

Effect of Women Economic Empowerment on Family Stability in Imenti North Sub-County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT:

This study focused on the effect of economic empowerment for women on family stability among families in Imenti North Sub-County. This study used the quantitative method for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. The descriptive design helped to describe, explain and validate the findings. The data collected was both primary and secondary data by use of a questionnaire. Data from questionnaires was analyzed using the descriptive techniques and inferential statistics with the help of data analysis software -Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 21). The study found out that a majority of the career women were working full-time and they have been engaged in their careers for a period of 5-10 years. Economic empowerment of women was found to reduce their reliance on their husbands and be able to take care of their needs and enjoy their rights. However, it was reported that there are instances of arguments among spouses over finances. Career women should seek professional counselling services to equip them with adequate skills of managing psychological stress emanating from their careers as well as family commitments. This will help them deal with the situations, thus reducing occurrences of depression and extreme stress that would lead to health complications as well as family stability.

Key Terms: economic empowerment, family stability, counseling, self-esteem.

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Introduction

There has been an emerging global concern of family stability that can no longer be abandoned. Family stability is one of the troublesome trends in our world today (Makela & Suutari, 2011). In the U.S. alone, the statistics show that family instability rate is up to 50 % or more (Wang & Crane, 2001). In Arab countries, family stability is low. In Jordan, there were 8.1 marriages per 1000 and 1.21 family stabilities per 1000 (Satloff & Schenker, 2013). In Syria, there were 8.8 marriages per 1000 and only 73 family stabilities per 1000 (Ghazal Read, 2004). In most Catholic countries in Central and South America, marriages far exceeded family stabilities. Out of 53 marriages per 1000, only 18 families stabilises (Martin, 2002).

When there was a sense in a marriage that one was a spendthrift, the prospect of family instability increased by 45%. Couples that have money disputes at a rate of more than once in seven days are 30% bound to have family instability, and as indicated by the family stress theory, monetary stressors negatively influence a couple's emotions and their communication in marriage, thus influencing their contentment in that marriage (McKelvey & McKenry, 2000). Moreover, joblessness (particularly of the man) and different types of financial challenges have over and again appeared to adversely influence the quality of and fulfilment in the marriage (Conger and Martin, 2010).

The social and monetary freedom of women for stability in the marriage has been curiously followed by social researchers because of an increase of women in the employment arena and the role disruption in marriage. It is as yet indistinct, notwithstanding, regardless of whether the growth of a woman's socio-economic status has, in reality, a weakening sway on marriages at the advent of changing roles between the couple (and a social shift to a

household's consumption from a household's production (Jalovaara, 2003).

Studies in finance management uncover that economic stability largely affects a couple's fulfilment and is recurrently the reason for conflict in a marital union. Olson and DeFrain (2000) found that 37% of the couples in their investigation demonstrated that the main issue in their marriage was financially related. Financial challenges can involve not having enough money and not agreeing on how to manage it (White & Rogers, 2000). The study also uncovers that pressure brought about by financial factors, for example, joblessness is recurrently coupled with resentment, which, thus, prompts a lack of satisfaction and a lack of stability in marriages. In addition, when the couples come from different social backgrounds, they have different convictions about who should be the money provider or who ought to expend it and in what conditions. For example, in some cultures, it is the husband who is expected to work and be the breadwinner as well as the one who makes the financial decisions. Financial management can also become the point of conflict in some African marital relationship (McWilliam, Snyder, Harbin, Porter & Munn, 2000).

The role of women's economic and social independence on family stability has been of particular interest to social scientists for several decades in response to growing female labour force participation and marital interruption. However, it is still unclear whether an increase in women's socioeconomic status indeed has a disrupting impact on marital unions at this time when gender roles are changing (Jalovaara, 2003) and a social shift to household consumption from household production (Raz-Yurovich, 2012).

The negative relationship between women's employment and family stability was also envisioned by a psycho-social

academic who argued that the involvement of the woman in paid work might be indicative of man's poor performance as an income provider, which might further lead to strains between spouses (Jalovaara, 2003). Much effort has gone into trying to address the problem of gender inequality in Kenya. After his election into the Kenyan presidency in 2002, Mwai Kibaki resigned from being Chancellor to public universities and gave the position to individual appointees. Female representation was narrowed to one out of the seven positions.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design based on a quantitative research approach to establish the relationship between career for women and family life balance. The researcher did not manipulate the study variable. The study population comprised of career women in Imenti North Constituency, estimated to be 6,572 women. To select the respondents, stratified random sampling was used as the study populace is not similar. Stratified sampling is used when the population reflects an imbalance on the characteristics of the sample. Kombo and Tromp (2006) recommend the inclusion of 10%, 20% or 30% of all units where the limited population is known. A sample of 97 career women was selected. For primary data, both semi-structure and Likert scale questions were used. The questionnaire is a listed survey prepared to gather feedback from a population sample such as the one for the study. It is an ideal instrument for the collection of important information from a population sample gotten from a large geographical area. Primary data is what is gathered anew and is unique (Kothari, 2004). Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis techniques. Quantitative data was classified and coded with the help of a codebook prepared in accordance to the research variables. Data was analysed using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Descriptive statistics in terms of frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the research findings.

RESULTS

Type of Work

The researcher sought to establish the type of work that the respondents were engaged in. The response was categorized into full time, part-time and at home. The response is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Type of Work

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Full Time	43	58.90%
Part-time	10	13.70%
At Home	18	24.66%
No Entry	2	2.74%
Total	73	100.00

Table 1 above presents findings on participants' type of work. Based on the findings, the largest groups of participants had full-time jobs (58.90%) and worked at home (24.66%). The smallest group comprised of individuals that worked part-time (13.70%). As well, one participant failed to indicate her type of work. This shows that career women are involved in many productive roles as documented by Afsha and Dennis (2016) who consider it as a strategy for women to adjustment emerging trends in the developing countries.

Period of Work

The researcher sought to establish the period that the respondents were in their work. The response was categorized into less than 5 years, 5-10 years, 10 – 15 years and more than 15 years. The response is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Period of work

Category	Frequency	Per cent
< 5 years	15	20.55
5 - 10 years	24	32.88
10-15 years	8	10.95
> 15 years	19	26.03
No Entry	7	9.59
Total	73	100.00

Table 2 above presents findings on participants' period of work in years. Based on the findings the three largest groups of participants have worked 5-10 years (32.88%),

more than 15 years (26.03%), and less than five years (20.55%), respectively. The smallest group comprised of individuals that have worked for 10-15 years (10.69%). As well, seven participants (9.59%) failed to indicate the number of years they have worked. The duration of the stay was relatively low, which agrees with the findings of Cohen and Golan (2007) indicating that there is high absenteeism and turnover among women professionals.

Economic Empowerment of Women on Family Stability

The following section analyzes aspects of economic empowerment of women that influence family stability. Table 3 presents the results on economic freedom, Table 4 salary difference and Table 5 women rights and advocacy.

Table 3: Economic Freedom

Category	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Applicable	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Entry
Economic Freedom(a)	5.48%	5.48%	16.44%	21.92%	36.99%	13.70%
Economic Freedom(b)	15.07%	10.96%	17.81%	16.44%	21.92%	17.81%
Economic Freedom(c)	8.22%	17.81%	26.03%	17.81%	16.44%	13.70%
Economic Freedom(d)	16.44%	19.18%	21.92%	16.44%	10.96%	15.07%
Economic Freedom(e)	16.44%	21.92%	20.55%	13.70%	8.22%	19.18%

Table 3 above presents findings on participants' economic freedoms. In regards to "part a", economic freedom, 58.91 % of the participants agreed that their economic empowerment reduces their reliance on their husband for upkeep money. Precisely, 36.99% strongly agree while 21.92% agree that when they are economically empowered, it reduces their reliance on their husband for upkeep money. Further, the largest portion of participants (21.92%) strongly agrees that when economically empowered, they are less tolerant of unfair treatment by their husband. This conquers with Folbre (2006) who considers women employment as empowerment. In concurrence, Martínez and Paterna, 2009 point out that men do not feel obligated

to participate in home chores as women feel. This is because men perceive home chores as hobbies. Also, social-cultural norms associate house chores like washing clothes, shopping, washing dishes, cooking, and cleaning the house with the feminine gender (Peters et al. 2016; Radović-Marković, 2016). As such, career women may feel frustrated due to the existence of norms and practices that discriminate against them. Given that career women are intolerant to unfair treatment; these trends may contribute to increased instability within such families.

Additionally, 26.03% and 21.92% of the participants responded that it was not applicable for: (a) the way their

spouses spend money affecting their relationship” and (b) when they operate their own accounts and manage their money it makes their husbands insecure, respectively. These findings concur with the views communicated by Martínez-Pérez, and Osca (2001), who point out that women tend to associate wealth with security and peace of mind. Therefore, many Career women will place emphasis on financial planning to guarantee financial security and peace of mind.

Lastly, 42.47 % of the respondents pointed out that they either disagreed earning more than their husband increases their level of self-worth which their husbands interpret as pride. Specifically, 21.92% indicated that they disagreed, while 20.55% indicated that it was not applicable. The findings agree with those of Garikipati (2008) whose

study established a positive impact of economic empowerment of women on household vulnerability. Interestingly, Martínez and Paterna (2009) attributed increased challenges in work-life balance and the likelihood to vent frustration on children and spouses during bad days. This phenomenon is attributed to role overload among career women. According to Martínez and Paterna (2009), such work-life-family conflict cause career women to be overwhelmed since there is a mismatch between energy and time demands. This may increase conflicts within a household since it becomes harder to accomplish family responsibilities. In this context, career women will tend to be less tolerant of stressful relations due to work-to-family interference, thus increasing instability within marriages.

Table 4: Salary Difference

Category	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Applicable	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Entry
Salary Difference (a)	15.07%	21.92%	23.29%	10.96%	10.96%	17.81%
Salary Difference (b)	19.18%	20.55%	20.55%	10.96%	8.22%	20.55%
Salary Difference (c)	24.66%	16.44%	24.66%	9.59%	6.85%	17.81%
Salary Difference (d)	19.18%	20.55%	28.77%	6.85%	4.11%	20.55%
Salary Difference (e)	17.81%	10.96%	28.77%	15.07%	5.48%	21.92%

Table 4 above presents findings on participants' economic freedoms. In regards to Salary difference (a); 45.21% of the respondents disagreed that when owning a family houses/property, in the event of a disagreement their husbands feel that they are mistreated because of the ownership. Specifically, 23.29% point out that it is not applicable, while 21.92% point out that they disagree. This resonates with Herdiyanti, (2018) who argues that financial stress has unique impacts on couples and their financial decisions within a family system. Studies have shown that financial stress has adverse effects on a couple's relationship and may cause relationship instability.

Additionally, majority of the respondents (49.32 %) disagreed and or stated that it is not applicable to say that they are happy when their husband gets a pay rise while on the contrary, their husbands expressed feelings of insecurity and unhappiness when their women get a pay rise higher than them. In particular, the categories disagree and not applicable accounted for 20.55% and 20.55%, respectively. Moreover, the categories – not applicable - accounted for the largest category (28.77%) for the statements their husbands prefer them to handle the kitchen budget while the men invest their salary which if

not the case leads to arguments amongst the couples. Additionally, the tradition of husbands being the primary breadwinner and those who are not employed are never satisfied even their wives give them all the money that they

have. This agrees with Kirchmeyer (2006), who found out that career advancement affects how women are perceived differently compared to men.

Table 5: Women rights and advocacy

Category	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Applicable	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Entry
Women rights and advocacy (a)	17.81%	20.55%	19.18%	6.85%	15.07%	20.55%
Women rights and advocacy (b)	16.44%	19.18%	23.29%	8.22%	13.70%	19.18%
Women rights and advocacy (c)	19.18%	27.40%	17.81%	4.11%	9.59%	21.92%
Women rights and advocacy (d)	27.40%	19.18%	20.55%	12.33%	1.37%	19.18%

Table 5 above presents findings on women rights and advocacy. In respect to the statement whether their husbands feel that when their wives are less empowered, will make them be more submissive, the categories disagree, not applicable and strongly disagree accounted for 20.55%, 19.18% and 17.81 %, respectively. The category "agree" accounted for 6.85%. Notably, 20.55% of the respondents failed to respond to this question. Further, the categories "not applicable", "disagree", and "strongly disagree" accounted for 23.29%, 19.18% and 16.44% in the statement that they know their rights, and when they demand them from their husbands, the husbands consider them to be strong-headed women who are not submissive. However, the group "agree" accounted for the least portion (8.22 %) of the respondents. This agrees with Warrington and Younger (2000), who argue that employment opportunities for women gives them independence as well as aware and able to enjoy their rights.

In respect to the statement that the career women felt that the women rights and advocacy works against their marriage and totally ignores the African setting, 27.4% of the respondents disagreed while 19.18% strongly disagree. Also, 4.11% of the respondents pointed out that they agreed with the question. This accounted for the smallest group among the respondents. Additionally, the categories "strongly disagree", "not applicable", and "disagree" accounted for 27.40%, 20.55%, and 19.18% of the responses towards the statement that their husbands do not allow them to attend women rights forums or to entertain their ideas as it may influence their marriage negatively. This is in line with Marriage Act (2014) that stipulates that both men and women should share equal autonomy in parenting and that nothing legally stands in the way of women being the head of the family whether they were single or not. In a study conducted by Whitehead and Kotze (2003) in South Africa to establish the career and life-balance of professional women, it was found out that ladies in Africa face the test of adjusting from work to family obligations.

Table 6: Financial Management

Category	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Applicable	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Entry
Financial Management (a)	15.07%	20.55%	23.29%	13.70%	9.59%	17.81%
Financial Management (b)	9.59%	12.33%	19.18%	16.44%	23.29%	19.18%
Financial Management (c)	10.96%	23.29%	20.55%	13.70%	9.59%	21.92%
Financial Management (d)	2.74%	5.48%	24.66%	24.66%	21.92%	20.55%
Financial Management (e)	19.18%	21.92%	24.66%	6.85%	6.85%	20.55%
Financial Management (f)	15.07%	20.55%	24.66%	10.96%	9.59%	19.18%

In respect to the question whether career women are more judicial in handling the family's finances an issue which their husbands are not happy with, the categories not applicable, disagree and strongly disagree accounted for the largest number of respondents. Specifically, the categories not applicable disagree and strongly disagree accounted for 23.29%, 20.55%, and 15.07%, respectively. The category strongly agrees accounted for the smallest portion of the respondents. More specifically, 9.59% of the respondents accounted for respondents who answered strongly agree. Outstanding, 17.81% of the respondents left the questions unmarked; hence, the high number of respondents in the no-entry category.

In addition, respondents to the question Financial Management (b)-on career women insisting on planning and having a budget to handle the family finances, the categories strongly agree, not applicable, and agree accounted for the highest three categories of respondents for this question. As well the groups strongly disagree and disagree accounted for the smallest categories by accounting for 12.33% and 9.59%, respectively. Outstanding, 19.18 % of the participants left this question blank.

In the question financial management (c) – about career women being contented with the amount of finances that is allocated to them every month by their husbands, the

categories disagree, not applicable, and agree were the top three groups in regards to respondents. Specifically, the categories disagree, not applicable, and agree accounted for 23.29%, 20.55%, and 13.70%, respectively. The groups strongly disagree (10.96%) and strongly agree (9.59%) accounted for the two smallest groups in this question. Notably, a significant portion of the respondents did not answer the question; therefore, the category no-entry accounted for 21.92% of the total respondents in the group. The high relationship between financial management and economic empowerment can also be attributed to the interactive association between financial management and couple relationships (Archuleta, 2013).

Table 7: Spouse's Employment Status

Category	Frequency	Percent
No	37	50.68%
Yes	13	17.81%
No Entry	23	31.51%

Findings presented in Table 7 shows results on the question about spouse's employment status. Based on the findings, 50.68% of the respondents indicated that their spouses were not employed. To the contrary, 17.81% indicated that their spouses were employed. However, 31.51% of the respondents did not answer the question. This aspect is

supported by Cornwall (2016), who explains that when women have greater productive resources and agency, they have a higher likelihood of transforming their prospects in all areas of their lives including employment, education, health, housing, social and political participation, and physical security. As such, empowered women will break-out of poverty cycles to meet some of the needs that were previously met by their spouses.

Table 8: Arguments about Finances

Category	Frequency	Per cent
Daily	0	0.00%
Weekly	3	4.11%
Monthly	8	10.96%
Rarely	21	28.77%
Never	16	21.92%
No Entry	25	34.25%

Table 8 presents findings on the question about the frequency of arguments about finances within the household. Interestingly, the groups rarely (28.77%) and never (21.92%) accounted for the largest portion of actual respondents. However, the group's daily and weekly frequency of arguments about finances accounted for the smallest portion of actual respondents. Precisely, the groups daily and weekly accounted for 0.00% and 4.11%, respectively. However, 34.25% of the respondents did not respond.

CONCLUSION

The study findings show that economic empowerment increases chances of family instability; specifically empowered women are less tolerant of unfair treatment from their spouses. Notably, empowered women tend to be less tolerant of a spendthrift spouse, thus increasing chances of family instability. This trend is supported by the view that monetary stressors negatively influence a couple's emotions and their communication in marriage, thus influencing their contentment in that marriage. Consequently, economic empowerment adversely affects family stability by influencing levels of tolerance among working-class women.

Career women should seek professional counselling services to equip them with adequate skills of managing psychological stress emanating from their careers as well as family commitments. This will help them deal with the situations, thus reducing occurrences of depression and extreme stress that would lead to health complications as well as family stability. There is need to empower women economically. However, career guidance should be offered to women so as to mentor, inspire and offer advice to those women who have the potential and the will to advance themselves by involving themselves in better and more lucrative careers. This will ensure that they pursue careers that can provide them with the necessary resources to support their families as well as improve themselves.

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