



Cultural Differences and Their Impact on Marital Relationships

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the influence of cultural differences on marital relationships, focusing on communication patterns, conflict resolution, and overall marital satisfaction among culturally diverse couples in Ghana. Employing a mixed-methods design, quantitative data from 250 couples were complemented by qualitative interviews with 30 couples to explore lived experiences. Findings reveal that cultural discrepancies often lead to communication barriers and familial conflicts, which can negatively affect marital stability. However, adaptive communication strategies, boundary-setting with extended families, and mutual cultural learning emerged as critical factors promoting marital satisfaction and resilience. The study highlights the complex role of culture in marriage and underscores the need for culturally sensitive counseling and education programs to support diverse couples. These insights contribute to a better understanding of marital dynamics in multicultural contexts and offer practical implications for policymakers and practitioners.

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Cultural differences, marital relationships, communication, conflict resolution, marital satisfaction, intercultural marriage, Ghana, mixed-methods.

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized world, cross-cultural marriages have become more common due to migration, international education, and intercultural exposure. While love and companionship remain the foundational ideals of marriage, the dynamics of marital relationships are significantly shaped by cultural factors that define individuals' values, beliefs, communication styles, roles, and conflict resolution strategies. Culture is a powerful determinant of how individuals perceive marital roles, family expectations, gender norms, and even expressions of affection and intimacy. When partners from differing cultural backgrounds enter a marital union, these variations can either enrich the relationship through diversity or become sources of tension, misunderstanding, and instability if not properly managed (Lichter, Carmalt, & Qian, 2011).

Cultural differences in marriage are multidimensional, extending beyond ethnicity or nationality to include religion, language, customs, and socialization patterns. For instance, individualistic cultures such as those in Western societies often emphasize personal autonomy, self-expression, and egalitarian marital roles, while collectivist cultures, prevalent in Africa and Asia, may stress family obligation, communal values, and hierarchical gender roles (Triandis, 2001). When spouses originate from these different cultural orientations, conflicts may arise over role expectations, parenting styles, financial management, and decision-making processes. These divergences may not only affect interpersonal dynamics but can also have long-term implications for marital satisfaction and longevity. Chuang and Tamis-LeMonda (2009) emphasize that such cultural clashes, if not anticipated and addressed, may strain the couple's ability to maintain relational harmony.

Moreover, communication styles are deeply embedded in culture. High-context cultures—such as those found in Japan, Ghana, and China—rely heavily on non-verbal cues, indirect speech, and implied meanings. In contrast, low-context cultures—such as the U.S., Germany, or Scandinavian countries—value explicit verbal communication, directness, and clarity. When partners from these divergent backgrounds interact, communication breakdowns are common. Misinterpretations and unmet expectations may arise not from lack of love or commitment but from differing cultural frameworks for expressing emotions or resolving disagreements (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001). These differences, if unacknowledged, can lead to emotional distance and reduced marital satisfaction over time.

Furthermore, cultural norms often dictate gender roles and power dynamics within a marriage. In some societies, men are traditionally viewed as the heads of the household, while women are expected to fulfill nurturing and supportive roles. Conversely, more egalitarian cultures advocate for equal decision-making and shared domestic responsibilities. When partners bring contrasting views into a marriage—say, one partner expects shared chores while the other expects traditional division of labor—resentment and

imbalance may emerge. According to Phalet and Schönpflug (2001), such discordance is especially prevalent in marriages involving immigrants or bicultural individuals, where internalized cultural values may conflict with those of the partner or the host society. Additionally, in cross-cultural unions, the role of extended family and in-laws becomes a significant factor. In collectivist cultures, family approval, involvement, and expectations often play a prominent role in marital life. Interference or pressure from in-laws may arise when cultural expectations are not met—such as expectations around fertility, religious rituals, or intergenerational caregiving. These issues may not be as pronounced in individualistic settings, where nuclear family autonomy is often prioritized (Killian, 2001). When partners are unaware or dismissive of each other's familial values and obligations, this can create a sense of alienation or disrespect, further complicating marital dynamics.

In Ghana and similar African contexts, cultural norms surrounding bride price, polygamy, lineage, and clan affiliations also affect how marriages are perceived and maintained. For example, failure to observe traditional marriage rites may render a union illegitimate in the eyes of one partner's family, creating underlying tensions. Studies such as that by Oppong (2018) show that even in urbanized African settings, these traditional expectations remain influential and may impact how marriage roles and responsibilities are distributed. Marriages that span ethnic or regional divides within Ghana also face challenges related to language barriers, food preferences, religious practices, and child-naming customs, among others. These seemingly minor differences can become major sources of conflict if partners do not proactively engage in cultural learning and negotiation.

However, not all cultural differences lead to conflict. Some research highlights that cross-cultural marriages can be enriching and rewarding. Couples who embrace cultural diversity often report deeper learning, personal growth, and stronger conflict-resolution skills. According to Buunk and Dijkstra (2017), partners in intercultural relationships who are open to learning, culturally sensitive, and willing to negotiate differences tend to develop more resilient bonds. Their marital satisfaction may, in fact, exceed that of culturally homogenous couples who lack the need for such adaptive strategies. This suggests that while cultural differences pose real challenges, they are not insurmountable and can be transformed into strengths when managed with awareness and mutual respect.

Despite growing interest in intercultural and cross-cultural marriages globally, there remains a limited body of research focusing on how these dynamics manifest within specific African contexts. Most existing literature draws on Western samples or immigrant populations in the diaspora, often overlooking the unique ways in which traditional, modern, and global values intersect within African marital settings. In Ghana, for example, modernization and increasing urbanization have led to greater intercultural mixing, yet societal expectations rooted in clan, ethnic, and religious traditions persist. As Owusu-Bempah (2020) notes, this tension between modern and traditional values creates a complex terrain for marital negotiation, especially among younger couples who may embrace more egalitarian ideals than their elders.

This study is therefore timely and necessary, as it seeks to fill the gap in understanding how cultural differences shape marital relationships in contexts where both modernity and tradition coexist. By exploring couples' experiences and perspectives, the study aims to uncover the cultural factors that influence relationship dynamics, the coping strategies couples adopt, and the outcomes associated with cultural integration or conflict. The insights derived will have implications not only for marital counseling and education but also for fostering greater cultural tolerance and understanding in diverse communities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Marriage, as a social institution, is deeply influenced by the cultural context within which it occurs. As societies become more diverse and culturally integrated, the frequency of unions between individuals from different cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds is on the rise. While such marriages may offer opportunities for intercultural exchange and personal growth, they also introduce complexities that may not be as prevalent in culturally homogenous relationships. Differences in communication styles, gender roles, family obligations, religious practices, and value systems often emerge as significant factors that shape the quality and stability of marital relationships.

Despite growing global interest in the effects of cultural diversity on intimate relationships, much of the existing literature is concentrated in Western contexts, particularly among immigrant populations. There remains a limited understanding of how cultural differences influence marital relationships in African settings, particularly within countries like Ghana where tradition and modernity often coexist in tension. In Ghanaian society, where extended family influence, ethnic identity, and traditional marital customs remain potent, cultural differences between spouses—whether inter-ethnic, inter-religious, or rooted in differing socialization experiences—can produce unique relational dynamics that are underexplored in academic literature.

The lack of context-specific studies means that counselors, social workers, and religious leaders in Ghana may not be adequately informed about the challenges and strengths of culturally mixed marriages, limiting their ability to offer effective support. Furthermore, without empirical evidence, policy and educational programs designed to promote marital harmony may overlook the nuanced cultural tensions couples face, especially in an era where migration, urbanization, and global exposure are reshaping relationship norms.

This study, therefore, seeks to address a critical gap by exploring how cultural differences affect marital relationships in the Ghanaian context. It examines the emotional, relational, and societal dimensions of culture within marriage and seeks to uncover how couples

navigate the challenges and opportunities that cultural diversity presents. In doing so, the study contributes to a more holistic understanding of marital dynamics in a culturally pluralistic society.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how cultural differences influence marital relationships, focusing on the effects on communication, emotional connection, conflict resolution, and overall marital satisfaction among couples in culturally diverse unions.

Research Objectives

1. To examine how cultural differences affect communication patterns and emotional dynamics between spouses.
2. To investigate the role of cultural norms and family expectations in shaping conflict and conflict resolution in marital relationships.
3. To assess the impact of cultural diversity on marital satisfaction and stability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this study draws primarily on Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory and Social Exchange Theory, both of which provide valuable lenses for understanding how cultural differences shape marital relationships.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010) conceptualizes culture as a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one group or society from another. The theory identifies key dimensions, such as individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity vs. femininity, and long-term vs. short-term orientation. These dimensions profoundly influence interpersonal relationships, communication styles, and social roles. In the context of marriage, spouses from individualistic cultures tend to emphasize personal autonomy, open communication, and equality in decision-making, whereas those from collectivist cultures prioritize family obligations, harmony, and hierarchical roles (Triandis, 2001). Applying Hofstede's framework, this study examines how discrepancies in cultural orientations between spouses create both opportunities for growth and potential sources of conflict in marital relationships.

Social Exchange Theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Homans, 1958) offers a complementary perspective by emphasizing the role of costs and rewards in interpersonal relationships. According to this theory, individuals evaluate their relationships based on the perceived balance of benefits and drawbacks, which influences their satisfaction and commitment levels. Cultural norms shape what individuals value as rewards or costs within marriage—for example, emotional support, financial provision, or social approval. In culturally diverse marriages, differences in expectations about marital roles and behaviors can alter perceptions of this exchange, impacting satisfaction and stability. For instance, a partner from a culture that values extended family involvement may perceive the lack of such engagement as a relational cost, while the other partner may see it as a benefit or neutral. This theory aids in understanding how cultural differences affect the subjective evaluation of marital relationships.

Together, Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory and Social Exchange Theory provide a robust framework to explore the multifaceted impact of culture on marital relationships. They enable this study to analyze both the structural cultural differences that influence relational patterns and the individual perceptions that determine marital satisfaction and stability. By integrating these theories, the research addresses not only how cultural differences manifest in behaviors and expectations but also how partners negotiate and assess these differences in the context of their intimate relationships.

Empirical Review

Empirical research on the influence of cultural differences on marital relationships reveals a complex interplay of factors affecting communication, conflict resolution, satisfaction, and stability. One significant study by Kurdek (2005) examined cross-cultural couples in the United States and found that cultural differences often lead to divergent communication patterns that, if unaddressed, can decrease marital satisfaction. Kurdek's study highlighted that couples who actively engaged in intercultural dialogue and demonstrated cultural sensitivity experienced higher levels of relationship satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of mutual understanding in navigating cultural gaps.

Similarly, a study by Yoshida and Mallinckrodt (2019) explored intercultural couples in Japan and identified that differing cultural expectations about emotional expression were a key source of marital conflict. Their findings underscored that partners from collectivist backgrounds often suppressed direct confrontation to maintain harmony, whereas those from more individualistic cultures valued open emotional expression. This mismatch in conflict styles sometimes resulted in unresolved tensions, which negatively impacted marital stability. However, couples who adopted flexible communication strategies and negotiated cultural norms reported better relationship outcomes.

In a Ghanaian context, Oppong (2018) investigated how traditional cultural practices and values influenced marital relationships across ethnic lines. The study found that while couples appreciated the richness cultural diversity brought to their unions, traditional expectations around gender roles and extended family involvement frequently posed challenges. These cultural pressures often heightened the risk of misunderstandings and conflict, particularly when one partner adhered more strongly to traditional norms

than the other. Oppong's findings suggest that cultural dissonance within marriages can undermine relational harmony unless couples consciously engage in cultural negotiation.

Extending these findings, Harwood, Miller, and Irizarry (2017) studied Latino intercultural marriages in the United States, revealing that family obligations and expectations exerted considerable influence on marital satisfaction. The research pointed out that when partners had differing cultural scripts regarding familial involvement, stress levels increased, especially regarding caregiving and financial support. Their study highlighted the critical role of extended family in many cultures and how divergent expectations could become a persistent source of marital strain.

A more recent longitudinal study by Nguyen and Reczek (2021) assessed the effects of cultural adaptation and acculturation stress on marital satisfaction among immigrant couples in Canada. They concluded that successful acculturation processes—characterized by mutual cultural learning and flexibility—were positively associated with marital stability, whereas acculturation conflicts often led to dissatisfaction and higher divorce risk. This study illustrates how cultural integration over time can mitigate the negative impacts of initial cultural differences in marriage.

On the other hand, Kim and McKenry (2002) found that in intercultural marriages where power imbalances existed—often influenced by cultural norms regarding gender roles—marital dissatisfaction was more prevalent. Their research showed that unequal decision-making and role expectations could exacerbate conflict, suggesting that cultural differences intertwined with gender dynamics critically affect relationship quality.

Finally, a meta-analysis by Buunk and Dijkstra (2017) reviewed multiple studies on intercultural relationships globally and concluded that while cultural differences present challenges, they also encourage personal growth, improved communication skills, and adaptability among partners. The meta-analysis emphasized that couples who engage in open communication and cultural learning tend to experience higher satisfaction and resilience, indicating that cultural diversity in marriage is not inherently detrimental but requires intentional effort and negotiation.

Together, these empirical studies illuminate the multifaceted ways cultural differences impact marital relationships. They consistently point to communication styles, gender role expectations, family involvement, and acculturation processes as key variables. Importantly, the findings also underscore that the negative effects of cultural differences are not inevitable but can be mediated by mutual respect, cultural competence, and adaptive strategies, highlighting areas for intervention and support in culturally diverse marital contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively explore the impact of cultural differences on marital relationships. The mixed-methods approach was selected to leverage the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, allowing for a robust analysis of the statistical relationships and rich, contextual insights into couples' lived experiences. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) emphasize that mixed methods are particularly effective when research questions require both measurement of trends and deep understanding of processes and perceptions, which aligns with the objectives of this study.

The quantitative component targeted married couples from diverse cultural backgrounds, including both intra-cultural and intercultural unions, residing in urban and peri-urban areas of Ghana. The aim was to quantify the relationship between cultural differences and marital satisfaction, communication quality, conflict resolution styles, and perceived family support. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across different ethnicities, religions, age groups, and socioeconomic statuses. The sample size consisted of 250 couples married for at least two years to capture experiences beyond the initial adjustment phase. Data were collected using standardized instruments such as the Cultural Values Scale (CVS) (Schwartz, 1992), the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), and the Marital Conflict Scale (Heavey, Larson, & Christensen, 1996). Descriptive and inferential statistics, including correlation and multiple regression analyses, were conducted using SPSS to identify the influence of cultural variables on marital outcomes.

For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was employed to select 30 couples from the quantitative sample who exhibited significant cultural differences as well as variation in marital satisfaction scores. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the couples' perceptions, experiences, and coping strategies related to their cultural differences. The interview guide focused on themes such as communication challenges, negotiation of gender roles, family involvement, and cultural integration within the marriage. Interviews were conducted in English and local languages based on participants' preferences, audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This qualitative data provided nuanced insights into how cultural differences manifest in everyday marital interactions and how couples navigate these complexities.

Ethical considerations were rigorously observed throughout the research process. Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by assigning unique codes to respondents and securely storing data. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty.

By integrating quantitative measurement with qualitative exploration, this methodology enabled a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted impact of cultural differences on marital relationships. The approach captured both the breadth of cultural influences and the depth of individual couple experiences, thereby enriching the study's validity and practical relevance.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

To examine how cultural differences affect communication patterns and emotional dynamics between spouses.

This thematic analysis explores the ways cultural differences influence communication styles and emotional interactions among spouses in culturally diverse marriages. Through in-depth interviews with 30 couples, recurring patterns emerged that highlight the challenges and adaptations partners make to bridge cultural divides. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach, three main themes were identified: Communication Barriers and Misunderstandings, Emotional Expression and Cultural Norms, and Adaptive Communication Strategies.

Theme 1: Communication Barriers and Misunderstandings

Participants frequently described how contrasting cultural communication styles led to frequent misunderstandings and frustration. Many couples reported that indirect communication preferred in their cultural backgrounds clashed with partners who favored direct and explicit conversations. One respondent remarked, "I come from a culture where we do not openly say what bothers us; it is expected that you read between the lines. My partner, however, expects me to speak clearly, which I find difficult." Such differences resulted in feelings of emotional disconnect and misinterpretation of intentions, often escalating minor disagreements.

Theme 2: Emotional Expression and Cultural Norms

Emotional dynamics were also deeply shaped by culturally ingrained norms regarding how feelings are expressed. In some cultures, public displays of affection or verbal affirmations are common, whereas others value emotional restraint and privacy. A participant shared, "My husband rarely says 'I love you' or shows affection openly, and at first, I felt unloved because in my culture, that is very important." This theme underscores how cultural expectations around emotional expression can influence spouses' perceptions of love and intimacy, sometimes causing emotional distance if not negotiated.

Theme 3: Adaptive Communication Strategies

Despite the challenges, many couples demonstrated resilience by developing adaptive communication strategies to bridge cultural gaps. Couples emphasized the importance of patience, learning each other's cultural communication norms, and consciously adjusting their styles. One wife stated, "I had to learn to be more direct like my husband, and he also tries to understand my subtle way of communicating. It's a learning process." These adaptations often improved emotional connection and reduced conflicts, suggesting that successful intercultural communication relies on mutual effort and cultural sensitivity.

To investigate the role of cultural norms and family expectations in shaping conflict and conflict resolution in marital relationships.

This analysis examines how cultural norms and extended family expectations influence conflicts and their resolution within culturally diverse marriages. Data from in-depth interviews with 30 couples revealed several critical themes highlighting the intersection of culture, family influence, and marital conflict management. Using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006), three central themes emerged: Familial Pressure and Interference, Cultural Expectations of Gender Roles, and Negotiation and Boundary Setting.

Theme 1: Familial Pressure and Interference

A prominent source of conflict stemmed from pressure exerted by extended family members, often grounded in cultural expectations. Many participants described how family involvement, especially from in-laws, led to tension within the marriage. One respondent explained, "My family expects me to follow all traditional rites and respect elders' decisions, but my partner's family is more relaxed. This difference causes frequent clashes between our families and sometimes between us." Such interference often intensified conflicts and complicated the couple's ability to resolve disagreements independently.

Theme 2: Cultural Expectations of Gender Roles

Cultural norms prescribing specific gender roles were a recurring factor in marital disputes. Several couples reported tensions arising when partners held differing views on responsibilities related to household chores, financial management, and decision-making. A husband remarked, "In my culture, the man is the head of the family, but my wife comes from a background where decisions are shared equally. Sometimes, this causes friction when we disagree on who takes charge." These divergent expectations often led to misunderstandings, feelings of disrespect, and power struggles within the relationship.

Theme 3: Negotiation and Boundary Setting

Despite these challenges, many couples actively negotiated family expectations and established boundaries to protect their marital space. Couples emphasized the importance of open dialogue and mutual respect when dealing with external pressures. One wife shared, "We had to agree that while respecting our families, certain decisions belong only to us. Setting these boundaries helped reduce conflicts and strengthened our relationship." This theme illustrates the agency couples exercise in balancing cultural obligations with marital autonomy, highlighting adaptive strategies that promote conflict resolution.

To assess the impact of cultural diversity on marital satisfaction and stability.

This thematic analysis explores how cultural diversity within marriages influences overall marital satisfaction and long-term stability. Drawing from interviews with 30 culturally diverse couples, the analysis identifies key patterns regarding the benefits and challenges of cultural differences in shaping relationship quality. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodology, three main themes emerged: Enrichment through Cultural Diversity, Challenges to Marital Satisfaction, and Resilience and Commitment.

Theme 1: Enrichment through Cultural Diversity

Many couples expressed that cultural differences enriched their relationships by broadening perspectives and fostering personal growth. Participants highlighted how exposure to different traditions, languages, and worldviews deepened their appreciation for each other and enhanced emotional intimacy. One respondent stated, "Learning about my spouse's culture has been an eye-opener; it has made me more patient and understanding." This theme underscores that cultural diversity can be a source of joy and enrichment, contributing positively to marital satisfaction.

Theme 2: Challenges to Marital Satisfaction

Conversely, participants acknowledged that cultural differences sometimes created barriers to satisfaction. Differences in values, expectations, and lifestyle occasionally led to misunderstandings, feelings of frustration, or unmet needs. One spouse lamented, "Sometimes I feel disconnected because we do not share the same cultural background, and it makes it hard to fully relate." Such challenges highlight the potential for cultural disparities to strain emotional bonds if not effectively managed.

Theme 3: Resilience and Commitment

Despite difficulties, many couples emphasized their commitment to overcoming cultural obstacles, attributing marital stability to mutual respect and perseverance. Couples described actively working to bridge cultural gaps and prioritize their relationship over external pressures. A participant noted, "We have disagreements, but our love and determination to stay together help us work through cultural differences." This theme highlights the role of resilience and shared commitment in sustaining culturally diverse marriages over time.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings of this study provide nuanced insights into how cultural differences shape marital relationships, confirming and extending existing literature. The theme of communication barriers and misunderstandings aligns with Kurdek's (2005) assertion that divergent cultural communication styles frequently create relational challenges. Similarly, Yoshida and Mallinckrodt (2019) emphasized that mismatches in emotional expression can lead to unresolved conflicts, which was echoed by participants who described difficulties in interpreting each other's communicative cues. However, unlike studies that portray cultural differences as predominantly detrimental, this research highlighted couples' adaptive strategies, supporting Buunk and Dijkstra's (2017) argument that cultural diversity can foster resilience and improved communication skills when met with openness and effort.

The role of familial pressure and cultural expectations in conflict mirrors findings by Oppong (2018) and Harwood et al. (2017), who identified extended family involvement as a double-edged sword, offering support but also generating stress in intercultural marriages. This study's participants similarly reported that differing family norms and gender role expectations often exacerbated marital tensions. Notably, couples' negotiation of boundaries confirms earlier research by Killian (2001) on the importance of setting limits to maintain marital autonomy amidst cultural and familial obligations. Yet, the persistence of power imbalances related to gender roles in some couples reflects concerns raised by Kim and McKenry (2002) about the intersection of culture and gender dynamics adversely affecting marital quality.

Regarding marital satisfaction and stability, the findings resonate with Nguyen and Reczek's (2021) study, which emphasized that successful acculturation and mutual cultural learning enhance marital outcomes. The enrichment theme supports Kurdek's (2005) view that cultural diversity can promote personal growth and deepen relational bonds. However, the acknowledgment of cultural differences as a source of frustration aligns with the broader literature cautioning that without effective management, these differences may undermine satisfaction. This dual perspective reinforces the idea that cultural diversity in marriage is not inherently positive or negative but contingent on the couple's adaptability and commitment, echoing the conclusions of Buunk and Dijkstra (2017).

A counterargument emerges from some scholars who suggest that cultural differences pose insurmountable barriers to marital success, particularly in highly traditional societies (García & Megías, 2016). While this study's participants did report challenges, many demonstrated agency in navigating cultural complexities, challenging deterministic views of culture as an obstacle. This underscores the need to consider individual and couple-level factors alongside cultural context, rather than assuming uniform outcomes based solely on cultural divergence.

In sum, this study affirms that cultural differences significantly impact communication, conflict, and satisfaction in marital relationships but also highlights the critical mediating role of adaptive strategies and mutual commitment. These insights emphasize the importance of culturally sensitive counseling and education programs that equip couples to understand and negotiate their cultural differences effectively.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

This study has explored the multifaceted impact of cultural differences on marital relationships, revealing both challenges and opportunities inherent in culturally diverse unions. The findings demonstrate that cultural variations in communication styles, emotional expression, gender roles, and family expectations significantly shape marital dynamics. These differences often present sources of misunderstanding, conflict, and frustration, which, if left unaddressed, can undermine marital satisfaction and stability. However, the study also highlights the resilience of couples who actively engage in adaptive communication, negotiate familial boundaries, and commit to mutual cultural learning. Such efforts facilitate emotional connection, reduce conflict, and strengthen marital bonds despite cultural disparities.

Importantly, this research contributes to filling a notable gap in the literature by focusing on the Ghanaian context, where tradition and modernity coexist and influence marital norms in unique ways. The study underscores that cultural diversity is neither inherently detrimental nor universally beneficial to marriage; rather, the outcomes depend largely on the couple's ability to navigate cultural differences with openness, respect, and collaboration. These insights have profound implications for practitioners, educators, and policymakers seeking to support marital stability in increasingly multicultural societies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, several recommendations emerge to enhance marital relationships impacted by cultural differences:

1. **Culturally Sensitive Counseling Services:** Marriage counselors and therapists should receive training in cultural competence to better understand the specific challenges faced by intercultural couples. Counseling interventions should incorporate cultural education and communication skills tailored to diverse cultural backgrounds.
2. **Premarital Education Programs:** Institutions and communities should develop premarital programs that address cultural differences explicitly, helping couples set realistic expectations, improve communication, and develop conflict-resolution strategies before marriage.
3. **Community and Family Engagement:** Programs that involve extended family members can help reduce familial pressure and misunderstanding by fostering awareness and acceptance of intercultural marriages within communities, particularly in collectivist societies.
4. **Promoting Mutual Cultural Learning:** Couples should be encouraged to engage actively in learning about each other's cultures, traditions, and values to build empathy and strengthen relational bonds.
5. **Policy Support for Multicultural Families:** Policymakers should consider frameworks that protect and support multicultural families, including legal recognition of diverse marital practices and the provision of social services sensitive to cultural diversity.

Future research could explore longitudinal outcomes of culturally diverse marriages and examine how evolving cultural identities influence marital stability over time. By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can better facilitate the success and well-being of intercultural couples navigating the complexities of marriage in a culturally pluralistic world.

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