

**Marital Quality and Marital Satisfaction in Protestant Haitian Americans vs. Non-  
Christian Haitian Americans**

by

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### **Abstract**

The current study examined perceptions regarding marital satisfaction as described by Protestants Haitians Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans. Participants were selected from married Christian and non-Christian couples that have been married for over five years within the age range of 25-53. The study used the Religion-Adapted Cognitive Behavioral Therapy theory (R-CBT) framework. R-CBT is a well-known theoretical framework that integrates religious interventions in the therapeutic relationship to educate clients about the triangular relationship between thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and cognitive restructuring (de Abreu Costa & Moreira-Almeida, 2022). Religion-Adapted Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (R-CBT) incorporates cognitive behavioral therapy methods from the perspective of the clients' organized system of beliefs. It also integrates practices that connect them with the sacred or God (de Abreu Costa & Moreira-Almeida, 2022; Moreira-Almeida & Koenig, 2006). The researcher used a qualitative descriptive research design because this methodology is used to understand how people make meanings of a given phenomenon or situation. Qualitative descriptive qualitative research design does not conform to a particular research process or procedure, making it possible for the researcher to use different methods in collecting and analyzing data (Patton, 2014). The study findings provided insights into factors influencing marital quality and satisfaction. The study findings also presented limitations, implications for stakeholders, and recommendations for future research.

*Keywords:* religion, cognitive behavioral therapy, marital quality/satisfaction, Haitian American

### **Dedication**

To Djenny Lamour: darling, dear, devoted.

With God's help, my love for you shall remain forever.

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The successful completion of my doctoral journey has been possible with the support of Djenny Lamour, my beloved wife, who encouraged and inspired me to stay on course to fulfill all the requirements.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

R-CBT.....	Religion-Adapted Cognitive Behavioral Therapy theory
CBT.....	Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
IPA.....	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
EMS.....	Marital Satisfaction Scale
EMSS.....	Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale
KMS.....	Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale
MSI-R.....	Marital Satisfaction Inventory
RCI-10.....	Religious Commitment Inventory
DRS.....	Dimensions of Religiosity Scale
IRB.....	Institutional Review Board

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Background Information**

Researchers have long desired to know and understand the relationship between religion and marriage quality and satisfaction (Sorokowski et al., 2019). Such an interest is necessary for several reasons. First, religion has been part of the human race since the beginning of human history and still plays a significant role and influences many people (Dickson, 1992; Clottes, 2006; Tarakeshwar et al., 2003). Second, nearly 82% of people worldwide professed to be religious, influencing many aspects of their lives, including marriage satisfaction (Sorokowski et al., 2019). Third, religion is a source of information and principles that are the basis of many peoples' beliefs, norms, and values (Zarean & Barzegar, 2016). Therefore, increasing our knowledge and understanding of how religion may influence marriage quality and satisfaction is vital. This study will examine the relationship between relationship and marriage quality and satisfaction as perceived by Protestant Haitian American and Non-Christian Haitian American couples living in Florida.

Several studies examined the relationship between religion and marriage, focusing on different dimensions such as church attendance and homogeneity of faith (Brown et al., 2008; Vaaler et al., 2009). However, only some studies examined how religion impacts marriage

satisfaction, especially among Haitian Americans couples (Sorokowski et al., 2019). While most studies attempted to assess the relationship between religion and church membership or church attendance, there is still a scarcity of data on how different aspects of married life (e.g., level of education, the arrival of children, income, and employed wives) affect marriage quality positively or negatively (Stellway, 2019). Moreover, those studies provided mixed data findings. While some argued that religious people have higher marriage quality and satisfaction through practicing their religious beliefs such as prayer, regular church attendance, and forgiveness (Mahoney et al., 2008; Schramm et al., 2012), others noted no correlation between religion and marital quality and satisfaction (Al-Othman, 2012; Dabone, 2012; Fard et al., 2013; Olson et al., 2016). Those findings suggested no definitive conclusions about marital quality and satisfaction between religious and non-religious people (Sorokowski et al., 2019). This study will compare how religion may influence marriage quality and satisfaction among Protestant and Non-Protestant Haitian American couples.

Marital satisfaction continues to be a social issue of concern across the globe (Karney & Bradbury, 2020). Limited research focused on marital satisfaction among American Haitians (Baptist et al., 2019). Little research suggests that American Haitians are likely to report a lower marital quality and satisfaction level than any other group in the United States (Vazquez et al., 2019). In addition, research shows that protestant Haitian Americans are likely to report reduced divorce rates compared to non-Christian Haitian Americans (Goodridge, 2018). Studies of Haitian Americans show that higher levels of warmth and lower hostility between protestant Haitian couples are characterized by increased marital quality and satisfaction (Karney & Bradbury, 2020). However, an effort to study, document, and understand why marital

satisfaction for non-Christian Haitian Americans is lower than for protestant Haitian Americans remains limited.

Some scholars have addressed the topic from a different perspective. For instance, Karney and Bradbury (2020) studied marital satisfaction among the Haitian community in the United States from a socioeconomic perspective. The study findings indicated that most Haitian American couples have lower marital satisfaction attributed to low income or low socioeconomic status (Karney & Bradbury, 2020). Vazquez et al. (2019) reported comparable results to establish a link between poverty and reduced warmth among spouses among American Haitians. In addition, Morton (2021) found that residential stability could result in lower marital satisfaction among Haitian American low-income earners.

Surprisingly, research on marital quality and marital satisfaction among Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans in the United States remains scarce (Fahimdanesh et al., 2020). Most studies on Haitian American life fail to include marriage satisfaction in their index (Baptist et al., 2019). In addition, existing research has majorly focused on an issue related to migration, identity, social discrimination, and socioeconomic status among Haitian Americans (Fahimdanesh et al., 2020). Studies have yet to address fundamental issues about marital quality and satisfaction. Little known about this specific population depends on anthropological or ethnographic research of certain Haitian American people living in the United States (Vazquez et al., 2019). The present study explores perceptions of marital quality and satisfaction described by protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans in the United States. The study places particular importance on the influence of religiosity on marital quality and marital satisfaction.

Many studies showed that religious commitment and practice contributed to marital satisfaction. More religious couples are happier than non-religious couples, and religious couples have more substantial marital responsibility, influencing their marriage satisfaction (Davies, 2011; Call & Heaton, 1997; Sullivan, 2001; Aman et al., 2019). Most studies examining the relationship between religion or religious commitment and marriage satisfaction have been conducted in countries such as the United States, Canada, and other first-world countries, focusing mainly on their ethnicity (Aman et al., 2019). However, there is a gap in the literature about Protestant Haitian American and Non-Protestant Haitian couples' communities living in the United States. This study seeks to fill the gap by investigating the participants' perceptions through a qualitative research method.

Additionally, studies showed a link between religious monogamy and marital satisfaction. They found that husbands whose wives had highly religious beliefs of the same denomination experienced a greater level of marriage satisfaction than husbands who had wives with weaker religious views of different denominations (Heaton & Pratt, 1990; Hwang et al., 2021). Those studies suggested that couples with similar religious beliefs and denominations contributed to marital satisfaction. While many studies showed the significance of spiritual monogamy in achieving marriage satisfaction, they overlooked women's experiences in such marriages (Nisa, 2011). This current study may provide vital data about the marriage of Haitian American wives whose husbands share similar religious views.

### **Situation to Self**

The acquisition of the data from this study is my top priority for several reasons. First, the findings will benefit the academic environments to develop and implement effective therapeutic

interventions to help Haitian American couples achieve their marriage goals. Second, the results may provide religious leaders with tools to better equip Christian Haitian American couples to reach satisfying relationships. Third, I am interested in understanding how religion influences the marital satisfaction and quality of my fellow Haitian American couples, especially non-protestant couples. Integrating biblical tenets into marriage improves marriage quality and satisfaction to glorify God based on my experiences with the couples I served. I provided mental health counseling to religious and non-religious couples. I received positive feedback from them for the skills and biblical principles that they learned to strengthen the quality and satisfaction of their relationship. Fourth, the data findings could help family therapists consider implementing religious beliefs and practices in counseling to solve marital conflicts to increase marriage quality and satisfaction. I attest to the efficacy of integrating biblical principles into counseling during my practice as a pastor and licensed mental health counselor. Finally, it is crucial for me, as Haitian American, to collect the data from the participants to encourage researchers to further consider this demographic population for more findings. That will add more data findings to the literature review about Protestant Haitian American and Non-Protestant Haitian American couples.

As a local church pastor for over 20 years, I have witnessed firsthand the impact of spiritual beliefs such as prayer, forgiveness, and confessing shortcomings among couples on marriage quality. Several married couples who attend my church attribute the success of their marriages to nurturing their relationship with God. I advocate using biblical principles and research-based evidence to equip marital couples to manage life's challenges with strength and

grace to live their best lives. I believe pastoral counseling in couples and biblical inputs can transform their marriages to reflect the relationship between Jesus and his church.

Several research-based premarital and marriage assessments are available to help clergy and mental health professionals collect relevant information about the dynamics of relationships and marriages to develop effective therapeutic interventions to help couples foster healthy relationships.

I have seen the effectiveness of pre/post-marital counseling in helping couples increase their marriage quality in my practicum as a licensed mental health counselor in Florida. My experiences include providing married couples the necessary skills to build healthy relationships and enhance marital satisfaction. It allows fiancée and spousal couples to learn and apply biblical principles to develop and maintain healthy relationships that honor God first. Religious communities have traditionally sought to provide spiritual solutions for those couples whose marriages are in trouble. Knowing and using biblical principles with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit is the spiritual backbone of the Christian life.

Different cultures have different views about certain practices, words, and beliefs. Haitian culture is no exception. My upbringing within the Haitian community and academic experiences help me note two different viewpoints about what people believe to be protestant, non-protestant, Christian, or non-Christian. My educational background teaches me that Protestant churches follow the Reformation's teachings or principles and separate themselves from the Roman Catholics. Those churches include Wesleyan, Baptist, Church of God, Methodist, etc. Culturally, most Haitians share the same belief as me. However, traditionally, most Haitians do not consider Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and other groups closely related to Roman



Catholics as Christians. They only view Evangelical groups as Christians. Being aware of the Haitian cultural view about Christianity, I will exclude Roman Catholics from this study and focus on Evangelical Christians and non-Christians. I take this precautionary step because of my cultural sensibility to the Haitian community to appreciate cultural differences.

### **Problem Statement**

Nearly 80% of Americans will eventually marry, as reported by the 2020 US Census Bureau (Fahimdanesh et al., 2020). Reflecting on the significance of this total institution, inquiry into marriage and the resulting marital satisfaction has attracted a long history of researchers. The problem is that the literature review provides very little information about perceptions regarding marital quality and satisfaction as described by Protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans (Baptist et al., 2019). However, from the basic demographic information gathered from the census report, little is known about marital quality and marital satisfaction perceptions among Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans (Baptist et al., 2019).

Furthermore, about 94% of Haitian Americans reported a religious affiliation to Christian denominations, 38% identified as Catholic, and 14% identified as Adventist (Nicolas et al., 2007). Because of such predominant religious beliefs among Haitian Americans, more data must be collected on whether religion influences marriage quality and satisfaction positively or negatively. This current study will provide findings to help understand the role of religion in achieving marriage quality and satisfaction as described by Protestant Haitian American and Non-Christian Haitian American married couples. Such results encourage researchers to conduct rigorous qualitative studies among that demographic population for more excellent data findings.

The prevalence of the divorce rate is another problem that justifies the importance of this study. Schweizer (2019) argued that marital dissatisfaction leads to a high rate of divorce among African American. While religious leaders presided over 90% of wedding ceremonies to build and maintain satisfying relationships using biblical resources, a 50% divorce rate was noted (Brown, 2019). Researchers questioned the efficacy of pre-marriage counseling that ministers conducted with religious couples equipping them with biblical and interpersonal skills to successfully address the challenges that all married couples face in their marriages (Alaf et al., 2017; Baker, 2019; Mortazavi et al., 2020). Additionally, findings found that couples who effectively learn and use biblical principles in their marriage are more likely to have a satisfying marriage (Bawa, 2018 & Shearin, 2016).

Moreover, studies suggested that using biblical teachings could increase the ability of couples to solve problems, become assertive communicators, share marital responsibilities, and give and receive love (Bawa, 2018 & Shearin, 2016). Therefore, it is vital to help religious couples understand the role of biblical principles in experiencing marriage quality and satisfaction. There is little data in the literature about implementing biblical principles among Protestant Haitian and non-Protestant Haitian American couples to examine the relationship between relationship and marriage satisfaction and quality. Given the high divorce rate, this qualitative study will examine how religion contributes to marriage quality and satisfaction as perceived by Protestant and Non-Protestant Haitian American couples.

### **Purpose of study**

This qualitative descriptive study explores perceptions regarding marital quality and satisfaction as described by Protestants Haitians Americans and non-Christian Haitian

Americans. Existing research underlines several reasons to conduct a study focusing on Haitian Americans, including the increasing number of Haitian Americans in the United States, such as New York, Chicago, and Michigan. Between 1990 and 2020, the Haitian American community in the United States rose by nearly 67%. Almost 1.2 million Haitian Americans live in the United States (Fahimdanesh et al., 2020). The growth in the Haitian American population has considerably surpassed some established minority groups such as Cuban and Korean (Fahimdanesh et al., 2020). The significant population of Haitian Americans in the United States calls for researchers to investigate their sociocultural factors and the influence of religion on their lives, including marital quality and marital satisfaction.

Additionally, examining the correlation between religion and marital quality and satisfaction is crucial because of individual happiness, social benefits, family well-being, and the need to develop therapeutic interventions to help couples cope effectively with marital challenges to reduce distress and prevent divorce (Bahnaru et al., 2019). Although researchers conducted many studies on the relationship between religion and marital satisfaction, they focused more on other ethnicities but less on the influence of religion on Haitian Americans Couples (Oginyi et al., 2015; Homaei et al., 2016; Abdullah, 2017). Researchers often studied religious aspects, including the faith community, church attendance, religious belief, and religious commitment (Bahnaru et al., 2019), and religiosity has been measured in the context of life satisfaction (Tran et al., 2015; Homaei et al., 2016). This study will investigate whether those religious factors influence marriage quality and satisfaction among Protestant and Non-Protestant Haitian American married couples.

### **Study Rationale**

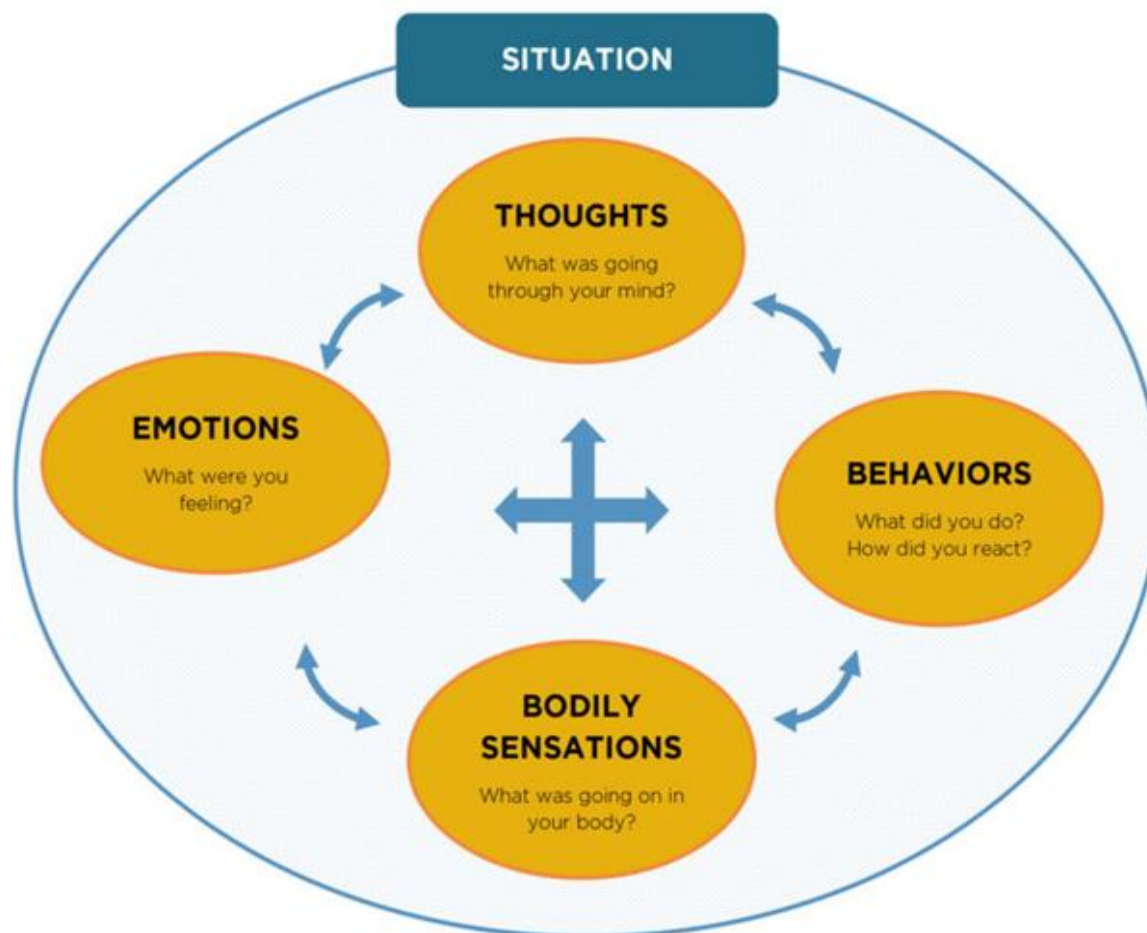
Haitian Americans have diverse religious practices that define their deity (Orellana, 2021). Among Haitian Americans, religiosity and spirituality occupy the center stage of their lives. Religion dictates what an individual should do, eat, love, relate to, and behave (Torchon, 2020). Most importantly, religious practices dictate how American Haitian perceives marriage, love, family stability, and overall marital life, including views toward marital quality and satisfaction (Fahimdanesh et al., 2020). There is a need to understand how protestants and non-Christian Haitian Americans consider marital quality and happiness based on their religious practices (Vazquez et al., 2019). Most Haitians in the United States still use Vodou as their primary form of religious expression, while others have converted to Christianity in different protestant churches (Orellana, 2021). Different religious affiliations make this a significant rationale for investigating marital quality and marital satisfaction perceptions between Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans (Orellana, 2021).

Additionally, several studies have called attention to religion within the Haitian community in the United States (Torchon, 2020). The differences in religious affiliation among this demographic population present an area of research to understand the influence of religion on marital satisfaction to enhance a highly diverse religious community (Orellana, 2021). This study will explore perceptions regarding marital quality and satisfaction as described by protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans to address this gap in the literature.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The researcher will use the Religion-Adapted Cognitive Behavioral Therapy theory (R-CBT) for the present study. R-CBT is a theoretical framework that integrates religious interventions in the therapeutic relationship to provide psychoeducation about the triangular relationship between thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and cognitive restructuring (de Abreu Costa & Moreira-Almeida, 2022). The religious aspect of R-CBT promotes religious activities, including behavioral activation, prayer, religious beliefs, and coping techniques (de Abreu Costa & Moreira-Almeida, 2022). Researchers use evidence-based interventions to address individuals' cultural and spiritual values (Kirmayer & Ban, 2013). Studies found religion-adapted psychotherapy effective in helping clients create meaning (Pargament, 2011; Lim et al., 2014), use coping resources, and build resiliency (Zimpel et al., 2015). Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is the most commonly used religion-adapted psychotherapy and shows effectiveness (Pearce, 2016). For those reasons, therapists should often consider the use of religion in psychotherapy (Moreira-Almeida et al., 2014, 2016). The following figure provides a clear

understanding of the premise of CBT to deepen understanding of the use of R-CBT:



(Skylandtra, n.d)

Several religions emphasize how our thoughts, behaviors, and emotions relate to one another to influence our lives (de Abreu Costa & Moreira-Almeida, 2022). For example, in the Christian tradition, the Greek word for repent is "metanoia," which means to change your mind or how you think. That was the first message Jesus preached and taught about the gospel of the kingdom of God (Matthew 4:17) (Pearce et al., 2015a, 2015b). In the Jewish tradition, for as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee" (Proverbs 23:7) (Pearce et al., 2015). Furthermore, Islam teaches that Surely Allah only changes

the condition of a people once they change their state ('Qur'an 13:11) (Pearce et al., 2015). Those examples show how many religions teach their followers the importance of renewing the mind. R-CBT includes using CBT procedures from the perspective of the clients' organized system of beliefs and practices that connect them with the sacred or God (de Abreu Costa & Moreira-Almeida, 2022; Moreira-Almeida & Koenig, 2006). The primary goal of R-CBT is to use the clients' beliefs, religious practices, and teachings to help address therapy goals through implementing religious-adapted procedures (de Abreu Costa & Moreira-Almeida, 2022). When individuals find answers to basic questions, they will likely realize a stable sense of hopefulness towards the world and purpose and can discern the meaning of life. Religious beliefs help people to connect with the divine and support them to live without stress and anxiety (Rajaei, 2010). In this study, the researcher will use the Religion-Adapted Cognitive Behavioral Therapy theory to understand how religious beliefs between Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans influence marital quality and satisfaction.

### **Research Question**

Several factors contributed to developing the research questions related to this study. First, the researcher analyzed research question samples from the findings cited in this current study for insights to conceptualize the research questions. Second, the researcher sought the guidance of the dissertation committee for feedback to formulate the questions successfully. Finally, the researcher developed the research question while considering the study's topic, problem statement, purpose, significance, and rationale. The researcher will use the following questions to collect data from the participants to understand their life experiences and perceptions about how religion impacts their marriage quality and satisfaction.

1. What is the difference between how protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans perceive the quality of marriage?
2. What is the difference between how protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans perceive marital satisfaction?
3. What biblical ideals do protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans believe have an impact on marriage quality?
4. What biblical ideals do protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans believe have an impact on marriage satisfaction?
5. What biblical principles do protestant and Non-Christian Haitian Americans believe would impact marriage satisfaction if introduced in counseling?
6. What biblical principles do protestant and Non-Christian Haitian Americans believe would impact the quality of marriage if introduced in a counseling setting?



### **Nature of study**

The researcher has selected a qualitative research methodology. Patton (2014) underscored that researchers use qualitative research methodology when exploring a phenomenon in its current setting using participants' views, opinions, and experiences. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) also noted that qualitative investigators typically turn a studied phenomenon into a given presentation through an interpretive approach and perceive the world for what it is. He selects qualitative research methodology for this study since he intends to explore how protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans describe their perceptions of marital quality and marital satisfaction, making qualitative research most appropriate for the current study.

A qualitative research methodology is also selected for this study because it allows the researcher to collect non-quantifiable data. This study contains detailed descriptions from participants about protestant Haitian Americans' and non-Christian Haitian Americans' perceptions of marital quality and satisfaction. Such information cannot be quantified, making qualitative research methodology appropriate for providing thick descriptions of Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans' perceptions of marital quality and satisfaction.

Merriam and Grenier (2019) described generic qualitative research design as descriptive methodology researchers use to understand how people make meanings of a given phenomenon or situation. Qualitative descriptive research is most appropriate because he intends to collect participants' descriptions of the current topic to enhance its understanding. Qualitative descriptive research design is flexible because it does not conform to a particular research process or methodology, making it possible for the researcher to use different methods in

collecting and analyzing data (Patton, 2014). Given its flexibility, investigators can explore a phenomenon through various research methodologies for a detailed analysis. The researcher will use a qualitative descriptive research design to collect in-depth participant data through probing questions or semi-structured interviews. The aim will be to understand Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans' perceptions of marital quality and satisfaction.

### **Significance of Study**

The current study will be significantly different. First, the study seeks to address the current gap in literature relating to perceptions that protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans have towards marital quality and satisfaction. In so doing, the study findings will provide valuable insights into the influence of religion on marital satisfaction. For instance, therapists and marriage counselors can use such results to introduce religious-based interventions for addressing marital problems and improving satisfaction among couples by identifying if religiosity influences perceptions towards marital quality and satisfaction.

The study findings will also provide insights into factors influencing marital quality and satisfaction. In addition to religion, the study will give non-religious factors influencing marital satisfaction among non-Christians. Individuals might also use societal results to integrate positive behaviors or practices supporting marital quality and satisfaction.

The current study's findings will positively change society because it focuses on understanding how protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans perceive marital quality and satisfaction. The results may help couples improve marital satisfaction and quality, reducing divorce rates.

By identifying religious practices such as beliefs and rituals, the current study will contribute to the theoretical framework by providing empirical results to support the constructs identified in theory as accurate. The study findings will also have theoretical implications. In particular, the results will provide valuable insights into how R-CBT theoretical aspects influence marital satisfaction.

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions refer to what the researcher considers valid when conducting the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). In this study, there are several assumptions that the researcher believes to be true when conducting the research. First, it assumes that participants will be reliable in the study. The reliability of participants contributes to sample sufficiency in qualitative studies. High attrition rates among participants could compromise the credibility of the study findings, especially when the population is nonrepresentative of the larger population. Another assumption is that participants will be honest with their responses. The authenticity and trustworthiness of participants' responses are critical to the credibility of qualitative studies. In this study, participants will be encouraged to be honest with their responses to support the reliability of the study outcomes.

Another assumption is that the selected theory and methodology will provide the required lens for the current study. It presumes that a qualitative method will adequately investigate participants' perceptions and descriptions of marital quality and marital satisfaction between Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans. It also pretends that the selected would provide the theoretical foundations for understanding the different religious constructs influencing marital quality and satisfaction among Haitian Americans.

### **Limitations**

Limitations refer to potential study flaws or weaknesses (Theofanidis, D., & Fountouki, 2018). The first limitations relate to the sample size. This study will recruit a small sample size of 12 to 15 participants. Using a small sample size may be less credible because it may fail to represent the entire population limiting the transferability of study findings to other settings.

Another limitation relates to geographical scope. Only Haitian Americans who live in Palm Beach and Broward County, Florida, will be recruited to participate in the study. The researcher will not use other American Haitians residing in different states, which limits the study geographically. The researcher's research skills will restrict the study because his first formal study and novice skills could affect the study processes. However, to mitigate such limitations, he will consult with the dissertation chair and community member reader with a wealth of field experience.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Marital satisfaction:** Marital satisfaction is an individual's subjective perceptions and subjective evaluations of the general nature of marriage that reflect the degree to which individuals about marriage are present in their marriage (Karney & Bradbury, 2020).

**Marital quality:** Marital quality is broad as global self- or other-reported evaluation of the marriage and behaviors within the marital relationship in terms of positive dimensions (happiness, support, satisfaction) and negative dimensions (conflict, tension, strain) (Sayehmiri et al., 2020).

**Religiosity:** Religiosity refers to people's varying tendencies to commit themselves to religious beliefs, principles, and activities (Agu & Nwankwo, 2019).

### **Summary**

This qualitative descriptive study explores perceptions regarding marital quality and satisfaction as defined by Protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans. While much information is available in the literature review about marital satisfaction across interfaith and inter-race, little is known about perceptions regarding marital quality and satisfaction as described by Protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans. In this chapter, I introduced the study topic and the study problem. Chapter 2 presents a detailed synthesis of the current literature on the subject. Other sections discussed included the study rationale, research question, nature of the study, significance, assumptions, limitations, and definition of terms.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

A limited study focused on marital satisfaction among American Haitians (Baptist et al., 2019). Therefore, it is essential to investigate the perceptions of marital quality and marital satisfaction described by Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans. This qualitative descriptive study explores perceptions regarding marital quality and satisfaction as defined by Protestants Haitians Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The researcher used the World Wide Web and Google Scholar to locate databases needed to obtain peer-reviewed scholarly articles and other publications deemed relevant to the topic of study. He searched several databases, including, Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects, PsycINFO, UpToDate, PubMed, Psycarticles, ProQuest, PsycINFO, Academic Premier, Sage, JSTOR, ResearchGate, EMBASE, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, Cochrane Library, Emerald, EBSCO, and Elsevier. The search terms included religion, religious practices, marital quality, predictors of marital quality, marital quality, and marital satisfaction. The researcher used only sources published within the 5-year gap from 2018-2022.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Beck (1976) developed the concepts of R-CBT theory. The theory identified and explained irrational or maladaptive thoughts, assumptions, and beliefs related to debilitating negative emotions to determine what is dysfunctional or just not helpful about them, especially interactions with religious people (Beck, 1976). Beck (1976) believed that persons susceptible to depression develop inaccurate/unhelpful core beliefs about themselves, others, and the world

because of their learning histories. Beck developed the theory to identify irrational or maladaptive thoughts, assumptions, and ideas related to debilitating negative emotions to determine what is dysfunctional or just not helpful about them (Beck, 1976). Pargament (2007) shows that individuals seeking therapy come with their religious beliefs, experiences, and values to the therapeutic process, which they might express implicitly or explicitly. R-CBT integrates religious beliefs and practices such as prayer, attending worship services, and reading biblical scriptures or sacred writings to the therapeutic approaches to explore clients' spiritual resources that may influence their marital quality and satisfaction (Santi, 2019). The R-CBT proposes several adapted interventions, including adapted motivational strategies, behavioral interventions, and cognitive interventions to help clients improve their conditions.

### **Adapted Motivational Strategies**

Propst's manual, for example, provides examples of Christ to show depressive clients how to create constructive activities and embrace more assertive behavior, social skills, and goal setting (Propst, 1980; Propst et al., 1992). The Koenig et al. manual shared two examples of how therapists can use clients' religious beliefs to increase their motivation and engagement in the therapeutic process of learning and implementing a treatment plan (Pearce et al., 2015a, 2015b):

*Pearce et al. (2015b) provide an example for monotheistic clients: "...therapists emphasize that there are many things God asks people to do that they don't necessarily feel like doing. People do these things because they believe that a loving God would only ask them to do things ultimately for their benefit." (Pearce et al., 2015b, p.8).*

*Pearce et al. (2015b) also show an example for Jewish clients: "An effective way to change our mood is to engage in pleasant activities. One of the first steps in changing*

*our perceptions and negative thoughts is to see the good things in our environment and make some of them a part of our daily activities. This idea is consistent with Torah's thought." (Pearce et al., 2015b, p.8).*

### **Adapted Behavioral Interventions**

Armento (2011) developed a Behavioral Activation protocol to encourage clients to practice religious behaviors to understand the causes of their presenting problems and how their religious beliefs or values impact their mental health and relationship issues. Behavioral Activation teaches how the therapist engages the clients in the therapeutic process to actively learn and use new skills learned to produce their desired outcomes (Wright et al., 2008). Therapists can help clients use adapted behavioral interventions, including prayer, reading of sacred writings, and meditating on passages between sessions and in a faith community to address their mental health and relationship issues (Armento, 2011; Bowland et al., 2012; Ebrahimi et al., 2013; Johnson & Ridley, 1992; Koenig et al., 2015b; Razali et al., 2002). Furthermore, acknowledging that God is almighty, all-knowing, merciful, and compassionate is essential in helping individuals maintain their mental health and quality of life (Rajaei, 2010).

### **Adapted Cognitive Interventions**

The cognitive-behavioral model teaches that clients use the thoughts associated with their mental health and relationship issues to give meaning to their situations with distorted views (Beck et al., 2013). Therefore, they must learn to identify and correct their cognition to improve their presenting symptoms (Beck et al., 2013). Cognitive restructuring techniques help clients identify and modify distorted thoughts with more positive opinions (Beck et al., 2013). In the R-CBT procedures, therapists use the clients' religious beliefs, teachings, and practices for



cognitive restructuring (Ebrahimi et al., 2013; Koenig et al., 2015b; Pecheur, 1980; Pecheur & Edwards, 1984; Propst, 1980; Propst et al., 1992; Razali et al., 2002). The R-CBT protocols use biblical scriptures or other sacred writings depending on the clients' religious beliefs (Koenig et al., 2015b; Propst et al., 1992) to identify and change maladaptive thoughts, while Muslim protocols use the Holy Qur'an and Hadith (Koenig et al., 2015b; Razali et al., 2002). For example, for a depressed client who has a negative self-view, Pecheur suggests that therapists use bible verses such as below:

*Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? (Matthew 6:26)*  
(Pecheur 1980).

Then clients are encouraged to challenge their negative thoughts using their religious beliefs:

*How can your view of God, religious/spiritual worldview, sacred writings, spiritual wisdom, and other sources provide evidence that challenges your automatic negative beliefs and beliefs that you can't cope with? (Koenig et al., 2015b; Pearce et al., 2015a, 2015b).*

RCBT provides therapists with many tools to help clients integrate religious beliefs during the sessions. The below tables share some of the tools therapists and clients can use during therapy sessions.

Table 1: Religious Tools Instructions

In teaching therapists how to integrate religion into the CBT model effectively, Pearce et al. share these religious tools:

- Renewing of the mind

- Scripture memorization
- Contemplative prayer
- Challenging thoughts using one's religious resources
- Religious practices (e.g., gratitude, altruism, forgiveness)
- Religious/Spiritual resources
- Involvement in the religious community (Pearce et al., 2015).

### **Table 2: Prayer Instructions**

Pearce et al. also show how therapists can use the below prayer format to help clients integrate prayer into therapy sessions:

- Choose a scripture. Begin with your memory passage for the week.
- Sit comfortably, but not too comfortably, back straight, chest open so the breath is free and open.
- Read the passage slowly. Savor each phrase. What word phrase or idea speaks to you?
- Reread the passage. Where does this passage touch your life?
- What do you see, hear, touch, or remember?
- Read the passage a third time. Listen quietly. Note insights, reflections, and personal responses to your journal reading.
- Follow the steps in order, or go back and forth between them as you feel moved.
- Finish by waiting a few moments in silence (Pearce et al., 2015).

### **Table 3: Challenging Thoughts**

Furthermore, Pearce et al. explain how Therapists can teach clients the following steps to challenge thoughts:

- Activating Event: Describe when the negative emotion(s) began.
- Beliefs: What negative beliefs or expectations automatically go through your mind?
- Consequent Feelings and Behavior: What painful feelings did these beliefs or expectations lead to? What behavior did these beliefs and emotions lead to? Rate each feeling using a scale of 1–10, where ten is very painful.
- Dispute the Beliefs and Deal with the Situation: Is there any evidence that those beliefs or expectations are not accurate or true? Describe the
- contrary evidence. Specify the unhelpful thought category that best describes the error in the view. Even if the situation can't change, what evidence do you have that you could manage it (based on your talents, experience, support persons, and resources)?
- Religious Beliefs and Resources: How can your view of God, Christian worldview, the Bible and religious writings, spiritual wisdom, and other sources provide evidence that challenges your automatic negative beliefs and beliefs that you can't cope with?
- Effective New Belief and Consequence: What is a different way to look at the situation now? How did your feelings change after you looked at the problem differently? Rate each feeling using a scale of 1–10, where ten is very painful (Pearce et al., 2015).

The Religion Adapted Cognitive Behavioral Therapy theory provides therapists with protocols to include the religious views of clients to improve functioning skills. The

responsibilities are clear people need to be persistent in solving life's problems and trust in God. The theory will help to understand how couples can give away irrational and distorted thoughts and replace them with more realistic and self-helping alternatives. Cognitive-behavior therapy modifies essential beliefs and appraisals so that the individual learns that intrusive thoughts are not of extraordinary significance and do not indicate increased responsibility or probability of harm. The theory helps the individual construct and test a new, less threatening model of their experience to understand how the problem may work. Then it is pushing this through behavioral experiments to learn that the problem is about thinking and worry, rather than danger or harm, contributing to marital satisfaction.

### **Review of Literature on Themes**

#### **History of Haitians in America**

In the early 1790s, Haitian was one of the affluent French colonies. That was effective when the country's Black population revolted against slavery, leading to a panicked exodus of Haitians to neighboring countries (Versluis et al., 2022). Thousands of Whites, Blacks, and enslaved people fled to America during the revolt. Most settled in New Orleans, Baltimore, New York City, and Boston (Tennis, 2021). Their settlement in this city led to affluent French-speaking communities among Haitians (Tennis, 2021). Haitian immigrants who arrived in the United States in the early 18<sup>th</sup> and 19th centuries had determined to live in their new land. One of the Haitians who were among the earlier immigrant to the States was Jean-Baptiste Point Du Sable (Tennis, 2021). He was a trapper who initially settled on the shores of Lake Michigan (Tennis, 2021). He established a trading post along the river currently known as the city of Chicago (Versluis et al., 2022).

Many Haitians who chose to migrate from the United States stayed in different cities and were educated (Versluis et al., 2022). In addition, Pierre Toussaint was a devout catholic who also immigrated to the United States and settled in New York in 1877. He participated in fundraising to help poor Haitians in the United States (Tennis, 2021).

### **Overview of Haitian Traditions and Religions**

Religion has influenced Haitians' lives for years (Orellana, 2021). Haitians who migrated successfully continued religious practices (Melkonian-Hoover & Kellstedt, 2019). In most cases, most groups and churches have become influential components in the lives of Haitians in the United States (Louis Jr., 2019). Historically, the national religion among Haitians is Roman Catholicism (Orellana, 2021). In Haiti, the first missionaries were Catholic and established several educational schools still deemed necessary (Kim, 2019).

Protestant ministry has been represented by missionaries, Pentecostals, and other evangelical denominations since 1990 (Melkonian-Hoover & Kellstedt, 2019). A study reported that 28% of Haitians in the United States are Protestants, 35% are Catholics, and 40% practice Voodoo (Louis Jr., 2019). Despite the differences in religious affiliation, it is essential to underscore that religion remains fundamental to Haitian culture, whether protestant or non-protestant (Louis Jr., 2019).

Most Haitians Diaspora in the United States has relied on their multidimensional spirituality as their epicenter of strength to determine their lifestyles (Orellana, 2021). Consequently, religion among Haitians was among practices, including indigenous Haitian spiritual beliefs, enslaved African traditions, and Catholicism that French colonizers brought.

Voodoo, Catholicism, and Protestantism influence the religious beliefs of many Haitians (Goodridge, 2018). Some religious ideas and spiritual differences among Haitians in the Diaspora include socioeconomic issues, migration, generation, and oral histories presented via traditions (Kim, 2019).

### ***Voodoo***

As discussed above, Voodoo is the primary religion among Haitians in the United States and those Haiti (Kim, 2019). The existing literature about Haitians' religious traditions has endeavored to embark on the multifaceted ideologies of Voodoo among the Haitians (Kim, 2019). As supported by Louis Jr. (2019), Voodoo is ritualistic, bridges the divide between material and spirituality, and was born of African (Yoruba) and indigenous Haitian traditions (Goodridge, 2018). Within the Voodoo religion, practiced by non-Haitian Protestants, music, drumming, dance, and art occupy an essential role in Haitian Voodoo practices (Goodridge, 2018).

Non-protestants believe that the Voodism practice represents a set of goals that fundamentally control and define the laws and forces of the universe (Orellana, 2021). The fundamental assumptions of Voodoo practiced by non-Christian Haitian Americans are the supreme deity, the master of all gods, representing a large group of lesser deities, and the twins commonly known as Marassas (Goodridge, 2018). Particularly, twins are presumed to own special powers, and exceptional service is dedicated annually. Among non-Christian Haitian Americans, Voodoo promotes individual advancement and divine protection (Demers, 2021).

The significance of the voodoo religion to non-Haitian Christian Americans starts with the Haitian revolution, which many scholars believe was influenced by the Bois Caïman Voodoo ceremony held in 1971 in a wooded area nearby le Cap (Morton, 2021). The local Haitian government was against Haitian Voodoo practice, but some believed it contributed to the revolution of the enslaved people (Kim, 2019). It was not until 2003 that Jean Bertrand Aristide, the Haitian president, fully acknowledged Voodoo as a religion among Haitians (Morton, 2021). Even though the government condemned Voodoo for several years, non-Christians who remained in Haiti and those who remained in the United States kept the cultural and religious practices alive (Morton, 2021). In most cases, Voodoo remained a private spiritual practice among non-Christian Haitians (Morton, 2021).

In summary, non-Christian Haitians in America continue to practice Voodoo as their religion. Voodoo represents God through natural elements such as air, water, fire, and earth (Demers, 2021). Voodoo's religious practice also has a gift of love, death, and even blessings. Among the non-Christian Haitians, an individual's soul will continue to live on earth and can be used in magic or incarnated in a member of a dead person's family (Orellana, 2021). It is essential to summarize that non-Christian Haitians living in America have continued to practice Vodou as a significant religious practice, with many turning to it for luck, love, and marriage satisfaction (Morton, 2021). It is, therefore, to understand that marital satisfaction among non-Haitian Christians and non-protestants gives the Christian affiliation which directly affects marriage, life, and other aspects of love.

### ***Protestant Evangelicalism Among Haitian Americans***

Since the 1970s, Protestant evangelicalism has steadily increased in Latin America, as seen in Haiti (Torchon, 2020). Protestants presume that salvation is essential to the gospel (Norcilus, 2021). Salvation is offered or given to believers through Jesus Christ's sacrifice (Melkonian-Hoover & Kellstedt, 2019). Protestants emphasize personal conversion, commonly known as being born again, and the significance of faith in God (Torchon, 2020). Norcilus (2021) reported that 58% of Haitian Americans profess to be Protestants.

Haitians who became Protestants found it easy to keep their religious affiliation in the diaspora (Johnson, 2020). Protestantism in the US offers solace from racial and cultural stereotypes (Torchon, 2020). In addition, protestant Haitian Christians also use religion to cope with personal problems and family issues such as love and marriage (Melkonian-Hoover & Kellstedt 2019). Given the differences in religion and spirituality among protestant Haitian American and non-Christians Haiti and Americans, it is imperative to explore differences in marital quality and marital satisfaction among the two groups, given that marriage plays a vital role in love, marriage, and family structure (De Matos, 2019).

### **Marital satisfaction**

Karney & Bradbury (2020) defined Marital satisfaction as an individual's subjective perceptions and evaluations of the general nature of marriage that reflect the degree to which individuals are present in their marriage. Other scholars have defined marital satisfaction as a mental state that reflects the perceived benefits of marriage to a particular person (Sayehmiri et al., 2020). As per this definition, the more cost a marriage partner inflicts on the other party, and



the lesser one is dissatisfied with the marriage and the partner (Karney & Bradbury, 2020). Hou et al. (2019) also conceptualized marital satisfaction as individuals' attitudes toward their marital relationship. Across these studies, there is evidence that marital satisfaction has been conceptualized differently by scholars. However, the common theme across all definitions is people's attitudes and expectations in their marriage (Hou et al., 2019; Karney & Bradbury, 2020; Sayehmiri et al., 2020).

For several reasons, marital satisfaction has become a critical area of research for scholars. For instance, Xie et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study with 23 couples in the United States. They established that developing an in-depth understanding of how relationships work could contribute to higher satisfaction levels among married couples. In addition to Xie et al.'s (2018) findings, Reizer et al. (2020) noted that identifying factors contributing to marital satisfaction in most married couples and those in marital counseling and marriage education effectively adopt strategies that would contribute to a more satisfying marriage while avoiding behaviors that decrease marital satisfaction.

Existing research indicates that married couples experience varying levels of marital satisfaction throughout their relationship, yet they compete for perceptions on how it occurs (Maroufizadeh et al., 2019). One of the explanations for the varying degree of marital satisfaction suggests a general decline in marital satisfaction over time after marriage (Maroufizadeh et al., 2019; Taghani et al., 2019; Yoo, 2020). A healthy connection between family members helps Children function well (Naemi, 2018). It is essential to underscore

whether children were intentional and understand how parental stress and core parenting behaviors all impact marital satisfaction could.

While marital satisfaction differs across couples, some scholars have recommended communication skills as a solution to couple satisfaction (Maroufizadeh et al., 2019). Some scholars have argued that couples who engage in frequent communication are more likely to report feeling happier, satisfied, and committed to their relationships, given the ability to address their differences amicably through communication (Naemi, 2018; Taghani et al., 2019).

While studies have investigated marital satisfaction among individuals, it is essential to underscore that marital satisfaction and its quality dictates the stability of marriage or family (Naemi, 2018). Despite this significance, research on marital quality and happiness is missing from the existing literature on protestant Haitian Americans versus non-Christian Haitian Americans (Williamson & Lavner, 2020). Precisely lacking from the current literature is research on religion and spirituality and their influence on marital quality and marital satisfaction among Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans.

The rising divorce rate in the US, including in Haitian couples, underlines the need to investigate marital quality and satisfaction among Haitians based on their religious affiliations (Naemi, 2018). That becomes a gap in the literature that the current study seeks to investigate by exploring the marital quality and marital satisfaction in protesting Haitian and non-Christian Haitian Americans through a quantitative research methodology.

### **Benefits of Marital Quality and Marital Satisfaction**

One of the benefits of high marital satisfaction is increased happiness among married couples. Scholars have examined the significance of high marital satisfaction among couples in different settings. Naemi (2018) conducted a qualitative study to investigate marital satisfaction and its influence on married couples with 25 married couples. After completing the analysis, the investigator found that marital satisfaction among couples increased their sense of happiness in their marriage. Taghani et al. (2019) corroborated the findings in a systematic literature review with 13 articles on marital satisfaction and its implications in marriage. Upon conducting the analysis, Taghani et al. (2019) identified that marital satisfaction among married couples improved their sense of belonging, efficacy, and happiness. From these studies, the evidence suggests that high marital satisfaction enhances a couple's level of happiness.

Marital satisfaction reduced family conflicts. Several studies, such as Maroufizadeh et al. (2019), have linked marital satisfaction to reduced conflicts among couples since they can reduce their issues amicably. In a different study, Yoo (2020) conducted qualitative research on marital satisfaction among 37 married couples. He collected the data through semi-structured interviews. After completing the analysis, Yoo (2020) found that marital satisfaction reduced conflicts among married couples, given that they could quickly solve their problems with minimum challenges. Sayehmiri et al. (2020) reported comparable results to those of Yoo (2020) in another qualitative study, and they also established that high marital satisfaction increases happiness and reduces conflicts among married couples. Overall, the studies reviewed provide evidence suggesting that marital satisfaction is critical in the stability of a family, given that it contributes to amicable conflict resolution among couples.

Existing studies have linked improved mental health to increased marital satisfaction among couples with high marital satisfaction. Dong et al. (2022), on marital satisfaction with 25 married couples, established an elevated level of marital satisfaction among couples and reduced conflicts, anxiety, and depression. In their study on marital satisfaction, Windle and Windle (2019) also found that dissatisfied couples reported increased mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression, which compromised their psychological well-being. Windle and Windle (2019) noted that mental health among married couples depended on the level of marital satisfaction experienced in their marriages. Married couples with high marital dissatisfaction levels experience conflicts with their partners, leading to mental health such as depression, anxiety, and depression (Dong et al., 2022; Windle & Windle, 2019). Those who experienced high marital satisfaction with minimum conflicts had improved psychological well-being. Across these studies, there is evidence indicating that marital satisfaction is important among married couples, given that it positively contributes to their mental well-being, especially when both are satisfied with their marriages with limited conflicts.

Fahimdanesh et al. (2020) investigated the link between marital satisfaction and divorce using 73 couples. They collected the data through interviews. Findings noted a correlation between improved marital satisfaction and reduced divorce rates among couples. After conducting the analysis, Fahimdanesh et al. (2020) found that high satisfaction among young married couples reduced their likelihood of divorcing their partner. Alipour et al. (2020) also reported comparable results on the link between marital satisfaction and divorces among minorities in the US. Alipour et al. (2020) found that marital satisfaction among individuals

reduced their divorce intentions. The studies revealed evidence linking high marital satisfaction to reduced partner divorce rates.

### **Factors Influencing Marital Quality and Satisfaction**

#### ***Religious Rituals***

From Williamson and Lavner's (2020) perspective, spiritual practices offer an exciting opportunity to strengthen intimacy among spouses and family cohesion and dynamics. Their rituals influence marital quality and satisfaction among individuals. Most of these rituals could be cultural or religious rituals. Within an institutional framework, cultural practices, religious sermons, traditions, celebrations, rites of passage, pilgrimages, praying together, and singing influence individuals' sense of belonging and social life (Agu & Nwankwo, 2019). Different rituals related to the religious holiday had positively influenced satisfaction in the relationship and marital quality by making individuals feel part of the family of the other couples (Aman et al., 2019). Religious rituals could also help individuals combine values with behaviors, helping them navigate values that could positively influence their relationships and marital satisfaction (Agu & Nwankwo, 2019).

For instance, holidays are likely to rise above everyday experiences people share. Dong et al. (2022) noted that religious family rituals, such as prayers before a meal or evening prayers play a crucial role in reinforcing families and couples as they bring one another close to God. Given the importance of religious rituals, Dong et al. (2022) concluded that sharing spiritual practices and rituals creates a sense of shared support among couples which could improve the quality and satisfaction among couples.

In most cases, conflicts in relationships and marriages are often followed by regrets and forgiveness if the couples affected are ready to share their religious practices (Taghani et al., 2019). Those articles demonstrated that the positive effects of marital marriage practices could be summarized by spiritual ways of life among couples, reassuring, strengthening physical and mental well-being, and enhancing the quality of life. Strengthen marriage ties and support married couples to create their relationship together and in line with God. All these practices effectively influence marital quality and marital satisfaction among individuals.

### ***Community***

Community is an essential aspect of marital quality and satisfaction, as elucidated by Aman et al. (2019). For religiously married individuals, the fundamental element of their marriage is the chance to become an integral part of the congregation and connect with other couples and families in the community. The connection starts with wedding vows taken in front of people and could manifest on every occasion when the couples participate in activities within the community (Taghani et al., 2019). Baptist et al. (2019) describe Congregation membership as linked with a sense of belonging to the more prominent family that could play an essential support and sustaining role during the marriage. Baptist et al. (2019) found that the purpose of belonging to a particular group of people in the community could be used to resolve conflicts, thus increasing their satisfaction levels.

In studying the link between belonging to a religious community, marital stability, and satisfaction, Agu and Nwankwo (2019) established a link between active participation in community activities and marital satisfaction levels. Agu and Nwankwo (2019) found that

individuals who have a sense of belonging to specific religious groups in the community. They often participated in different districts and were less likely to have extramarital affairs than those who did not belong to such a community, leading to marital satisfaction among couples.

Additionally, Aman et al. (2019) found that regular attendance at congregational events was one of the religion-based features that positively related to marital faithfulness leading to marital satisfaction among couples.

While marital conflicts and domestic abuse are less active among active congregants, this could only be true if both spouses belong to the same congregation and the responsibilities after that do not overburden the relationship (Agu & Nwankwo, 2019). In the past two decades, several religious groups have organized marriage preparation for engaged couples seeking to minimize conflicts and offer strategies to reduce group quarrels (Aman et al., 2019). Nevertheless, according to these studies, belonging to a community influences marital satisfaction among couples because belonging to a particular group of people is likely required to increase their satisfaction level (Agu & Nwankwo, 2019). Therefore, belonging to a community influences couples' marital satisfaction.

### ***Religious Principles***

Couples experiencing God have underscored the need for religious beliefs and cultural and social influence in marital satisfaction. Aman et al. (2019) noted a positive connection between marital satisfaction and religious beliefs and principles because marriage focuses on values such as loyalty, humility, and unique gender roles. Such regulations backed by religion could influence marital quality and satisfaction, given that believers must adhere to them (Davis

et al., 2018). However, some couples may experience divine manifestation reports on the presence of God in their marital life, and some talk about sharing God's actions (Bahnaru et al., 2019).

Most base their religious principles on God's help sustaining marital satisfaction. For instance, in a study conducted by Davis et al. (2018) with 27 couples, most considered religious principles that God's support was critical to their marital satisfaction, given that God responds to their prayers through the Holy Spirit to help them solve their marital problems. Aman et al. (2019) conducted comparable results and found that 60% of married couples linked their satisfaction to their relationship with God. Given the findings, the researchers concluded that religion positively impacts stability among married couples.

Participants noted that praying and remaining devoted to God gave them the strength to continue their relationships. Agu and Nwankwo (2019) also reported that religious couples believed in experiencing God's presence to strengthen their relationship. Aman et al. (2019) also indicated that experiencing God's presence in marriage can sanctify and strengthen the relationship between couples and increase couples' desire to identify meaning and purpose in life together. Religious beliefs also inspire married couples to devote attention to solving marital problems amicably through the fear of God. Davis et al. (2018) also noted that religious couples use religion to reinforce the concept of realizing desired peace, love, and harmony. Lastly, faith also helps individuals to share their experiences and practices that the community offers in resolving marital conflicts to promote marital satisfaction (Aman et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2018).



For all religious spouses, marriage is considered a holy covenant. Therefore, devoted religious couples use this concept to underscore that marital satisfaction is based on the altruism of both individuals (Agu & Nwankwo, 2019). Such desires are possible if religious couples believe that marriage is a sacred union approved by God and husband and wife complement each other. Marriage is a commitment that helps people to identify their marital satisfaction (Davis et al., 2018). According to Protestants, the purpose and implication of marriage are to become a family (Aman et al., 2019). Equally, God's presence blesses the marriage with peace and unity, providing the required commitment, loyalty, and support to keep couples satisfied. The literature shows that religiosity is essential in marriage by influencing marital satisfaction, such as loyalty, commitment, love, and support.

### ***Sociocultural Characteristics and Marital Quality and Marital Satisfaction***

Sociocultural characteristics include age, social class, race, gender, and income level. All these factors are likely to influence couples' social interactions and the degree to which they are satisfied with their marriage. Scholars such as Alipour et al. (2019) have linked marital aspects with age, given that people with varying age groups display unique tests and desires. Whisman et al. (2018) also corroborated the findings after establishing that age could make long-term couples less susceptible to external relationships among partners.

Income level is another factor influencing marital satisfaction. After investigating a sample of 35 couples, a study reported that the financial status of an individual could play an essential role in a couple's life and marital satisfaction (Williamson & Lavner (2020). In particular, Williamson and Lavner (2020) found that financial stability in a family couple

influences satisfaction or dissatisfaction among couples, especially when they cannot afford other basic needs.

Karney and Bradbury (2020) conducted a study to establish that financial constraints were the primary stressors among couples contributing to marital dissatisfaction. Given the findings, Karney and Bradbury (2020) concluded that financial resources are a crucial indicator of marital quality and satisfaction among couples as they influence their ability to finance their lives. Blom and Hewitt (2020) reported comparable results to Karney and Bradbury (2020) in a qualitative study with 43 first-generated Haitian couples in the US. Upon conducting the analysis, Blom and Hewitt (2020) found that most Haitians reported socioeconomic obstacles as the significant predictor of sociocultural practices in their marriages. The findings showed that most Haitians reported increased dissatisfaction in their marriage, given that they could not have the basic needs to support them for their marriage to function effectively (Blom & Hewitt, 2020).

Low income earned by married men correlates to a better quality of life than unemployed married men. Cai et al. (2020) conducted a study revealing that marital satisfaction levels among employed married men were significantly higher than among stay-at-home spouses. Karney and Bradbury (2020) also corroborated the findings in the US when they established that employment and income status influenced marital satisfaction among standing. Spouses with stable income and employment were more likely to meet their family needs timely, leading to high satisfaction levels (Karney & Bradbury, 2020).

Moradzadeh and Pirkhaefi (2018) conducted a qualitative study on a sample of 55 participants in the US. After analyzing the data, the investigators reported that married couples

with steady income said increased marital satisfaction compared to unemployed couples who found it challenging to take care of family responsibilities. In another study, LeBaron et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study investigating the relationship between family status and marital satisfaction. After the analysis, the investigators showed marital satisfaction connected to the family's income level. Aigbiremhon et al. (2019) also reported comparable results, whose findings linked improved marital satisfaction to financial stability among couples.

### ***Family Origin***

Studies have identified family origin as another factor that could influence marital satisfaction. According to Bahnaru et al. (2019), family origin related to social and cultural settings could also affect marital satisfaction. Differences in cultural practices could become a significant source of dissatisfaction among relationships and married couples. After conducting a study across cultures, Hwang et al. (2019) found that individuals from diverse cultures experience marital satisfaction differently. Therefore, a family of origin influences individuals' marital quality and satisfaction.

### ***Gender Ideology and Marital Satisfaction***

Scholars investigating the link between gender roles and marital satisfaction have reported mixed results. Gender ideology refers to how individuals identify themselves concerning marital and family roles (Beam et al., 2019). In most cases, traditions conceptualized family roles. Some individuals consider gender roles to have a considerable influence on marital satisfaction regarding the allocation of resources and other family dynamics (Nourani et al., 2018). In their qualitative study on factors influencing marital satisfaction among couples, Beam

et al. (2019) found that varying views of gender roles could negatively affect marital satisfaction, especially when people consider specific roles performed by a given gender.

Gender ideology defines duties and responsibilities in relationships and marriage (Nourani et al., 2018). Therefore, this could affect the level at which the couples are happy or dissatisfied with the roles of other couples. Dissatisfaction with functions performed by a particular gender could lead to marital dissatisfaction and divorce (Nourani et al., 2018).

Gender is an essential component of marital satisfaction regardless of religious affiliations. Yoo (2021) noted the findings about gender differences across marital satisfaction in several studies, yet the results were inconsistent. Some scholars have established that men are likely to be more satisfied in their unions than women (Whisman et al., 2018), while others develop that women could be happier in marriage than men. Several studies have established that gender differences in other aspects are related to marital satisfaction. Blom and Hewitt (2020) showed that one of the predictors of marital satisfaction among men is their relationships with children, followed by approval from friends of their marriage, communication, and emotional health. On the other hand, Yoo (2021) found the significant predictors of marital satisfaction among women as communication among couples, approval of friends and parents of their marriage, emotional health, impulsivity, and parent-child relationships.

Hou et al. (2019) found that those with egalitarian views of gender roles are likely to be satisfied compared to traditional roles. Hou et al. (2019) found that as men sought to accommodate their wives' egalitarian ideals, they had lesser marital satisfaction. Another study also demonstrated that spouses with anxiety and agreeableness could increase marital satisfaction

among men but not women (Hou et al., 2019). On the other hand, Cao et al. (2019) established that couples who considered traditional gender roles had higher marital satisfaction levels than those with egalitarian gender roles.

Helms et al. (2019) also found that among 25 couples interviewed, 60% of men would be happy in marriage if their partners did more than their fair share of housework. Comparable results were also reported by Cao et al. (2019), which said that wives indicated high satisfaction in their marriages if their husbands performed a share of household work. Taken as a whole, existing research on marital satisfaction and gender demonstrates that married satisfaction views are associated with a couple's perceptions of gender roles and expectations. Couples have varying opinions of what constitutes marital satisfaction based on gender roles and differences (Hou et al., 2019).

### **Empirical Literature on Relationship Between Religions and Marital Satisfaction**

Religion influences marital satisfaction (Agu & Nwankwo, 2019). At an individual level, religion offers a benchmark for corporate worldviews that provides unique meaning and experiences in marriage. Such an interpretation could influence coping strategies and how individuals can handle marital challenges to improve their satisfaction. Religion at an individual level could improve self-esteem among couples (Aman et al., 2019). Agu and Nwankwo (2019) reported that religious community and tradition provide individuals with unique moral codes that help them assume certain positive behaviors needed for marital satisfaction. Aman et al. (2019) also noted that religious communities offer individuals an outlook of principles that can directly influence their well-being in a relationship for a better outcome.

Existing research demonstrates that religion and spirituality could positively affect relating help, happiness, self-esteem, and optimism. In addition, Davis et al. (2018) found that religion and spirituality negatively correlate with anxiety and depression among couples, given these religious beliefs provide comfort from problems.

### ***Religion In Intimate Relationships***

In the last two decades, studies in psychology and religion have indicated that religiosity directly impacts the functioning of relationships and marriages. In one of the studies, Hwanget al. (2019) found that religiosity passively correlated with quality relationships and unions among couples, thereby reporting increased marital satisfaction. While religiosity could impact intimacy, it is essential to note that it can also provide coping mechanisms for conflict resolution, positively affecting marital satisfaction among couples.

Religious tradition underscores couples' significance of love, commitment, loyalty, support, and forgiveness. In a study conducted by Hwang et al. (2019) on the relationship between religiosity and intimacy satisfaction levels, the researcher identified love, commitment, and loyalty as some of the values supported by religion in maintaining the sustainability of marriages. Furthermore, Davis et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study with 25 couples to investigate the influence of religiosity on marital satisfaction. Upon completing the analysis, Davis et al. (2018) found that religious couples who underscored values supported by religion, such as love, commitment, and loyalty, reported higher levels of commitment, stability, and marital satisfaction than nonreligious couples.

Agreeing with Davis et al.'s (2018) findings, Hwang et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study on factors influencing marital satisfaction among couples in the US. Hwang et al. (2019) found that couples that upheld religious-backed values such as life, commitment, support, and forgiveness reported increased marriage stability and marital satisfaction. Such values supported by religion are likely to improve satisfaction among couples. In this regard, Hwang et al. (2019) concluded that religiosity influences marital stability and happiness, given that religious couples must remain loyal and committed and forgive the other couples for the mistakes committed.

Several other studies have also established a positive relationship between religious commitment and marital satisfaction among couples. For instance, Vazquez et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study with 47 married couples in the US to investigate the influence of commitment and marital satisfaction. After completing the analysis, Vazquez et al. (2019) found that married couples who committed to their religion reported increased marital satisfaction compared to those who were not. Bahnaru et al. (2019) found that among religious married couples, certain aspects of religiosity, such as loyalty, love, and commitment, increased marital satisfaction among couples. In addition, Bahnaru et al. (2019) also found that religious commitment improved conflict management skills and coping strategies during challenges in marriage, thereby positively influencing marital satisfaction.

Hamid et al. (2018) conducted similar findings in a qualitative study on the link between religious commitment and marital satisfaction among 53 couples in the US. Upon executing the analysis, Hamid et al. (2018) found that religious faith, actions, and practices such as loyalty, forgiveness, and commitment positively contributed to the couple's psychological well-being and

mutual support in their marriages. Such religious activities strengthened marital harmony and satisfaction among religious couples (Hamid et al., 2018).

The role of religion manifests itself in various stages of marriage and relationships (Davis et al., 2018). However, essential to understanding is that religious beliefs and practices could affect different areas of unions (Hwang et al., 2019). For instance, religious beliefs could influence decisions related to marriage, long-term commitment among couples, strategies to improve marriage, and even religious-based coping strategies during a crisis (Bahnaru et al., 2019). Therefore, religion becomes vital throughout the lifecycle of relationships and marriage by supporting how to address unique challenges affecting their lives (Hamid et al., 2018).

The effect of religion on marriage may appear during the initial stages of choosing a partner. A study by Aman et al. (2019) indicated that emerging religious adults are more likely to select a religiously homogenous partner, given that homogamy could contribute to satisfaction in their relationship. In another study by Bahnaru et al. (2019), religiosity positively correlated with marital attitudes with the primary assumptions that marriage was suitable for the individual and best on realistic assessment when an individual when ready to get married. Additional research by Hamid et al. (2018) has established that religious individuals are most likely to consider marriage successful and happy. They would do anything to prepare for marriage in advance compared to nonreligious ones, who are less likely to plan for the wedding, increasing the chance of dissatisfaction.

Historically, religion is a fundamental aspect of marital union. Existing research on religion's role in marital satisfaction indicates a link between religiosity and marital satisfaction



among couples. Bozhabadi et al. (2020) conducted a study in the US faith with a sample of 45 couples from different religions and those who do not belong to any religion. Among the religious participants, Bozhabadi et al. (2020) established that religious beliefs were considered one of the most important aspects contributing to marital satisfaction among couples. Despite the findings, there are inconsistent study results with those of Bozhabadi et al. (2020). Some researchers, such as Kasapoğlu and Yabanigül (2018), established a direct link between religiosity and improved marital satisfaction.

Williamson and Lavner (2020) have established a meaningful relationship between religiosity and marital satisfaction. The researchers found that individuals who do not have a specific religion could still report marital satisfaction, given its link to personal attributes rather than religious beliefs and practices (Williamson & Lavner, 2020). The current inconsistencies regarding marital satisfaction's role could partly contribute to definitions and differences used to conceptualize marital satisfaction. However, it is critically important to underscore that such inconsistencies indicate that religion may influence or enhance marital satisfaction among couples based on contextual factors.

Researchers on religion and marital satisfaction have extensively examined various aspects of religiosity, including church attendance, church affiliations or membership, coping styles, and philosophies of life (Williamson & Lavner, 2020). For instance, in a qualitative study investigating how different components of a couple's religiosity influence marital satisfaction, Kasapoğlu and Yabanigül (2018) found that church attendance insignificantly correlated with marital satisfaction across genders.

Like Yabanigül (2018), Aman et al. (2019) also found that church affiliation or membership was insignificantly associated with marital satisfaction. Imperative to note is that findings from the above studies could be misleading; however, given that both studies only used a simplistic two-item instrument to conduct the study, their results could be limited too (Aman et al., 2019). There is a possibility that more comprehensive and exhaustive research on religiosity using large sample size and individuals with different religious affiliations could provide significance and new findings regarding the influence of religiosity on marital satisfaction among couples with diverse religious backgrounds.

Existing research supports the concept that cognition and attribution influence marital satisfaction among couples. Karami et al. (2018) expounded that religion is essential in influencing marital satisfaction. It provides believers with the cognitive schemas or philosophies of life that they can use to navigate their way through life. Hamid et al. (2018) reported comparable thoughts and established that people could use religious practices to assess their world and offer guidance on which behavior to adopt.

Bahnaru et al. (2019) studied three direct, indirect, and compensatory models to describe the relationship between religion and marital satisfaction. After conducting the analysis, Bahnaru et al. (2019) found that within the direct model, the researcher found that religion positively affected couples' sense of marital satisfaction. The indirect model taught that religion indirectly influences marital satisfaction by influencing other components of marital quality, which could affect marital satisfaction with time (Bahnaru et al., 2019). Such variables included attitude and

perception towards divorce, commitment, willingness among couples to seek help during marital stress, and willingness to seek help during marital distress.

The compensatory model focused on the presumption that different risk factors for marital satisfaction, including age and neuroticism, are directly moderated by religion. Consequently, faith may compensate for married couples' vulnerabilities and support them to remain satisfied despite the challenges. Even though Bozhabadi et al.'s (2020) findings discounted the three models, they were critical as they indicated that religion is related to and influences couples' attitudes within the first years of marriage. Given the findings, Bozhabadi et al. (2020) concluded that religious couples are more likely to maintain attitudes toward divorce, report an elevated level of marital satisfaction, and are more likely to seek help during marital distress.

Bahnaru et al. (2019) explored religious coping styles and their influence on marital satisfaction. The researcher conducted the study with 35 couples who participated in virtual interviews. According to the findings, church attendance negatively correlated with marital satisfaction levels among the husbands but not wives, suggesting that men with higher church attendance and who were religious reported lower marital satisfaction. Bozhabadi et al. (2020) indicated that men are more likely to seek spiritual support during marital distress. The author speculated that increased stress levels could be the main factor influencing their high church attendance.

Consistent with Bozhabadi et al.'s (2020) findings, Vazquez et al. (2019) established that religious commitment and church attendance negatively correlated with couples' marital

satisfaction within the local university. According to the findings, an elementary level of religiosity among individuals could negatively impact their marital relationship and happiness. Nevertheless, their choice to combine individual cases for spouses without independently studying them could have influenced their results.

In contrast to other researchers, several studies have established a relationship between religiosity and marital satisfaction. Hwang et al. (2019) used a one- and 2-item marital satisfaction and religiosity scale. They showed that holding beliefs that the bible has answers to human problems positively increased satisfaction among conflicting couples. Like Davis et al. (2018), Vazquez et al. (2019) utilized a 23-item Saulkner-Dejong religiosity scale and established that those religious beliefs positively increased marital satisfaction levels among the couples. In a different study, Aman et al. (2019) used a 10-item spiritual scale to assess the link between religion and marital satisfaction. They found that religion positively influenced marital satisfaction, given that most couples believed in God's supremacy to help them navigate the challenges.

Other studies exploring religious influence on marital satisfaction showed a link between marital satisfaction and spiritual stressors. For instance, Williamson and Lavner (2020) investigated interfaith couples interfaith Christians and found that religious beliefs such as loyalty, commitment, and dependence on God improved couples' levels of marital satisfaction. Aman et al. (2019) compared interfaith and inter-ratio couples to homogeneous ones in a different study. The findings suggested that intermarried couples identified limited family

support, severe religious beliefs, and differences in acculturation levels that increased their marital dissatisfaction (Aman et al., 2019; Williamson & Lavner, 2020).

Agu and Nwankwo (2019) established that interfaith couples had less marital satisfaction, characterized by regular conflicts concerning children's religious education, compared to similarities in faith couples. As reviewed above, religious studies suggest that married couples with similar religious affiliations reported fewer divorces than mixed-faith or nonreligious affiliations (Agu & Nwankwo, 2019). Because of the above evidence, one can conclude that religious affiliations and beliefs influence an individual's perceptions of marriage and its satisfaction. A study on religious beliefs among couples revealed that religion influences their behavior regarding what to talk about, what to eat, and their social practices (Aman et al., 2019). The findings, therefore, imply that religious practices and beliefs influence marital satisfaction.

### **Summary and Gaps**

Over the years, religion has become essential to human life and history (Bozhabadi et al., 2020). Presently, religion occupies a prominent position in society—82% of the global population belongs to a particular religion (Aman et al., 2019). For instance, only 5% of Americans, 4% of South Africans, 1% of Brazilians, and 3% of Indians identify as atheists (Vazquez et al., 2019). With this perception, it is crucial to investigate how religion influences their life, including marital satisfaction. As beliefs often connect with different relationships related to values and norms, social scholars have widely studied the link between faith and married life (Agu & Nwankwo, 2019; Williamson & Lavner, 2020). The current study seeks to

investigate one of these aspects relating to marital quality and marital satisfaction in protestant Haitian Americans versus non-Christian Haitian Americans.

Considerable research has explored marital satisfaction, including stability, conflict-solving, fidelity, and dependence. Despite the overwhelming literature on religion and married life, limited research exists on how faith influences marital satisfaction and marital quality among Haitian and non-Christian Americans (Vazquez et al., 2019). Most current studies have focused on various aspects of religiosity, including church attendance, religious homogamy, and theological conservatism, with limited focus on specific religious groups or faith. James (2019) investigated different religions among couples but did not compare the influence of religion on marital quality and marital satisfaction among Haitians.

There are also inconsistencies in the study's findings. For instance, some of the studies, including pastoral support, mostly protestant ones, would be happier with their marriages than non-Christian couples (Kasapoğlu & Yabanigül, 2018). However, other studies have provided inconsistent results indicating that religious affiliation could not influence marital satisfaction independently (Bozhabadi et al., 2020). Given this literature, there is limited evidence of differences in marital quality and marital satisfaction among Protestants among Haitian and non-Christian Americans (Williamson & Lavner, 2020).

Scholars have established a positive correlation between religions, religious affiliation, and mental well-being, suggesting that atheists or non-Christian individuals may have low levels of marital satisfaction (Bahnaru et al., 2019; James, 2019). However, no research has directly addressed the differences in marital quality and marital satisfaction between Protestant and non-

Christian Haitian Americans (Vazquez et al., 2019; Williamson & Lavner, 2020). The current study will address this gap in the literature by analyzing the differences between marital quality and marital satisfaction among protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans who practice Voodoo as the primary religion.

### **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

This qualitative descriptive study explored the perceptions of Haitians regarding marital quality and satisfaction in Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans. There was an insufficient understanding of the influence of religion on marital quality and marital satisfaction among protestant marital Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans. The findings of this qualitative descriptive study attempted to close the gap regarding the missing data about marital quality and marital satisfaction in protestant Haitian American and non-Christian Haitian Americans.

Chapter 3 presents a detailed discussion of the research methodology, processes, and procedures used to conduct the current study. The chapter organizes into different parts, starting with research methodology and design. The following section discusses the population, sample, research instrument, and study procedures. Other areas include data collection procedures, data analysis, and ethical assurances. The chapter will conclude with a summary and transition into chapter four.

#### **Research Methodology and Design**

The researcher selected a qualitative research methodology for this study. Scholars such as Patton (2014) have emphasized that investigators adopt qualitative research methodology when investigating a phenomenon from participants' perspectives. The study included participants' attitudes regarding their views, descriptions, and even perceptions. The researcher considered a qualitative research methodology the best approach for the proposed analysis because he intended to investigate the marital quality and satisfaction among Haitian and non-Christian Americans from their perspectives concerning the role of religion in their marriage. He



used participants' views, descriptions, and perceptions on how faith influences their marital quality and satisfaction.

A naturalistic perspective characterizes qualitative research methodology (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The realistic approach makes qualitative research methodology distinctive since it allows the researcher to collect in-depth participant data regarding a studied phenomenon in its natural setting. Studying a phenomenon in natural environments is effective when conducting a study because the study settings are usually placed in the surrounding in which the phenomenon occurs (Patton, 2014). The naturalistic aspect of qualitative study becomes the primary rationale for selecting the qualitative research methodology to guide the study. The primary reason was that researchers aimed to explore perceptions regarding marital quality and marital satisfaction among Haitian Americans in the United States, making a qualitative research methodology suitable for investigating its phenomenon in natural settings.

Another critical feature of qualitative research methodology is a thick description of a phenomenon. According to Sandelowski (2000), qualitative researchers aim to collect in-depth data through semi-structured interviews to explain the study phenomenon widely. Likewise, the researcher gathered detailed information from the study to offer thick descriptions of marital quality and satisfaction among Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans.

The researcher also considered alternative research methodologies for this study. A researcher uses alternative methods in a study when he proposes to investigate a relationship between variables. The researcher thought of the quantitative research methodology for this study. First, quantitative researchers seek to collect quantifiable data to assess the relationship between study variables (Sandelowski, 2000). In this study, a quantitative research methodology

is inappropriate because the researcher did not intend to collect quantifiable data on marital quality and marital satisfaction influenced by religion among Haitian Americans.

Additionally, researchers use quantitative research methodologies when they intend to investigate differences between groups (Patton, 2014). In this study, the researcher did not select a quantitative research methodology because he does not aim to investigate differences in marital quality satisfaction between Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans. Researchers use research instruments such as surveys and scales to collect data in a quantitative study. Using a standardized scale reduces subjectivity in quantitative studies, given that the researcher remains objective throughout (Gries, 2015). In this study, he did not use a survey instrument or scale to collect data on marital quality and marital satisfaction between Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans. That made the quantitative research methodology unsuitable for the current study.

Thorne (2016) also contemplated using a mixed-methods system when investigators intend to use both qualitative and quantitative methods. The aim is to supplement one method's weakness with the strength of another process. However, in this study, the researcher discarded the mixed methods approach. He did not collect quantitative data but qualitatively on marital quality and marital satisfaction between Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans. The mixed-method system was unsuitable for this study.

The researcher contemplated using alternative quantitative approaches for this study. In experimental research design, researchers analyze a controlled environment or laboratory (Gries, 2015). As such, the investigators are likely to manipulate study variables. The researcher

discarded the experimental research for this study because he did not use study variables (Gries, 2015).

Finally, the researcher thought about using the quasi-experimental research design. In a quasi-experimental research design, researchers analyze pre- and post-experimental data collected to assess an intervention's effectiveness (Gries, 2015). However, in this study, the researcher did not collect pre- or post-intervention data making a queasy experimental research design inappropriate for the current study.

### **Population and Sample**

The target population in this qualitative case study involved Haitian Americans living in the United States. The target sample for the survey included protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans living in the United States. The study sample size consisted of 12-15 participants. The purposive sampling technique usually allows researchers to collect data using a convenient sample. In most cases, purposive sampling researchers collect data from participants with common attributes. In this study, the purposive sampling technique only targeted recruiting Haitian Americans living in the United States, mainly Protestant and Non-Christian Haitian Americans.

### **Recruitment of Participants**

The study occurred at Unity Pentecostal Church and the non-Christian Club led by Attorney Lydia Charles because the settings provided the most significant access to the targeted population. The researcher emailed the invitation letter to President Smith, the representative of Unity Pentecostal Church, a former supervisor at Multilingual Psychotherapy Centers, Inc, and Attorney Lydia Charles (e.g., Law Office of Lydia Charles, LLC). Those facilitators shared the

Facebook Ad with potential participants and provided the contact information of participants interested in participating in the study. Then, the researcher emailed potential participants the demographic questionnaire and Informed Consent to determine their eligibility for the study. The researcher informed potential participants about the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and the criteria for participation. The researcher also chose the church because they had a Christian couples group of 26 couples, and Attorney Lydia had a club of at least ten non-christian couples. Also, her service to non-christian clients within the Haitian community offered incredible opportunities to find other non-Christian couples.

Furthermore, the researcher posted the research recruitment Ad on his Facebook friends list, but his 2k plus friends have yet to respond. The Ad generated no leads. Therefore, it produced no participants.

Seven couples from the CFA group expressed an interest in the study. Still, four were ineligible because of Age and language barriers (e.g., they wanted to be interviewed in Haitian Creole, and their partners were unwilling to participate). The remaining couples from the CFA did not respond to the inquiry. Eligible couples referred other couples they knew to participate in the study, including couples from churches such as Alive Church, Faith Assembly of God, Assemblée Chrétienne de Salem, and Calvary Church (Kendall Campus) to find eligible couples. Four couples were eligible from those churches. Four Non-Christian participants were ineligible because wives agreed. Still, husbands did not want to participate, other couples had mixed faith (e.g., one partner was protestant, and the other was non-protestant), and other couples did not honor the scheduled Zoom interview. Some had difficulty joining the discussion due to a lack of experience with technology). There were six eligible protestant participants and six non-

Christian participants that participated in this study. The researcher gave no compensation to couples to participate in the study.

This study focused on Christian Haitian Americans and Non-Christian Haitian Americans. The researcher used the demographic questionnaire with Informed Consent to identify Christians from non-Christians. The participants' responses from the demographic questionnaire identified the religious affiliations of the participants.

### **Preventing Research Biases**

The researcher had no professional relationship with the study participants. Nevertheless, people from participating churches and agencies knew him because of his professional positions as a published author, public speaker, pastor, and Licensed Mental Health Counselor in the community. The researcher used bracketing, keeping detailed notes, and reporting all data to control participants' bias in the study. Qualitative researchers use bracketing to avoid personal preconceptions and prejudice influencing the study outcome. First, the bracketing technique mitigates potential bias. Bracketing requires the researcher to collect data using semi-structured interviews and put aside his beliefs, values, and experiences to accurately understand participants' life experiences (Chan et al., 2013). The researcher should not have allowed his views about marital satisfaction and quality to interfere with the study by using semi-structured interviews to collect data. The interview method helped him understand the nature of the participant's life experiences with the phenomenon. Second, the researcher promptly kept detailed notes and electronic recordings during the interview because leaving them for later could create misinformation or errors in the data. Finally, the researcher included all data in the final report to help prevent bias in the study and allow readers to make their conclusions.

The researcher honestly reported all the results in his final report. The researcher correctly interpreted the data based on the hypothesis and got his chair and reader to verify his work to reduce research bias. The collected data, objective analysis, and transparency supported the validity and trustworthiness of the study.

Participant invitation letter and Informed Consent related to the study contained preliminary information about the study proposal, focus, confidentiality of participants, and use of the findings. Participants who passed the screening test received a consent form to sign. The researcher used coded numbers to identify them throughout the study.

### **Instruments/Data Collection Tools**

Over the years, researchers have been investigating the dynamics of relationships to measure the quality and satisfaction of marriage. Institutions and researchers have developed various instruments to assist this aspect of research, including the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (Snyder, 1979), and the Marital Satisfaction Scale (Roach et al., 1981). Other instruments involve Quality Marriage Index (Norton, 1983), Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (Schumm et al., 1986), and the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale (Fowers & Olson, 1993). Because of its reliability and validity, the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMS) is one of the most widely used instruments to measure marital satisfaction.

To develop the interview questions for participants of this study to measure their perceptions about their marital satisfaction, the researcher used instruments such as the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale, the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS), the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI-R), the Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10), and the Dimensions of

Religiosity Scale (DRS). The Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale has 17 items, with ten articles focusing on marital satisfaction, analyzing the aspects of marriage, including communication, roles, leisure, and religious orientation (Fowers & Olson, 1983). The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale provides an overview of measuring marital quality using a three items scale to make it easier to use (Schumm et al., 1986). The Religious Commitment Inventory is a ten-item scale to measure religious commitment (Worthington et al., 2012). The Dimensions of Religiosity Scale is a 20-item scale to measure the dimension of religiosity in a relationship (Joseph & DiDuca, 2007). Those instruments' ranking scales helped develop the below ten questions for the interview of the participants:

1. What do you believe would make a marriage a high-quality marriage?

This question will help obtain information about research question #1, trying to understand the perceptions of protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Americans about marriage quality.

2. How do you experience satisfaction in your marriage?

This question will help obtain information for research question #2, focusing on finding protestant Haitian and non-Christian Americans' perceptions of marital satisfaction.

3. Which religious concepts contribute to the quality and satisfaction of your marriage, praying for each other, giving and receiving forgiveness, participating in a faith community, practicing unconditional love, serving one another, and meditating?

This question will help obtain information on research questions 3 & 4, focusing on the perception of protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Americans about the practice of their religious ideals or practices they believe contribute to the quality and satisfaction of their marriage.

4. How does a relationship with God, as you understand him, influence the quality of a marriage?

This question will help obtain information concerning research question #3 to determine if protestant Haitian and non-Christian Americans consider their relationship with God or non-relationship with God as a biblical ideal that influences the quality of their marriage.

5. How does a relationship with God, as you understand him, influence how satisfied you are in your marriage?

This question will help obtain information concerning research question #2 to determine if protestant Haitian and non-Christian Americans consider their relationship with God or non-relationship with God as an example of their biblical ideals that impact their marriage satisfaction.

6. How do your religion's teachings and beliefs influence marital commitment and satisfaction?

This question will help obtain information concerning research question #2 to determine if protestant Haitian and non-Christian Americans have religious or non-religious teachings as examples of their biblical ideals that affect their marriage satisfaction.



7. How do your religion's teachings and beliefs influence the quality of your marriage?

This question will help obtain information concerning research question #3 to determine if protestant Haitian and non-Christian Americans' religious or non-religious teachings are examples of their biblical ideals regarding the quality of their marriage.

8. How do you think your religious commitment may impact the quality of your marriage?

This question will help obtain information concerning research question #3 to determine if protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Americans consider their religious or non-religious commitment as one of their biblical ideals that impact the quality of their marriage.

9. How does your religious commitment influence your marriage satisfaction?

This question will help obtain information concerning research question #4 to determine if protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Americans have a religious or non-religious commitment as one of their biblical ideals that they believe impact their marriage satisfaction.

10. How do you think the integration of biblical principles in counseling may affect the quality and happiness of your marriage?

This question will help gather information on research questions 5 & 6 concerning how protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans believe that biblical principles in counseling may impact marital satisfaction and the quality of marriage.

The researcher chose Semi-structured interview questions for this study because they are the most frequently used question for qualitative research and provide objectivity and credibility to the investigation (Kallio et al., 2019). Patton (2014) noted that using semi-structured questions is typical for qualitative studies because they solicit in-depth participant data regarding the studied phenomenon. Additionally, the researcher has read various articles for graduate students of different fields to the appropriate data collection tools for this study and identify the best methods to develop the questions (Kallio et al., 2019; Patton, 2014; Rabionet, 2011; Rabionet, 2011; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

The crafting of the interview protocol was time-consuming because it emphasized the need to establish rapport with the interviewees and is essential for developing questions and follow-up probes (Rabionet, 2011). The researcher followed the guidance of existing literature to develop and refine the interview questions. The guidelines consisted of asking open-ended questions to elicit reflection and factual comments from the interviewees, focusing on "What," "How," or "Why" to understand the phenomenon from the perspectives of participants, and asking questions related to the purpose and scope of the study to understand the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of the participants (Rabionet, 2011; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

The researcher used semi-structured interviews in this project to gather participants' views and thoughts on marital quality and marital satisfaction as described by protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans. He also selected interviews as the primary data collection tool to help investigators develop rapport and personalized relationships with participants. Such a relationship is essential for collaboration and trust throughout the project

(Thorne, 2016). The interview protocol included questions about Haitian Americans' perceptions of marital quality and satisfaction described by Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans. The interview protocol was organized in a standard format to ask questions in a standardized manner. The researcher used pseudonyms in place of participants named to conceal the participant's identity and protect each participant's confidentiality. The researcher will document Field notes used by the research to record participant responses for further reference during interview coding and data analysis.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The goal of utilizing various data collection points was to recruit 12-15 consenting married couples, a roughly even mixture of Christian and non-Christian Haitian couples, to participate in the study. Before the recruitment of the participants, the researcher applied to Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), seeking their approval. The application provided information about the purpose of the study, problem statement, significance, and procedures to protect participants' safety, privacy, and data security. The researcher used pseudonyms for the couples to maintain confidentiality and privacy. Upon receiving IRB approval to collect data, the researcher contacted the leaders of the organizations to request their help in finding participants. Most declined because they did not find eligible participants, but Unity Pentecostal church agreed to help find possible couples. Next, the researcher started the recruiting process by emailing, texting, and calling potential participants to explain the eligibility criterion for the study. After completing the demographic questionnaire, the researcher emailed the Informed Consent to the qualified couples and asked them to provide potential interview dates. The researcher followed up with the participants reminding them about the Informed

Consent due date and requesting a date for the interview. The researcher and couples scheduled the interview and conducted the interview individually for each couple using Zoom Video Conference. The interview lasted between 40-60 minutes. The researcher used followed-up questions to ensure that couples approved their answers. After the interview, the researcher transcribed the recording and began the analysis.

The next step was to obtain Consent from participants. The researcher formally emailed participants to share information about the study and a consent form to provide essential information regarding the participant's role, participation requirements, confidentiality and privacy, and time requirements. The consent form also provided information about the study's risks and benefits. The researcher informed participants that they had four days to peruse, read and electronically sign the Informed Consent.

The next step was to schedule data collection, date, and time with participants. The researcher conducted virtual interviews using Zoom platforms for 30 to 60 minutes and asked participants for permission to record the interview.

### **Ethical Issues**

Before collecting data, the researcher obtained approval from the university's IRB. Upon acceptance, the researcher contacted potential participants for the study to ensure that the study satisfies relevant permissions and requirements. He asked participants to sign the consent form. A consent form implied that participants had read its content and understood its roles and the study's overall goal. After understanding the critical aspects of the study, participants voluntarily signed a consent form to participate. Dissatisfied participants were free to disqualify themselves from the study. The researcher discarded data collected from disqualified participants.

During the data collection, the researcher used pseudonyms to conceal participants' identities and remind them to avoid revealing information. That enabled the researcher to uphold participants' confidentiality and privacy. Regarding data management and storage, the researcher stored interview transcripts on a personal computer using a unique password and field notes off-campus at the researcher's home in a secure cabinet. He kept all data gathered in the study for five years and intended to delete electronic data from the personal computer's hard disk to destroy data. Information stored in hard copies was shredded and burnt.

The next step was member checking. In member checking, the researcher sends interview transcripts to participants to check their accuracy before analysis. The aim was to analyze data from the participant's perspectives and what they meant during their interviews. Participants had four days to complete the member-checking process before returning the transcripts to the researcher for data analysis. The researcher used Atlas transcription software to transcribe interviews to code and analyze transcripts or field notes, build future reviews, and visualize data for emerging themes.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

In this study, the researcher used a thematic analysis approach to analyze data to identify key emerging themes from interview responses. The thematic analysis allowed researchers to identify significant themes from participants' responses using qualitative software such as NVivo. According to Rezapour (2018), NVivo is renowned data analysis software that permits researchers to collect, analyze, and visualize semi-structured data (Rezapour, 2018). The researcher processed data analysis according to Braun and Clarke's (2019) six steps for research, as discussed below. He used NVivo software during the coding process to categorize themes.

First, the researcher familiarized himself with the data by thoroughly reading the interview transcripts. During this part of the process, the researcher took notes on essential terms or phrases presented during the interviews by the participants. After identifying common words and repeated representations, the second step is generating an initial code. The researcher created a list of codes identified to reveal what constitutes data and how that data was linked to the topic. The researcher used NVivo software to code patterns within the data set to understand better the relationship between the themes identified and marital satisfaction in Christian and non-Christian Hattian Americans. Third, the researcher placed themes from the data analysis process. The codes and categories generated research themes and combined all codes and similar types to group significant and less significant codes for further analysis. Fourth, the researcher reviewed themes to group categories into important themes to determine the relevancy of each theme related to the research questions. Fifth, the researcher identified emerging themes and understood their relationship with the study's problem statement. Finally, the researcher incorporated all data in the final report to connect the findings to the theoretical framework and current literature, which helped explain the context of the study results.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 discussed the research procedures and methods used to conduct the current study. First, the researcher began by discussing the selected research methodology and design. This section offered the rationale for choosing qualitative research methodology and design. The researcher discussed population and sample size, the target population, and the sample size, followed by a discussion of data collection instruments, interviews, and data collection

procedures. Other sections discussed included data analysis and ethical assurances. The next chapter, Chapter 4, presents the study findings.

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

This phenomenological qualitative study explored perceptions of marital quality and satisfaction as Protestants, Haitian Americans, and non-Protestant Haitian Americans described. The first three chapters of this study provided data about the purpose of the study, findings from the literature review, and the methodology. In chapter four, the researcher will share the results of the findings received from the twelve married Haitian American Christian and non-Christian couples that have been married for over five years within the age range of 25-40 to understand the influence of religion on their marital quality and satisfaction. Each participant completed a demographic questionnaire to determine eligibility for the study and participated in a one-on-one interview with the researcher via Zoom. The investigator used pseudonyms to conceal the identity of the participants to maintain confidentiality. This chapter will describe the participants, provide an overview of the participants' perceptions concerning the impact of religion on their marriages, and provide a chapter summary.

### **Analysis of the Demographic Information of the Respondents**

#### **Research Participants**

##### **Protestant Couples**

Couple 1: Sanon (husband) and Bitá (Wife)

Couple 2: John(husband) and Sheila (wife)



Couple 3: Nod(husband) and Phanie (wife)

Couple 4: Sam (husband) and Lina (wife)

Couple 5: Joseph and Mary

Couple 6: Zach (husband) and Elizabeth (Wife)

#### Non-Protestant Couples

Couple 1: Juna (wife) and Chard (husband)

Couple 2: Landia (wife) and Andrews (husband)

Couple 3: Nancy (wife) and Peter (husband)

Couple 4: Elkanah (husband) and Hanna (wife)

Couple 5: Ruth (wife) and Boaz (husband)

Couple 6: Julia (wife) and Thomas (husband)

#### **Age of the Respondents**

In the present study, overall, 12 couples participated. Six of them were protestants and the other six were non-protestants; their age information is in Figure 1.

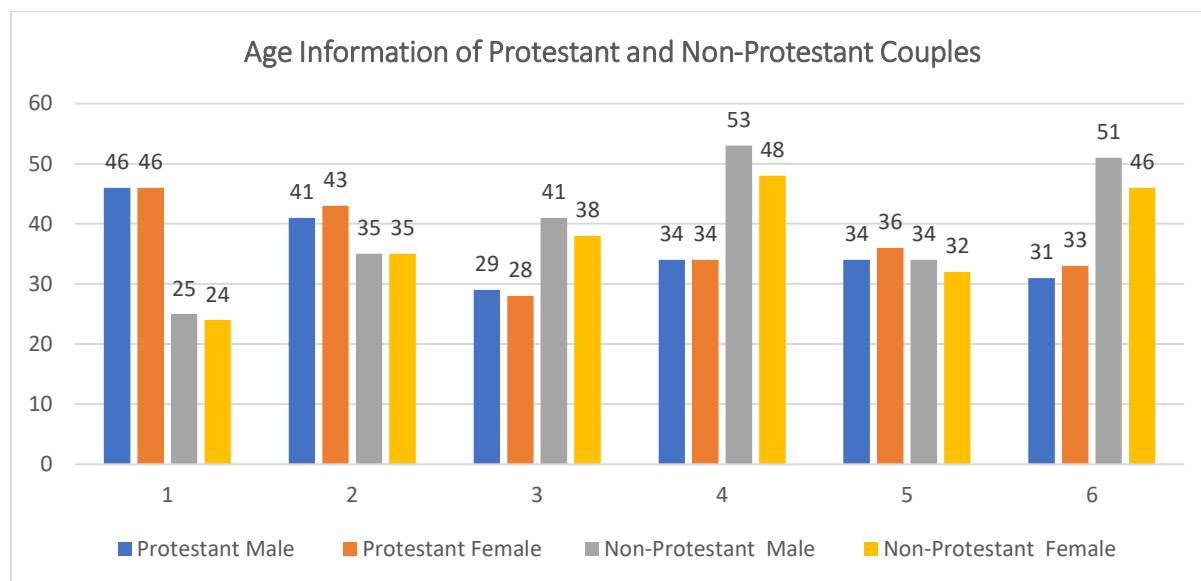
**Figure 1-Age of the Participants**

Figure 1 shows that among these 12 couples, the eldest male non-respondent was 53 years and the youngest male non-protestant was 25 years. In comparison, protestant males' maximum age was 46, and the youngest one was 31 years. The age range for protestant women was from 28 to 46 years, and for non-protestant women was from 24 to 48. The researcher deviated from the original plan to recruit participants from Haitian American married Christian and non-Christian couples that have been married for over five years within the age range of 25-40. After searching for almost two months for the study sample, it was challenging to find the Initially targeted ages of participants among the solicited potential participants in the Haitian community living in Palm Beach and Broward County, Florida. The ages of current participants echoed the Haitian American couples who participated in the study during the recruiting process.

### **Income Status of Participants**

Figure 2 shows the income of protestant Haitian American and non-Christian Haitian American couples.

**Figure 2-Income Status of the Participants**

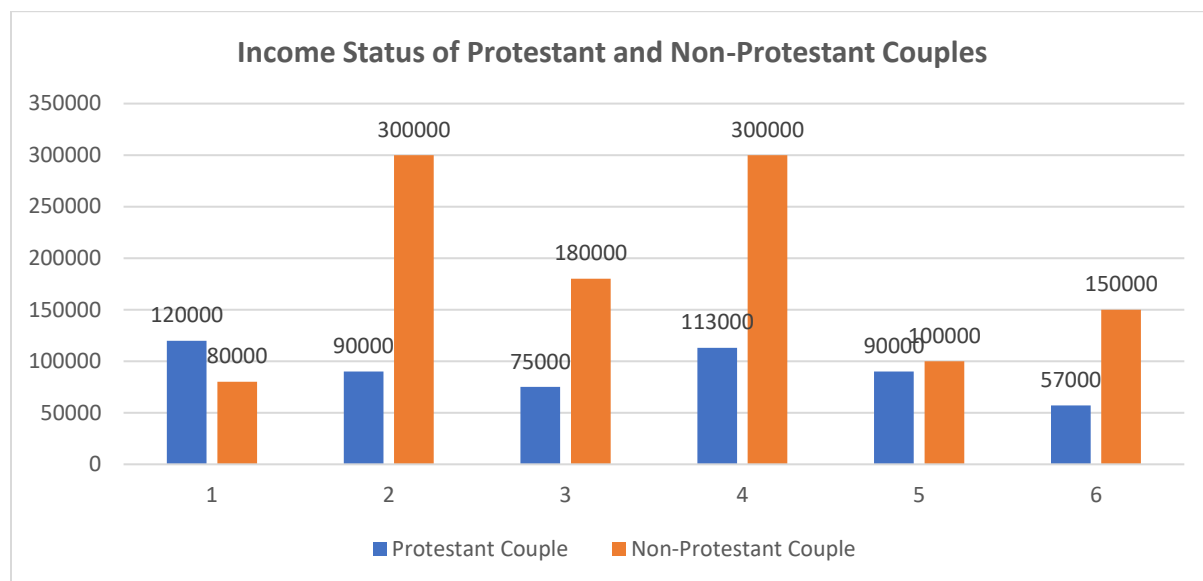


Figure 2 shows that overall protestant couples had lesser income than non-protestant couples. The maximum protestant couple's income was \$113,000, and the lowest income was \$57,000. On the other hand, the highest revenue for non-protestant couples was \$300,000, and the minor income was \$80,000.

### **Marriage Years**

Figure 3 indicates the years for the protestant Haitian American and non-Christian Haitian American couples marriage.

**Figure 3-*Years of Marriage of the Participants***

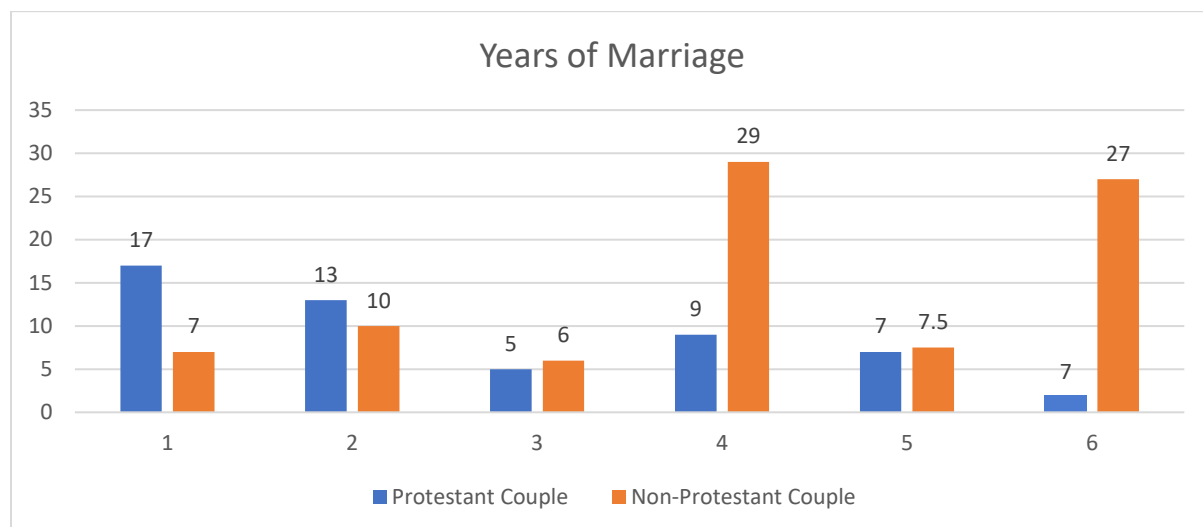


Figure 3 shows that one of the non-protestant couples had 29 years of marriage, followed by the next oldest couple with 27 years of marriage. The minimum number of years for the marriage was six. While for the protestant respondents, the marriage years ranged between 7 to 17 years.

### **Information About Participants' Children**

Figure 4 provides information about the children of protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian.

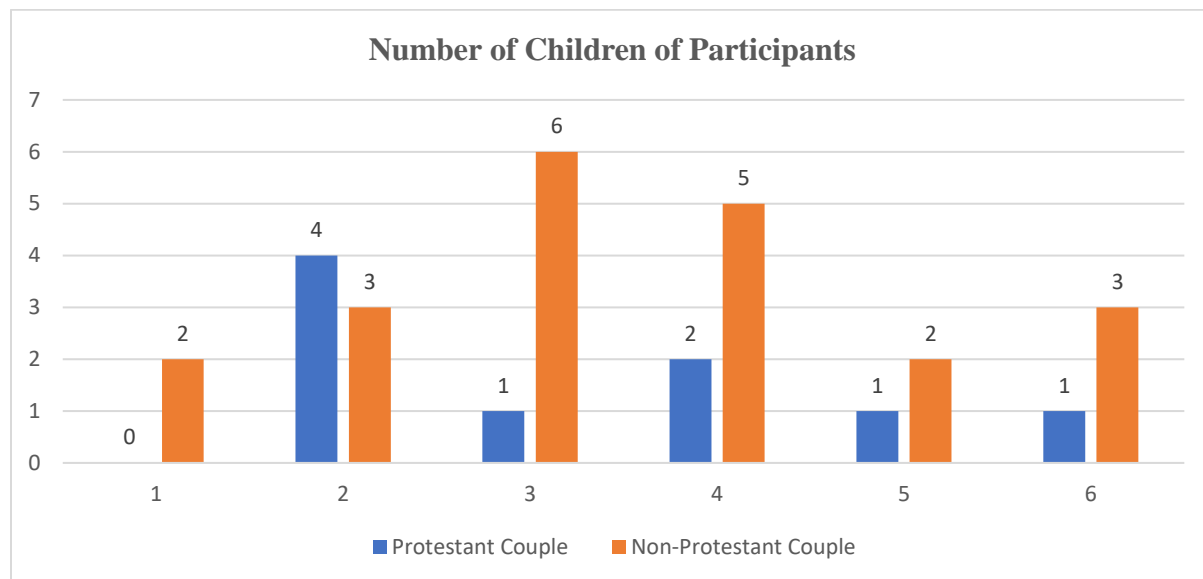
**Figure 4- Haitian American children*****Information for Number of Children of the Participants***

Figure 4 shows that overall protestant and non-protestant couples had 21 children.

**Socio-Economic Status of Participants**

Figure 5 describes the socio-economic status of protestant Haitian American and non-Christian Haitian American respondents.

**Figure 5-Socio-Economic Status of Participants**

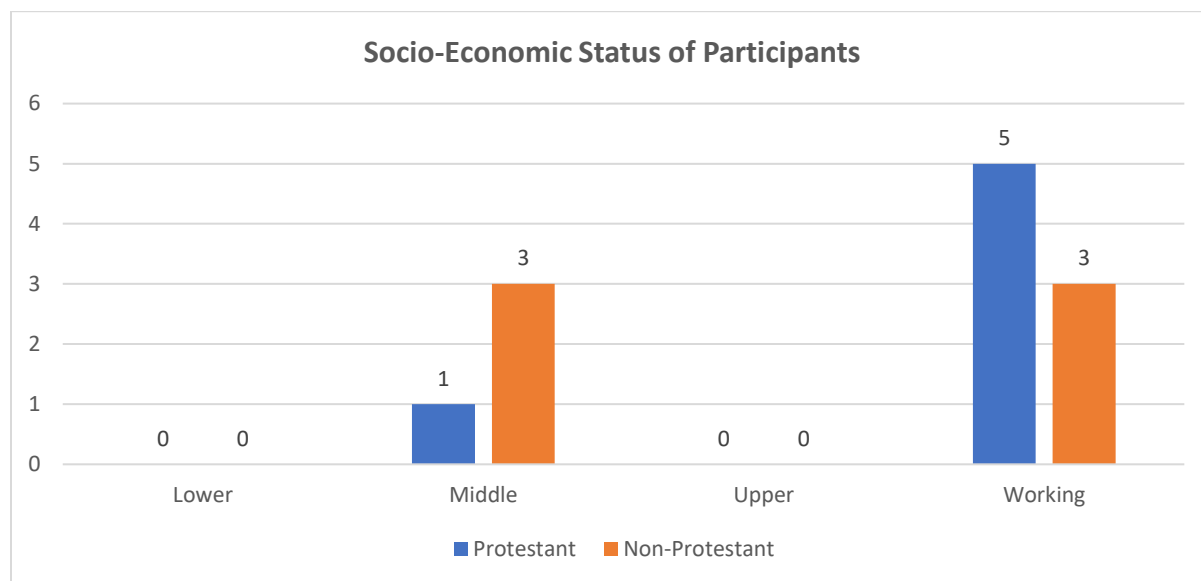


Figure 5 shows five protestant couples were working class while one had a middle socio-economic status. While for non-protestant couples, half of them were working, and the remaining half had middle-level socio-economic status.

## Results

The first part of the analysis showed the respondents' demographic information about their age, ethnicity, income, marriage years, children, and socio-economic status. The next section of this study will discuss the analysis of the research questions.

### Analysis of Research Questions

In the current qualitative study, the researcher investigated how Protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitians described the quality and satisfaction of their marriages. The recent research emphasized various reasons to carry out a study specifically on Haitian Americans, including the growing population of Haitians in the United States, particularly in cities like New York, Chicago, and Michigan. The researcher processed data analysis according

to Braun and Clarke's (2019) six steps for research, as discussed below.

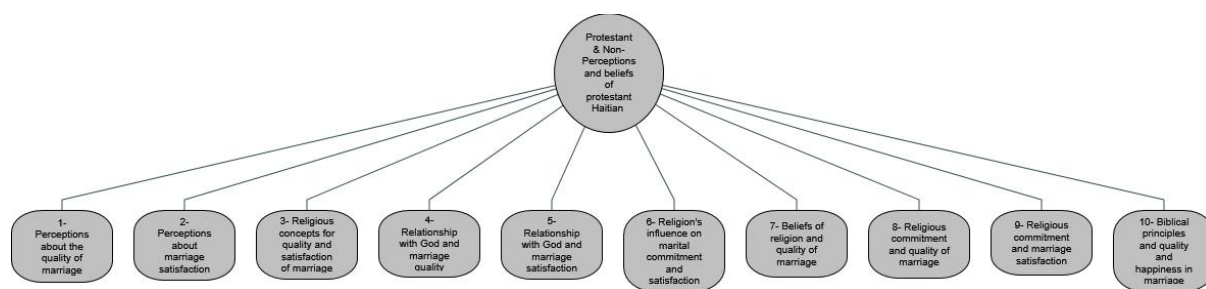
First, the researcher familiarized himself with the data by thoroughly reading the interview transcripts. During this part of the process, the researcher took notes on essential terms or phrases presented during the interviews by the participants. After identifying common words and repeated representations, the second step was to generate an initial code. The researcher created a list of codes identified to reveal what constituted data and understand the correlation between the data and the topic. The researcher used NVivo software to identify code patterns within the data set to understand better the relationship between the themes identified in marital satisfaction between Christian and non-Christian Haitian Americans. Third, the researcher placed themes from the data analysis process. The codes and categories generated research themes and combined all codes and similar types to group significant and less significant codes for further analysis. Fourth, the researcher reviewed themes to group categories into important themes to determine the relevancy of each theme related to the research questions. Fifth, the researcher named themes to identify emerging themes and understand their relationship with the study's problem statement. Finally, the final report incorporated all data to connect the findings to the theoretical framework and current literature, explaining the study results' context.

The researcher collected data using an interview guide for the following research questions.

1. What is the difference between how protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans perceive the quality of marriage?
2. What is the difference between how protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans perceive marital satisfaction?

3. What biblical ideals do protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans believe have an impact on marriage quality?
4. What biblical ideals do protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans believe have an impact on marriage satisfaction?
5. What biblical principles do protestant and Non-Christian Haitian Americans believe would impact marriage satisfaction if introduced in counseling?
6. The researcher collected data from six protestant Haitian American couples and six non-Christian Haitian Americans to answer the above research questions. After collecting data through interviews, the researcher transcribed it and then analyzed it using the six-step framework for thematic analysis given by Braun and Clarke (2006). For the data visualization, the researcher also used NVivo software and emerged the following themes in Figure 6.

**Figure 6-***Detail of Themes Emerged from the Data of Protestant non-Christian Haitian Americans*



In Figure 6, the researcher presented the themes that emerged from the data of protestant and non-protestant Haitian Americans. The researcher meagered the themes from the research



questions using the interview data. Figures 7 and 8 provide information about the hierarchy charts for the protestant and non-protestant couples.

**Table 1-Hierarchy Chart for Protestant Respondents**

1- Protestants Haitian Americans Married Couples			
9- Religious commitment and marriage ...	6- Religion influence on marital commi...	3- Religious concepts for ...	2- Marriage satisfaction
8- Religious commitment and quality of ...	5- Relationship with God and satisfacti...	10- Biblical principles and quality and happiness in ...	
7- Beliefs of religion and quality of ma...	4- Relationship with God and quality in ...	1- Perceptions about quality of marriage	

Using the NVivo software, the researcher analyzed data and found the above hierarchy chart for the Protestant couples.

**Table 2 -Hierarchy Chart for Non-Protestant Respondents**

Using the NVivo software, the researcher analyzed data and found the above hierarchy chart for the non-protestant couples. The following figures also show the Word cloud of the data acquired.

Non-Protestant Haitian American Couples			
9- Religious commitment and marriage ...	6- Religion influence on marital commi...	3- Religious concepts for ...	2- Marriage satisfaction
8- Religious commitment and quality of ...	5- Relationship with God and satisfacti...	10- Biblical principles and quality and happiness in ...	
7- Beliefs of religion and quality of ma...	4- Relationship with God and quality in ...		
		1- Perceptions about quality of marriage	

Figure7-Word Cloud Protestant Respondents



Figure 8-Word Cloud Non-Protestant Respondents



## Interview Research Question Answers

This phenomenological study consisted of ten research questions developed to understand the participant's perceptions about the quality and satisfaction of their marriage. The researcher analyzed data for protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans and identified the codes like, rock solid, willing to listen, deeper, devoted husband, being united, effective communication, unity, and understanding. The researcher supported the key findings with interview excerpts. This section reports the data findings and the qualitative analysis of the interview responses for each research question.

### Theme 1: Perception of Quality of Marriage

#### Discussion of Question # 1

The first question revolved around how protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans perceive marriage quality. The researcher asked respondents this question: what would make a marriage high-quality? The first protestant couples responded,

*"I believe that I have to go to my perspective as a Christian because this is rock solid. I think that Christ in my marriage would make it high-quality. Following the example of the relationship between Jesus and the Church would make a marriage of high quality."*

(Sanon- husband)

*"I believe that a high-quality marriage is all about unity and understanding. Being united in our marriage makes it easier to work together to achieve common goals. Because I understand my husband, this makes the quality of our marriage what it is supposed to be."*

*God, as the center of our marriage, makes our marriage a high-quality marriage."* (Bita-wife).

In response to the first protestant couple, the first non-protestant couple argued,

*"I would say communicate and listen to my partner. Those are the two big things for me."*(Chard- husband)

*"I believe that trusting the person and working together on many things makes a marriage high-quality."*(Juna-wife)

While replying to the same question, one of the other protestant couples stated,

*"A marriage is high-quality because the couple shares the same beliefs. It makes it easier to go to the same church. Another factor that makes a quality marriage is effective communication and understanding."* (Shell-wife)

*"I would say that a high-quality marriage has a lot to do with the fear of God and respect for my wife. That is the key to a successful marriage."* (John- husband)

The researcher asked the same question to the non-protestant couples. One couple answered as follows:

*"Oh, I say, honesty, trust! Of course, this is what it is all about. I think love is another if people are religious and then love."*(Landia-wife)

*"They have the same goals, respect, and honesty. Those are big things. Of course, having a quality marriage is hard if you're on two different paths."* (Andrews- husband)

In response to the same question, another protestant couple answered,

*"Different things, such as communication, being a good listener, and putting himself in his wife's shoes to help her not do things that will not get under her skin." (Nod-husband)*

*"I would say that a high-quality marriage is about communication, trust, and understanding—good faith in God." (Phanie-wife)*

The researcher asked the same question to the non-protestant couples, and they replied as follows:

*"Okay, a high-quality marriage. Okay, well, I believe you should always have togetherness in the marriage, so with togetherness, communication will be needed. Yeah, communication and understanding, I guess." (Nancy-wife)*

*"A high-quality marriage, I would say, communication. Communication is very high for me to have a high-quality marriage and home." (Peter- husband)*

### **Analysis of Couples' Responses to Question # 1**

The findings of the interview responses to question one regarding marriage quality showed that Haitian American Protestant couples believed several religious factors contribute to the quality of their marriage. First, having Jesus Christ in their marriage makes it a quality marriage because his relationship and the church is the perfect model to emulate. The couples identified the spiritual features characterizing the interaction of Jesus and his Church and used them in their marriage to foster and cherish a quality marriage. Those religious features included self-sacrifice, understanding, forgiveness, open communication considering one another's views, and listening were essential to make a marriage a high-quality marriage. Furthermore, the findings revealed that Haitian American Protestant couples believed marital unity, similar

beliefs, fear of God, mutual trust, mutual respect, and having God as the focal point are essential for a high-quality marriage.

The interview responses' findings about marriage quality showed that the non-protestant Haitian American couples attributed the quality of their marriage to other factors. The couples believed trust, respect, honesty, togetherness, and communication make their marriage high-quality. They also viewed having the same goals as crucial for a high-quality marriage. They did not view God or Jesus as the reason for making their marriage high-quality.

## **Theme 2: Perception of marriage Satisfaction**

### **Discussion of Question # 2**

The study's second research question concerned the differences between protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans' perceived marital satisfaction. How do you experience marital satisfaction? The protestant couples responded.

*"I feel satisfied when I meet my expectations." (Sam-husband)*

*"For me, satisfaction is not coming from my husband but from the result of the work that I put in. If the outcome is better, that is my satisfaction." (Lina-wife)*

To the same question, the non-protestant couple argued,

*"I am monitoring my wife's actions toward me and how she reacts when we have a family issue." (Elkanah-husband)*

*"I experience satisfaction when we spend time together, speak about things you know are bothering me, talk about them, and sit down and see our accomplishments." (Hannah-wife)*



When another protestant couple asked the same question, they answered,

*"My marriage satisfaction is spending time with my husband because my love language is quality time, sharing goals, and learning what we can do better to improve our marriage."* (Mary-wife)

*"As the Bible says, when you find a good wife, that is better than gold. I experience satisfaction in my marriage because God gave me a wife who is better than gold. I got what I was looking for."* (Joseph-husband)

To the same question, the non-protestant couple answered,

*"I think that smooth communication, understanding, positivity, and support from one another give me satisfaction in my marriage."* (Ruth-wife)

*"I experience satisfaction in my marriage by being able to communicate through tough times. Also, you know, being able to work together to, you know, achieve our ultimate goal as one."* (Boaz-husband)

## **Analysis of Couples' Responses to Question # 2**

The findings of the interview responses for question two suggested that protestant couples experienced marriage satisfaction when they fulfilled their expectations, were pleased with the quality of interactions, spent quality together, and had shared goals. Contrarily, the findings show that non-protestant couples considered talking about everything, having a good wife, having smooth communication, monitoring partners' reactions, and supporting one another as the crucial daily function of marital satisfaction.

The results further revealed that protestant couples found satisfaction in married life was to spending time with their husband, finding a suitable wife based on biblical teachings, and sharing goals while talking to improve their family life. However, the findings indicated that non-protestant couples highlighted smooth communication, understanding, positivity, and moral support as the main factors contributing to marital satisfaction.

### **Theme 3: Religious concepts for quality and satisfaction of marriage**

#### **Discussion of Question # 3**

This theme covered the study's third and fourth research questions, which are concerned with Biblical ideals protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans believe have an impact on marriage quality and satisfaction. Which religious concepts contribute to your marriage's quality and satisfaction, such as praying for each other, giving and receiving forgiveness, participating in a faith community, practicing unconditional love, serving one another, and meditating? The protestant couples answered the question as follows:

*"I believe that prayer is essential. Serving is important. We serve the community through the Church regardless of their religion and beliefs. And also love. We have to love everyone."* (Zach-husband)

*"I am my husband's rib. He is the head of the household. Of course, I am praying with him and go to Church together."* (Sarah-wife)

The researcher asked the same question to the non-protestant couple, and they replied,

*"I learned as a kid that if you have a wife or husband, you must honor them. You treat them right and be faithful. I think all those things play a big part in the quality and satisfaction of my marriage." (Andrews-husband)*

*"I have no religious concepts that contribute to the quality and satisfaction of my marriage. From my perspective, I would say, being there for the person like you said, yeah, I would say, that's it. You have to be there for the person. " (Lindia-wife)*

In response to the same question, one of the other protestant couples argued,

*"Our religious concepts that contribute to the quality and satisfaction of our marriage include sharing the same faith. We believe in family prayer, forgiveness, patience, and caring for one another and the kids. " (Shell-wife)*

*"I would say the first is faith, and the second is prayer. I believe we will face challenges as a family. As I said, we trust God and pray to him. There might be more concepts, but that is faith and prayer." (John-husband)*

In response to the same question, the non-protestants, one non-protestant couple argued,

*"From my perspective, I would say, being there for the person like you said, yeah, I would say, that's it. You have to be there for the person." (Landia-wife)*

*"Everyone you know as kids that you always learn from parents how to live with others. If you have a wife or husband, you have to honor them. You treat them right and be faithful. I think all those things are a big part." (Andrews-husband)*

### **Analysis of Couples' Responses to Question # 3**

The findings showed that protestant Haitian Americans believed that praying, serving the community through church, church attendance, loving, and supporting were essential to experience marital quality and satisfaction. They also thought that family prayer, forgiving one another, having patience, showing love to the children, reading the Bible, unconditional love, and not going to bed angry built and enhanced their marriage quality and satisfaction.

The results showed a contrast between the protestant and non-protestant couples regarding what contributed to marriage quality and satisfaction. The non-protestants attributed their marriage quality and satisfaction to non-religious concepts. These non-religious ideas involved honoring one another, treating one another the right way, being faithful to each other, and being present for one another were essential to have a quality and satisfied marriage. The non-protestant couples considered other concepts contributing to marital quality and satisfaction. The responses of the non-protestant couples showed no correlation between religious beliefs and the quality and satisfaction of their marriage.

#### **Theme 4: Relationship with God and marriage quality**

##### **Discussion of Question # 4**

The current theme emerged from the data answering the interview questions for the third research objective concerning the impact of a relationship with God on marriage as described by protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans. The researcher asked participants to share their thoughts about the connection between a relationship with God and the quality of their marriage. How does a relationship with God, as you understand him, influence the quality of a marriage? One protestant couple said,

*"I see God as my father, provider, and everything. The way my relationship with God influences my marriage and family is to be a father and provider to my family." (John-husband)*

*"My relationship with God influences a marriage's quality because faith in him reminds us that we are not alone. God is there for us and with us, which helps us avoid doing what is wrong." (Shell-wife)*

In response to the same question, a non-protestant couple said,

*"I think it makes us take our vows to each other a little bit more seriously because we, you know, made that vow with God as well. So, I think that's our influence. But also, you know, and pretty much, having Faith that God will see us through what we're going through." (Nancy-wife)*

*"I would say that just being able to open up. Do you know what I mean? Like, you know, when I sit there and think throughout the day, or whenever I'm praying, you know the God, you know I just over I'm comfortable just speaking to him, and we are open it up. So, I use the same thing regarding my wife and my kids. I don't hold anything back when it comes to them." (Peter-husband)*

In response to the same question, another protestant couple commented,

*"I believe that having a relationship with God is essential. I know that you understand your spouse or wife more with God." (Zach-husband)*

*"Now that my relationship with God has been better. I respect my husband more. The quality of our marriage has improved tremendously." (Sarah-wife)*

When a non-protestant couple asked the same question, they commented,

*"That's the one I make because my religion says we must stick with the wife. I don't know how to put that words to get it together. It just respects one another, you know."*

(Thomas-husband)

*"I don't have any religious beliefs, to be honest with you. I do believe in a higher power. As I said, I am not religious but spiritual. But I think there is a high power, and that awareness influences how I relate to my husband in words, attitudes, and actions." (Julia-wife)*

#### **Analysis of Couples' Responses to Question # 4**

The findings from the above answers demonstrated that the protestants couples believed their relationship with their God was essential because it affected their marriage quality. Results showed that protestants couples viewed their relationship with God as the Father and Provider as the primary source for their family. Faith in God, his mercy, and kindness influenced the quality of their marriage. Findings further revealed that their connection with God was the standard to shape their interactions and behaviors, and the presence of God reassured them that they were not alone. As a result, this motivates them to act morally and make the correct choices for their children and themselves with the help of the Holy Spirit.

The non-protestant couples had different views. The results showed that non-protestant couples believed that the marriage quality depended upon themselves. The non-protestant

couples thought that being vulnerable to one another and sharing their thoughts and feelings throughout the day was vital for a quality marriage. They felt comfortable talking with each other and took their marriage vows seriously because they believed in exchanging them before God. A couple provided mixed answers about how a relationship with God might influence marriage quality. For example, one couple attributed the quality of their marriage to praying to God. Yet few non-protestant couples thought God played a role in their marriage quality even though they did not serve him actively. Overall, protestant couples relied on God to define their marriage, while non-protestant focused on interpersonal skills to shape the quality of their marriage.

### **Theme 5: Relationship with God and Marriage Satisfaction**

#### **Discussion of Question # 5**

The current theme that emerged from the data for the second research question concerned the difference between how protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans perceive marital satisfaction. The researcher asked questions related to the second research question to both protestant Haitian American and non-Christian Haitian Americans. The researcher asked the participants: How does a relationship with God, as you understand him, influence how satisfied you are in your marriage? In response to the question, the protestant couples said,

*"I find satisfaction in my marriage by serving my wife and being willing to sacrifice for my marriage. Being willing to give my marriage my all proves I follow Christ as my example."* (Sanon-husband)

*"I am satisfied in my marriage because I allow God makes the choice that he wants for our marriage. He is doing what he does to take care of this marriage."* (Bita-wife)

*"Satisfaction for me is trying to be the husband God wants. I am satisfied as long as I do what God expects of me."* (Nod-husband)

*"I do not feel like it affects my marriage. I feel like there are two separate things."*  
(Phanie-wife)

Two other non-protestant couples responded to the same question as follows:

*"I know that God exists, and I believe in him. Even though I am not 100% into God, he answers me when I ask him for something."* (Elkanah-husband)

*"Having respect for God makes me respect my husband. Knowing that God says he is the prince of the house and believing that God is watching us, there are certain things that you don't want to do, whether your husband is there or not."* (Hannah-wife)

*"By having a relationship with God, knowing he's ordering your steps. He wouldn't take you to this person for you to end up divorcing this person; you know you're with this person through good and bad times, you know. When you make those vows, you do in front of God; those are the ones you know. I genuinely am, live by, you know, for better, for worse, for rich or poor, you know, through sickness and those things. It wasn't a joke to me. So those are the core values that I live with."* (Boaz-husband)

*"I do not know how a relationship with God influences satisfaction in my marriage. I would say that even on those days in your marriage, you are unsure or have negative*



*thoughts. You know that the path of life is not easy. It will be all right. You're not sure those days were in your marriage, or you're having negative thoughts. You know that the walk of life is not a straight path. You know and understand you go through your trials and tribulations, good or bad. So, it will be all right at the end of the day."* (Ruth-wife)

### **Analysis of Couples' Responses to Question # 5**

Findings showed that protestant couples' responses suggested a correlation between their relationship with God and how they experienced satisfaction in their marriage. The couples considered God the one for making positive changes in their lives and felt because they were following God. They believed that being satisfied in marriage included being willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of Christ, serving one another, and being willing to sacrifice everything.

Findings demonstrated that most non-protestant couples shared different views than the protestant couple about the relationship between God and marital satisfaction. The non-protestant couples felt that a relationship with God and marriage satisfaction are two other things, and their relationship with God would not affect their marriage satisfaction. However, one couple supposed that having a solid relationship with God would make their marriage more vital and satisfying.

Overall, the protestant couples leaned more toward God for the satisfaction of their marriage than the non-protestant couples. Nevertheless, the non-protestant couples gave mixed answers. For instance, a husband thought trusting God would impact his marriage's satisfaction. In contrast, his wife did not see any correlation between God and marriage satisfaction. She viewed them as two separate entities.

## Theme 6: Religion's Influence on Marital Commitment and Satisfaction

### Discussion of Question # 6

The researcher addressed the theme of religion's influence on marital commitment and satisfaction for the second research question concerned with the protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans' perceived marital satisfaction. How do your religion's teachings and beliefs influence marital commitment and satisfaction? A protestant couple provided the following answers:

*John (husband) said, "Faith helps us to trust God even when we do not see him or any action. I see it the same way in my marriage. Prayer requires perseverance.*

*Perseverance is the key, like when you have to have perseverance when you pray.*

*Perseverance helps me to continue, strive for more, and stay connected to the end. I also see the notion of humility."*

*Shell (wife) said, "God's teachings encourage me to be faithful and not do wrong or harm. God's teachings empower us to be committed to one another." Seek Him first always.*

The researcher asked the same question to a non-protestant couple, and they answered,

*"I grew up Jehovah's Witness. It was always like you know you honor your wife or your husband. You know you try to treat each other with respect. Be faithful to all that stuff, even though I don't actively participate in that religion daily. It was always like honor, respect, and love. Even though I do not practice religion, it impacts the satisfaction of our marriage using what I learned during my upbringing. But I take many of those*

*teachings with me now. I am a grown person, and I apply those to my marriage. It improves satisfaction because I don't have to worry about that. Drama, you know, like, you know, like you know, most relationships, dramas. I avoid those things by using what I know from my upbringing."* (Andrews-husband)

*"I am satisfied because we are both good people who allow positive and good people to allow our marriage to prosper. So, I think it's a lot of like our marriage to thrive because, you know, we've qualified, you know, just our positivity. And you know, just being good people allow our marriage to prosper, even though we are not perfect people. We're married for all the right reasons. I don't see us separating or anything like that because we're delighted in the marriage. So, I think it's because of our beliefs. We have the same views and commitment."* (Landia-wife)

In response to the question, another protestant couple commented,

*"My relationship with God is tremendous in my marriage. As I said, if you respect God, you will do what you should in the marriage. Since God gave us marriage, I would do whatever I could to please God in my marriage."* (Joseph-husband)

*"One way is to trust and believe and have faith. Trusting in God and having faith even though you cannot see something you believe."* (Mary-wife)

To the same question, one of the non-protestant couples argued,

*"I cannot answer that question because I am not into religion."* (Elkanah-husband)

*"God says that is one man and one woman. I believe in that part, so I could never see myself in a three-way or forward relationship." (Hannah-wife)*

### **Analysis of Couples' Responses to Question # 6**

The findings from the above statements highlighted the differences between protestant and non-protestant couples regarding the influence of religion on marital commitment and satisfaction. The results showed that protestant couples perceived that their faith influenced marital fidelity. Data findings showed that the protestant couples believed that trusting in God, his teachings, obedience to God, prayer, and perseverance could keep them going, push themselves further, and diligently commit to their marital tasks. They also considered not believing in divorce because of their Faith in God, prioritizing God, behaving as God wants in marriage, instilling moral principles in their children, such as the idea of holiness and following God's instructions about how to treat one another, empowered them to remain committed to their marriage.

Data findings further showed that the non-protestant couples did not see any connection between their commitment to marriage and religion because they viewed themselves as non-religious. They valued respecting one another, loving one another, honoring one another, being decent, and marital faithfulness influenced their marital commitment. Nevertheless, even though most non-protestants did not see a relationship with God impacted their commitment to one another, one couple saw a connection. The wife believed that it was the teaching of God that one woman for one man influenced her marital commitment and could never see herself sharing her

husband with other women. The non-protestant husband linked his marital commitment to his upbringing as a Jehovah's Witness.

Even though he no longer attended church, he believed that everything he learned growing up impacted their marriage's happiness despite his lack of religious practice. The husband attributed his level of contentment in his marriage was higher because of what his parents and others taught him. Like in most relationships and partnerships, he compared life to drama, but he tried to live with his wife with the drama associated with relationships. He has been using what he learned from childhood to avoid those situations. At the same time, his wife acknowledged that even if they aren't perfect, the fact that they are friendly and good people helps their marriage succeed. There are many good reasons why they got married. She did not see them divorcing or doing something similar because they loved their marriage. Hence, in her opinion, their beliefs and shared convictions strengthen their marriage.

Protestant couples believed religion influenced their marital commitment and satisfaction more than non-protestant couples. Protestant couples were more inclined towards religion than non-protestant couples.

### **Theme 7: Beliefs of religion and quality of marriage**

#### **Discussion of Question # 7**

The current theme emerged from the data for the third research question of the study. The third research question concerns biblical ideals of whether protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans believe an impact on marriage quality. The data analysis of this section describes the participants' perceptions concerning how their religious beliefs affect the

quality of their marriages. How do your religion's teachings and beliefs influence the quality of your marriage? A protestant couple answered as follows:

*"Following Jesus and his teachings impacted the quality of my marriage. The Bible is the foundation of everything that we do as a couple. Reading the Bible improves my relationship with God; his teachings become who I am and part of everything I do in my marriage."* (Sanan-husband)

*"My husband and I experience a good marriage because we go by the Word of God and what the Word of God says, knowing that he has the blueprint."* (Bita-wife)

When the non-protestant asked the same question, one of the couples said the following:

*"I'm not saying that teaching is a main priority like we know the respect for the higher power. With our decision, we make it for ourselves, and then we will make it work. And then we want to get better every day, and then we know we try our best to make it work, and then to believe with what you see the religion we have just like the respect for each other."* (Thomas-husband)

*"I do not have any religious commitment. So, it does not impact my relationship at all. I'll say the belief in that higher power and our respect for each other. I give and demand respect, and it works out for us."* (Julia-wife)

Another protestant couple further said,

*"The teachings help us a lot because the Holy Spirit guides us. Listening to teachers who teach the Word of God and have experience contributes significantly to the quality of our*

*marriage. From spiritual teachers, it is essential to learn how to function in marriage.*"(Nod-husband)

*"I feel like there is more that contributes to the satisfaction of my marriage."* (Phanie-wife)

In response to the same question, a non-protestant couple said,

*"My marriage is impacted positively because of religion and Church."* (Chard-husband)

*"I would say cooking together, believing in my husband, and ensuring everything is okay with him."* (Juna-wife)

### **Analysis of Couples' Responses to Question # 7**

The findings revealed that the protestant couples believed that their religious teachings significantly impacted the quality of their marriages. Their commitment to Jesus and his teachings, daily Bible reading, relationship with God, and obedience to his word influenced marriage. Religious teachings and beliefs may also affect the quality of marriage, including factors such as the lead of the Holy Spirit, biblical teachers of the Word of God, and spiritual mentors to understand how marriage works. Those results showed how protestant couples believed they impacted the quality of union of the protestant couples.

The data findings also showed that the non-protestant couples did not think the teachings of God should take precedence over other things. They emphasized the awareness of a higher power, defining what their marriage should be by themselves, working hard together to make things work, and continually improving their marriage determined the quality of their marriage. They also considered the compatibility of beliefs, positive regard for one another, their conviction, and reciprocated respect as the more significant force of their marriage than the teachings of religion.

The data findings also noted a difference of opinion between a non-protestant couple concerning the influence of religion on the quality of marriage. The non-protestant husband believed that religion and church positively influenced his marriage because they avoided doing anything that could endanger their union, ultimately keeping them content. His wife thought that spending time with her husband, his well-being, and cooking for him influenced the quality of their marriage.

The findings generally revealed that Protestant couples attributed the quality of their marriage to religion's teachings and beliefs. However, non-Protestant couples believed that individual work was the main factor in shaping the quality of their marriage.

### **Theme 8: Religious Commitment and Quality of Marriage**

#### **Discussion of Question # 8**

The researcher collected data on the religious commitment that Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans believe and their impact on marriage quality. How do you think your religious commitment may impact the quality of your marriage? The researcher asked



protestant couples to share their thoughts on the correlation between religious commitment and the quality of their marriage, and they replied,

*"I thank God for my wife and me because we have the same beliefs. Most people do not share the same views. Thank God for us because we believe the same things. There is no inconvenience at all."* (Nod-husband)

*"I think the lack of my religious commitment negatively affects the relationship because there is less forgiveness and other concepts."* (Phanie-wife)

*"Being with someone with the same beliefs strengthens the quality of our marriage. The shared beliefs contribute to being involved in serving God together. The shared beliefs make it easy to obey the commandments of God. For example, if I am on a mission, my partner would not object because we both want to honor God."* (Sanon-husband)

*"My religious commitment shows that I am living for something good and am willing to give my best efforts to have this marriage quality."* (Bita-wife)

The researcher asked the same question to the non-protestant couples, and they replied,

*"The impact keeps me in a straight line that holds us together like cheating. All the kinds of stuff that keep us together."* (Chard-husband)

*"I feel like making sure my husband is okay, doing things in the house, making sure you are doing what a wife should do, like satisfying her husband, making sure the house is clean, and the kids are always good."* (Juna-wife)

### **Analysis of Couples' Responses to Question # 8**

The data findings showed that protestant couples believed religious commitment practices influenced the quality of their marriage, including sharing the same beliefs and values. The shared convictions allow them to serve God together, follow His commandments, and benefit from having a partner with the same ideas and values. For instance, the husband would not complain if his wife went on a mission because they both wanted to glorify God. Meanwhile, his wife argued that she is living for something greater than herself and is willing to put in her best effort to have marriage quality, as seen by her religious commitment. The results demonstrated that protestant couples believed their religious commitment impacted their marriage quality.

Non-protestant couples provided mixed responses about the relationship between religious commitment and marriage quality. While the majority did not see any connection between the two, a couple suggested otherwise. Data findings revealed that a non-protestant husband believed that the impact of religious commitment keeps him in a straight line, which holds them together and all the things that have them together. On the other hand, his wife did not share similar religious beliefs. His wife valued showering, believing in her husband's aspirations, and leaving his clothing on the bed as important. She argued that making sure her husband was okay, doing stuff around the house, and doing what a lady should do, like satisfying her husband, keeping the house clean, and ensuring the well-being of the children, contributed to the quality of her marriage.

The non-protestant couples have different views concerning the impact of religious commitment on marriage quality. While one partner thought there was a connection between religious commitment and marriage quality, the other felt that fulfilling marital and family

responsibilities contributed to marriage quality. The findings noted no disagreement between the protestant couples about how religious commitment affects marital quality. They perceived that their religious commitment influenced the quality of their marriage.

## **Theme 9: Religious Commitment and Marriage Satisfaction**

### **Discussion of Question # 9**

The researcher collected and analyzed the data for the fourth research question concerning biblical ideals and how protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans believe it impacted marriage satisfaction. How does your religious commitment influence your marriage satisfaction? The protestant couples gave the following answers,

*"Greatly. Overall, it is a significant influence. Not only am I learning for free, but I get to be placed around people who share the same value. That is what we call church. My wife likes when I serve. She understands that every time I perform, she believes things are better. My wife always says my prayer is for my husband to do the work of God."* (Sam-husband)

*"My husband and I connect with God. We get our satisfaction when my husband and I do anything that has to do with the kingdom. Anything that deals with God satisfies us. Anything that has to do with the body of Christ gives us satisfaction. If we are happy, our marriage is happy. Happiness comes from doing God's works."* (Lina-wife)

*"Because I believe in God and Jesus Christ, I follow them, and that commitment impacts the quality of our marriage."* (Joseph-husband)

*"Satisfaction wise. I would say that I am satisfied based on how secure I am in my marriage due to our belief in God." (Mary-wife)*

The non-protestant couples replied to the same question as follows,

*"I do not think religious commitment impacts our marriage."(Andrews-husband)*

*"I don't feel that religion has an impact on that. I don't know if I'm contradicting myself. I think my religion has an impact on me as a person. I believe religion affects, you know, my upbringing." (Landia-wife)*

*"She knew what God did for her, and even at times when it looked like, you know, she was going through things, she never gave up on the faith." (Peter-husband)*

*"So honestly, we don't have a religious commitment at this time." (Nancy-wife)*

### **Analysis of Couples' Responses to Question # 9**

From the above comments of the protestant couples, the findings showed that their religious commitment positively impacted their marriage satisfaction. The couples believed their beliefs in God and Christ made them happy in their marriages. The non-protestant couples did not consider themselves religious. Therefore, they did not see any connection between religious commitment and marital satisfaction. The findings revealed a clear contrast between protestant couples and non-protestant couples. While protestant couples believed their commitment to religious beliefs positively impacted their marriage satisfaction, non-protestant couples thought differently.

### **Theme 10: Integration of Biblical Principles into Counseling**

The researcher emerged from this theme after the data analysis for the fifth research question of the study. That was concerned with biblical principles that Protestant and Non-Christian Haitian Americans believe would impact marriage satisfaction if introduced in counseling. How do you think the integration of biblical principles in counseling may affect the quality and happiness of your marriage? The protestant couples answered as follows:

*"It will positively affect us because our counselor understands the Bible. I will feel more trusting and believe in a counselor who understands marriage through the Bible instead of a counselor who does not know the Bible."* (Zach-husband)

*"I think that is amazing because being able to go to someone who can implement biblical principles is impactful. Implementing biblical principles is essential because having someone with the same beliefs can hold you accountable to your beliefs."* (Sarah-wife)

*"If I need counseling for our marriage, we go to a Christian counselor because we believe he can integrate biblical principles into the sessions. That can only improve my marriage because they reinforce what we believe. To improve my marriage, I will not have issues implementing biblical principles."* (Sanon-husband)

*"If the counselor does not have the same biblical background as me, the person would not understand my point of view. I prefer a therapist with the same religious experience because I do not want him to implement his beliefs into my life. I want to live my life as I perceive it as a Christian."* (Bita-wife)

The researcher asked the same question to the non-protestant couples, and they replied as follows:

*"Well, it would impact it in a significantly positive way. For example, we can use it to know what path to take. We can use them as examples of how to live with each."* (Chard-husband)

*"I do not think that it would affect anything. When you are getting married, wedding officiates use verses from the Bible about what couples should do. I do not believe that it would affect anything."* (Bita-wife)

*"We did that before we got married. We had to do a class where it's like before you get married. We did that. It was like counseling before we got married."* (Andrews-husband)

*"Once again, I think it depends on you as a person. As a person, I feel like it does not affect my marriage, whether positively or negatively. However, it depends on you as a person."* (Landia-wife)

### **Analysis of Couples' Responses to Question # 10**

Data findings showed that the protestant couples believed counseling would benefit them because their counselor was well-versed in the Scriptures, according to the above results. It seemed they would have more excellent faith and trust in a counselor who understands marriage from the Bible rather than one who does not know it. The couples appeared to believe that if a Christian counselor was familiar with the Bible, he could assist them in remaining together. They further thought that being able to go to someone who could put biblical concepts into action was decisive. The couples underlined the importance of counseling according to Bible principles. Applying biblical principles was critical because having someone who shared their values could

hold them accountable. The couple also said that using biblical principles explicitly in counseling sessions would improve the quality and pleasure of our marriage.

The findings from the responses of the non-protestant couples showed the couples had different opinions about the satisfaction in marriage from counseling based on the Bible principles. One of the couples dismissed the impact of integrating biblical principles into counseling on marriage satisfaction and quality. At the same time, the other one said it depends on whether you want to consider it. The integration of biblical principles likely influences marital quality and satisfaction. Overall, participants provided positive feedback on how they think integrating biblical principles in counseling may affect the quality and happiness of your marriage.

### **Summary**

After data analysis for the ten research questions, the results found crucial elements contributed to a quality marriage for protestant couples, including fear of God, respect for each other, Jesus' relationship with his church, communication, acceptability, sharing common beliefs, and understanding. While for non-protestant couples, togetherness, agreement, support, trust, honesty, communication, and listening to each other were essential for the quality of marriage.

The data analysis revealed that protestant couples' marriage satisfaction is related to accomplishing their desires and happiness, listening to each other's, satisfying each other's sharing quality time, and setting goals for the future. While on the other hand, for non-protestant couples' satisfaction is linked with smooth communication, understanding moral support, positivity, and standing by each other in tough times.

The findings showed that the protestant couple believed that prayers and serving the community through the church contributed to the quality and satisfaction of their marriage. They also attributed their happy marriage to obedience to their religious beliefs, including that the wife is her husband's rib. As a result, she should follow him as the family leader. On the other hand, the non-protestant couple shared a different view about what constitutes quality and happy married life. They emphasize good communication, quality time, respecting and honoring one another, and understanding to experience satisfaction and quality in their marriage.

The findings showed that protestant couples firmly believed in their relationship with God to have quality marriages. The non-protestant couple revealed that they believed in God, but they did not view him as the reason for the quality of their marriage. They attributed the quality of their marriage to their traits. The results indicated that protestant couples had a stronger relationship with God than non-protestant couples.

The findings revealed that their relationship with God, commitment to religion, and application of religion's teachings contributed to their marriage's well-being. The protestant couples believed their religious beliefs and practices positively impacted their marriage quality and satisfaction. While a few non-protestant couples noted a positive connection between religion and marriage quality and satisfaction, most couples saw no relationship.

The findings found a sharp contrast between protestant couples and non-protestants regarding specific religious or non-religious practices to influence the quality and satisfaction of their marriages. The protestant couples emphasized personal prayer, praying as a couple, faithful attendance to church services, forgiving one another, and serving God together in the community through church ministries positively influenced their marriage. They believed that Christ in their



marriage made a marriage high quality. Following the example of the relationship between Jesus and the Church would make a marriage of high quality. They think their marriage should be the same if they follow that same model. Furthermore, the protestant couples emphasized communication, understanding, making decisions together using the Bible and listening to one another as other factors that positively impact their marriage.

On the contrary, the non-protestant couples believed that trusting the person and working together on many things makes a marriage high-quality. The other factors contributing to their marriage's quality include communication, listening, respect, having the same goals, and togetherness. Concerning what gave them satisfaction in their marriage, they thought that hanging out with one another, solving problems together, having positive views, and supporting one another played a significant role in experiencing satisfaction in their relationships. Even though most non-protestant couples stated that they did not have a relationship with God and did not consider religious practices and religious commitment as the reason for the success of their marriages, few of them found their inspiration to engage in positive behaviors toward each other because of the awareness of a high-power.

The results also suggested that protestant Haitian Americans believed that integrating biblical principles into counseling significantly impacts marriage satisfaction if introduced. While on the other hand, some non-Christian Haitian American couples thought it would not impact marriage satisfaction.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS**

### **Overview**

This study examined the marital quality and satisfaction perceptions of Protestant Haitians and non-Christian Haitian Americans. The researcher conducted a one-on-one interview with the participants and requested their consent to record the interview. The researcher used instruments such as the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale, the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS), the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI-R), the Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10), and the Dimensions of Religiosity Scale (DRS) to develop the interview questions. The couples validated the transcriptions by interacting with the researcher about their responses to the interview questions. The researcher used pseudonyms to keep participants anonym and formed no assumptions before analyzing the study's data. Chapter Five discusses data findings using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) to answer the research questions. The chapter further outlines the findings' implications, limitations, recommendations for future research, and a summary.

### **Discussion**

The present study found that certain elements contribute to the quality and satisfaction of protestant and non-protestant Haitian married lives. In this part of the thesis, the researcher discussed the findings, presented the importance and discussion of the critical study results in light of past studies, and showed the overall picture of the debate on how these supported or contradicted the study findings of the previous studies.

## **Quality of Marriage**

The findings showed several essential factors that contributed to the quality of marriage for American protestant couples, including respect for each other, communication, acceptability, the presence of shared beliefs, and understanding. Most respondents believed the connection between Jesus and the church would be the ideal example of a good marriage. As a result, they thought that if they followed the same belief, their marriage should be the same. While non-Protestant couples attributed the quality of their marriage to being together, understanding each other, being supportive of one another, trusting each other, being honest, communicating openly, and listening to one another. Some protestant couples also believed that communication, understanding and honoring, and respecting one another contributed to the quality of their marriage. However, the central conflict of beliefs was whether God influenced their marriage. Protestants relied on their relationship with God to define their marriages' purpose, behaviors, and interactions.

On the other hand, non-protestant couples focused more on using humanistic views such as honesty, respect, and honor to have a happy marriage. The humanistic approach to building relationships emphasizes human trust, openness, awareness, understanding feelings, interpersonal honesty, and equality, focusing on human ingenuity as the centered of relationships (Priliantini et al., 2020). Furthermore, non-protestants viewed a high-quality marriage as equivalent to honoring their marriage vows, receiving unexpected gifts from their spouses, and spending time together.

## **Marital Satisfaction**

According to the data analysis, protestant couples associated marriage satisfaction with achieving their goals, happiness, listening to each other, satisfying each other's needs, spending quality time together, and meeting their personal needs. The findings also found that protestant wives believed that spending time with their spouses gave them fulfillment and satisfaction in their marriage. They further considered spending time together and discussing their aspirations as vital components that enhanced the quality of their family life. However, non-Protestant couples attributed their marriage satisfaction to having open communication, showing mutual respect, being optimistic, and sticking by one another during trying times. For example, some non-protestant husbands are more satisfied when their marriage expectations are met and feel content when they fulfill their goals.

Moreover, data findings showed that protestant couples believed they experienced satisfaction when their spouses understood them, were willing to listen to them, and made decisions together for the marriage. Participants shared other essential factors they practiced in their marriages to enhance marriage satisfaction. These factors involve serving one another, acknowledging each different opinions, spending time they cherish together, making plans together, thinking of one another, helping one another, and understanding one another. Participants also believed that spending time with their children, picking up the kids on time, staying in love together the way they pictured their relationship in the past, meeting their needs, and taking care of their family gives them satisfaction. The findings further showed that Biblical teachings such as following Jesus, praying, church attendance, operating unconditional love, and forgiving are central to a good married life.

On the contrary, the findings suggested that non-protestant couples subscribed to a humanistic philosophy regarding marital quality and satisfaction. They emphasized going on dates, receiving flowers, doing little things that make them happy, lovemaking, having one another around where they can watch movies and spend time together, and telling each other pretty much everything—that kind of stuff. The ultimate purpose of the humanistic philosophy is to accomplish self-actualization through excitement, fun, emotions, open communication, etc. (Javadi & Tahmasbi, 2020). (Additionally, participants shared that reaching common goals, solving a problem for their spouses or kids, and monitoring their spouses' actions and reactions when they have a family issue is very satisfying in their marriage. Data findings also noted that non-protestant couples positively perceived a link between what they do for each other and marriage satisfaction. For example, they shared that spending time, speaking about things they know are bothering them, talking about them, sitting down and seeing their accomplishments, smooth communication, understanding, positivity, and supporting from one another, being able to talk about anything and everything, whether they agree or not, avoiding negative conversation as vital components that contribute to marriage satisfaction. Findings reported that religion positively influences quality and marriage satisfaction.

### **Summary**

The literature review provided little information about the impact of religion on protestant and non-protestant Haitian American married couples. The discussions of the data findings revealed that faith was essential to experiencing marriage quality and satisfaction for protestant American Haitian couples. However, few non-protestant American Haitian couples suggested that a higher power influences the quality and satisfaction of their marriages. But most

of the non-protestant American Haitian couples reported no correlation between religion and the quality of their marriage because they were non-religious.

### **Implications**

The findings received from the twelve American Haitian married couples have theoretical, empirical, and practical implications for future couples, married couples, mental health counselors, church leaders, policymakers, administrators, teachers, and parents.

#### **Theoretical implications**

The insights of the phenomenological study have significant implications for empirical theories, including the Religion-Adapted Cognitive Behavioral Therapy theory (R-CBT). Findings from this study confirmed that R-CBT is relevant in understanding how couples might benefit from religious interventions in counseling in achieving marital quality and satisfaction. The results showed how R-CBT could integrate religious interventions in the therapeutic relationship to educate religious and non-religious married couples about the triangular relationship between thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and cognitive restructuring (de Abreu Costa & Moreira-Almeida, 2022). Religion-Adapted Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (R-CBT) incorporates cognitive behavioral therapy methods from the perspective of the clients' organized system of beliefs and integrates practices that connect them with the sacred or God (de Abreu Costa & Moreira-Almeida, 2022; Moreira-Almeida & Koenig, 2006). Using R-CBT in counseling can help identify and understand religious and nonreligious factors that influence the quality and satisfaction of marriage. In the R-CBT procedures, therapists use the clients' religious beliefs, teachings, and practices for cognitive restructuring (Ebrahimi et al., 2013; Koenig et al., 2015b; Pecheur, 1980; Pecheur & Edwards, 1984; Propst, 1980; Propst et al.,

1992; Razali et al., 2002). The R-CBT protocols use biblical scriptures or other sacred writings depending on the clients' religious beliefs (Koenig et al., 2015b; Propst et al., 1992) to identify and change maladaptive thoughts. Furthermore, R-CBT provides therapists with many tools to help clients integrate religious beliefs during the sessions, including spiritual tools, instructions for renewing the mind, Scripture memorization, contemplative prayer, and challenging thoughts using one's religious resources (Pearce et al., 2015).

### **Empirical implications**

The findings also have empirical implications because previous studies examined whether incorporating biblical ideals into counseling will influence marital quality and satisfaction (Alaf et al., 2017; Baker, 2019; Mortazavi et al., 2020; Schweizer, 2019). A growing body of studies on marital quality and marital satisfaction among Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans in the United States remains scarce (Fahimdanesh et al., 2020). Most reflections on Haitian American life fail to include marriage satisfaction in their index (Baptist et al., 2019). This current study helps close this knowledge gap because the insights from the participants revealed a positive correlation between religion and the quality and satisfaction of marriage, especially among protestant and non-protestant Haitian American couples. The scarcity of data collection about how religion may influence the quality and satisfaction the American Haitian married couples justified the need for this study. The study's findings further contribute to understanding how protestants Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans consider marital quality and happiness based on their religious practices (Vazquez et al., 2019). Haitian American protestant participants believed that praying, following the example of Jesus, the church, and their relationship with God empowered them to continue maintaining

the quality and satisfaction of their relationships. While some non-participant Haitian American couples attributed the quality and satisfaction of their marriages to factors such as support, communication, and trust, others viewed the awareness of a higher power as having positive effects on their marriages.

### **Practical implications**

The practical implications of this study signify the different shareholders that might benefit from the findings, mental health counselors, ministers, policymakers, administrators, teachers, and parents. Mental health counselors can use the conclusions during counseling sessions to help couples understand how the integration of biblical principles might assist them in achieving marital quality and satisfaction through learning and using the interventions. The findings can increase policymakers' awareness in church and public settings to establish and reinforce guidelines to teach future and married couples the benefits of integrating their religious beliefs in counseling to achieve marriage goals. Policymakers should create a positive setting within their churches, administrations, school settings, and workplaces to promote the implementation of religious beliefs concerning marriage to help couples achieve and enhance the quality and satisfaction of their marriage as they perceive it. Parents can teach their children what studies revealed about how religious beliefs positively influence marital quality and satisfaction. Thus, they can encourage them to consider pre/post-marriage counseling to enhance their marriages. Those stakeholders can also encourage non-religious couples to consider counseling to learn and apply interpersonal skills, including communication, problem-solving, honesty, support, and trust while emphasizing their positive influences on marriage quality and satisfaction.



### **Limitations**

Limitations refer to potential study flaws or weaknesses (Theofanidis, D., & Fountouki, 2018). First, this study used qualitative research methods using semi-structured interviews as the primary tool to collect the data. As a result, the findings only captured participants' opinions, feelings, and perceptions about marriage quality and satisfaction. The second limitation was correlated to the sample size. This study recruited a small sample size of 12 participants. Using a small sample size may be less credible because it may fail to represent the entire population limiting the transferability of study findings to other settings. The third limitation was related to geographical scope. The researcher recruited only Haitian Americans who live in Palm Beach and Broward County, Florida. The researcher did not use other American Haitians residing in different states, which limited the study geographically. Finally, participants' interview responses may lead to subjective bias because the answers depended on the individual lived experiences of each couple. Consequently, it isn't easy to systematically compare the data because each couple has its background and unique marital experiences. The duration of marriage, knowledge, understanding, and beliefs of the couples may have influenced the findings.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The above limitations of the study guide the recommendations for future studies. First, this study used semi-structured interview methodologies to collect the data. Therefore, researchers should use other data collection methods, such as focus group discussions, field observations, ethnography, archive data, and other authors' surveys, to corroborate the interview responses' findings. Second, future studies should use a broad range of population samples to

extend the geographical scope. Third, future studies should have a larger sample size to understand critical trends and statistics correlated to marital quality satisfaction among Protestant and non-protestant American couples. A larger sample will provide generalizable results about that population. Finally, researchers should consider the humanistic approaches to building relationships among non-protestant couples to collect more data regarding how humanistic views influence the quality and satisfaction of their marriages.

### **Summary**

This qualitative phenomenological attempted to understand perceptions of marital satisfaction as described by Protestants Haitians Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans. This study selected participants from married Christian and non-Christian couples that have been married for over five years within the age range of 25-40. The study may be understood in connection with the Religion Adapted Cognitive Behavioral Therapy theory (R-CBT) framework because religious and non-religious interventions contribute to marriage quality and satisfaction. The findings revealed that protestant couples believed that religious beliefs and practices enhanced the quality and satisfaction of their marriage. Non-protestant couples attributed their marital quality and satisfaction to critical factors such as honesty, trust, communication, understanding, and support. Additionally, some non-protestant couples credited the awareness of the existence of a higher power influencing how they related to one another in their marriage. The study showed that protestant couples were more inclined toward religion and delivered better marriage quality and satisfaction.

The findings further revealed religious and non-religious practices that couples believed influenced their marriage. The protestant American Haitian couples thought their relationship

with God influenced how they treated each other. Religious practices such as praying individually and together, giving and receiving forgiveness, serving God together through churches, unconditional love, giving and receiving forgiveness, following the pattern of Jesus' relationship and the church, the integration of biblical principles in counseling contributed to the quality and satisfaction of their marriages. On the other hand, most non-protestant American Haitian couples that participated in this study believed that respect, communication, and being there for one another influenced marriage positively. They also thought that honesty, what their parents taught them during childhood, awareness of a higher power watching what they do, and being good and decent people contributed to the quality and satisfaction of their marriages. The findings echoed previous findings where married couples linked their marriage quality and satisfaction with their religious commitment and practices, such as reading the Bible, attending church services, praying for one another, and practicing unconditional love (Agu & Nwankwo, 2019; Aman et al., 2019).

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**APPENDIX A: Informed Consent Form****Consent**

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**Title of the Project:** Marital Quality and Marital Satisfaction in Protestant Haitian Americans vs. Non-Christian Haitian Americans

**Principal Investigator:** xxxxxxxxxxxx, a doctoral candidate in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University.

**Co-investigator:** xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

**Invitation to be part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be married to Christian and non-Christian couples that have been married for over five years within the age range of 25-40. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research.

**What is the study about, and why is it being done?**

The purpose of the study is to examine perceptions regarding marital satisfaction as described by Protestants Haitians Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans.

**What will happen if you take part in this study?**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Complete a demographic screening questionnaire.

2. Participate in a virtual personal interview via Zoom that will take no more than 1 hour. With your permission, the discussion will be recorded.

<b>How could you or others benefit from this study?</b>
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**No Direct Benefits:** Participants should not expect a direct benefit from participating in this study. The only benefits participants might gain from this research study is to obtain new information about the relationship between religious and marital satisfaction among the Haitian American Christian couples who participated in this study.

**Benefits to society:** The study findings will provide valuable insights into the influence of religion on marital satisfaction. For instance, therapists and marriage counselors can use such results to introduce religious-based interventions for addressing marital problems and improving satisfaction among couples by identifying if religiosity influences perceptions towards marital quality and satisfaction.

The current study's findings will positively change society because it focuses on understanding how protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans perceive marital quality and satisfaction. Such results can be integrated into a couple's life to improve marital satisfaction and quality, reducing divorce rates.

By identifying religious practices such as beliefs and rituals, the current study will contribute to the theoretical framework by providing empirical results to support the constructs identified in theory as accurate. The study findings will also have theoretical implications. In particular, the results will provide valuable insights into how R-CBT theoretical aspects influence marital satisfaction.



The study findings will also provide insights into factors influencing marital quality and satisfaction. In addition to religion, the study will give nonreligious factors influencing marital satisfaction among non-Christians. Individuals might also use societal results to integrate positive behaviors or practices supporting marital quality and satisfaction.

**What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

**Minimal risk:** The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

**How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher can access the documents. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Your data may be used in future research studies and shared with other researchers. If data collected from you is reused or transferred, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand. The researcher will use pseudonyms in place of participants named to conceal the participant's identity and protect each participant's confidentiality.
- Data will be stored on a personal computer using a unique password and field notes off-campus at the researcher's home in a secure cabinet. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.

- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for five years until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and then deleted. The researcher and his doctoral committee members will have access to these recordings.

**How will you be compensated for being part of the study?**

Participants will receive no compensation for participating in this study.

**Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your participation will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any questions or withdraw without affecting those relationships.

**What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number in the next paragraph. If you decide to remove yourself, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and not included in this study.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is xxxxxxxx, and the name of faculty Chair is xxxxxxxxxxxxxx. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

## Your Consent

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature &amp; Date

**APPENDIX B: IRB Approval Letter**

Date: 5-4-2023		
<b>IRB #:</b> IRB-FY22-23-802		
<b>Title:</b> Marital Quality and Marital Satisfaction in Protestant Haitian Americans vs. Non-Christian Haitian Americans		
<b>Creation Date:</b> 1-4-2023		
<b>End Date:</b>		
<b>Status:</b> <i>Approved</i>		
<b>Principal Investigator:</b> [REDACTED]		
<b>Review Board:</b> Research Ethics Office		
<b>Sponsor:</b>		
<hr/>		
<b>Study History</b>		
<hr/>		
<b>Submission Type</b>	<b>Initial</b>	<b>Review Type</b> <i>Expedited</i> <b>Decision</b> <i>Approved</i>
<hr/>		
<b>Key Study Contacts</b>		
<hr/>		
<b>Member</b> [REDACTED]	<b>Role</b> Principal Investigator	<b>Contact</b> [REDACTED]
<hr/>		
<b>Member</b> [REDACTED]	<b>Role</b> Primary Contact	<b>Contact</b> [REDACTED]
<hr/>		
<b>Member</b> [REDACTED]	<b>Role</b> Co-Principal Investigator	<b>Contact</b> [REDACTED]
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### **APPENDIX C: Demographic Questionnaire**

Demographic Questionnaire :

1. What is your age?
2. What is your ethnic/racial background?
3. What is the highest level of education you completed?
4. What is your current professional occupation?
5. What is your household income?
6. What is your socioeconomic status (e.g., lower, working, middle, upper)?
7. What is your marital status?
8. How long have you been married?
9. How many children do you have?
10. Are you Protestant Haitian American or Non-Protestant Haitian American?

## **APPENDIX D: Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire**

### **Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire**

1. What do you believe would make a marriage a high-quality marriage?

This question will help obtain information about research question #1, trying to understand the perceptions of protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Americans about the quality of marriage.

2. How do you experience satisfaction in your marriage?

This question will help obtain information for research question #2, focusing on finding out the perceptions of protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Americans about their marital satisfaction.

3. Which religious concepts contribute to the quality and satisfaction of your marriage, praying for each other, giving and receiving forgiveness, participating in a faith community, practicing unconditional love, serving one another, and meditating?

This question will help obtain information on research question 3&4, focusing on the perception of protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Americans about the the practice of their religious ideals or practices they believe contribute to the quality and satisfaction of their marriage.

4. How does a relationship with God, as you understand him, influence the quality of a marriage?

This question will help obtain information concerning research question #3 to determine if protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Americans consider their relationship with God or non-relationship with God as a biblical ideal that influences the quality of

their marriage.

5. How does a relationship with God, as you understand him, influence how satisfied you are in your marriage?

This question will help obtain information concerning research question #2 to determine if protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Americans consider their relationship with God or non-relationship with God as an example of their biblical ideals that impact their marriage satisfaction.

6. How do your religion's teachings and beliefs influence marital commitment and satisfaction?

This question will help obtain information concerning research question #2 to determine if protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Americans have religious or non-religious teachings as examples of the biblical ideals that affect their marriage satisfaction.

7. How do your religious teachings and beliefs influence the quality of your marriage?

This question will help obtain information concerning research question #3 to determine if protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Americans' religious teachings or non-spiritual teachings as examples of their biblical ideals regarding the quality of their marriage.

8. How do you think your religious commitment may impact the quality of your marriage?

This question will help obtain information concerning research question #3 to determine if protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Americans consider their religious or non-religious commitment as one of their biblical ideals that impact the quality of their marriage.

9. How does your religious commitment influence your marriage satisfaction?

This question will help obtain information concerning research question #4 to determine if protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Americans have a religious or non-religious commitment as one of the biblical ideals that they believe impact their marriage satisfaction.

10. How do you think the integration of biblical principles in counseling may affect the quality and happiness of your marriage?

This question will help gather information on research questions 5 & 6 concerning how protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans believe that biblical principles in counseling may impact marital satisfaction and the quality of marriage.



**APPENDIX E: Recruitment Invitation Letter**

Dear potential participant:

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. My research will explore perceptions regarding marital quality and satisfaction as described by Protestant Haitian Americans and non-Christian Haitian Americans. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be married Haitian Protestant Christian and non-Christian couples that have been married for over five years within the age range of 25-40. Participants will be asked to complete an audio-recorded interview (30-60 minutes). Names and other identifying information will be requested for this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please get in touch with me to schedule an interview.

A consent document is attached to this email and will be given to you again during the interview. The consent document contains additional information about my research.

If you choose to participate, you must sign the consent document and return it to me during the interview.

Sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXX

Doctoral Candidate

**APPENDIX F: Research Flyer**

# Research Participants Needed

## **Marital Quality and Marital Satisfaction in Protestant Haitian Americans vs. Non-Christian Haitian Americans**

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- Are you 25 years of age or older?
- Are you Protestant Haitian American?
- Are you Non-Protestant Haitian American?
- Have you been married for over five years?


If you answered **yes** to those questions, you might be eligible to participate in a marital quality and satisfaction research study.

This study will examine Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans' marital quality and satisfaction perceptions. Participants will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded virtual Zoom interview that will last 30 to 60 minutes. Participation in this research study

is entirely voluntary. The researcher will mail you the Consent information if you are interested.

Frantz Lamour, a doctoral candidate in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

**Don't hesitate to contact xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx for more information.**



**APPENDIX G: Recruitment social media****ATTENTION FACEBOOK FRIENDS**

I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree at Liberty University.

This study will examine Protestant and non-Christian Haitian Americans' marital quality and satisfaction perceptions. To participate, you must be a married Haitian Protestant Christian or a married Haitian non-Christian who has been married for over five years and is 25-40.

Participants will be asked to participate in a virtual Zoom interview lasting 30 to 60 minutes. I will ask participants for permission to audio-record the interview.

If you meet the criteria to participate, please get in touch with me at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx to schedule an interview. I will email you a consent document one week before the interview.