

Relationship Between Accommodation Conflict Resolution Style And Marital Satisfaction Among Couples In Nairobi City County, Kenya

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Abstract

Background: Marriage is considered necessary in most cultures, and is expected to build fulfilling relationships. However, world records show decreased rates of new marriages and divorce figures are still high globally^{7,11}. Culturally, married individuals achieve socially acceptable status and fulfill religious and cultural obligations through bearing children⁸. Research carried out in Kenya¹² indicates that 29% of respondents' marriages were headed for crumbling and only 40% were happy with their marriages. Unhappy marriages may result in marital dissatisfaction leading to divorce. Divorces have profound consequences particularly in children⁷. Hence there is need to curb divorce. Research on predictors of marital satisfaction posits that resolving differences and conflicts improves interpersonal skills. In addition, interpersonal skills correlate positively with marital satisfaction, while low marital satisfaction has been associated with marital dissolution. Divorce figures are still high in most regions of the world though some countries such as Germany and United States may have recorded a decrease in Divorce rates¹². Kenyan population census (2019) shows that persons who are either divorced or separated, headed 5.5% of the total households, which is approximately 661,628 households¹³. Research supports that conflicts and conflict resolutions are among the major determinants of marriage satisfaction. This study aimed to determine the relationship between accommodation conflict resolution style and marital satisfaction among couples in Nairobi City County. The research sought to establish whether Nairobi couples use accommodation conflict resolution style in resolving conflicts and its influence on marital satisfaction. Research assumed that inability to resolve marital conflicts amicably or to manage post-conflict experiences influences a person's perception of their marriage relationship. Studies on how conflict resolution styles influence marriage satisfaction are yet to be extensively conducted locally.

Material and Methods: The research used a correlational study design. The target population constituted couples in 858,926 households within Nairobi City County. The households were identified from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS)¹³. The study used Stratified and proportional simple random sampling to sample sub counties and households respectively. Data was collected using structured self-reported questionnaires. Modified Conflict Resolution Strategies Scale (CRSS) and Marital Satisfaction Index (MSI) were incorporated into the questionnaire.

Results: Data was cleaned and analyzed through statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 23. Pearson's correlation was used to analyze inferential statistics where results showed accommodation conflict resolution style had a weak positive relationship with marital satisfaction where, $r_s(398) = .179, p < .05$.

Conclusion: Use of accommodation conflict resolution has positive influence on marital satisfaction. The findings can guide to develop conflict intervention programs for couples.

Keywords: Marriage, Marital dissolution, Marital Satisfaction, Conflict, accommodation Conflict Resolution, adaptive behavior, vulnerabilities, marital relationship

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I. Introduction

Marriage is expected to be a lifetime fulfilling commitment¹⁶. Fulfilment in marriage brings satisfaction, goodness, and happiness¹¹. However people enter marriage with different values, beliefs and personalities, that sometimes bring huge differences between individuals. Research shows that individual differences, excessive arguing, and differences in values contribute to divorce^{3,5}. Excess arguing end in conflicts that individuals sometimes fail to resolve. Unresolved conflict may lead to unsatisfying relationship, predictor of divorce. This research sought to find out whether Nairobi couples used accommodation conflict resolution style (CRS) and its influence on marital satisfaction. The aim is to alleviate divorces among couples. Accommodation CRS refers an

individual's low assertive behavior and high cooperative behaviour. One partner shields the other from hurt by failing to express their views in favour of the partner's opinions. In so doing they ensure that no arguments arise since they prefer not to express their views.

Marital satisfaction is the joy and happiness individuals experience from their marriage relationship¹¹. People will marry or move in with partners to bear children, gain social capital, for love, companion and general wellbeing¹⁰. Marital satisfaction is a major contributor to one's health¹¹. Marriage relationships set the tone for all other relationships in the family culture such as Child/Parent relationship¹⁷ yet, divorce figures are yet still high including in Nairobi County^{4,6}. Older couples are likely to divorce than younger couples showing that marital dissatisfaction increases with marriage duration⁴. To the contrary, other research suggests young couples are prone to more destructive conflict strategies than older couples and that cohesion and stability increase with the duration of the marriage¹⁶. Resolving differences amicably in marriages across different stages of marriage duration may help alleviate marital dissatisfaction to curb divorces that are sometimes very painful particularly to children and women^{1,2}.

Conflicts are inevitable in any relationship. Conflicts arise from differences in values, beliefs, and cultural background. Differences influence negatively on relationships especially if they remain unresolved⁹. Irreconcilable differences lead to divorce³. Unresolved conflicts in marriage relationships can account for abuse, divorce, and separation among couples¹⁷. Further, conflicts among couples impacts negatively on children adjustment processes and may lead to mental health issues. Vulnerability-stress-adaptation (VSA) theory, explains that adaptive behaviors are how spouses adapt to challenges that come with marriage relationship such as different or conflicting opinions and therefore ensuring that they are satisfied with their marriage over time²⁶. Resolving conflicts, influence marital satisfaction positively and may alleviate divorce. Accommodation CRS includes yielding to others opinions/ letting go, selflessness, and peace making¹⁷. This study found that use of accommodation conflict resolution style had a positive influence on marital satisfaction. The research recommends use of accommodation CRS as a measure to increase marital satisfaction among couples.

Resolving conflicts in any relationship is very important for the relationship to last. Human well-being for those in relationship is directly related to healthy satisfying relationship¹⁰. Though marriages have declined and divorce rates are still high, a large population of divorced individuals would wish to marry again³. People will still marry or move in with partners since marriage is still viewed as necessary across many cultures^{3,9}.

Accommodation conflict resolution style minimizes one's perceived differences drawing attention to other's views in a conflict situation. Using an accommodating style, a partner may play down their own needs in favour of others' needs. The accommodation style of conflict resolution is characterized by a greater concern for the needs of the partner than for oneself. This can be productive or unproductive in a give-and-take relationship. Maintaining a relationship is more valued than fulfilling personal goals¹⁷. Letting go to accommodate the other creates a lose/win relationship. Accommodation style results in cooperative behaviour and no assertiveness¹⁸. Research has indicated accommodating behaviour decreases tension and stress supporting the partner's opinions¹⁹. Decrease in tension may explain the finding of this research that accommodation CRS positively influences marital satisfaction.

A research carried out in India found that 66% and 57.3% wives and husbands were using accommodation conflict²¹ where, χ^2 (10.80; $p > 0.01$) level revealed a significant association between gender and accommodation strategy. They argued that wives' gender role dictates concern for others. However, it was not clear how accommodation strategy influences marital satisfaction.

A cross-sectional survey design with a sample size of 249 Makerere University workers advocates use of accommodation style by university leadership to enhance job satisfaction²². This study supports use of accommodation CRS to enhance marital satisfaction.

II. Material And Methods

The research population constituted 858,926 households (57% of households) in Nairobi City County. 57% of the households consist of a married couple while households with singles, separated, divorced or widowed total to 43% computed from (KIHBS, 2016)²¹. This research assumed more or less similar percentages. The current household characteristics by marital status are scarce. For purposes of obtaining views from both men and women, the researcher purposed to obtain data from males from half of the households (200 men) and from females from the other half of the households (200 women). Data collection was from October 2023 to January 2024.

Study Design: Correlational study design

Study Location: Nairobi City County, Kenya. The data was collected in all administrative blocks within Nairobi City County (Dagorretti, Embakasi, Kamukuiji, Kasarani, Kibra, Langata, Makadara, Mathare, Njiru, Starehe, and Westlands)²¹.

Study duration: October 2023 to October 2024

Sample size: 400 households calculated using Yamane’s formula (1967)

Sample size calculation: $n = N/(1+Ne^2)$

Where,

n = Sample size

N = Population size

e = Margin of error

Therefore,

$n = 858,926 / (1 + 858,926 (0.05)^2)$

n=400 households

Subjects and Selection methods: The research used Stratified and proportionate simple random sampling to sample sub counties and households respectively. Purposive selection of 200 men and 200 women from the sampled households was applied.

Inclusion criteria: Households where the couples were still married and living in Nairobi City County.

Exclusion criteria: Households with singles, where couples had separated, divorced, or widowed or were visitors in Nairobi County at the time of data correction were excluded.

Procedure Methodology: Sub counties and households were sampled using stratified and proportionate simple random sampling, respectively. Strata followed Nairobi City County administration boundaries (Dagorretti, Embakasi, Kamukuji, Kasarani, Kibra, Langata, Makadara, Mathare, Njiru, Starehe, and Westlands) tabulated in the census report^{13, 21}. Each sub county was sampled due to differences in population features such as social economic status. Households were selected from each of the 11 sub counties through a proportional simple random sampling method (proportional to the population size of each sub county). 400 households were sampled. Data collection was through questionnaires, containing questions on conflict resolution strategies, which were measured using the modified Conflict Resolution Strategies Scale (CRSS) adopted from the Kilmann conflict mode instrument (1974). Modified Marital Satisfaction Index (MSI) was used to measure marital satisfaction

Statistical Analysis

Participants Demographic Characteristics

From the 400 households that were sampled, 400 participants answered the study questionnaire, 200 men from half-sampled households and 200 women from the other half. Demographic characteristics included; gender, occupation and years in marriage.

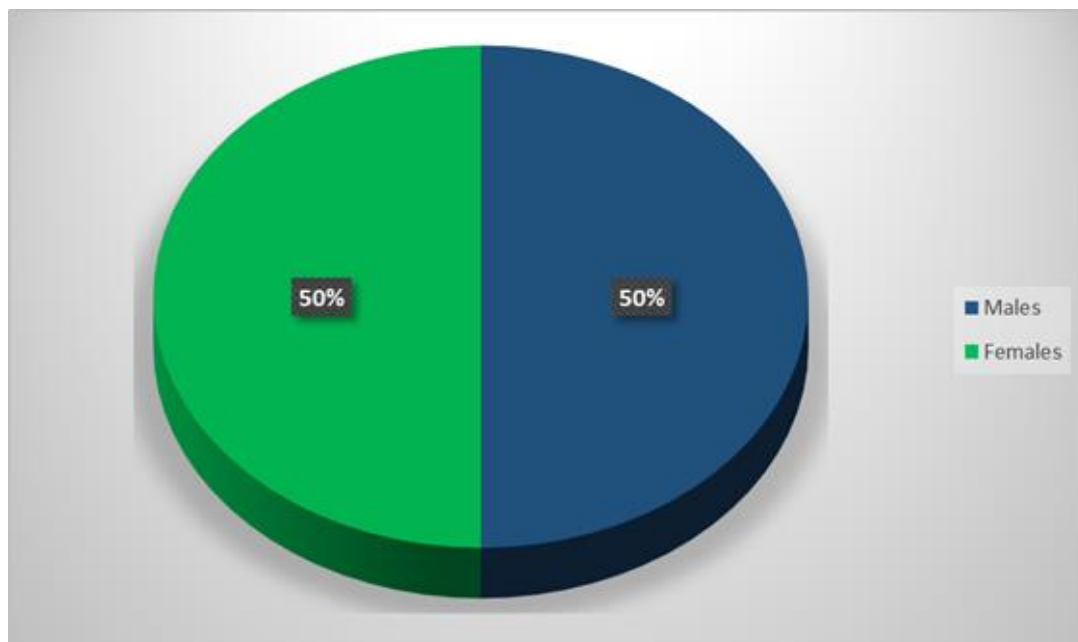


Figure1 Participant’s Gender

From figure1, 50% of the respondents comprised of males, and females respectively. The researcher ensured equal representation of both genders in order to ensure representative views of both genders in the study findings.

Distribution of respondents by occupation is presented on table 1.

Table 1 Respondents Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Civil servant	33	8.3
Self-employed	205	51.3
Private sector employee	96	24.0
Unemployed	55	13.8
Others	9	2.3
No Response	2	0.5
Total	400	100.0

From the findings on table1, slightly more than half (51.3%) of the respondents were self-employed, 24% were private sector employee, 13.8% were unemployed, while 8.3% were civil servants. According to a poll done in 2022, Kenya employs approximately 19.1 million people. The personnel were largely from the informal sector. Approximately 15.9 million people worked in informal settings, while nearly 3.2 million were employed in the formal sector. Most workers in the informal sector are employed by the retail and hotel sector²².

Respondents' Distribution by Years of Marriage

Summary of the findings on respondents’ years in marriage is presented in figure 2.

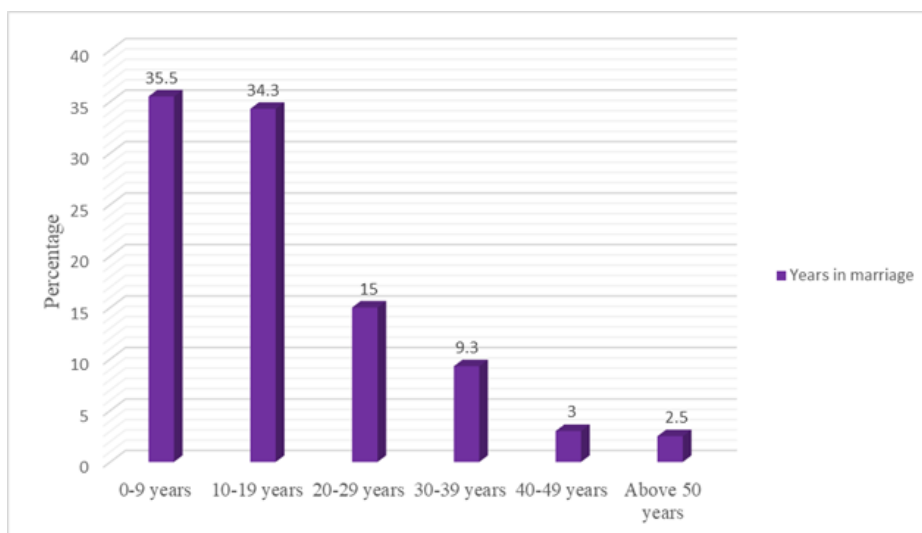


Figure 2 Respondents Years in Marriage

As shown on figure 2, up to 35.5% of the respondents had been married between 0 to 9 years, 34.3% between 10 to 19 years, while only 2.5% had been married for more than 50 years. These indicating that 22.6% of respondents had been married for 0–5 years, and 37.4% had been married for 6–15 years. The majority of respondents, had been married for fewer than 20 years.

Descriptive Findings

Level of Marital Satisfaction

Respondents were given a marital satisfaction index scale and asked to indicate how much they agreed with each of eight statements regarding marital satisfaction in order to gauge the degree of satisfaction in their marriage. There were four Likert scales with up to six and seven levels for the statements on marital satisfaction. Table 2 summarizes the responses from the respondents.

Table 2 *Participants Marital Satisfaction*

Marital satisfaction	Not at all	A little	Some-what	Mostly	Almost completely	Completely	Mean	Std. Dev
I have a good relationship with my spouse	28	34	56	99	118	65	4.10	1.432
My partner meets my needs	25	44	70	106	96	58	3.94	1.428
My partner meets my original expectations	34	61	67	90	99	46	3.72	1.516
I am satisfied with my marriage	33	30	53	91	90	99	4.15	1.592
I enjoy my partner's company	25	30	42	61	44	198	4.66	1.622
My partner and I have fun together	26	51	43	65	33	177	4.36	1.770

According to Table 2, participants reported that they almost completely enjoyed their partners company as shown by a mean of 4.66, they had fun with their partners most of the time as shown by a mean of 4.36 and that their partners mostly met their original expectations as shown by a mean of 3.72. These findings imply that majority of the respondents enjoyed spending time with their spouses indicating a higher level of marital satisfaction. Research indicate that couples who spent more time chatting together reported higher levels of satisfaction, recognized more positive traits in their relationships, and felt closer, further underscoring the above findings²⁴.

Data was further analyzed to determine the levels of marital satisfaction. As a result, the scale was converted into a scores, whereby greater scores correlated with more contentment in marriage. The lowest score was 8, while the highest score was 49. The results were divided into three categories: low marital satisfaction was indicated by scores between 8 and 21, moderate marital satisfaction was indicated by scores between 22 and 35, and high marital satisfaction was indicated by scores between 36 and 49. Table 3 presents an overview of the results.

Table 3 *Level of Marital Satisfaction*

Marital Satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low Level	48	12.0	8	49	33.94	9.724
Moderate Level	160			40.0		
High Level	192			48.0		
Total	400			100.0		

Table 3 indicates that 48% of the respondents reported a high level of marital satisfaction, 40% reported a moderate level, and 12% reported a low level. The lowest possible score was 8, and the highest possible score was 49. The respondents' average level of marital satisfaction was moderate, as shown by the mean score of 33.94 (SD = 9.724). These statistics suggest that the majority of respondents were content with their marital life. These findings can be explained by the vulnerability-stress-adaptation (VSA) theory, which explains that adaptive behaviors are how spouses adapt to challenges that come with marriage relationship such as different or conflicting opinions and therefore ensuring that they are satisfied with their marriage over time²⁶. These findings are also supported by previous findings, that marital satisfaction does not deteriorate over time, but rather remains generally consistent over extended periods of time²³. This could explain the higher levels of marital satisfaction for the respondents from different stages in their marriage and age differences. Further studies may be required to establish how marital satisfaction vary with gender differences.

Level of use of Accommodating Conflict Resolution style

To determine this, the respondents were provided with the conflict resolution strategies scale (CRSS) and required to rate their level of agreement to 3 statements related to accommodating conflict resolution style. The respondents used a four-point Likert scale, where 1 is never, 2 rarely, 3 occasionally, and 4 always. The scale was further transformed into levels to analyze the Level of use of accommodating conflict resolution style. Given that there were three items, the maximum score that could be obtained was 12 (4x3), while the lowest possible score was 3 (1x3). The sum of the total scores for each item was used to determine an individual's overall score. After that, the results were divided into three categories: low, represented by scores between 3 and 5, moderate, represented by scores between 6 and 9, and high, represented by scores between 10 and 12 indicating a high level of use of accommodating conflict resolution approaches. The findings are summarized in table 4.

Table 4 level of use of Accommodating Conflict Resolution Style

Accommodating Resolution Style	Frequency	Percentage	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low Level	47	11.8	3	12	7.80	1.890
Moderate Level	280				70.8	
High Level	73				18.3	
Total	400				100.0	

A substantial number of participants (70.8%) had a moderate score in use of accommodating conflict resolution style as indicated by table 4. 18.3% reported high level, while 11.8% had indicated a low level of use of accommodating conflict resolution style. The lowest possible score was 3, and the highest possible score was 12. The respondents, on average, exhibited a moderate level of usage of accommodating conflict resolution approach, as indicated by the level of use mean score of 7.80 (SD = 1.890). The high prevalence of use of accommodating conflict resolution style can be explained by the tendency of couples to want to play down their own needs for the needs of their partners which is important in maintaining a long term relationship. In accommodation one tries to shield the other from hurt by not expressing their own feeling or letting go to keep peace. This concur with research that stipulates that maintain a relationship is more valued than fulfilling personal goals¹⁷. Accommodating behavior decrease tension and stress by supporting the partner's opinions, which this research supports.

Relationship between Accommodating Conflict Resolution Style and Marital Satisfaction

The third goal was to determine the connection between Nairobi City County, Kenya, couples' satisfaction with their marriages and their accommodating conflict resolution approach.

The null hypothesis listed below was examined:

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between accommodating conflict resolution style and marital satisfaction among couples in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Since both variables were measured on an interval scale, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to analyze the relationship between compromise dispute resolution and marital satisfaction. The findings are summarized in table 5.

Table 5 Relationship between accommodating Conflict Resolution and Marital Satisfaction

Accommodating Conflict Resolution	Marital Satisfaction		
	Pearson Correlation		.179**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N		400

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Findings on Pearson Correlation Coefficient established a significant weak positive relationship between accommodating conflict resolution style and level of marital satisfaction, $r_s(398) = .179, p < .05$. The findings imply that an increase in use of accommodating conflict resolution style was correlated with an increase in levels of marital satisfaction. The alternative hypothesis was accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected in light of the data. These findings indicate that couples who were more accommodating in their conflict resolution style also reported higher levels of marital satisfaction. The current findings contradict with a study which established a negative correlation between accommodating conflict resolution style and marital satisfaction²⁷. The current findings were however supported by a past study in Kenya that found a positive relationship between marital satisfaction and accommodating conflict resolution styles among couples in catholic church kitengela, Kajiado County²⁸.

III. Results

Findings established that majority of the respondents (70.8%) had a moderate score in use of accommodating conflict resolution style. Pearson Correlation Coefficient established a significant weak positive relationship between accommodating conflict resolution style and level of marital satisfaction, $rs(398) = .179, p < .05$.

IV. Conclusion

The study found weak positive relationship between accommodating conflict resolution style and level of marital satisfaction, $rs(398) = .179, p < .05$. The study therefore concludes that couples who are more accommodating to their partners during conflict resolutions experience increased levels of marital satisfaction. Findings established that a majority of Nairobi couples were using accommodation conflict resolution style. Accommodation conflict resolution style used in resolving conflict positively correlated with marital satisfaction and therefore this study recommends adoption of the conflict resolution style by couples, marriage helpers and

policy makers. The research recommend future study on how conflict resolution style affect marital satisfaction across different marriage durations.

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