

Differentiation of Self and Divorce: Perceptions of Adults in Kisumu East Constituency

John Baptist Ssemugabi

Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology, Department of Psychology, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Maseno University

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100700251>

Received: 10 July 2026; Accepted: 15 July 2026; Published: 29 July 2026

ABSTRACT

In Kenya, national divorce rates rose from 10.5% in 2015 to 17.7% in 2020. The recent national statistics recorded 1,341,217 registered marriages, with 9.3% of women aged 15–49 years divorced or separated. Furthermore, the latest census data documented 212,972 total divorce cases, including 1,304 (0.6%) in Kisumu East Constituency. Bowen's concept of differentiation of self explains how marital relationships, emotional processes, and divorce reflect human functioning within emotional units. However, gaps persist regarding how adults in Kisumu East Constituency perceive this role. Consequently, this study examined adults' perceptions of how differentiation of self influences divorce in Kisumu East Constituency, focusing on assessing the role of intellectual functioning in marital dissolution. Guided by Bowen's concept of differentiation of self, Yamane's formula, and a quantitative survey design, the study targeted 465,624 adults in Kisumu East Constituency, chosen for its high population density and divorce rates within Kisumu County. Simple random sampling yielded 156 participants (78 females, 78 males). Quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive data were gathered using a questionnaire, analysed using IBM SPSS (Version 33), and presented in summary tables. The instrument was validated by experts, pilot-tested ($n = 16$), and demonstrated strong reliability ($r = .78$; $\alpha \approx .80$). Descriptive statistics served as the interpretative framework. Subscale standard deviations ranging between 1.11 and 1.63 confirmed satisfactory data variability. The findings revealed that participants perceived the differentiation of self as a substantial factor influencing divorce rates in the constituency. This study offers crucial empirical data, recommending that couples, counsellors, and scholars integrate interpersonal functioning with the principles of differentiation of self.

Keywords: Bowen family systems theory, differentiation of self, divorce, quantitative survey, Kisumu East Constituency

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Divorce is the termination of a marriage, restoring the legal capacity of both individuals to enter a new union (Bélanger & Ward, 2019; Marriage Act, 2014; Matrimonial Causes Act, 2012). This transition involves diverse emotional and practical adjustments, beginning with the initial intention to separate and concluding with the court's final decree (Butler et al., 2003; Elikaei, 2023; Ward & Bélanger, 2011). The formal dissolution of a marriage is not a single event but a process that unfolds over time in a series of structured and interrelated stages (Bohannon, 1970; Wiseman, 1975).

According to Bowen (1976), couples establish an interdependent network of interactions shaped by their respective levels of differentiation of self. However, when divorce occurs, it disrupts these interlocking relationships (Elikaei, 2023; Guttman, 1993; Ward & Bélanger, 2011). Kerr and Bowen (1988) argued that this marital dissolution was a disorder of the emotional system, typically rooted in the undifferentiation of self. This personal undifferentiation impeded emotional processes, relationships, routines, tasks, assumptions, and roles (Bowen, 1978). In his theoretical framework, Bowen asserted that a severe lack of differentiation culminated in

emotional divorce, given that low differentiation was characterised by major deficits in intellectual functioning, autonomy, and the development of a solid self. This emotional instability bred high levels of fusion and routine marital crises (Aseka et al., 2021; Beal, 1998; Bowen, 1978; Moland, 2011), which bitter court battles often exacerbated (Gilbert, 2006; Ward & Bélanger, 2011).

In the United States, approximately half of first marriages ended in divorce (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006; Markman et al., 2010). Beal (1998) studied child-focused divorce in the United States and linked marital breakdown to Bowen's notion of differentiation. Clarke-Stewart and Brentano (2006) researched the causes and consequences of divorce in the United States, indicating that emotional dysfunction was a major cause of marital dissolution. Similarly, Rosenberg (2018) and Peluso (2019) investigated rising divorce trends in the United States and concluded that infidelity represented a major cause. In Canada, Bélanger and Ward (2019) studied marriage dissolution across multiple cohorts, focusing on the experience of divorce, and identified the history, causes, stages, crises, and impact of divorce on children. While these studies offered valuable data and insights on marital dissolution in the United States and Canada, their methodologies omitted any direct assessment of the specific context of Kisumu East Constituency.

Comparable marital disruptions were evident across the African continent. Reniers (2003) studied divorce and marriage in Malawi using a sample of 1,342 ever-married women and reported that 4.0% of women aged between 20 and 24 years and 7.5% of women aged between 45 and 49 years were divorced. In 2010, South Africa registered 170,826 civil marriages, with 22,936 ending in divorce (Statistics South Africa, 2010). Furthermore, Smith-Greenaway and Clark (2017) examined the effects of divorce in 31 Sub-Saharan African countries using a sample of 290 subnational regions and concluded that children with divorced parents faced significant health disadvantages. Similarly, van de Walle (2017) analysed marital histories across 29 African countries and reported divorce rates of 3.0% in West Africa, 6.8% in Central Africa, 7.5% in East Africa, 6.7% in Southern Africa, and 5.5% for the continent. More recently, Ngunjiri (2021a, 2021b) assessed divorce in Africa across five countries, namely, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, and Malawi. Ngunjiri used an analytical cross-sectional design with a sample of 1,046 participants drawn through cluster random sampling. The recorded divorce rate was 27.2%, indicating skyrocketing rates across Africa among the study participants.

A similar situation regarding shifting family dynamics and rising divorce rates existed in Kenya. Although the Kenyan legal framework protects marriage and designates the family unit as a vital, organic component of society, statutory law still allows a spouse to petition for divorce after three years of marriage. However, courts may permit earlier filings in cases of exceptional hardship (*Constitution of Kenya*, 2010; *Marriage Act*, 2014). Additionally, the *Marriage (Amendment) Bill* (2023) aims to restructure these fault-based provisions by introducing Section 75A, which allows a no-fault option based on mutual consent. Couples in Kenya are permitted to divorce based on the formal legal procedures and grounds outlined in the *Marriage Act* (2014).

The *Kenya Vital Statistics Report 2024*, compiled by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) in collaboration with the Civil Registration Services, the Office of the Attorney General, and the Department of Justice, indicated a total of 1,341,217 registered marriages, whereas 9.3% of women aged between 15 and 49 years were divorced or separated (KNBS, 2025). These records aligned with the most recent national census data, which showed 212,972 formal divorce cases and 355,018 separated spouses nationwide (KNBS, 2019). In addition, macro-level longitudinal records showed a substantial increase in marital disruptions, with national divorce rates rising from 10.5% in 2015 to 17.7% in 2020 (Koech, 2020). By the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021, more than 2,000 cases were expected to be filed in court (Koech, 2020; Mwangi, 2021; *The Daily Post*, 2020). Furthermore, a study by Daystar University in 2015 among 1,200 Kenyan couples across 46 counties revealed that 42.0% of couples had divorced by their fifth anniversary (Koech, 2020; Mswati, 2019; Mwangi, 2021). To address these localised marital disruptions, this study investigated adults' perceptions of the role of Bowen's concept of differentiation of self, operationalised as intellectual functioning, in divorce in Kisumu East Constituency.

Differentiation of self was defined as a person's ability to balance affective and cognitive functioning within an emotional unit (Bowen, 1978). Bowen (1976) asserted that high differentiation fostered emotional maturity,

enhanced intellectual capacity, cultivated a solid self, built autonomy, and correlated with a lower propensity for divorce. Conversely, low differentiation resulted in spousal dysfunction that exacerbated emotional distress and other life challenges, thereby increasing the likelihood of divorce (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Skowron et al., 2014). Accordingly, Kerr and Bowen (1988) indicated that differentiation separated emotional functioning from objective logic and thus facilitated rational thought and reasoning. Differentiation explained the reasons and mechanisms behind the variability of human behaviour and functioning across a shared continuum (Titelman, 2014). Furthermore, it described how individuals assimilated and balanced affective and mental processes, as well as the fusing of self with others in emotionally interlocking interactions (Frost, 2014). Skowron et al. (2014) defined Bowen's concept of differentiation as the ability to proficiently regulate emotions, stress, intimacy, and autonomy. Differentiation integrated and delineated conflicting but fundamental impulses, such as cognition and emotion, individuality, and togetherness (Metcalf, 2011; Moral et al., 2021). Skowron (2015) referred to differentiation as the ability to maintain mental clarity in the face of intense emotions, whereas Fromme (2011) defined it as a level of personal autonomy.

Numerous studies regarding Bowen's concept of differentiation demonstrated substantial differences in individual functioning among spouses. Recent research in the Middle East and online linked lower differentiation to adverse psychological adaptations, emotional problems, poor marital expectations, co-parenting conflicts, and spousal divorce (Amirahmadi et al., 2025; Elikaei, 2023; Moral et al., 2021). In the United States, Skowron and Friedlander (1998), Skowron and Schmitt (2003), and Skowron et al. (2014) developed and validated iterations of the Differentiation of Self Inventory (DSI), which indicated that lower scores of differentiation of self were associated with increased emotional crises and dysfunctional marital duties, whereas high differentiation was associated with emotional regulation, intellectual functioning, excellent health, marital satisfaction, quality relationships, parenting quality, adolescent quality, and attachment quality. Additionally, Beal (1998) identified a correlation between Bowen's concept of differentiation and child-focused divorce trends among couples, suggesting that low differentiation heightened the propensity for divorce. In a study conducted by Harrison (2011) on the relationship between Bowen's notion of differentiation and learning outcomes, a well-differentiated person achieved superior results. In Africa, Nel (2011) linked Bowen's idea of differentiation to the Zulu cultural philosophy of *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, which highlighted the necessity of social membership and social connections.

Despite these empirical findings, notable methodological and geographical gaps persisted within the existing scholarly literature. Recent studies conducted in the Middle East were limited to psychological counselling centres in Nowshahr and Chalus, Iran, and the Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz, Iran. They sampled only female university students and counselling clients, relied on convenience sampling, and lacked gender balance, thereby obscuring how these dynamics operate across more diverse adult life circumstances (Amirahmadi et al., 2025; Elikaei, 2023). Furthermore, the extensive psychometric validations of the DSI relied heavily on self-report instruments susceptible to response bias, whereas Nel's (2011) exploration of differentiation was limited to the Zulu cultural philosophy of *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* in South Africa, and its methodology was simply implied, restricting the clarity of its procedures and techniques. In addition, none of these investigations had contextualised marital dissolution or operationalised Bowen's concept of differentiation specifically as intellectual functioning in Kisumu East Constituency. These combined gaps underscored the necessity of the current study.

Statement of the Problem

The rising divorce rate presents major obstacles to all legally recognised forms of marriage in Kenya. This trend disrupts the interconnected structure of marriage and family life, leading to severe emotional, legal, economic, co-parental, community, and psychological crises. The latest national statistics of registered marriages compiled in the *Kenya Vital Statistics Report 2024* by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2025) indicated a total of 1,341,217 registered marriages, whereas 9.3% of women aged between 15 and 49 years nationwide were divorced or separated (pp. 8, 23). Furthermore, the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census data from KNBS (2019) recorded 212,972 total divorce cases, with 1,304 (0.6%) occurring in Kisumu East Constituency. Nationally, the proportion of divorce cases increased from 10.5% in 2015 to 17.7% in 2020, whereas the number

of annual petitions rose from 1,009 in 2018 to approximately 1,108 in 2019 (Koech, 2020). As a result, the number of new divorce petitions filed across the country in 2020 was between 1,300 and 1,500 (Koech, 2020). Despite these escalating trends, there is a notable lack of research focusing on how adults in Kisumu East Constituency perceive the role of Bowen's concept of differentiation of self in divorce, particularly when operationalised as intellectual functioning. International studies have associated differentiation with divorce and variations in human behaviour. However, these findings have not been contextualised for Kisumu East Constituency, nor have they been operationalised as intellectual functioning in accordance with the current research objective.

Objectives of the Study

The subsequent general objective guided the framework of this study: to assess adults' perceptions of the role of differentiation of self in divorce in Kisumu East Constituency.

To achieve this, the research was directed by the following specific objective: to analyse adults' perceptions of the role of intellectual functioning in divorce in Kisumu East Constituency.

Significance of the Study

The current research may assist families, divorcees, authorities, counsellors, researchers, and other stakeholders in Kisumu East Constituency and beyond in relating intellectual functioning to the thinking brain, which is responsible for logical and objective integration, contingent upon one's differentiation. Different levels of intellectual functioning correlate with different levels of human functioning. This helps assess the role of Bowen's notion of differentiation in divorce in Kisumu East Constituency.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bowen family systems theory, which Bowen clinically advanced between 1949 and 1975, guided the theoretical foundation of this study (Bowen, 1978; see also Brown, 1999; Butler, 2013). The theory comprises eight interlocking concepts: differentiation of self, triangles, nuclear family emotional process, family projection process, multigenerational transmission process, sibling position, societal emotional process, and emotional cutoff (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Bowen (1978) conceptualised the family as an emotional unit operating as a system of interlocking relationships, identifying the differentiation of self as the cornerstone of family emotional systems (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Within these dynamics, differentiation of self allows individuals to manage interpersonal anxiety and emotional pressures effectively (Noone & Papero, 2015; Titelman, 2014). This process enables individuals within an emotional unit to navigate, distinguish, and balance togetherness, individuality, affect, and cognition (Bowen, 1978; Corey, 2017; Metcalf, 2011). In addition, differentiation provides a theoretical scale for assessing human functioning along a continuum by evaluating interlocking relationships, automatic emotional processes, and intellectual functioning. It represents an innate property across all stages of life within individual and family emotional systems, regulating emotional closeness, distance, approval, and personal autonomy (Bowen, 1978; Titelman, 2014). Ultimately, differentiation establishes a solid self through self-definition and self-determination, which facilitates objective, logical, and goal-directed human functioning (Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

Bowen (1976) operationalised and rated differentiation on a continuum ranging from 0 to 100. Lower ratings on this continuum reflect direct observations of individuals experiencing significant emotional reactivity and distress, whereas higher scores indicate superior integration of logic and emotional autonomy (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). A well-differentiated person possesses the capacity to distinguish emotional reactivity from cognitive logic, allowing the individual to balance the drives for individuality and togetherness without experiencing systemic instability (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Driven by emotional autonomy, well-differentiated individuals maintain stability within relational units. In contrast, undifferentiated individuals are driven by automatic emotional responses and an excessive need for togetherness, which frequently breeds relational crises, acute dysfunction, and marital breakdown (Bowen, 1978; Nel, 2011).

In this study, Bowen's concept of differentiation of self was operationalised specifically through the dimension of intellectual functioning to evaluate adults' perceptions of divorce in Kisumu East Constituency. Intellectual functioning reflects an individual's ability to maintain mental clarity, employ logical reasoning, and resist automatic emotional reactivity during acute marital stress (Skowron, 2015). By placing spousal dynamics along Bowen's continuum, this theoretical framework examines how adults perceive intellectual functioning as a protective or risk factor in marital stability and dissolution within the local cultural context.

Conceptually and practically, complete differentiation remains unattainable, as individuals continuously strive for relational connections and autonomous growth throughout life (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Bowen (1978) acknowledged the absence of empirical proof for his hypothetical scale of differentiation, indicating that only a limited number of individuals scored above 65, whereas most of the population scored below 50. Furthermore, high chronic stress impedes individuals from maintaining high scores on the scale. The foundational premises of Bowen family systems theory, particularly the differentiation of self, developed primarily within United States clinical settings, did not directly examine how adults in Kisumu East Constituency perceived these dynamics. Consequently, this theoretical framework bridges Bowen's scale of differentiation, specifically as intellectual functioning, with local empirical realities to explain adults' perceptions of divorce in Kisumu East Constituency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Bowen's (1978) differentiation of self framework, intellectual functioning enables an individual to act based on objectivity and logical reasoning amidst intense emotional situations within anxious emotional units. Bowen asserted that individuals exhibiting high intellectual functioning tend to possess strong convictions, adaptability, emotional autonomy, and goal orientation, leading to greater order and success in life. Furthermore, Bowen (1978) conceptualised this intellectual functioning as a cognitive function of the brain responsible for intellect, reasoning, reflection, logic, knowing, understanding, analysis, and the communication of complex ideas (see also Frost, 2014; Titelman, 2014). It represents the thinking brain that drives a rational organism towards objective, logical, and verifiable facts, unflooded by emotional reactivity and fusion (Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Papero, 2014).

In the broader field of intelligence studies, intellectual functioning entails mental or cognitive abilities that support abstract and objective reasoning, understanding, and adaptation (American Psychological Association, 2009; Colman, 2003; VandenBos, 2015). In earlier work, Das (1986) defined intelligence as a full range of mental functions, whereas Legg and Hutter (2006) defined it as the successful attainment of desired results. This aligns with Dai and Sternberg (2004) and Matthews and Zeidner (2004), who asserted that intellectual functioning involves the integration of knowledge and its practical implementation. Scholars, including Ackerman and Kanfer (2004), Black and Grant (2014), and the American Psychiatric Association (2022), similarly characterised cognitive capability as a combination of general mental abilities for reasoning and adaptive behaviour in the surrounding environment. These definitions concur that intellectual functioning constitutes a cognitive ability involving reasoning and adaptation. However, these perspectives fail to specify how adults perceive the significance of intellectual functioning in divorce.

The current study adopts the definitions from the theoretical frameworks of Bowen (1978), Kerr and Bowen (1988), Papero (2014), and Titelman (2014) to define intellectual functioning as the cognitive process responsible for logical and objective integration, tailored to each individual's unique degree of differentiation. This definition affirms that differentiation is a key determinant of individual variation in intellectual functioning. Thus, marital distress and divorce can be observed through the direct interplay between differentiation and intellectual functioning on a single continuum (Elikaei, 2023; Moral et al., 2021).

Studies in psychology agree on individual differences in intellectual functioning but differ regarding the underlying rationale (Mayes, 2020; McGrew & Flanagan, 1998). Therefore, various theoretical models have been proposed. Bowen (1978) introduced the concept of differentiation of self, using a corresponding scale that ranged from 0 to 100. Lower scores on this scale were obtained from the direct observation of people with

complex clinical difficulties, normal people, and those exhibiting higher levels of functioning. By contrast, higher scores were hypothesised and correlated with higher levels of emotional maturity and psychological functioning. This state is characterised by intellectual functioning that facilitates objective logical processes in intense emotional fields and the ability to balance the life forces of togetherness and individuality within family emotional dynamics (Bowen, 1978; Corey, 2017; Papero, 2014).

Hebb's (1949) theory identified two components of intellectual functioning in the human brain, which he designated intelligence Part A and intelligence Part B. Part A represented the 'direct intellectual power' that supports reasoning and learning and is impaired by ageing and neurological incidents. Part B referred to the stored knowledge and skills acquired over a lifetime, which included routines and common problem-solving abilities. Researchers found that adults, even those who experienced neurological incidents, preserved this aspect well (Ackerman, 2013; Schneider & McGrew, 2012). Hebb's theory held that intellectual functioning relates to overall human functioning and varies from person to person. However, Hebb's theory focused primarily on intelligence quotient (IQ) tests and psychometrics. Consequently, the role of IQ in differentiation dynamics and the context of divorce was not studied.

Cattell's theory (1963) proposed that intelligence consists of two kinds: fluid intelligence (Gf) and crystallised intelligence (Gc). Gf pertains to reasoning and learning; it is strong in childhood but weakens in adulthood, whereas Gc is characterised by a range of acquired and stored knowledge and skills that depend on Gf's abilities and are well-preserved in adulthood (Ackerman, 2013; Kranzler & Floyd, 2013). Cattell asserted that variations in the extent and profundity of cognition across individuals are partially due to variances in Gf (Kranzler & Floyd, 2013; Schneider & McGrew, 2012). However, Cattell's theory was confined to IQ tests and psychometrics, and it never related the influence of Gf and Gc to differentiation or divorce.

The integrated Cattell-Horn-Carroll (CHC) theory, formalised by McGrew (1997), combined and modified earlier theories by Cattell, Horn, and Carroll to create a unified theoretical framework for cognitive abilities. This model includes processing speed (Gs), visual processing (Gv), and long-term storage and retrieval (Glr), which deals with long-term memory. The integrated theory states that in adulthood, Gf, Gs, and Gv decline, whereas Glr and Gc remain resilient at least up to 60 years (Ackerman, 2013; Flanagan et al., 2012; Schneider & McGrew, 2012). CHC theory supports variations in intellectual functioning, which in turn affect individuals' capabilities. However, the CHC theory relates only to IQ tests and their psychometrics. The constructs Gf, Gs, Gv, Glr, and Gc have not been applied to differentiation and the study of divorce.

Studies have examined how intellectual functioning influences human functioning. Bowen (1978) studied differentiation and its scale in the United States from 1949 to 1975 to explain variations in emotional maturity and human functioning along the same continuum. He found that more than half of the people were rated below 50, a few rated between 65 and 70, and none scored 100. Bowen concluded that complete differentiation of self is hypothetically rated at 100 on the scale, implying optimal levels of human functioning characterised by emotional self-regulation, a solid self, and intellectual functioning that resists emotional fusion within any emotional field. However, this grading framework was not examined in relation to divorce in Kisumu East Constituency. Furthermore, the research was confined to a few locations and families in the United States.

The Stanford-Binet study, now in its fifth edition at Stanford University in the United States, was standardised between 2001 and 2002 using a sample of 4,800 individuals ranging from 2 to over 85 years of age. The mean was set at 100, with a standard deviation of 15 points (Roid & Pomplun, 2012; Wasserman, 2012; Wasserman, 2013). The Stanford-Binet study of intelligence established different IQ standards and academic success benchmarks by age, but it did not examine its role in divorce or the differentiation of self.

David Wechsler developed the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) in the United States as a revision of the Wechsler-Bellevue test, created in 1939 to assess an adult's IQ using verbal and non-verbal questions. Wechsler broadened the definition of intelligence to include clinical assessments of psychiatric and neurological disorders, mental age concepts, children, and academic achievement (Ackerman, 2013; Drozdick et al., 2012; Smith, 2020). Wechsler discovered that some intelligence abilities, such as verbal comprehension, vocabulary,

and general information, were better maintained in adults, whereas others, such as short-term memory, arithmetic, perceptual speed, and spatial processing, were better demonstrated in children (Ackerman, 2013; Drozdick et al., 2012; Wasserman, 2012). The WAIS IQ studies support the concept of variations in intellectual functioning; however, they did not relate it to differentiation or divorce.

Another related study of intellectual functioning was the Cognitive Assessment System (CAS), developed by Das and Naglieri (1997, as cited in Wasserman, 2013). Its major focus was to assess cognitive processing among gender-balanced children and adolescents (Wasserman, 2012). The CAS battery successfully indicated that intellectual functioning varies from one person to another, but it targeted children and adolescents alone (Mayes, 2020). The CAS battery's focus on children and adolescents creates a significant gap in understanding adult intellectual functioning and its impact on broader life dynamics, such as differentiation of self and marital conflicts among couples (Kranzler & Floyd, 2013).

CONCLUSION

The preceding literature review highlights substantial empirical and theoretical research on intellectual functioning. However, these investigations have rarely been conducted within the Kenyan context, particularly in Kisumu East Constituency. This empirical gap warrants the current research, guided by Bowen's concept of differentiation of self, which posits that individuals within emotional units can effectively regulate their emotional processes (Bowen, 1978; Corey, 2017; Noone & Papero, 2015; Titelman, 2014).

METHODS

Research Design

A survey research design was implemented to evaluate adults' perceptions of Bowen's concept of differentiation within the context of divorce in Kisumu East Constituency. This design was cross-sectional, utilising questionnaires to generate quantitative, descriptive data that are generalisable to a larger population (Cohen et al., 2018). Variables were deductively derived from established theoretical themes and subjected to statistical analysis. This design systematically identifies the beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and behaviours of the target population (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Mills & Gay, 2019). Furthermore, the design employed a validated instrument, a standardised formula for determining sample size, and a standard statistical package to guarantee empirical objectivity and impartiality (Creswell, 2012).

Study Area

The research was carried out in Kisumu East Constituency, located within Kisumu County, Kenya. This constituency was established as a separate entity from Kisumu Town Constituency in 1997. Geographically, it is bordered to the south by Lake Victoria, to the west by Kisumu West Constituency, to the east by Nyando Constituency, to the north by Aldai Constituency, and to the north-east by Muhoroni Constituency. Recent national census data from KNBS (2019a, 2019c) recorded a total population of 220,997, comprising 108,304 males, 112,689 females, and 4 intersex individuals. Within this population, 137,776 individuals were in monogamous marriages, 19,166 in polygamous marriages, 15,667 were widowed, and 2,931 were separated.

Kisumu East Constituency has clear geographical boundaries and reported the highest population by marital status per county and district, totalling 465,624 people and 1,304 (0.2%) divorce cases. By comparison, Kisumu West Constituency recorded a total population of 144,474 people and 354 (0.2%) divorce cases, while Nyando Constituency reported a total population of 349,784 people and 835 (0.2%) divorce cases (KNBS, 2019a). A large population implies a higher frequency of social interactions, fostering dense networks of interlocking relationships and systemic anxieties that provide fertile grounds for emotional and psychological dynamics. The researcher measured these psychological constructs to assess the role of Bowen's concept of differentiation in divorce (Bowen, 1978).

Kisumu West Constituency was selected as the pilot study location, comprising 10% ($n = 16$) of the main study's sample size. This location was chosen because it shared similar demographic characteristics with Kisumu East Constituency regarding population distribution by sex and marital status across counties and sub-counties (Connelly, 2008; KNBS, 2019a, 2019c; Treece & Treece, 1982).

Study Population

The current study targeted a total of 465,624 adults, as reported in the most recent national census data on population by marital status across counties and sub-counties for Kisumu East Constituency (KNBS, 2019a).

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Yamane's (1967) formula was used to calculate a sample size of 156 participants, using the equation:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n is the sample size, N is the target population of 465,624, and e signifies the acceptable margin of error at 8% (0.08) with a confidence level of 95%. Scholars of research methodology and industry platforms recognise a margin of error of up to 8% as an acceptable upper limit in survey research designs targeting a 95% confidence level, particularly when operating with a sample size of approximately 156 respondents (Cohen, 1988; De Vaus, 2014; see also Appinio, 2025; LimeSurvey, 2024). The calculation proceeded as follows:

$$n = \frac{465,624}{1 + 465,624(0.08)^2} = \frac{465,624}{1 + 465,624(0.0064)} = \frac{465,624}{2,980.9936} \approx 156$$

The sample size for the study consisted of 156 adults, evenly distributed with 78 females and 78 males, selected through a simple random sampling procedure from a total population of 465,624 adults in Kisumu East Constituency. Given the cultural, social, and legal dynamics surrounding divorce, trauma, and stigma, data were collected from any consenting adult, regardless of marital status. The participants were identified impartially, and the data were generalised to represent a broader population of interest (Creswell, 2012; Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Participants completed a printed questionnaire; upon return, each survey was physically logged and sequentially assigned a tracking number from 001 to 156 to ensure data integrity (Leavy, 2017; Vercruyssen & Hendrick, 2012).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Instrument reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's α and the test-retest method. Cronbach's α was computed to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire items across the target constructs (Cronbach, 1951; Field, 2024; Mills & Gay, 2019). Higher coefficient values indicate strong, dependable inter-item correlations (Field, 2024; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). As noted by Mills and Gay (2019), Cronbach's α is a well-established metric for assessing internal consistency on Likert scales with multiple response options. Prior to primary data collection, a pilot study was conducted in the adjacent Kisumu West Constituency with 16 participants, representing approximately 10% of the main study sample ($n = 156$). Kisumu West was selected due to its comparable demographic profile, gender distribution, and marital characteristics (KNBS, 2019a, 2019c; Treece & Treece, 1982). Using SPSS, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated to evaluate test-retest reliability, yielding a strong positive correlation ($r = .78$). According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), a correlation of this magnitude demonstrates strong temporal stability. These pilot results confirmed the instrument's overall suitability, ensuring reliable data collection for subsequent analyses.

Validity

The questionnaire for this quantitative study was evaluated for face, content, and structural validity through expert judgement. The evaluation panel consisted of the two research supervisors of the current study and one psychometric research expert from Maseno University. These experts reviewed the instrument and its development process to ensure construct and structural relevance. Their recommendations were subsequently incorporated to refine the final instrument, thereby establishing content validity (Field, 2024; Mills & Gay, 2019).

Data Collection Techniques

Questionnaire

A structured, closed-ended questionnaire was administered to a sample of 156 participants. The study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards; all participants provided voluntary informed consent, and anonymity was strictly maintained. Demographic characteristics were captured across five variables: gender, age, education level, marital status, and profession/skills.

Participants' perspectives on the role of differentiation in divorce were evaluated using a 10-item intellectual functioning subscale, adapted from Bowen's differentiation model to capture attitudinal perceptions. Items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale, where response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Because the scale items were phrased in terms of intellectual deficits and marital risk factors, higher mean scores indicated stronger participant agreement that compromised intellectual functioning contributes to divorce.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Data analysis involved directly aligning the collected data with the research objectives and questions. Raw data were systematically prepared for analysis by scoring, transforming, and categorising responses into numeric values, eliminating entry errors, and tabulating the coded entries in IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 33). Next, the dataset was explored through visual inspection and descriptive analysis to establish baseline distributions. Descriptive analysis was used to calculate frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations across all major variables. The dataset was then examined to verify distribution normality, address missing or inconsistent values, and evaluate psychometric properties.

Following data preparation and initial screening, reliability and validity assessments were conducted. Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's α to confirm scale reliability (Cohen et al., 2018; Cronbach, 1951). Descriptive statistical analyses were subsequently performed to address the four specific research questions. The results were organised into summary tables and interpreted within the context of the research problem, existing literature, study limitations, and recommendations for future research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards protect research integrity, ensure participant welfare, and maintain public and institutional accountability (Creswell, 2012; Resnik, 2024). The School of Graduate Studies and the Maseno University Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (MUSERC) granted administrative approval and ethical clearance. Subsequently, a research permit was secured from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and presented to relevant local administrative stakeholders. To ensure strict compliance with academic standards, the study actively prevented plagiarism, data fabrication, and potential psychological or physical harm, while safeguarding academic freedom and the rights of participants.

Participant privacy and data confidentiality were strictly maintained (Mills & Gay, 2019; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). This involved respecting participants' dignity, anonymity, and informed consent. Digital dataset files

were secured using strong password protection on an encrypted personal computer. Hard-copy questionnaires were kept in locked storage accessible only to the primary researcher, and all analytical data were aggregated during reporting to prevent individual identification. Voluntary participation was established through a formal informed consent process. The researcher provided a comprehensive briefing detailing the nature, purpose, estimated risks, and potential benefits of the study, along with the right to withdraw without penalty. Consequently, the study enrolled only individuals who provided explicit, written informed consent (Matsumoto, 2009; VandenBos, 2015).

Data Analysis, Presentation, and Discussion

The data analysis, presentation, and discussion were structured around the study's primary objective: to analyse adults' perceptions of the role of intellectual functioning in divorce in Kisumu East Constituency.

Participants' Demographic Information

Participants' Gender

Table 1 Gender			
		Frequency (f)	Valid Percent (%)
	Female	78	50.0
	Male	78	50.0
	Total	156	100.0

Note. N = 156.

The demographic profile of the sample was examined across key variables to establish an initial overview for analysis. As shown in Table 1, the sample comprised equal proportions of female (50.0%) and male (50.0%) participants. This balanced gender distribution minimised potential gender-based skewness and provided an equitable dataset for the descriptive analysis of the research problem.

Participants' Age Ranges

Table 2 Age Ranges			
		Frequency (f)	Valid Percent (%)
	18–34 years old	18	11.5
	35–44 years old	33	21.2
	45–54 years old	52	33.3
	55 years old and above	53	34.0
	Total	156	100.0

Note. N = 156.

As shown in Table 2, the largest percentage of participants was in the 55-and-above age group (34.0%), followed by those aged 45 to 54 years (33.3%), 35 to 44 years (21.2%), and 18 to 34 years (11.5%). This high proportion of participants aged 45 years and older suggests that most individuals possessed extensive life experience and long-term exposure to relationship dynamics. Consequently, these respondents provided relevant perspectives regarding divorce and its associated emotional outcomes.

Participants' Education Level

Table 3 Level of Education			
		Frequency (f)	Valid Percent (%)
	None	13	8.3
	Certificate	42	26.9
	Diploma	35	22.4

	Degree	43	27.6
	Masters	15	9.6
	PhD	8	5.1
	Total	156	100.0

Note. N = 156.

In Table 3, the distribution of participants' education levels reveals that 8.3% had no formal education, 26.9% held certificates, 22.4% had diplomas, 27.6% held bachelor's degrees, 9.6% had master's degrees, and 5.1% held doctoral degrees. Overall, a substantial majority (64.7%) of participants held a tertiary-level qualification (diploma or higher).

Participants' Marital Status

Table 4 Marital Status			
		Frequency (f)	Valid Percent (%)
	Married	113	72.4
	Widowed	17	10.9
	Single	13	8.3
	Divorced	7	4.5
	Engaged	6	3.8
	Total	156	100.0

Note. N = 156.

Table 4 presents the distribution of participants' marital statuses, revealing that a clear majority of the participants were married (72.4%), followed by those who were widowed (10.9%), single (8.3%), divorced (4.5%), and engaged (3.8%).

Profession or Employment

Table 5 Profession or Employment			
		Frequency (f)	Valid Percent (%)
	Professional	144	92.3
	Non-professional	12	7.7
	Total	156	100.0

Note. N = 156.

Table 5 demonstrates that an overwhelming majority of participants (92.3%) identified as professionals, whereas the remaining 7.7% identified as non-professionals. This high concentration of professionals indicates that the sample possessed extensive exposure to structured institutional frameworks and formal work environments, potentially bringing structured viewpoints to the descriptive analysis.

Adults' Perceptions of Intellectual Functioning in Divorce

The objective of the study was to analyse adults' perceptions of the role of intellectual functioning in divorce in Kisumu East Constituency. Participants responded to the 10-item Intellectual Functioning Questionnaire, and data were gathered using a 5-point Likert scale, represented numerically by *strongly disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *undecided* (3), *agree* (4), and *strongly agree* (5). Because the scale items were phrased in terms of intellectual deficits and marital risk factors, higher mean scores indicated stronger participant agreement that compromised

intellectual functioning contributes to divorce. Table 6 displays the descriptive statistical measures computed from these responses using SPSS descriptive analysis.

Table 6 *Descriptive Statistics for Adults' Perceptions of Intellectual Functioning in Divorce*

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)		
1. Couples who make poor judgements easily end up in divorce.	3 (1.9)	5 (3.2)	10 (6.4)	43 (27.6)	95 (60.9)	4.42	0.89
2. Couples who hold negative attitudes struggle to avoid divorce.	2 (1.3)	14 (9.0)	32 (20.5)	28 (17.9)	80 (51.3)	4.09	1.09
3. Couples who ignore the facts of their situation easily end up in divorce.	0 (0.0)	10 (6.4)	10 (6.4)	61 (39.1)	75 (48.1)	4.29	0.85
4. Couples who misunderstand each other easily end up in divorce.	3 (1.9)	7 (4.5)	19 (12.2)	27 (17.3)	100 (64.1)	4.37	0.99
5. Couples who hide things from each other struggle to avoid divorce.	4 (2.6)	5 (3.2)	20 (12.8)	28 (17.9)	99 (63.5)	4.37	1.00
6. Couples who leave their conflicts unresolved easily end up in divorce.	0 (0.0)	2 (1.3)	20 (12.8)	34 (21.8)	100 (64.1)	4.49	0.77
7. Couples who make decisions without each other struggle to avoid divorce.	1 (0.6)	10 (6.4)	11 (7.1)	60 (38.5)	74 (47.4)	4.26	0.89
8. Couples who refuse to analyse their issues run a high risk of divorce.	0 (0.0)	2 (1.3)	19 (12.2)	35 (22.4)	100 (64.1)	4.49	0.76
9. Couples who fail to work as a team easily end up in divorce.	2 (1.3)	9 (5.8)	10 (6.4)	59 (37.8)	76 (48.7)	4.27	0.91
10. Couples who make poor adaptations struggle to avoid divorce.	0 (0.0)	20 (12.8)	10 (6.4)	46 (29.5)	80 (51.3)	4.19	1.03

Note. *N* = 156. Scale values: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *undecided*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*. Values in parentheses represent percentages rounded to one decimal place. *f* = frequency; % = percentage; *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation.

The descriptive statistics displayed in Table 8 show that the intellectual functioning subscale produced an overall aggregate mean score of 4.32 (*SD* = 0.92), indicating strong participant agreement that intellectual deficits contribute to marital breakdown. Item means ranged from 4.09 to 4.49, reflecting consistently high endorsement across statements, while item standard deviations spanned 0.76 to 1.09, illustrating the extent of response dispersion across the sample.

Regarding analytical and conflict-resolution capabilities, participants registered their highest agreement for statements on couples who refuse to analyse their issues (22.4% agreed, 64.1% strongly agreed; *M* = 4.49, *SD* =

0.76) and those who leave conflicts unresolved (21.8% agreed, 64.1% strongly agreed; $M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.77$). Evaluating communication and cognitive barriers, high agreement was recorded for couples who make poor judgements (27.6% agreed, 60.9% strongly agreed; $M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.89$), misunderstand each other (17.3% agreed, 64.1% strongly agreed; $M = 4.37$, $SD = 0.99$), and hide things from each other (17.9% agreed, 63.5% strongly agreed; $M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.00$). Similar agreement appeared for teamwork and joint decision-making, where ignoring situational facts (39.1% agreed, 48.1% strongly agreed; $M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.85$), failing to work as a team (37.8% agreed, 48.7% strongly agreed; $M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.91$), and making decisions without each other (38.5% agreed, 47.4% strongly agreed; $M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.89$) received high ratings. At the lower end of the item distribution, though still reflecting broad agreement, making poor adaptations (29.5% agreed, 51.3% strongly agreed; $M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.03$) and holding negative attitudes (17.9% agreed, 51.3% strongly agreed; $M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.09$) recorded lower mean scores relative to other items in the subscale.

The empirical data collected from Kisumu East Constituency regarding intellectual functioning were also evaluated using cognitive literature. Theoretical frameworks by Bowen (1978), Das (1986), Titelman (2014), and Papero (2015) demonstrated that intellectual functioning drives objective reasoning and the communication of complex ideas by distinguishing between cognitive processes and automatic emotional processes. Research also linked this cognitive adaptability to broader knowledge acquisition and purposeful goal seeking within an environment (Ackerman & Kanfer, 2004; Colman, 2003; Dai & Sternberg, 2004; Frost, 2014; Kranzler & Floyd, 2013; Legg & Hutter, 2006; Matthews & Zeidner, 2004). Similarly, clinical lexicons and diagnostic manuals defined these underlying intellectual capabilities through cognitive abilities that support abstract reasoning and understanding (American Psychiatric Association, 2022; VandenBos, 2015), an approach also mirrored by independent clinical guides such as Black and Grant (2014). This extensive literature indicated that maintaining objective intellectual functioning establishes a strong capacity to manage emotional processes that emerge within the marital environment.

Bowen (1978) examined intellectual functioning within the family emotional unit using his theoretical scale of differentiation. He determined that a score of 100 on this scale represented a hypothetical state of total differentiation of self, which was associated with full intellectual functioning. Consequently, Bowen's concept of differentiation of self associates higher levels of intellectual functioning with the ability to use logic and objectivity when balancing separateness and individuality within family emotional dynamics (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Comparable outcomes were reported using the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS), developed in the United States starting in 1939 (Ackerman, 2013; Drozdick et al., 2012; Wasserman, 2012). Similarly, Hebb (1949) and Cattell (1963) concluded that intellectual functioning directly influenced broader human adaptive capabilities, which varied across individuals (Ackerman, 2013; Schneider & McGrew, 2012).

Although none of these related historical studies focused explicitly on divorce within the specific context of Kisumu East Constituency, they consistently linked better task performance with higher intellectual functioning, matching the current study's findings as displayed in Table 8. Evaluated within the context of Bowen's (1978) framework, individuals who were guided by intellectual functioning rather than automatic emotional reactivity were perceived by respondents as less likely to face marital dissolution because they maintained differentiation within the interlocking relationships of family emotional units.

However, contemporary researchers have challenged the emphasis on intellectual functioning within family emotional systems. Knudson-Martin (1994) and Suhendra (2015) claimed that Bowen's concept of differentiation of self confines human behaviour and maturity to the intellectual system. From Bowen's (1978) perspective, individuals who rely on their intellect manage their emotional tendencies, acquire objective understanding, and resist automatic reactions. Critics argued that this thesis ignored the importance of emotional intelligence and the impact of moral and religious frameworks, which shape human behaviour (Suhendra, 2015). Furthermore, Knudson-Martin (1994) and Narayanan and Sriram (2023) criticised Bowen's theory for neglecting the importance of gender norms, race, class, and religion in individual functioning. To address these theoretical critiques within the Kenyan setup, the present study included equal gender representation in the sample to capture a balanced distribution of local ratings.

Gottman and Gottman's (2016) manual, based on neuroscience research, rejected Bowen's hypothesis of intellectual functioning, identifying it as an obsolete version of MacLean's (1990) triune brain model. MacLean conceptualised the brain from an evolutionary standpoint, comprising the 'reptilian' (brainstem), 'mammalian' (limbic), and 'primate' (advanced cortical) components. This model led Bowen to interpret emotions as evolutionarily primitive, limbic, impulsive, and opposed to the logic associated with the cortex. Consequently, Bowen's differentiation model tasked therapists with empowering the client's cerebral cortex to override the limbic system, prioritising intellect and reason over emotions and feelings (Gottman & Gottman, 2016; MacLean, 1990). However, according to Gottman and Gottman (2016), contemporary neurobiology showed that neural processing was a combination of emotion and reason, with bidirectional and reciprocal feedback. Rational thought was shown to be inherently connected to emotional processes, meaning humans think while experiencing emotions. The current study accommodated this neurological critique by incorporating constructs that evaluate an individual's capacity to balance individuality and togetherness forces amidst intense emotional processes. Ultimately, the empirical findings strongly supported the role of intellectual functioning as an indicator of a couple's capacity to handle family emotional systems and avoid marital dissolution in Kisumu East Constituency.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

The general objective of the study was to assess adults' perceptions of the role of differentiation of self in divorce in Kisumu East Constituency, with differentiation operationalised as intellectual functioning. This objective was addressed using a cross-sectional, descriptive survey research design. The sample size comprised 156 adults, divided equally into 78 female and 78 male participants.

Adults' Perceptions of Intellectual Functioning in Divorce

The specific objective of the study was to assess adults' perceptions of the role of intellectual functioning in divorce in Kisumu East Constituency. On a 5-point Likert-type scale, the items yielded an aggregate mean score of 4.32 ($SD = 0.92$), with individual item means ranging from 4.09 to 4.49 and standard deviations spanning from 0.76 to 1.09. Because the questionnaire items were phrased in terms of intellectual deficits and marital risk factors, higher mean scores indicated stronger agreement that deficits in intellectual functioning contribute to divorce vulnerability. In summary, the empirical evidence demonstrates widespread agreement among participants that couples who fail to separate cognitive reasoning from emotional impulses struggle to process facts objectively, analyse issues, resolve conflicts, and maintain marital stability.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusion was drawn concerning adults' perceptions of the role of intellectual functioning in divorce in Kisumu East Constituency: elevated intellectual functioning in couples corresponded with consistent life principles, a capacity for self-determination, and emotional maturity.

Recommendation

Based on the research objective and the corresponding findings, the study proposed the following recommendation to enhance Bowen's concept of differentiation, operationalised as intellectual functioning, in relation to divorce in Kisumu East Constituency: support networks in Kisumu East Constituency and beyond must consistently create avenues within the family's emotional system to develop and manage intellectual functioning, as well as integrate knowledge, understanding, goals, individuality, togetherness, and adaptability.

Suggestions for Further Research

The following suggestions for future research were proposed based on the study's specific objective and findings:

1. Further research should explore other clinical categories and contexts under Bowen family systems theory to expand the empirical understanding of these dynamics.
2. Future studies should apply the updated DSI-R battery to capture standardised measurements of participants' self-reported differentiation.
3. Future investigations should incorporate expert insights and argument-based validity frameworks to strengthen the integrity of the research design.
4. Future researchers should use longitudinal, mixed-methods, and experimental designs, as well as larger sample sizes, to maximise statistical power and generalisability.
5. Future research should expand the study area outside Kisumu East Constituency to cover both rural and urban areas because increasing divorce rates are a national trend.

REFERENCES

1. Ackerman, L. P. (2013). Assessment of intellectual functioning in adults. In K. F. Geisinger (Ed.), *APA handbook of testing and assessment in psychology: Vol. 2. Testing and assessment in clinical and counseling psychology* (pp. 119–132). American Psychological Association.
2. Ackerman, L. P., & Kanfer, R. (2004). Cognitive, affective, and conative aspects of adult intellect within a typical and maximal performance framework. In D. Y. Dai & J. R. Sternberg (Eds.), *Motivation, emotion, and cognition: Integrative perspectives on intellectual functioning and development* (pp. 119–141). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
3. American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed., text rev.).
4. American Psychological Association. (2009). *APA college dictionary of psychology*.
5. Amirahmadi, T., Jayervand, H., Hooman, F., & Homaei, R. (2025). The correlation between self-differentiation and emotional experiences towards the spouse with the probability of divorce among married female students. *Women's Health Bulletin*, 12(2), 101–108. <https://doi.org/10.30476/whb.2025.104101.1313>
6. Appinio. (2025, January 10). Sample size calculator and margin of error: The ultimate guide. Appinio Blog. appinio.com.
7. Aseka, E. O., Ileri, N. W., & Menecha, J. B. (2021). Relationship between spousal support and marital satisfaction among Christian couples: A case study of two selected churches in Nairobi County, Kenya. *African Journal of Emerging Issues*, 3(4), 70–78.
8. Beal, E. W. (1998). Child-focused divorce. In P. Titelman (Ed.), *Clinical applications of Bowen family systems theory* (pp. 327–353). Haworth Press.
9. Bélanger, M., & Ward, M. (2019). *The family dynamic: A Canadian perspective* (7th ed.). Nelson.
10. Black, D. W., & Grant, J. E. (2013). *DSM-5 guidebook: The essential companion to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.). American Psychiatric Association.
11. Bohannon, P. (1970). The six stations of divorce. In P. Bohannon (Ed.), *Divorce and after: An analysis of the emotional and social problems of divorce* (pp. 29–55). Doubleday.
12. Bowen, M. (1976). Theory in the practice of psychotherapy. In J. P. Guerin (Ed.), *Family therapy: Theory and practice* (pp. 42–90). Gardner Press.
13. Bowen, M. (1978). *Family therapy in clinical practice*. Jason Aronson.
14. Brown, J. (1999). Bowen family systems theory and practice: Illustration and critique. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 20(2), 94–103.

15. Brown, J., & Errington, L. (2024). Bowen family systems theory and practice: Illustration and critique revisited. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 45(2), 135–155. <https://doi.org/10.1002/anzf.1589>
16. Butler, I., Scanlan, L., Robinson, M., Douglas, G., & Murch, M. (2003). *Divorcing children: Children's experience of their parents' divorce*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
17. Clarke-Stewart, A., & Brentano, A. (2006). *Divorce: Causes and consequences*. Yale University Press.
18. Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
19. Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge.
20. Colman, M. A. (2003). *A dictionary of psychology* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
21. Connelly, L. M. (2008). Pilot studies. *Medsurg Nursing*, 17(6), 411–412.
22. Constitution of Kenya. (2010). Government Printer.
23. Corey, G. (2017). *Theory and practice of counselling and psychotherapy* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.
24. Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
25. Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson.
26. Creswell, J. W., & Clark, L. V. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
27. Cronbach, L. J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *Psychometrika*, 16(3), 297–334. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02310555>
28. Dai, Y. D., & Sternberg, J. R. (2004). Beyond cognitivism: Towards an integrated understanding of intellectual functioning and development. In Y. D. Dai & J. R. Sternberg (Eds.), *Motivation, emotion, and cognition: Integrative perspectives on intellectual functioning and development* (pp. 3–38). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
29. The Daily Post. (2020, October). Divorce rates in Kenya: The latest statistics.
30. Das, J. P. (1986). On definition of intelligence. In R. J. Sternberg & D. K. Detterman (Eds.), *What is intelligence? Contemporary viewpoints on its nature and definition* (pp. 55–56). Ablex.
31. Daystar University. (2015). *Redeeming Christian marriage and family in Kenya*. Daystar University Publication.
32. De Vaus, D. (2014). *Surveys in social research* (6th ed.). Routledge.
33. Drozdick, W. L., Wahlstrom, D., Zhu, J., & Weiss, G. L. (2012). The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale–Fourth Edition and the Wechsler Memory Scale–Fourth Edition. In D. P. Flanagan & P. L. Harrison (Eds.), *Contemporary intellectual assessment: Theories, tests, and issues* (3rd ed., pp. 197–223). Guilford Press.
34. Elikaei, D. H. (2023). Predicting emotional divorce based on self differentiation and marital expectations in women consulting psychological counselling centres. *Psychology of Woman Journal*, 4(4), 9–16.
35. Field, A. P. (2024). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics* (6th ed.). SAGE.
36. Flanagan, D. P., Alfonso, V. C., & Ortiz, S. O. (2012). The Cross-Battery Assessment approach: An overview, historical perspective, and current directions. In D. P. Flanagan & P. L. Harrison (Eds.), *Contemporary intellectual assessment: Theories, tests, and issues* (3rd ed., pp. 459–483). Guilford Press.
37. Fromme, D. K. (2011). *Systems of psychotherapy: Dialectical tensions and integration*. Springer Science+Business Media.

38. Frost, T. R. (2014). Challenges of conducting Bowen family systems research on differentiation of self. In P. Titelman (Ed.), *Differentiation of self: Bowen family systems theory perspectives* (pp. 303–329). Routledge.
39. Frost, T. R. (2015). The predictability of the family emotional system. In R. J. Noone & D. V. Papero (Eds.), *The family emotional system: An integrative concept for theory, science, and practice* (pp. 43–58). Lexington Books.
40. Gilbert, M. R. (2006). *The eight concepts of Bowen theory: A new way of thinking about the individual and the group*. Leading Systems Press.
41. Gottman, J. M., & Gottman, J. S. (2016). *Level 1 clinical training: Gottman Method couples therapy – Bridging the couple chasm*. The Gottman Institute.
42. Guttman, J. (1993). *Divorce in psychosocial perspective: Theory and research*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
43. Harrison, A. V. (2011). Live learning: Differentiation of self as the basis for learning. In C. O. Bregman & C. M. White (Eds.), *Bringing systems thinking to life: Expanding the horizons for Bowen family systems theory* (pp. 75–87). Routledge.
44. Human Rights Watch. (2020). “Once you get out, you lose everything”: Women and matrimonial property rights in Kenya.
45. Johnson, R. B., & Christensen, L. (2014). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE.
46. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. (2019a). Marital status by county and district. <https://www.knbs.or.ke/download/marital-status-by-county-and-district/>
47. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. (2019b). 2019 Kenya population and housing census volume I: Population by county and sub-county. [knbs.or.ke](https://www.knbs.or.ke)
48. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. (2025). Kenya vital statistics report 2024. <https://www.knbs.or.ke/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Kenya-Vital-Statistics-Report-2024.pdf>
49. Kerr, M. E., & Bowen, M. (1988). *Family evaluation: An approach based on Bowen theory*. W. W. Norton & Company.
50. Knudson-Martin, C. (1994). The female voice: Applications to Bowen’s family systems theory. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 20(1), 35–46.
51. Koech, D. (2020, December 31). Divorce rate in Kenya: The latest statistics [2021]. Nairobi Wire.
52. Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods & techniques* (2nd rev. ed.). New Age International (P) Ltd., Publishers.
53. Kranzler, H. J., & Floyd, G. R. (2013). *Assessing intelligence in children and adolescents: A practical guide*. The Guilford Press.
54. Leavy, P. (2017). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. The Guilford Press.
55. Legg, S., & Hutter, M. (2007). A collection of definitions of intelligence. In B. Goertzel & P. Wang (Eds.), *Advances in artificial general intelligence: Concepts, architectures and algorithms: Proceedings of the AGI Workshop 2006: Frontiers in artificial intelligence and applications* (Vol. 157, pp. 17–24). IOS Press.
56. LimeSurvey. (2024, September 5). A comprehensive guide to understanding margin of error. LimeSurvey Blog.
57. MacLean, P. D. (1990). *The triune brain in evolution: Role in paleocerebral functions*. Plenum Press.
58. Markman, H. J., Stanley, S. M., & Blumberg, S. L. (2010). *Fighting for your marriage: A deluxe revised edition of the classic bestseller for enhancing marriage and preventing divorce* (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

59. Marriage Act, Cap. 150 (2014) (Kenya). National Council for Law Reporting.
60. The Marriage (Amendment) Act, 2023, Kenya Gazette Supplement No. 123 (Act No. 4).
61. Matsumoto, D. (Ed.). (2009). *The Cambridge dictionary of psychology*. Cambridge University Press.
62. Matthews, G., & Zeidner, M. (2004). Traits, states, and the trilogy of mind: An adaptive perspective on intellectual functioning. In D. Y. Dai & J. R. Sternberg (Eds.), *Motivation, emotion, and cognition: Integrative perspectives on intellectual functioning and development* (pp. 143–174). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
63. Mayes, D. (2020). Intellectual functioning and sexual crime: A historical context. In K. Hocken, R. Lievesley, B. Winder, H. Swaby, N. Blagden, & P. Banyard (Eds.), *Sexual crime and intellectual functioning* (pp. 1–28). Palgrave Macmillan.
64. McGrew, K. S., & Flanagan, D. P. (1998). *The intelligence test desk reference (ITDR): Gf-Gc cross-battery assessment*. Allyn & Bacon.
65. Metcalf, L. (Ed.). (2011). *Marriage and family therapy: A practice-oriented approach*. Springer Publishing.
66. Meyer, P. H. (1998). Bowen theory as a basis for therapy. In P. Titelman (Ed.), *Clinical applications of Bowen family systems theory* (pp. 69–116). Haworth Press.
67. Mills, G. E., & Gay, L. R. (2019). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and application* (12th ed.). Pearson.
68. Moland, M. (2011). *Conflict and satisfaction in romantic relationships* (Master's thesis, Fort Hays State University). FHSU Scholars Repository.
69. Moral, M. A., Chimpén-López, C. A., Lyon, T. R., & Adsuar, J. C. (2021). The relationship between differentiation of self and psychological adjustment to separation. *Healthcare*, 9(6), Article 738.
70. Mswati, M. (2019, February 4). Inside nasty divorce cases and horror of disliked spouses. *The Standard*.
71. Mugenda, O. M., & Mugenda, A. G. (2003). *Research methods: Quantitative and qualitative approaches*. Acts Press.
72. The Murray Bowen Archives Project. (2017). Chapter 32. Marriage and the family emotional system. In C. Boyd (Ed.), *Commitment to principles*.
73. Mwangi, N. (2020, December 31). Divorce rate in Kenya: The latest statistics. *Nairobi Wire*.
74. Narayanan, M., & Sriram, S. (2025). An exploration of differentiation of self in Indian youth. *Human Arenas*, 8(2), 306–333.
75. Nel, J. M. (2011). Bowen theory and Zulu understanding of family. In O. C. Bregman & C. M. White (Eds.), *Bringing systems thinking to life: Expanding the horizons for Bowen family systems theory* (pp. 335–345). Routledge.
76. Ngunjiri, N. (2021a). Women's career growth and divorce rates in Kenya [Unpublished manuscript]. ResearchGate.
77. Ngunjiri, N. (2021b). Divorce and separation in Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic [Unpublished manuscript]. ResearchGate.
78. Noone, R. J., & Papero, D. V. (2015). Towards a science of human behaviour. In R. J. Noone & D. V. Papero (Eds.), *The family emotional system: An integrative concept for theory, science, and practice* (pp. 3–14). Lexington Books.
79. Oso, W. Y., & Onen, D. (2008). *A general guide to writing research proposals and reports: A handbook for beginning researchers* (2nd ed.). Makerere University Printery.
80. Papero, D. V. (1990). *Bowen family systems theory*. Allyn and Bacon.
81. Papero, D. V. (2014). Emotion and intellect in Bowen theory. In P. Titelman (Ed.), *Differentiation of self: Bowen family systems theory perspectives* (pp. 65–81). Routledge.

82. Papero, D. V. (2015). The family emotional system. In R. J. Noone & D. V. Papero (Eds.), *The family emotional system: An integrative concept for theory, science, and practice* (pp. 15–28). Lexington Books.
83. Peluso, P. R. (2019). *A family systems guide to infidelity: Helping couples understand, recover from, and avoid future affairs*. Routledge.
84. Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2004). *Nursing research: Principles and methods* (7th ed.). Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
85. Reniers, G. (2003). Divorce and remarriage in rural Malawi. *Demographic Research*, 1(6), 175–206.
86. Resnik, D. B. (2024, December 23). What is ethics in research and why is it important? National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.
87. Roid, H. G., & Pomplun, M. (2012). The Stanford–Binet Intelligence Scales, Fifth Edition. In D. P. Flanagan & L. P. Harrison (Eds.), *Contemporary intellectual assessment: Theories, tests, and issues* (3rd ed., pp. 249–268). Guilford Press.
88. Rosenberg, P. K. (2018). *Infidelity: Why men and women cheat*. Da Capo Lifelong Books.
89. Saha, S. (2021). Theories of divorce. *Jus Corpus Law Journal*, 2(1), 115–120.
90. Sahu, P. K. (2013). *Research methodology: A guide for researchers in agricultural science, social science and other related fields*. Springer.
91. Schneider, W. J., & McGrew, K. S. (2012). The Cattell–Horn–Carroll model of intelligence. In D. P. Flanagan & P. L. Harrison (Eds.), *Contemporary intellectual assessment: Theories, tests, and issues* (3rd ed., pp. 99–144). Guilford Press.
92. Singh, A. S., & Masuku, M. B. (2014). Sampling techniques and determination of sample size in applied statistics research: An overview. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, 2(11), 1–22.
93. Skowron, A. E. (2015). Understanding autonomic physiology and relationship processes in high-risk families. In R. J. Noone & D. V. Papero (Eds.), *The family emotional system: An integrative concept for theory, science, and practice* (pp. 237–256). Lexington Books.
94. Skowron, E. A., & Friedlander, M. L. (1998). The differentiation of self inventory: Development and initial validation. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 45(3), 235–246.
95. Skowron, E. A., & Schmitt, T. A. (2003). Assessing interpersonal fusion: Reliability and validity of a new DSI Fusion with Others subscale. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 29(2), 209–222.
96. Skowron, A. E., Van Epps, E. A. S., & Cipriano-Essel, A. E. (2014). Towards a greater understanding of differentiation of self in Bowen family systems theory: Empirical developments and future directions. In P. Titelman (Ed.), *Differentiation of self: Bowen family systems theory perspectives* (pp. 355–381). Routledge.
97. Smith, B. J. (1998). The use of Bowen theory in clinical practice with the elderly. In P. Titelman (Ed.), *Clinical applications of Bowen family systems theory* (pp. 205–225). Haworth Press.
98. Smith-Greenaway, E., & Clark, S. (2017). Variation in the link between parental divorce and children’s health disadvantage in low and high divorce settings. *SSM – Population Health*, 3, 473–486.
99. Smith, L. (2020). Intellectual functioning assessments in prison. In K. Hocken, R. Lievesley, B. Winder, H. Swaby, N. Blagden, & P. Banyard (Eds.), *Sexual crime and intellectual functioning* (pp. 29–57). Palgrave Macmillan.
100. Statistics South Africa. (2010). Statistical release P0307: Marriages and divorces 2010.
101. Suhendra, J. (2015). *A biblical critique on Bowen’s family systems theory of differentiation of self* (Doctoral dissertation No. 3662869). Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

102. Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). Foundations of mixed methods research: Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences. SAGE.
103. Titelman, P. (1998). Overview of the Bowen theoretical-therapeutic system. In P. Titelman (Ed.), Clinical applications of Bowen family systems theory (pp. 7–49). Haworth Press.
104. Titelman, P. (2014). The concept of differentiation of self in Bowen theory. In P. Titelman (Ed.), Differentiation of self: Bowen family systems theory perspectives (pp. 3–64). Routledge.
105. Treece, E. W., & Treece, J. W. (1982). Elements of research in nursing (3rd ed.). Mosby.
106. van de Walle, D. (2017, November). Divorce, widowhood, and women's welfare in Africa. World Bank.
107. VandenBos, R. G. (Ed.). (2015). APA dictionary of psychology (2nd ed.). American Psychological Association.
108. Vercruyssen, M., & Hendrick, H. W. (2012). Behavioural research and analysis: An introduction to statistics within the context of experimental design (4th ed.). Taylor & Francis.
109. Ward, M., & Bélanger, M. (2011). The family dynamic: A Canadian perspective (5th ed.). Nelson Education.
110. Wasserman, J. D. (2012). A history of intelligence assessment: The unfinished tapestry. In D. P. Flanagan & L. P. Harrison (Eds.), Contemporary intellectual assessment: Theories, tests, and issues (3rd ed., pp. 3–55). Guilford Press.
111. Wasserman, J. D. (2013). Assessment of intellectual functioning. In J. R. Graham, J. A. Naglieri, & I. B. Weiner (Eds.), Handbook of psychology: Vol. 10. Assessment psychology (2nd ed., pp. 451–501). John Wiley & Sons.
112. Wiseman, R. S. (1975). Crisis theory and the process of divorce. Social Casework, 56(4), 205–212.
113. Yamane, T. (1967). *Statistics: An introductory analysis* (2nd ed.). Harper & Row.