

**Factors that Influence Marital Satisfaction among Foreign Brides in Korea**

By

**AGU, Chukwuemeka Decland**

**THESIS**

Submitted to

KDI School of Public Policy and Management

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Committee in charge:

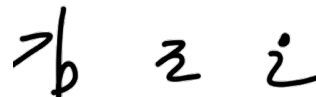
Professor Choi, Seulki, Supervisor



Professor Joo, Yu Min



Professor Kim, Joeun



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## **Abstract**

Data have revealed that the divorce rate in cross-cultural marriages in Korea has been on the rise. According to popular ideas in the literature, this is suggestive of low marital satisfaction in these marriages. It is based on this problem that this research attempted to understand the factors that influence marital satisfaction among foreign brides in Korea. Four research questions and hypotheses were presented to guide the study. The research made use of data from the 2017 Marriage Brokerage Survey which was conducted by the multi-cultural division of the Korean Ministry for Gender Equality and Family. The national survey which utilized a sample size of 514 aims to among other things, gauge the marital as well as living experiences of foreign brides in the country. The study observed that communication conflict has a negative relationship with marital satisfaction among foreign brides in Korea. Also, it was revealed that both age and level of education have no significant relationship with marital satisfaction among foreign brides in the country. Conversely, it was identified that having a paid job is associated with a reduction in marital satisfaction among foreign brides in the country. On the premise of these findings, policy recommendations to enhance peaceful communication in multi-cultural marriages in the country and stimulate better marital satisfaction of foreign brides were put forward.



## 요약

한국의 이문화간 결혼에서 이혼율이 증가하고 있는 것으로 나타났다. 문헌에 따르면, 이것은 이러한 결혼에서 낮은 결혼 만족도를 시사한다. 이 연구가 한국에 있는 외국인 신부들의 결혼 만족도에 영향을 미치는 요소들을 이해하려고 시도한 것은 이 문제에 바탕을 두고 있다. 연구를 안내하기 위해 네 가지 연구 질문과 가설이 제시되었다. 이 연구는 여성가족부 다문화과가 실시한 2017년 결혼중개조사 자료를 활용했다. 표본 크기 514개를 활용한 전국 조사는 무엇보다 외국인 신부들의 국내 생활 경험뿐만 아니라 부부 관계를 측정하는 것을 목표로 하고 있다. 이 연구는 한국의 외국인 신부들 사이에서 의사소통 갈등이 부부 만족도와 부정적인 관계를 가지고 있다고 관찰했다. 또한, 나이와 교육 수준 모두 한국에 있는 외국인 신부들 사이에서 결혼 만족도와 중요한 관계가 없다는 것이 밝혀졌다. 반대로, 유급 직업을 갖는 것은 그 나라에 있는 외국인 신부들 사이에서 결혼 만족도의 감소와 관련이 있는 것으로 확인되었다. 이러한 조사 결과를 전제로, 국내 다문화 결혼에서 평화적인 소통을 강화하고 외국인 신부들의 더 나은 결혼 만족을 자극하기 위한 정책 권고안이 제시되었다.

## CHAPTER 1

### 1.0 Background and Introduction

In recent years, the wind of globalization has blown across virtually all aspects of society. The heightened movement of individuals across national borders has fundamentally altered traditional ways of doing things and this is very much evident in the context of marriage and family. Globally, multi-cultural marriages have been gaining increasing popularity and this is in line with the reality in South Korea (herein referred to as Korea). Up until 2011, Korea experienced steady growth in the number of cross-cultural marriages in the country. The number began to fall in 2011 following the government's introduction of strict immigration rules related to the issuance of marriage visas. However, the years that succeeded 2011 have seen marginal increments (Yonhap News Agency, 2019).

According to data from Statistics Korea, the number of such marriages in 2017 was 21,917 but in 2018, the figure increased to 23,773 which represented 9.2 percent of the 257,622 marriages conducted in South Korea in that year. The majority of international marriages in Korea have involved Korean men and foreign brides. In 2018, such marriages accounted for 67 percent of all international marriages that were performed in the country. Among these foreign brides, 30 percent were from Vietnam followed by China at 21.6 percent.

As the number of these marriages has been on the rise, so is the academic attention that it has attracted. While some research efforts have centered on the factors that motivate their occurrences, significant academic work has gone into examining its socio-cultural impacts. Koh (2018), pointed out that the immigration of foreign brides to Korea was a response to the crisis of reproduction. According to him, rapid economic growth produced radical demographic changes in Korea. Women's education received a tremendous boost and this was accompanied by their migration to the cities from villages in search of better jobs. Increased migration of women produced a gender imbalance in rural communities and with time, the huge number of older unmarried men constituted a grave social concern as it negatively impacted on birth rate, population, as well as revenue of local governments. Consequently, in an effort to address these challenges, governments

in the different local governments began to encourage multi-cultural marriages between men in rural areas and international brides through matchmaking companies.

Extant literature seems to unanimously agree that multi-cultural marriages experience peculiar challenges that primarily revolve around cultural variations of married individuals. In relation to Korea, Koo (2007), succinctly submitted that immigrant wives begin their marital experience in a cultural context that greatly varies from that of native Korean brides and this holds negative consequences for their adaptation. According to him, foreign brides are introduced to a new cultural and extended family environment that demands gender roles and expectations that might vary from what is obtainable in their countries of origin. Therefore, it is not surprising that many studies have concluded that marital dissatisfaction is more pronounced among inter-ethnic marriages compared to intra-ethnic ones (e.g., Fu, Tora, & Kendall, 2001; Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008).

Perhaps, it was the above idea that motivated Bramlett & Mosher (2002), to submit that an increased number of multi-cultural marriages is associated with a high risk of divorce. This is very true in Korea as evidenced by data. Data from Statistics Korea revealed that the number of marital divorces in multi-cultural marriages as a percentage of the total divorce rate in the country increased from 6.7% in 2007 to 10.9% in 2011. Furthermore, more recent data from the same authority showed that in 2020 the total divorce rate in the country was 2.1 while the figure was 6.2 in multi-cultural marriages.

As mentioned earlier, the relationship between marital satisfaction and marital stability has been explored by numerous scholars globally. Studies have linked divorce to low marital satisfaction. The results of a series of longitudinal studies have provided strong indications that high marital satisfaction is a strong predictor of marital stability in the long run (Levinger, Senn, & Jorgensen, 1970 Clements, Stanley, & Markman, 2004). Furthermore, a four-year longitudinal study by Karney & Bradbury, 1997), provided strength to this argument. The study observed that couples who indicated a higher marital satisfaction at the beginning of the study were more likely to remain married after four years.

Similarly, in their fourteen years longitudinal study titled “Attachment, Marital Satisfaction, and Divorce during the first fifteen years of Parenthood”, Hershberger et al (2009), tested a series of

hypotheses which included that marital satisfaction will predict divorce. The linear regression of data utilized a Cox proportional hazards model and revealed that initial marital satisfaction was a powerful predictor of divorce in the long run among men. This finding is in line with the conclusions of similar studies (Stevenson et al, 2007; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996; Srivastava et al, 2006). To Hershberger et al (2009), these findings demonstrate that marital dissatisfaction can produce divorce but this is likely not to be hinged on a serious problem in the marital relationship at a given point but rather a product of the cumulative burden of marital unhappiness which becomes too stressful to manage as it pervades.

If we follow the argument that marital stability and divorce are partly consequences of marital satisfaction, it becomes only logical and necessary that we interrogate the factors that influence marital satisfaction. This question has received considerable research attention. Dobrowolska et al (2020), concluded that the subjective level of marital satisfaction is one of the key predictors of marital sustainability. Huston et al (2001), have suggested that marital satisfaction enjoys stability over time. He further noted that at the earlier stage of marriage, it is a predictor of a couple's satisfaction level in the future. Similarly, Rhoades (1994), observed differences in the factors that predict marital satisfaction among men and women. On one hand, for men, marital satisfaction is primarily related to the quality of relationships with their children. Other factors that he identified include emotional health and the attitude of important figures such as parents and friends toward their marriages. On the other hand, women place tremendous value on communication with their husbands, impulsivity, and their relationship with their children, these factors predict their marital satisfaction.

Some research has also examined marital satisfaction in relation to socio-demographic variables. A significant number of these variables have been established to strongly predict marital satisfaction. Some of them include the level of education (Heaton, 1997; Harkonen and Dronkers 2006; Kalmijn, 2013; Martin, 2006; Matysiak et al, 2014; Park, et al, 2009; Raymo et al, 2013), Age (Jose & Alfons, 2007; Shakerian, 2010; Shirmohamadi, 2004), and employment (Rataj & Matysiak 2012; Coke, et al, 2013). Similarly, DiLillo, (2001), Bradbury & Karney, (1993), and Christensen & Shenk, 1991), identified the quality of communication as a strong influence on the marital satisfaction of couples.

The ultimate question then becomes if the above-established relationships hold true among foreign brides in Korea. The submission by Koo (2007), that the marital experiences of foreign and native brides proceed from varying socio-cultural contexts might have consequences on their subjective evaluations of their marital quality and the factors that influence them. Therefore, while the above relationships were established in studies that mostly involved intra-cultural marriages, an examination of the experiences of foreign brides in Korea can shed light on if they are applicable to inter-cultural marriages.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The increasing number of cross-cultural marriages in Korea has been followed by a growing rate of divorce. Kim (2006), submitted that cross-cultural marriages are commonly faced with language and cultural barriers, and navigating through them produces an intense level of stress for couples which often results in conflict. Similarly, Kim (2015), noted that compared to marriages between locals, multi-cultural marriages face a higher risk of conflicts. According to her, these conflicts degenerate into marital divorce when they are not properly managed.

**Table 1: DIVORCE TREND IN KOREA**

YEAR	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total divorce (A)	124,097	116,535	123,999	116,858	114,284
Immigrants' marriages (B)	8,294	10,980	11,473	11,088	11,495
Ratio of (b)/(a)	6.7	9.4	9.3	9.5	10.9

#### *Number of mixed marriages*

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Mixed Marriages	37,560	36,204	33,300	34,325	29,762

Source: Statistics Korea ([www.kostat.go.kr](http://www.kostat.go.kr))

Evidence from Statistics Korea shows that from 2007 to 2011, the rate of divorce in multicultural marriages was increasing while it was decreasing in marriages between native Koreans (see table 1). However, it is important to point out that the years that succeeded 2011 saw a decline in multicultural marriages as a percentage of the total number of divorces in the country. From 2013 to 2016, the numbers stood at 10.5%, 9.8%, 8.2%, and 7.7% respectively. Nevertheless, these numbers should be interpreted with caution as these years also witnessed a decline in both the number of marriages between native Koreans and native Koreans and foreign spouses.

To provide a better analytical context, according to Statistics Korea, the general divorce rate in Korea in 2020 stood at 2.1 while the number was 6.2 in multi-cultural marriages. Data from the World Population Review show that in 2021, the Maldives had the highest general divorce rate in the world at 5.52 which is lower than the current rate in multicultural marriages in Korea. The other countries that make up the top 5 include Kazakhstan at 4.6, Russia at 3.9, Belarus at 3.7, and Belgium at also 3.7.

The relatively high divorce rate in multicultural marriages in Korea points to a problem of marital dissatisfaction in these marriages. Researchers have established that divorce is primarily predicted by marital satisfaction. In their study of marital satisfaction and marital stability, Fan & Lui (2004), analyzed data from Hong Kong and concluded that couples who experience low marital satisfaction are more likely to seek divorce. This line of argument strongly follows the one of Sternberg & Hojjat, (1997), who submitted that in today's world, for most people, marriage is no longer seen as a social or religious obligation that must be achieved. Rather, it has transformed into a voluntary act that expresses the desire of individuals to be together in matrimony. In this context, the role of marital satisfaction in marriage sustenance has become even more important

Divorce holds tremendous negative consequences for families. In the event of divorce, the divorced individuals potentially experience a loss of critical social support. They also face health challenges like depression as well as financial instability (Ambert, 2015; Sbarra, 2015). Studies have also reported that compared to children in stable families, children in divorced marriages endure lower quality psychological well-being, poorer social relationship, self-concept, and educational achievement (Amato, 2001). For the society, with respect to the smooth cohabitation

of multicultural individuals, a high divorce rate in multicultural marriages weakens the socio-cultural integration of immigrants (Kim, 2015).

Consequently, addressing the issue of divorce in multicultural marriages in Korea demands an in-depth understanding of the factors that affect marital satisfaction in this kind of marital union. This will create a strong platform for the development of policy efforts that will target the improvement of marital satisfaction, especially among foreign brides in the country.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

In the pursuit to ascertain the factors that influence marital satisfaction among foreign brides in Korea, this study will seek to provide an answer to the following question;

1. What are the factors that influence marital satisfaction among foreign brides in Korea?

To effectively interrogate the above question, this research will focus on the sub-questions below;

- A. Does communication conflict have a relationship with the marital satisfaction of foreign brides in Korea?
- B. Does level of education have a relationship with the marital satisfaction of foreign brides in Korea?
- C. Does age have a relationship with the marital satisfaction of foreign brides in Korea?
- D. Does the employment status of foreign brides in Korea have a relationship with their marital satisfaction?

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

This research is partly a response to the call by Kim (2015), that more rigorous research efforts need to be undertaken in order to better understand the predictors of marital satisfaction as such

knowledge will be instrumental in addressing marital instability. Consequently, this study rests on the following objectives;

1. To ascertain if communication conflict has a relationship with the marital satisfaction of foreign brides in Korea.
2. To understand if the level of education of foreign brides in Korea has a relationship with their marital satisfaction.
3. To determine if the age of foreign brides in Korea has a relationship with their marital satisfaction.
4. To identify if the employment status of foreign brides in Korea is related to their marital satisfaction

#### **1.4 Study Hypotheses**

This study will adopt multiple working hypotheses against a single working hypothesis. According to Bruce (1990), the standard of the use of multiple working hypotheses demands that prior to the research, several hypothetical statements that might provide explanations for the subject of the study be put forward. He submitted that the use of multiple working hypotheses enables researchers to avoid the trap of ruling out potentially explanatory variables which can enable a research work to yield meaningful outputs. It also relates to the expectation of researchers to be open-minded as they entertain all the possible explanations to the subject of study which includes the possibility that none of the hypothetical statements are correct. Furthermore, it is common to observe through a careful study that a phenomenon is produced by several factors and not just one. The use of multiple working hypotheses enhances the likelihood that we will observe these factors and understand how they interact. Compared to research directed toward a single hypothesis, multiple working hypotheses encourage greater thoroughness in research.

Based on these, the hypotheses of the study are given below;

1. Communication conflict is negatively correlated to marital satisfaction among foreign brides in Korea.



2. Foreign brides in Korea with higher educational attainment enjoy better marital satisfaction than those with no and lower academic qualification
3. Among foreign brides in Korea, age is negatively correlated with marital satisfaction
4. Foreign brides in Korea who have paid employment enjoy higher marital satisfaction than the ones who do not have

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

As rightly pointed out by Dobrowolska et al (2020), studies on marital satisfaction have predominantly focused on western countries with very little attention extended to other regions of the world. According to them, this renders the generalization of existing findings futile. The topic of marital satisfaction especially as it concerns foreign brides in Korea is yet to receive as much attention from scholars as it should.

While few research efforts have gone into it (e.g., Kim 2007; Yang & Chung 2007; Kwon & Cha, 2006; Son & You, 2008), most of them used relatively small sample sizes which covered a few metropolitan cities in the country. Consequently, one of the significance of the current research rests on the fact that the data used were from a survey with national coverage. The 2017 Marriage Brokerage Survey which produced the data that were used for this study covered all the metropolitan areas in Korea. Therefore, findings from this study will provide a better understanding of the topic of interest on a national scale.

In addition, the growing number of divorces among cross-cultural marriages is a source of concern. As earlier noted by Kim (2015), addressing the challenges of increasing divorce rates demands a more rigorous understanding of the factors that influence marital satisfaction. AS a majority of previous studies on marital satisfaction in Korea were done in the early 2000s, this study attempts to provide a more current understanding of the factors that influence marital satisfaction among foreign brides. Findings from this study will inform Korea's Government's policies and programs which are related to the successful adaptation of foreign brides in Korea. This is extremely important as the country continues to grapple with low marriage and natality rates and intends to encourage more men to seek foreign brides.

Furthermore, marriage counselors will find the findings of this work very useful as it will provide a great insight into marital satisfaction and the factors that influence it. Armed with this knowledge, they will be better equipped to assist married couples, especially multi-cultural ones to navigate through their marital crises.

## **1.6 Theoretical Framework**

In the academic discussion of marital satisfaction, the dynamic theory has become one of the most prominent explanatory frameworks for the foundations of marital satisfaction and its changing nature across marital life-span. According to Tianyuan & Helene (2011), the theory interprets marital satisfaction as the subjective assessment of the quality of marital relationships. The theory presents the argument that marital divorce is not always a consequence of low-quality marriage. It hinged this argument on the reality that several studies have observed that unsatisfied couples exist in stable marriages (e.g., Bauserman & Arias, 1992; Rhatigan, et al, 2005; Rhatigan & Axsom, 2006). Based on this, marital satisfaction is only one among numerous factors that impact the stability of marriages (Adams & Jones, 1999).

At the core of the dynamic goal theory is the belief that individuals have certain marital goals that they strive to achieve. These goals are prioritized and their attainment or non-attainment is the key determinant of marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The general arguments of the dynamic goal theory can be summarized in the following four critical points;

1. Individuals possess multiple marital goals
2. While these goals are universal, their prioritization across the differential developmental stages of marriage does change
3. Marital satisfaction is a function of meeting the prioritized marital goals in a given stage of marital development
4. The attainment of marital satisfaction is also dependent on other factors. However, these factors work by causing changes in the prioritization of marital goals or enhancing the attainment of prioritized ones.

Tianyuan & Helene (2011), classified marital goals into three and they include the following;

**Companionship goals:** These goals express the need for individuals to share intimacy and acceptance in the context of marriage. From the perspective of the theory of self-determination, the desire to relate with one another is among the three fundamental psychological needs of humans (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2002). This specific desire for companionship has been referred to as the integrative social relationship needs by Austin & Vancouver (1996), and the belonging goals by Lang (2004). In the context of marriage, Stenberg (1986), in his triangular theory of love, identified commitment and intimacy as two of the three dimensions of love.

**Personal growth goals:** Tianyuan & Helene (2011), expressed that these goals are connected with the desire of individuals to achieve self-improvement or self-actualization. In their research, Fitzsimons & Shah (2008), identified that having a goal improves the chances of accessing social relationships that can facilitate the attainment of the goal. Fitzsimons & Fishbach (2010), also noted that individuals who believe that their spouses are important to the achievement of their personal goals tend to have strong relationships with their partners. Goals that focus on self-improvement form a fundamental part of social relationship goals (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Lang, 2004). In the place of marriage, the evolution of self which represents the process of amassing new knowledge, experiences, social networks, as well as identity is critical for the development and sustenance of marital relationship (Aron & Aron, 1986; Aron & Aron, 1996; Aron et al, 2002). In addition, a high-quality marriage advances the pursuit and achievement of the personal goals of the couple. Through affirmation and positive feedback, couples can encourage each other in the pursuit of their individual goals.

**Instrumental goals:** this direct attention to the responsibilities in marriage. Marital responsibilities such as domestic work, children's upbringing, managing family finances, etc. are usually shared between couples. On one hand, studies have demonstrated that couples who provide instrumental support to each other in terms of fulfilling family responsibilities tend to enjoy marital satisfaction (Cutrona, 1996; Mickelson et al, 2006). On the other hand, inequitable distribution of family responsibilities has been found to produce marital conflict, especially in families where both couples work to earn money (Frisco & Williams 2003; Lavee & Katz, 2002; Wilkie et al, 1998).

Tianyuan & Helene (2011),) proposed that just like the goals of all social relationships, the goals of marital relationships undergo changes. They emphasized that among young married adults, the goal of personal growth enjoys high priority but this decline as they grow older. The attainment of personal goals at the early stage of the marriage can prepare couples to effectively cope with the marital challenges of the future (Carstensen et al., 1999; Carstensen, 2006). As couples grow older, the importance of personal goals declines. Furthermore, the goals of companionship enjoy low importance in the phase of early adulthood and grow consistently as couples get old. This proposition found proof in the works of Schulz & Heckhausen, (1996), and Carstensen (2006). It has also been suggested that older spouses give more value to spending time with their partners as they deem their remaining time on earth to be limited (Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1990; Fung, Carstensen, & Lutz, 1999).

Tianyuan & Helene, (2011), submitted that the value of instrumental goals is highest among couples in middle adulthood. This argument rest on the idea that middle-aged couples have a myriad of responsibilities that are not limited to raising children, earning money through work, and looking after old parents. The struggle to fulfill these responsibilities exerts huge physical and mental stress on them which negatively affects their marital satisfaction (Allen et al, 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). This produces the need for prioritizing instrumental goals at this stage.

Finally, the dynamic goal theory interrogates the relationship between the goals of marriage and other factors that have been identified that impact marital satisfaction. Tianyuan & Helene, (2011), categorized these factors in accordance with their relationship to marital goals. Age, together with other factors can cause significant changes in the prioritization of marital goals. At a basic level, the impacts of childbirth on marital satisfaction have been the focus of many studies (Bradbury et al., 2000; Glenn, 1990). There is almost a general consensus in the literature that childbirth negatively impacts marital satisfaction (Belsky & Rovine, 1990), but positively contributes to the stability of marriage (Waite & Lillard, 1991). The emergence of a child or children increases the instrumental work of couples and takes their attention off certain areas of the marriage. It then follows that childbirth elevates the priority of instrumental goals. In post-retirement periods, couples tend to share more time with each other as they experience lesser instrumental responsibilities (Brubaker, 1990). With this, the goal of companionship gains more importance over instrumental goals. Also, it has been observed that financial strain can lead to the prioritization

of instrumental goals as couples struggle to provide for their basic needs (Conger et al, 1990; Cutrona et al, 2003; Vinokur, Price, & Caplan, 1996).

Once the priority of the marriage is defined, other variables that impact marital satisfaction can be streamlined to enhance the chances of achieving these goals. The communication patterns of couples are influenced by marital goals. Levenson et al (1994), observed that compared to young couples, older ones are less likely to be physiologically triggered when resolving conflicts. Similarly, the potential for conflict was found to be lesser among old couples than in middle-aged ones (Levenson, Carstensen, & Gottman, 1993)

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 The Concept of Marriage and Marital Satisfaction**

Marriage has been identified by Ozguven (2000), as an essential union that provides opportunities for couples to meet their social, psychological, and biological needs. Larson and Holman (1994), further submitted that marital union represents the most socially accepted pathway to building a family and bringing forth future generations. Marriage is an important component of social life. It provides the opportunity for individuals to meet some of their basic needs such as sex as well as the need for companionship. Also, it provides a gateway for the emergence of families. Marriage as a subject has attracted the attention of sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, and other experts in other fields. Their interests in the subject of marital union vary and for one, this points to the complexity of marriage. Some experts have directed research attention to understanding the history of marriage and how it has changed across space and time. Significant efforts have also been undertaken by others to interrogate the roles of marriage in our society.

Studies have examined the relationship between marriage and quality of life. Some of these studies have established that married individuals are generally happier with better biological and psychological health compared to those who are single, divorced, or separated (Myers, 2000; Diener et al, 1999; Gove et al, 1983; Diener & McGraven, 2008; Diener et al, 2000). ). It has also been noted that compared to unmarried people, married individuals experience greater life satisfaction (Acock & Hurlbert, 1993), better mental health (Horwitz, White, & Howell-White, 1996), and are better integrated into the society (Green, Schatten-Jones, Nezlek, & Richardson, 2002). It has also been concluded that married people enjoy better physical health, experience fewer issues with weight, engage in less smoking, engage more in activities that prevent diseases and improve health, and experience fewer hospitalizations (Stack & Eshleman, 1998; Tucker, Schwartz, Clark, & Friedman, 1999), and have lower death rate (Lilliard & Waite, 1995; Tucker, Friedman, Wingard, & Schwartz, 1996). However, Marina et al (2007),

For some scholars, an examination of why some marriages succeed and others fail has been the focus of their intellectual inquiry. However, as Gottman (1993), mentioned, research efforts to

identify these factors have enjoyed very little success. Over two decades have gone by since the submission of Gottman, and researchers have made considerable gains in the quest to identify why some marriages fail and others succeed. Arguably, it is within the context of this search that the concept of marital satisfaction was popularized. This inquiry is important for academics but it holds greater importance to society as a whole. As Barongo et al (2015), succinctly put it, the stability of marriage and family is necessary for the stability and growth of any nation. This makes marital satisfaction an important topic that should attract considerable interest.

As pointed out earlier, many studies have reported that when compared to single or divorced individuals, married people enjoy a higher level of subjective well-being. However, Diener et al (2000) submitted that being married as a singular factor is insufficient in explaining the health advantages of married individuals over unmarried ones. Numerous studies have attempted to explain these differences by emphasizing the role of marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction can function to prevent and minimize stress as well as negative psychological and physical health experiences (Burman & Margolin, 1992; Cutrona, 1996). Therefore, it is not surprising that a significant amount of research into marriage and family has attempted to provide an understanding of marital satisfaction and the factors that influence it (Bradbury et al, 2000).

Empirical works have shown that couples who report satisfaction in their marriages are happier, healthier, and also live longer (Be et al., 2013; Robles et al., 2014; Vanassche et al., 2013; Whisman et al., 2018). Marital satisfaction represents a total assessment of one's sentiment towards his or her marriage. Marital satisfaction centers on marital happiness and the quality of all the aspects of marriage (Ahmadi et al., 2010; Li & Fung, 2011; Schoen et al., 2002; Tavakol et al., 2017)

Studies have proven that marital satisfaction is positively correlated with quality physical and psychological health. The conceptualization of marital satisfaction has been shaped by definitions of happiness and stability that are shared among a group of people (Hicks & Platt, 1970). Commonly, the measurement of marital satisfaction has been based on factors such as adjustment, stability, and happiness. To Glenn, (1998), the subjective feeling toward one's marriage and adjustment represents the common perspectives that are associated with marital satisfaction. It then follows that marital satisfaction constitutes a personal evaluation that concerns marital wellness.

According to Hendrick (1988), marital satisfaction represents a construct that encompasses feelings, behaviors, and thoughts which are connected to the relationship of individuals with their marital partners. It refers to the subjective quality of a marital union. High marital satisfaction and fewer occurrence of conflicts have been linked to an experience of more positive life events (Cohan et al, 1997), better psychological health (Whisman & Baucom, 2011) high-quality communication (Christensen et al, 2006), and overall improved well-being (Bookwala, 2005). Stone & Shackelford (2007), added their voices to the discussion by submitting that marital satisfaction relates to individuals' mental evaluation of the costs and benefits that are associated with being married. According to him, a higher benefit in comparison to the costs signals higher marital satisfaction while greater costs against benefits point to lower marital satisfaction.

In their contribution, Stutzer & Frey (2006), acknowledged that marital satisfaction is intrinsically related to the needs of the parties in the union. He concluded that one's level of marital satisfaction proceeds from a subjective evaluation of how much his or her needs are met in the marital relationship. Harper et al (2000) noted that the definition of marital satisfaction has rather proven to be elusive and it is usually interchanged with phrases such as dyadic adjustment and marital quality. According to them, at the center of marital satisfaction is the ability of individuals in a marital relationship to adjust appropriately to accommodate each other's needs at any given moment. They further submitted that it can relate to an aspect of the marriage such as the quality of communication or to the general functioning of the union.

## **2.1 Factors that Influence Marital Satisfaction**

Marital satisfaction and the factors that predict it are not new to research. As observed by Anthony (2003), Marriage has been at the center of numerous research in the previous decades. Marital satisfaction as a concept has taken the center stage in the academic literature on marriage and family. In their studies, researchers have utilized a wide range of replaceable expressive phrases which included "marital satisfaction", "marital cohesiveness", "dyadic adjustment", "marital happiness", "marital sustenance", and "marital sustainability "marital cohesiveness", "marital happiness", "dyadic adjustment" and "marital stability".



Most studies on marital satisfaction have focused on socio-economic variables. These research endeavors have strived to determine how these variables are related to marital satisfaction. Some of these variables include;

### **2.1.1 Communication**

Burleson and Denton (1997), identified communication behaviors and communication skills as important aspects of communication. To Olson, Larson, & Olson (2009), communication in the context of marriage is characterized by competencies in talking and listening as well as in sharing thoughts. According to Westerop (2002), the bulk of research on communication and marital satisfaction has centered on how communication skills impact marital satisfaction. Findings from some of these research efforts have linked the experience of constant negative communication to strained marital relationships (DiLillo, 2001). Some other research in this area has interrogated how patterns of communication especially in the context of conflict resolution impact the quality of marital experience (Greef & De Bruyne, 2000). Arguments are very common in human relationships and more so in marriages. How couples argue as well as how they express affection to each other have been identified as important influences on marital satisfaction. Huge evidence supports the idea that communication quality is a powerful predictor of marital satisfaction (Bradbury & Karney, 1993; Christensen & Shenk, 1991).

As mentioned earlier, a considerable amount of research has gone into identifying the impacts of communication on marital satisfaction. A 1980 study of nonverbal communication and marital satisfaction by Noller concluded that a connection exists between communication and marital adjustment. In the research, to determine their level of marital satisfaction, participants were subjected to the Marital Adjustment Test which was developed by Locke and Wallace (1959). Findings showed that poor marital adjustment was correlated with poor nonverbal communication and vice-versa. This however raises an important question concerning which of the factors precedes the other. Does better marital adjustment lead to improved communication or do married couples do improved communication produce higher marital adjustment?

In addition, studies by Noller (1980) and Sabatelli et al (1982) identified that compared to men, women are better at nonverbal communication. Effective communication involves the ability to encode and decode information. On average, men are less expressive than women and this predisposes them to more errors when encoding information (Noller, 1980). However, Noller (1980), observed that women do not possess a greater ability at decoding messages than men. He suggested that this might be linked to the fact that men are not excellent at encoding information effectively. More studies have added weight to this discussion by introducing familiarity as an important factor that determines the effectiveness of non-verbal communication between couples (Sabatelli et al., 1982; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). These studies submitted that better communication between couples tends to be achieved as the marriage last longer.

In their study of communication styles and marital satisfaction, Hanzal and Segrin (2009), recognized differences in style of communication to be at the root of marital conflict. They noted that the use of communication styles that are deemed harmful, especially in conflict situations negatively impacts the marital satisfaction of both the user and the receiver. Gottman and Krokoff (1989), observed that certain elements of negative communication such as stubbornness, withdrawal, and defensiveness generate marital dissatisfaction over time, especially when they are displayed by husbands.

Competencies regarding positive and negative communication have been found to strongly predict marital satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2005). Couples who report high marital satisfaction predominantly observe constructive patterns of communication as they strive to avoid or minimize negative ones. Conversely, dissatisfied couples tend to embrace communication styles that are destructive as well as negative strategies for resolving conflict (Bertoni & Bodenmann, 2010; Birchler & Webb, 1977; Bradbury & Fincham, 1992; Houts et al., 2008). Destructive communication and the use of negative conflict resolution styles have been identified as major impediments to intimacy among couples (Eldridge et al., 2007; Pearce & Halford, 2008; South et al, 2010).

A 2006 study by Stanford University identified an important dimension of spousal communication which is referred to as partner appraisal and is defined as a spouse's perception of the other. The study examined three kinds of appraisal which included expectancies for negative communication,

negative attributions for partner behavior, and expectations for partner understanding. The study stressed that the behaviors of marital couples are conditioned by their appraisal of each other. For instance, in situations of conflict, if a wife has an expectation that her husband will demonstrate harsh behaviors, she will immediately assume a defensive posture. On the contrary, if she anticipates a calm and kind behavior from her husband, she will act similarly. The study identified that the expectations of wives give rise to greater personal changes compared to men and this is suggestive that women have more susceptibility to the impacts of their appraisals.

Danesh & Hydarian (2006), identified mutual respect as an important component of communication between spouses. In their study which took place in Qom City, Iran, they sought to ascertain how mutual respect and interest impact marital satisfaction. The study observed a strong positive correlation between shared respect and marital satisfaction. In the same study, the researchers identified three aspects of marital satisfaction which include actions or thoughts that are likely to produce divorce, how much time couples spend together and how often it happens which they refer to as quality of communication, and the spouse's accounts of marital happiness. The study noted these factors have powerful impacts on marital satisfaction throughout a marriage.

Research findings have been very emphatic that the experience of a distressed marital relationship is likely to proceed from frequent negative communication (Gottman & Levensohn, 1992; Vanzetti, et al, 1992; Christensen & Shenk, 1991; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989). Communication styles and not just the contents of communication have been ascertained to predict marital satisfaction. Statistically significant changes in the styles of communication were found to produce even greater positive and negative changes in marital satisfaction levels (Boostan et al, 2008)

### **2.1.2 Level of Education**

In the study of marital stability, many research efforts have investigated education and how it contributes to marital satisfaction. Some studies have established a link between education attainment and marital satisfaction (Shakerian, 2010; Wagheiy et al, 2009; Orathinkal & Vansteenwegen, 2006; Pepping & Halford, 2012). A study conducted in Malaysia by Madanianan & Syed (2013), concluded that couples who are highly educated tend to experience higher marital

satisfaction and improved mental health compared to those with little and no education. Zainah et al (2012), attempted to provide an explanation for this by suggesting that education equips individuals with better social functioning skills which is important for marital success. It then follows that the better the quality of social functioning skills of couples are, the higher their marital satisfaction. On a similar note, Tabatabaei (2012), opined that educated couples possess a better understanding of realities around them and this improves their capacity to constructively address their marital problems.

Heaton (1997), conducted large-scale research which involved 10,000 sample individuals in the United States and observed that the rate of divorce decreases as the level of education increases. Also, it has been observed that the divorce rate among educated women is lower compared to uneducated ones or ones with lower levels of education which strongly suggest that educated women enjoy a higher level of marital satisfaction (Harkonen and Dronkers 2006; Kalmijn, 2013; Martin, 2006; Matysiak et al, 2014; Park, et al, 2009; Raymo et al, 2013). Similarly, scholars have argued that education enhances resources such as cultural, social, financial, and cognitive skills, and these produce positive impacts on marital satisfaction and stability. This is achieved primarily by improving communication and other factors that are important for a relationship to work ( Amato, 1996; Home, 1997; Ono, 1998; Dronkers, 2002). In their contributions, Home (1997), Oppenheimer (1997), and Jalavaara (2003) were unanimous in their agreement that married couples with lower education and income face greater marital strain than those with higher resources.

However, Amato (2010), opined that research is yet to provide us with a comprehensive understanding of why educated women enjoy greater marital satisfaction than uneducated and less educated ones. Becker et al (1997), submitted that education possesses ambiguous consequences for women. Some researchers have concluded that for women, education has more of a destabilizing effect on marriage than a stabilizing impact as it provides them with the necessary resources to exit marriages that they deem unsatisfying (Kreager et al. 2013; Lyngstad and Jalovaara 2010).

The effects of women's education on marital stability occur through economic and non-economic means (Becker et al, 1977). Boertien and Harkonen (2018), argued that as human capital, education

should exert a similar influence on marital stability as other socio-economic factors such as employment, and income. It has been acknowledged by Lyngstad and Jalovaara (2010) and White and Rogers (2000), that evidence clearly suggests that the economic resources of husbands are a major contributor to marital stability. According to them, whether the resources of wives have a similar effect is still a topic of debate. Becker et al (1977), suggested that the education of women can negatively impact marriage stability by decreasing returns to education to a division of labor that is along the line of gender differences. Alternatively, marriage destabilization as a result of women's education can proceed from a reduction in wives' economic dependency on their husbands and this can empower them to leave unhappy marriages (Kreager et al. 2013; Sayer et al. 2011; Schoen et al. 2002).

Researchers who have been on the opposite side of this debate have maintained that the economic resources of wives improve the living standard and financial security of their families. Consequently, they should be a source of marital stability in the same way that the resources of husbands are (Oppenheimer 1997). However, experts believe that evidence of how women's resources such as income, education, and employment contribute to marital stability or instability is conflicting (Ozcan & Breen 2012; White & Rogers 2000).

Some scholars have submitted that educated women have a higher marital attraction compared to uneducated and lower educated ones and this explains their experience of higher marital satisfaction and stability (Harkonen and Dronkers 2006; Kalmijn 2013; Kreager et al. 2013; Matysiak et al, 2014; McLanahan and Jacobsen 2015). Boertien and Harkonen (2018), suggested that the reason for the experience of higher marital satisfaction among educated women can be found in the existence of fewer economic stressors and financial insecurity in their families. Works that revolve around the family stress model such as Conger et al (2010), have attempted socio-psychological explanations of how these stressors create marital disability through negative spousal communication and emotional distress.

Educational differences in relation to marital satisfaction have also been discussed as a product of gender egalitarianism in the family space (Esping-Andersen and Billari 2015; Goldscheider et al, 2015; Kalmijn 2013). Education provides women with greater bargaining power in the share of family responsibilities such as house chores and taking care of children (Bonke and Esping-

Andersen 2011) and this has been found to have a positive impact on marital satisfaction (Cooke 2006; Olah and Gahler 2014).

### **2.1.3 Age**

Shakerian, (2010), and Jose & Alfons (2007), have pointed out a correlation between age and marital satisfaction. In their research, they observed that marital satisfaction decreases as the age of couples increases. Jose and Alfons (2007), suggested that this could be the reason why middle-aged couples experience a greater number of marital problems when compared to younger ones. On a similar note, Gorchoff et al (2008), in their work identified that elderly couples report fewer marital issues compared to middle-aged couples. Tabatabaei et al (2012), argued that the decline in marital satisfaction among couples of middle ages can be explained by an increased level of responsibilities that characterizes this stage of marriage, responsibilities which center on childbirth and raising children. Therefore, it follows that marital satisfaction would increase during old age when the children are grown and have left home

Research efforts into age and marital satisfaction have also focused on the age difference between couples. Rahmani et al (2009), emphasized that the difference in age between couples is a major predictor of marital satisfaction. They noted that this is so as it influences the quality of understanding and sexual experience. However, there is no general understanding among scholars on the age gap that produces the highest level of marital satisfaction. Some scholars have suggested five years difference while others have leaned towards three years (Nasehi et al, 2004). However, Rahmani et al (2011), noticed in their work that marital satisfaction is higher among couples with an age difference of ten years or less compared to those with an age gap of ten years or more. In an attempt to provide an explanation for this, Shirmohamadi (2004), mentioned that increasing age is associated with a decline in sexual desire and ability and this produces incompatibility in sexual expectations. According to him, this results in sexual dissatisfaction which impacts marital satisfaction negatively.

It is important to note that some studies did not ascertain any statistically significant relationship between the age difference of couples and marital satisfaction (Guo & Huang, 2005). Therefore,

it will be wrong to generalize concerning the age difference between couples. While it is commonly observed in some cultures that husbands are older than their wives, in other cultures, this observation is not so common (Zeinab et al, 2016).

In their study of couples' age gap and marital satisfaction which utilized Australian panel data, Lee and Terra (2018), commented that men are likely to enjoy more satisfaction with younger brides compared to older ones. Interestingly, the study further observed that brides are also more satisfied with younger grooms compared to older ones. Furthermore, for both men and women, among couples in different age brackets, marital satisfaction declines as marriage progress relative to those in similar age brackets. The higher level of marital satisfaction reported by men who are married to younger brides and women married to younger grooms in the initial stage of marriage (predominantly within six to ten years) is effaced by this relative decline.

#### **2.1.4 Employment Status**

Research into the relationship between work, marriage, and family has traditionally revolved around the short and long-term impacts of work on the quality of family and the development of individuals (Perry-Jenkins, Reppeti & Crouter, 2000). Near et al (1980), undertook a comprehensive review of literature on work and non-work and presented two conclusions. First, the influence of the structures of work (job features, schedules, and accompanying stress levels) transcends to behaviors and attitudes in non-work environments like marriage, family, and community. Second, conditions of extra work have consequences on the attitude and productivity on the job.

Extensive research efforts have been engaged to identify the impacts of work on marital satisfaction. Rataj and Matysiak (2012), utilized Polish samples to examine family models and their impacts on marital satisfaction. The research focused on two family models which included dual-earner and male breadwinner models. The researchers employed the strategy of panel data which allowed for efficient categorization of families into the models and their relationship with the marital satisfaction of spouses. After the analysis of data, a positive relationship between women's employment and their marital happiness was established. Also, data showed that

women's employment causes a decline in the marital happiness of their husbands. Surprisingly, there was no identified effect of men's employment on the marital satisfaction of their wives. As noted by the researchers, it can be deduced from these findings that the idea of role specialization based on sex is strongly rooted in the consciousness of married men in Poland. The research clearly demonstrates a strong preference for the male breadwinner family type by men in Poland.

Coke, et al (2013), interrogated the relationship between the employment of wives and the divorce rate. The study was a comparative analysis that utilized 1990s aggregate data which were collected from eleven countries. These data were on marriage, the employment rate of married women, divorce rate, together with information on social policy and changes in attitude from these countries of interest. Data analysis results revealed that the rate of divorce is higher in the places where a higher number of wives have jobs and social and political attitudes support the employment of women. It was also observed that in the United State where strong political support for women's employment was lacking, being a part of the labor market increases the chances of divorce among women. No significant correlation between wives' employment and the risk of divorce result was observed in Australia, Italy, the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany. However, in Sweden, Finland, and Norway, it was noted that employed women have a significantly lesser likelihood to divorce compared to women without jobs. The research findings suggest that a greater positive social attitude and political support can significantly lessen or even overturn the risk of divorce linked to the employment of wives.

Edsel (2012), compared the marital happiness of employed married women and housewives. The research utilized the World Value Survey to interrogate if there is a difference in marital satisfaction between these two groups. In relation to the unpaid labor of the housewives, the research categorized paid employment into full-time, part-time, and self-employment. Data analysis revealed no statistically significant difference between the two groups. Instead, the research identified proof that any established difference between the marital satisfaction of the two groups is most likely to be a product of social context as well as culture

In their study of the impact of employment on marital satisfaction and stability, Cook and Gash (2010), collected and compared data from Germany, the United States, and Britain. Data pointed out the existence of variations among these countries. In Germany, it was observed that compared



to full-time employment, part-time work of wives is associated with a higher level of marital stability. In the United States and Britain with strong liberal traditions, no significant relationship was found between the employment of wives and marital stability. However, in the United States, part-time working wives have a lower risk of divorce compared to full-time employed wives. In Germany and Britain, the unemployment of married men has greater negative consequences on marital stability than the employment of wives.

In relation to the employment of women, Bhattarai (2015), argued that the necessity of additional family income remains one of the strongest motivations for women's participation in the labor market. According to him, a woman's income as a contribution to the income of her family attracts greater respect to her from her husband. Furthermore, Omolayo et al, (2013), recognized that women's increased engagement in the labor market demands continuous commitment and dedication. The dual responsibilities of mothers and workers place intense stress on them as they require effective coping strategies and an ability to ensure a balance between personal needs, work, and family (Koos & McLelland, 2009). In his submission, Markus (1990), recognized that the employment of women provides greater prestige for the family as well as strengthens marital stability.

### **2.1.5 Duration of Marriage**

Many cross-sectional studies have pointed out that marital satisfaction observes a curvilinear path. It is at its highest level at the beginning stage of marriage and experiences increasing declines at subsequent stages until the period of retirement when it returns to the level experienced at the earliest stage of marital union (Quadagno, 1999; Rhyne, 1981). Conversely, other research observed greater stability across the length of marriage (Weishaus & Field, 1988). Findings from other studies indicate that the level of marital satisfaction falls with age (Lee & Shehan, 1989).

In their study of marital satisfaction in long-term marriages, Valliant and Valliant (1993), emphasized that long-term marriages are different from short-term ones, especially in relation to their quality. They submitted that motives that motivate marital relationships in young adults ages are different from the ones that sustain them to middle and old ages. According to Kendrick et al

(2002), the impacts of emotional intensity and physical attraction are most profound at the beginning stage of marriage. Kerny & Bradbury (1995), maintained that consequent to the fact that spouses are faced with co-development, the quality of marital interaction, should be more powerful than fixed socio-economic conditions of marriage or changing personality traits in predicting marital satisfaction in long-term marriages. Melton et al (1995) and Quadagno (1999), noted this explains why some couples in long-term marital relationships have effectively managed the experience of marital stressors while many others have been unsuccessful.

Previous studies have identified that age is negatively correlated with marital satisfaction (Buunk, & Yperen, 1991; Lee & Shehan, 1989). However, this argument is based on a very limited number of studies (Dobrowolska et al, 2020). They further noted that while age has a positive correlation with duration of marriage, the two variables should be considered different in how they influence marital satisfaction as they hold conceptualizations that are divergent. Marital duration represents the length of time couples spend in a marital relationship following the establishment of marital union (Dobrowolska, et al 2020). Studies that have interrogated how the age of partners influences their marital satisfaction have centered on the challenges that are associated with the developmental stages of marriage. For instance, mid-life crises (Brim et al, 2004) and the challenge of post-retirement life (Henry et al, 2005). It becomes very pertinent for couples to engage in strong and consistent positive interactions to maintain marital stability in the face of these challenges (Booth & Johnson, 1994; Randall & Bodenmann, 2017).

Studies on the marriage duration and marital satisfaction are bound to produce divergent findings as a consequence of the methodology used which might be negative or U-shape (Kurdek, 1999; VanLaningham & Amato, 2001; Wendorf et al, 2010). To Anderson et al (2003), on the hand, as a marriage progresses, the differences between couples tend to dissipate as their characteristics become more similar and this can improve marital cohesion and stability. On the other hand, declining sexual activities and satisfaction which typically follow the time progress of marriage may negatively impact their marital satisfaction (Schroder & Schmiedeberg, 2015). Bahr et al (1983), and Shapiro et al (2000), in their contribution, submitted that the ages at which couples get married as well as when they had their first child can have powerful effects on their reported marital satisfaction as a result of changes in their domestic responsibilities.

### **2.1.6 Number of Children**

Some studies on the presence of children and marital satisfaction observed a negative relationship between the two variables. These studies identified that the presence of children is correlated with lower quality of marriage (Claxton & Perry-Jenkins, 2008), more severe signs of depression (Evenson & Simon, 2005), higher level of marital conflict (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003), and lower experience of marital satisfaction (Keizer et al, 2010), especially in cases where pregnancy and child upbringing were not planned for (Cox et al, 1999).

Conversely, some studies observed a positive or no correlation between the number of children in a marital union and marital satisfaction (Nelson et al, 2013; Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Cox et al, 1999; Shapiro et al, 2000). The study of Yu et al (2019), which involved the analysis of a dataset of 72,668 married adults concluded that the experience of parenthood has a positive relationship with increased subjective well-being. In addition, Kohler et al (2005), made an interesting observation in their study. Their study presented evidence that among men and women (especially women) marital satisfaction increases with the birth of the first child. However, the emergence of subsequent children does not have a similar effect and it is even associated with decreased marital satisfaction among women.

In their contribution to the discussion, Twenge et al (2003), in their study which employed meta-analysis concluded that marital satisfaction among couples decreases as the number of children increases. However, more recent studies, especially in western countries, have come up with contradictory conclusions (Tao, 2005; Dillon & Beechler, 2010; Wendorf et al, 2011). Twenge (2003) and Jackson et al (2014), have joined the debate by emphasizing that serious caution should be applied in attempts to generalize the findings of these studies as they were concentrated on western countries.

The quality of sexual intercourse has been long identified as a key predictor of marital satisfaction and more married men report higher sexual satisfaction compared to married women (Asamarai et al, 2008; Bernard, 1971; Schumm et al, 1998). Also, the challenges of parenthood and its consequences on marital satisfaction hold greater strength for women compared to men (Dew & Wilcox, 2011; Twenje et al, 2003; Gjerdingen & Chaloner, 1994). The equality theory holds the argument that participation in a relationship that is characterized by inequality is a predictor of

stress (Hatfield, 1979). In such a relationship, partners who enjoy more of the benefits and the ones with lesser benefits may express feelings of dissatisfaction (Utne, et al,1984). Similarly, social role theory maintains that role expectations in relation to the maintenance of the home are different for men and women (Eagly et al, 2000).

The responsibility of providing for the family is a social expectation of men while women are socialized into roles that involve housekeeping and taking care of children. However, differing social roles do not in any way suggest that both sexes enjoy contentment with the division of labor (Kowal wet 2001). The paper ahead to posits that in some situations, couples experience feelings of inequality between their commitment to the marriage and their children's upbringing. In relation to this, Gjerdingen and Chaloner (1994), made a connection between the marital dissatisfaction of mothers to the subjective feeling of insufficient support in household chores from their husbands. Dew and Wilcox (2011), further affirmed that this insufficient support from husbands produces a decline in the amount of quality time that couples spend after childbirth which negatively impacts marital satisfaction, especially among women. Kowal (2021), has extended this argument by submitting that this feeling of dissatisfaction can increase as more children are produced in the marriage. Marcinkowska, et (2018), further noted that commonly, an increasing number of childbirths produces a declining level of attractiveness in women. According to them, the feeling of being less attractive can be a source of lower marital satisfaction among women

### **2.1.7 Marital Satisfaction between Men and Women**

Various studies have established an influence on marital satisfaction by gender ((Tucker & Aron, 1993; Aron & Henkemeyer, 1995; Nadia & Shahid, 2012)). Nadia & Shahid (2012), observed that Patriarchal values create different gender roles for men and women. Similarly, Knox and Schacht (2000), have pointed out that the different gender roles have huge impacts on the lives of males and females. He noted that in a stereotypical fashion, words such as objective, rational, decisive, and independent have been associated with men. Women on the other hand have been assumed to have a capacity to be more emotional, submissive, expressive, affectionate, caring, and better at handling domestic activities. Furthermore, these differences also have consequences on their feelings of marital satisfaction.

Studies have observed greater satisfaction for men compared to women (Bernard, 1972; Lee, 1999, Kamp et al, 2008; Myers & Booth, 1999; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2009; Whiteman et al, 2007). Zoller and Williams (1987), noted that women report lesser satisfaction in their marriages than men. This was also supported by the findings of Connides (2001). In a similar vein, In the United States, national surveys of married couples which were conducted in 1980 and 2000 revealed that, on average, women enjoy lower levels of marital satisfaction when compared to men (Amato, Booth, Johnson, & Rogers, 2007). Findings by Rhyne (1981), indicate that women have greater value for companionship and affection than men and poor marital satisfaction among them follows a feeling of emotional neglect by their husbands.

Nadia and Shahid (2012), proposed that healthy interaction between couples is fundamental to harmony. They pointed out the variation in the marital satisfaction of men and women is more of a question of degree rather than kind. Put differently, the factors that influence marital satisfaction across men and women are dominantly common, but the impacts of these factors vary. Among women, a higher degree of marital satisfaction is closely linked to sexual satisfaction. His study on the gender difference in marital satisfaction in Pakistan among couples in Pakistan revealed that factors such as perception of self, compromise, relationship with in-laws, sexual satisfaction, income level, and communication were important predictors of marital satisfaction among men. Equally, he identified income level, ability to compromise, and communication as the strongest predictors of marital satisfaction among women. In his work, Koehne (2000), identified the feeling of intimacy which is defined by closeness to one's marital partner as the chief predictor of marital satisfaction among men. Furthermore, a study conducted by Rhoades (1994), identified the quality of relationships with the children as the most important predictor of marital satisfaction among men and this is followed by family and friends' approval of the marriage, quality of communication, and psychological health.

Bernard (1972), made an attempt to provide a feminist rooted causal explanation of the existence of gender differences in marital satisfaction. The power difference between men and women has given rise to a nature of marriage where women are oppressed and dominated by men and this oppression mirrors the subjugation that women experience in all forms of social relationships with men (Ferree, 1990). The superior role that is played by men in the context of marriage is demonstrated by their almost total control of family income and a lower risk of experiencing

marital violence (Finlay & Clarke, 2003; Walker & Thompson, 1995). Given that women play a subordinate role in marital relationships, their experience of lower marital satisfaction in comparison to men is only a natural consequence (Ball, Cowan, & Cowan, 1995; Brezsnyak & Whisman, 2004; Gray-Little, Baucom, & Hamby, 1996).

Bernard's (1972), provocative argument that men enjoy greater benefits from marriage compared to women stimulated greater research attention to gender differences in marital satisfaction (Schmitt et al 2007). Schmitt (2007), further noted that relations that are specific to gender, reciprocity, and social support appear to impact differently the marital satisfaction of men and women. Gagnon et al (1999), further observed that perceived marital support is more important to women's marital satisfaction and subjective well-being compared to those of men. This line of argument was strengthened by the findings of Acitelli and Antonucci (1994). Following this, Schmitt (2007), submitted that it is only logical to anticipate that interactive behavior as a predictor of marital satisfaction will hold more power for women than men.

However, existing literature suggests that the power gap in marital relationships has narrowed in the course of the past few decades. A 2007 national survey that was conducted by Amato et al, reported a reduction in the number of marriages from the late 1980s to the early 2000s. the study revealed a 17% increase in the number of women who claimed that they were significantly involved in decision-making between 1980 and 2000. Therefore, to better our understanding of why gender differences exist with concern to marital satisfaction, more research efforts need to be done especially with a focus on today's marriage characteristics.

Conversely, there are studies that reported no difference in marital satisfaction between men and women (Broman, 2005; Kurdek, 2005). In their study, Gager and Sanchez (2003), utilized data from the National Study of Families and Households to test the hypothesis that subjective marital evaluations and divorce vary by gender. The study identified no significant differences between the marital satisfaction of men and women. The study further compared the paired scores of the marital happiness of husbands and wives and it was observed that an overwhelming majority of the couples had an exact score.

Correspondingly, Broman (2005), after the analysis of data from the American Changing Lives Survey observed no statistically significant difference in gender in relation to marital satisfaction.

Findings of studies that examined gender differences in marital satisfaction have been hugely inconsistent (Broman, 2005; Umberson et al, 2006). Notwithstanding, many of these studies produced findings that suggest a lower experience of marital satisfaction among women when compared to men. Vessey & Howard (1993), observed that in marital relationships, women are more likely to initiate marriage counseling compared to men and this occurs as much as 73.2% of the time (Doss, Atkins, & Christensen, 2003). In addition, among couples in marriage therapy, it has been noted that women generally report more marital problems (Miller, Yorgason, Sandberg, & White, 2003). Furthermore, evidence exists that shows that women are more likely than men to commence divorce cases (Montenegro, 2004; Rokach, Cohen, & Dreman, 2004),

## **2.2 Trends in Multi-Cultural Marriages In Korea**

The government of Korea began the compilation of data on foreign marriages in the country in 2000. In that year, the percentage of international marriages in the country stood at 3.4. There was a sharp increase in the figure to 4.5 percent in 2001, and in 2002, it reached 4.9 percent. 2002, 2003, and 2004 so the numbers increase further to 4.9%, 8.1%, and 11.2%. 2005 saw it reach its peak at 13.4% which translated to 42,356 of the 314,304 marriages in that year (Kim, 2021).

However, subsequent years saw a decline in the figures. In 2009, it fell to 10.7% and declined further to 10.4% in 2010. Similarly, from 2011 to 2015, it decreased to 9%, 8.6%, 8%, 7.6%, and 7% respectively. After its worst decline in 2015, there was a reversal as the figure increased slightly in 2016 to 7.3%. This increase remained steady as the numbers grew to 7.8% in 2017, 8.8% in 2018, and 9.8% in 2019 (Kim,2021).

The year 2020 witnessed another plunge as the number dropped to 7.1% which translated to 15,341 of the 213,503 marriages that took place in the country that year. For the five-year period of 2016-2020, the 2020 figure was the lowest. Also, it is important to mention that between the 18 years period 2003 to 2020, it was the second-lowest, only bettering the 2015 figure of 7%. (Kim, 2001). Experts have credited this fall to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic which resulted in a reduced movement of people, especially across national borders. Furthermore, these experts have

commented that such a decline will persist as the world continues to grapple with the socio-economic challenges of the pandemic (Kim, 2021)

However, some analysts believe that a reversal in fortune should be expected in subsequent years. Their prediction is based on the declining natality rate in Korea. According to them, marriage between Koreans and foreigners remains one of the effective ways to arrest the country's childbirth issues. In recognition of this, the government has continued to provide different support structures to encourage this kind of marriage (Kim, 2001).

A majority of international marriages in Korea have involved international brides. For example, of the 15,241 cross-cultural marriages that took place in Korea in 2020, 11,100 which represented 73% were between native Korean men and foreign brides while 4,200 which equals 27 % involved native Korean women and foreign grooms (Kim, 2021).

The history of foreign brides' marriages in Korea is connected to the country's economic and industrial development. According to Lee (2016), industrialization in Korea produced a huge population shift. Young women moved to cities especially Seoul in the pursuit of education and office jobs. Young men remained in the rural areas to continue with their agricultural enterprises. Around the 1990s, Korea was already facing a huge problem of shortage of brides, especially in rural communities. This motivated the emergence of match-making businesses that serve to link Korean men with foreign brides. Governments at community levels subsidized the services of these companies as a way of assisting Korean men to get married (Lee, 2016).

As mentioned by Sealing (2011), and Elizabeth (2011), a majority of Korean men who utilize the services of these companies are relatively poor village dwellers or economically disadvantaged individuals who live in cities. According to them, these men are motivated to opt for the services of match-making companies because they are less likely to marry native Korean women as most of them have a high level of education and opportunities to advance their careers. As such, they are less inclined to marry these men given the socio-economic differences. Also, the patrilineal culture of marriage in Korea places an expectation on married women to take care of their in-laws and fewer Korean women are willing to embrace these responsibilities. Furthermore, match-making companies have maintained aggressive marketing that is aimed at presenting foreign brides as desirable and a lot of Korean men are buying into it. In addition, is also important to note that



this kind of marriage has received considerable support from subsequent governments in Korea and this has made it more popular among men (Cheng et al, 2011).

Foreign brides in Korea have predominantly come from neighboring Asian countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam, China, etc. Chi (2019), submitted that most of these migrations are motivated by economic reasons as some of these source countries are lesser developed than Korea and as such, they hold comparably lower opportunities for social mobility.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3.0 Research Data and Methodology

This study aims to identify the factors that influence marital satisfaction among foreign brides in Korea. To effectively do this, four research questions and four hypotheses have been put forward. These hypotheses relate to the suggested factors that influence marital satisfaction and how they are correlated.

This is a quantitative study and thus, will utilize quantitative data. The choice of quantitative data rests on two reasons. First, their analysis is more straightforward compared to qualitative data. Second, the study needed a relatively large dataset and this was produced by quantitative research. Also, the dataset used for the study was secondary, and this was a consequence of the limitations that made the collection of primary data almost impossible. These limitations included insufficient time and weak knowledge of the Korean language which is the major language of communication in Korea.

Data from the 2017 Marriage Brokerage Survey were utilized for this study (downloaded from <https://kosis.kr>). The survey was conducted by the multi-cultural division of the Korean Ministry for Gender Equality and Family in accordance with Article 2 of the Marriage Brokerage Management Act. It is conducted every three years with the first one in 2014. The survey seeks to identify domestic and international marriage conditions such as the operation of the international marriage brokerage business, the lives of users, and cases of damage. The last one was conducted in 2020 but data from it are yet to be released for public use, consequently, the one of 2017 was used for this study. It should be noted that the Marriage Brokerage Survey is targeted at three categories of research subjects which include match-making companies, foreign brides, and Korean men who are married to foreign brides. This study will utilize the data that were generated from the survey of foreign brides.

### **3.1 Sample Size**

With respect to the survey of foreign brides living in Korea, questions were asked to five hundred twelve research respondents who were all foreign brides to elicit information about their marital conditions. This sample was selected from the total population of foreign brides in the country which according to NBC News (2011), has been estimated to be over a hundred thousand. The questions that were asked to the respondents revolved around their socio-demographic details, length of their marriages, the experience of different kinds of conflict, satisfaction with their spouses, their general life satisfaction, and many more. Proportional random sampling by region was used to identify these respondents. They were selected from the seventeen metropolitan cities in Korea. Gyeonggi had the highest representation with ninety-one while Sejong with two representations was the lowest.

### **3.2 The Nature of the Dataset**

The survey utilized the questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. They were distributed face to face by the research team to the respondents who migrated from different countries to Korea such as Vietnam, Cambodia, Uzbekistan, Thailand, Philippines, and others. The questionnaire was close-ended and contained eighty-nine. They bordered on questions on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age, educational qualification, residential area, employment status, and many more. the use of the close-ended questionnaire was ideal for the research as it guided the respondents to provide only responses that were pertinent to the study. Also, its use made data coding and cleaning relatively easy.

Also, there were questions that probed the occurrence of conflict in these marriages. Different kinds of conflicts such as employment-related conflicts, sexual conflicts, conflicts about infidelity, the division of house chores, education of children, family remittances, and many more were interrogated. Furthermore, the questionnaire also contained questions that concerned the satisfaction of these women with their spouses as well as their overall life satisfaction. Questions were also asked concerning their experiences with the marriage brokers that they used. These

questions were targeted at gauging the level of their satisfaction with the services that were provided by these companies.

A few of the questions had responses that were on different Likert scales. For example, the question which probed their level of satisfaction with their husbands had responses that were on a four-point Likert scale of “very satisfied”, “satisfied”, “normal”, and “dissatisfied”. The same was also applied to the question on their satisfaction level with the services of the match-making companies.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

Descriptive analysis was done to quantitatively summarize the socio-demographic information of the respondents. Furthermore, the Ordinary Linear Regression Model (OLS) was used to test the hypotheses. The choice of the OLS regression model rests on the submission by Mike Jonas Econometrics (2020), that it produces estimations of marginal probability effects that are consistent and unbiased. However, the OLS model has a fundamental flaw which is an absence of limitations on the predictions that it produces especially when the dependent variable is not a continuous variable. The predicted dependent variable does not have to observe a probability interpretation. To put it differently, it does not always conform to the probability interpretation of zero and one.

To resolve this, the probit model was introduced. According to Oscar (2008), this model should be employed when the dependent variable is a dummy. This non-linear regression model forces predicted outputs to conform to the probability range of zero and one. The probit regression model produces marginal effects that when compared to the results of linear regression generate useful information.

However, before the probit model was applied, a check was conducted to confirm that the data met the two other conditions for the application of probit regression in addition to having the dependent variable as a dummy variable. These conditions include having a relatively large sample size and the avoidance of multicollinearity of the independent variables. It was determined that the former condition was met and to check for the latter, a Variance Inflation Factor Test (VIF) was performed.

The test produced a mean score of 1.42 which indicate a moderate correlation among the explanatory variables but is not serious enough to cause concern (Statology, 2020).

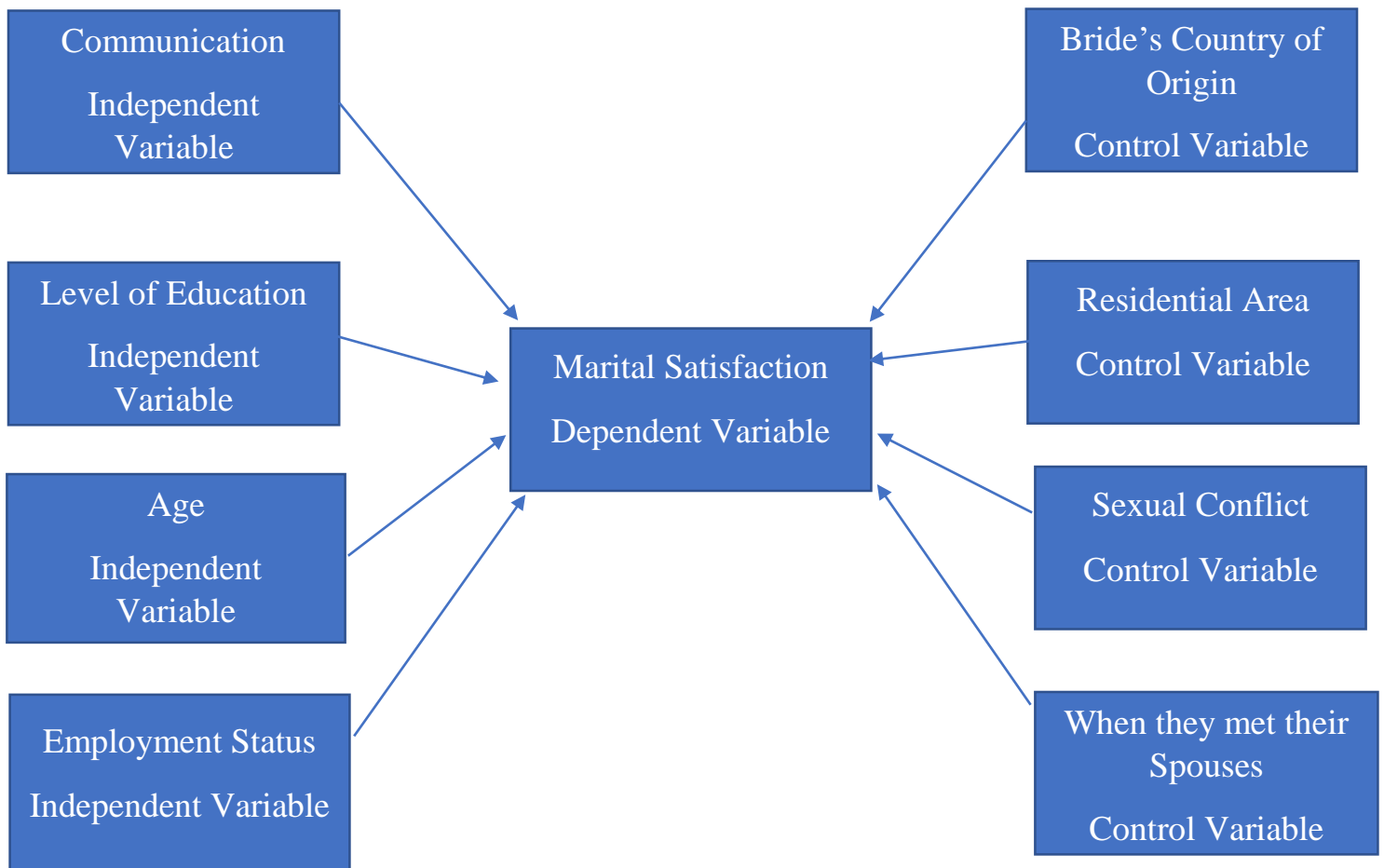
As presented in the research regression model, the probit analysis accommodated the control variables. These variables included the bride's country of origin, residential area, the experience of sexual conflict, and the year they first met their spouses. The use of control variables was important in strengthening the internal validity of the research by minimizing the influence of extraneous variables.

The goal of the hypotheses testing was to determine if the dependent and independent variables were significantly correlated and how. The dependent variable which was marital satisfaction was measured using the responses of the respondents to the question which concerned their satisfaction level with their husbands.

Some of the responses of the respondents were recoded to make them more adequate for statistical analysis. For example, the responses concerning the level of marital satisfaction with husbands were recoded into "satisfied" and "not satisfied", "very satisfied" and "satisfied" were both recoded as "satisfied" (1), while "normal" and "dissatisfied" were recoded into "dissatisfied" (0). In addition, in relation to the responses on their level of education, no education was recoded as 0, elementary education, middle, school, and high school were recoded as "low-level education" (1), while 2-3 years of university education, 4 years university education, and graduate school or higher learning were recoded as "high level of education" (2).

### 3.4 Conceptual Framework

Based on the examined literature, a conceptual framework of the relationship between the variables of interest to the study is presented. The framework underscores the position that the marital satisfaction of foreign brides in Korea is influenced by their communication with their husbands, their level of education, their age, and their employment status. Furthermore, it is understood that there are other factors in the dataset that potentially influence the marital satisfaction of foreign brides. This framework captures them as control variables and they will be included in the data regression analysis to ensure that they do not interfere with the results of the analysis.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 Empirical Strategy

$$\text{Marital Sat}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{com}_{con} + \beta_2 \text{edu} + \beta_3 \text{age} + \beta_4 \text{emp} + \beta_5 \text{cou} + \beta_6 \text{res} + \beta_7 \text{sex}_{con} + \beta_8 \text{year} + \varepsilon_i$$

As specified in the above model, marital satisfaction among foreign brides in Korea is influenced by communication conflict, education level, age of individuals, employment status, country of origin, area of residence, sexual conflict, and year of meeting one's spouse. These variables consist of the dependent, independent, and the control variables and they were all included in the probit analysis. Country of origin, area of residence, sexual conflict, and the year of meeting one's spouse were used as the control variables.

### 4.1 Description and Measurement of the Dependent and Independent Variables

VARIABLE	DEFINITION	MEASUREMENT
Marital Satisfaction of Foreign Brides (dependent variable)	Their subjective evaluation of the quality of their marital relationships	The questionnaire item "How satisfied are you with your husband"
Age (independent variable)	The age of respondents at the time of the survey	19-24 25-29 30-34 35-above

Communication conflict (independent variable)	A disagreement in the sharing and understanding of ideas thoughts, and feelings among cross-cultural couples in Korea usually proceeds from an inability to communicate in a common language	The questionnaire item “Conflict over any of the following (communication conflict?)
Level of Education (independent variable)	Highest educational attainment at the time of the survey	No education  <b>Low-level education</b>  Elementary education Middle school High school  <b>High-level education</b>  2-3 years of university education 4 years of university education Graduate school or higher
Employment Status (independent variable)	Presence or absence of a paid job	The questionnaire item Have worked for more than an hour to make money during July 30, 2017 and August 5, 2017?



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **5.0 Socio-Demographic Variables of Respondents**

A majority of the respondents (58.56%) were between the ages of 19 - 24 while those who were 35 years and above had the least representation with 6.81%. As mentioned earlier, the sample size consisted of respondents who were residents in the 17 metropolitan areas in Korea. With 17.70% Gyeonggi had the highest representation while Sejong city had only 0.39%. With respect to the country of origin, a significant majority of them (74.90%) were from Vietnam while Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, and Japan had a representation each (0.19%) in the sample size. In relation to how they met their spouses, 85% responded that they met their husbands via marriage brokerage companies while only one respondent (0.19%) chose the option “other”. Concerning when they met their husbands, a majority of them (38.91%) mentioned 2016, while 29.65% of them met their spouses in 2014.

Further analysis revealed that 52.2% of them had a higher education while those with no education and the ones with graduate school or higher qualifications had 4% representation each. The question which concerned employment status confirmed that most of them (81,91%) had paid jobs while 16,73% of them did not have jobs. In addition, it was identified that in the course of their marriages, an overwhelming majority of them (91.83%) received translation services while 42 which represented 8.17% of them did not receive such services.

#### **5.1 The Regression Results**

Before I proceed, it is important to mention that in the regression analysis, 0.05 was set as the probability threshold for statistical significance. Also, the level of confidence was set at 95%.

As mentioned earlier, four hypotheses that predict the factors that influence marital satisfaction among foreign brides were presented. These factors include communication conflict, level of education, age, and employment status. To confirm these predictions, a Probit regression analysis was conducted and the results were presented below;

The Z test statistics for the predictor variable “communication conflict” was -2.30 with an associated P-value of 0.022 which points to a negative significant relationship between the variables. This implies that an increase in communication conflict produces a decline in marital satisfaction among foreign brides. This is consistent with previous findings. A 2018 study of working and non-working wives in Indonesia by Renanita and Setiawan identified communication as the strongest predictor of marital satisfaction. Also, the findings of Bradbury & Karney (1993), and Christensen & Shenk (1991), provided additional proof to support this position.

In relation to the second predictor variable “education level”, the calculated Z test statistics was 1.86 and the P-value was 0.062. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between the two variables was accepted. Level of education is not significantly correlated with marital satisfaction among foreign brides in Korea. This result is in sync with the observation of Kim (2007), who studied marital satisfaction among foreign brides who were residents of Seoul.

Further analysis revealed that the Z statistics for the third independent variable “Age” was -1.70 and the related P-value was 0.088. Consequently, it was established that no significant relationship exists between age and marital satisfaction among foreign brides in Korea. Previous studies by Shakerian, (2010), and Jose & Alfons (2007), had identified a negative relationship between age and marital satisfaction. According to these studies, marital satisfaction decreases as married individuals age which suggests that younger people are likely to have higher marital satisfaction than older ones. However, this study failed to confirm this or observe a relationship that is statistically significant.

For the fourth independent variable, “Employment Status”, the Z statistics was -2.24 and the associated P-value was 0.025 which presented evidence that employment status has a negative significant relationship with marital satisfaction among foreign brides in Korea. A negative correlation implies that having a paid job increases the likelihood of low marital satisfaction among

married brides in Korea. This was rather a surprising observation but this study would not be the first to identify it. Coke, et al (2013) in their comparative study of marital satisfaction using data from eleven countries observed that in the United States, having a paid job increases the likelihood of being divorced among women. This suggests that being employed causes a decline in the marital satisfaction of women.

## CHAPTER 6

### 6.0 Limitations of the Study

No study is perfect, and this current one is definitely not an exception. Despite its significance, it is not devoid of limitations. Its major limitation is in the area of measurement, especially in relation to its dependent variable. As previously emphasized, marital satisfaction was measured using a single item on the questionnaire, the item which questioned how satisfied the respondents were with their husbands.

Admittedly, marital satisfaction involves an evaluation of one's relationship with his or her spouse but it goes beyond that. As a concept, its complexity cannot be effectively captured by a single question on a questionnaire. As Durodoye (1997), suggested, marital satisfaction represents a comprehensive subjective evaluation of the "specific components" of marital union. Garcia (1999), expanded this definition by identifying these components which include life satisfaction, satisfaction with family relationships, and satisfaction with one's spouse. The measurement of marital satisfaction in this study reflected only the third dimension. However, it should be pointed out that this was a consequence of the constraint of the available data in the dataset that was used for the research. Additional necessary data in the dataset would have provided for a more comprehensive measurement of marital satisfaction.

Also, the absence of a comparative group was a disservice to this study. The study would have achieved a clearer understanding of the factors that influence marital satisfaction among foreign brides by comparing data on foreign brides to data on native Korean brides. This is especially important in the context of providing a solid foundation for government interventions to make cross-cultural marriages more stable and successful. A comparative analysis will produce better quality insights for the introduction of well-tailored marriage programs which will be targeted foreign brides in the country.

In addition, the study could have benefited more from a larger sample size. Data on the number of foreign brides currently living in Korea is lacking. However, a 2008 estimate put the figure at 130,000 (Korea 4 expats.com). Since then, the number would have most likely increased. A larger

sample size would have been a more adequate representation of the general population of foreign brides in Korea which will make for generalization of findings more accurate.

## **6.1 Recommendations**

As earlier mentioned, the divorce in cross-cultural marriages in Korea has begun to raise serious concerns. Among other things, this suggests a problem with the marital experience of foreign brides in Korea. Cross-cultural marriages in Korea have grown in importance, especially as the country battles with decreasing marital and birth rates among its citizens. In recognition of this, subsequent governments have made concerted efforts to improve the experience of cross-cultural marriages, especially for foreign brides in the country. Such efforts include the expansion of its regulation of matchmaking companies in Korea, the establishment of cultural centers where foreign brides take Korean language and cultural classes to aid in their adjustment process as well as subsidizing the cost of getting married to foreign brides for the native men. This subsidization is very important even for foreign brides as it lessens the financial burdens of establishing marital unions on Korean men which improves their capacity to cater to them at least in the short-run.

Despite the above efforts, the challenge of a relatively high divorce rate among foreign brides in the country still persists. As has been repeatedly mentioned, healthy marital satisfaction is essential for marriage stability. The current study has observed a negative relationship between communication and marital satisfaction. It then follows that reducing communication conflicts between foreign brides and their husbands will improve marital satisfaction, especially for foreign brides. To effectively do this, the following recommendations should be considered;

1. The Korean government should establish Korean cultural and language centers in the countries where significant numbers of foreign brides migrate from. Countries such as Vietnam, China, Cambodia, and Uzbekistan. These cultural centers should specifically target preparing females who are interested in migrating to Korea for the purpose of marriage. In the countries where Korean cultural centers already exist, special units should be created in them that will see to the implementation of this task. In addition, it should be made mandatory that females who intend to travel to Korea for the purpose of marriage

take classes for a period of at least three months and demonstrate an appreciable mastery of the Korean language and marriage-related cultural practices before they are allowed to depart for Korea. This mastery can be tested through standardized assessments.

2. The Korean government should make it compulsory for matchmaking companies to provide language translation services for couples especially doing the stage of familiarization.
3. Even as foreign brides are encouraged and even mandated to learn the Korean language, the Korean government should encourage the husbands of these foreign brides to learn the native languages of these women too. The goal of this is to stimulate better communication and understanding between couples. Also, the husbands' interests in learning the native languages of their spouses might motivate these foreign brides to apply themselves better to learning the Korean way of life most especially, the language.
4. The Korean government should introduce marriage counseling and conflict mediation programs that will be run by experts who are natives of some of the foreign brides' countries. A marriage counselor who is from Vietnam and is fluent in both Vietnamese and Korean will most likely be most effective in counseling couples of Korean and Vietnamese nationalities in times of marital crisis.
5. A lot of research efforts are needed to sufficiently understand how the employment status of foreign brides impacts their marital satisfaction. Based on this, it is imperative that the government of Korea make adequate provisions for research projects that will interrogate the relationship between the variables. Results from these efforts will be useful in designing employment-related policies for foreign brides in Korea.

## **6.2 Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Studies**

Multi-cultural marriages in Korea have been gaining more popularity. The majority of these marital unions involve Korean men and foreign brides. As evident by extant statistics, the divorce rates in these marriages in the country have been on the increase and this begs many questions. Chief among them concerns marital satisfaction in these marriages and the factors that influence it. This question is very important as studies have proven that an increasing divorce rate is associated with declining marital satisfaction. This study has attempted to answer this question at least in part, by focusing on foreign brides.

The study identified communication conflict and employment status as factors that have significant relationships with the marital satisfaction of foreign brides in Korea. Communication conflict was found to be negatively associated with marital satisfaction among foreign brides and the same holds true for having a paid job. These findings have practical implications for the Korean government's policy development to strengthen cross-cultural marriages, as well as professional marriage counseling for multi-cultural spouses in the country.

As earlier mentioned, despite its significance, this study is not devoid of limitations. It is important that these limitations are recognized by future studies and provisions are made to address them. Future studies on marital satisfaction among foreign brides in Korea should employ more robust and comprehensive measurements of marital satisfaction. Established and proven measuring scales such as the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) which typically consist of fourteen questions and the Satisfaction with Married Life Scale (SWML) which infers marital satisfaction level from answers to a list of five questions should be utilized. These measurement scales provide an extensive understanding of marital satisfaction as they capture its dimensions.

Furthermore, future studies on this topic should incorporate native Korean brides as a comparative group. A comparative study of marital satisfaction and the factors that influence it among foreign brides in Korea and native Korean brides has the capacity to produce results that will have far greater consequences for policy interventions to enhance the experience of cross-cultural marriages in Korea. For such a study to achieve it, it should carefully interrogate cultural variations in this kind of marriage and how these variations impact the adjustment quality of foreign brides. Similarly, future studies should include Korean men who are married to foreign brides. Comparing

data from them to those of foreign brides can reveal very important details that can shine greater light on marital satisfaction among foreign brides.

Also, the current study observed a negative relationship between the employment status of foreign brides in Korea and their marital satisfaction level. This contradicts popular findings in the extant literature and demands explanatory research. Future studies on marital satisfaction should make considerable attempts to explore this area by focusing on the nature of employment, the financial benefits, time requirements, and other related factors and how they interact with marital satisfaction among foreign brides. This can produce results that can have huge implications for policy development.



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## List of Tables

### Table 2: Age

	<b>Freq</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cum.</b>
19-24	301	58.56	58.56
25-29	133	25.88	84.44
30-34	45	8.75	93.19
35 and above	35	6.81	100.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>100.00</b>	

### Table 3: Educational Qualification

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cum.</b>
no education4	4	0.78	0.78
elementary education	25	4.86	5.64
middle school	129	25.10	30.74
high school	268	52.14	82.88
2~3 years university education	55	10.70	93.58
4 years university education	29	5.64	99.22
graduate school or higher	4	0.78	100.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>100.00</b>	

**Table 4: Country of Origin**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cum</b>
Cambodia	57	11.09	11.09
China	6	1.17	12.26
Chinese ethnic Korean	26	5.06	17.32
Japan	1	0.19	17.51
Kyrgyzstan	1	0.19	17.70
Laos	1	0.19	17.90
Mongolia	1	0.19	18.09
Philippines	15	2.92	21.01
Russia	1	0.19	21.21
Thailand	2	0.39	21.60
Uzbekistan	15	2.92	24.51
Vietnam	385	74.90	99.42
Other	3	0.58	100.00
<b>Total  </b>	<b>514</b>	<b>100.00</b>	

**Table 5: Residential Area**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cum.</b>
Seoul	61	11.87	11.87
Busan	48	9.34	21.21
Daegu	11	2.14	23.35
Incheon	21	4.09	27.43
Gwangju	7	1.36	28.79
Deajon	18	3.50	32.30
Ulsan	8	1.56	33.85
Sejong	2	0.39	34.24
Gyeonggi	91	17.70	51.95
Gangwon	25	4.86	56.81
Chungbuk	23	4.47	61.28
Chungnam	22	4.28	65.56
Jeonbuk	29	5.64	71.21
Jeonnam	32	6.23	77.43
Gyeongbuk	57	11.09	88.52
Gyeongnam	39	7.59	96.11
Jeju	20	3.89	100.00
<b>Total  </b>	<b>514</b>	<b>100.00</b>	

**Table 6: Employment Status**

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<b>Have you worked for more than an hour to make money between July 30 2017 to August 5 2017</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cum.</b>
worked	86	16.73	16.73
did not work	421	81.91	98.64
I didn't work, but I had a job	7	1.36	100.00
<b>Total  </b>	<b>514</b>	<b>100.00</b>	

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## Regression Results

**Table 7: Liner Regression**

satisfaction	Coefficient	std. err.	t	P> t	[95% conf. interval]	
<b>communication conflict</b>	-.0660502	.0313535	-2.11	0.036	-.1276586	-.0044418
<b>education level</b>	.0816071	.0346219	2.36	0.019	.0135765	.1496377
<b>Age</b>						
25-29	-.0063943	.0329167	-0.19	0.846	-.0710744	.0582858
30-34	-.0735744	.0625246	-1.18	0.240	-.1964328	.0492839
35 and above	-.0612549	.0728783	-0.84	0.401	-.2044578	.081948
<b>Employment Status</b>	-.0762238	.0428072	-1.78	0.076	-.1603383	.0078907
<b>Country of Origin</b>						
China	-.05682	.1488216	-0.38	0.703	-.3492487	.2356086
Chinese Ethnic Korean	-.0287216	.0821798	-0.35	0.727	-.1902017	.1327585
Japan	.0216607	.0593258	0.37	0.715	-.0949121	.1382335
Kyrgyzstan	-.0176271	.0706977	-0.25	0.803	-.1565453	.1212912
Laos	.0074827	.0712022	0.11	0.916	-.1324269	.1473922
Mongolia	-.0842075	.0461567	-1.82	0.069	-.1749036	.0064886
Philippines	-.1154751	.104858	-1.10	0.271	-.3215168	.0905667
Russia	.1463279	.0945916	1.55	0.123	-.0395409	.3321967
Thailand	.0014526	.0524251	0.03	0.978	-.1015607	.1044659
Uzbekistan	.0797631	.0398218	2.00	0.046	.0015148	.1580114

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**Continuation of table 7**

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Vietnam	-.0680557	.0350837	-1.94	0.053	-.1369937	.0008823
<b>Other</b>	.0985886	.0646289	1.53	0.128	-.0284046	.2255817
<b>Residential Area</b>						
Busan	-.0529485	.0775283	-0.68	0.495	-.2052885	.0993915
Daegu	.0891084	.0551194	1.62	0.107	-.0191991	.1974158
Incheon	.052603	.0733141	0.72	0.473	-.0914564	.1966624
Gwangju	.1531369	.0540537	2.83	0.005	.0469234	.2593504
Deajon	-.1355741	.1195071	-1.13	0.257	-.3704008	.0992525
Ulsan	.0294767	.1097751	0.27	0.788	-.186227	.2451804
Sejong	-.3569631	.3492826	-1.02	0.307	-1.04329	.3293632
Gyeonggi	-.0033559	.0586084	-0.06	0.954	-.118519	.1118072
Gangwon	.1280049	.0527936	2.42	0.016	.0242676	.2317422
Chungbuk	.0440129	.0806212	0.55	0.585	-.1144045	.2024303
Chungnam	.1003099	.0622308	1.61	0.108	-.0219712	.222591
Jeonbuk	.0444666	.0838647	0.53	0.596	-.1203243	.2092574
Jeonnam	.0678188	.0705559	0.96	0.337	-.0708207	.2064584
Gyeongbuk	.0829082	.057679	1.44	0.151	-.0304288	.1962453
Gyeongnam	.0207579	.0717514	0.29	0.772	-.1202308	.1617465
Jeju	.0688165	.0674491	1.02	0.308	-.0637183	.2013514
<b>Sexual Conflict</b>	-.1506594	.0940395	-1.60	0.110	-.3354433	.0341245
<b>Year of meeting spouse</b>						
2015	.0132688	.0395102	0.34	0.737	-.0643672	.0909048
2016	.0015958	.0403756	0.04	0.968	-.0777405	.0809322
<b>cons</b>	.8729996	.0719845	12.13	0.000	.7315529	1.014446

**Table 8: Variance Inflation Factor**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>VIF</b>	<b>1/VIF</b>
<b>Communication Conflict</b>	1.13	0.886253
<b>education Level</b>	1.25	0.801817
<b>Age</b>		
25-29	1.23	0.814508
30-34	1.15	0.870410
35-above	1.41	0.708953
<b>Employment Status</b>	1.11	0.899739
<b>Country of Origin</b>		
China	1.29	0.775925
Chinese ethnic Korean	1.92	0.520807
Japan	1.09	0.919616
Kyrgyzstan	1.12	0.892817
Laos	1.11	0.897561
Mongolia	1.12	0.893788
Philippines	1.62	0.618826
Russia	1.13	0.882601
Thailand	1.14	0.875251
Uzbekistan	1.40	0.712781
Vietnam	2.81	0.355288
Other	1.35	0.740239



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**Continuation of table 8**

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**Area of Residence**

Busan	1.74	0.576290
Daegu	1.19	0.837709
Incheon	1.37	0.729571
Gwangju	1.14	0.879032
Deajon	1.35	0.741770
Ulsan	1.14	0.877563
Sejong	1.05	0.955849
Gyeonggi	2.14	0.468046
Gangwon	1.61	0.620303
Chugbuk	1.48	0.677655
Chungnam	1.43	0.701461
Jeonbuk	1.57	0.638243
Jeonnam	1.59	0.627453
Gyeongnam	1.82	0.550579
Gyeongnam	1.59	0.628516
Jeju	1.48	0.676403

**Sexual Conflict|** 1.12 0.896066

**Year of meeting spouse**

2015	1.62	0.616533
2016	1.70	0.588182

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**Mean VIF** **1.42**

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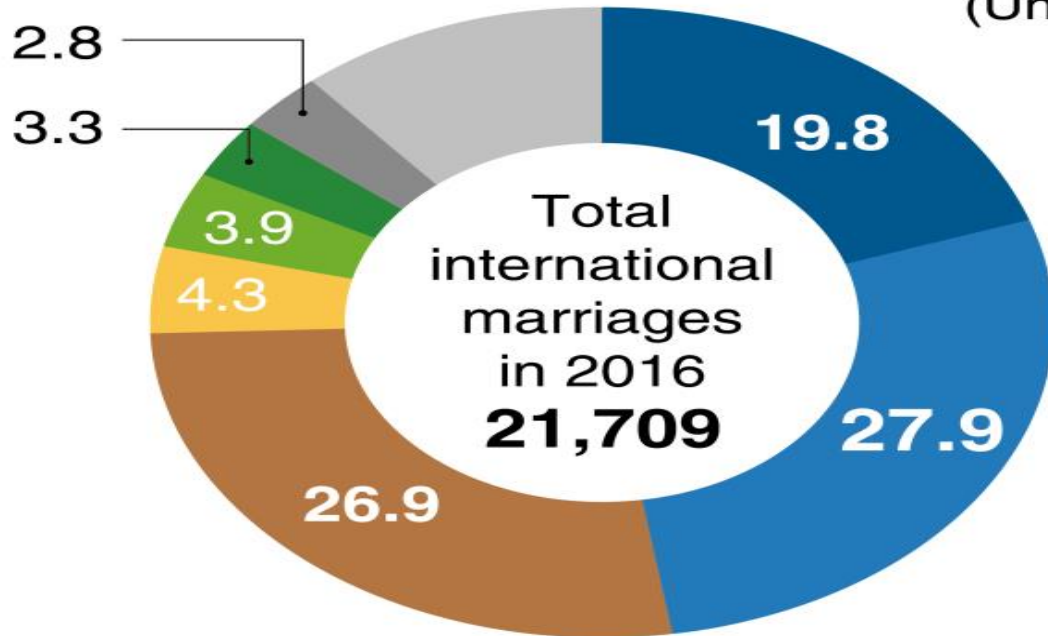
Table 9: Probit Regression

	<b>satisfaction</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>Std. err.</b>	<b>z</b>	<b>P&gt; z </b>	<b>[95% conf. interval]</b>	
Communication Conflict		-.3603334	.1567555	-2.30	0.022	-.6675686	-.0530982
Education Level		.4086781	.2193745	1.86	0.062	-.021288	.8386442
Age		-.1374041	.0806525	-1.70	0.088	-.29548	.0206719
Employment Status		-.4141272	.1850392	-2.24	0.025	-.7767974	-.051457
Country of Origin		-.0338231	.0197746	-1.71	0.087	-.0725806	.0049344
Residential Area		.0355709	.0146599	2.43	0.015	.006838	.0643038
Sexual Conflict		.5495781	.2935603	1.87	0.061	-.0257895	1.124946
Year of meeting spouse		-.0246858	.0964524	-0.26	0.798	-.213729	.1643573
_cons		50.02241	194.3328	0.26	0.797	-330.8628	430.9076

# Married into South Korea

International marriages by wife's nationality

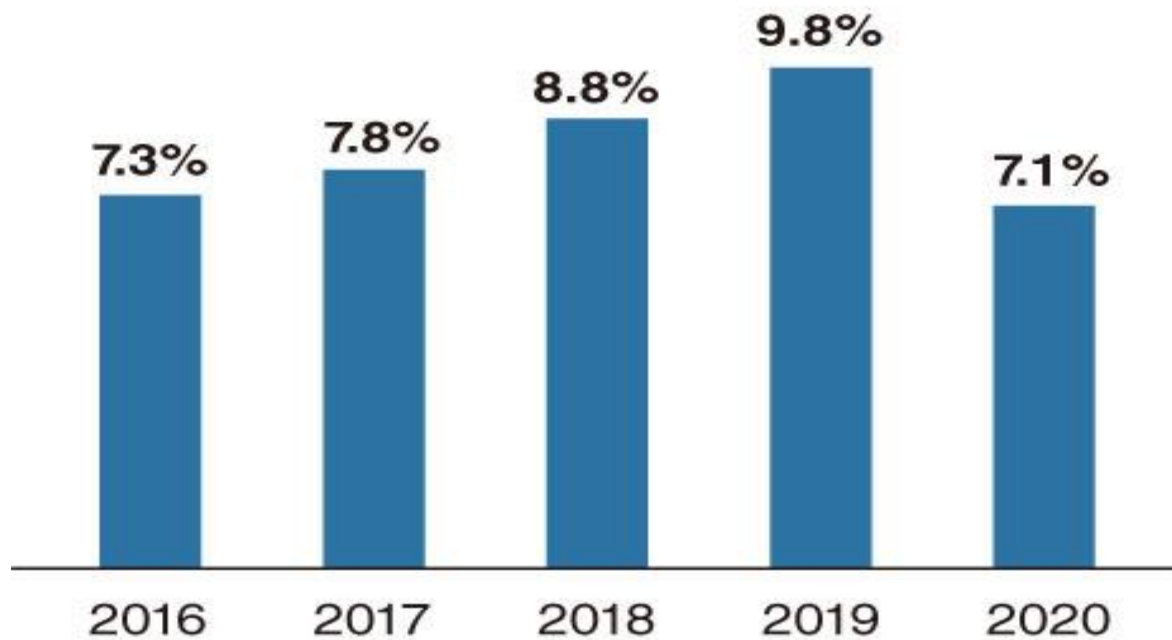
(Unit: %)



source: Statistics Korea

## South Koreans' international weddings

(Share of total marriages)



Source: Statistics Korea