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General Conclusion

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Introduction

Rwandan society and probably all human communities within middle- and low-income countries need professional marriage and family therapy, but the contextualization of approaches to psychosocial and cultural values of those communities is essential. There is a view of culturally sensitive framework for interventions that is based on the concept of conceptualism, which emphasizes that an individual must be understood within the context of his or her family, and that at the same time, the family needs to be understood within the context of the culture in which it is immersed (Bernal, 2006; Bernal & Sáez-Santiago, 2006).

However, in the context of Rwandan society and probably in the context of societies with similarities, it is hard to find existing literature on marriage and family life therein. The similarities of those societies can be based on the facts that they are: (1) middle- and low-income countries'

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societies, (2) post-conflict societies. Lack of literature on marriage and family life becomes more complicated when it relates to ancient times of those societies, and the connection between the past and the current times. This volume is about sharing researches' outputs emerging from within and inside pre- and post-genocide Rwanda, through exploratory qualitative research approaches. This volume is an attempt to fill the gap in existing literature on marriage and family life, and to serve as a milestone in the progress of public health towards better well-being of the spouses and family members and thus of the society made by families at large.

Components of the Book

Our book intends to contribute to evidencing that psychosocial interventions aimed at marriage and family well-being should take into account the past and present socio-cultural context the beneficiaries of psychosocial interventions are in. It is important to remember that the family is the smallest traditional social cell/unit of the overall world society, but that each society has its own uniqueness with the general common characteristics within the whole world. That uniqueness cannot be left behind in programming for the marriage and family well-being in the society.

This book would bring in a more contextual mindset to the implementation and the evaluation of interventions in mental health and well-being in the post-genocide Rwandan society by drawing on its past positive culture. While being evidence-based, the book also aims to contribute to influencing policymakers and individual practitioners in the area of marriage and family in terms of how interventions are designed and implemented.

The book is composed of ten chapters including an introductory chapter and the present conclusion chapter. Chapter 1 presents and shows in details the reasons that have led to the title of the whole book "Psychosocial Well-Being and Mental Health of Individuals in Marital and in Family Relationships in Pre- and Post-Genocide Rwanda."

Chapter 2 is about the qualitative research approaches used in exploring marriage and family life in ancient Rwandan society. The

chapter introduces the overall research project on psychosocial well-being and mental health in marriage and family within Rwandan pre-genocide society. It gives details on the research methods applied to the research findings presented and discussed in Chapters 3–7.

Chapter 3 gives an overview of the characteristics of marital life in traditional Rwandan society. It shows that marital life in pre-genocide Rwandan society was characterized by societal pressure and spousal awareness about compliance with cultural values in marital life. The societal pressure and spousal awareness about compliance with cultural values in marital life were key to building strong households in Rwanda society. Normal marital life functioning traditionally was arranged that spouses would see each other as equal, as different, and as complementary human beings. Those perspectives about how spouses saw each other brought harmony to their marital lives. In addition, and equally important, was the fact that the marital lifestyle in ancient Rwandan society was a good way of preparing children for marriage. The parents in the traditional Rwandan society would play a fundamental role in the whole marriage process of their children.

Chapter 4 is about the determinants of marital happiness as a dimension of marital quality in ancient Rwandan society. Healthy marriage and marital happiness were related to the achievement of the reasons why people would get married. Abiding by cultural conditions of good marital functioning was key to healthy marriage and a happy marital life in ancient Rwandan society. The reasons why people got married and subsequently enjoyed marital happiness included having children, getting an increased social support through the ties established with the other family, and experiencing an increase of their own wealth. The conditions of happiness which were related to the spousal marital life functioning included respect toward the in-law family members, collaboration of both spouses in contributing to the increase of wealth of the household, good communication between spouses, common marital life direction, mutual respect coupled with obeying each other, love and balanced power relations among the spouses, and ultimately the living of marital life in a peaceful manner.

Chapter 5 is about the socio-cultural causes of marriage destruction in the ancient Rwandan society. Marital conflict is obvious in each marriage

and the ancient Rwandan society did not make an exception to this reality. However, divorce resulting from marital conflict was not seen as an option to solve marital problems in ancient Rwandan society. There were efficient family and cultural mechanisms used to deal with the spousal disputes within the families without leading to divorce. Specific cases could lead to divorce and were culturally accepted. These were cases of adultery, the discovering of a hidden disease or/and malformation in one of the spouses after marriage, marital sexual relation dissatisfaction, dirtiness and lack of hygiene, drunkenness, disrespect, stealing, and infertility. Bad behaviors like adultery were common to both wives and husbands. Some behaviors like dirtiness and disrespect were specifically considered for women, while bad behaviors like stealing (especially family resources in the context of this study) and the like could be particularly seen in men.

The situation of marital conflict was not alarming in ancient Rwanda. The attempt to explain the non-alarming marital conflict in ancient Rwandan society is two-fold. First, there were cultural values that would prevent the spouses from making marital conflicts publicly known. Second, marital conflict in new homes of ancient Rwandan society was prevented through young age upbringing in their family of origin. New spouses would behave the way they had observed over the marital life course of their parents. These latter would bear in mind and do all they could so that their behavioral action in front of their children could not have a negative impact on them—especially on their future marital life.

Chapter 6 is about protective factors of marriage lastingness in the traditional Rwandan society. Spouses' families of origin had an important place and consideration in the new spouses' marital life and functioning in ancient Rwandan society. This place and consideration was an important factor in marriage lastingness in ancient Rwandan society. New spouses had a psychosocial responsibility of preventing anything that could break the family ties established between their two respective families of origin. The spouses had an exceptional commitment to marital life functionality. Spouses were able to show patience and mutual respect to each other as well as perseverance in their marital life.

Chapter 7 explores and reports on the ways which were used to deal with destructive marital conflict in customary Rwanda. Normal and

good marital lifestyle of the parents was a good practical way of teaching the children about marital life. The children would learn by observation of how marital life functions. Learning by observing their parents' marital lifestyle would help their children in their future marriages, and thus prevent destructive marital conflict in the new households made up by the children. In addition, destructive marital conflict was prevented through verbal pieces of advice given to the young lady and the young boy just prior to their marriage.

Whenever conflict arose despite the prevention processes, destructive marital conflict was first managed within the new household by the spouses themselves. In case of need, the two families would help the spouses to resolve the conflict. These two families of origin were crucial in the new destructive spousal marital conflict management and resolution once the conflict was not solved by the spouses by themselves. While helping the spouses in destructive conflict, the families would abide by the principle of objectivity. Spouses could make recourse to the "Kwahukana" phenomenon, a situation in which a spouse (generally the wife) could sometimes flee the marital home for a relatively short period, in a situation of destructive marital conflict. She would flee to her family-in-law or to her family of origin. Following this separation, the management of the conflict could be carried out in the family where the wife had fled. Both families were supportive to the new spouses in cases of marital conflict to such an extent that the family-in-law of the married woman could even protect and defend her.

From where the woman had taken sanctuary and sometimes in the presence of the two families together, the husband would only succeed in getting her wife back home after he had discussions on the reasons that had caused the spousal conflict in question. Deliberations were always fair and would end in blaming the wrongdoer in the conflict. The spouses, especially the wives, were reminded about the need for having patience and perseverance in marital life. The husband, more specifically, was warned about the wrong done and the need for him to be a good head of the household. Four main reasons were behind the efforts of the new spouses and the two families of origin in preventing and eventually in dealing fairly with marital conflict in ancient Rwandan society: (1) building a stable and well functioning new household, (2), preventing

divorce, (3) making the new household last long, and (4) maintaining the ties established between the two families of origin.

Chapter 8 reports on intimate partner violence in post-genocide Rwandan society. The data were collected in three districts of Southern Province and Western Province of Rwanda, using qualitative research approaches. Results revealed that women easily report economic abuse and physical violence but needed support from other people to report sexual violence, and generally did not report psychological harassment, perhaps because they accepted it as a social norm. Men generally did not report intimate partner violence (IPV) and the main victims of IPV in all its forms were children and women. A number of measures can help to reduce IPV. These include among others: economically empowering females; educating and sensitizing family members about their responsibilities and community leaders about laws and human rights; educating all community members about gender equality and IPV including premarital instruction; increasing access to services; putting in place a law that protects free unions by giving them legal status after a period of cohabitation; setting up a specific institution to deal with IPV; improving both support to the victims and follow-up of reported cases, along with instituting punitive responses to deter potential new perpetrators.

Chapter 9 is about looking at conflict and dissensions in new types of alternative families of post-genocide Rwandan society. These particular alternative families are composed of siblings, and headed by one of the siblings. They are known as children- and youth-headed households. The chapter arises from an exploratory study in which qualitative data was collected. Seven focus group discussions were conducted with the heads of forty-one youth-headed households in post-genocide Rwanda. Like in other types of families, conflict and dissension are common in youth-headed households. Conflict and dissensions are manifested in poor communication and absence of positive interaction between members. The most often reported consequences of this conflict and dissension include household members leaving home and becoming separated from the family, and this is coupled with and exacerbated by health problems and poverty.

Participants also reported feeling psychological distress, social isolation, lack of motivation, and suicidal thoughts. Where there is conflict, participants turn to their own friends or their parents' friends for support. Participants also reported needing economic assistance and psychosocial support. Based on the focus group interviews, the researcher concludes that it would be beneficial to set up specific community-based structures that can deal with all the issues of daily life and regulation facing youth-headed households. The researcher recommends that the training of youth-headed households in how to take on family responsibilities should be a national policy. This chapter forms a conclusion to the book.

Main Insights from the Book

The findings from various researches and presented in the book show that ancient Rwandan marital and family members had specific ways and behaviors in their marriage and family relations that were based on its cultural and societal contexts. From the findings about the overview of the characteristics of marital life as they are presented in Chapter 3; the determinants of marital happiness as dimension of marital quality as presented in Chapter 4; the socio-cultural causes of marriage destruction presented in Chapter 5; the protective factors of marriage lastingness presented in Chapter 6; up to the findings about the ways which were used to deal with destructive marital conflict in customary Rwanda as are presented in Chapter 7, we can say that the whole research illustrates and supports Ndushabandi et al. (2016) statement that raises the awareness on the necessity of avoiding contradictions between legal provisions and Rwandan traditional gender practices and Rwanda's culture while dealing with family and of course marriage issues.

Fitting of the Book's Content in the Sustainable Development Goal 3 (or SDG 3) and Applicability in Other Contexts Similar to Rwanda

The family is an important environment of the psychosocial life of its members. The family well-being can ensure the well-being of its members. This volume fits the Sustainable Development Goal 3 (or SDG 3) as one of the seventeen sustainable development goals established by the United Nations in 2015. The SDG 3 is about good health and well-being and aims to ensure healthy lives and to promote well-being for all at all ages across all races (United Nations, 2015).

The link between SDG 3 and the current book is that the aim and the vision of both go hand-in-hand. This is the achievement of mental health and well-being for the spouses and family members in Rwanda in particular, and in all societies similar to Rwanda. Once the spouses and family member are healthy and have well-being within their societies, the SDG 3 target will be achieved. As researchers who contributed to this book, we make an academic contribution to inform policymakers about mental psychosocial support policies aligning the cultural values.

This book supports Thomas et al. (2017) idea suggesting that it is important for health promotion policies to take into account, among other aspects, the complexities in family relationships, paying attention to family context and relationship quality to benefit health and well-being. The importance of this book is also that it stresses Broderick and Schrader (1991), Jithoo and Bakker (2011), as well as Sholevar's (2003) statements that historical family counseling has emerged from research and practice based on the Western context and thus, there is a need for taking into account the uniqueness of the interactions families have with major environmental systems, in applying the Western models to the African and other similar contexts (Jithoo & Bakker, 2011).

Limitations of the Book and Directions for Further Researches

The book is about an exploratory view of “Psychosocial Well-Being and Mental Health of Individuals in Marital and in Family Relationships in Pre- and Post-Genocide Rwanda.” The discussions about the findings presented in Chapters 3–7 are made mainly in relation to existing literature. However, even if the literature used fits in terms of the domains of the academic works, not all the literature fits the cultural and societal contexts of the findings from Rwandan participants. Nevertheless, the explanation of this limitation is that this book is among the first, if not the only one to date, in the area of marriage and family life and well-being in pre- and post-genocide Rwandan society. There are no previous academic publications on marital and family well-being in Rwanda, or on intimate violence and the phenomenon of children and youth-headed household in pre-genocide Rwandan society. Another limitation concerns the samples of the research participants in the various studies presented in this book. These participants were selected and recruited, and the qualitative data were collected and analyzed, via appropriate scientific research approaches; but none of the studies presented were designed to be conducted throughout the whole Rwandan country. However, it is to recall that the country is small geographically of 26,338 km², and that its population shares globally a same culture and a same native language.

Conclusion

Despite some limitations shown above, this volume stands as a milestone for guidance in the evolutionary cultural perspective of marital and family well-being in Rwandan society, and in other similar societies having their specific cultural contexts, and affected by war and genocide. Further researches would benefit in being conducted with the aim of extending marriage and family research to the whole of Rwandan society; to conceptualize and theorize marriage and family well-being in Rwandan society; to investigate the factors and skills influencing the

increase in marital satisfaction after marriage; to study intimate partner violence in pre-genocide Rwandan society; to study the phenomenon of alternative families including child- and youth-headed households in pre-genocide Rwandan society; and to elaborate on need for assessment of Rwandans' need of mental health and psychological support. As suggested earlier, further researches are suggested for which customs and values can be taken from the ancient cultures in various societies which have similarities with Rwanda, to make for better and sustainable present-day marriages and family well-being.

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