

Relationship between Gender Roles and Marital Stability among Couples in Selected Counties of Kenya

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ABSTRACT

There is increased evidence of marital conflict, instability, separation and divorce both globally and in Kenya. There is a possibility that this could be attributed to changes in perceptions and performance of gender roles by the partners in a marriage arising from the impact of global influences on family socialization processes. This study sought to explore the relationship between gender roles (perceptions and performances) and marital stability among couples in selected counties in Kenya. The study used a correlational research design and was guided by the Family Systems approach. The target population was 6.83 million couples in Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu counties of Kenya. Multistage sampling that included stratified, convenient and purposive sampling was used to draw a sample of 402 couples for the study. Data was collected using researcher developed questionnaires measuring gender roles and marital stability. Feedback from the pilot study was used to strengthen the validity and reliability of the instruments. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse quantitative data. Spearman rank order correlation was used to determine the nature of the relationship between gender roles (perceptions and performance) and marital stability. The findings showed that there was a significant weak positive relationship between gender role perception and marital stability, $r_s(804) = .393, p < .05$. Further, there was a significant moderate positive relationship between gender role performance and marital stability, $r_s(804) = .414, p < .05$. These findings point to the need to incorporate gender role awareness into premarital and marital counselling by family counsellors and therapists as well as in the development of strategies by key stakeholders to strengthen marital stability among couples in Kenya.

Key Words: Family Socialization, Gender, Gender Roles, Marital Stability, Marital Trust, Marital Commitment, Marital Problem Solving

INTRODUCTION

Family socialization processes often tend to categorize learning based on gender. Socialization incorporates those salient and critical aspects of culture, religion, social life, psychology and lifestyle that are uniquely drawn up for the man as well as the woman. Every ethnic group had its own processes on “how and what” members were to be taught and initiated into to attain membership. Members were indoctrinated on norms, attitudes, values, behaviours and social skills which were deemed gender appropriate, gave them integrity, brought out a sense of belonging and achieved a lifelong identity. It was hoped that socialization processes would instil in every member gender appropriate core beliefs, an awareness of dysfunctional assumptions, which are those rigid and unrealistic rules that make a relationship maladaptive and that it could avoid becoming the hub of those negative automated thoughts (NAT’s) that could destroy a relationship (Lian and Geok, 2012). NAT’s are those negatively framed interpretations of the way we think of ourselves and has an undesirable impact on the person. Family socialization not only plays a great role in shaping the individuals’ gender role ideologies but at the same time it can engrave deeply embedded cognitive frameworks within the psyche of the person (Hilpert, Randall, Sorokowski, Atkins, Sorokowska, & Ahmadi, 2016).

There are numerous socialization agents and environments such as family cultures, traditions and present day global influences that nurture the formation of cognitions, especially those that are gender specific. Family members are the most influential in shaping gender learning (Lamm, Keller, Yovsi, & Chaudhary,

2008; Jensen, & Arnett, 2012). Gender socialization not only teaches and generates culturally appropriate perceptions about how men and women should think, speak, dress, and interact but also determines performance criteria for men and women within the context of the society. Members of the family are typically socialized into different gender-role criteria through the formation of appropriate gender role perceptions and performances (Philpot, 2000). As a result of their differing socialization experiences, members of each sex, for the most part develop distinct behavioural expectations, are granted disparate opportunities, and have differing life experiences (Eccles, Freedman-Doan, Frome, Jacobs, & Yoon, 2012). Family socialization gives men and women the ability to be single minded in their thinking and even empowers them to add colour and flavour to their perceptions especially where gender is concerned. In other words, the man and woman, because of their socialization processes could become uncompromising and fixated in the way they perceive each other's gender roles and therefore, hold fast to what they have learnt and know best. This could lead to a hard and fast stance by the man and/or the woman about their roles in the relationship, set off a gradual outpouring of dysfunctional assumptions that are backed up by negative automated thoughts (NAT's) that in turn could feed marital conflict.

Seldom do men and women consider the fact that marriage can be plagued with conflict, separation, divorce, and violence that could lead to mistrust, lack of commitment and an inability to problem solve, leading to the possibility of marital instability. Fan and Lui (2004), contend that marriage is becoming increasingly unstable especially in many developed countries where betrayal, infidelity, separation and divorce are some of the factors that define and contribute to marital instability. According to Gichinga (2003), marriage is faced with enormous challenges that range from economic, social, political, religious, psychological and emotional impacts suggesting that marriages, both globally as well as locally, are increasingly becoming unstable. For example, according to the United Nations (UN), the country with the highest divorce rate in the world is the Maldives with 10.97 divorces per 1,000 inhabitants per year. This is followed by Belarus with 4.63 and the United States with 4.34. Statistics on divorce indicate that Kenya is facing an increase in cases of separation, divorce and marital instability. In Kenya according to records at the Milimani Law Courts, there was an upsurge of the number of couples seeking to dissolve their marriages. A total of 101 cases were recorded in 2001, 115 in 2002 and 206 cases in 2003. In the subsequent years, the figures were as high as 296, 295, 357, and 369 for the years 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008 respectively. In the period between 2010 and 2015, approximately 1246 cases were filed at the Milimani Law Courts. These statistics are cases filed at the Milimani law courts only (Ayiemba, 2013, Hetherington, 2001). The number would be higher if all cases throughout the country were taken into consideration raising many questions like: how did so many married men and women who loved each other, get to reach the state of divorce? Weren't they intelligent enough to know or see it coming? Is this the face of family socialization showing itself in men and women who have become "hard faced" with "no compromise?" How much has the man and woman's socialising processes contributed to their core beliefs, dysfunctional assumptions and negative automatic thoughts? How much has family socialization processes contributed towards the divorce? This is a gap in literature and knowledge that needs a study on family socialization processes, its contribution to personalized core beliefs, dysfunctional assumptions and negative automated thoughts and its influence on the marital relationship.

There is a possibility that family socialization processes have not only made men and women aware of their own gender role perceptions but it could have also enabled and influenced them to perceive and evaluate their partners' roles perceptions as different and non-conforming, leading to unnecessary speculation and doubt about the other. This could lead to a hard and fast stance by the man and/or the woman about the way the other perceives their roles in the relationship, set off a gradual outpouring of dysfunctional assumptions that are backed up by negative automated thoughts (NAT's) and in turn could feed the perceptions on marital conflict leading to the dissolution of their marriage. This study sought to bridge this gap by finding out whether socialization processes contribute and lead men and women to perceive realities inaccurately causing cognitive distortions and dysfunction resulting in possible conflict situations and a possible end to

the marriage itself?

Gender roles are understood as those behavioural or psychological traits typically associated with one's sex, as male or female and are also considered culturally appropriate (Moore, & Mathews, 2001; Matsumoto, 2001). In this study gender role perceptions are husbands' and wives' mental interpretation and /or categorization of each other's roles and behaviour as appropriate or inappropriate to the marriage relationship. There is a growing possibility that men and women's personalized experiences, perspectives, preferences (perceptions) and demands for equitable and quality performances from each other is gradually becoming one of the reasons for conflict situations that could further escalate into a lack of trust, commitment and a lethargy to problem solve. Wilmoth and Blaney (2016) suggest that reasons for marital instability are varied, complex, unique and specific to the couple's marital relationship. Such may include the individual's personalized experiences of upbringing, experiences of family socialization, personal and/or subjective perspectives of roles and performances about their own marriage, subjective understanding of marital conflicts and the way such conflicts should be managed and solved (Wilmoth & Blaney, 2016). When such personal perspectives are coupled with demands for equitable and quality performance by the partners from each other, and when such demands become concrete and non-negotiable, then there is a possibility of marital instability that could gradually lead to marital dissolution.

When a man and a woman enter into a marital relationship, each one brings into the marriage their own set of personal opinions, preferences, habits, and quirks (Lott, 2010; Arnett, 2002). They also bring into the marriage their unique perceptions and behaviour patterns based on their unique family socialization processes. When husbands and wives encounter gender role differences due to the uniqueness of their family socialization processes and when such differences are subjectively perceived and gets embedded in the cognitive structures of the man and woman, there is a tendency for the differences to grow and significantly impact the marital relationship. Marital conflict can be defined as differences in opinion encountered by husbands and wives, whether positive or negative, minor or major, tactical and/or emotional leading to stress and strain on the relationship and could arouse hostile interactions meted out on each other. According to Lian and Geok, (2012) marital conflict is the existence of high levels of disagreements, hostile interactions and stressful and disrespectful verbal abuse between couples usually caused by minor and major interpersonal interactions as well as temperaments that lead to difference in opinions. They further argue that these interpersonal interactions and temperaments that lead to differences in perceptions and opinions could also be the reasons that make the couple drift apart, feel threatened, intimidated and even contemplate separation and divorce (Lian & Geok, 2012; McGraw, 2007; Amato, Booth, Johnson, & Rogers, 2009).

It is possible, therefore, that couples facing marital conflict may gradually begin to perceive their marriage as breaking down, lack the ability to perceive the other as unique, and different and that they will never be able to be together. Davis and Greenstein, (2004) illustrating this tension, stated that when one spouse perceived the relationship to be inequitable or unbalanced, psychological tension resulted, leading to conflict and possible marital instability. For example, it may happen that one of the two in marriage could perceive inequity in the distribution of household tasks and hence more free time was awarded to the other partner (Ganguly-Scrase, 2003). This often resulted in marital conflict and gradually to marital instability. For many, resentment grew when they were forced to give up deeply ingrained ideas/perceptions about themselves. This could mean that the man could feel that he is unmanly even if he agrees to do "woman's work." Likewise, a woman may resent the fact that her husband is not taking care of her in a protective role and that she must take on tasks that are not hers (Adegoke, 2010). Therefore, the focus of this study was to evaluate whether such perceptions about inequitable distribution of roles could trigger a reluctance, disparity and trigger dissolution.

Statement of the problem

The institution of marriage is facing challenges that are a threat to its integrity. Marital conflict, increased

cases of domestic violence, infidelity, and a desire to control the other has increased the reason among couples for the dissolution of marriages. There is a growing intolerance and demand for conformity on the part of couples about the roles they play as husbands and wives. There is a waning of marital trust, commitment and problem solving among couples and an increase of vulnerability and intolerance within marriage. There is a growing tendency for spouses to draw up mutual agreements that enable them to leave, whenever they perceive they have been aggrieved or let down by the other partner. The situation gets complicated when the partner(s) may decide to leave without prior warning or just request the other to leave with no compromise.

Family and global socialization processes plays a great role in influencing and changing husbands and wives gender roles perceptions and performances. This has given them the ability to choose between traditional and/or globalised gender roles, use such roles to benefit their own agenda in conflicts, engage in competition over each other, manipulate the other to conformity and develop a sense of control over the other. Married life has becomes a place where gender roles are used and abused in favour of the self, more than the marriage itself. Given all the factors that contribute towards marital dissolution, little is known about the couples' own socialization processes and its possible contributions towards marital stability. This raises many questions like, how did so many married men and women who were in love with each other get to reach the state of divorce? Didn't they know or see it coming? Is this the face of family socialization showing itself in men and women who have become "stone faced" with "no compromise?" How much has the man and woman's socialising processes contributed to their core beliefs, dysfunctional assumptions and negative automatic thoughts? Is it possible that the influence of family socialization processes and its contributed towards the break up?

These questions illustrate the need for a study on the relationship of family socialization processes and its contribution to personalized core beliefs, dysfunctional assumptions and negative automated thoughts and its response to its influence on marital relationship. Family socialization processes have not only made men and women aware of their own gender roles perceptions and performances, but has also influenced them to perceive and evaluate the roles and performances of the other. This study sought to bridge this gap by finding out whether socialization processes contribute and lead men and women to perceive gender roles inaccurately causing cognitive distortions and dysfunction which have influenced gender roles and marital stability? In other words, the problem was to find out whether couple's gender role perceptions which are those mental interpretation and/or categorization of each other's behaviour as appropriate or inappropriate within their marriage, and gender role performances which represents the conduct of behaviour in ways that are deemed appropriate or inappropriate within marriage, contribute towards their own marital stability?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Couples' gender role performances

Human development embraces marriage as a unit of intimate relationship. When two adults get into an intimate relationship with each other, they bring into their relationship their personal, family, extended family, and peers socialized gender ideologies hoping that it will lead to marital stability. As the relationship grows demands for appropriate behaviour performances become frequent and stringent. Gender role performance can be defined as appropriate behaviours demanded of men and women in a relationship and which reflect the fundamental judgments or internalized belief systems of the couple. These fundamental demands for performance, made by the couple to each other, could lead to the indication that marriage is becoming individualistic where each partner run their own affairs (Lauer & Yodanis, 2010). In individualized marriages, spouses maintain independence in their relationship even though they are a couple. Lauer and Yodanis, (2010) studying individualized marriages, sought to find out whether married couples manage their money in pooled accounts or keep separate accounts, and how variation in the

individualization of marriage is related to variation in resource integration within marriage. First, the study found that individualization matters. When couples understood and practiced individualized marriage, they were more likely to keep their money separate. The presence of individualized approaches to marriage and individualized alternatives to marriage within a country or society were also related to a higher likelihood of couples keeping money separate. Second, the study found that integrating resources remained a constitutive part of marriage. Despite trends toward individualization and growing alternatives to marriage, most married couples in the study continued to pool their money together. Paradoxically, the study concluded that majority of spouses engage in interdependent and integrated behaviours indicating that trends are not clearly in a trajectory toward individualization (Yodanis & Lauer, 2014). The study implicitly addressed the perceptions couples can have towards finances and its management and therefore the resulting outcome in performances. Finance is one of those issues that can thwart healthy perceptions and performance. The same can be said of gender role perceptions where gender role perceptions are individualized giving rise to individualized performances. The current study focused on the assumption that couples personalized gender role perceptions could be the reason for low marital stability.

One of the main reasons for high divorce rate is that married people do not know the reason for their marriage. Most people marry for love, companionship, social status, they believe marriage is designed by God, the church wants it, or because it is a cultural tradition. These subjective reasons often lead to marital conflict. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child argues that marital conflict is becoming common among the affluent in Kenya with a strong socio-cultural link. Thus, women who are either too dependent or too independent are more likely to face marital conflict than their peers who fall under neither of the extremes (UNCRC, 2012). Odhiambo and Maito (2013), researching on the social dimensions of marital conflict in Kenya, used the Anglican Diocese of Mase no North as a case study. The study illustrated vividly the challenges faced by couples arising from the way they perceive gender roles and consequently reflecting their demands for gender role performance behaviour. According to the study, destructive marital conflict was perceived to be related to a wide array of factors which were grouped into five interrelated categories: socio-economic factors, socio-cultural factors, personal attributes of the spouse, domestic family life factors and factors of structural inequality. The data indicated that psychological battering was common and was employed by both spouses. About a third of women indicated they had been victims of physical abuse yet kept their abusive relationship because they were constrained by a network of social, cultural and economic barriers. Respondents' perception of gender relations in society informed their relationship to the opposite sex and this they carried over into marriage to back up their individualized ways of perceiving and performing even in the face of marital conflict (Odhiambo & Maito, 2013). The study showed the impact of socialization processes on gender role performances which can be positive or negative and affects marital stability. It also shows the fact that changes in gender role perception and performances could present opportunities for adaptation and growth or lead to defensiveness and withdrawal. Change is initially stressful for both individuals in the relationships. If these changes are ignored or left unaddressed, they could become reasons for couple conflict and marital instability. The current study sought to find out whether socialisation processes had any impact on couple's gender role performance demands and whether such demands lead to marital conflict, violence, abuse and stalemate in the marital relationship.

Marital conflict is an indication of the existence of unresolved perspectives, value orientations or behaviour performances between spouses. An unresolved and conflicting situation is a situation in which two or more values, perspectives and opinions are contradictory in nature, and have not yet aligned or agreed upon. According to Fincham (2012), couples in marital conflict are distressed and may make more negative statements and fewer positive statements and they are also most likely to respond with negative behaviour when their partner behaves in a negative way. One reason why conflict develops is that two persons view a situation differently. Jensen et.al. (2012) affirm that perceptual differences are usually expressed through emotions and behaviours. An individual's perception of fairness in the relationship is determined by an appraisal of the outcomes or performances (Jensen et.al. 2012). Thus, a person looks at what he or she is

getting out of a relationship vis-a-vis what the partner is receiving. When one perceives the relationship to be inequitable or unbalanced, psychological tension results leading to conflict (Davis, et.al. 2004). It may happen that among couples, one may, for example, perceive inequity in the distribution of household tasks, giving more free time to the other partner (Ganguly-Scrase, 2003). For example, a man may feel that he is unmanly even if he agrees to do “woman’s work.” Likewise, a woman may resent the fact that her husband is not taking care of her in a protective role and that she must take on tasks that are not hers (Adegoke, 2010). When such perceived inequity of gender roles pile up and begin to ferment, they grow into deep resentments giving one the feeling that they are forced to give up deeply ingrained ideas about themselves and consequently on what and how they do. There is need for a study that addresses these mentally accumulated and unresolved conflicts between husbands and wives, the impact it has over their perceptions and gender role performances and subsequently its impact on marital stability.

Couples in conflict can use conflict to learn how to manage and improve their performance both positively or negatively. Ejaz, igbali and Ara,(2012) affirm that couples who strive to attain a balance in perception, and therefore learn how to manage conflict also learn conflict resolution strategies that add positive performance factors rather than negative affect. The way that couples deal with interpersonal conflict or their verbal and/or nonverbal interactions and behaviours can determine whether the relationship will remain intact or dissolve (Curran, et al., 2011). Another study by Brown and Roberts(2014) has shown that high levels of negative expressions and low levels of positive expressions are used during arguments between partners who experience vast amounts of distress and face possible dissolution. Couples who face unresolved conflicts about their gender roles, may also project a diminished or minimal sense of performance (Brown & Roberts, 2014). In Kenya, The Federation of Women Lawyers (2018) reported that cases of domestic violence that have surfaced due to marital conflict hit a five year high in the first half of 2018. The human rights umbrella reported that it handled 2,182 domestic violence cases between the months of January to June 2018. This was higher as compared to 2010 where the figure stood at 2028 conflict cases. Whisman and Uebelacker (2006) found that relationships suffering from unresolved conflicts are related to social role impairment with family and friends, diminished work functioning, pain and anxiety, worse mental and physical health, and increased likelihood of suicidal ideation. Relationships with high rates of unresolved conflict could reflect a mental “stuckness” or the inability to perceive the other’s perspective and hence the inability to perform the desired role demands which could lead to ideations of separation and/or divorce. As seen earlier, there is abundance of literature about marital conflicts and divorce. But seldom has literature dealt with the possibility that couple’s unresolved ideations about gender role conflicts and the lack or imbalance of gender role performances could be the factor that fuels divorce. This present study hopes to bridge this gap in literature and knowledge.

The impact of gender role perception and the resulting demands for gender role performances is well illustrated by Perrone et.al. (2009) who discussed the changing gender roles in career, marriage, and parenting. The study argues that gender roles in family and work domains are in a state of flux. The traditional view of the male as the breadwinner and the female as homemaker has shifted overtime (Acker, 2004). Perrone’s (2009) study affirms that changes in social norms have resulted in men and women placing a high premium on both work and family roles (Friedman, 2007).

Other studies suggest that gender equality at the family level is also linked to reproductive behaviour, and stronger gender equality appears to be associated with higher fertility (Neyer, Lappegård & Vignoli, 2013; Oláh, Kotowska, & Richter, 2018; Duvander & Andersson 2006). Higher gender equality may very well lead to higher fertility; more important however, as one moves away from the male breadwinner model, is the potential mismatch between gender equality, (that is the actual sharing taking place across genders) and gender ideology, that is the “attitudes regarding the appropriate roles, rights, and responsibilities of women and men in society” (Kroska, 2007). The mismatch between the two might result in “unfulfilled expectations”, and a feeling of disappointment may lower fertility. To exemplify, if the woman has liberal

attitudes towards gender roles (i.e., she has an egalitarian ideology regarding gender roles and gender relations in the couple), and the man does not fulfill her expectations through sharing household tasks, she might derive lower satisfaction from the partnership, which in turn may lower the chances for the couple agreeing on having children, which presumably lowers overall fertility (Mencarini & Sironi, 2012; Aassve et al., 2014). Goldscheider, Bernhardt and Brandén (2013), in their study, state that there is some evidence suggesting inconsistency between attitudes toward couples' sharing of tasks and actual division of housework reduces the likelihood of continued childbearing even in a high gender-equal society like Sweden. This study explored whether already existing gender role perceptions and the demand for appropriate gender role performances create balance or imbalance that could possibly have an effect on marital stability

METHOD

Research Design

The study used correlational research design and mixed methods approach. The mixed method approach was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The correlational research design enabled the research to assess the correlations (relationship) between the independent and dependent variables.

Study Variables

The independent variable was gender roles, which, for this study, were operationalized as couples' gender role perceptions and gender role performances arising from family and global socialization. The dependent variable was marital stability which was operationalized in terms of three components: mutual trust, commitment and problem solving.

Site of Study

The study was done in the counties of Nairobi, Kisumu and Mombasa. These Counties were chosen because they exhibited three essential characteristics essential to this study: first, a history of a growing interaction with a variety of peoples, traditions and cultures; second, an interaction and growth arising from the socialization structures of peoples and third, that they have encountered positive and/or negative change and growth especially to gender role perspectives and performances.

Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

The study employed a multi-staged sampling technique. The technique was employed in two stages. Stratified sampling for stage one and convenience sampling for stage two. In stage one Stratified sampling was employed to breakdown the population into manageable clusters. The manageable clusters were Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu as counties. In the second stage, convenience sampling was used to obtain the sample for quantitative data

Sample

According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), table, determining sample sizes for research activities (Appendix 5) three hundred and eighty four couples were considered to be representative of the views of the study population. The minimum sample size desired was 384. However to take care of potential non response, oversampling was done hence a sample size of 402 was used. The sample population was distributed among the three Counties in the following proportions: Nairobi County having the largest population of 3.5m was apportioned a total sample of 240 couples, Mombasa was apportioned 55 couples and Kisumu was

apportioned 110 couples.

Research Instruments

The instruments used for the study were researcher developed questionnaires and focus group discussion guides. The questionnaires consisted of two parts. The first part was to gather relevant demographic information about the participants. The second part was to collect data for the study objectives which were: i) couple's gender role perceptions; (ii) couple's gender role performances; (iii) Marital stability based on three components – mutual trust, commitment and problem solving; (iv) Relationship between gender role perceptions and marital stability; (v) relationship between gender role performances and marital stability.

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected primarily by the researcher, who took the principal role in the distribution and collection of questionnaires. When groups were involved, the researcher personally administered questionnaires and collected the responses as well. Since the sample population was vast and spread over the three counties, the researcher employed six field research assistants (two per county) to assist with data collection.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The data collected from the selected counties was analysed and grouped into the following categories, themes and sub-themes: (a) Couples gender role perceptions; (b) Couples gender role performances; (c) Levels of marital stability based on the three components of trust, commitment and problem solving; (d) relationship between gender role perceptions and marital stability-trust, commitment, and problem solving; and (e) relationship between gender role performances and marital stability-trust, commitment, and problem solving.

Data Management and Ethical Considerations

Before beginning the study, the researcher sought letters of introduction, authorization and ethical clearance from Kenyatta University. The necessary permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, Kenya (NACOSTI) to conduct the research was also obtained. To uphold the dignity of the participant, data management and ethical considerations were adhered to by the researcher. Data collection and analysis revealed no identifying factors about participants' identities. Coding was used in place of names so as to ensure confidentiality of data and of personal identities. All participants signed the informed consent form before any data was collected. Participants were made aware that they could terminate their participation in the study at any time with no consequences to them. Participants were assured that all data collected would be confidential and at no time would it be released. There was no foreseen reason for deceit. At the end of every data collection session, the researcher conducted a debriefing session in order to prevent any harm as a result of their participating in the study.

FINDINGS

Gender Role Performances

The second research objective was to establish the gender role performances among couples in selected counties of Kenya. Data was collected using a gender role performance questionnaire with fifteen items measuring gender role performances based on either traditional or global performances. For each item, the respondents were required to indicate the level of agreement using a score of 1 to 5 where 1=strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= undecided, 4= disagree and 5= strongly disagree. A higher score indicated performances that

tended to be highly traditional (minimally global), while a lower score indicated performances that were minimally traditional (highly global). Since there were a total of fifteen 15 items, the highest possible score for each individual was seventy five [(75 (15X5)]. The lowest possible score on the other hand was fifteen [(15 (15X1)]. To obtain couple’s score an average was obtained between the scores of the husbands and wives. The scores were then categorized as follows: thirty seven (37) and below indicated performances that were minimally traditional; thirty eight to fifty three (38-53) indicated performances that were moderately traditional and a score of fifty four (54) and above represented performances that were highly traditional.

Gender Role Performance

This section presents the gender role performance of couples in general, followed by gender role performances of couples by County and finally gender role performance of husbands, wives and couples by county.

Couples Gender Role Performance

Data was analysed to find out couple’s gender role performances and the findings are presented in table 1

Table 1 Gender role performances of couples

Frequencies on Couples Gender Role Performance		
Level of Performance	Couple	
	Frequency	Percent
Highly Traditional	317	39.4
Moderately Traditional	479	59.6
Minimally Traditional	8	1.0
	804	100.0

Data analysis on couples in general indicated that 59.6% of couples were moderately traditional in their gender role performances while 39.4% were highly traditional in their gender role performances.

The expected outcome was that couples’ gender role performances would match the outcomes on their gender role perceptions. But the outcomes on their gender role perceptions and the resultant outcomes from their gender role performances shows an inconsistency between the two. Findings on couples’ gender role perceptions showed that 56% of couples were highly traditional and 42.3% of couples were moderately traditional in their gender role perceptions. But findings on couple’s gender role performances showed that 59.6% of couples were moderately traditional in their gender role performances while 39.4% were highly traditional in their gender role performances.

Findings on couple’s gender role performances should have been consistent with the findings on couple’s gender role perceptions. Findings point out that couples in general were moderately traditional in their gender role performances which runs contrary to their gender role perceptions which were highly traditional. Similarly, even though a growing number of couples tended towards being moderately traditional in their gender role perceptions, findings on gender role performances show the tendency of couples in general tending towards being highly traditional. This means that even though couples’ tended to be moderately traditional in their gender role performances, there is an impact from family socialization processes over their gender role performances.

Becoming a couple means merging of two persons’ perspectives, histories, values and worldviews. Men and women come from unique socialization processes and are often challenged by each other’s differences in

gender role perceptions and performance criteria. When couples are aware of their gender roles, they feel pressurized to behave or perform in gender appropriate ways. Young et al. (2007) describes a couple as a unique dyad of separateness and influence. They are separate from each other as individuals with a unique identity and at the same time originate from separate families of origin, thereby giving the partners within the couple and their families of origin, the ability to influence and be influenced by each other positively or negatively. It is therefore possible that the ability to influence can play a role in pressurizing the couple into conforming to appropriate gender role performances based on personalized family socialized criteria. This is consistent with the outcome of this study that even though couple's gender role perceptions were highly traditional, their gender role performances were moderately traditional.

Gender role Performances by County

Further analysis was done on data collected on gender role performance of couples by County. Findings are presented in table 2.

Table 2 Gender role performance of couples by County

County	Level of Performance	Frequency	Percent
Nairobi	Minimal Traditional	8	1.5
	Moderate Traditional	309	56.8
	Highly traditional	227	41.7
	Total	544	100.0
Mombasa	Moderate Traditional	51	44.7
	Highly traditional	63	55.3
	Total	114	100.0
Kisumu	Moderate Traditional	119	81.5
	Highly traditional	27	18.5
	Total	146	100.0

As shown in table 2, 56.8% of couples from Nairobi County and 81.5% from Kisumu County were moderately traditional in their gender role performances, while 55.3% from Mombasa County were highly traditional in their gender role performances. The table also reveals that 41.7% of couples from Nairobi County were highly traditional while 44.7% from Mombasa County were moderately traditional in their gender role performances.

Findings indicate that couples from Nairobi County scored higher towards being moderately traditional in their gender role performances, yet the gap was reducing between those who were moderately traditional and those who were highly traditional. Another interesting finding is that majority of couples from Kisumu County were moderately traditional in their gender role performances. There is a possibility that new developments in the county demanded new ways of perceiving the self and hence gave couples the opportunity towards new ways of performances. Findings from Mombasa County showed that 55.3% couples were highly traditional while at the same time the gap between highly traditional and moderately traditional (44.7%) was gradually narrowing and pointing out to the possible influence from globalization.

When a man and a woman come together in marriage, they take on a new identity of being a couple. Even though the couple identity makes them one, they are still two separate individuals who have the ability to influence and impact each other positively or negatively. This can create in them the tendency either to please or to manipulate each other in order to gain favour and/or affirmation from the other. This tendency

can lead the couple into conflict which can escalate and influence marital stability. This is consistent with Beayboeuf-Lafontant (2007) study that such demands for appropriate gender role performance behaviours may not only strengthen, weaken and/or challenge husbands and wives, but it also has the potential to lead to conflict. This could therefore, be the struggle that husbands and wives go through in order to accommodate each other’s uniqueness, separateness and role performances. Davis and Greenstein (2004) illustrate the impact gender role perception has on gender role performance stating that husbands and wives often look at what he or she is getting out of a relationship vis-a-vis what the partner is receiving. If either of them perceives the relationship to be inequitable or unbalanced, then psychological tension prevails which could bear on marital stability. The tension between pleasing and manipulating could affirm the findings of this study where even though couples from Nairobi County scored higher towards being moderately traditional, and couples from Mombasa County scored highly traditional, the reducing gap between those who were moderately traditional and those who were highly traditional could be indicative of the couples struggle to come to par between gender role perceptions and gender role performances.

Gender role Performances by Gender and by County

Further analysis by gender and by county was done and the findings are presented in table3

Table 3 Gender role Performances by Gender and by County

County	Levels of performances	Husbands		Wives		couples	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Nairobi	Minimal Traditional	3	1.1	5	1.8	8	1.5
	Moderate Traditional	147	54.2	162	59.3	309	56.8
	Highly traditional	121	44.6	106	38.8	227	41.7
	Total	271	100.0	273	100.0	544	100.0
Mombasa	Moderate Traditional	27	47.4	24	42.1	51	44.7
	Highly traditional	30	52.6	33	57.2	63	55.3
	Total	57	100.0	57	100.0	114	100.0
Kisumu	Moderate Traditional	60	81.1	59	81.9	119	81.5
	Highly traditional	14	18.9	13	18.1	27	18.5
	Total	74	100.0	72	100.0	146	100.0

From table 3, 54.2% of husbands from Nairobi and 81.1% from Kisumu counties were moderately traditional while 52.6% from Mombasa County were highly traditional in their gender role performances. Among wives, 59.3% from Nairobi and 81.9% from Kisumu counties were moderately traditional while 57.2% from Mombasa County were highly traditional in their gender role performances. Among couples, 56.8% of couples from Nairobi and 81.5% from Kisumu counties were moderately traditional while 55.3% from Mombasa County were highly traditional. It must be acknowledged that 44.6% of husbands, 38.8% of wives and 41.7% of couples from Nairobi County displayed highly traditional gender role performances. Similarly, 47.4% of husbands, 42.1% of wives and 44.7% of couples from Mombasa County displayed moderately traditional gender role performances.

When two individuals come together in marriage each brings into the marriage relationship their own set of personal opinions, preferences, habits, and quirks (Lott, B 2010, Arnett, J., 2002). Each brings into the marriage relationship their own ideas and quirks about gender roles and gender performances based on their unique socialization. When gender role ideologies significantly vary and differ from spouse to spouse because of differences in family socialization processes, conflict sometimes is inevitable and could bear on

the marriage stability. For example, Davis & Greenstein (2004) rightly illustrates this tension stating that when one spouse perceives the relationship to be inequitable or unbalanced, psychological tension results leading to conflict and possible marital instability. It may happen that among spouses, one may, for example, perceive inequity in the distribution of household tasks, giving more free time to the other partner (Ganguly-Scrase, 2003). This could result in conflict and gradual marital instability. For many, resentment can grow when they are forced to give up deeply ingrained ideas about themselves (Boerner, Jopp, Carr, Sosinsky & Kim, 2014). For example, a man may feel that he is unmanly even if he agrees to do “woman’s work.” Likewise, a woman may resent the fact that her husband is not taking care of her in a protective role and that she must take on tasks that are not hers (Adegoke, 2010). These differences in spousal perceptions and performances, brought about through family socialization processes are consistent with this study findings where couple’s gender role perceptions were highly traditional while their gender role performances were moderately traditional.

The findings of this study is consistent with the study done by Jeong-Yoo and Hyunju (2002) who studied Korean couples and their rapidly changing gender role attitudes (perceptions) and behaviours (performances) attributed to modernization, urbanization, and industrialization. The findings suggested that there was a relationship between husbands’ and wives’ gender role perceptions and performances. When the couples were well educated and employed, their perception of their high income levels boosted their positive gender role performances. Couples’ traditional attitude (perceptions) toward women’s employment, men’s provider role, and non-traditional family life was usually associated with wife’s higher performance levels. On the other hand, in such traditional attitudinal context, men’s perspective of their wife’s employment as non-traditional was related to low marital performance levels. Similarly, husband’s traditional attitudes toward sharing of housework had negative effects on the couple performances, although wife’s traditional attitudes toward sharing housework had a positive effect on their marital performances. This is consistent with the outcome of the present study that though couples’ gender role perceptions have been influenced by global influences yet, the actual behaviour or gender role performances were moderately traditional.

The findings of this study once again are consistent with the study done by Jiping and Shengming (2001) who using a longitudinal national sample of married individuals, examined the changes in gender ideologies of married men and women regarding family roles. The changes were gauged from men’s and women’s perspectives of “women’s employment.” Depending on whether they perceived it to be a “threat or benefit”, a “gain or loss”, the couples’ responses could reveal their gender role perceptions and of performances accordingly. The study reiterated that when men perceived women’s employment as a threat to their role as provider, they often became resistant to the women’s gender roles and gender equality. This resistance also indicated a fear of losing their masculine identities and their wives’ domestic services. When men’s perspective focused on “benefit”, there was an ideological shift in men toward egalitarianism because men benefit materially from their wives’ financial contributions to the family. Empirical findings suggest that both members in the couple were moving in the direction of egalitarianism. This is consistent with the finding of this study where couples were moderately traditional in their gender role performances, confirming Jiping and Shengming’s (2001) findings.

Levels of Marital Stability among Couples

From the perspective of the levels of marital stability, couples in general scored moderate in their level of marital stability. Findings show that couples from the three counties were moderate in their marital stability. From the perspective of gender according to the counties, findings indicate that husbands and wives were moderate in marital stability. Couples from the three Counties were at the moderate level of marital stability.

Couples level of Marital Stability

Data was analysed on couples’ levels of marital stability. The findings are presented in table 4.

Table 4: Couples level of Marital Stability

Frequencies on Couples Levels of Marital Stability		
Level	Couple	
	Frequency	Percent
Low Marital Stability	10	1.2
Moderate Marital Stability	509	63.3
High Marital Stability	285	35.4
	804	100.0

Table 4 shows that 63.3% of couples were moderate in their levels of marital stability while 35.4% of couples showed high levels of marital stability.

The expected outcome was that couples would score low on marital stability. On the contrary, scores revealed that couples scored moderate in their levels of marital stability. A possible explanation could be that couples perceive their own marriages and performances in marriage as stable in comparison to other marriages that are facing separation, divorce and instability. It is believed that social, behavioural, domestic, sexual, religious and financial factors influence marital stability (Maciver & Dimkpa, 2012; Dada, Adetutu, Bada & Sanni, 2016). Though, globally, education has improved the quality of the understanding of the need for marital stability, the impact of family socialization plays a vital role in decision-making especially in the less educated parts of the globe (Ayodele, 2001). For example, socialization and cultures contribute to the break up and impact couples. One of the factors responsible for these the break-up or separation or divorce is lack of children which couples encounter some years after inception of the union (Maciver et.al. 2012).

When couples discover that they are childless, they begin to perceive their marriage as incomplete and the need to remarry is often felt especially with pressure from members of the family of origin, friends and even the larger society (Ayodele, 2001). In spite of being educated, childless couples often face stigma and ridicule of family socialization processes that often perceive them as incomplete and shame them. The shame becomes visible as couples' performances are questioned. Marital conflict becomes the norm ultimately resulting in suspicion, unhappiness and even separation and divorce (Dada, Adetutu, Bada & Sanni, 2016). It is possible then, that the constant friction arising from husbands' and wives' differences in perception and performances, coupled with impact from their various socialization processes could lead them to the decision to separate or divorce or lead them to ignore such shame and so present a high level of marital stability.

Couples Levels of Marital Stability by County

Data was then analysed to find out the levels of marital stability by county. The findings are shown in table 5

Table 5: Couples Levels of Marital Stability by County

County	Level of Marital Stability	Frequency	Percent
Nairobi	Low Marital Stability	7	1.3
	Moderate marital stability	323	59.4
	High Marital Stability	214	39.3
	Total	544	100.0
Mombasa	Low Marital Stability	1	0.9
	Moderate marital stability	78	68.4

	High Marital Stability	35	30.7
	Total	114	100.0
Kisumu	Low Marital Stability	2	1.4
	Moderate marital stability	108	74.0
	High Marital Stability	36	24.7
	Total	146	100.0

Table 5 shows that 59.4% of couples from Nairobi County, 68.4% of couples from Mombasa and 74.0% of couples from Kisumu County indicated moderate levels of marital stability.

Findings of this study showed that couples from Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu indicated moderate levels of marital stability. Marriage and marital stability spells out the interaction between husband and wife and unfolds their positive and/or negative marital experiences. The interaction between husband and wife often reflect their positive or negative gender role perceptions and the resultant demands for appropriate gender role performances. The expected outcome was that couples would score low on marital stability. On the contrary, findings revealed that couples scored high on marital stability. The findings of this study are consistent with studies on marital stability. For example, Boerner, Jopp, Carr, Sosinsky and Kim (2014), studied gender differences in older adults’ appraisals of positive and negative aspects of their marriages and examined how these appraisals relate to global marital satisfaction. Men and women who had positive appraisals of their marital experiences showed high levels of marital stability. Similarly, men and women who displayed negative appraisals displayed low levels of marital stability. Such findings were again consistent with Hawkins, Carrère, Sybil and Gottman’s (2002) findings that married individuals who report low marital happiness are nearly 5 times more likely to divorce than those who report greater marital happiness. Fan et al. (2004) studied how the perceived changes in marital satisfaction affect marital stability using a unique data set obtained in Hong Kong. Findings showed that a change in marital satisfaction due to extramarital affairs increases the probability of divorce, but it is not the only determinant of marital instability. These results affirm and align well with the outcomes of this present study.

Level of Marital Stability by gender and by county

Further analysis by gender and by county generated findings which are presented in table 6

Table 6: Level of Marital Stability by gender by county

County	Levels of Marital Stability	Husbands		Wives		couples	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Nairobi	Low Marital Stability	2	0.7	5	1.8	7	1.3
	Moderate marital stability	160	59.0	163	59.7	323	59.4
	High Marital Stability	109	40.2	105	38.5	214	39.3
	Total	271	100.0	273	100.0	544	100.0
Mombasa	Low Marital Stability	1	1.8			1	0.9
	Moderate marital stability	38	66.7	40	70.2	78	68.4
	High Marital Stability	18	31.6	17	29.8	35	30.7
	Total	57	100.0	57	100.0	114	100.0
Kisumu	Low Marital Stability	57	77.0	2	2.8	2	1.4
	Moderate marital stability	17	23.0	51	70.8	108	74.0

	High Marital Stability			19	26.4	36	24.7
	Total	74	100.0	72	100.0	146	100.0

Table 6 shows that 59.4% of couples from Nairobi County, 68.4% of couples from Mombasa and 74.0% of couples from Kisumu County indicated moderate levels of marital stability. Noteworthy of acknowledging is that 40.2% of husbands, 38.5% of wives and 39.3% of couples from Nairobi County displayed high levels of marital stability. Similarly, 31.6% of husbands from Mombasa County displayed high levels of marital stability.

The expected outcome was that couples would score low on marital stability. On the contrary, scores revealed that couples scored high on marital stability. A possible explanation could be that couples perceive their own marriages and performances in marriage as stable in comparison to other marriages that are facing separation, divorce and instability. When data was put together from the three counties, husbands, wives and couples demonstrated moderate levels of marital stability. A possible explanation is through the concept of “sentiment override”. Navarra and Gottman (2018) define sentiment override as the tendency husbands and wives use to assess the other’s behaviour as either positive or negative on the basis of more globally held perceptions about the partner rather than the objective nature of the partner’s immediate behaviour. Sentiment override then tends to become a kind of perceptual filter husbands and wives use to view and assess the behaviour of each other. Sentiment override could be indicative that husbands and wives are conscious of the complex nature of social life lived around them, and therefore show that they are a match to the situation. Lian, and Geok (2012), illustrate the fact that irrespective of the outcomes of husbands and wives’ gender role perceptions and gender role performances, what matters to couples is to present a sound level of marital stability. The urge to present a sound level of marital stability could be the reason why husbands and wives override their own perceptions and performances about marital trust, in order to present their marriage as highly stable.

CONCLUSIONS

With respect to the couple’s gender role perceptions, in general, it is concluded that couples were highly traditional though there was a reasonable high number being moderately traditional. Couples from Nairobi and Mombasa counties were highly traditional, while those from Kisumu County were predominantly moderately traditional. From the perspective of gender by the counties, the conclusion is that husbands and wives were highly traditional in their gender role perceptions. As couples from the three counties it is concluded that couples were highly traditional in their gender role perceptions.

With respect to couple’s gender role performances, it is concluded that couples, in general, were moderately traditional even though there was a reasonable number of couples tending towards being highly traditional. Couples from Nairobi and Kisumu counties were moderately traditional in their gender role performances while those from Mombasa County were predominantly highly traditional. From the perspective of gender by the three counties, husbands and wives from Nairobi and Kisumu counties were moderately traditional in their gender role performances while husbands and wives from Mombasa County were highly traditional in their gender role performances. The study also concludes that couples from Nairobi and Kisumu counties were moderately traditional in their gender role performances, while couples from Mombasa County were highly traditional in their gender role performances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendation is made for policy makers, implementers, researchers, counsellors and therapists and other stake holders.

Counsellors, therapists and church ministries be aware that couple's gender role performances being moderately traditional, may probably be indicative of a greater influence from global socialization and hence may seem to contradict their gender role perceptions giving the impression that the partners are in constant marital conflict.

Research be done to assess the knowledge, skills, and capabilities couples need in order to improve their gender role performances and so build their marital relationship based on marital trust, commitment and problem solving.

AUTHOR ABOUT

This research deals with "The Relationship Between Gender Roles and Marital Stability Among Couples in Selected Counties of Kenya", due to the length and the large volume of data, the research is broken down to smaller articles for the intentions of publishing. This second article deals with "Gender Role Performances and Marital Stability". The third article will address marital stability and the components of marital stability.

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