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GLOBAL GENDER STUDIES

Patriarchal-Oriented Couples' Practice Of Self-Empowerment And Its Effects On Their Marital Stability. A Case Study Of Cameroonian Couples In Denmark.

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Patriarchal-oriented couples' practice of self-empowerment and its effects on their marital stability. A case study of Cameroonian couples in Denmark.

Research question: What are the effects of the practice of self-empowerment on patriarchal-oriented couples' marital stability?

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ABSTRACT

Marriage is the fundamental unit on which the family and society are built, so it is a legal institution that draws much attention. Marital stability is essential for every couple, so research about it, its challenges, and how they can be ameliorated are paramount. This research observes the differences between the two societies (Cameroon and Denmark) concerning gender role stereotypes and practices. Observing that both societies are directly opposite (arguably), whereby Cameroon is a patriarchal society, and Denmark is more egalitarian, leaning towards matriarchy, it is intriguing to research the effects these differences have on patriarchal-oriented Cameroonian couples' marital stability living in Denmark. The patriarchal system subjects' wives to dependency on their spouses as there is an imbalance of power in the couple. The data is primarily collected through interviews with Cameroonian couples living in Denmark and interpreted using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach. This research approach shows respect and sensitivity to the 'lived experiences' of the research participants. As a qualitative research approach, IPA allows multiple individuals (participants) who experience similar events to tell their stories without distortions and prosecutions.

The theory of marriage by Gary Becker (Becker, 1973) argues that marital stability is threatened when the gains from being single outweigh the gains from being married. It is criticized for being static even though no definite explanation or meaning is attributed to human relationships, as humans ascribe different meanings to things and experiences. This theory explains why empowerment, particularly on the part of wives, could negatively affect marital stability and how it ameliorates the relationship in some cases. The Practice Theory Perspective on Doing and Undoing Gender Equality (Grzelec, 2022) argues that it takes practice(tradition) to rule out another. So, it suggests that for the ongoing 'disadvantageous' stereotypes, a new practice has to be consistently practiced until it becomes a norm, encouraging the Cameroonian couples to embrace a different approach to handling their gender roles and responsibilities, empowering each other, and fostering their marital stability.

Keywords: Patriarchy, empowerment, Cameroonian couples, Denmark, marital stability

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INTRODUCTION

The family unit is built upon a relationship known as marriage, and for marriage to work out right, the family needs care. Marriage age, couples' educational attainment levels, religion, and other factors all impact the institution of marriage (Dada & Idowu 2006). It is not easy to overstate the importance of literacy because it significantly impacts marital stability. However, literacy rates are low in Cameroon (Cheka, 1996) and many other African nations. However, the goal of marriage is far more significant than just the spouses' sanctioned sexual relationship. To this purpose, there are numerous strains, resentment, failures, and accomplishments in marriage. Age of marriage, education level of the spouse, religion, money, kind of marriage, fertility status, type of spouses' families, communication, and culture are other elements that strain marriages (Maciver, 2011).

It is common in the traditional Cameroonian society for the man to be the breadwinner of his family while his wife takes care of the domestic aspect of the family (Cheka, 1996). These norms or narratives have gradually changed as more wives enter the labor force and embrace self-empowerment. The norms of masculinity portray a man as the head of the family, a provider, a protector, strong, and much more, and all these characteristics are already embedded in parents such that they raise their sons, reminding them of what they are supposed to be (Cheka, 1996). So, to an extent, the norms of masculinity or, better still, the gender roles of men compel them to be self-empowered and embrace responsibility. On the contrary, the gender roles attributed to women limit them to the home, house chores, child-rearing, cooking, and doing domestic work in general hence promoting her dependency on her spouse (Armand Totouom, 2018). The narrative is changing as many women embrace the promotion of self-empowerment and independence.

Change is evident in marital lives as gender roles embrace new characteristics (Armand Totouom, 2018). Therefore, this study aims to determine the effect of couples' involvement in self-empowerment on their marital stability. Both spouses must manage their power balance, careers, domestic work, the rearing of their kids if they have one, and all that comes with building a family. Cameroonian couples living in Denmark were chosen because Cameroonian society still practices the old mentality of how marriage should be, which they call their culture. So, for a couple coming from such a background and living in another society, in this case, Denmark, with an "updated" version of how marriage should be, it may become challenging or more comfortable for the couples to build their relationship.

In the past, couples were expected to be together until death. The sharp decline in mortality in the 19th century, combined with the steady increase in separations and divorces, which has accelerated sharply in the last ten years, radically changed these expectations. Today, a typical couple is unlikely to be separated by death within the first 15 years of marriage (Becker, 1973). Some researchers argue that marriage rates in low-income communities declined the most because the economic prospects of less educated men steadily declined, and welfare and other social programs enabled women to raise their children. Others argue that poor women accepted middle-class marriage aspirations, leading them to create unrealistic economic conditions. The hassle with those explanations, write Shelly Lundberg and Robert Pollak, is their handiest recognition of the boundaries to marriage in very negative communities—however, visible marriage retreats in a far large population (Pollak, 2015).

Lundberg and Pollak argue that marriage profits reassert have modified such that high-profit, well-knowledgeable households have the finest incentive to preserve long-time period relationships (Pollak, 2015). They write that traditional models of gender specialization in domestic and market labor have become more complex as women's educational attainment has surpassed that of men, and the ratio of male earnings to female earnings has declined (Pollak, 2015). The distribution of activities (e.g., household chores) within, and mobility relative to, such households is one way of investigating the gendered geographies of power (Liversage, 2012). These changes are referred to as gender roles embracing new characteristics, and we begin to see how changes occur immediately. The couple's primary source of income has shifted from domestic services to investing in children.

It will be essential to understand what empowerment is as it will be used very often to describe the focus of this study. Empowerment can be defined as the presence of a range of qualities such as that someone can (hopefully) make a difference by learning to think critically; unlearning conditioning; seeing things differently; for example, a) Learning to redefine who we are (in our voice). B) Learning to redefine what we can do. c) Learning to redefine our relationship with institutionalized power, coming out of hiding, never-ending and self-initiated growth, and change, developing a positive self-image, and overcoming stigma. Adding to these qualities is financial independence. This study examines the impact (positive or negative) of these characteristics on married Cameroonian couples living in Denmark (Chamberlin, 1997).

Two theories will be used to analyze the research question—the theory of marriage and the practice theory perspective of doing and undoing gender equality. The theory of marriage

postulates that when the gains of being single outweigh that of being married, there is a tendency for the marriage breaks as spouses most often women feel they are better off living separately (Becker, 1973). This may be the tendency for a couple where a spouse stays in the marriage as a result of dependence or the gains made from the marriage, and this is common in the Cameroonian society, which is patriarchal, with the women most times depending on the men as stipulated by their gender stereotypes (Cheka, 1996). The Practice theory perspective of doing and undoing gender equality suggests that practices can be removed by consistently practicing new traditions, thereby introducing new stereotypes. In the context of this research, the consistent practice of self-empowerment and other egalitarian practices will eventually become a norm (Alase, 2017).

For couples whose sources permit them to invest closely in their children, marriage gives a bonding mechanism that helps that investment. On the other hand, for couples who cannot afford to invest heavily in their children, marriage may not be worth the cost of limited independence and possible inadequacy (Pollak, 2015). This becomes challenging and triggers both parties to question their gains in the marriage. Sociologists studying the overall decline in the prevalence and stability of legal marriages have focused on two factors: decreasing economic opportunity for many men and increasing economic opportunity for women. The increasing economic opportunity for women stems from the rooting for gender equality and women's empowerment (Bryman). This does not mean that men are less employed in the labor force compared to women but indicates a rise in the recruitment of women as far as economic opportunities are concerned.

This is still a gradual process in developing countries, in this case, Cameroon (Cheka, 1996), and so it is very much appreciated and explored by the Cameroonian wives living in Denmark from our conversation. Stable jobs and high incomes are strongly correlated with men's marital status, possibly because stable incomes allow them to fulfill the traditional role of breadwinner. Since the 1970s, many young people, particularly the less educated, have found it increasingly difficult to find a stable career with an income above the poverty line, which appears to be a significant factor in delaying marriage (Gary S. Becker, 1977).

Proponents of the opportunity independence speculation have argued that as ladies get extra education, work, and earn more, their greater economic independence should reduce the need to marry. However, most studies have shown that women who earn more are more likely to marry (Pollak, 2015). Women from a society where they are taught to stay home and depend

on their spouses for decision-making, provision, and information with little or no power will likely act in a certain way when allowed to be knowledgeable and independent. This may trigger new personalities and behaviors. The wife's ability to be educated and earn a living should be an advantage to the family as the burden is lifted off the husband's shoulders. Marriage offers many economic benefits, as a couple living together can benefit from both joint productions (Elizabeth M., 1977).

With these in mind, the author is triggered to reflect on marriages in the Cameroonian patriarchal community and the effect of this on their marital stability after they practice self-empowerment.

The Cameroonian Constitution, in line with international law, guarantees that:

“...Men and women of majority age... are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at dissolution...” (Cheka, 1996, p. 51). (Cheka, 1996)

However, Cameroon's laws regarding marital capacity, the meaning of marriage, and norms of behavior in marriage provide even more opportunities for women to maintain control and dependence on their husbands. For example, the 1981 Civil Status Ordinance sets the legal age for marriage in Cameroon at 15 for girls and 18 for boys. This ordinance sees in Art. 49 that the marriage law determines the type of marriage chosen, i.e., polygamy or monogamy. According to a 1979 judgment, the definition of marriage recognized by Cameroonian law is as follows:

“...the union between a man and one or more women to the exclusion of other men...” (Cheka, 1996, p. 23)

In this definition, polygamy means that a man can marry more than one woman, but a woman cannot practice polyandry which is a woman marrying more than one man. The law allows each future spouse to choose the marriage they wish to enter freely. At the registry office, everyone is also asked which form of marriage they would like to choose. The registrar attends the ceremony only if their answers are identical and their choice is noted on the marriage certificate (Cheka, 1996). We observe that the law is biased toward women as it puts the choices of the men above that of the women, and these are some of the barriers that empowerment breaks. As a result, women's empowerment has become so popular that many women do not want to become dependent on their spouses or anyone else.

Additionally, some women see no need to marry when they are financially stable, considering that financial independence is a factor of self-empowerment (Chamberlin, 1997), just as some independent women are quick to leave marriage at the slightest challenge, believing they are better off alone. Nevertheless, if this is the case, what are the expectations from marriage? Is it just about the provision? Becker hypothesizes that people will marry when the utility of being married exceeds the utility of remaining single (Becker, 1973). It is also reasonable to assume that couples will separate when the expected benefits of remaining married fall below the expected benefits of divorce and possibly remarriage. These will be addressed during the interviews, which will be conducted with willing participants.

Getting a definition of marriage, its origins, and how the world shaped it is a good start. From a conjugal point of view, marriage can be defined as the union of a man and a woman who mutually enter into a permanent and exclusive bond, which is naturally realized through the joint procreation and upbringing of children (Becker, 1973). Spouses seal/complete and renew their relationship through marriage certificates, a behavioral part of the reproductive process, thus uniting them as a reproductive entity. This definition of marriage is also supported by the Christian Bible, which states that God instituted the first marriage between Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The revisionist view defines marriage as the union of two people of the same or opposite sex who are engaged in romantic love and care for one another and share the burdens and benefits of marriage (Pollak, 2015). It is essentially a union of heart and mind, enhanced by any sexual intimacy that both partners find pleasurable.

Economists see marriage as a choice made by individuals weighing the expected benefits of a particular marriage against other marriages or living alone (Springer, 2010). The potential benefits of marriage fall into two broad categories: co-production and co-consumption. Manufacturing profits are made in the household that produces household goods such as home-cooked meals and childcare services. The benefits of a two-person household come from economies of scale (cooking meals for two people typically costs % less per person than cooking separately) or a division of labor that allows one partner to specialize in the commercial job and the other for housework (Nguyen, 2019). Consumption gains arise from households' shared consumption of public goods—goods one person can consume without diminishing another person's enjoyment. The home and the children are typical examples of public goods in the family context.

We recognize that marriage, regardless of the type of marriage, is the only relationship that receives legal attention (Armand Totouom, 2018). A study by Armand Tootoo predicts that illiteracy and unemployment among women facilitate their submission to marriage (Armand Totouom, 2018). Although the positive impact of education on job performance is well documented, it is surprising that women's education remains lower in a context where entering the labor market is a significant challenge for them (Armand Totouom, 2018). Kolev and Sirven point out that women's literacy levels in Africa are lower than men's: the literacy rate for men was 61%, compared to 41% for women. The population with primary education in the 15-64 age group accounted for 38% men and 32% women, and only 27% with secondary education (Armand Totouom, 2018). Only 5% of men and 3% of women had tertiary education.

In Cameroon, statistics from the National Statistical Institute showed that the dropout rate was higher among women (37.0%) than men (30.3%) in 2010 (Armand Totouom, 2018). Among those who attended school, regardless of their level of education, there was little difference in favor of men. In higher education, for example, almost 5.7% are men versus 3.5% Women. As in most countries, although women have low levels of education compared to men, they also face low employment rates. The employment rate 2010 was 71.7% for men compared to 61.4% for women (National Institute of Statistics) (Armand Totouom, 2018). Can education help close this gender employment gap? The opportunities are different in Denmark and open to all. Therefore, this triggers thoughts on how these changes affect marital stability among Cameroonian couples, given that they have gained a different type of exposure compared to the Cameroonians back in Cameroon with the traditional experiences.

This observation was made many years after promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Progress has been made, but not enough. The norm of gender inequality in many, if not all, African cultures under the guise of custom and tradition somewhat compels women to be beneath men in everything (Cheka, 1996). Women who stand out are often shamed for wanting to be men or competing with men (Cheka, 1996). Perhaps raising women's awareness of their potential and rights, particularly in societies that value them, in Denmark, brings out their voice and opinions and falsifies marriages if not appropriately treated. Comparing Cameroonian men's access to education, financial wealth, and material goods with women's access at individual, family, and community levels reveals the extent of gender inequality. Men have so much more (Cheka, 1996). The average per capita income in Cameroon today is less than US\$450 per year. Against the background of this poverty, parents send their daughters into early marriages (Cheka, 1996). In addition, 50% of all young women

in Cameroon marry before the age of 17, and half of the married women have given birth before the age 19.

This is an economic boon for parents encouraging such marriages since girls are likelier to leave home and marry virgins. They probably will not be getting married anytime soon. Worse, they can get pregnant while still in school, and the men who get them pregnant usually refuse to marry them (Cheka, 1996). Because unmarried daughters remain dependent on their fathers, parents can be financially responsible for their daughters and their children. As a result, many parents prefer not to send their daughters to school, i.e., to stay away from school and stay at home to prepare them for early marriage. In the long term, this keeps illiteracy rates high among women, contributing to their lack of financial independence and poverty (Cheka, 1996). This, in turn, encourages submission among husbands, who are seen as their protectors and authorities and able to maintain higher status.

Based on the analysis of property rights, marriage, and adultery and the testimonies of Cameroonian women, it shows how women's subordination is reinforced not only by sociocultural values but also by customary norms and written laws. This gradually explains why some married women behave differently when in possession of power (Cheka, 1996). This background enables us to understand why the interest in studying the changes in empowerment not only on the part of the wives but also on the part of the husbands affects their marital stability. Finally, we observe that despite the evolution of things, traditions are maintained, and these traditions are deeply rooted in people born and raised in these conditions.

Why does the state not set the terms of our usual friendships? Why don't we file a civil suit for negligence or treason against our friends? Why are there no civil friendship ceremonies or legal barriers to celebrating them? Indeed, mere friendships do not affect the political common good in an orderly manner that justifies or warrants regulation (Blackstone, 2003). Marriage, on its part, is a legal institution on which the basic unit of society, which is the family, is built, and every other aspect of life depends on human beings raised from this unit (Gary S. Becker, 1977). This does not cancel the fact that kids are equally out of the marriage and raised respectfully. Weddings are a matter of urgent public interest, as the records of almost every culture show that they are worth legal recognition and regulation. Societies are based on families, built on good marriages, and produce what they need, but they cannot create just and honest people and citizens. As children grow, they learn the love and care of mother and father and the devoted and exclusive love of parents for one another (Elizabeth M., 1977).

It should be noted that children are primarily products of their environment and consciously or unconsciously empathize with what they experience (Bryman). For example, a son (daughter) raised by a mother determined to keep the relationship going only when she will benefit most from her spouse tends to transfer these concepts to her son. Likewise, a boy brought up in a home where his father mistreats his mother may never have respect for women. This is inconclusive as many children are different, but the implications cannot be ignored. This study recognizes different definitions and types (e.g., marriage between two men or two women) of marriage but mainly focuses on their definition of marriage as between a man and a woman.

Within this type of marriage, two types are recognized by the government of Cameroon, namely monogamy and polygamy. Monogamy is a type of marriage where one man is married to one woman, while polygamy defines a situation where a man can marry two or more women, but that is not our goal (Ogletree, 2015). In this study, we attempt to understand the relationship or impact of female empowerment on Cameroonian couples living in Denmark. Learning more about power relations in marriage in Cameroonian cultures will also be interesting. The well-being of married men and women connects to how marriage is defined within the society they come from and the society in which they find themselves (Ogletree, 2015).

Research Question

What are the effects of the practice of self-empowerment on patriarchal oriented couples' marital stability?

Sub questions

- What do Cameroonian couples living in Denmark think of marriage in relation to a means of survival?
- Does divorce risk depend on spouses' relative income?
- How do Cameroonian couples living in Denmark embrace empowerment in relation to the norms they attach to marriage?

The project structure.

INTRODUCTION

Research inspiration and description

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marital disruption and the employment of married women (Greenstein, 1990), Wives' income and marital quality (Rogers, 1999), Wives and work; the sex revolution and its consequences (Davis, 1984)



PROBLEM FORMULATION

What are the effects of the practice of self-empowerment on patriarchal oriented couples' marital stability?

Sub questions

- What do Cameroonian couples living in Denmark think of marriage in relation to a means of survival?
- Does divorce risk depend on spouses' relative income?
- How do married Cameroonians living in Denmark embrace empowerment in relation to the norms they attach to marriage?



METHODOLOGY

Qualitative method of research, using interviews and academic papers



THEORY

The theory of marriage by Gary Becker (Becker, 1973) and the Practice theory perspective on doing and undoing gender equality



DATA ANALYSIS

Making use of the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Alase, 2017) to analyze the results of the conducted interviews.



CONCLUSION

Relevance of this study

This research's relevance could be categorized into four groups beginning with the academic world. This study is relevant to academics because it gives insight into the research idea from a different perspective and case study (in this case, Cameroonian couples living in Denmark). It adds to already existing similar literature but differs in that it focuses on Cameroonian couples living in Denmark. It informs scholars of the existing gender practices despite the evolution of gender equality and marriage practices.

It is relevant to Cameroonian policymakers as it informs them of the challenges the Cameroonian citizens face due to the practiced gender differences (backed by instituted policies) in a world where gender equality and marriage have evolved.

This research will be relevant to couples, informing couples who do not experience such challenges or differences about what others face in their marriages, and enlightening victims of such challenges and differences of the existence of the challenge and hoping that they find ways to navigate the challenges, embrace new practices, without resulting to resolution.

The study will inform every reader of the effects of different practices on behavioral patterns.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Stacy Rogers' work titled "Wives' Income and marital quality," significant gender differences exist between married women and men regarding job performance and responsibility for paid work and family responsibilities (Rogers, 1999). However, there have been significant changes in the attachment of married women to the workforce and their income. Until the 1980s, most married mothers followed a sequential pattern of labor market participation, in which they were likely to leave the labor market in the early years of child-rearing and return when the children grew older (Rogers, 1999). Until 1990, women had a concurrent employment pattern. They remained in the workforce during the early years of parenthood. In particular 1990, 68% of married mothers with children under 6 had a job the previous year, and 28% were employed full-time throughout the year (Spain & Bianchi, 1996) (Rogers, 1999).

Employment rates are highest among married mothers with older children. Married women's return to the labor market increased in the 1980s when the gender pay gap narrowed to 71% between 1955 and 1980 (Spagna and Bianchi, 1996) (Rogers, 1999). The economic contributions of married women in the 1980s have become increasingly important to their family's standard of living. For example, her income significantly reduced the likelihood that her family would live in poverty (Hernandez, 1993) (Becker, 1973). Some work suggests that wives' income negatively affects marriage by threatening spouses' role complementarity. This perspective emphasizes the necessity of the traditional division of labor for ensuring marital quality and stability. More recently, Becker (1981) argues that wives' profits reduce spouses' profits from the performance inherent within the conventional department of labor.

Similarly, Furstenberg and Cherlin (1992) argue that divorce has become more common in recent decades because spouses have less to exchange within marriage (Rogers, 1999). A wife's earnings may also have bad outcomes on marital great to the volume that it demands a husband's prerogative because he is the number one breadwinner. Wives have more power in marriage with higher earnings (Rogers, 1999). However, traditional expectations within marriage, especially regarding the division of labor and breadwinning (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Thompson & Walker, 1989) (Cheka, 1996), are resilient. Hood finds that wives' income is most problematic for husbands with higher earnings, for whom their wives' economic contributions are less necessary (Rogers, 1999).

However, traditional expectations of marriage, particularly about the division of labor and the nature of livelihood (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Thompson & Walker, 1989), are resilient. Hood believes wives' income is more problematic for higher-income husbands, for whom wives' financial contributions are less necessary (Rogers, 1999). Traditional marriage arrangements and increasing wives' incomes can lead to conflict as higher-income women expect more equity in decision-making (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983) and housework (Booth et al., 1984; Hochschild, 1989) (Rogers, 1999). Greenstein (1996) notes that this is particularly true for women with more open attitudes toward gender roles. Moreover, because wives may perceive change requests as belated and husbands as challenging their privileges (Goode, 1992; Scanzoni, 1972), husbands may particularly point to the harmful effects of wives' employment and income on the marriage quality (Rogers, 1999).

According to Theodore Greenstein, author of "Marital Disruption and the Employment of Married Women" (Greenstein, 1990), the apparent link between married women's

employment and marital instability has attracted the attention of scholars for more than a century. Charles Franklin Thing, whom O'Neill (1967) writes: Women are naturally more likely to divorce (Greenstein, 1990). In an unprecedented quantitative study by U.S. Divorce Statistics, Willcox found that a divorced woman can make a living through her job and remarriage. It is, therefore, natural that divorce should be more common where it is easier for a woman to earn a living (Greenstein, 1990). The increase in divorce rates in the United States is partly due to an increased awareness of women's rights, which is creating greater intellectual independence among women and an actual increase in their independence through new opportunities for self-employment. For example, a woman who would have clung to a worthless husband for fear of starvation now claims she can live better by lifting a heavy burden and working in a shop or factory.

While the labor force participation of married women was not generally considered a direct cause of divorce, many authors around the turn of the century agreed that the availability of jobs for women might facilitate marriage failure, making divorce a more realistic alternative for many wives. O'Neill (1967) wrote that although relatively few married women worked at the turn of the century, they knew work was available when they needed it, and since alimony was rarely provided, the new opportunity for self-sufficiency may have had something to do with it to deal with the increase in the number of divorces (Greenstein, 1990). Researchers in the first half of the 20th century also seemed convinced that employment for women, particularly wives, was associated with marital failure (Greenstein, 1990). Calhoun (1919/1960) wrote that a woman's access to industry must be a significant factor in her separation from her husband, and Waller (1938) seemed to think that wives' employment created conflicts of interest within the family. Goodsell (1928) went so far as to suggest that most divorces would probably never have been achieved if industries and professions had not been opened up to women (Greenstein, 1990). Cherlin (1981) summarized this and other similar work by stating that almost all known scholars in the 20th century have cited the importance of increased female employment in increasing divorce rates.

According to (Nguyen, 2019), the failure of marriages and cohabitations can be explained by the perception of work-life balance within the family. Several correlational studies have found that when hours worked exceed hours spent with a partner, it can escalate conflict and lead to a sense of rupture in marital and cohabiting relationships (Nguyen, 2019). In particular, the longitudinal study found that excessive work hours by wives were positively associated with marital failure. However, no demographic variable was considered in this study, and only

married couples were examined. Work-life imbalances highlight an inability to manage energy and time effectively due to partners' work schedules to stabilize their long-term relationships (Tausig & Fenwick, 2001). Relationships unable to manage work-life balance are more likely to suffer from relationship dissatisfaction and stress, which can lead to relationship failure. Couples with poor work-life balance also suffer from psychological problems such as burnout and irritability, which can lead to conflicts that reduce the quality of their relationship (Schaer et al., 2008) (Nguyen, 2019).

Kingsley Davis argued that the divorce wave had struck the heart of the 19th-century gender role system. If a young woman could not count on her husband to remain married to her, she could not count on his financial support either. In doing so, the divorce broke the principal marriage contract, under which a woman traded her services as a wife and mother for her husband's financial support. His best defense against the disaster of divorce was earning his own money through side jobs (Davis, 1984). She argues that the new egalitarian gender role system still lacks normative specifications. It is unclear what husband and wife should expect from each other. What ex-wives, ex-husbands, children, partners, friends, and neighbors should expect is unclear. Instead, each couple must find harmony, which means much experimentation and failure (Davis, 1984).

The main weakness of the egalitarian system is that when it brings women back into economic production, it happens outside the home and is therefore incompatible with raising children. This incompatibility characterizes both the position of husband and wife. However, since in the two previous systems (the system of domestic production and the system of head of household), the woman was the one particularly endowed with domestic responsibilities, she becomes generally seen as their problem. The apparent remedy for this weakness is equalizing the rights and duties of both sexes, both at work and at home. Women would rise to a higher workplace positions than they do today, and men would shoulder half the burden at home. This recipe, so easy to verbalize, is challenging to follow.

For example, in the workplace, it is undoubtedly possible to equate the position of women with that of men in general, but it is not possible to equate the position of any particular man with any particular woman. How can a lawyer and a civil servant be equal just by marriage? As long as men and women are unequal in the labor market, they will also be unequal at home; On average, those who contribute the least through work contribute the most at home. Even disregarding this work influence, biological specialization makes it challenging to balance

domestic duties. Since men cannot bear and nurse children, they must do something equivalent, but how does one measure equivalence? It should be measured in terms of time and energy, but the final determination may depend more on the personality of both partners than the physics and physiology of the workload.

Cameroonian couples living in Denmark will be the focus to complement the existing literature on this research idea. This is particularly interesting because there still exist so many couples without exposure to empowerment, taking into consideration the deep-rooted cultures and traditions practiced in Cameroon and the conscious or unconscious resulting disempowerment of women, especially married women, which is the focus of this study. It will be interesting to find out how the Cameroonians living in another culture that promotes the rights and empowerment of women at a higher and faster rate embrace these changes and how it affects their marriages.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Method

In this project, the author seeks to explore, understand, and explain the relationship and impact women's empowerment has had on marriage in recent times. This project respects the meanings of marriage and its various types but focuses on the marriage between a man and a woman. The argument is that women's empowerment has affected the Cameroonian concept of marriage, leading to marriages in the given context is more of contracts than emotional relationships determined to grow better. This thesis explores what the Cameroonians that will be interviewed expect from marriage and how women's empowerment has affected marriages as per the meaning of marriage within a Cameroon setting. Interviews will be conducted with married Cameroonians living in Denmark to answer the research question. This paper will equally make use of academic works of literature to support the arguments in this thesis. This is to see what others have done on a related topic, identify the gaps and see how the puzzle expressed in this thesis differs from theirs.

The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach will be utilized to analyze my study (Alase, 2017). IPA is a qualitative research approach examining how people make sense of their significant life experiences. Additionally, IPA shares the view that human beings are sense-making creatures; therefore, the accounts participants provide will reflect their

attempts to make sense of their experience. As such, it is seen by many researchers and admirers of the approach as the most 'participant-oriented' qualitative research approach, which shows respect and sensitivity to the 'lived experiences' of the research participants. As a qualitative research approach, IPA allows multiple individuals (participants) who experience similar events to tell their stories without distortions and prosecutions. Creswell stated that.

“...a phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon...” (Alase, 2017, p. 76)

He also stated that.

“...Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon...” (Alase, 2017, p. 76).

The most crucial aspect of IPA tradition is its ability to make sense of the 'lived experiences' of the research participants and genuinely allow the research study to explore the phenomenon it is investigating. In today's research world, the IPA approach is used in many qualitative research studies to investigate and interpret the 'lived experiences' of people who have experienced similar (standard) phenomena. According to Creswell (2013), "phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (p. 76). He also asserted that "Phenomenology is not only a description but also an interpretive process in which the researcher interprets the meaning of the lived experiences." Moustakas (1994, p. 135) stated that it is essential to understand the "underlying dynamics of the experience" of the participant. He advised that to capture the essence of a proper research investigation; researchers must endeavor to bracket themselves away from the issue they are investigating. He stated that we must “set aside our prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things” we are trying to understand (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85).

However, that may be hard to do as qualitative research; the bottom line is that an IPA research approach intends to tell the participants 'lived experience stories so that when readers reflect on them, they can equally understand. Finally, as an interpretative, interpersonal, and interactive research tradition, the qualitative research approach (IPA) is endowed with many features that can help equip its studies (and researchers) with a rich abundance of data insight and holistic flavor to the stories being explored. Consequently, a qualitative approach like IPA is equipped with all the necessary tools and mechanisms to conduct a rich and thick descriptive research study. Smith et al. (2009) emphasized that.

"...IPA studies are conducted on relatively small sample sizes, and the aim is to find a reasonably homogeneous sample, so that, within the sample, we can examine convergence and divergence in some detail...." (Alase, 2017, p. 3)

The issue is quality, not quantity, and given the complexity of most human phenomena, IPA studies usually benefit from a concentrated focus on a small number of cases.

Data Analysis Method

The data collected through interviews with the couples chosen for this research was processed through coding. In the social sciences, coding is a method of analysis in which data in both quantitative and qualitative forms such as interview transcripts or questionnaire results are categorized to aid in analysis (Alase, 2017). Coding is essential for analyzing qualitative data from interviews. It allows researchers to identify patterns, themes, and trends, and helps to make sense of the data collected during the interview. It also helps to provide structure and organization to large amounts of qualitative data, making it easier to interpret and draw conclusions from (Alase, 2017).

To code the transcript of the interview conducted for this thesis, the interview was broken down into smaller segments or categories and assigned codes to each segment based on the content or topic of this thesis. The purpose of this coding was to identify and classify the different themes, ideas, or patterns that emerged from the interviews conducted for this paper.

This method was used to familiarize one with the transcript to get a sense of what the interviewee is talking about, to identifying key themes or ideas, creating a coding scheme or categorization system to organize the themes and ideas, applying codes to each segment of the transcript that fits into one of the predefined themes or categories, and finally summarizing and analyzing the data based on the codes to draw insights and conclusions about the interviewee's responses.

Case Selection

Despite the similarity with patriarchal societies in the world, particularly in the African continent, the Cameroonian society is chosen because it ties perfectly with the research question, the author's particular interest in the country, and accessibility to the Cameroonian community in Denmark. The couples chosen for this case, have lived in Denmark for more than ten years, and were living as a couple in Africa prior to their arrival to Denmark. Their

experience with life as a couple in Africa, and in Denmark for several years, is the reason for their selection to participate in this study.

This thesis's aim of identifying the effects of self-empowerment on patriarchal-oriented couples in Denmark, required couples that have experienced life in Denmark and life in Cameroon. Couples with this experience will provide a more insightful information on the effects of self-empowerment. This insight is useful for the understanding and the fulfilment of the aims of this thesis.

Data collection

The Data used for this analysis will be collected through interviews with married Cameroonian men and women living in Denmark. This collection method will aim to ascertain that the experiences are collected firsthand, thereby analyzing actual lived experiences. It will also use relevant documents dating back to the 1970s to understand the origin and durability of the traditions practiced.

Validity and reliability

This study is mainly based on primary data collected through interviews conducted by the author. Other data used in this secondary work is taken from credible sources such as the Aalborg University Library and the online platform Google Scholar.

Ethical Considerations

The consent of the interview participants was solicited, and their identities were kept anonymous. This is very important because the participants will be sharing their personal experiences. Also, at the end of this research, every voice record made during the interviews will be deleted to ensure that the interview participants are truly anonymous.

Limitation

This study faced limitations in that many Cameroonian wives did not agree to the interviews and so instead of 5 intended wives for the interviews. They felt that this research was getting into their private spaces and so were not willing to share information which they considered confidential. As a result, the research was conducted with less participants than intended, hence limiting the opinions that would have been obtained.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Cameroon

Cameroon is an African country bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the southwest, Nigeria in the Northwest, the Republic of Congo to the southwest, Chad to the Northeast, Equatorial Guinea to the south, and the Central African Republic to the east. Due to its diverse geography and culture, Cameroon is frequently called "Africa in miniature" (Cheka, 1996). The nation has one of the highest literacy rates in Africa, but corruption and years of authoritarian governance have stymied its economic development. The current state of Cameroon, which was formed in 1961 through the union of a British and a French colony, has likewise fought to maintain peace and unity (News, 2023). The country's capital is Yaounde; it covers an area of 475,442 sq km with a population of about 29.3 million (News, 2023).

Denmark

Low height, sandy coasts, flat agricultural land, and a temperate climate are the defining features of Denmark's topography. It consists of 5.935 million inhabitants (News, 2023). The country's capital is Copenhagen, and Denmark is considered a developed nation with a high quality of living. Denmark upholds strong political, cultural, and linguistic links with its Scandinavian neighbors. Denmark has earned a reputation as a progressive nation that supports LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) minorities and women's rights through legislation and policy (News, 2023). In Denmark, public education is free, and almost all adults are literate (News, 2023).

Patriarchy

Patriarchy, or a patriarchal social structure or society, is one in which men are inherently powerful and dominant in positions of moral authority, social privilege, and property control. This relationship exists because there is a power relation. This power relation is very much practiced in the basic unit of society, which is the family, and when not properly handled, it gives room for marital stability and worst-case scenario, divorce (Ortner, 2022).

Gender Roles and Society

Gender roles are the roles expected of men and women based on the characteristics ascribed by society to each gender (Blackstone, 2003). Traditionally, many Western societies believed that women were more considerate than men. Therefore, the traditional view of women's gender roles recommends that women behave benevolently (Blackstone, 2003). One way for a woman to embrace traditional female gender roles would be to support her family by working full-time at home rather than taking jobs outside the home. On the other hand, in traditional notions of gender roles, men are recognized as leaders. The traditional view of male gender roles, therefore, suggests that men should be the breadwinner, support the family financially, and make important family decisions (Cheka, 1996). While these views remain dominant in many sectors of society, alternative perspectives on traditional beliefs about gender roles have gained increasing support in the 21st century. Different disciplines offer different perspectives on gender roles (Bryman). The ecological view of gender roles suggests that gender roles emerge due to the interactions between individuals, communities, and their environments. This means that not only do individuals play a role in the construction of gender roles but also in the physical and social environments in which people move (Blackstone, 2003).

The biological view of gender roles suggests that women have a natural affinity for the female gender role, and men have a natural affinity for the male gender role. However, the biological perspective does not mean that one role is inherently more valuable than another. The sociological perspective on gender roles suggests that masculine and feminine roles can be learned and that masculine and feminine gender roles are not necessarily related to the biological characteristics of men and women. Sociologists study the different meanings and values that male and female gender roles have in society. Coupled with a sociological perspective, a feminist perspective on gender roles could argue that when gender roles are learned, they can also be unlearned, and new and different roles are created.

The feminist perspective emphasizes that gender roles are not only ideas about the appropriate behavior of men and women but are also related to society's different power levels. For example, maintaining economic control over themselves and their families gives men more power in society than women. Since men are expected to be the primary breadwinners, women often fall into poverty when their marriage fails. In this example, a feminist perspective would argue that men tend to exercise more power in their marriages than women because men are

less likely to lose power or social status when their marriage fails. Gender roles can also be linked to men's and women's expectations in unfamiliar areas such as work (Williams 1995).

Men and women are frequently required to carry out various activities and play distinct responsibilities in the workplace depending on their sex (Kanter 1977). Even in the early twenty-first century, many organizations still function from a perspective that promotes conventional ideas about gender roles (Blackstone, 2003). For instance, they might exclusively provide maternity leave benefits to moms while excluding them for fathers. Additionally, because the traditional view of gender roles continues to be prevalent in many organizations, positions held by women and men within these corporations are frequently divided based on sex. Men are more likely to be expected to work in management and executive positions, whereas women are more likely to be expected to work as secretaries. Men are also thought to be more ambitious and task-oriented at work, while women care more about their relationships with co-workers and their relationships in general.

These illustrations show how gender preconceptions are often used to define gender roles. Stereotypes about gender oversimplify the similarities and differences between men and women. People occasionally use gender stereotypes as the foundation for their beliefs about acceptable gender roles (Blackstone, 2003). Gender stereotypes frequently make exaggerated or incorrect claims about the characteristics of males and females. For instance, it is a frequent gender prejudice that men lack emotion. On the other hand, stereotypes of women as being unreasonable or too emotional are frequent. Gender stereotypes are still being dismantled by political groups like the feminist movement, which also offers alternative conceptions of gender roles that emphasize equality between men and women.

Lastly, discussions about gender roles frequently refer to a person's gender role orientation, typically classified as traditional or non-traditional (Blackstone, 2003). An emphasis on the differences between men and women and the presumption that each sex is naturally drawn to certain activities are characteristics of a conventional gender role orientation. People who adhere to traditional gender roles are probably affected by the customs and traditions of the parents and grandparents who came before them (Cheka, 1996). People with non-traditional gender roles are more prone to think that a person's behavior should not be wholly based on her sex (Cheka, 1996). Therefore, people who have non-traditional gender role orientations are more likely to value equal relationships between men and women and to

believe that each person has the freedom to choose the roles they want to play and the degree to which those roles should or should not be related to their sex (Blackstone, 2003).

Gender Equality in the Cameroonian Society

Women's studies and gender studies, in particular, have, up to this point in Cameroon, centered on issues like political participation for women, economic and social development of the nation, and discrimination against women. There is a blatant gender discrepancy in the Cameroonian legislature. Given that men predominate, some patriarchal values may be predicted (German 2006). In patriarchal societies like Cameroon, where assumptions about the gendered labor divide and various gender-differentiated social activities are pervasive, Tannen and Saville-Troike (1985) assert that discourses on "gender differentiation" are most potent. These preconceptions can be seen in the linguistic remnants of these societies' discourses; for example, a lady is only attractive with her baby, which means that a woman can never be beautiful unless she is a mother, is an example of the common Cameroonian proverbs concerning gender characteristics.

Exploring explicit sexism in Cameroon may offer a different viewpoint than that employed in (supposedly) more egalitarian Anglo-American cultures because of the country's well-ingrained patriarchal practices (Cheka, 1996). For example, African feminist academics still have to deal with explicit and occasionally crude sexism, which is frequently legalized by the laws of their countries, whereas Western feminist scholars study language techniques of subtle sexism (Pollak, 2015). According to Mupotsa (2007), African feminism aims to undermine and confront patriarchal traditions (such as polygamy, female genital mutilation, which is still legal in Cameroon and many other African nations, and the low educational attainment of girls in many areas) (Pollak, 2015). Additionally, it aims to encourage women's involvement in politics.

International Women's Day has been observed since the early 1900s, but it was first observed in Cameroon in 1994 and has since been observed annually (Cheka, 1996). In response to this and other circumstances, the Ministry of Women's Affairs was established in December 1997. Despite pledging to "empower" women, the ministry was renamed "Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Family Welfare" seven years later, in 2004, likely reinforcing gender disparities and rigidly identifying women very closely with the family (Cheka, 1996).

The Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) holds 82% of the seats in the parliament, comprising five political parties from Cameroon (Cheka, 1996).

Organizing the social affairs of the party is the responsibility of the CPDM's women's wing. According to Article 47/48 of the CPDM party's constitution, it also "helps the smooth running of party affairs," aims to "mobilize Cameroonian women to publicize the party and their full participation in the pursuit and realization of the party's objectives," and "conceives and puts in place programs with a social, cultural, and political character" (Cheka, 1996, p. 32). The constitution states, this wing's organization will be under the party's political tutelage. As a result, the CPDM constitution establishes women as inferior in both the party and society. It underlines women's contributions to the social and cultural realms while implying that women's primary function in the party is supporting the dominant (male-dominated) party (Cheka, 1996). It can be contended that such restrictions reflect (and are derived from) how women are also created within larger Cameroonian culture.

Women have historically been seen as domestic in Cameroon (Atanga, 2012). Domestic, as opposed to public, refers to activities in, near, or around the home. Cameroonian women's activities have increasingly changed from being solely homemakers to including extra jobs in the public sector (Atanga, 2012). Families frequently seek or need a second paycheck due to recent social and economic developments (poverty, urbanization and modernization, globalization (including global discourses on women's rights and the empowerment of women), and greater perceptions of material needs), whereas in the past being domestic meant not having paid jobs and career women were greatly discouraged (Becker, 1973). As a result, the term "domestic" has been redefined and reinterpreted in the context of women in Cameroon to incorporate increased work outside the home while maintaining domestic duties (Atanga, 2012).

Due to the addition of the public (professional) realm to the private domain, the concept of primarily domestic has evolved. The public refers to women's restricted engagement in public events, but it does not lessen the customary home duties that women are still required to perform the well-known double burden. Women's public appearance is further constrained by the perception of transgression that still exists when they are in 'male' settings like bars (beer parlors). Even though women in modern Cameroon have constitutionally unrestricted access to public life, they are nevertheless constrained to legal and cultural standards of domesticity (Atanga, 2012).

Empowerment

Work on social change has long used the idea of empowerment. Early feminist applications to international development in the 1970s were influenced by feminist collective action and consciousness-raising (Cornwall, 2016). In the 1980s and 1990s, "women's empowerment" emerged as a radical strategy to alter power dynamics in favor of women's rights and equality between men and women. Empowerment was portrayed in these writings as an evolving process of shifts in consciousness and communal power (Cornwall, 2016). People insisted that others could not grant empowerment but rather involved acknowledging power imbalances, standing up for one's rights, and taking action to demand and bring about structural change in favor of greater equality (Cornwall, 2016). By 1994, Srilatha Batliwala stated that the revolutionary edge of the concept of women's empowerment was at risk of being lost in the expanding discussion of it. She urged a more straightforward definition of empowerment as well as power (Blackstone, 2003). She defined empowerment as the process of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of power by defining power as 'control over material assets, intellectual resources, and ideology' (Cornwall, 2016).

Gita Sen quotes Batliwala to support her claim that empowerment is primarily about shifting power dynamics in favor of people with limited control over their lives. According to Batliwala, power has two main components: control over resources (including human, financial, intellectual, and self-resources) and control over ideology (including beliefs, values, and attitudes). Since empowerment is acquiring control, empowerment is the process of doing so. Empowerment is not something that can be done to or for anybody else, according to feminist conceptual work from this era (Cornwall, 2016). A feminist perspective of power, according to Jo Rowlands, is intensely concerned with "the dynamics of oppression and internalized oppression" and empowerment,

'... must also include the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to occupy ... decision-making space... so that the people affected come to see themselves as having the capacity and the right to act and have influence ...' (Cornwall, 2016, p. 87) (1996: 87).

Enhancing a person's or group's ability to make decisions and translate those decisions into desired actions and outcomes is the process of empowerment (Cornwall, 2016). Building individual and collective assets and enhancing the effectiveness and fairness of the institutional

and organizational structure that governs the use of these assets are critical components of this process. Considering these insights, it becomes clear that giving women access to assets such as loans, business opportunities, and the means to generate income may help them manage their poverty more effectively (Blackstone, 2003). However, to be genuinely transformative and address the underlying causes of poverty and the profound structural underpinnings of gender inequality, more must be done than simply facilitating women's access to assets or developing enabling institutions, laws, and policies (Atanga, 2012). Two key levers are required. The first is a process that causes consciousness to change. This entails opposing restrictive cultural and social norms, questioning the institutions of daily life that uphold unfairness, and overcoming normative ideas and expectations that keep women trapped in roles of subordination and dependency.

Batliwala stresses the following: The emphasis on improving women's self-image is one distinctive aspect of this strategy.:

"... unless women are liberated from their existing perception of themselves as weak, inferior and limited beings, no number of external interventions ... will enable them to challenge existing power equations in society, the community or the family...." (Cornwall, 2016, p. 80)

Engagement with culturally ingrained conventional notions of gender, power, and transformation is the second (Atanga, 2012). This moves the change process beyond the individual level to address widely held and taken-for-granted presumptions that support gender inequality in any given cultural environment. There are many ways to challenge preconceived ideas about what a man or woman should be or do, as well as gender identities and relationships (Grzelec, 2022). It can take the shape of formally established training programs that expose participants to various frames for understanding their social surroundings and give them new words and perspectives to examine their reality (Grzelec, 2022). It can also entail women getting together with other women to exchange stories, offer support, and offer solidarity, changing how they learn to see themselves and their rights as individuals and as groups of people with shared interests (Grzelec, 2022). Ultimately, it is about empowering individuals to step back and critically examine the assumptions they make about themselves and others and then utilize this enlarged understanding to guide an analysis of what needs to change and how they may contribute to that change process. (Cornwall, 2016).

The likelihood of divorce was lower in these couples than expected based on the general inverse link between each spouse's educational level and divorce risk, which was proven

earlier. The likelihood of divorce was higher for couples where the wife worked outside the home or was a stay-at-home mother than for those where one or both partners were unemployed. A husband's high income decreases the likelihood of divorce, while a wife's high income increases the risk at all levels of the other spouse's income, significantly if the wife's income exceeds the husband's (Becker, 1973). In previous generations, women were significantly less likely to leave their spouses since they lacked independent social and financial means. As a result, divorce rates in the 20th century have been partially attributed to women's increased employment (Tichenor, 1999). The possible contribution that wives' economic independence may make to the longevity of marriage, particularly in the United States, has been the subject of extensive research (Tichenor, 1999).

It is still unknown, though, if a wife's independent resources or higher social position than her husband increases the likelihood of marriage breakup in contemporary post-industrial nations where men and women have economic obligations (Ogletree, 2015). Both economic and psychological models identify a husband's lack of resources and a wife's economic success as factors that tend to destabilize marriage, despite how they do so be slightly different (Ogletree, 2015). The fundamental advantage of marriage, according to proponents of the economic theory like Becker, Landes, and Michael (1977), is the couple's mutual dependency as a result of their different roles—the wife is focused on domestic production, while the husband is focused on earning a living (Becker, 1973). They argue that when a wife's resources compare more favorably with her husband's, specialization diminishes, resulting in the likelihood of marriage breakdown. Psychosocial framework proponents feel that a husband's neglect of his responsibility as a provider will strain the marriage in many ways, even when the woman is employed. (Cherlin, 1979).

A wife's independent financial resources also provide her peace of mind that, should the marriage have problems, she could manage independently (Nock 1995) (Ogletree, 2015). According to Ross and Sawhill (1975), as women's employment became more recognized, couples' decisions to get married and stay married would be more affected by their enjoyment and less by things like money transfers and a clear, gender-specific division of labor (Tichenor, 1999). Gender equality would apply to other economic effects, such as economies of scale. Due to the rising relative importance of the companionate aspects of marriage, better communication between partners, which results from shared economic interests, maybe even more essential for marital unity (Blackstone, 2003).

Additionally, as the number of married women who work for a living rises, it becomes less unusual and less likely to have marital problems. The impacts of a husband's lack of support might also be less severe because wives contribute to the home budget (Cherlin 1979). In conclusion, it can be predicted that as men and women become more similar in their economic and domestic roles and the noneconomic facets of marriage gain in relative importance, the effects of wives' and husbands' economic resources on marital stability will be more symmetrical than popular theories of marriage suggest (Chamberlin, 1997).

Power Relation in Marriage

Power was defined by French and Raven (Hallenbeck, 1966) as a stable potential influence in a dyadic relationship between two individuals. They identify five types of power: rewarding power (based on power's ability to reward those it influences), coercive power (based on the power of the powerful to mediate punishment for those they influence), legitimate power (based on the statement by the person under the influence that the person having the power has the right to control their behavior or opinions), reference power (based on the identification of the person under the influence with the person having the influence has) and expert power (based on a person's perception of the superior under the influence of powerful knowledge and skills) (Hallenbeck, 1966). The extent of power relates to the number of areas affected, resulting in an appropriate interpersonal power structure for the considered areas of influence.

Marital and family life is where the most significant spheres of influence and likelihood of use of all types of powers are observed since family life is where the most significant interaction of cultural, social, and personal factors occurs over the most extended periods. Time (Becker, 1973). Blood and Wolfec posit that the balance of power in marriage rests with the spouse who brings the most resources to the marriage (Hallenbeck, 1966). Heer cites these assets as economic input, personal attractiveness, and the ability to perform roles appropriately. Economic resources, i.e., purchasing power and material goods, fall into the French price and raven category. Hill gives the image exaggerated constraint tones, stating:

"...Money is a source of power that supports male dominance in the family . . . Money belongs to him who earns it, not to her who spends it, since he who earns it may withhold it..." (Hallenbeck, 1966, p. 51)

French and Raven argue that while reward withholding may resemble punishment, reward, and coercive forces differ dynamically, as the negative valences created by coercion tend to induce withdrawal from the frame of action (Hallenbeck, 1966). In the Detroit sample studied by Blood and Wolfe, the power of husbands described by their wives varies directly with their socioeconomic status (Blackstone, 2003). It was also found that women's relative power was more significant when they worked (Tichenor, 1999). The authors believe these two results support their view of the primary importance of economic resources. However, Heer believes this hypothesis does not explain some of her other findings, most notably the longitudinal rise and fall of her husband's power in the same family (Hallenbeck, 1966). Since male power seems to be greatest when the children are in preschool, Heer suggests male dominance since it is more difficult for females to work outside the home now. Heer's theory, tested by Blood and Wolfe, holds that man's power depends on the difference the woman makes in the value of the resources her husband brings in versus the value of the resources she has outside of marriage for himself. His suggestion suggests that wives weigh the pros and cons when contemplating a possible separation.

Blood and Wolfe also speak of decision-making,

"The power to make decisions stems primarily from the resources which the individual can provide to meet the needs of his marriage partner and to upgrade his decision-making skill" (Hallenbeck, 1966, p. 13)

Intelligent decision-making, when categorized into French and Raven, seems to lead to the creation of expert authority. The basis would be the effect of attributing abilities, knowledge, or perceptions to those in power, and it is suggested that the power of experts is limited to cognitive systems and relatively narrow domains (Hallenbeck, 1966). This notion is partly consistent with Blood and Wolfe's findings that many marriages' decisions are divided according to the areas involved. For example, husbands make decisions about work, choosing cars, and buying life insurance, while wives make decisions about groceries and medical purchases (Blackstone, 2003). Couples are more likely to make joint decisions about where to live and spend their time. If the wife delegates authority to her husband because of his decision-making ability, she must demonstrate that she is an expert.

Hill points to the tendency of men to marry women younger than themselves, less educated, and therefore less capable of making decisions. The exact protective mechanism seems to work for men, whose severe objections to their wives' work have no realistic basis

but result from a feeling that their dominance will be undermined if they are not the sole or primary breadwinners (Hallenbeck, 1966). A married couple brings various assets, such as B. Earning power, intelligence, skills, physical attractiveness, and personality traits he likely explored and considered during his engagement. They also have rapidly developed unique ideas about the "ideal" wife and husband. Their behaviors and attitudes reflect the cultural norms they have internalized. It is through the interplay of these variables that power relations are established and maintained, which affect all other aspects of the marital division of labor, the extent of adjustment required for each spouse, and methods of conflict resolution (Hallenbeck, 1966).

THEORY

The Theory of Marriage

The theory of marriage by Gary Becker in 1973 stipulates that marriages end when the benefits of remaining single outweigh the benefits of divorcing (Becker, 1973). According to the idea, people maximize utility from the goods they anticipate consuming over their lifetimes, rating potential marriage strategies according to their total wealth and selecting the best option. Unfavorable results could happen because of the current state of ambiguity. Increases in the expected value of positively sorted variables (such as men's earnings), time spent looking for a spouse (age at marriage), and marital-specific capital (such as children), which increases with duration and decreases with an order of marriage, all lower dissolution probabilities, according to Becker. Increased expected values of negatively sorted variables (e.g., wife's earnings relative to husband's) and more significant discrepancies in mate traits (e.g., IQ, religion, race) than would be the case in optimal sorting all increase the likelihood of a marriage dissolving (Becker, 1973).

Overall, empirical results and Becker's predictions agree. According to Cutright (1971) and Becker et al. (1977) (Becker, 1973), a husband's salary is inversely correlated with a marital breakup. However, studies on the unique effects of a husband's income level and employment stability reduce the likelihood of divorce (Cherlin 1979; see also Ross and Sawhill 1975). According to the marital unhappiness mechanism, husbands are less content with their marriages when they provide less than half the household income (Springer, 2010). According

to Cherlin (1976, 1978), Waite and Moore (1978), and Ross and Sawhill (1975), marital disintegration is exacerbated by the wife's income and the ratio of her earnings to the family's income. Age at marriage and length of marriage negatively correlate with divorce (Ross and Sawhill 1975; Cherlin 1977), yet the length of marriage does not indicate whether a couple will get a divorce or decide not to (Levinger 1979, p. 148). When it manifests as assets, marital-specific capital prevents breakup, but the impact on young children is unknown. Discords between partner characteristics like age and religion heighten divorce (Cheka, 1996).

Due to their standing as the household's primary provider of income and prestige, husbands have historically exercised more influence over their wives (Tichenor, 1999). Although women have entered the paid workforce, their contributions to income and prestige have not proportionally enhanced their authority (Tichenor, 1999). The assumptions of resource and exchange theories, which reflect the idealized idea of two spheres-breadwinning for men, and domestic work for women-have guided efforts to analyze the relationship between women's employment and their authority in marriage (Coltrane, 1996; Ferree, 1990) (Springer, 2010). Men's higher influence in marriage is explained by the fact that they provide significant financial resources. Research on marital power has shown that these financial resources have a negligible effect on women's power over money, decision-making, and the division of domestic labor as more women have entered the workforce. (Tichenor, 1999)

Gender relations theory holds that expectations, sentiments, and behaviors specific to gender are profoundly shaped and constrained by gendered cultural norms, such as those that link masculinity to the need to provide for one's family. However, other social structural reasons and dimensions of inequality also influence and intersect with gender as a cultural frame. Socioeconomic status is a crucial stratify of masculinity and affects its ideals and manifestation in different social circumstances (Springer, 2010).

The marital theory, which tries to hypothesize the likely reasons for instability and eventual breakup of the marriage, is entirely relevant to our study. In Cameroonian society, it is typical to encounter a couple entirely dependent on the spouse at first (although this does not negate the fact that many were independent before marriage) (Cheka, 1996). This is also supported by cultural norms that state that a man is to provide for his wife and family while his woman handles all household duties and gives birth to and rears the children (Cheka, 1996). According to Becker, there is extremely little chance that a marriage between a stable-earning man and his wife will end in divorce. This is because the man's position is one on which his

family can depend comfortably. Therefore, dissolution will be unusual in such houses (Becker, 1973).

Spouses with the same income or who are equally able to support their families have a 50 percent risk of marital instability because they feel they can get along without each other (think women in particular) (Davis, 1984). In typical Cameroonian cultures, a woman is never allowed to be rude to her husband, even if he has done something terrible to her (Cheka, 1996). A young girl is taught to respect her man and always indulge her ego. It is much easier when the woman is entirely dependent on her spouse (Cheka, 1996). In cases where both are independent, the husband often deserves the wife's submission, as should be the case in any marriage. When a woman caves into her husband's words simply because the culture compels her to do so and the economic situation does not necessarily reciprocate, this tends to make her change her mind quickly after taking power. In Becker's words, when the benefits of being single outweigh those of being married, separations will likely be the order of the day (Becker, 1973).

Marriage patterns have important implications for, among other things, birth rates and population growth, female labor force participation, inequality of income, skills, and other characteristics between families, natural genetic selection of various traits over time, and the distribution of leisure time. And other household resources (Becker, 1973). The quality and stability of romantic relationships are among the best predictors of the overall health and well-being of individuals, couples, and families (Davis, 1984). Therefore, romantic relationships are at the forefront of researchers' concerns across disciplines. An unequal and unfair division of labor within the family is a significant factor in relationship problems and failure, and housework is the most frequently cited source of conflict among couples (Davis, 1984). While a fair and equitable division of labor between partners is ideal, inequality often occurs (Amie M. Gordon, 2022). Marriage can be successfully analyzed within the framework offered by modern economics. If this is true, it is further compelling evidence of the unifying power of economic analysis.

This division of labor is typical of families in Cameroon, where the mother is expected to look after the children daily while the father works. The situation becomes complicated when both partner's work and childcare are still imbalanced (Cheka, 1996). Maybe a mother takes better care of her children, but that does not take away from the fact that it can be tiring. In

some cases, it is not the children but only the duties themselves that are left to the wife. A dependent woman would find nothing wrong in her duties (Cheka, 1996).

Furthermore, a woman raised entirely within the social and cultural norms where she finds herself doing her job, believing it is her role. These women tend to speak or act differently when women are given opportunities that make them realize they can work for themselves, make decisions, and decide what they want to do with their lives. This is where thoughts of a solution creep in (Cheka, 1996).

Even though masculinity can vary, all masculinities are understood and negotiated in contrast to hegemonic masculinity (Springer, 2010). Hegemonic masculinity is “the most honorable way of being a man” (Springer, 2010) and corresponds to the ideal masculinity of dominant groups (Springer, 2010). In the contemporary American context, earning one's bread is one of the main elements of hegemonic masculinity. Thus, failing to achieve the ideal of earning a living can be debilitating for men, causing stress, and leading to compensatory acts of masculinity such as having sex. B. unhealthy behaviors (Thompson & Walker 1989). For example, research has shown that men engage in unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, drinking, extreme sports, and avoiding health services to fulfill their masculinity, mainly when at risk (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Courtenay 2000). The negative health consequences of these compensatory behaviors can reflect the social and cultural affront to masculinity of not being the primary breadwinner in the male body (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

The adverse health effects of a man's absence from the family can vary depending on the social situation. Low-income men are furthest from the economic success of hegemonic masculinity and may be most vulnerable to seeing their wives' higher earnings (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Kimmel 2005). In addition, the economic dependency of low-income men may be particularly harmful, as the more public shame of lower economic status compounds this dependency. Unable to achieve the prevailing normative standard of masculinity through earning a living, low-income men may attempt to achieve and establish masculinity through overt and physical means such as drinking, smoking, and other unhealthy behaviors (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Courtenay2000; Pike 1996).

Critic of The Theory

Although Becker's theory explains various results, it raises several problems from a sociological point of view. First, it does not explicitly predict the usefulness of situations for the people who experience them. Economists take utility for granted because their deductive theories cannot readily deal with imprecise variables (Maynes 1978, p. 391), so their utilities are generally based on reasonable notions of typical human preferences. However, one cannot know why a couple divorces if they do not know how they feel about the situation. Second, every divorce involves two people with different experiences and perceptions of the benefits and costs. In principle, Becker's theory could separate these effects, but in practice, Becker does not attempt to do so. However, some variables can have the opposite effect on a man's or a woman's desire for divorce.

A woman's high income can motivate her to end a bad marriage; This effect could be amplified if the husband were threatened by his wife's income (Komarovsky 1973) or if he felt that his income relieved him of his financial responsibilities. In return, the woman could be a more attractive partner if she has a higher income; Her motivation to end the marriage may be outweighed by her desire to continue the marriage. The bottom line is that Becker's theory predicts that a given event increases the likelihood of a resolution but does not explain why. Third, Becker's theory cannot accommodate new assessments of the division of labor in the home because it fails to distinguish how men and women perceive costs and benefits. Although wives' employment has become acceptable because husbands prefer to live in dual-income households, the distribution of household chores is more controversial today than it used to be. Despite criticism of this theory, this is considered relevant to the thesis as it sheds light on many experiences that parallel the lived experiences of Cameroonian couples.

Contextualization of Theory

The theory of marriage by Gary Becker argues that a marriage in which the benefits of being single outweigh that of being married has a high tendency of breaking compared to a marriage where the benefits outweigh that of being single. It postulates that the rate of women's earnings determines the stability of the marriage or the duration of the marriage. It equally dwells on the old patriarchal traditions where the man is responsible for providing for the home while the woman cares for the kids, if any, and does all the domestic work. Despite being written in the 1970s, this theory postulates an argument that is still very relevant in Cameroonian society despite the evolution of marriage (Cheka, 1996).

This basis of research exists because traditional practices have not been completely wiped out by evolution, hence the challenges with evolved practices. We study the effect of empowerment because women were, remarkably, disempowered before the promotion of empowerment. Male preference taking, for example, a Cameroonian wife raised in the habit of being able to purchase something for herself, her mum or dad, or just anyone of her choice only upon the approval or monetary provision from her husband and then coming to the realization that she can, she also has the power to do things independently, may quickly get out of character. Moreover, that is just an example out of so many.

Practice Theory Perspective on Doing and Undoing Gender Equality

According to the theoretical practice perspective called "doing and undoing," women can "undo" their gender in male-dominated environments by stifling or downplaying their feminine traits in order to lessen the harmful effects of not conforming to the masculine identity associated with the workplace (Grzelec, 2022). The focus has been on people's responses to gendered organizations, even though the idea of doing and undoing gender has provided a lens for seeing gender inequities and understanding how these are manifested in organizations. Van den Brink and Benschop examined the behaviors of an organization working with (de)gendering itself, changing its practices to become sex-nondiscriminatory instead of examining how people interact with a gendered organization. Finally, they talk about implementing and reversing equality measures (Blackstone, 2003).

In their study, Van den Brink and Benschop (2012b) concluded that undoing gender inequality includes introducing a new thing, highlighting the fact that introducing a practice within an organization may not yield the desired results due to the existence of other practices that prevent the new practice from acting as the desired change agent (Blackstone, 2003). They investigated academic appointment procedures, including those in the natural sciences. They discovered that while some practices aimed at increasing women's representation among faculties had changed (such as increasing the number of women applicants for each job opening), other practices remained the same and were hindering efforts to hire more women (Grzelec, 2022).

Additionally, research has demonstrated how specific practices can neutralize or negate other practices (Grzelec, 2022). For instance, Myers et al. (2019) discovered that even though

students of the natural sciences could observe discriminatory behaviors in the classroom (such as women engineering students not being taken seriously), they continued to think it was up to the individual to figure out how to cope with the situation, i.e., they were individualizing structural issues. When students could identify hidden and subtle forms of prejudice, they were learning a new practice for eradicating gender inequality while also engaging in an older practice that needs to be abandoned to create room for the new practice.

This demonstrates the interdependence that Van den Brink and Benschop noted: Outdated methods may obstruct novel ones. On the other hand, adopting a practice theory perspective means emphasizing practices as they are executed, meaning that only meaningful practices can be observed in action. According to Hui et al. (2017), the second point is that practices must be examined concerning other ongoing practices since they involve both material (objective) and cultural (symbolic) elements and interpretations. The point of origin for the current study is the theory put forth by Van den Brink and Benschop that practices go in pairs: One practice might cancel out another.

Several authors such as O'Connor, Miller, et al., Van den Brink, and Benschop (Grzelec, 2022) have urged for broader and more sweeping changes to society, such as institutional reforms, changes to power relations, and changes to the typical structures and cultures, in order to transform the gendered status of companies (O'Connor, 2020). Given that organizations do not function in a vacuum but are ingrained in societies immersed in communities with different cultures, it makes sense to point to the larger society as the required change (Grzelec, 2022). For instance, the degree of representation in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) disciplines varies among nations and is associated with gender stereotypes (Miller et al., 2015), with specific environments allowing various practices to flourish (Chamberlin, 1997). Despite cultural and contextual variations, many modern organizations are frequently designed for stereotypically masculine life circumstances (Grzelec, 2022). Success in the workplace depends on having someone (often a woman) handle the unpaid duties of family life at home (Grzelec, 2022).

As a result, one area of research has concentrated on organizational procedures that assist people in juggling work and family obligations. In order to analyze the practices that organizations can use to lessen the effects of gendered family duty, it is necessary to consider how society and organizations interact with practices. People's behavior in society, such as adhering to gender-specific family duties, impacts their professional lives. Because of this,

women who care for children find it more challenging to devote as much time to their careers as men do. Van den Brink and Benschop's (2012b) study on gender equality and inequality practices is beneficial because it uses the idea of doing and undoing from an organizational perspective (Grzelec, 2022).

Putting this theory into context, actions must be taken regardless of existing stereotypes until these new actions become the new norms. This research is carried out because the traditional and cultural practices meet with recent changes, causing a shift in behavioral patterns and producing either positive or adverse effects. The Cameroonians are of a patriarchal society (Cheka, 1996), and regardless of the promotion of women empowerment, the men remain the head (Cheka, 1996). It, therefore, becomes challenging to counter a tradition in which one is born and raised, but then, considering the exposure that people get, especially when they move out of their home countries and experience different ways in which things are done, there are tendencies of change.

The practice theory perspective of doing and undoing gender equality suggests that it is a work in progress and that one practice cannot be eliminated or suppressed without another. Therefore, it suggests in this context that embracing self-empowerment and normalizing it as a factor of marital stability and not necessarily a threat to patriarchy is one of the ways to eliminate traditions that promote power imbalances in marriage (Grzelec, 2022).

(Alase, 2017) “...a phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon...” (Alase, 2017, p. 76)” (Alase, 2017, p. 76) He also stated that; “...Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon...” (Alase, 2017, p. 76).” (Alase, 2017, p. 76)

The most crucial aspect of IPA tradition is its ability to make sense of the 'lived experiences' of the research participants and genuinely allow the research study to explore the phenomenon it is investigating. In today's research world, the IPA approach is used in many qualitative research studies to investigate and interpret the 'lived experiences' of people who have experienced similar (standard) phenomena. According to Creswell (2013), "phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (p. 76). He also asserted that "Phenomenology is not only a description but also an interpretive process in which the

researcher interprets the meaning of the lived experiences." Moustakas (1994, p. 135) stated that it is vital to understand the "underlying dynamics of the experience" of the participant.

He advised that to capture the essence of a proper research investigation, and researchers must endeavor to bracket themselves away from the issue they are investigating. He stated that we must "set aside our prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things" we are trying to understand (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). However, that may be hard to do as qualitative research; the bottom line is that an IPA research approach intends to tell the participants 'lived experience stories so that when readers reflect on them, they can equally understand. Finally, as an interpretative, interpersonal, and interactive research tradition, the qualitative research approach (IPA) has many features that can help equip its studies (and researchers) with a rich abundance of data insight and holistic flavor to the stories being explored. Consequently, a qualitative approach like IPA is equipped with all the necessary tools and mechanisms to conduct a rich and thick descriptive research study. Smith et al. (2009) emphasized that "...IPA studies are conducted on relatively small sample sizes, and the aim is to find a reasonably homogeneous sample, so that, within the sample, we can examine convergence and divergence in some detail...." (Alase, 2017, p. 3) (Alase, 2017, p. 3) The issue is quality, not quantity, and given the complexity of most human phenomena, IPA studies usually benefit from a concentrated focus on a small number of cases" (p. 51).

Contextualization of theory

This theory is fit to address the research in that it suggests ways couples can embrace new practices when faced with practices that are contrary to those they have been practicing. In context, the Cameroonian couples on which this study is based have a patriarchal orientation of practice concerning marriage. This tradition states that the male gender has power and authority over the female gender in all spheres of life, including marriage and the home. Therefore, decision-making and implementation of ideas depend mainly, if not always, on the men. This practice is, therefore, in line with the evolution of gender and gender equality in Cameroonian society, thereby causing a shift in behavior when they meet the actual practice of women empowerment and gender equality in Danish society.

This theory is thereby relevant as it encourages the practice of different ways of doing things, in this case, practicing more gender egalitarian ways, which could become norms, cultures, and traditions in the long run.

ANALYSIS

At the heart of the analysis are two simple rules. First, since marriage is almost always consensual, both on the part of the prospective spouse and the part of their parents, the theory of preference is easy to apply, and it can be assumed that the prospective spouse (or their parents) expect that their benefits will outweigh them beyond what would otherwise occur if they stayed single. Second, a marriage market can be assumed to exist since many men and women compete for mates. Everyone tries to find the best partner, subject to the constraints imposed by market conditions. These two principles explain why most adults are married and why ranking partners by wealth, education, and other characteristics is similar under seemingly very different circumstances.

However, marriage patterns vary from society to society and change over time in many ways that contradict any theory. Divorce is relatively common in some societies, nearly impossible in others, and has increased dramatically in Western countries over the past half-century. Some societies deal with the legal difficulties of divorce by delaying marriage, while others adapt by developing more flexible "consensual," "ordinary," or "trial" marriages. In many cases, the bride brings the dowry. In others, the groom pays the bride price, while other couples marry out of "love" and disdain for financial negotiations (Becker, 1973).

What do Cameroonian couples living in Denmark think of marriage concerning a means of survival?

Cameroonian couples living in Denmark originate from a society that suggests that the husband is supposed to care for the entire family. The policies ensure an imbalance of power relations where the male gender is superior to the female gender. In Cameroon, women have always been viewed as domestic (Atanga, 2012). Activities inside, close to, or around the home are referred to as domestic instead of public. Women's roles in Cameroon have evolved from being purely domestic to now including additional employment in the public sector. Recent social and economic developments (poverty, urbanization and modernization, globalization (including global discourses on women's rights and the empowerment of women), and greater perceptions of material needs) have made it standard for families to seek or need a second

paycheck, whereas in the past being domestic meant not having paid jobs, and career women were strongly discouraged. As a result, in Cameroon's context for women, the term domestic has been revised and reinterpreted.

Living in Denmark, a developed country with considerable employment opportunities and benefits despite the high cost of living, the narrative of total dependency on a husband becomes challenging irrespective of the fact that the men do not outrightly complain as provision is a gender stereotype of masculinity. Denmark has earned a reputation as a progressive nation that supports LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) minorities and women's rights through legislation and policy (News, 2023). In Denmark, public education is free, and almost all adults are literate (News, 2023). Denmark's support of gender equality, particularly women's rights, differs from the practices in Cameroon to some extent regarding equality.

Therefore, this gives room for the Cameroonians to explore a more egalitarian system than theirs. The high cost of living requires support to ease the burden of providing for a household alone. Therefore, spouses are encouraged to be economically empowered so that the weight of bills is shared. The participants affirmed to be all employed and earning a living. All the husbands provided for their households, with four out of five, as seen in the table below, paying the entire bills. In addition, two of the three female participants contributed equally to their family income percentage, and the third female depended on her spouse even though she earned a living.

None of the participants admitted to their marriages being a means of survival as they all worked and earned a living, but they expressed that they had mutual gains in addition to their emotions, which gave them a reason to hang on and that living together and possibly sharing the bills makes it easy to live in a comparatively expensive country.

Does divorce risk depend on spouses' relative income?

Husbands are stereotypically known as providers, so in most cases, they tend to often have a source of income compared to wives. This stereotype stems from traditional practices. Drawing from the background of this study, we understand that patriarchy, or a patriarchal social structure or society is one in which men are inherently powerful and dominant in positions of moral authority, social privilege, and property control. This relationship exists

because there is a power relation. This power relation is very much practiced in the basic unit of society, which is the family, and when not properly handled, it gives room for marital stability and, worst-case scenario, divorce (Ortner, 2022).

According to proponents of the opportunity independence theory, if women continue their education, work, and earn more money, their increased economic independence should lessen the necessity for marriage. However, most research has revealed that higher-income women are more likely to get married (Pollak, 2015). When given a chance to be informed and independent, women raised in a culture where they are expected to stay home and rely almost entirely on their husbands for care, food, and information will probably behave differently. New personalities and behaviors could result from this. The family should benefit from the wife's capacity to pursue an education and make a living because it relieves the husband of some financial responsibility. Livithier offers many economic benefits of marriage, as a couple living together benefits from both joint productions (Pollak, 2015).

Due to women's disadvantaged economic status in the past, divorce was uncommon. While still relying on their unpaid domestic work, industrialized nations have increased their reliance on women's paid labor. Despite being constrained by sex-based earnings disparities, women's economic independence has altered the nature of married relationships, especially those with patriarchal orientations. It is believed that the role of marriage in giving companionship will grow as the economic benefits of marriage decline. Unlike economic interests, friendship choices are more malleable. Therefore, divorce rates rise when one partner is not economically dependent on the other due to the mode of subsistence (Glenna Spitze, 1985). This is backed by Becker's abovementioned theory, which argues that marital stability is negatively affected when the gains of being single outweigh those of being married.

The author, however, argues that couples with high income can employ helpers that will do all the housework and take care of the kids, thereby taking off that responsibility from the couple, giving them enough time for their jobs and the time they spend together. This, therefore, opines that spouses' income does not necessarily spike divorce but could influence positive change in the couple.

How do Cameroonian couples in Denmark embrace empowerment about the norms they attach to marriage?

The empowerment process improves a person's or a group's capacity to make decisions and convert those decisions into desired actions and results. Key aspects of this process include strengthening the effectiveness and fairness of the institutional and organizational structure that regulates the use of these assets and developing individual and collective assets, with the institution, in this case, being the institution of marriage. These observations show that granting women access to resources like loans, business opportunities, employment opportunities, and generating income may help them manage their poverty more successfully.

In the traditional Cameroonian community, it is typical for the father to support his family financially while his wife looks after the home duties. As more wives enter the workforce and embrace self-empowerment, these norms or narratives have slowly evolved. The ideals of masculinity present a man as the leader of the household, a provider, a protector, strong, and much more. These ideals are already ingrained in parents, who raise their boys by constantly reminding them of what they should be. Therefore, males must be self-empowered and accept responsibility to some extent by the standards of masculinity or, better yet, the gender roles that men play. The gender roles that are given to women, on the other hand, restrict them to the home, household duties, child-rearing, cooking, and general domestic tasks, which encourages their dependence on their spouse. As more women support the idea of independence and self-empowerment, the narrative is changing.

People have changed through marriage, how they value life before and after marriage, how they have become someone different than before, and sometimes how they have lost a part of themselves; how they went from individuals to couples to have families and children and how they struggled to form lasting relationships. By getting married and starting a family with children, people gradually shifted the limits of what they could "endure" in a relationship, becoming more tolerant and agreeable. Some people subconsciously lose themselves to keep their choices, to have a lasting relationship, to work as a couple, to live together and with partners, and to be responsible for raising children. These factors have significant roles to play in the marital stability of every couple. Some of the changes made or experienced by spouses could be beneficial to the couple and could as well be detrimental to their marriage. It all rests on the spouses and how they handle their differences.

As couples tend to adapt during their married life, as explained above, they are faced with novel practices; in this case, Cameroonian couples face an environment and society that upholds gender equality, promotes empowerment, and provides opportunities for

empowerment far more than what they have experienced in their country. Also, originating from a patriarchal society, where the power balance and power relations are ‘unfair’ to women, and the women have learned to accept it that way, it becomes challenging to unlearn the old practices and immediately embrace the new ones.

However, considering the setting and practices in Denmark, a two-earner couple tend to better the cost of living. Irrespective of this advantage, some husbands still practice their traditional patriarchal way of providing entirely for their families as it makes them feel masculine. On their part, wives embrace the opportunities of egalitarian opportunities and equal rights and therefore grab opportunities that change the narrative and stereotypes that describe women's function as primarily domestic. The effect of wives’ self-empowerment practice on their behaviors tends to affect their marital stability. A self-empowered wife realizes her capabilities beyond the traditional practice of dependence and therefore begins to do things by herself and for herself and contributes to her family income.

This action of hers earns her respect (or more respect for those who were already respected) from her husband, as was confirmed in the interviews conducted, thereby influencing the existing power relations in the couple to some extent. The challenge with the many hours of work trying to earn an income is that spouses tend to spend less time together, tend to communicate less, tend to spend less time with kids, and generally bond less, thereby gradually and probably unconsciously losing grip of each AutoSummarizing to separation, unfortunately.

To summarize, couples embrace self-empowerment with ‘conditions’ because the husbands still want to be active in the shared responsibilities. What offends the wives is that child-rearing (for spouses with kids) and house chores are left to the wife, irrespective of her existing career life outside the home. This is problematic as the work and responsibilities become unfair to the woman.

In order to analyze the data collected during this research, the data collected through interviews will be transcribed, presented, and explained for proper understanding. A total number of eight (8) persons were interviewed, five being male (husbands) and three being female (wives). Surprisingly, the husbands were more open to discussing than the wives, which explains why instead of five husbands and five wives,

There are five husbands and three wives. As a result of this challenge (noninterest in participating in the interview), I had to work with married individuals and not necessarily a couple. This implies that the participants of this interview are different couples altogether.

The discussions were centered on the number of years the spouses had been married (the interest here was to find out how much they have been living together, which is a valid point for experiences), their levels of education (which determined their level of exposure to some extent in my opinion), their thoughts on a separation or worst case scenario divorce, how much they contributed to family income compared to their partners, their opinions on house chores in addition to individual career lives, the levels of respect within their couple, and how each spouse’s empowerment influenced their marriage.

The husband was coded as male, and the wife as female. The number of years each spouse had been married was represented as decade-plus (decade + implying ten years and above), their levels of education represented as either undergraduate, graduate, or master, their thoughts on separation presented as separation, their contributions to their respective family incomes as a leading provider and equal provision, their opinions on house chores as no chores and yes chores, the levels of respect in within the couple represented as earned respect, and the influence of spouse's empowerment on their marriages represented as positive EE and negative EE. These representations are presented in the table below.

Figure 1: Interview Results

THEMES	NUMBER OF MALE	NUMBER OF FEMALE
Decade +	5	3
Undergraduate		1
Graduate	2	1
Master’s degree	3	1
Separation	0	2
Main provider	5	1
Equal provision		2

No Chores	3	1
Yes chores	2	2
Earned respect	3	2
Positive EE	3	2
Negative EE	2	1

Source: Table created by the author

The table above shows that all the participants have been married for over ten years. Two were married for 13 years, one for 14 years, two for 15 years, one for 30 years, another for 24 years, 30 years, and lastly, 42 years. One can be convinced that the participants will have a well-lived experience to share. It is important to note that none of the participants have ever been separated from their partners. The next factor that inspired conviction was that all the participants attained some level of education. So, communication was accessible to them, and understanding the subject matter was easy too. Two of the eight participants considered separation at some point in their marriage. These two were women, one being the primary provider in her family and the other being an equal provider. All the male participants were the leading providers in their families; 2 provided 100%, 1 provided 80%, another 75%, and then 70%. Three males and one female said no to chores, while two males and two females responded positively. The females said they did all the chores alone, while the males said they gladly stepped in whenever they realized it was overwhelming for their spouses.

Two females mentioned that they could contribute to their family's upkeep earned them much respect. Three males indicated the same. All the participants expressed that they were affected by their self-empowerment. One female expressed that her ability to provide for her family and sometimes make decisions often pushed her to be rude and disrespectful to her husband because she saw him as an equal and not necessarily head of the family. The other two females said their self-empowerment affected their marriages positively as their spouses appreciated better. Three males mentioned that their self-empowerment boosted their masculinity and made them feel in control of power, while the other two males shared that it led them to constant quarrels with their spouses.

Moving further into our discussion, the males expressed their view of marriage as a means of survival. In their opinion, the man is meant and built to be a shield and provider for

his family. Irrespective of the high cost of living in Denmark compared to Cameroon, they were still very conscious of their responsibilities towards their families, which were not affected by whether their wives worked. One of them stated.

"... there cannot be two heads of one family. If I allow her to provide, I have lost my pride and manhood as a man...." Stated by one of the interview participants.

None of the males see marriage as a means of survival; neither did they see it as a burden but rather as a factor that fueled their masculinity. On the contrary, the two females that indicated they had thought of separation further explained that they are still married because they need their husbands for their well-being, particularly their kids. In other words, they are still in the marriage because they gain more from it than they lose. The expectations from marriage were relatively easy for both parties to enumerate than practice. The males indicated that they expected to have kids, be taken care of (have their meals prepared, their laundry sorted and cleaned, their houses cleaned), have sex at will, and above all, be respected. The females mentioned they expected to be cared for in terms of provision and protection, assisted with rearing the kids and doing house chores, listened to, and treated more like a partner.

It is important to comment that one of the females mentioned that her spouse is as caring as he is because of the rules guarding women in developed countries, without which she doubts he would have embraced his responsibilities. This female sadly mentioned that her husband allows all the domestic work to her and constantly reminds her that where they come from, it is a woman's responsibility to care for kids and chores. We realize that although they live in Denmark, where it is common to share house duties, his mindset is not altered at all. For example, two males indicated that they gladly helped their wives but only when the chores were overwhelming and not necessarily daily. For example, two females said they did all the chores and still cared for the kids 100%. They said that is how it is supposed to be and how they were raised, so as long as her husband provided, she did the rest.

Empowerment and exposure have had effects on marriages. Thankfully positive effects are registered too. Three males mentioned that it boosted their masculinity and gave them the feeling of being in control of power. One male said it encouraged him to dialogue often with his wife, while the other said he often quarreled with his wife over decision-making issues. One female mentioned that being empowered led her to the temptation of often disrespecting her husband, talking back rudely to him, and feeling like he was of no importance to her. The

other two females stated empowerment made their husbands treat them better and listen to and respect their opinions. Finally, they mentioned that their economic independence enabled them to assist their own families in which they were born without necessarily asking their husbands.

Moreover, this was such a relief for their husbands as well. All five men admitted feeling "threatened" by their spouses' empowerment since they got to Denmark and integrated into the society. They shared in different words that it has been uncommon in their local communities in Cameroon for power to be shared with their wives. Thus, they find their wives' empowerment a threat to their positions as heads of the family.

Conclusion

In an attempt to explore and understand the effects of self-empowerment on the marital stability of patriarchal-oriented couples' case of Cameroonian couples living in Denmark, the author takes a point of departure from identifying what the patriarchal society is and how much it is practiced in Cameroon. Based on the findings presented above, it is observed that the social and cultural norms in which people are raised affect their behavioral patterns. However, there exist differences in the practices carried out in both nations, thereby causing an effect on how marriage is observed and affecting marriage stability.

The results from the interviews with the participants reflect that the differences affect marital stability both positively and negatively. Two out of three women mentioned that they have considered separation and, worst-case scenario, divorce during their marriage life. These women were those who contribute half and more in the fraction of their family income and live with the feeling that they do not gain anything from the marriage; hence they could be better off living apart. The third woman out of the three admitted to still living with her husband because of her and her children's gains from the marriage. This result presents that some women go into marriage and stay married due to their dependency, and their societal norms greatly influence this. This equally answers the research question of if the risk of divorce depends on spouses' income as we realize that it is easier to quit the marriage when the gains from being single are equal or more than those of being married.

On the part of the husbands, most husbands admitted to feeling less masculine if their wives were empowered to the point of even contributing equally to what they contributed.

Neither of them mentioned ever thinking of separation or divorce. They instead argued that to be a man is to provide for their family's needs and protect them, so it is normal for them to make the entire provision. On the other hand, they maintained that it is the woman's responsibility to care for domestic needs regardless of their career lives. This, too, was common for all the female participants. On the bright side, one husband mentioned that his wife's empowerment worked in favor of their marital stability as both spouses shared a power balance and the burden of keeping up with their livelihood and rearing kids. This implies a view of marriage as a means of survival for some women as they remain married because of the gains they obtain from it and because they depend solely on their husbands for their survival and that of their kids.

Self-empowerment in the participants' opinions has earned them respect from their spouses. The husbands feel 'masculine' enough, and the wives are respected and treated better with a power balance closer to egalitarian than the power balance prior to their empowerment. So self-empowerment adds value to their person and makes them feel good.

The theory of marriage postulates the challenges couples face in the practice of contradictory practices to patriarchal practices, drawing from the fact that couples in which gain from staying single (familiar with couples where both spouses are empowered, as is the case of two of the female participants) outweigh the gains from being married. The theory of doing and undoing suggests a method through which couples are encouraged to continue indulging in more egalitarian practices to grow past practices that hinder their self-empowerment and stability. By so doing, these practices someday become societal norms and, in turn, foster gender equality more than what is already practiced presently.

According to the participants, marriage is not entirely a means of survival but an emotional union in which gains are expected so both partners feel good. None of the participants admitted to their marriages being a means of survival as they all worked and earned a living, but they expressed that they had mutual gains in addition to their emotions, which gave them a reason to hang on and that living together and possibly sharing the bills makes it easy to live in a comparatively expensive country. Coming from a patriarchal society with masculinity and femininity characteristics, husbands, despite the challenging cost of living, carry out their responsibilities without counting on their wives' incomes because it boosts their masculinity. They accept empowerment because it makes their spouses a better version of themselves, but they are equally threatened by it.

Self-empowerment should be seen as a factor that improves people, creates awareness, and impacts knowledge, not forgetting the economic part of it, which brings about financial independence to some degree. Therefore, couples are encouraged to use their empowered self positively to make life easier, manage their power relationships, and work on mutual respect. In addition to the social groups existing to guide couples in managing their marital stability, patriarchal-oriented couples enjoying the gains of more egalitarian practices could sensitize other couples in similar situations in different developed countries on how to do it.

Traditions and cultural practices are a people's identity, so it may not be advisable to be completely ruled out, as suggested by the theory above, but women should be treated so that they are not devalued all in the name of traditional practices.

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