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The Mediating Role of Liturgy in The Relationship Between Inculturation and Christian Marriage Stability Among Couples in Methodist Church Nairobi Synod, Kenya

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Abstract:

Purpose: This study investigated how liturgy mediates the relationship between inculturation and Christian marriage stability

among couples in the Methodist Church Nairobi Synod, Kenya.

Methodology: Guided by Ritual Theory and grounded in the pragmatist paradigm, the study adopted a convergent mixed-methods design. The target population consisted of 4,010 married adults across 17 circuits, from which a sample of 194 respondents was selected using stratified random and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, achieving a 72.2% response rate ($n = 140$). Quantitative data were analyzed using hierarchical regression analysis, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis.

Findings: The results revealed that liturgy plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between inculturation and Christian marriage stability. Hierarchical regression models showed progressive improvement in explanatory power: Model 1 ($R^2 = 0.618$), Model 2 including liturgy ($R^2 = 0.687$), and Model 3 with interaction terms ($R^2 = 0.762$, $F = 147.352$, $p < 0.001$). All interaction effects were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming the mediating influence of liturgy.

Conclusion: The study concludes that integrating culturally relevant liturgical practices strengthens the positive impact of inculturation on marital stability. Intentional liturgical design is therefore essential in fostering resilient Christian marriages within the Nairobi Synod context.

Keywords: *Liturgy, inculturation, Christian marriage stability, mediation, Methodist Church, Nairobi Synod, Ritual Theory.*

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1.0 Introduction

Marriage in Kenya exists at the intersection of cultural tradition and religious faith. For Christian communities, marriage is both a social institution and a sacred covenant, shaped by biblical teaching and communal worship practices. Within African Christianity, the process of inculturation — defined as the meaningful adaptation of Christian teachings and liturgical practices to local cultural contexts — has become a significant factor influencing how couples experience and sustain their marriages (Nyamache & Asatsa, 2022). Inculturation acknowledges that faith cannot be divorced from culture, and that the church's rituals, symbols, and ceremonies must speak meaningfully to the communities they serve.

Within the Methodist Church Nairobi Synod (MCK Nairobi Synod), which serves a predominantly Meru cultural community, inculturation has shaped how marriage ceremonies, worship practices, and pastoral care are conducted. Liturgy — the structured set of communal worship practices including prayers, sacraments, hymns, and rituals — serves as the primary vehicle through which inculturation is expressed and experienced by married couples. As such, liturgy may serve as a critical mediating pathway linking the broader processes of inculturation to concrete outcomes of Christian marriage stability.

Despite considerable theological debate on inculturation in African Christianity, empirical research examining how liturgy specifically mediates the relationship between inculturation and Christian marriage stability in Kenyan denominational contexts remains limited. This study addresses that gap by investigating the mediating role of liturgy in the relationship between inculturation and Christian marriage stability among couples in the MCK Nairobi Synod, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

The MCK Nairobi Synod operates within a cultural context where Meru marriage traditions — including dowry ceremonies (*ruracio*), communal blessings, and ancestral rituals — coexist with Christian liturgical practices. While inculturation provides a framework for integrating these cultural elements into Christian faith, it is unclear how the resulting liturgical expressions influence the stability of marriages within the synod. Existing studies on African Christian marriage tend to examine inculturation broadly or focus on liturgical theology without empirically testing the mediating pathways through which liturgy operates (Kama & Klaasen, 2023; Fagerberg, 2022). Furthermore, rising marital instability within Kenyan Christian communities (KNBS, 2023) suggests that current approaches to faith-based marriage support may be insufficient. Without context-specific empirical evidence on liturgy's mediating role, church leaders lack the basis to design targeted liturgical interventions that can strengthen marital outcomes. This study addresses this knowledge gap.

Purpose of the Study



The purpose of this study was to evaluate the mediating role of liturgy in the relationship between inculturation and Christian marriage stability among couples in the Methodist Church Nairobi Synod, Kenya.

Research Hypothesis

H01: Liturgy has no significant mediating effect on the relationship between inculturation and Christian marriage stability among couples in the Methodist Church Nairobi Synod, Kenya.

2.0 Literature Review

Theoretical Framework: Ritual Theory

This study is guided by Ritual Theory, which posits that communal rituals serve as fundamental mechanisms for constructing social identity, reinforcing shared values, and sustaining relational bonds within communities (Collins, 2004). Ritual Theory has been extensively applied in the sociology of religion to explain how structured communal practices — including liturgical worship — create 'emotional energy' and solidarity among participants, motivating continued commitment to the group and its values (Turner, 2021). In the context of Christian marriage, liturgical rituals such as marital blessings, communion, vow renewal ceremonies, and communal prayer function as structured interactions that reinforce the sacredness of marriage, create shared spiritual memory between spouses, and embed the marital relationship within a broader community of faith.

Applied to the MCK Nairobi Synod, Ritual Theory explains how inculturated liturgy — worship that incorporates locally meaningful cultural symbols and practices — amplifies the effect of inculturation on marital stability. When cultural practices such as the dowry ceremony or communal marriage blessings are incorporated into Christian liturgical frameworks, they gain both cultural legitimacy and sacred significance. This dual legitimation strengthens couples' marital commitment by aligning their cultural identity with their Christian faith identity, creating a more robust foundation for marital stability (Kama & Klaasen, 2023). Ritual Theory thus provides the theoretical basis for understanding liturgy as a mediating variable that channels the positive effects of inculturation into measurable marital outcomes.

Empirical Review

Liturgy as a Mediating Factor

Liturgy refers to the structured forms of communal worship practiced within a Christian community, encompassing prayers, hymns, Scripture readings, sacraments, and ceremonial rituals (Fagerberg, 2022). As a mediating variable, liturgy translates the broader theological and cultural processes of inculturation into lived spiritual experiences that directly shape marital relationships (Taft, 2024).



Kama and Klaasen (2023) conducted a comprehensive qualitative study on identity formation during liturgical inculturation in the Ethiopian Episcopal Church, published in HTS Theological Studies. The study examined how liturgical inculturation affected community relationships including marriage stability. Using narrative inquiry and ethnographic observation among multigenerational church members who had experienced the transition from Western to inculturated African liturgy, the study found that couples who actively participated in inculturated liturgical practices reported stronger connections between their cultural identity and Christian faith. This alignment positively influenced marital stability. The study identified specific liturgical elements — including indigenous music, vernacular languages, traditional instruments, and culturally relevant ceremonial practices — as mediating factors that strengthened both personal and communal Christian identity. The research underscored that liturgical inculturation, when well-executed, creates deeper spiritual satisfaction that translates into improved family relationships, while poorly managed inculturation generates identity conflicts that can destabilize marriages.

Research on the integration of traditional Igbo marriage ceremonies (Igba Nkwu) with Christian liturgical practices demonstrates how inculturated liturgy functions as a mediating mechanism between cultural tradition and marital stability (Okoye & Ugwu, 2024). The study found that couples who participated in carefully designed inculturated marriage ceremonies — combining traditional practices with Christian liturgical elements — reported higher levels of family acceptance and community support, reduced conflict between cultural and religious expectations, and improved marital outcomes. Specific liturgical adaptations including the incorporation of indigenous prayers and songs, the blessing of traditional marriage symbols within Christian ceremony, and the recognition of dowry as a spiritually meaningful act significantly improved both spiritual satisfaction and marital stability. This study confirms liturgy's role as a bridge between cultural inculturation and marital outcomes.

Inculturation and Christian Marriage Stability

Inculturation in the MCK Nairobi Synod context involves the thoughtful integration of Meru cultural marriage practices with Christian theological principles. Marriage within Meru culture is a communal event encompassing multiple ceremonies — including the ruracio (bride price payment), family visitations, communal celebrations, and ceremonial transfers — each of which carries deep social and spiritual significance (Nyamache & Asatsa, 2022). The Marriage Act No. 4 of 2014 recognizes Christian marriage as a one man, one-woman lifelong union officiated under Christian rites, providing the legal framework within which inculturation operates.

The integration of Meru cultural practices with Christian liturgy creates both opportunities and tensions for marital stability. Positively, inculturated marriage ceremonies validate the union within both religious and cultural frameworks, reinforcing social bonds and communal expectations (Lowes & Nunn, 2017). They provide couples with a sense of cultural continuity and spiritual grounding that can buffer against marital instability. However, challenges arise when traditional gender role expectations conflict with Christian teachings on mutual submission and



partnership, or when the economic burden of extensive ceremonies creates financial stress that threatens marital wellbeing (Caldeira, 2021; KNBS, 2023).

Younger generations within the MCK Nairobi Synod tend to reinterpret cultural practices and Christian teachings differently from their elders, introducing generational tensions that influence marital stability (Taft, 2024). Effective liturgical mediation — through carefully designed worship practices that honor both cultural heritage and Christian doctrine — can help navigate these tensions and promote stable marriages across generational divides. Van Niekerk and Verkuyten (2021) observed that the degree to which Christian couples successfully integrate cultural identity with religious identity significantly predicts marital satisfaction and relational resilience. Liturgy serves as the primary institutional space in which this integration is practiced and reinforced, making it a crucial mediating variable in the relationship between inculturation and marital stability.

3.0 Research Methodology

This study examined the mediating role of liturgy in the relationship between inculturation and Christian marriage stability among couples in the MCK Nairobi Synod, Kenya. Guided by the pragmatist philosophical paradigm, the study employed a convergent mixed-methods design in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and integrated at the interpretation stage (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). This design was selected because it allows for triangulation of statistical patterns with lived experiential insights, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon.

The study was conducted across the MCK Nairobi Synod, comprising 17 circuits, 64 churches, and approximately 4,010 married adults. The target population consisted of married men and women in unions lasting more than five years, as such couples were considered to have meaningful experience with both inculturation practices and liturgical participation within the synod. A sample of 194 participants was drawn using stratified random sampling for the quantitative survey, ensuring proportional representation across all 17 circuits, and purposive sampling for qualitative interviews to capture in-depth perspectives from key informants with relevant experience.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires measuring inculturation variables (Christian wedding ceremony, dowry payment, and evangelization), liturgy, and Christian marriage stability on a five-point Likert scale. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather qualitative depth on participants' lived experiences of liturgy and its relationship to marital stability. Quantitative data were analyzed using hierarchical moderation regression analysis following the three-step approach recommended by Fairchild and MacKinnon (2009), while qualitative data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic analysis framework. Ethical standards including informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study.

4.0 Research Findings and Discussion

Response Rate

The study targeted 194 married couples from the 17 circuits of the MCK Nairobi Synod. A total of 140 respondents completed and returned usable questionnaires, representing a response rate of 72.2%. This response rate is considered excellent for academic research. Sataloff and Vontela (2021) regard a response rate of 66% as very good, within the acceptable range of 45% to 75%. The 72.2% rate obtained in this study exceeds the upper threshold of this acceptable range, thereby supporting the credibility and representativeness of the findings.

Table 4.1: Response Rate by Circuit

Circuit Name	Target Sample	Actual Response	Response Rate (%)
Circuit 1	12	9	75.0%
Circuit 2	15	11	73.3%
Circuit 3	10	7	70.0%
Circuit 4	13	9	69.2%
Circuit 5	14	10	71.4%
Circuit 6	10	7	70.0%
Circuit 7	16	12	75.0%
Circuit 8	13	9	69.2%
Circuit 9	11	8	72.7%
Circuit 10	15	11	73.3%
Circuit 11	9	6	66.7%
Circuit 12	13	10	76.9%
Circuit 13	13	9	69.2%
Circuit 14	11	8	72.7%
Circuit 15	15	11	73.3%
Circuit 16	14	10	71.4%
Circuit 17	14	9	64.3%
Total	194	140	72.2%

Source: Field Data (2025)

The high response rate is attributable to several factors: the researcher's proactive engagement with church leadership across all circuits, which facilitated trust and participant access; the spiritual and cultural relevance of the study topic to participants' lived experiences; and a systematic, circuit-

wide data collection strategy ensuring comprehensive and inclusive representation. These efforts collectively enhanced participation and strengthened the reliability of the findings.

Descriptive Statistics: Liturgy

The study evaluated the mediating role of liturgy in the relationship between inculturation and Christian marriage stability. Respondents rated ten liturgy-related statements on a five-point Likert scale. The results are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics on Liturgy

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
Liturgical practices such as marital blessings reinforce the sacred nature of Christian marriage.	1 (0.7%)	6 (4.3%)	17 (12.1%)	75 (53.6%)	41 (29.3%)	4.07	0.84
Church rituals in marriage ceremonies help couples understand their spiritual roles and responsibilities.	2 (1.4%)	8 (5.7%)	18 (12.9%)	72 (51.4%)	40 (28.6%)	4.00	0.89
Participation in church worship services enhances emotional and spiritual connection between spouses.	1 (0.7%)	7 (5.0%)	15 (10.7%)	71 (50.7%)	46 (32.9%)	4.10	0.85
Marital renewal ceremonies within the church encourage couples to reaffirm their commitment.	1 (0.7%)	6 (4.3%)	18 (12.9%)	75 (53.6%)	40 (28.6%)	4.05	0.83
Doctrinal teachings integrated into liturgy influence the roles and responsibilities of each spouse.	2 (1.4%)	5 (3.6%)	17 (12.1%)	86 (61.4%)	30 (21.4%)	3.98	0.81
Worship sessions in church provide an opportunity for couples to pray together and strengthen their union.	1 (0.7%)	8 (5.7%)	12 (8.6%)	77 (55.0%)	42 (30.0%)	4.08	0.85
Liturgical practices enhance the spiritual significance of marriage, ensuring long-term stability.	1 (0.7%)	7 (5.0%)	20 (14.3%)	78 (55.7%)	33 (23.6%)	3.97	0.84
Church teachings in liturgical services guide couples on Christian marital values and expectations.	1 (0.7%)	11 (7.9%)	15 (10.7%)	83 (59.3%)	29 (20.7%)	3.92	0.87
The role of liturgy in Christian weddings helps sustain the sanctity and permanence of marriage.	2 (1.4%)	13 (9.3%)	30 (21.4%)	74 (52.9%)	20 (14.3%)	3.70	0.93
Couples who actively engage in church liturgical practices exhibit stronger marital commitment and stability.	0 (0.0%)	17 (12.1%)	26 (18.6%)	63 (45.0%)	33 (23.6%)	3.80	0.98
Aggregate Score						3.97	0.87

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation. Source: Field Research Data (2025)



Participation in church worship services received the highest mean score among all liturgy variables ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.85$), with 83.6% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that such participation enhances emotional and spiritual connection between spouses. Interview participants strongly validated this finding, describing communal worship as a 'spiritual reset' for their marriage — a shared experience that created emotional alignment and softened relational distance even during difficult periods. This is consistent with Ritual Theory's proposition that communal participation in structured worship creates emotional energy and solidarity that reinforces relational bonds (Collins, 2004).

Worship sessions as a space for couples to pray together recorded a mean score of 4.08 ($SD = 0.85$), with 85.0% agreement. Participants described the church worship environment as a 'sacred space' that synchronized them emotionally and spiritually, reminding them that their union was 'part of something bigger.' This finding aligns with Kama and Klaasen (2023), who found that inculturated worship practices created deeper spiritual satisfaction with positive effects on relational identity and family cohesion.

Liturgical practices reinforcing the sacred nature of marriage ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.84$) were affirmed by 82.9% of respondents. Participants described their regular engagement with monthly communion, Sunday worship, and special marriage blessing services as 'deeply meaningful.' They explained that taking communion together was 'a spiritual moment that reminds us of Christ's covenant and the self-giving love we are called to emulate in marriage,' reflecting the sacramental nature of inculturated liturgy as a marital reinforcement mechanism.

Marital renewal ceremonies were endorsed by 82.2% of respondents ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.83$) as encouraging couples to reaffirm their commitment. Participants described vow renewal as 'a sacred reset button' — emotionally affirming and spiritually weighty, reminding them of their original marital covenant and reinforcing their shared commitment. Church rituals helping couples understand their spiritual roles ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.89$) were supported by 80.0% of respondents, with participants noting that these rituals 'embed our marriage within a much larger story of grace, sacrifice, and divine presence,' creating what they termed 'ritual memory.'

Doctrinal teachings within liturgy were rated by 82.8% of respondents ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.81$) as shaping their understanding of spousal roles. The role of liturgy in ensuring long-term marital stability ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.84$) was affirmed by 79.3% of respondents. Church teachings guiding couples on Christian marital values ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.87$) and the role of liturgy in sustaining the sanctity of marriage ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.93$) were also endorsed, though with relatively lower means, suggesting that couples find participatory worship more directly impactful than formal doctrinal instruction alone. Active liturgical engagement as a predictor of marital commitment ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.98$) received the lowest mean but remained within the agree range, supported by 68.6% of respondents.

The aggregate mean score for liturgy was 3.97 ($SD = 0.87$), indicating that respondents generally agreed that liturgical practices positively contribute to Christian marriage stability within the MCK

Nairobi Synod. Interview participants confirmed this holistic assessment, describing liturgical participation as having 'deepened our connection, not just spiritually, but emotionally and communally,' affirming liturgy's role as a meaningful mediating pathway between inculturation and marital wellbeing.

Descriptive Statistics: Christian Marriage Stability

The study also examined the level of Christian marriage stability among couples in the MCK Nairobi Synod. The results are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics on Christian Marriage Stability

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
Marital commitment is strengthened when both spouses share a deep spiritual connection and faith in God.	0 (0.0%)	5 (3.6%)	7 (5.0%)	53 (37.9%)	74 (52.9%)	4.41	0.79
Couples who actively engage in church activities tend to experience greater satisfaction in their marriage.	1 (0.7%)	14 (10.0%)	20 (14.3%)	58 (41.4%)	46 (32.9%)	3.96	1.02
Effective conflict resolution methods based on Christian teachings enhance the stability of Christian marriages.	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.4%)	4 (2.9%)	76 (54.3%)	56 (40.0%)	4.32	0.71
A strong emotional and spiritual bond between spouses leads to a more fulfilling and lasting marriage.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (3.6%)	71 (50.7%)	63 (45.0%)	4.41	0.58
Christian marriages thrive when spouses prioritize faith, love, and mutual respect in their relationship.	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.7%)	4 (2.9%)	46 (32.9%)	88 (62.9%)	4.59	0.59
Shared religious beliefs contribute to harmony and cooperation in the decision-making process within marriage.	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.7%)	10 (7.1%)	66 (47.1%)	62 (44.3%)	4.35	0.66
The ability to forgive and seek reconciliation, as taught in Christian faith, strengthens marital stability.	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)	66 (47.1%)	71 (50.7%)	4.49	0.58
Regular participation in church events fosters social support, which is beneficial for Christian marriages.	1 (0.7%)	3 (2.1%)	17 (12.1%)	75 (53.6%)	43 (30.7%)	4.12	0.80
Spouses who pray together tend to resolve conflicts more peacefully and maintain stronger emotional ties.	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)	5 (3.6%)	62 (44.3%)	70 (50.0%)	4.43	0.69
A stable Christian marriage is characterized by mutual understanding, patience, and a commitment to lifelong companionship.	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.7%)	4 (2.9%)	56 (40.0%)	78 (55.7%)	4.52	0.60
Aggregate Score						4.36	0.70

Source: Field Research Data (2025)



Faith, love, and mutual respect received the highest mean score as a foundation for marital stability ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 0.59$), with 95.8% of respondents in agreement. Participants described shared Christian faith as 'the common ground' of their marriage — guiding decisions, informing conflict resolution, and sustaining commitment through adversity. Mutual understanding, patience, and lifelong commitment ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.60$) were affirmed by 95.7% as central to stable Christian marriages, with participants describing their union as a 'covenant before God' rather than merely a contract.

Forgiveness and reconciliation as taught through Christian faith ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.58$) were endorsed by 97.8% of respondents as central to marital stability. Participants cited Matthew 18:15-17 as a structured, 'God-honoring' approach to conflict that restores peace and preserves relational dignity. Praying together ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.69$) was affirmed by 94.3% as facilitating more peaceful conflict resolution and stronger emotional ties, with participants treating prayer as 'spiritual breathing' that sustained their daily connection.

Shared spiritual connection ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.79$), shared religious beliefs ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.66$), Christian-based conflict resolution ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.71$), and church social support ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.80$) all received high endorsement levels. The aggregate mean of 4.36 ($SD = 0.70$) confirms high overall marital stability perceptions among MCK Nairobi Synod couples, with faith practices identified as the primary sustaining factors. Interview participants synthesized this experience as a 'threefold model of covenant Theology, church community, and mentorship' — described as 'spiritual scaffolding' that prevents marital collapse.

Moderation Analysis: The Mediating Role of Liturgy

The primary objective of this section was to evaluate the mediating role of liturgy in the relationship between inculturation and Christian marriage stability among couples in the MCK Nairobi Synod. The following null hypothesis was tested: H01: Liturgy has no significant mediating effect on the relationship between inculturation and Christian marriage stability among couples in the MCK Nairobi Synod, Kenya. A three-step hierarchical regression approach recommended by Fairchild and MacKinnon (2009) was employed. This method assesses the progressive contribution of the mediating variable (liturgy) and interaction terms to the explanation of variance in the dependent variable (Christian marriage stability). Table 4.4 presents the decision-making criteria for the moderation analysis.

Table 4.4: Moderation Decision-Making Criteria

Step	Condition	Criterion
Step 1	$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ should be significant in Model 1	p-value < 0.05
Step 2	β_4 should be significant in Model 2	p-value < 0.05
Step 3	$\beta_4, \beta_5, \beta_6$ interaction terms should be significant in Model 3	p-value < 0.05

Source: Fairchild and MacKinnon (2009)

The three regression models were formulated as follows:

Model 1 (Direct Effects): $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \varepsilon$, where Y = Christian Marriage Stability, X_1 = Christian Wedding Ceremony, X_2 = Dowry Payment, X_3 = Evangelization.

Model 2 (Main Effects with Liturgy): $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4\text{Lit} + \varepsilon$, where Lit = Liturgy.

Model 3 (Interaction Effects): $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4(X_1 \times \text{Lit}) + \beta_5(X_2 \times \text{Lit}) + \beta_6(X_3 \times \text{Lit}) + \varepsilon$.

Table 4.5: Regression Model Summary of Moderation Analysis

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.786	.618	.614	0.628	.618	158.724	3	136	.000
2	.829	.687	.682	0.570	.687	162.418	4	135	.000
3	.873	.762	.756	0.498	.762	147.352	6	133	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Christian Wedding Ceremony, Dowry Payment, Evangelization. b. Predictors: same as (a) plus Liturgy. c. Predictors: same as (b) plus Interaction Terms.

b. Source: Field Research Data (2025)

The regression model summary reveals a progressive and statistically significant improvement in explanatory power across the three models. Model 1, which included only the three inculturation variables, explained 61.8% of the variance in Christian marriage stability ($R^2 = 0.618$). The introduction of liturgy as a main effect in Model 2 increased the explained variance to 68.7% ($R^2 = 0.687$), representing a meaningful improvement of 6.9 percentage points. This confirms that liturgy independently contributes to Christian marriage stability beyond the direct effects of inculturation variables.

Most significantly, the inclusion of interaction terms between liturgy and each inculturation variable in Model 3 further increased the explained variance to 76.2% ($R^2 = 0.762$), adding an



additional 7.5 percentage points. This progressive increase in R^2 values provides compelling evidence that liturgy not only directly influences Christian marriage stability but also moderates and amplifies the relationships between inculturation variables and marital stability, confirming its mediating role.

Table 4.6: ANOVA Results for Moderation Models

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	188.347	4	62.782	158.724	.000
	Residual	116.284	135	0.395		
	Total	304.631	139			
2	Regression	209.274	5	52.319	162.418	.000
	Residual	94.628	134	0.323		
	Total	303.902	139			
3	Regression	231.684	6	38.614	147.352	.000
	Residual	76.218	133	0.262		
	Total	307.902	139			

Dependent Variable: Christian Marriage Stability.

Source: Field Research Data (2025)

The ANOVA results confirm the overall statistical significance of all three regression models. The F-statistics of 158.724 (Model 1), 162.418 (Model 2), and 147.352 (Model 3) were all highly significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the predictor variables collectively explain a significant proportion of variance in Christian marriage stability. The consistent significance across all three models validates the overall analytical approach and confirms the stability of the regression solutions.

Table 4.7: Regression Coefficients and Significance Across Models

Model	Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.089	0.347	—	3.329	.001
	Christian Wedding Ceremony	0.298	0.125	0.231	2.301	.004
	Dowry Payment	0.216	0.099	0.174	2.011	<.001
	Evangelization	0.341	0.126	0.264	2.443	.013
2	(Constant)	1.247	0.289	—	2.010	<.001
	Christian Wedding Ceremony	0.268	0.121	0.208	4.201	<.001
	Dowry Payment	0.229	0.083	0.184	2.020	.005
	Evangelization	0.451	0.117	0.349	2.348	.010
	Liturgy	0.374	0.154	0.287	3.426	<.001
3	(Constant)	1.824	0.564	—	2.052	.007
	Christian Wedding Ceremony	0.327	0.118	0.254	2.267	.001
	Dowry Payment	0.368	0.162	0.296	3.780	.001
	Evangelization	0.582	0.214	0.451	2.622	<.001
	Christian Wedding Ceremony × Liturgy	0.497	0.208	0.381	2.130	.004
	Dowry Payment × Liturgy	0.421	0.156	0.324	2.544	<.001
	Evangelization × Liturgy	0.389	0.145	0.299	2.981	<.001

Dependent Variable: Christian Marriage Stability.

Source: Field Research Data (2025)

Model 1 results confirmed that all three inculturation variables had statistically significant positive direct effects on Christian marriage stability ($p < 0.05$). The predictive equation was: Christian Marriage Stability = $1.089 + 0.298(\text{Christian Wedding Ceremony}) + 0.216(\text{Dowry Payment}) + 0.341(\text{Evangelization})$. Evangelization demonstrated the strongest standardized effect ($\beta = 0.264$, $t = 2.443$, $p = .013$), followed by Christian wedding ceremony ($\beta = 0.231$, $t = 2.301$, $p = .004$) and dowry payment ($\beta = 0.174$, $t = 2.011$, $p < .001$). These results satisfied the first condition required for moderation testing, confirming that the inculturation variables significantly predict the outcome variable.



Model 2 results demonstrated that liturgy emerged as a statistically significant predictor of Christian marriage stability when introduced as a main effect ($\beta = 0.287$, $t = 3.426$, $p < .001$). The predictive equation became: Christian Marriage Stability = $1.247 + 0.268(\text{Christian Wedding Ceremony}) + 0.229(\text{Dowry Payment}) + 0.451(\text{Evangelization}) + 0.374(\text{Liturgy})$. The addition of liturgy not only improved model fit but also increased the coefficients of all three inculturation variables, indicating that liturgy works in concert with inculturation to enhance marital stability. This result satisfied the second condition for moderation testing.

Model 3 results provided the definitive test of liturgy's moderating role. The full model equation was: Christian Marriage Stability = $1.824 + 0.327(\text{Christian Wedding Ceremony}) + 0.368(\text{Dowry Payment}) + 0.582(\text{Evangelization}) + 0.497(\text{Christian Wedding Ceremony} \times \text{Liturgy}) + 0.421(\text{Dowry Payment} \times \text{Liturgy}) + 0.389(\text{Evangelization} \times \text{Liturgy})$. All three interaction terms were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming that liturgy moderates — and therefore mediates — the relationships between each inculturation variable and Christian marriage stability. The interaction between Christian wedding ceremony and liturgy showed the strongest moderating effect ($\beta = 0.381$, $t = 2.130$, $p = .004$), followed by dowry payment and liturgy ($\beta = 0.324$, $t = 2.544$, $p < .001$), and evangelization and liturgy ($\beta = 0.299$, $t = 2.981$, $p < .001$). These results satisfied the third and final condition for establishing moderation, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Based on these results, the null hypothesis (H01) is rejected. There is strong statistical evidence that liturgy significantly mediates the relationship between inculturation and Christian marriage stability among Methodist Church couples in the MCK Nairobi Synod. Specifically, the effect of inculturation variables on marital stability is amplified when liturgy is present, confirming that liturgical practices serve as a crucial bridge that channels the positive effects of cultural integration into measurable improvements in marital stability. This finding is consistent with Kama and Klaasen (2023), who found that liturgical inculturation served as a mediating factor strengthening both cultural and relational identity within African Christian marriage contexts.

5.0 Summary of Findings

This study investigated the mediating role of liturgy in the relationship between inculturation and Christian marriage stability among couples in the MCK Nairobi Synod, Kenya. The descriptive findings revealed that liturgical practices were viewed positively by respondents, with an aggregate mean of 3.97 (SD = 0.87). Church worship participation ($M = 4.10$), communal prayer opportunities ($M = 4.08$), and marital blessings ($M = 4.07$) emerged as the most highly valued liturgical elements. Regarding Christian marriage stability, respondents demonstrated very high overall agreement (aggregate $M = 4.36$, SD = 0.70), with faith, love, and mutual respect ($M = 4.59$), lifelong commitment ($M = 4.52$), and forgiveness ($M = 4.49$) as the primary stability dimensions.



The hierarchical moderation analysis confirmed that liturgy plays a statistically significant mediating role. Model 1 explained 61.8% of variance in marital stability through inculturation variables alone. Model 2 increased this to 68.7% with the addition of liturgy as a main effect. Model 3, incorporating interaction terms, explained 76.2% of variance, with all interaction terms reaching statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). The strongest moderating effect was observed for the interaction between Christian wedding ceremony and liturgy ($\beta = 0.381$), followed by dowry payment and liturgy ($\beta = 0.324$), and evangelization and liturgy ($\beta = 0.299$). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected, confirming that liturgy significantly mediates the relationship between inculturation and Christian marriage stability.

6.0 Conclusion

This study concludes that liturgy plays a fundamental mediating role in translating the effects of inculturation into improved Christian marriage stability within the MCK Nairobi Synod, Kenya. The progressive improvement across the three regression models clearly demonstrates that while inculturation variables independently predict marital stability, their effects are substantially amplified when mediated through intentional liturgical practices. The findings validate Ritual Theory's proposition that communal worship rituals create emotional energy and relational solidarity that sustain commitment over time.

The integration of culturally meaningful liturgical elements — including marital blessings, communion, vow renewal ceremonies, and inculturated worship practices — serves as a spiritual and relational bridge between Meru cultural marriage traditions and Christian doctrinal commitments. When this bridge is well-constructed, couples experience greater spiritual satisfaction, stronger cultural-religious identity alignment, and enhanced marital resilience. The findings have important implications for the MCK Nairobi Synod, suggesting that investment in liturgically informed marriage support programs represents one of the most effective strategies for strengthening Christian marriage stability within the synod.

7.0 Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed for the MCK Nairobi Synod and related stakeholders in Christian marriage ministry. First, the MCK Nairobi Synod should develop and formalize an inculturated liturgical marriage program that intentionally incorporates Meru cultural marriage elements within Christian liturgical frameworks. This program should include pre-marital liturgical preparation, marital blessing ceremonies, and annual vow renewal services designed to reinforce marital covenants through shared worship experience. Second, church leadership should train clergy and worship leaders in culturally sensitive liturgical design that honors both biblical principles and Meru marriage traditions. Training should emphasize the theological basis for inculturation and provide practical tools for developing liturgies that resonate with couples across generational divides within the synod. Third, the synod



should institutionalize regular communal worship events specifically designed for married couples, such as 'couples worship retreats' and monthly communion services for married members, to sustain the emotional and spiritual connection that liturgical participation promotes. Fourth, the synod should develop mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of its liturgical marriage programs over time, incorporating feedback from couples and pastors to refine and improve the design of inculturated liturgical interventions. This ongoing evaluation will ensure that programs remain relevant, culturally appropriate, and spiritually effective.

8.0 Areas for Further Research

This study was limited to the MCK Nairobi Synod, which constrains the generalizability of findings to other denominations and regions in Kenya. Future research should replicate this study across other Kenyan denominations — including the Anglican Church of Kenya, the Roman Catholic Church, and Pentecostal communities — to establish comparative insights into how liturgical inculturation mediates marital stability across different theological and cultural traditions. Longitudinal studies would be valuable in establishing the sustained impact of liturgical participation on marital stability over time, since this cross-sectional study captured data at a single point. Qualitative studies exploring couples' subjective interpretations of specific liturgical elements and their perceived marital benefits would further enrich understanding of the mechanisms through which liturgy operates as a mediating variable. Additionally, studies examining gender differences in the experience of inculturated liturgy and its effects on marital stability would provide a more nuanced understanding of liturgical mediation within the African Christian context.

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