
**THE INFLUENCE OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE RITES ON MARITAL STABILITY
OF THE AMERU PEOPLE**

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ABSTRACT

A stable marriage is the basis of any well-functioning and morally upright society across the world. However, recent portray a discouraging trend, as many marriages around the world are falling apart, Kenya being deeply affected. Meru county is one of the regions in Kenya with high numbers of single parent families many reported cases of domestic violence. This study examined the role of traditional marriage rites on marital stability among the Ameru People in Kenya. The study was based on Symbolic Interactionism theory of Social Psychology and was implemented using the mixed methods research design. The study was conducted in Meru County and targeted all residents therein, numbering 1,145,114 in total. All catholic churches in one ward within the research area were selected by cluster sampling and used to reach the respondents. Data was collected using the marriage rights questionnaire and the marital stability questionnaire. Data was analyzed using Partial Pearson's correlation analysis at 0.05 alpha level. Results indicated a strong positive association between the sampled respondents' marriage rights scores and their marital stability scores. All the four Ameru marriage rights i.e. pre-marriage preparation, courtship, dowry payment and traditional wedding ceremonies were found to be significant contributors of marital stability among the Ameru people and should therefore be practices to the latter in order to guarantee stable marriages.

Keywords: Ameru Traditional Marriage Rites, Pre-Marriage Preparation, Courtship, Dowry Payment, Traditional Wedding, Marital Stability, Ameru People

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

A stable marriage is desirable, but studies indicate that many people are dissatisfied in their marriage, as reflected by single-parent homes due to separation and divorce. Studies indicate that there has been a retreat from marriage, sustained high levels of divorce, and rapid acceleration in unmarried cohabitation since 1970 (Cherlin, 2004). Although studies indicate that marital satisfaction cannot be easily achieved due to instability in marriages, a stable marital relationship is healthy and desirable (Holman, 2002). Knowledge of marital rites is needed for healthy family functioning, but little is known on how the marital rites knowledge influences marital satisfaction of married couples in Meru County.

Marital stability is the perceived quality of interaction between couples that affects how couples feel about themselves, their spouses, and their marriages in a subjective, situational, and relatively constant manner (Canel, 2013). The harmony, which leads to marital stability partly, depends on how the mutual support, needs, and complementarities between the sexes are lived out (LaHaye, 2005). According to a study done in the United States of America by Brabury and Karney (2010), marital stability is determined by levels of happiness with the relationship between couples, their feelings about their marriages, their perspective, and perceptions about marriage. Love plays a significant role in maintaining a close interpersonal relationship between the spouses necessary for a satisfying marital relationship. (Nympha & Guda, 2015).

Sternberg (1986) presented a Triangular Theory of love whose elements are intimacy, passion, and commitment. The presence of intimacy, passion, and commitment lead to consummate love in marriage (Sternberg, 1986). Consummate love is necessary to achieve marital stability. If there is incongruity among the three components of consummate love in a marriage, there is likely to be unstable (Tung, 2007). The three pillars of love combine into the perfect blend of intimacy, passion, and commitment; consummate love arises (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2010). It is not correctly understood how marriage rites have been used to enhance these components of consummate love.

Marital stability leads to improved psychological and physical health, improved longevity, reduced feelings of loneliness, reduced suicide, and decreased obliquity.

Ondingi and Mugenda (2011) found that marital happiness is the most significant contributor to overall satisfaction for married individuals. It is strongly associated with the physical and psychological well-being of the spouses. Marital rites equip family members to develop knowledge and skills that enhance well-being and strengthen interpersonal relationships. This is important for a stable marriage. Knowledge of human sexuality is one of the content areas of family life education. Knowledge of human sexuality includes information, attitudes, beliefs, and values about identity, relationship, and intimacy (www.parliament.uk, 2019).

Family life education is expected to address the issues of personality, value formation, decision-making, peer and social pressures, affection and intimacy, body image, gender roles, communication strategies, and various sexual behaviors (Kelly, 2006; United Kingdom, Department of Education, 2019). The recommendation by the UK parliament and Kelly are made in the context of the USA and UK, which both

have different cultural and psychosocial orientations from the Meru Context. The researcher, therefore, found it necessary to highlight marriage rites and the content it passes about Family Life Knowledge among married couples in Meru County and how the content influences marital stability.

Countries are increasingly acknowledging the importance of equipping young people with the knowledge and skills to make responsible choices in their lives, particularly in a context where they have greater exposure to sexually explicit material through the internet and other media (World Health Organization, 2019). Sex and relationship education in the United Kingdom is designed to equip children and young people with the information, skills, and values to have safe, fulfilling, and enjoyable relationships and to take responsibility for their sexual health and well-being (the United Kingdom, Department of Education, 2019). The focus of family life education in the United Kingdom is on enjoyable relationships, not specifically marital satisfaction. This study, therefore, intends to establish how family life education received during marriage rites influences marital stability.

Nigeria has strong and vocal religious forces that dictate morality, thus policy, and ultimately family life education instructions (Ogunfowokan & Fajemilehin, 2012). Egypt teaches family life education that focuses on knowledge about male and female reproductive systems, sex organs, conception, and sexually transmitted infection. In the second and third years of the middle preparatory phase, this is taught in public schools. Other countries view family life education as just one of the many life skills that young people require (UNESCO & UNFPA, 2012). Nonetheless, it has not been established whether there is any country that focuses implementation of family life education that focuses on enhancing marital satisfaction.

In Kenya, there was a continuing debate on whether to teach family life and family life education in schools (Wanyonyi, 2014). Proponents of family life and family life education argue that young people do not receive the right education to help them manage their sexual desires according to societal norms. According to Guttmacher Institute (2017), comprehensive family life and family life education are needed in Kenya to ensure healthy sexual and reproductive lives. Opponents to the introduction of family life education in schools argued that family life was a moral issue that should be handled by religion and family (Kavivya, 2003). The proponents and opponents of teaching family life and family life education were all focusing on the adolescent lives but did not consider the post-adolescent lives, especially as it was done in the Meru traditional society before the advent of colonialism and Christianity.

Family life Knowledge among the Meru was aimed at establishing a satisfactory relationship between spouses. This knowledge was emphasized during the initiation period. Older women taught girls, and boys were taught by older men while in seclusion. There was set content, method of delivery, and an evaluation. However, in 1953 there was a ban on female circumcision and the Gaaru system (a system where young men were put in seclusion and taught the position of a man in the family and society and how to relate with a wife) that led to the disintegration of the delivery of C. The school system did not offer an equivalent replacement of the family life education; hence it is not clear the sources from which and the age at which married couples in Meru County got family life knowledge and how they influenced their marital

satisfaction. Simultaneous with the change in family life education was a decline in marital satisfaction as manifested by an increase in marital violence, an upsurge in cases relating to custody and maintenance of children, and an increase in divorce cases (Meru County Law, 2016).

Data from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics indicates that there was a total of 567,990 divorced and separated people in Kenya as per the 2009 population census. Among these, Meru reported a total of 31,606, which was the third-highest after Nairobi and Kiambu County. Meru County was leading in divorces within the county analysis, with 2.4% of divorced people accounting for the highest percentage of divorce within the country. These statistics point to a challenge in marriages in Meru County, which might be due to differences in the influence of family life knowledge on marital satisfaction.

Whereas Kithinji attributed the differences in marital satisfaction to the impact of colonialism, this study attributed the differences in stability in marriages to differences in family life knowledge and marital satisfaction. Hence, this study set out to determine the influence of marriage rites on the marital stability of married couples in Meru County. The problem warranting this study is based on the fact that marital stability is associated with psychological wellbeing, physical health, lower levels of stress, improved longevity, and reduced feelings of loneliness. A stable marriage consists of people who have higher levels of life satisfaction. Marriage rites knowledge is expected to prepare people for family life and help them learn how to relate with one another in their marriages.

Marital stability is improved when people feel contented. Children need a stable family in order to grow up experiencing love and support from both parents. That is why many studies recommend a stable family as the ideal environment for bringing up children. According to Kenya's latest data, the number of divorces has risen from 10.5% in 2015 to 17.7% in 2020 (KNBS, 2021). During the National Population Census conducted nationwide in the year 2009, Meru County reported the highest divorce and separation rate in Kenya, apart from Nairobi and Kiambu, i.e., of 2.4%. Instability in marriages is still recorded despite the attention given to the importance of marital stability among African communities. This points out to problem in marital stability in Meru County. Most of the studies have linked marital instability to socio-economic, political, and religious factors. However, there is limited information on marriage rites and their influence on the marital stability of the Ameru people. This necessitated the study on the relevance of marriage rites on the marital stability of married couples in Meru County. The study was based on Symbolic Interactionism (SI) which is one of the key theories in Social Psychology. George Herbert Mead, a philosopher-professor, believed that social interactions are the key to understanding society at large. In strategic family therapy, the therapist develops techniques for solving problems specific to the family's interactions and structure. The therapist sees the problem as part of a sequence of interactions of those in the individual's immediate social environment. To this end, the specific objective of this study was to examine the influence of the traditional marriage rites on marital stability of the, Ameru people in Kenya. The null hypothesis that guided this study was:

Ho: Traditional marriage rites have no statistically significant influence on marital stability of the Ameru

People

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars reveal that marriage is one of the four rites of passage observed by the Ameru people. Other rites include birth and child naming, initiation, death, and funeral rituals. The main purpose of marriage is to beget offspring and create a family, which is the basic unit of all political and social organizations (Culture, 2017). According to Mbiti (1969), marriage is a vital ritual of existence that enables a family and the entire community to interact and create a lasting history of progeny. This is the reason why each member belongs to and is identified within the family unit in a given community (Ayisi, 1997). Marital stability refers to a firm, steady well balanced and healthy marital relationship between couples. For a marriage to be stable, each member ensures that he/she is responsible in the relationship. Echebe (2010), observed that marital stability lead to a well-balanced and well-adjusted family which in turn, lead to well-adjusted progressive society.

In the Meru community, the marriage process unfolded in three distinct steps: courtship, dowry, and finally, the wedding ceremony. Prior to the coming of European missionaries, the Ameru traditional marriage started with courtship, followed by the settlement of bride wealth and the actual day of fetching the bride (Mbijiwe, 2015). Courtship was an important foundation for any Meru marriage. It was at this stage that mutual attraction between two people was established. Initiated boys and girls grew up and knew each other well as they congregated during public village dances or at earlier wedding occasions. At this moment, a boy could identify and court a girl for marriage (Paukwa, 2020). Further encounters were facilitated to enable a bride and the groom to interrogate each other's family background which made them understand each other before the commencement of engagement (Ezenweke, 2016).

Courtship was only acceptable for only those who had undergone circumcision. In most cases, the initiated boy began by expressing interest in a mature girl and started the dating process (Mbijiwe, 2015). A boy never approached a girl without first inquiring about her to find out whether she was a good match for him. He investigated from close neighbors the bride's age, name of the father, and the clan from which she belonged. This investigation was perhaps the most important because it determined if the engagements would continue. The peers could recommend, warn, discourage or encourage the relationship.

If the two liked each other, they informed their parents about their proposed marriage plans. Both parents further cross-examined their family character traits, respectively. Parents could also deliberately arrange for their two children to meet eliciting their preferences. Sometimes the boy's old female relatives could influence the boy without his awareness of the girl whom his parents preferred for marriage. Both parents could also mutually consent to their children's marriage when they were of age. They examined the character and other important details, and if they found them to be worthy, they encouraged their son or daughter to meet the prospective marriage partner and the engagement process was initiated. Such an encounter was arranged so as to discourage any displeasing engagement that either a boy or girl could have started. The parents did this in a very tactful and peaceful way. This was meant to cement family

friendships among the involved families. But, if the children objected, such an engagement could be terminated.

In certain cases, a boy and a girl could fall in love and their parents could oppose the engagement because the boy or girl hailed from a poor or unmatchable clan and family. The bride's wealth could then be agreed upon and disbursed to the girl's parents to solemnize the marriage. The relationship was terminated if it was established during courtship that the boy and girl were closely related by blood or belonged to the same clan. The courtship process was very important to Ameru boys and girls because it enabled partners to learn and know each other well before they could settle for marriage. After establishing the preliminary background information of both families and acknowledging that there was no close relationship that could stop the marital arrangements, the groom officially planned to visit the bride's home (Nyaga, 1997). He was accompanied by another boy who belonged to his age set at least thrice or more times to give him more courage in dealing with his prospective in-laws. The groom made guttural sounds as he approached his suitor's home to alert the occupants, especially the would-be mother-in-law of his arrival. He then presented a bunch of khat miraa to book his girlfriend from other marriages' gwikia uthoni', who now handed it over to her father. The father acknowledged the offer and chewed openly as a form of acceptance. He was further presented with a he-goat 'nthenge ya miraa'. The groom then returned to his home where his mother prepared some gruel and arranged to visit the bride's family on an appointed day carrying in a big gourd. The bride's mother reciprocated and filled the same gourd with fresh gruel that was taken back to the groom's family. This was followed by yet another special appointment by a group of women from both sides carrying several gourds of gruel (Paukwa, 2020). These visits were meant to acquaint the in-laws. Finally, women from the bride's clan and village prepared a great celebration meal. It was attended by women from the groom's village who carried some bags of finger millet, sorghum, millet, black beans, or cowpeas. These gifts were emptied in big baskets' nkaranga' to the prospective in-laws.

After it was agreeable to both sides that marriage could be sanctioned, the father and selected elders went to the bride's home to negotiate bride wealth payment for the prospective daughter-in-law. He chose four adult male age mates, preferably Njuri Ncheke elders who were full of wisdom and negotiation skills. Women and young men were prohibited from participating in bride wealth negotiations because they could create jokes during the serious deliberations. Upon arrival, they were welcomed by a similar delegation led by the bride's father for negotiations. After eating, they settled down to discussions and the payment was pegged on her state and what the father had initially paid for the mother of the bride. In some cases, a groom paid more bride wealth for a virgin girl. This payment was agreed to by both parties and was to be disbursed in manageable instalments so that the groom could be permitted to take the bride. It was assumed that the payment of bride wealth commenced a relationship and locked any other further encounters of male suitors (David, 2013).

The Ameru traditional bride wealth comprised a container of honey giempe Kia naichu, an ewe, a bull, a heifer, five she-goats, and a ram (Mbijiwe, 2015). All these items were paid in reasonable instalments so that even the poor grooms could afford to engage a spouse. All the articles that consisted of bride wealth

had a symbolic meaning. A heifer, ewe, and honey symbolized that the bride was a virgin (Paukwa, 2020). The five goats were meant to replace the vacuum left at the girl's home and remind her parents and siblings that she was figuratively present despite getting married elsewhere. A special day was then set and agreed upon for the disbursement of items to the in-laws. The settlement of bride wealth was followed by guidance and counseling sessions to both the bride and the groom respectively to inculcate Ameru customs and traditions. The teachings focused on respect for in-laws, responsible handling of home affairs, respect for the husband and wife, how to relate with the children.

While the guidance and counselling sessions were in progress, the groom constructed a new hut where he would settle with his bride. A special ground-breaking ceremony was conducted by an elderly paternal uncle who gave appropriate directions on siting of the new hut (Paukwa, 2020). The construction process started very early in the morning to keep away any malicious people from interrupting the process. While girls fetched dry reeds or grass for thatching the house, the village warriors rose up early with machetes and axes to cut and chop building materials. The girls also drew water and placed some mud on the rafters that had been tied around the standing pillars of the house to sustain the walls. This hut was supposed to be constructed and completed in a single day in readiness for the wedding day. It was just a mere temporary shelter which was replaced later by a well-planned house. The first fire was then kindled in the new hut by the groom in the evening using the traditional method of rubbing two sticks together covered with some dry grass to warm it and symbolize a new beginning of new life.

This was then followed by a wedding ceremony the next day 'guika' where some female groom's relatives and children were selected and mandated to collect the bride from her home. In most cases, the team was led by strong young men muraa who were often not resisted at all by the bride's family (Culture, 2017; Paukwa, 2020). The wedding ceremony took place at sunset when it was believed that evil spirits had become tired and moved to their resting abodes, while malicious people had also retired to their houses and slept.

The bride's father or paternal uncle came out of the house with a gourd containing a mixture of honey and milk while female relatives led by her mother brought finger millet and presented it to their daughter (Culture, 2017; Paukwa, 2020). An elder then prayed for the bride and adorned her with bracelets and necklaces before leaving her parental home to the bridegroom's residence. The wedding could however be terminated if it was discovered that the bride and the groom had already been involved in sexual intercourse before the wedding. The bride was further smeared with Ash powder as a sign of purity by her aunt. It was at this moment that a girl whose hymen had been ruptured was chastised for embarrassing her parents. Once the news of such a bride was passed over to the groom's family, the wedding ceremony could be cancelled. Women who had been assigned to escort the bride could withdraw any further arrangements. However, a groom who was still interested in the bride could arrange to marry her secretly with less ceremonial arrangements. In some cases, the whole wedding arrangements could be annulled and the girl could be married off to an old man.

A girl who was proven to be a virgin was escorted to the groom's house which was well warmed with glowing fire from a muriiru tree. Upon arrival, the groom welcomed the bride and untied her necklaces and string bracelets. The couple was then left alone in their new hut to consummate their marriage. In the morning, the groom's mother offered them a gourd containing gruel with two serving calabashes and was replenished regularly with gruel. The bride exchanged her goat's hide garment with that of her spouse which was made from a cow's hide. The couple was then expected to spend the whole day in their exchanged garments, signifying acceptance and tolerance of marital union. On the following day, the bride's hair was shaved by either a young girl or an older woman to indicate her new status in the family, while an elderly man shaved the groom. They then returned their exchanged garments, and the bride distributed her bracelets and necklaces to young girls who were present while a great feast was held to celebrate their marriage. This is how a man and woman started their nuclear family in the traditional Ameru society.

However, in the Ameru traditional society, it was observed that the wife was subordinate to the husband, though she had her established rights. Polygamy could be permitted for reasons that were acceptable to the community. There were many explanations that could warrant a man to marry more than one wife. First, it was taboo for a nursing mother to engage in sexual intercourse with her husband. This is the reason why a sexually active man needed an alternative woman to fulfil his sexual urge rather than indulging in adultery hence curbing promiscuity. Second, polygamy ensured that every woman among the Ameru was accorded an opportunity to get married if the population of girls outnumbered boys in a given area. Third, in certain rare cases, if the first wife was incapable of begetting children, the husband was encouraged to marry a second wife and prove his potency. Fourth, if a man had a bigger parcel of land, he could marry more than one wife so that children who were born could inherit and till the land, increase food production, good harvest, and generate more wealth (Mbijiwe, 2015). This was perhaps one of the ways that were used to identify a rich man in society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study utilized the mixed-methods research design. This type of research design integrates both the quantitative and qualitative research approaches. A qualitative research design involves collecting and analyzing non-metric variables such as attributes and behaviors. A quantitative research design involves collecting and analyzing metric data. This study combined the two approaches to evaluate the role of African traditional marriage rites on marital stability. The rationale for mixing the research is that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient to capture in detail trends a complex issue (Creswell, 2003) such as family life and marital stability. A major principle for mixed-method research design is that qualitative and quantitative research methods can be combined both text and numerical data leading to a better understanding of the problem under study (Creswell, Piano, Gutmann & Harison, 2003).

Neither quantitative nor qualitative research can answer the questions "why," "what," or "how" about a particular phenomenon. By combining the two methodologies, researchers can analyze all three questions. Furthermore, the mixed methodologies research strategy enables researchers to acquire a comprehensive

understanding of their topic. Mixed method research can be conducted in four different ways: exploratory sequential, explanatory sequential, nested, and parallel. The exploratory sequential mixed-method approach was used in this study, which begun with qualitative data analysis and then go on to quantitative data analysis. The quantitative research design utilized in this technique justified the conclusions of the qualitative data analysis.

This study utilized primary data obtained through a survey conducted among the Ameru community. The target population were the Ameru people of Meru County with a population of 1,545,714 people. This study was conducted in one ward in Meru County. The cluster sampling technique was used. According to Frey (2018) cluster sampling is a probability sampling approach that categorizes all population elements into mutually exclusive and exhaustive groups called clusters. Clusters are chosen for sampling, and the sample is made up of all or portion of the elements from those clusters. When natural groups (e.g., schools or counties) exist in the population, or when getting a list of all population items is unfeasible or impracticable, this method is often utilized.

Cluster sampling, as opposed to ordinary random sampling, can save money on in-person data collecting by using geographically concentrated clusters. In cluster sampling is a technique researchers divide a population into smaller groups known as clusters. The next draw a sample at random from these clusters. Cluster sampling is frequently used to examine large populations, particularly those that are geographically distributed. As clusters, researchers typically use pre-existing units such as schools or cities. This study utilized catholic churches in the ward as clusters, and from the clusters, each and every member will have an equal chance of participating in the survey provided he/she is an Ameru. The sample size for this study was determined using the online sample calculator.

This study utilized two questionnaires for data collection. To evaluate the independent variable the Marriage Rites Questionnaire (MRQ) was used. Therein, the participants were asked to indicate which traditional marriage rites were conducted at their traditional marriage ceremony. The study also involved controlling variables such as income and family status. Furthermore, the questionnaire also evaluated the demographic factors of the participants such as their education level, age, and gender. To measure the level of marriage stability, the Marital Stability Questionnaire (MSQ) was utilized to evaluate the level of stability among married couples. It was a brief and easy to use measure containing items on a 7-point Likert scale. Items are assessed on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 being the most unsatisfied (extremely dissatisfied) and 7 being the most satisfied (extremely satisfied). The total score ranges from 3 to 21, with higher scores indicating improved marital stability.

The data was coded, cleaned, and analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 26. A pilot test is an analysis on a small portion of the sample to detect shortcomings of the research design and instrument before the data collection (Schindler & Cooper, 2011). It is a useful tool for the study, as it helped the researcher identify deficiencies and rectify them before the researcher collects data. The researcher followed the same procedures as those for the actual data collection to pre-test the

questionnaires. The researcher used three participants to conduct the pilot test from the sample population. This portion of the sample was ideal as a successful pilot test should involve 1–10 percent of the actual sample size (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2008). The pilot test checks the validity and reliability of the instrument (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

Validity on the other hand refers to the extent to which the instrument measures what the researcher intends it to measure and it performs as the researcher designed it to perform (Bashir & Marudhar, 2018). The researcher measured the instrument's validity by using Cohen's Kappa Index. The validity obtained was good for both questionnaires, as it exceeded the stipulated Kappa threshold of 0.75 (Erdogan & Temel, 2015).

Reliability refers to the degree to which the research instrument produces consistent and stable results (Dudovskiy, 2016). The researcher measured the instrument's reliability using the Cronbach's Alpha method. Cronbach's alpha is a coefficient of reliability that provides an unbiased estimate of the data's generalizability. An alpha coefficient over 0.70 shows that the data collected has relatively high internal consistency, resulting in the instrument being regarded as reliable (Lavrakas, 2008). The MRQ and MSQ used in this study had coefficients of 0.85 and 0.78 respectively which implies that they were both reliable. Data collected by both instruments during the actual study was analyzed inferentially using partial Pearson's correlation with aid of SPSS. This enabled for controlling of intervening variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to examine the influence of marriage rites on marital stability of the Ameru People. To address this objective, the sampled respondents were supplied with the marriage rights' questionnaire (MRQ) and the Marriage Stability Questionnaire (MSQ) which captured data on the marriage rights and marriage stability indices of the sampled respondents, both of which were the independent and dependent variables under investigation. The marriage rites index of each respondent of each respondent was obtained using the composite score for all the marriage rites practiced by the Ameru people. The marriage stability index for each respondent was on the other hand was obtained by obtaining a composite score for all by each respondent in the various indicators of marriage stability as listed in the marriage stability questionnaire.

The null hypothesis H_0 of the study was formulated from the first research objective thus;

H_0 : Marriage rites have no statistically significant influence on marital stability of the, Ameru People.

This hypothesis was tested inferentially at the 0.05 alpha level of statistical significance using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC), where the each of the four Ameru marriage rights score obtained from the MRQ for all the respondents were correlated against the marriage stability scores of all the respondents as captured by the MSQ.

The first Ameru marriage rite under investigation was pre-marriage preparation. The respondents' scores

in the pre-marriage preparation part of the Marriage Rites Questionnaire (MRQ) were correlated against marriage stability rites obtained from the Marital Stability Questionnaire (MSQ) and the results of PPMCC analysis were as presented in Table 1 thus:

Table 1: Correlation between Pre-marriage Preparation and Marital Stability Scores

Variable		Pre-Marriage Preparation Score	Marital Stability Score
Pre-Marriage Preparation Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.765
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	146	146
Marital Stability Score	Pearson Correlation	.765	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	146	146

The findings showed that there was significant strong positive correlation between pre-marriage preparation rites scores of the respondents and their marriage stability scores [$r = .765$, $p = .000$ at $\alpha = .05$]. This means all participants of the study who practiced pre-marriage preparations had more stable marriages than those who did not.

The second Ameru marriage rite under investigation was courtship. The respondents' scores for courtship part of the MRQ were correlated against marriage stability rites scores and the results of PPMCC analysis were as presented in Table 2 thus:

Table 2: Correlation between Courtship and Marital Stability Scores

Variable		Courtship Score	Marital Stability Score
Courtship Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.390
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	146	146
Marital Stability Score	Pearson Correlation	.390	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	146	146

The findings showed that there was significant moderate positive correlation between courtship scores of the respondents and their marriage stability scores [$r = .390$, $p = .000$ at $\alpha = .05$]. This means participants who did courtship had significantly more stable marriages than the ones who got married without any form of prior courtship.

The third Ameru marriage rite under investigation was dowry payment. The scores for the dowry payment part of the MRQ were correlated against marriage stability rites scores and the results of PPMCC analysis were as presented in Table 3 thus:

Table 3: Correlation between Dowry Payment and Marital Stability Scores

Variable		Dowry Payment Score	Marital Stability Score
Dowry Payment Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.713
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	146	146
Marital Stability Score	Pearson Correlation	.713	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	146	146

The findings showed that there was a strong positive correlation between dowry payment rites scores of the respondents and their marriage stability scores [$r = .713$, $p = .000$ at $\alpha = .05$]. This means all participants who paid dowry had more stable marriages as compared those who did not pay dowry before marriage.

The fourth marriage rite under investigation was holding a traditional wedding ceremony. The respondents' scores in the wedding ceremony part of the MRQ were correlated against their marital stability scores and the results of PPMCC analysis were as presented in Table 4 thus:

Table 4: Correlation between Traditional Wedding Ceremony Scores and Marital Stability Scores

Variable		Traditional Wedding Score	Marital Stability Score
Traditional Wedding Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.743
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	146	146
Marital Stability Score	Pearson Correlation	.743	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	146	146

The findings showed that there was a strong positive correlation between traditional wedding ceremony scores of the respondents and their marriage stability scores [$r = .743$, $p = .000$ at $\alpha = .05$]. This means all participants who held traditional wedding ceremonies had more stable marriages than those who did not.

To address the research objective, the null hypothesis was tested by performing a correlation between the composite marriage rites scores (cumulative total of all sections in the MRQ) and the marriage stability scores from the MSQ thus:

Table 5: Correlation between Marriage Rites and Marriage Stability Scores

VARIABLE		Marriage Rites Scores	Marital Stability Scores
Marriage Rites Scores	Pearson Correlation	1	.826
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	146	146
Marital Stability Scores	Pearson Correlation	.826	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	146	146

As table 5 reveals, there was a strong positive correlation between marriage rites scores of the respondents and the marriage stability scores [$r(146) = .826, p = .002$ at $\alpha = .05$]. This correlation was statistically significant at the 0.05 alpha level of statistical significance as the table further reveals. This implies that the respondents who fully practiced all the traditional marriage rites of the Ameru people had significantly more stable marriages and consequently higher MSQ scores. The reverse is true for respondents who did not practice all traditional Ameru marriage rights to the latter as they consequently had less stable marriages as their relatively lower MSQ score demonstrated.

When all the four Ameru marriage rites are put together, it can be deduced from the inferential analysis that pre-marriage preparation was the highest contributor of marital stability followed by wedding ceremony then dowry payment and courtship in that order. All the four rites are significant though hence important and should never be ignored by the Ameru people while preparing their kinsmen for marriage. These findings are in agreement with those of Garba (2006) who found out that marital stability as an interpersonal relationship which is most meaningful when it is dynamic and evolving where all the cultural practices of the communities in question are performed as expected. This is explained by the fact that there may be periods of joy and excitement followed by times of conflicts, struggle, pain and distance. Unless two persons in this regard have settled for complacency, there are probably not too many long periods in which they are growing and changing, both separately and together, their relationship is bound to change. Dada and Idowu (2006) also asserted that before marriage, couples in love have an idea and tendency to emphasize the similarities in their way of life rather than their differences. Husband and wife idealized each other. After the wedding, they will find their beginning a metamorphosis which depends on the extent to which marriage practices have been carried out as expected by the communities in question, a revelation that lends support to findings of the current study.

CONCLUSION

Data collected by the research instruments and subsequent testing of the null hypothesis of the study provides evidence that corroborates the existence of a significant positive influence of marriage rights on the marital stability among the Ameru people in Kenya. This is because the statistics emerging from the inferential testing of the null hypothesis using data collected by the marriage rights questionnaire and marriage stability questionnaire revealed that men who had by the time of data collection participated in all the required Ameru marriage rights like dowry payment, weddings etc. had comparatively more stable marriages than those of their counterparts who had participated in little or no marriage rights as earlier mentioned in this document. This implies that performance all marriage rights by men in the Ameru community is very important and should be encouraged among all the Ameru people, as it forms a crucial determinant factor towards the stability of their respective marriages in the long haul.

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