to which the client agrees or disagrees with the statement. Scores for the reverse

score questions have to be obtained before working out scores for each factor. To calculate a person's average score, the total scores of all the five factors are obtained, then divided by 5. To work out if a person is high, average or low in each factor, the scores of each factor are compared to the average score. If a person scores 28 for extraversion and the average score for the same factor is 32, then the person is average in extraversion. The sketch of personality profile is obtained by, writing in a column the scores for each factor with indication of H (to indicate high), A (to indicate average) or L (to indicate low). Through the scores obtained in each factor, the person is able to understand his or her personality better. Married partners are able to assess the level of their compatibility by comparing their scores.

ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale Items.

The ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (Fowers and Olson, 1993) originated from the ENRICH Inventory (Fowers and Olson, 1989). It is a questionnaire composed of 125 items with 14 scales that include idealistic distortion, marital satisfaction, personality aspects, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and parenting, family and friends, equative roles, religious orientation, marital cohesion and marital adjustment. Fowers and Olson (1993) developed a brief version which is easy to apply (Ferrao et al. 2019). The current study is focused on the shortened version of ENRICH Marital Satisfaction scale, a 15- item ENRICH tool used to assess marital satisfaction among married partners through two dimensions: The marital satisfaction dimension, which has 10 items that explore several aspects that affect marital satisfaction; and Idealistic distortion dimension (ID), which has other 5 items (Nunes et al. 2022). The 15 items are answered on five-point scale whose scoring key is; Strongly disagree, moderately disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Moderately agree and Strongly agree.

The two dimensions are included: Marital satisfaction (MS) e.g “I am not happy about our communication and feel my partner does not understand me”, and Idealized distortion (ID) e.g “Our relationship is a perfect success”. Scoring is carried out by calculating the sum of the items, and reversing the values of items 2, 5, 8, 9, 12, and 14. The total score is obtained by using the following formula: $EMS = MS - [(MS) \times (\text{correlation between MS and ID})^2 \times (ID \times 0.01)]$. Higher scores represent high levels of marital satisfaction (Fowers and Olson, 1993). The following ethical requirements were adhered to by the researcher during the period of data collection

Permission: The researcher obtained proper permission from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, a memorandum of understanding signed between JRS and the researcher, and a research permit from NACOSTI to certify the authenticity of the researched and approval to collect data from respondents.

Informed Consent: The respondents were briefed by the researcher about the purpose, nature, data collection methods, and the extent of the research before commencing the research. Upon the agreement of respondents to partake in the study, the informed consent was obtained by each of them by appending their signatures in the consent form as indicated in Appendix 1

Harm and Risk: Security of respondents was the first priority. The researcher ensured that the respondents were free from any legal, physical or psychological harm during the period of data collection. The respondents freely accepted to answer the questionnaire. They were secure in church ground and not exposed to any physical danger. The respondents were happy to provide their responses and never coerced at all, providing psychological security.

Privacy, Confidentiality, and Anonymity: The privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were maintained, by ensuring that no identifying character of the respondents was included in the return questionnaires.

Voluntary Participation: The respondents who responded are the only one's who volunteered and accepted to participate in the study. They were allowed to participate in the study after signing the informed consent form. There was no inducement of any nature either monetary or any motivation to participating respondents.

Debriefing: Debriefing was done before the respondents begun to respond to questionnaires, and immediately after completion of the research. This was conducted by the researcher, and the research assistant.

RESULTS

Average years in marriage

The descriptive statistics for the "Years in Marriage Together" as shown in table 1, variable within the study sample reveal that the mean number of years that participants had been married together was 23.77 years, with a standard deviation of 13.438 years. The sample size for this variable was 132, with 46 missing values. The minimum number of years in marriage was 1, and the maximum was 62 years. The mean value suggests that, on average, the participants had been married for a significant period, while the relatively large standard deviation indicates a wide range in the number of years the participants had been married. The different experiences in married life of the respondents which was determined by their different stages in married life was important in assessment of marital satisfaction.

Table 1. Average years in marriage

| | | |
|----------------|---------|-----|
| N | Valid | 132 |
| | Missing | 46 |
| Mean | 23.77 | |
| Std. Deviation | 13.438 | |
| Minimum | 1 | |
| Maximum | 62 | |

Prevalence of the Big Five Personality Traits

Table 2. presents the descriptive statistics for the Big Five personality traits measured in the study. The sample size (N) ranged from 177 to 178, with no more than 1 missing value for any given trait. The mean score for Extraversion was 3.33 (SD = 0.57), for Agreeableness was 3.67 (SD = 0.69), for Conscientiousness was 3.78 (SD = 0.73), for Neuroticism was 2.73 (SD = 0.63), and for Openness was 3.54 (SD = 0.43). The minimum and maximum values for each trait were as follows: Extraversion (2.00 - 4.75), Agreeableness (2.22 - 5.00), Conscientiousness (2.00 - 5.00), Neuroticism (1.00 - 4.50), and Openness (2.50 - 4.80).

Table 2. The Prevalence of the Big Five Personality Traits

| | | Extraversion mean | Agreeableness mean | Conscientiousness mean | Neuroticism mean | Openness mean |
|----------------|---------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| N | Valid | 178 | 178 | 177 | 177 | 178 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Mean | 3.3251 | | 3.6729 | 3.7772 | 2.7295 | 3.5371 |
| Std. Deviation | .57249 | | .68735 | .72798 | .62842 | .42979 |
| Minimum | 2.00 | | 2.22 | 2.00 | 1.00 | 2.50 |
| Maximum | 4.75 | | 5.00 | 5.00 | 4.50 | 4.80 |

The mean scores suggest that, on average, the participants scored relatively high on Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Openness, moderate on Extraversion, and lower on Neuroticism. The standard deviations indicate a reasonable spread of scores for each trait. The given scores of the respondents are indication of relatively high levels of marital satisfaction among the participants. High scores in Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Openness and Extraversion are associated with high level of marital satisfaction. Low levels on

Neuroticism is also an indication of high level of marital satisfaction.

Correlation between the Big Five Personality Traits and the Subscales of Marital Satisfaction

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for the subscales of marital satisfaction. For the Marital Satisfaction scale, the mean score was 3.86 (SD = 0.68), with a minimum of 1.78 and a maximum of 5.00. For the Idealistic Distortion scale, the mean score was 3.67 (SD = 0.66), with a minimum of 1.60 and a maximum of 5.00. For the Marital Dissatisfaction scale, the mean score was 3.09 (SD = 0.84), with a minimum of 1.00 and a maximum of 5.00. The total number of participants was 178, with 1 missing value for the Marital Dissatisfaction scale. The result for descriptive statistics as given above provide additional insights on the status of marital satisfaction among the respondent.

Table 3. Subscales of Marital Satisfaction

| | | Marital Satisfaction | Idealistic Distortion scale | Marital dissatisfaction |
|----------------|---------|----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| N | Valid | 178 | 178 | 177 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Mean | | 3.8558 | 3.6652 | 3.0932 |
| Std. Deviation | | .67505 | .65856 | .83576 |
| Minimum | | 1.78 | 1.60 | 1.00 |
| Maximum | | 5.00 | 5.00 | 5.00 |

Although the mean level of marital satisfaction at 3.86, and idealistic Distortation at 3.67 are encouraging, the minimum score of 1.78 for marital satisfaction and 1.60 for idealistic Distortation are indication of respondents with serious marital relationship concerns. The level of marital dissatisfaction which has mean of 3.09, with minimum score of 1 is indication of strained marital relationship some respondents.

Table 4. Correlation between the Big Five Personality Traits and the Subscales of Marital Satisfaction

| | | Extravers ion mean | Agreeable ness mean | Conscientiou sness mean | Neurotici sm mean | Openn ess mean | Idealist ic Distorti on scale | Marital Satisfact ion | Marital dissatisfac tion |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Extraversion mean | Pearson Correlat ion | 1 | .212** | .238** | -.115 | .129 | .148* | .128 | .028 |
| | Sig. (2- tailed) | | .004 | .001 | .129 | .086 | .049 | .087 | .714 |
| | N | 178 | 178 | 177 | 177 | 178 | 178 | 178 | 177 |
| Agreeablenes s mean | Pearson Correlat ion | .212** | 1 | .664** | -.437** | .269** | .377** | .558** | -.488** |
| | Sig. (2- tailed) | .004 | | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 178 | 178 | 177 | 177 | 178 | 178 | 178 | 177 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| Conscientiousness mean | Pearson Correlation | .238** | .664** | 1 | -.475** | .268** | .316** | .462** | -.522** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .001 | .000 | | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 177 | 177 | 177 | 176 | 177 | 177 | 177 | 176 |
| Neuroticism mean | Pearson Correlation | -.115 | -.437** | -.475** | 1 | .050 | -.171* | -.283** | .363** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .129 | .000 | .000 | | .507 | .023 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 177 | 177 | 176 | 177 | 177 | 177 | 177 | 176 |
| Openness mean | Pearson Correlation | .129 | .269** | .268** | .050 | 1 | .218** | .252** | -.083 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .086 | .000 | .000 | .507 | | .003 | .001 | .274 |
| | N | 178 | 178 | 177 | 177 | 178 | 178 | 178 | 177 |
| Idealistic Distortion scale | Pearson Correlation | .148* | .377** | .316** | -.171* | .218** | 1 | .772** | -.112 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .049 | .000 | .000 | .023 | .003 | | .000 | .138 |
| | N | 178 | 178 | 177 | 177 | 178 | 178 | 178 | 177 |
| Marital Satisfaction | Pearson Correlation | .128 | .558** | .462** | -.283** | .252** | .772** | 1 | -.329** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .087 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .001 | .000 | | .000 |
| | N | 178 | 178 | 177 | 177 | 178 | 178 | 178 | 177 |
| Marital dissatisfaction | Pearson Correlation | .028 | -.488** | -.522** | .363** | -.083 | -.112 | -.329** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .714 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .274 | .138 | .000 | |
| | N | 177 | 177 | 176 | 176 | 177 | 177 | 177 | 177 |

The correlation matrix as depicted in table 4, presents the relationships between the Big Five personality traits and the subscales of marital satisfaction. Extraversion was positively correlated with the Idealistic Distortion scale ($r = .148, p = .049$) but not significantly correlated with Marital Satisfaction ($r = .128, p = .087$) or Marital Dissatisfaction ($r = .028, p = .714$). Agreeableness was positively correlated with the Idealistic Distortion scale ($r = .377, p < .001$), Marital Satisfaction ($r = .558, p < .001$), and negatively correlated with Marital Dissatisfaction ($r = -.488, p < .001$). Conscientiousness was positively correlated with the Idealistic Distortion scale ($r = .316, p < .001$), Marital Satisfaction ($r = .462, p < .001$), and negatively correlated with Marital Dissatisfaction ($r = -.522, p < .001$). Neuroticism was negatively correlated with the Idealistic Distortion scale ($r = -.171, p = .023$), Marital Satisfaction ($r = -.283, p < .001$), and positively correlated with Marital Dissatisfaction ($r = .363, p < .001$). Openness was positively correlated with the Idealistic Distortion scale ($r = .218, p = .003$) and Marital Satisfaction ($r = .252, p = .001$), but not significantly correlated with Marital Dissatisfaction ($r = -.083, p = .274$). The total number of participants included in the analyses ranged from 176 to 178, with some missing values. The correlation matrix is the summary of results of the research paper. Respondents with high scores in Neuroticism have strained marital relationship, hence marital dissatisfaction. Respondents with high scores in openness enjoy marital satisfaction in their married life.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the influence of Big Five personality traits on marital satisfaction among couples in Kilungu Deanery, Catholic Diocese of Machakos, Makueni County. The findings revealed that personality traits significantly affect marital satisfaction. Specifically, neuroticism was negatively correlated with satisfaction, indicating that couples exhibiting higher levels of neuroticism experienced diminished marital fulfillment. Conversely, agreeableness and conscientiousness demonstrated a strong positive correlation with marital satisfaction, suggesting that couples who scored high on these traits tended to enjoy more fulfilling marriages. Extraversion and openness also contributed to marital satisfaction, albeit to a lesser extent than

agreeableness and conscientiousness.

These findings underscore the critical role that personality plays in shaping relationship dynamics and marital satisfaction. Neuroticism, characterized by emotional instability, appears to significantly contribute to dissatisfaction within relationships. Individuals high in neuroticism often exhibit negative emotional states, such as anxiety, mood swings, and irritability, which can exacerbate conflicts and diminish relationship quality. In contrast, traits such as agreeableness and conscientiousness are associated with positive interpersonal behaviors, including empathy, cooperation, and responsibility, all of which foster a harmonious marital relationship. Thus, the results reaffirm that personality traits can either fortify or strain a marriage, contingent upon the nature of the trait in question.

The robust positive correlation between conscientiousness and marital satisfaction particularly highlights the importance of reliability and commitment within marital relationships. Partners who score high in conscientiousness tend to be organized, responsible, and dependable—qualities that promote mutual trust and satisfaction. Furthermore, agreeableness facilitates effective communication and conflict resolution; agreeable individuals are typically more cooperative and empathetic, making it easier for couples to navigate the complexities inherent in married life.

Comparison with Other Studies

When juxtaposing these findings with existing literature, a clear consistency emerges. Sayehmiri et al. (2020) similarly documented that couples exhibiting high levels of neuroticism experience lower marital satisfaction, while those with elevated levels of conscientiousness and agreeableness report greater satisfaction. This parallel reinforces the notion that neuroticism is detrimental to marital quality. However, it is noteworthy that Sayehmiri's research focused on Iranian couples, while the current study centers on Kenyan couples, thereby highlighting the cross-cultural relevance of personality traits in marital satisfaction.

Moreover, the longitudinal study conducted by O'Meara and South (2019) in the United States found that fluctuations in neuroticism over time negatively impacted marital satisfaction, echoing the present study's

findings regarding the harmful effects of this trait. Their research extends the discourse by elucidating the dynamic, evolving nature of personality traits within the context of marriage, suggesting that ongoing fluctuations in neuroticism can perpetually affect marital satisfaction. In contrast, our study primarily examined static trait levels, indicating a pressing need for further research on the temporal dynamics of personality traits in Kenyan marriages.

Additionally, Drahman and Yusof (2018) confirmed the significant relationship between personality types and marital satisfaction in Malaysia, particularly within urban settings. This aligns with the current study's findings regarding the importance of openness and extraversion in fostering marital satisfaction, albeit with varying degrees of influence. Their investigation into urban, suburban, and rural differences introduces a layer of complexity not addressed in the current study, suggesting that future research should explore regional variations within Kenya to determine if geographical context influences the impact of personality traits on marital satisfaction.

Theoretical Implications

The findings contribute significantly to the existing body of literature on the Big Five personality traits, reinforcing their relevance in understanding marital dynamics. They support theoretical frameworks that link personality to relationship outcomes, particularly the dyadic adjustment theory, which posits that compatibility in personality traits leads to greater marital satisfaction. This study strengthens the assertion that traits such as agreeableness and conscientiousness are foundational to positive relationship outcomes, while neuroticism serves as a barrier to relationship satisfaction.

Furthermore, this research highlights the bidirectional relationship between personality and marital satisfaction. While personality traits influence relationship quality, it is equally plausible that the quality of the marital relationship influences the development or exacerbation of certain traits, particularly neuroticism. This aligns with the reciprocal determinism theory, which posits that behavior, environment, and personal factors, such as personality traits, mutually influence one another. Thus, the findings suggest that personality traits not only predict marital satisfaction but are also shaped by the marital context itself.

Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, the results have significant implications for marital counseling and relationship interventions. Understanding the role of personality traits in marital satisfaction can enable counselors to tailor interventions to meet the specific needs of couples. For instance, couples in which one or both partners exhibit high levels of neuroticism may benefit from interventions that focus on emotional regulation, stress management, and conflict resolution strategies. Additionally, enhancing traits such as conscientiousness and agreeableness through targeted communication training or behavioral exercises could lead to improved relationship outcomes.

Marriage preparation programs could also incorporate personality assessments to facilitate couples' understanding of their own and their partner's traits, promoting greater awareness of how these traits may impact their relationship. By fostering an understanding of personality differences, couples can develop more effective coping mechanisms, ultimately leading to more stable and satisfying marriages.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The use of a correlational research design restricts the ability to establish causal relationships, meaning that while a relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction is observed, definitive conclusions regarding causation cannot be drawn. Furthermore, the sample was confined to couples from a specific deanery in Kenya, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or cultural contexts.

Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the study does not capture changes in personality traits or marital satisfaction over time. As noted in O'Meara and South's (2019) longitudinal study, personality traits can evolve, and these changes can significantly impact marital satisfaction. Future research should consider a longitudinal

design to better understand the dynamic nature of personality and its long-term effects on marriage.

Future studies should explore the role of personality traits in marital satisfaction across diverse regions of Kenya to assess whether regional or cultural factors influence these relationships. Moreover, there is a pressing need for longitudinal research to examine how personality traits evolve over time and how these changes impact marital satisfaction within the Kenyan context. Further investigations could also delve into the influence of external factors such as socioeconomic status, education, and employment on the relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction. Such research would provide a more holistic understanding of the multifaceted factors contributing to marital quality. Finally, exploring the interaction between personality traits and other relational factors, such as communication patterns and conflict resolution strategies, could yield deeper insights into enhancing marital satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study underscores the significant role that Big Five personality traits play in marital satisfaction among couples in Kilungu Deanery, Makueni County. Traits such as neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness emerged as key determinants of marital satisfaction, highlighting the importance of personality compatibility in fostering successful marriages. While the study contributes valuable insights into the understanding of marital dynamics, it also raises critical questions regarding the long-term effects of personality traits on marriage, thereby suggesting the necessity for continued research in this area.

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