



PARADOX OF INTIMATE COMPARISON AND EMPATHIC REFLECTION IN RELATIONSHIP MAINTENANCE: SIMILARITY-DISSIMILARITY PATHWAYS IN MEASURING COUPLES' PERFORMANCE ECOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Every marriage is intended to be successful through the combined efforts of the man and woman, who are expected to "work well together". Working well together is usually the outcome of matching the couple's strengths and weaknesses to arrive at a complementary outcome. This depends on what they brought into the union as their performance ecology. This study aimed at developing a scale to measure couples' performance ecology in their romantic relationship. Items were generated through focus group discussions and literature review. Derived items were subjected to face and content validity, item analysis as well as principal component analysis using 1328 participants. The emerging scale has six factors (discriminated from decreasing Eigen values) including comparison distress, genetic incompatibility, reflective pride, progressive talk, relational economics and parenting acumen. The scale was also compared with four other measures to verify convergent and divergent validities. We arrived at a valid and reliable scale (with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .80) which is recommended for assessment and therapeutic intervention among couples. It has been shown that when couples are capable of demonstrating intimate comparison and empathic reflection in times of relational challenges, they are likely to cooperatively strengthen their relationship through enhanced relationship quality.

Keywords: *Empathic reflection, Intimate comparison, measurement, performance ecology, relationship maintenance.*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of performance ecology emerged in the marital enhancement literature through Beach, Tesser, Mendolia, Anderson, Crelia, Whitaker and Fincham's (1996) conception of couples "working well together" towards marital satisfaction. From their line of reasoning, "working well together" requires each partner developing and maintaining a unique set of performance niches which indicates their relative strengths and capabilities towards their partner. Their approach to measure performance ecology was through the extension of the self-evaluation maintenance model of social behaviour to the realms of marriage. The self-evaluation maintenance theory (Tesser, 1998) explains discrepancies between two people in a relationship, in which each of the two individuals attempts to feel good psychologically throughout a comparison process to the other person. Studies have shown that self-evaluation, the way a person views him or herself, may be raised when a close other performs well (Tesser, Millar & Moore, 1988). This is called the reflection process. Similarly, the success of a close other can decrease another person's self-evaluation in an opposite process known as comparison (Tesser et al, 1988). The self-evaluation model integrates two topical ideas in social psychology into one: (1) the notion of social comparison (Festinger, 1954; Goethals, 1984; Suls & Miller, 1977) and (2) the concept of basking in reflected glory (Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman & Sloan, 1976). The model assumes that persons behave in a manner that will maintain or increase self-evaluation and that one's relationship with another has a substantial impact on the self-evaluation process (Tesser et al, 1988). In the model, both the reflection process and the comparison process have as component variables the closeness of another

and the quality of that other's performance (Tesser et al, 1988). However, closeness of another and quality of that other's performance affectively interact to alter self-evaluation in opposite directions (Tesser et al, 1988).

The notion of measuring marital performance in similar and dissimilar (or different) ways is the central focus of performance ecology. In the first place, differences and similarities are, in equal measures, important in relationships. Smith (2015) for instance, observed that:

"Differences make people unique, stir mystery, and define preferences. They add colour to life in a way a spouse may not have seen before, while similarities and same interests bridge connection, inspire pleasure and also have a part in defining relationships"... "I am a wallflower and he is a social butterfly"... "the point is ... we could sit around and fight about our differences, or be insecure that our differences mean we are not compatible, when we should be embracing both our differences and similarities and cultivating them in our marriages. Differences help identify individuals in a marriage, while similarities bring two together to be one".

The concepts of similarities and differences cut across many areas of human conduct. Many researchers have found that there are also emotional differences between men and women, which stem primarily from socialized gender roles rather than ordinary biology.

Since a number of emotional models have shown that both positive and negative emotions are arousing, it is perspicuous why partners in a marital relationship should be concerned about what contributions they and their partners make in supporting their relationship. It is this kind of concern that elicits inquiry into the structure of performance ecology using the self-evaluation maintenance model (Beach, et al, 1996). Before this research, Beach and Tesser (1993) had earlier developed the Marital Decisions Making Scale to assess four categories (and 24 decision making areas) of information deemed important in understanding the impact of marital decision making from the standpoint of the self-evaluation maintenance model. They took into consideration: (i) the extent to which a person and his/her spouse agree, (ii) who decides, (iii) how important that a person decides and (iv) how important to a spouse that he/she decides.

Scoring modalities of the scale provided clear outcomes of agreement, from a Likert-type format structured as "entirely or always", "entirely my decision", and "very important" to "not at all or never", "entirely my spouses' decision", or "not important". To demonstrate clarity, items explored (a) whether the couple agreed, for the most part, in a particular area of decision making, (b) whether decisions in the selected areas were made primarily by them or their partner; (c) whether making decisions in that area was important to them and (d) whether making decisions in that area was important to their partner.

It is common experience that despite multifarious, multicultural and global effort at helping spouses to understand each other and work together to enhance their relationship, research evidence still shows that issues of discontent still affect marital dyads at different stages of marital progress. There are therefore real and perceived threats to relational continuity due to perceived incompatibility and unhealthy lifestyles within dysfunctional dyads.

Consequently, as a result of increasing cases of broken and dysfunctional marriages across the world, marital researchers are increasingly concerned about the future of marriages and by extension, the general atmosphere of social stability. Margulies (2010), for instance, has observed that it takes a long time for a marriage to erode to the point that the couple is held together only by inertia and fear of the consequences of separation. In response, experts have been beaming their search-light on the quality of relationship maintenance by marital partners and, in turn, make useful advocacies in that direction. In one study, Edenfield, Adams and Brihil (2012) opined that as social beings, the quality of our relationship contributes greatly to individual development, growth and overall wellbeing.

Appropriate relationship maintenance behaviours by couples have been facilitated by a constellation of marital factors including positive affect (Gottman & Levenson, 2000), relationship commitment (Rusbult, Johnson & Morrow, 1986), reconcilable differences (Christensen & Jacobson, 2002), dialectical harmony (Ottu, 2015), relational continuity constructional units (Sigman, 1991; Dindia & Emmers-Sommers, 2006) and performance ecology (Beach, et al, 1996). Relationship maintenance activities as described in many streams of research, are “conscious and intentional behaviours designed to maintain the relationship (Dindia, 2003), or “efforts expended to maintain the nature of the relationship to the actor’s satisfaction” (Stafford & Canary, 1991). The conception and investigation of performance ecology in marriage is pivotal as a relationship maintenance process since performance has been the basis for various human social undertakings as found in the work setting (work performance), academic setting (academic performance) and sport settings (sport performance) among others. Performance appears to be intricately more amplified in Stafford and Canary’s (1991) definition of relationship maintenance as “efforts expended to maintain the nature of relationship to the actor’s satisfaction” p. 220. It is in consonant with common sense that performance can correlate positively with efforts, everything being equal. Performance in terms of human relationships will particularly assess the quality of growth and resilience in the various interactional episodes initiated by one partner in favour of the other.

In a recent study, Solomon and Jackson (2014) showed that a man’s career performance (which is a subset of marital success) can be influenced by his personality and the personality of his spouse. In their longitudinal study involving 4544 heterosexual married people, they found that people with more conscientious spouses were likely to have higher job satisfaction, more promotions and higher wages than those whose spouses were low in conscientiousness. They explained that conscientious people tended to be well organized, provide reliable support and were clearly skilled at managing their lives. They hypothesized that people with conscientious spouses may outsource more of the household chores or errands to their partners, thus allowing them to devote more time and energy to work. In the Ibibio cultural space where the quality of marriage is particularly measured through socially-perceived levels of intimacy, closeness and respect; differentiated niches of performance therefore become useful tools in calibrating these marital qualities

Although there are fewer studies examining performance ecology in recent times, there are foundational studies indicating its importance in marital discourse. In Beach, Whitaker, O’Mahen, Jones, Tesser & Fincham (2002), similarity is known to be attractive in providing a platform for assortative mating. However, similarity is also likely to lead people to display abilities similar to those of their partners, creating a potential threat to self-evaluation and cooperative interaction. With all these, we were persuaded to ask: “if birds of a feather flock together, how do they stay together? That is, if similarity brings people together, how do they deal with the problems of boredom that maybe created by their similarity in order to maintain their relationship? On the other hand, in the direction of differences, if “absence makes the heart grow fonder”, how do we reconcile the other angle that, “out of sight is out of mind”? If a partner belonging to the doctrine of fonder heart during absence marries one that promptly erases his/her partner from the mind whenever he or she is out of sight, how will their ecologies merge? Aligning these questions to Beach et al’s (2002) findings, it may be necessary for couples to occasionally revise their self-relevance in relation to perceived partner effort in creating a satisfactory “performance ecology”. This may be a way of strengthening both self and partner relevance, which have been proven to be profound in many studies (e.g. Beach & Tesser 1993; Fitzpatrick, 1988). Moreover, it has been established that a well-developed performance ecology that provides both partners with clear areas of leadership roles and control within the relationship would be associated with relatively satisfying interactions and relatively fewer negative interactions (Houts, Robins & Huston, 1996). On the other hand, Beach et, al. (2002) explains that the difficulty in establishing a workable, shared performance ecology would seem

to provide occasion for competitive interactions, with one of the partners winning and one losing, and both partners wondering if they really belong together. As a way of resolving these difficulties, we considered the development of a performance ecology scale that may address the weaknesses and shortcomings of the Marital Decision Making Scale as an important instrument in marriage counseling and therapy as well as pre-marital guidance.

METHOD

The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative designs. The first part of the study was inductive in nature, making use of focus group discussions aimed at surveying a range of ideas or feelings that people have in relation to complementary performance ecology capable of sustaining marital relationships. Apart from the need to uncover factors that may influence people's opinions, behaviour and motivations on the constructs, group processes also have the advantage of becoming more than the sum of individual parts, thus facilitating more ideas to emerge as a synergy from group members. The second approach was deductive, which based item generation on extensive literature review.

Participants and Setting

The setting was Akwa Ibom State as a whole. A discussant group known as '*Mbono Iban*' attached to the Nigerian Television Authority Uyo was contacted and expanded for this study. *Mbono Iban* is a weekly discussant group (3 females and 1 male) that appraises marriage as a social institution. The group was expanded to eight (8) members by the researchers through invitation of additional elderly people versed with deep understanding of marital aspect of the culture. They were married people who garnered good knowledge of marital expectations of the people. Participants for the exploratory study were 664 couples aged 18 years as minimum and above 70 years. They were grouped into 3 marriage durations (1-7 years, 8-14 years, 15 & above). The minimum educational qualification was the First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) (529) and the highest was the Ph.D (4). They lived in different house-types ranging from duplex to single rooms. Participants reported their socio-economic status as high (9.3%), medium (69.8%) and low (16.2%). They stated their perceptions of similarity in different domains such as age 299 (22.5%), religion 1235 (93.0%) ethnic group 1100 (82.8%) and family of origin wealth 1152 (86.7%). In the sample, 960 (22.3%) were employed while 319 (24%) had no employment. In response to the query on whether they experienced domestic violence, 295 (22.2%) said 'Yes' while (16) 69%) responded 'No'. In relation to the age of marriage, 304 (22.9%) were married between 18-20 years, 617 (46.5%) were married between 21-30 years while 407 (30.6%) married when they were 30 years and above. All participants were Christians except 1 who reported as Hausa. They reported that they suffered various forms of abuse in their family of origin (55.7%) while 36.3% did not experience abuse. When asked whether their parents were married till death, an indication of marital quality, 1171(88.2%) said 'Yes', while 112(8.4%) said 'No'.

Instruments

Video tapes, radio tapes, biros, papers, tables, and chairs were used.

Procedure

Participants were assembled in the recording studio of the NTA, Uyo and two moderators (the researcher and original group moderator) addressed the central questions of concern. In their responses, the discussants of the focus group expressed their views which were also appraised and/or moderated by other participants. Emerging texts were examined for contents depicting the constructs under consideration. These views, in addition to those available in the literature served as guides in the selection of relevant items for the construction of the performance ecology scale which was validated along with existing scales. In order to extract relevant

responses related to the construct of performance ecology, the following questions were put forward:

1. What are the types of things that a husband and wife in Ibibio communities will like his or her partner to do for him or her in marriage....the kind of things that each person does not have the skill to do well?
2. If a husband or wife performs well in his or her area of volitional competence, will the other partner experience pride or envy in such performance?
3. If an area of performance is relevant (is not relevant) to one partner, how will he or she feel if the other partner does better than him or her on that domain?

At the end of several submissions which attracted heated discussions, participants were asked to compare their submissions and come up with concrete cultural terms that reflect or fit emerging terminologies put across during the session. For performance ecology, participants suggested "Ubiong utom", ndumek utom, "se owo ano inam" "uwak utom owo" which they said were varied.

The following are the Responses of Focus Group Discussions for Qualitative Data using 8 participants: (4 females, 4 males) in an attempt to extract relevant Performance Ecology Information

- Q1. What are the types of things that a husband and wife in Ibibio communities will like the other to do for him or her in their marriage....the kind of things that each person does not have the skill to do well?

This question addresses the central ideas behind routine behavioural exchange between spouses and seeks to understand the repertoire of behaviours every couple may appreciate as complementary within their relationship. In a particular response, one participant (who is also a wife) emphasized the need for husbands to look after their wives and mother-in-law in particular, in order to address two germane ideas: to compensate the mother-in-law for her parental duties towards the wife and to enliven the creative instinct of childcare in the couple.

I believe that the husband should look after his wife and the wife's parents especially mothers-in-law because "ado ekaanwan, anye ado ayin" meaning that the son-in-law who "marries" the mother-in-law (i.e cases for the mother-in-law), is the rightful husband to the daughter. This is because she took care of this woman who is now someone's wife. As a parent too, such skills will help them to look after their own children, which is an important duty for husband and wife to do (Wife 3).

A related point brought to the fore the role of the husband who is expected to praise his wife for her duties concerning housekeeping and also perform compensatory duties that can serve as intimate signposts in the relationship.

I think that it is good for the husband to praise the wife over exceptional deeds, such things that the husband cannot regularly do such as cooking, laundry, housekeeping, child-care and other things. He should also show commitment, for example, if the wife was out and it suddenly begins to rain, a husband should drive out to bring her home (wife 4).

A particular wife stressed the need for men to be accommodating to their wives by demonstrating patience, engaging in private and peaceful negotiations and cultivating the habit of gift giving. These may be termed the three pillars of love.

I like the husband to be patient with the wife and discuss marital issues in private to make peace. It is not a good thing for the husband to scold or abuse his wife in public. He should also know how to buy things regularly for the wife who likes to receive gifts. Marriage is seen in what we do daily for each other (wife 1).

Most men consider self-control, respect and the tendency to offer apologies as important attributes of a good wife. For a balanced behavioural exchange, such men believe it is counterproductive for husbands to compare their wives with other women. As argued, such tends to exemplify those relationships and undermine their own union.

I will like my wife to have self-control in speech and to apologize for any wrongdoing. Showing respect is the biggest thing a wife or husband should do for each other. In the same way, a husband should not compare the wife with or to other women and vice versa. This reduces love and tends to draw a partner's intimate attention to those people used as examples (Husband, 3).

While most women expect their husbands to love them, care for them and their children and give them freedom to do what is expected of them without duress, some of them actually confirmed their pleasure with their husbands for their kindness towards them.

I like a partner (man) who can really love and care for me and children because it is always a big work for me and women generally. I also like a man who cares for me when I am pregnant. When a husband is close to the wife she will enjoy the marriage and will produce children who look like them in everything. Sometimes husbands quarrel and say the child is not their own. This is because the husband does not trust the wife and they are not friends. If you are your partner's best friend, you will not doubt anything...and women should do things that will not bring suspicion (wife 3).

I think my husband should not bother me in anyway but should do his work in the family. It does not mean that we are not together. I like a man who is free with the wife and does not fix a time for her to do something. If you love somebody, you will like him to help you. I value my partner's love (wife 2).

In the same way men also expressed their desire for women to be humble, care for the family and demonstrate some level of business initiative. The following are corresponding excerpts from the FGD:

On my own side, my wife should care for me. If I travel she should phone me to know what is happening to me. In the home, I cannot always wash, so I will appreciate this from my wife and other things. One thing that I like most is to see my wife bring up a business idea (Husband 4).

I will like my wife to be very humble, I sincerely appreciate humble women. This is one thing I like even though I cannot do it very well. However, I am learning to do it well. It is the thing that brought my wife to me (Husband 2).

My own is submission and care. I have not seen a husband that is as submissive as my husband. He brought me to this place, it will not be long he will return to take me back. He is very considerate and simple, very kindhearted (wife 3).

Q2 If a husband or wife performs well in his or her areas of competence, will the other partner experience pride or envy in such performance? If an area of performance is relevant (is not relevant) to one partner, how will he or she feel if the other partner does better than him or her?

I cannot envy my husband. A hardworking husband is a good thing for the house. Husband and wife should share everything. No envy (wife 2).

My husband is a very good person in bringing peace when we quarrel. He is not proud like what other women tell me about their husbands. How can I envy someone who likes peace? Instead I love him (wife 4).

These responses elicited other views from debating participants who believe that nothing can be traded for respect in a marital relationship. It was observed that no matter what contributions each partner makes in a relationship, it does not compensate for the essential need to respect one's spouse.

I don't think in that way. No responsible wife can stop to respect the husband because she has a chance to help him. What then is marriage? Marriage is not competition. What of other things that do not have to do with money? I don't measure love with money. Love is different, very different.

However, some wives believe that spouses should not have specified areas of work in a relationship but should be guided by the need to ensure a happy union. They see naturally differentiated areas of specialized skills in their relationship as a way of strengthening their union to work effectively.

In the course of the discussion, a husband submitted that marriage means sharing the good, the bad and the ugly sides of life.

For me, I think husband and wife continue to learn from each other. In Ibibio, marriage is something people share. We share the good and bad and then try to change the bad to good. Anyone who does a good thing brings happiness not envy. If you show envy, do you want your partner to bring you a bad thing?

The benefits of specialized skills in the marital relationship were highlighted by a 'husband' and 'wife' who were, however, not spouses to each other. One preached on the benefits of romantic names while the other appreciated the other's skills of prayer.

I like my wife because he calls me good names. It makes me feel well... and believe that he loves me but sometimes you can be angry over some things you don't understand. In our house we respect each other. It is important, other things follow. In every home there are good and bad things in the marriage (Husband 3).

I am not a bad person but my husband can pray better than me, I like it because even though I can pray, his prayer is always more powerful, so I feel happy when he prays. He shows more influence on the children. When he is around I feel protected (wife 4).

Why should anyone be unhappy when his husband begins to do what she use to do better than her? It is a good thing because I will rest and get assistance from him. We learn from each other (wife 3).

I want to ask first, what are those things? It depends on those things but it is something good if my wife can help me in doing those things she used to depend on me for. But it depends on what those things are. After some time, if the woman is not humble she can begin to look down on you for example, if she earns a higher salary than you and you depend on the salary (Husband 2).

Instrument Development Stages

Step One: Item Generation: The focus group discussion session helped in generating views that also serve as items for scale development. In addition, information from the literature was also useful in the whole process of item generation. Cognitive models were used to identify radicals (i.e cognitive features of an item that affect difficulty) and **incidentals** (surface items that do not affect difficulty).

Stage Two: Item Selection: The researchers transcribed the FGDs where suitable items were selected and compared to those in the literature for development of performance ecology scale. Items selected were those that were consistently described as relevant to the construct in existing literature. They were given to a cross-section of volunteers who role-played the duties of romantic partners in order to test how they perceive the attractiveness and appropriateness of the test.

Stage Three: Review for Face Validity: Selected items were reviewed for face validity before inclusion in test items.

Stage Four: Content Validity: Test items were examined by four psychometric experts who have good knowledge of test construction. Some items which were controversial were removed. All other (32) items were deemed appropriate and agreed upon by 7 out of 9 expert judges after some adjustments were made on their formulations. Content validity is very important because it is a prerequisite for two other (construct and criterion) forms of validity (Lynn, 1986). It can be defined as the ability of the selected items to reflect the variables of the construct in the measure. Agreement was therefore above 80% level. This fulfilled the requirement of expert judgement on scale construction. For instance, Kassarian (1977) stated that the lowest acceptable level of coefficients of reliability should be above .80.

Stage Five: Item-Analysis: The 32 items selected for the Performance Ecology Scale were significant and therefore retained after pilot study. Alpha coefficient for the performance ecology scale was .76 using the Validation method.

Stage Six: Inter-Item Correlation was high (above recommended 0.2) (Kline, 1993) for the new performance ecology scale.

Stage Seven: Item Statistics: Mean and standard deviation of each scale were computed.

Stage Eight: Factor Analysis: This was done at the pilot level and reported accordingly. The Performance Ecology Scale returned 6 different factors as shown in Table 2.

Stage Nine: Reliability and validity tests were carried out. Construct or criterion validity examined the convergent and discriminant validity of all scales (Keyton, 2006).

RESULTS

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and Intercorrelation of study variables Explaining convergent and divergent (discriminant) validity of the Performance Ecology Scale

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Marriage Dialectical Harmony Scale	28.55	4.45	(0.85)	.10**	.31**	-.21**	-.46**
2.	Performance Ecology Scale	80.36	13.53		(0.79)	.05	.04	.12**
3.	Attributional/Complexity Empathic Scale	93.45	17.37		(0.81)	.01	.39**	
4.	Infidelity Proneness Scale	1.54	6.21		(0.87)	-.10**		
5.	Relationship Maintenance Scale	127.87	11.65		(0.91)			

Note: N = 1328; P < 0.01 (2-tailed) Cronbach's alpha (α) in bold and parenthesis

Performance Ecology Scale: Earlier, in a pilot study, the performance ecology scale returned an alpha coefficient of .76. It also correlated positively with the investment model scale in a test of convergent/divergent validity. In this study, the scale has an alpha coefficient of .79 (.80) and was correlated with the Marriage Dialectics Harmony Scale, Attributional Complexity/Empathic Accuracy Scale, Infidelity Proneness Scale and Relationship Maintenance Scale. As shown in Table 1 above, the performance ecology scale correlated positively with dialectical harmony ($r=.10, p <.05$) and relationship maintenance ($r=.12, p <.05$).

Factor Analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 15.0 version) with Principal Component Analysis and direct varimax rotation was used to determine the factorial structure of the scale, based on scores of 1328 participants. In line with the recommendations of Stephens (1986), factors had to have Eigen values of 1.0 and greater. This produced 6 component factors that conformed to Kaiser’s criterion of sampling adequacy. These results, with Eigen values, are presented below.

Table 2. Factor Analysis of Performance Ecology Scale showing subscales, associated factors, Eigen Values and Percentage of Variance.

ITEMS	SUBSCALES	EIGEN VALUES	% OF VARIANCE	CUMMULATIVE %	ASSOCIATED FACTOR
16, 8, 32, 24	1	4.41	19.18	19.18	Comparison distress
22, 21, 18, 17	2	3.04	13.23	32.40	Perceived genetic incompatibility
12, 28, 20, 4	3	2.61	11.34	43.75	Reflective pride
2, 1, 6, 5	4	1.87	8.14	51.89	Progressive talk
25, 26, 29, 30	5	1.35	5.85	57.74	Relational economics
13, 9, 14	6	1.27	5.54	63.28	Parenting acumen

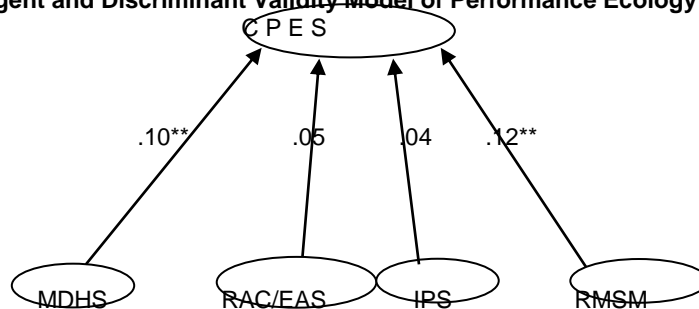
Table 2 shows that 6 factors with Eigen values greater than 1 were extracted. This accounted for a total of 63.28% cumulative variance.

Verifying Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Convergent validity ensures that constructs that are expected to be related are actually related while divergent or discriminant validity tests to ascertain that constructs that should have no relationship do not, in reality, have such relationship. These tests are usually carried out using simple correlations or multiple/hierarchical regressions.

From Table 1, we extracted the following statistical information on the relationship between the Couples Performance Ecology Scale (CPES) and other scales.

Fig 1: Convergent and Discriminant Validity Model of Performance Ecology Scale with Related Scales



Key: MDHS – Marriage Dialectics Harmony Scale
 AC/EAS - Attributional Complexity/Empathic Accuracy Scale



IPS – Infidelity Proneness Scale
RMSM – Relational Maintenance Strategies Measure

DISCUSSION

Based on Cole's (1987) assumptions that non-significant correlations indicate that the scales are distinct from each other, we accept that the EAS and the IPS scales are distinct measures from the PES. In the same way, the MDHS and RMSM are related to the PES and may measure related, constructs. This does not mean that they are measuring exactly the same construct but shows that there may be inherent factors that are common to all the scales. The present result shows that the PES is similar to two of the measures (MDHS and RMS) and structurally dissimilar to two others (EAS and IPS). In essence, it shows that participant's marital performance niches were clearly defined and not subjected to the swings and turns of dialectical tensions. This is because there are basic levels of harmony in the thought processes of the participants in favour of their marital relationships. In the same way distinct and complementary performance ecology of participants is likely to enhance favourable relationship maintenance. For the divergence, it pointedly indicates that infidelity proneness cannot be part of good performance ecology in marriage hence the discriminant result. When also looking at attributional complexity/empathic accuracy, the discriminant result could be explained by the fact that people who are attributionally complex are not likely to exhibit high empathic accuracy and this may make them vulnerable to all kinds of emerging decisions. People of this nature are not likely to be identified with specific tenets that promote marital relationship.

Conclusion

The study was an attempt to develop a performance ecology scale to assess the level of complementary interaction between spouses in a marital relationship. As the study was conducted in a distinct cultural group with some culturally-distinct marital practices, it was important to engage participants in a focus group discussion (PGD) as a way of gathering information on their opinions and ideas about the concept of performance ecology. The FGD revealed a lot of information on participants understanding of performance ecology and there was the need to supplement this with additional information from what is current in the literature about performance ecology.

In all, information from the literature and the FGDs helped in the formulation of items for the performance ecology scale which was administered to participants to ascertain the psychometric and other (validity/reliability) information about the scale. It was discovered that what emerged as the final scale to measure performance ecology can yield a composite score as well as other subscale scores. From factor analysis there emerged six components/subscales that measured comparison distress, perceived genetic incompatibility, reflective pride, progressive talk, relationship economics and parenting skills. We recommend that researchers and marital therapists utilize this scale during their routine interactions and dealings with clients as a way of improving on counseling and intervention activities with spouses and the general population on matters relating to interpersonal relationships. It is expected that frequent and proper use of the scale will lead to better understanding between marital partners and reduce the incidents of fear, anxiety and bickering that most times lead to extreme decisions such as separation or divorce.

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Appendix 1
Performance Ecology Scale
Iboro F. A. Ottu & John O. Ekore

Instructions: As a husband or wife, there are specific behaviours that you may observe in your lives as you interact with your partner. Read the following items and say how much you agree or disagree with each item about your marriage based on the following options "Strong Disagreed (1), Disagree (2) Rarely Agree (3), Agree (4) Strongly Agree (5).

There is no right or wrong answers. Please mark option to every item as it applies to you.

Name:

Gender:

Age:.....

Socioeconomic Status:

Table with 7 columns (S/N, SD, D, RA, A, SA) and 24 rows of items for the Performance Ecology Scale.



	awkward.					
25.	Economic investment in our relationship is where my husband/wife shows the greatest strength and self relevance.					
26.	My husband/wife is better than me in providing most of the economic necessities in our home.					
27.	Anytime I appear to do more than my husband/wife in providing for the home, he/she feels belittled.					
28.	When my husband/wife continues to do better than me in providing for the home, I feel happy and excited.					
29.	The area of economic upkeep of our home is where my husband/wife shows no self-relevance or strength.					
30.	In the area of cooking and economic contribution in our home, my husband/wife makes virtually no contribution.					
31.	When I do better than my husband/wife in providing for the home he/she feels happy and favoured.					
32.	Should situations arise where my husband/wife does better than me in providing for the home, I feel belittled.					

SD - Strongly Disagree, D – Disagree, AR - Rarely Agree, A – Agree, SA - Strongly Agree