


Corrigendum: Investigating gender differences in housework and religion in marital conflict in Cameroon

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In the published article, Chateh, N., 2022, 'Investigating gender differences in housework and religion in marital conflict in Cameroon', *Inkanyiso* 14(1), a18. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ink.v14i1.18>, on page 5 the following paragraph is updated as it was incorrectly formulated:

The original incorrect wording

One of the aspects of religion that the author measured in this study was whether the frequency of religious service attendance affected marital conflict. Vaaler, Ellison and Powers (2009:920) informed this study in which they observed that 'It is reasonable to expect that the risk of marital dissolution will be elevated among couples in which partners differ significantly in the frequency with which they attend services'. They also posited that the more theologically conservative the husband is, the lower the chances of divorce. Also, for couples who attend religious services on a regular basis, the chance of divorce is reduced (Vaaler et al. 2009). A grounded theory study by Lambert and Dollahite (2007) proffered that it is possible that couples do not divorce in part because their religion forbids it. The influence of religious institutions cannot be overstated. Most of the participants in this study were Catholics and perhaps the fact that the Catholic Church does advocate divorce might be a contributing factor in why the couples remain married. Cavendish, Welch and Leege (1998) used a different point of entry, social network theory, to examine the effect of religion on marriage and also came to the conclusion that to the extent that the couple inserts themselves in a meaningful social milieu, religion will play a huge role in their lives.

The revised and updated wording

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The author apologises for this error. The correction does not change the study's findings, its significance or overall interpretation of results or the scientific conclusions in any way.

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Investigating gender differences in housework and religion in marital conflict in Cameroon

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This article presents the findings of a study that measured the extent gender differences in division of housework and religion affected marital conflict in Bamenda, Cameroon. There is extant literature on the general causes of marital conflict from Western studies, such as use of drugs, alcohol, physical and verbal abuse, income, unequal distribution of housework and infidelity, but there is a gap in the body of knowledge for Cameroon, Africa. Studying this phenomenon was of interest because it has been asserted that gender inequality is institutionalised in Cameroon. Rational choice theory (RCT) is used to analyse the phenomenon. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyse the quantitative data. A total of 180 participants completed the questionnaires. The findings revealed that there is no statistical difference between the wife doing all the household chores and marital conflict; equally, there is no statistical difference between the wife's practice of religion and marital conflict. The findings of this study provide new data that could be used to inform public policy, and support educators, religious ministers and practitioners in conflict management. Recommendations are suggested for public policy consideration.

Keywords: marital conflict; division of housework; religion; analysis of variance (ANOVA); rational choice theory (RCT); empowerment; marriage in Cameroon; feminism; gender differences.

Statement of problem

Very little is known about marital conflict that leads to divorce in Bamenda, Cameroon. Meanwhile, divorce has been a topic of much research interest in the West and particularly in the United States of America because of its high divorce rates (Amato 2010; Michael 1988; Rausch et al. 1974; Schweizer 2020; Wagner 2020). This phenomenon of high divorce rates is also prevalent in Europe (Hogendoorn, Leopold & Bol 2020). However, little is known about whether the factors, such as division of housework and practice of religion, that lead to divorce in a country with high divorce rates are relevant to marital conflict in Cameroon. Because of this gap in the body of knowledge and because marriage is a critical institution in society, it is important to examine why marital conflict that leads to divorce is high in one country and may not lead to divorce in another country; furthermore, based on the study findings, appropriate conflict management tools could be developed to assist couples on how to better resolve marital conflict.

Marital conflict, for the purposes of this study, was defined as the inability of a married couple to come to a consensus on a real or perceived struggle because of their interdependence manifested through frequent arguments (Dhir & Markman 1984). The two main causes of marital conflict of interest in this study were division of housework and religion. Research indicating some sort of a relationship with marital conflict informed the factors chosen for this research.

Evidence has been established to suggest that there are gender differences associated with housework (Frisco & Williams 2003). According to Kluwer, Heesink and Van De Vliert (1997), marital conflict leads to eventual divorce. However, data from Cameroon were not included in these studies; consequently, the relevance of the findings to Cameroon is uncertain. Stanik and Bryant (2012) conducted a unique study with African-American couples suggesting that men participating in the division of housework equally with their wives expressed higher levels of marital quality than their counterparts who had lower participation in the division of housework. This study demonstrated how the division of housework affects marital conflict in some fashion; however, there was a need to test empirically whether it will be the same in Cameroon.

N. Palmer, an expatriate cultural anthropologist residing in Cameroon with whom the author corresponded via email prior to the pilot study suggested that the primary investigator (PI) should expect to find that couples in Bamenda with higher education would have more conflicts regarding division of housework, whereas the PI should not expect any marital conflict regarding division of housework for less educated couples because they understand their different roles in the family (N. Palmer, pers. comm., 09 June 2011). The PI inferred one thing in particular from N. Palmer's remarks with respect to the division of housework and women in Cameroon. This was the idea that less educated women understood their roles in the family and by extension would not question the division of housework. It also raised the question of whether this understanding is a function of norms, culture or social institutions that lower the statuses of the Cameroonian woman. Abayomi (2017) inferred this notion, and similarly, Cheka (1996) suggested that gender inequality is institutionalised in Cameroon. Palmer's remarks were an added impetus for the author to study the link between the division of housework and marital conflict.

The selection of religion as a cause of marital conflict to test in this study stems from: (1) studies that suggest that religion can be an advantage to marriage (Goddard et al. 2012; Lambert & Dollahite 2007; Li, Kubzansky & VanderWee 2018; Mullins 2016; Schramm et al. 2012); and (2) there are many social indicators for the importance of religion in Bamenda (e.g. the tolling of the church bells three times a day beckoning people to prayer or to attend church service). Religion was conceptualised in this study as a belief in a supreme deity and adherence to a particular organised set of doctrines in support of that belief. In the pilot to this study, many participants cited religious practices as a factor in marital conflict; consequently, the PI hypothesised that the practice of religion reduces the occurrence of marital conflict for couples in Bamenda.

This study had the modest aim of providing data that would bridge the gap in the body of knowledge, particularly in the social science field of conflict management, but there was an equally important need to study this phenomenon in Bamenda stemming from the low socio-economic status that women occupy in Cameroonian society (Abayomi 2017). Cameroonian women have a greater necessity to marry in order to improve their socio-economic class (Calves 1999). A recent study by Robert (2022) suggests that wealth is a means of acquiring a high marital social status in the Littoral region of Cameroon. Combined, these data are a paradox because in Cameroon 'the wife is regarded as part of her husband's property' (Cheka 1996:43).

Literature review

As stated in the first line of Statement of problem, scant studies are available on the issue of marital conflict that leads to divorce in Bamenda, Cameroon. It was therefore necessary to examine other contributors in society that define the married life experience of a Cameroonian woman in Bamenda

in order to glean their contributing effects and to showcase the gap that exists in the field of conflict management. A good starting point was the class status of the Cameroonian woman.

Women's class status in Cameroon

Though there have been laws passed incrementally that have positively affected the status of the Cameroonian woman (Epoto & Djuidje 2020), nevertheless, gender inequality is still institutionalised in Cameroon even on the issue of ownership of property (Nguindip 2022). Cheka proffers that women in Cameroon have less access to 'education, financial wealth and material assets' so much so that parents marry off their young daughters as a means of alleviating poverty (1996:41). This early marriage perpetuates the cycle of uneducated young girls (Doho 2003; Eloundou-Enyegue & Calves 2006; Endeley 2001; Fonjong 2001) consequently '[promoting] their subordination to their husbands' (Cheka 1996:41). This is a paradoxical contradiction because, on the one hand, the Cameroonian woman occupies a low socio-economic status, while, on the other hand, they need marriage to be able to attain a higher status (Calves 1999). In marriage itself, women are still no better off because there is no time to get educated (to enable them to get a better job and some financial independence) because of the other functions that they have to carry out at home (Fonjong 2001). Furthermore, because of laws and other customs, women still cannot own real estate or other property even within the context of a marriage (Akwanga 2020; Endeley 2001; Fonjong 2001; Nguindip 2022). Where the law or custom allows it, the husband still has an overwhelming decision-making power over the assets without the need to consult the wife (Cheka 1996).

This apparent gender inequality screams for more reforms of laws and customs, but do the Cameroonian women want a status change, or do they stay in such marriages rather than divorce because of the stigma of divorce? One alternate idea is that although they are disadvantaged across all levels of society as Endeley (2001) suggests, they feel empowered in the carrying out of their duties as wives and mothers. Regardless of the reason that this gender difference exists in the execution of household chores, the author believes that there is a need to measure the link between gender differences and marital conflict so that tools can be developed to teach women in Cameroon to embrace their own form of empowerment and feminism and also to teach them constructive ways to resolve marital conflicts when they arise.

Feminism and empowerment

Feminism is a term that evokes different meanings and different responses from different people. It seems feminism has come to be synonymous only with the Western conceptualisation of the term, yet 'There are many forms of feminism' (Zandra 2003:63). Despite the fact that there may be different ways and forms of manifesting feminism, it is disheartening the way Western feminist scholars portray

non-Western women. For example, women from less developed countries studied through Western lenses have been portrayed as trapped, conservative and submissive, while 'Western women [are] secular, liberated, and having control over their own lives' (ed. Mohanty, Russo & Torres 1991:74). This is an inaccurate and shallow portrayal of women from less developed countries. It goes without saying that each and every woman is unique, has her own story and subscribes to a different view of feminism. Drawing on Mohanty's (ed. 1991) observation, a woman from a less developed country who foregoes college or a career for the sake of her family is not any less liberated than a Western woman who struggles to juggle career and family life with the number of a divorce lawyer on her speed dial. Moreover, the ideal of feminism from the West has occasionally been seen as contrary to non-Western women's perception of individuality, contrary to their values and an attempt to hold them up against men (Charles 2020).

The author recognises that despite the fact that Cameroonian women occupy a low-class status (Abayomi 2017) and that gender inequality is institutionalised in Cameroon (Cheka 1996), it is possible that some Cameroonian women do not subscribe to the Western view of feminism and prefer to be homemakers. The author also recognises that it is very possible that there are women who have made the choice, joyfully even, to be homemakers when given the option of working outside of the home. This notion of women preferring to be homemakers will most likely seem dubious to most Western feminists, particularly in terms of women's empowerment. It is interesting to note that when Endeley interviewed women from a tribe in the North West Region of Cameroon for her study on empowerment, the women were of the consensus that empowerment was 'a borrowed feminist idea' (2001:31). Nevertheless, the women did acknowledge that some cultural norms and expectations did not give them the freedom to thrive in different areas of life (Endeley 2001). This desire to abound in different areas of society led to the rise of many women and groups of women in the wake of the 2011 Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa to demand change through protests and advocacy (Deb 2020; Moghadam 2020). As such, the term empowerment in this study is used loosely to mean 'making women aware of the options they have and giving them the confidence to joyfully accept the choices they make without fear of criticism'.

The above conceptualisation of empowerment is the author's original conceptualisation of the term. Mosdale (2005) states that the term empowerment has not been clearly conceptualised in the literature, but it has been operationalised in terms of outcome and goals to be attained. Also, Syed laments the fact that studies on empowerment have been 'Eurocentric ... [and do] not adequately take into account the diverse and complex nature of gender relations in various socio-political contexts' and in particular 'non-Western women' (2010:284). Syed's (2010) lamentation is another example of the biases on studies conducted on non-Western

women. But to the point, essentially, empowerment is generally understood to be 'people making decisions on matters which are important in their lives and being able to carry them out' (Syed 2010:244). So, the conceptualisation of empowerment proposed here by the author is not far from the generally accepted understanding of the term; however, the two words that stand out in the author's conceptualisation of the term are confidence and criticism. Far from being operative terms in the definition, the author feels it is important that the definition encapsulates the idea that women who do not subscribe to the Western notion of feminism should not feel maligned or less of a woman but celebrate their choices even if criticised. Hopefully this conceptualisation of the term empowerment could be used in future non-Western studies on marriage, marital conflict and other non-Western studies on empowerment.

Because marriage is the institution at the background of this study, a bird's-eye view of studies on marriage in Africa in general and Cameroon in particular is fitting to bracket this study.

Marriage unions in Africa

A fair number of studies have been conducted on marriage in Africa. However, Western scholars have conducted the majority of these studies. Many of these scholars are perhaps interested in knowing more about marriages in Africa because of exotic characteristics such as the use of bride wealth in Mwamwenda and Monyoo's study (1997) or polygyny in Falen's study (2008) or Gwanfogbe et al.'s study (1997); however, these studies are not primarily on marital conflict or divorce. Some of these studies have also centred on knowing more about family formation processes and family structures. For example, Mulder, George-Cramer, Eshleman and Ortolani (2001) studied kinship and marriage in East Africa with an anthropological perspective. The information on divorce in this study indicated that divorce in East Africa is woman-centric; in other words, it occurs most often when the dowry paid to the woman's family is low or when she still maintains links to her family, and lastly when her children have a strong link to her family as well. The extent of the applicability of this study in Cameroon *vis-à-vis* marital conflict and divorce is unknown.

These studies are invaluable, but it is the author's contention that more studies still need to be conducted on the topic of marriage in Africa from a conflict analysis and resolution perspective so that a wealth of information could be available for conflict management practitioners and public policymakers. It was clear from the available literature on marriage in Africa that an overwhelming number of studies were conducted in South Africa on marriage, disproportionate to other African countries. Despite the dearth of studies on this topic from Africa, four aspects stood out about the status of marriage unions in Africa: (1) polygyny is common in Africa, (2) the giving of bride wealth or bride-price is a common practice in most African marriages, (3) the woman is usually in charge of

housework and (4) divorce is relatively lower among African couples than in the West.

Marriage unions in Cameroon

There has been little attention from scholars on the phenomenon of marital conflict or factors of marital conflict in Cameroon. Granted, ancillary topics connected to marriage and about the Cameroonian woman have been studied. For example, Gwanfogbe et al. (1997) researched polygyny and marital satisfaction. Meanwhile, Calves (1999) studied single mothers and their struggles to get married. Perhaps a reason marital conflict and its consequent divorce were not studied as much in Cameroon was because of the low divorce rates; however, I contend that there is much to be learned precisely because of the low divorce rates.

In summary, the few studies that have been conducted on marriage unions in Africa and in particular in Cameroon have been on exotic topics such as bride wealth or polygyny with little done on the topic of marital conflict or divorce. At the same time, the gender analysis studies that have been conducted in Africa have had nothing or very little to do with marital conflict. This study will also contribute to the literature on gender studies in addition to the literature in the field of conflict management. Following is a discussion on the two factors that form the crux of this study: division of housework and religion.

The housework factor

According to Kluwer, Heesink and De Vliert (1996), housework was a long-standing source of conflict among married couples. However, like many other studies on this topic, these studies on conflicts regarding the division of housework are from the West. It would be problematic to assume it would be the same in African countries because in many Western nations, 'Definitions of the division of labor between men and women thus are beginning to break down' (Rausch et al. 1974:8). Nevertheless, 'Women still do the majority of the housework, but they are doing less and their spouses more than in the past' (Shelton & John 1996:300; see Doucet 1995). Though the dynamics of division of housework may be changing in the West, it is the author's contention that in most African countries because 'The wife [is] responsible for the care of her home, her husband, and her children', such division of housework may not be an issue (Weitzman 1985:2). This limited involvement of men in the running of the household is an aspect of African culture that has been enshrined (Abayomi 2017). Meanwhile, Taniguchi and Kaufman (2020) reported that the unequal division of housework overall augmented married life in Japan. However, it is not known what consequence the division of housework will have in Cameroon, but based on the findings of the pilot study, the PI hypothesises that unequal division of housework does not cause marital conflict in Cameroon.

Kluwer et al. (1996) also indicated that conflict surrounding paid work had not been explored, which inadvertently omits

Rice's (1979) work on couples who work outside the home. Rice proffered that renegotiation of housework chores because of both spouses working outside the home can bring about tension, which was a conclusion Kluwer et al. (1996) also reached. Their findings suggested that the conflict regarding paid work arises because of both parties' dissatisfaction with the husband's hours at work. On the other hand, Kluwer et al. (1996) proposed that an element of housework, childcare duties, should also be studied as a potential area of conflict.

Maume, Sebastian and Bardo (2010:765) examined the issue from a physiological point of view, namely sleep, and they argued that there is 'Gender inequality in sleep patterns' owing to the different home-based and work-related responsibilities falling on the shoulders of the woman. Meanwhile, Treas and Tai (2012) studied the issue from the perspective of power and management, which is an entirely different aspect from mere division of housework and also the least studied topic. The data for this study came from 31 countries spanning all the continents except Africa. The negotiation of housework is another facet of the division of housework that has received considerable attention research-wise. Bolak (1997:430) cautions that the negotiation of the division of housework and the conflict that arises as a consequence should be understood in the proper context, because 'Whether and how conflicts are perceived and negotiated is mediated by a family-based interpretation of gender'. His conclusions, which are based on data collected in Turkey, support the idea that there is a need for more research in this area from different countries and diverse cultures; this study will add a little bit more to the body of knowledge. The value of this study cannot be overstated given the overabundance of studies on the issue of division of housework from other countries and not much from Cameroon.

The religion factor

According to Cameroon's National Institute of Statistics latest data released in 2010, 64.7% of Cameroonians are Christians, with Catholics being the majority at 38.4%. In the North West Region, where this study was conducted, Cameroon's National Institute of Statistics (CNIS:2010) reports that 86.8% of citizens are Christians, of which 43.1% are Catholic. Religion plays a vital role in the lives of Bamenda citizens; given the total Christian population and in particular the total Catholic population, the author theorised that religion plays a positive role in reducing marital conflict for couples in Bamenda. Religion was conceptualised in this study as a belief in a supreme deity and adherence to a particular organised set of doctrines in support of that belief.

Numerous studies have shown that religion has a positive influence on marriage (Aman et al. 2019). For example, Kazemi, Tarkhan and Golpour (2018) demonstrated that positive religious attitudes reduced marital conflict; Mullins (2016) found that religion played a positive role for marriage endurance, whereas Schramm et al. (2012) indicated that

religion has a very positive effect for first marriages. Also, Lambert et al. (2012) posited that couples who prayed together had a more trusting relationship; meanwhile, Goddard et al. (2012) demonstrated that regular church attendance is a good predictor of satisfaction in marriage. As such, the practice of religion in one way or another by couples, or at least by one partner in the marriage relationship, yields positive outcomes with regard to marital conflict. However, some participants in the pilot study said religion was a cause of marital conflict. Nevertheless, the author hypothesised that religion will have a positive effect for married couples in Bamenda, because '[Religion] help define appropriate marital and relationship conduct, encourage partners to fulfill their familiar roles and responsibilities, and handle conflict in a constructive manner' (Ellison, Burdette & Wilcox 2010:964).

Similar to previous studies exploring how religion affects a marital relationship, Wilcox and Wolfinger (2008) examined the relationship between religion and the quality of the relationship for married or non-married couples in urban America. The findings showed that there is a positive association between religious attendance and high relationship quality. However, what the study does not do is make a leap regarding the effect of little or no marital conflict. Nevertheless, Wilcox and Wolfinger (2008:841) state, 'Shared religious attendance appears to encourage supportive, nonviolent behaviours'; this finding supports the PI's hypothesis that religion will have a positive effect for married couples in Bamenda.

Lehrer and Chiswick (1993) not only examined the relationship between religion and marital stability, but they took it a step further to examine whether religious affiliation of the spouse made a difference in marital stability. Their framework for analysing the effects of religion on marital stability was based on the premise that 'Marital companionship is enhanced when individual spirituality can be shared and is inhibited when the partners must look outside the marriage for religious intimacy' (Lehrer & Chiswick 1993:386). The sample for this study was a national representative sample, and they concluded that couples with different religious affiliations have a higher chance of divorce than couples with the same religious affiliation. Another interesting conclusion is that couples with different religious affiliations tend to have more conflicts in their households (Lehrer & Chiswick 1993:400). They concluded that more in-depth studies on the relationship between religion and marital stability are needed, particularly regarding whether the gender of a spouse and his/her religion affect marital stability. This study is a response to that call about examining the role of gender and religion.

Of all the studies examining the effect of religion on marriage, Curtis and Ellison (2002) offer the closest in terms of research question to this study. For example, their second research question asked whether the religious practices of each spouse were related to the number of arguments the couple had on other aspects of their married life. One of the conclusions that stood out in this study was that the less the man participated

in religious activities such as attending church services, the more arguments the couple had, whereas the woman's level of participation did not affect the number of arguments. More interesting is the conclusion that 'Religious differences are linked with conflicts over housework' (Ellison & Bartkowski 2002:567). This statement may be different for couples in Bamenda.

One of the aspects of religion that the author measured in this study was whether the frequency of religious service attendance affected marital conflict. Vaaler, Ellison and Powers (2009:920) informed this study in which they observed that 'It is reasonable to expect that the risk of marital dissolution will be elevated among couples in which partners differ significantly in the frequency with which they attend services'. They also posited that the more theologically conservative the husband is, the lower the chances of divorce. Also, for couples that attend religious services on a regular basis, their chance of divorce is reduced (Vaaler et al. 2009). A grounded theory study by Lambert and Dollahite (2007) proffered that it is possible that couples do not divorce in part because their religion forbids it. The influence of religious institutions cannot be overstated. Most of the participants in this study were Catholics, and perhaps the fact that the Catholic Church does advocate divorce might be a contributing factor in why the couples remain married. Cavendish, Welch and Legee (1998) used a different point of entry, social network theory, to examine the effect of religion on marriage and also came to the conclusion that to the extent that the couple inserts themselves in a meaningful social milieu, religion will play a huge role in their lives.

Theoretical perspective

Scholars have used various theoretical perspectives to shed some light on the causes and factors of marital conflict. The theoretical orientation informing this study is the rational choice theory (RCT). According to Ritzer and Goodman (2004), RCT is primarily concerned with the player's actions as the factors in the cost-benefit analysis and the influence of social institutions, such as religious beliefs, laws and customs, in aiding or hindering the player from achieving a goal. Ritzer and Goodman (2004:401) state, 'Actors have ends or goals toward which their actions are aimed', thus the actors will do everything in their power that will give them maximum output with minimum cost. For married women in Bamenda, Cameroon, it would seem that the influence of laws and customs would hinder these couples from divorcing when experiencing conflict in marriage as opposed to their counterparts in the West because the cost benefit of divorce is high for the woman.

Methodology

This research used quantitative data analysis. A questionnaire with a Likert-type range of possible responses was used to collect the data. The questionnaire comprised 14 questions. The first nine were demographic questions, and the following five were on marital conflict. Data were collected at an

assigned venue weeks after the announcement of the study, and flyers were posted at three different churches. Participants were separated into rooms by gender, and once they were seated, an explanation of the study was given, and once their consent was received, the questionnaires were handed to the participants.

Sample

According to the CNIS (2010:13), the population of Bamenda at the time of the study was estimated to be 269 530 inhabitants. However, there were no accurate data on the number of married people in Bamenda because there are two types of marriages. Those who are married in front of a justice of the peace, hence registered, and those who are married through a traditional marriage ceremony, hence not registered. As such, a quasi-stratified sampling technique was the appropriate method to be used in this case.

Participants

There were a total of 180 participants: 90 women and 90 men completed the questionnaire, while 91 questionnaires were deemed usable. Of the 91 completed questionnaires, 52 questionnaires were from women and 39 were from men. The researcher used the sample size determination table information about sample size from the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service to estimate the appropriate number of participants. This sample size, n , was obtained based on the population, p .

Assumptions of the study

The following four assumptions underpinned this study:

- The participants will answer the questionnaires truthfully.
- The level of measurement is interval-ratio for marital conflict and ordinal for division of housework and religion.
- The population is normally distributed.
- Population variances are equal.

Research questions and hypotheses

The research questions were as follows: (1) Is there a measurable link between the wife doing all the chores at home and marital conflict? and (2) Is there a measurable link between the wife's practice of religion and marital conflict? This study was only interested in the link between: (1) the wife, division of housework and marital conflict, and (2) the wife, religion and marital conflict, and not the husband. The findings for the husband were only a corollary of the study.

The hypotheses were as follows:

H₀ 1: There is no measurable link between the wife doing all the chores at home and marital conflict.

H₁ 1: There is a measurable link between the wife doing all the chores at home and marital conflict.

H₀ 2: There is no measurable link between the wife's practice of religion and marital conflict in Cameroon.

H₁ 2: There is a measurable link between the wife's practice of religion and marital conflict in Cameroon.

Data analysis

Analysis of variance was the test statistic used in this study. Analysis of variance test statistic tests for variances between the groups and within the groups all at once. In other words, ANOVA is 'An extension of the t test for the significance of the difference between two sample means' (Healey 1999:234). Therefore, the PI was investigating the means to decipher whether they were similar. The data from the ANOVA tables led the PI to fail to reject the null hypotheses for the research questions. For brevity, only Table 1 of analysis for Research Question 1 is shown.

A look at the means (Table 1) from the between-subjects output table shows that the means are roughly equal in value, indicating that the PI can fail to reject the null hypothesis (Healey 1999).

However, the similarity in the means was not enough to reject the null hypothesis. In order to be able to do that, the PI has to interpret the results of the ANOVA table (Table 2). In this table, in the sig. column, all the values of interest are $p > 0.05$, indicating that the variance is not statistically significant.

There was no significant main effect for gender, $F(1, 84) = 2.115$, $p = 0.150$. Even though women indicated a greater number of conflicts (mean = 5.54) than men (mean = 3.87), the difference was low as indicated by the partial eta squared value of 0.25. There was also no significant difference in the wife doing all the housework and marital conflict, $F(3, 84) = 0.422$, $p = 0.737$, as indicated by the means in all four levels of housework (mean = 4.33, 4.75, 5.45, 3.50). This difference in the means is also indicated by yet another low partial eta squared value of 0.015. For the interaction effects of gender and the wife's division of housework, there was no significant difference, $F(2, 84) = 0.020$, $p = 0.981$, with a 0 value for the

TABLE 1: Between-subject factors showing the mean and standard deviation for Research Question 1 ($N = 91$).

Gender	Housework by wife	Mean	Standard deviation	<i>n</i>
Male	Wife does all	2.33	1.528	3
	Wife does majority	3.50	2.417	20
	Wife does some	4.79	5.265	14
	Wife does very little	3.50	2.121	2
	Total	3.87	3.636	39
Female	Wife does all	5.00	6.403	9
	Wife does majority	5.43	5.965	37
	Wife does some	7.00	8.222	6
	Total	5.54	6.204	52
Total	Wife does all	4.33	5.630	12
	Wife does majority	4.75	5.072	57
	Wife does some	5.45	6.151	20
	Wife does very little	3.50	2.121	2
	Total	4.82	5.299	91

Note: Dependent variable is marital conflict.

TABLE 2: Analysis of variance showing the results of the between-subjects effects for Research Question 1.

Source	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.	Partial eta squared
Corrected model	99.582	6	16.597	0.574	0.750	0.039
Intercept	677.134	1	677.134	23.430	0.000	0.218
Gender	61.117	1	61.117	2.115	0.150	0.025
Wife housework	36.626	3	12.209	0.422	0.737	0.015
Gender * Wife housework	1.133	2	0.566	0.020	0.981	0.000
Error	2427.605	84	28.900	-	-	-
Total	4645.000	91	-	-	-	-
Corrected total	2527.187	90	-	-	-	-

df, degree of freedom; Sig., significance.

partial eta squared. These values lead to the conclusion to fail to reject the null hypothesis; therefore, the answer to Research Question 1 is that there is no measurable link between the wife doing all the household chores at home and marital conflict.

Limitations of the study

There were three limitations to this study. The first limitation is that with the divorce rate of 0.7% in Bamenda, the number of divorced and remarried participants was small; there were only 10 (11%) divorced and remarried participants in this study. The second limitation is that the generalisation or transferability of the findings is limited to the Christian population in Bamenda given the small sample size ($N = 180$) and the fact that the participants came only from the Catholic and Protestant churches. The third limitation is that the findings would be subject to the socio-cultural norms and value systems of the research area.

Discussion

The findings from this study indicate that most couples in Bamenda, Cameroon, handle marital conflict by not divorcing. The results further indicate that though the wife may do the majority of the household chores, it is not a factor in marital conflict. This study's goal was to investigate the role of gender differences in the division of housework and religion in marital conflict in the light of the low-class status that Cameroonian woman occupy in the society; in the light of the findings, the author echoes Doucet's (1995:280) question of whether 'Gender differences can exist side by side with gender equality'. The PI contends that there is a possibility that the two can co-exist, but they do have to be understood in the proper context. It is important to be mindful that the Cameroonian woman occupies a low-class status; Abayomi (2017) and Cheka (1996) have stated that gender inequality is institutionalised in Cameroon. However, the author is hesitant to state conclusively that the division of housework is a function of gender inequality following Bolak's (1997) observation that the negotiation of household chores should be understood and interpreted in the proper socio-cultural context.

The author proposed that the proper socio-cultural context to understand the significance of the study findings is found in the intersection of religion and the rational choices the

couple makes in terms of running the household while being cognisant that gender roles are a firm part of the culture. Religion is a powerful social institution that influences and guides the actions of followers, and it would not be farfetched to state that the intersection of religion and rational choice is the point where the couple may find their balance in the division of housework with the understanding that it may lead to less marital conflict. In conflict management, this highlights the need to develop and tailor existing conflict management processes, such as conflict coaching and facilitated discussions that respect the cultural norms of marriage in Cameroon, but at the same time, actively engage couples experiencing marital conflict to allow both their voices to be heard and appreciated. The author concedes that there is much to be studied on this topic for couples in Bamenda, Cameroon, given the small sample size of participants; nevertheless, this study is a step in the right direction for contributing to the scholarly knowledge in the field. To that end, the PI offers some recommendations for consideration.

Recommendations

Produce more data on women's class status in Cameroon

Researchers, research organisations and human rights advocates

- In order to find out whether the Cameroonian woman is being marginalised, a qualitative research such as phenomenology should be conducted to find out the reason why women choose to remain married even though they experience marital conflict despite the disparity in division of housework.
- This study was limited to only two aspects of marital life: division of housework and religion. Another study could examine whether polygyny or polygamy, a widespread practice in Cameroon, could be a factor in marital conflict and whether it plays a role in disempowering the Cameroonian woman.
- A study involving couples of different religious views, no religion and views other than Catholic and Protestant viewpoints is highly recommended.

Create gender equality

Government of Cameroon

- Amend the laws that create gender inequality such as the 1986 case law that states that a woman belongs to her husband.
- Start a campaign to provide free education to young girls in the rural areas where there are no schools so that young girls have as equal access to education as young boys.

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Competing interests

The author declares that no conflict of interest exists.

Author's contributions

N.C. is the sole author of this article.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Review Board, Nova Southeastern University (IRB@nsu.nova.edu). In order to minimise risk, the participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they were free to stop answering the questions at any time they felt uncomfortable without any consequences to them. There was no personal identifiable information, such as name, addresses and phone numbers, required on any of the questionnaires. When the questionnaires were collected from all three locations, they were shuffled in order to mix up the questionnaires so that if one questionnaire is picked out of the pile it cannot be traced back to one particular site. Finally, the questionnaires were put into an envelope, sealed and signed on the back of the envelope. The purpose of signing the envelope was to preserve the integrity of the data collection phase and also to make sure that the envelope was not tampered with.

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Data availability

Data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, N.C., on request.

Disclaimer

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