

## Original Research Article

# Psychological Perception of Masculine Femininity under the Prism of Intermarital Conflicts Complexity in Cotonou/Benin Republic

Tossou Tata Jean<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Enseignant-Chercheur, Maître-Assistant des Universités/CAMES, Psychologie Sociale, du Travail et des Organisations, BP 823 Cotonou, Jericho, Benin

### Article History

Received: 29.01.2022

Accepted: 03.03.2022

Published: 09.03.2022

### Journal homepage:

<https://www.easpublisher.com>

### Quick Response Code



**Abstract:** On behalf of sexual equality, some women find it hard to submit to the authority of their husbands. Most of the time, those women are considered as wives with men temperament, exempted of flexibility. Through the colloquial name *masculine femininity*, this lack of flexibility leads to conflicts in many couples in Cotonou. This research is carried out with a quantitative approach through a written questionnaire sent to 83 people with regard to inclusive and exclusive criterias. The reasonable choice method, the iceberg method and the volunteers method are the three main methods used for this research. The methodology helps to collect key information and material which revealed that many men (94%) do not accept wives domination. The data collected from the survey point out that 73,3% and 61,9% of people interviewed, consider wives subjugation to their husbands as a cultural and spiritual fact and agree that women should remain subjugated to men's authority. However, some of them, 94,1% interviewed, mainly intellectuals, think that we should necessarily refer to law so as to know women and men's role within couples. They reject any idea of man's authority on woman. Thus, it is important to highlight that the constant observation of man authority and or woman's role doesn't always guarantee a couple exempted of conflicts.

**Keywords:** Masculine femininity, Intramarital conflict, Complexity, Couple, Gender role, Benin.

**Copyright © 2022 The Author(s):** This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution **4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0)** which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Any social issue analysis requires the knowledge of its definition and the specific characteristics of the targets or the element that could help to observe and get a deep understanding of this phenomenon. For this article which shows « the masculine femininity » as a worsening factor of intermarital relation, many people, men (55,4%) as well as women (44,6%) have freely said their words in the frame of this research work. The « masculine femininity » concept in this article is analysed through a dyadic approach; as the couple is known as a living place where each partner hardly hides his or her imperfections for a very long time. According to the scientific direction of the current research work, the couple is composed by male and female. However, gathering two things and most importantly the ones with different aspects, calls for the setting up of a harmonious environment in which each element affords to provide with a personal flexibility and key contribution. So, within a couple, man and woman have

to work unanimously to keep their couple successful. Therefore, each partner should know his/her role and abide it by decently.

E. Goldbeter-Merinfeld (2006) said, « At the origin of a family, a community and by extension a society, is a couple, considered as the key element with its general and specific characteristics. », For E. Goldbeter-Merinfeld (2006),

« a family, no matter its composition fits into a space or a place where starts his social and domestic life, and where takes place a miscellaneous of behaviours almost ritual, defining, for each group, its uniqueness », (E. Goldbeter-Merinfeld, 2006, p. 42).

This definition, obviously very simple, tries to point out what couple is and releases a concern. Particularly, what should we understand while talking of couple? As answer to this concern, many scientists attempt to bring in their useful contributions with specific particularities by everyone. In that perspective,

\*Corresponding Author: Tossou Tata Jean

Enseignant-Chercheur, Maître-Assistant des Universités/CAMES, Psychologie Sociale, du Travail et des Organisations, BP 823 Cotonou, Jericho, Benin

J. Scanzoni, K. Polonko, J. Teachman and L. Thompson (1989), view a couple as a relationship of utmost importance based on sexuality between partners. However,

« *a couple relationship is specific, emotionally crucial for partners. A relationship which aims to remain stable through time and in which sexuality can be, but not necessarily, one of its relational areas* » (N. Favez, 2013, p.13).

Throughout those conceptual apprehensions with legitimate consideration to sexuality in couple definition, it becomes crucial to highlight in the current article that a couple is the intentional and factual act by which two people of opposite sexes chose deliberately to get together, sharing theoretically the same values, perceptions, beliefs, in order to enjoy their sexual, reproductive, emotional, behavioural, cognitive, etc., intimacy. All of this in a harmonious and logic complementarity. This suggests that for a couple to be, we should have a dyadic association of man and woman whose intercomplementarity helps to satisfy the requirements related to the breeding function and that of conjugal complexity, gauge of a functional continuity and peaceful organization of the couple. Such conceptual structuration requires a clear and defined role of man, so the male aspect and the one of woman which calls for female aspect. This will surely help readers to have a deep understanding of the thematic of masculine femininity.

In fact, seen as a place where man and woman freely decide to set up a family and build their life together, the couple sometimes turns into a ballet of gender expressive behaviour due to the fact that some women with strong or shrewish behaviour seek at all costs to dominate their husbands. By doing so, they become less flexible; flexibility which is considered to be the most important quality required from every spouse and moreover from females. At the beginning of such a relationship, love, harmony, peace and the great feeling to be with one's partner, become daily blessings. Those are the characteristics of the couple people dream of.

Unfortunately, in couple the evolving process of the couple it happens that a masculine femininity shows up, and hampers the above-mentioned elements. In that case, it is noticed that some women, despite the fact that they have access to their husband's wealth by necessity or due to their right to, pretend to have authority or power which allows them to make trouble or disrespect their husbands. Nevertheless, male's authority lays on cultural beliefs and wealth availability. In Benin republic, man and woman's roles within the couple have been clearly set up by the society since the ancestral age. This role subdivision was implemented during the socialisation process. For M. Darmon (2006), this socialisation

« is the set of processes by which the individual is transformed or shaped by the society he lives in. *It is a process through which he gets the ways of doing, thinking and living socially.* » (M. Darmon, 2006, p. 6).

In the same vein, C. Perronnet (2016, p. 5) highlights that « socialisation occurs in a social context where genders are separated by distinguished institutions which recognise male and female ». In the same way, M. Fellous (1981) quoted by C. Broqua, et A. Doquet (2013, p. 308) said that « *In Mali and anywhere else, genders roles are taught at a very young age, especially through specific games separating boys from girls.* ». Those roles acquired by adolescents, derive from an observation and adults imitation process. That's what makes C. Broqua, and A. Doquet, (2013, p. 308) think that

« *it is usual to see children looking at elder with great and joking attention the way they may behave in front of puppet ballet. So, to keep and guarantee the transmission at this step of genders role distinction to young generation, the society, in its sociocultural dynamic, mandate men and women for this purpose.* ».

The role of man and woman according to their gender is a priori established by the society they live in. A. Cukier et É. Debray (2014) makes it clear when he said

« *the typical behaviour of man or woman (....) appears as a result of social conditioning. Therefore, with masculine socialisation, the specific and representative role of the authority is man's affair.* » (A. Cukier et É. Debray, 2014, p. 227).

In the same token, K. Koné (2002, p. 21) added that « *masculinity requires specific qualities such as courage, authority or physical endurance. Man within the couple and according to sociocultural considerations is the one who leads the couple and who works and provides the couple with resources needed for physiological and psychological satisfaction.* ».

For Castro 2012 cité par C. Broqua, et A. Doquet (2013, p. 308),

« *man should be able to satisfy his family needs, but first of all his partner's needs. Man embodies authority within the couple and reflects the role related to that authority so as to be respected.* ».

In this gender role specification, women are known to stay with children, nurture and educate them. Moreover, it is woman who gives birth to children and become by nature, mother of the family. She is then considered as the one who should stay at home and provides children with the care, bliss and the attention they deserve; as established by the society. In that perception of woman's role in the society, Coenen-Huther (2001, p. 192) thinks that the woman doesn't have to perform any work for which she is paid, she has to be available for her husband and children; that's all.

Hoffman (2002, p. 8) shares the same view when he said:

*« femininity is the expression of woman's subjugation to both her husband and the social requirements related to breeding. Woman represents then the affective element for children and even for her husband. She is the educator, the masterpiece, the keystone, etc. in children's development process ».*

Nowadays, the social realities with regard to woman's role within the society have changed, despite the gender role specification. The world is continuously dynamic and women access the highest administrative responsibilities than men or at least, perform works they get paid for; no matter the role the society assigns them or their husband's financial level.

This remark, is also made by Bosquet (2009) who explains that

*« women do not want to be reduced to the maternal, and ultimately to the physiological role society assigns them. In addition, the gender equality issue is still on and is progressively taking into account within society. Women are no more assigned to residence as projected by cultural ideology. »* (Bosquet, 2009, p. 319).

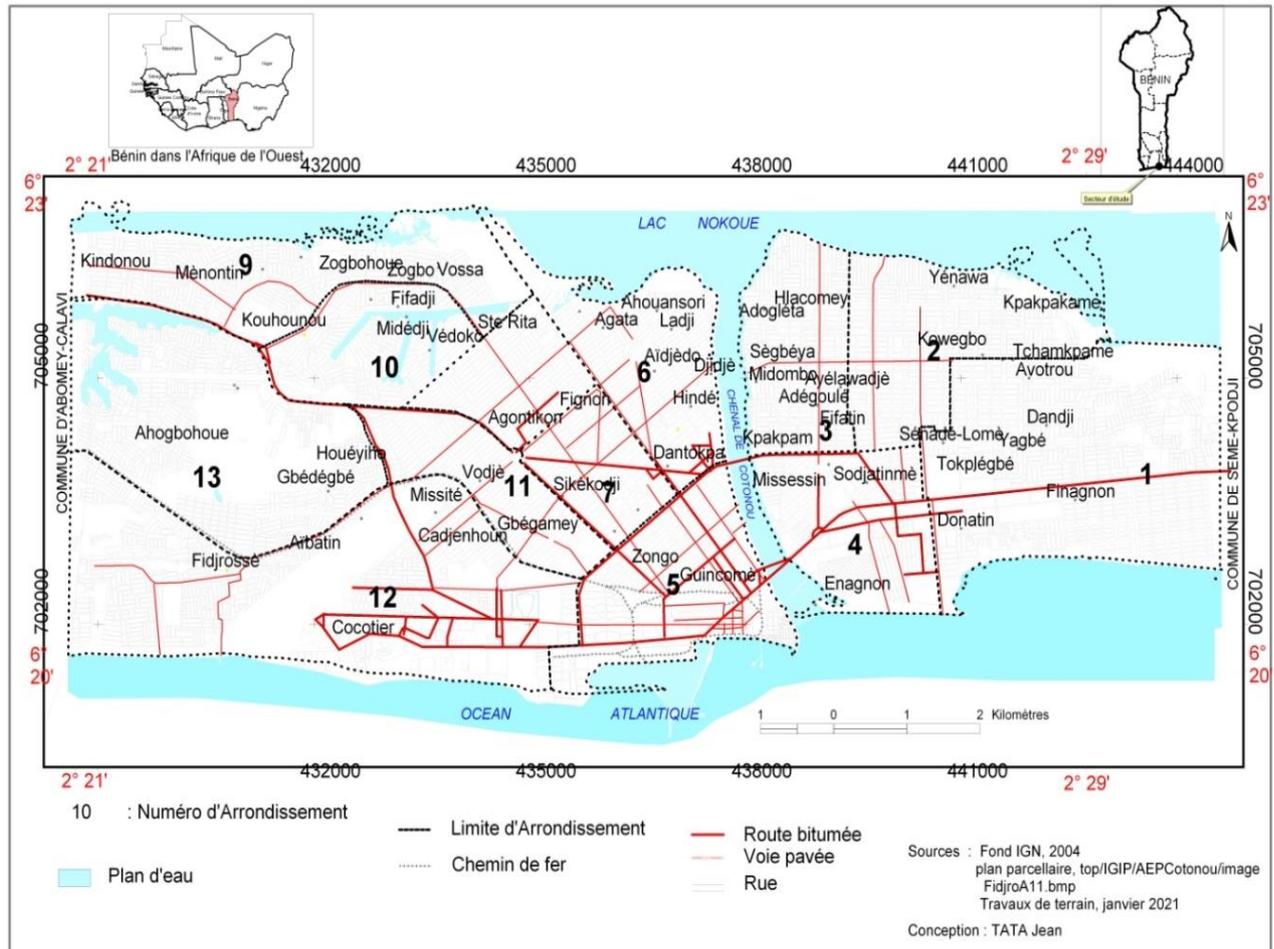
So, the gender role separation and the related behaviours are most of the time permuted in many couples particularly in intellectual couples in Cotonou, Benin republic. This thus brings in the issue of masculine femininity. This may be appreciated through a quantitative and qualitative role, thus the man and woman's responsibilities within a couple. Therefore, due to his personal belief in the irrevocability of gender's role within couple, man becomes rude when he notices that his wife is treading off his authority or trying to dominate him. The situation becomes relaxing when woman changes her mind and shows flexibility. On the other hand, when woman keeps showing up her defying authority towards her husband, acting as if she were the man, the chief of the family, a flow of interconjugal conflict breaks out and worsens things. In front of this critical situation, each partner becomes distrustful and stays on his defense. In this kind of couple, the dyadic rhythm is strengthened with corrosive and constant conflict which fragilised interpersonal considerations and crumble couples' harmony. This misunderstanding, is due to the misperceptions of some men who think they should show male authority within couple, and the socio-anthropologic consideration which considers men as the unquestionable cultural authority within couples. In addition, it is important to point out that this social perception becomes more visible, not just as a social perspective but as an uncontested social reality when it is a man who has the financial and material resources for couple needs' satisfaction at his disposal. The backwash of this perception is that, men see it

uncomfortable for women to act like a man, revealing their masculine femininity aspect. It is a situation that causes conflicts and divorce especially in intellectual couples in Cotonou, Benin.

Therefore, masculine femininity as a special character of some women, leads undoubtedly to « conflicts » between partners with regards to their genders' roles. We may then see some women with man behaviour, rude, unflexible, making complexive couples' misunderstandings. More often, at the end of those troubles, nothing is and will never be like the way it was before. The uncomfortable environment created by the conflicts made of suspicions and distrust affects not only the couple's daily life, but it also impacts relatives negatively. It is crucial for scientific communities to focus on that social issue, seek for strategies or perspectives and come up with workable solutions so as to facilitate harmonious, blissful and peaceful couple setting up strategies. That's what I seek to throughout the current article. For a deep understanding of the phenomenon, in the frame of our research, I come to a key question: How can the masculine femininity issue become an explanatory factor of interconjugal conflicts complexity within intellectual couples in Cotonou? The main aim throughout this question is to suggest psychological perspectives that will help to provide people (victims) with psychosocial assistance. To reach that goal, I argue that the lack of flexibility of woman towards her man is the fundamental cause of conflicts within intellectual couples. This research is structured into four (04) parts. In the first part, I make a brief presentation of the research context. It is followed by the methodology. The third session, displays the results. A discussion is ultimately undertaken at the last part so as to compare the results obtained with those of previous researchers.

## **2. A BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH CONTEXT**

In Benin, the city of Cotonou is located on the corridor of littoral near the Atlantic Ocean, from which it gets his department name, Littoral. It is a location derived from the last zoning activity of January 15th, 1999. Lays 79 km<sup>2</sup> (0,07% of the homeland surface), the Littoral department is the smallest among the twelve departments of Benin. Located on 6°20' of the North parallel and at 2°20' of meridian East, this department is between Nokoué Lake to the North, the Atlantic Ocean to the South, the commune of Sèmè-Kpodji (of department of Ouémé) to the East and the Commune of Abomey-Calavi (of Atlantique department) to the West. It is the only department composed of thirty (13) districts and 143 city-towns. Cotonou is Benin economic capital where is implemented the majority of political and administrative infrastructures. The map below illustrates it.



### Administrative map of the City of Cotonou

Reference: National Institut of Geography, 2004

The population of the department of Littoral revealed by the fourth global population and habitat enrolment (GPHE4) of May, 2013 is 679 012 people with 325 872 men against 353 140 women from 166 433 houses. In 2022, the population is estimated at 1 268 229 according to the GPHE4 of 2013. The Littoral department is a cosmopolite one which gathers people from a range of ethnic groups. However, *Fon and related* speakers (56,5%), *Adja and related* speakers (17,7%) and those who speak *Yoruba and related* (10,9%) make up the three main ethnic groups with impressive demography. The majority of the population of the Littoral department are catholic christians (51,2%) and muslims (16,9%). The other christians and celestials are respectively (12,2%) and (5,7%) according to the (GPHE4, 2013)

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Any research endeavour requires a priori an organisation and a well defined methodology. To abide by that logic, this article is written through quantitative approach that calls for a specific tool usage like a questionnaire so as to collect relevant information. This

tool has been implemented through three research approaches: the reasonable choice method, the iceberg method and the volunteers approach. It was quite difiul to feel in the pattern component because of men’s reluctance to tell whether they accept the phenomenon of masculine femininity in their couple, and to women to tell us if they are the one holding the power or authority in their couple.

Faced with that challenge, we stay on track, using Le Van (2010, p.41)’s approach which makes it clear that in front of difficulties, the survey should not be « at any rest ». Then, 83 people were selected with inclusive and exclusive criterias and have participated in this reseach. Thoses inclusive creterias are :

- Being a resident of the City of Cotonou during at least 4 years;
- Being in a couple since at least 5 years;
- Belonging to a couple whithin what the feminity masculin is expressive;
- Being a witsner of couples conflicts caused by the phenomenon of masculine femininity;

The people interviewed (100,0%) are at least 20 years old with secondary school as academy level (75,0%); 45,8% of them work in the private sector and 40,0% work in the public sector It is important to point out that for this reseach, we give privilege to intelectual couples. The objective is to see whether the status of the

intelectual woman predisposes her to masculine femininity.

### 3. RESULTS

The different results we come at are mentioned in this part.

#### 3.1 Socio-demographic Data of Interlocutors

**Table I: Distribution of Interlocutors according to Sex and Age**

Sex, Age						
	Male		Female		Total	
	N	% cit.	N	% cit.	N	% cit.
Under 20years	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%
20-40 years	14	16,9%	23	27,7%	37	44,6%
40-60 years	24	28,9%	12	14,5%	36	43,4%
Beyond 60years	8	9,6%	2	2,4%	10	12,0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>55,4%</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>44,6%</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Reference: reseach data, April, 2021

Through the above table, it is obvious that among the 83 interlocutors, 55, 4% and 44, 6% are respectively men and women. In addition, 43,4% and 44, 6% of them are respectively aged between 40 to 60 years and between 20 to 40 years. But 12,0% of people

interviewed are 60 years old. The people interviewed are considered physically mature regarding their ages and are able to express their thoughts on topics dealing with the couple and on the social realities as well.

**Table II: Distribution of Interlocutors regarding their Profesional Status and Academic Level**

Professional_Status, Level_of_study								
	Civil servant In private sector		Civil servant In public sector		Jobless		Total	
	N	% cit.	N	% cit.	N	% cit.	N	% cit.
Unemployed	0	0,0%	1	1,2%	4	4,8%	5	6,0%
Primary	0	0,0%	1	1,2%	2	2,4%	3	3,6%
Secondary	18	21,7%	11	13,3%	2	2,4%	31	37,3%
University	20	24,1%	21	25,3%	3	3,6%	44	53,0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>45,8%</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>41,0%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13,3%</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Reference: reseach data, April, 2021

This table reveals that 37,3% and 53,0% of interlocutors attend respectively secondary school and university as their academic level. In the same way, 45,8% and 41,0% of them are employed in private and public sectors. So, the interlocutors involved in this reseach, worked in private or public sector.

#### 3.2 Cultural Historiography regarding Men and Women’s Roles within Couples in Cotonou

The masculine femininity seems to influence the role each partner plays in the couple. That’s the reason why, interested in that reality, interviewers were asked to give the fundamental cause of gender roles classification. The paragraph bellow sums up those causes and the perceptions of the actors on roles inversion within couples.

**Table III: Gender roles irréversibility according to interlocutors and the criteria of their definition**

Gender_Role_of_partners_irreversible, Criterias_of_Gender_roles_definition_						
	Yes		No		Total	
	N	% cit.	N	% cit.	N	% cit.
Cultural	31	37,3%	14	16,9%	45	54,2%
Legislative	4	4,8%	13	15,7%	17	20,5%
Biblique	13	15,7%	8	9,6%	21	25,3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>57,8%</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>42,2%</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Reference: reseach data, april, 2021

This table points out that, 57,8% of interlocutors think every man and woman have specific roles to perform in their couple, adding that those roles shouldn't be permuted; but 42,2 % of them, think the contrary. In addition, 54,2% of interlocutors argue that patners' roles within couples are established by cultural principles, where 25,3% support that gender rolewithin

couples is clearly mentioned in the Bible. Meanwhile, just 20,5% of interlocutors argue that the Law has recommended to men and women the roles each of them has to play in the couple. It is important to mention that culture is the key source of men and women's perception of their roles within couples.

**Table IV: Roles reversibility according to man or woman**

Sex, Role_gender_of_partners_irreversible						
	Male		Female		Total	
	N	% obs.	N	% obs.	N	% obs.
Yes	39	81,3%	9	18,8%	48	100,0%
No	7	20,0%	28	80,0%	35	100,0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>55,4%</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>44,6%</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Reference: Reseach data, april, 2021

As showed in the table above, men (81,3%) think that gender roles within couple can be permuted

but women (80,0%) believe the oposite. Gender roles reversibility within couples is conflicting.

**Table V: The corelation between genders role and woman's subjugation to man's authority**

subjugation_of_Women_to_men_authority, Criterias_of_gender_roles_definition_						
	Yes		No		Total	
	N	% obs.	N	% obs.	N	% obs.
Cultural	33	73,3%	12	26,7%	45	100,0%
Legislative	1	5,9%	16	94,1%	17	100,0%
Biblic	13	61,9%	8	38,1%	21	100,0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>56,6%</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>43,4%</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Source: Données de terrain, avril, 2021

This table shows that the interlocutor who think that culture and the Bible are gender roles origin within couples agree respectively at 73,3% and 61,9% that woman should be subjugated to man’s authority.

However, according to 94,1% of the interlocutors who think that we should refer to Law so as to know partners’ role in the couples, there is no way to think of any man’s authority upon woman.

**Table VI: Correlation between the variables « sex » and « woman at the center of men’s responsibilities in couples »**

Women_in_the_responsability_of_men, Sex						
	Yes		No		Total	
	N	% cit.	N	% cit.	N	% cit.
Male	3	30,0%	43	58,9%	46	55,4%
Female	7	70,0%	30	41,1%	37	44,6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Source: reseach data, April, 2021

Through this table, it is showed that 70,0% against 30,0% of iterlocutors who argued that men responsibilities can be carried by women, are respectively men and women. But 58,9% of those who believe the opposite are men versus 30,0% of women.

This t high proportion of interlocutors who have negative percpetion of women’s ability to perform men’s roles is accounted for by cutural and biblical influence of on their perception.

**Table VII: Correlation between the variables «women at the center of mens’ responsibilties » and « mans’agreement to stay at home and perform househorld chores »**

Women_in_the_responsability_of_men, Agreement_of_man_to_stay_at_home						
	Yes		No		Total	
	N	% cit.	N	% cit.	N	% cit.
Never	0	0,0%	48	65,8%	48	57,8%
Rarely	1	10,0%	3	4,1%	4	4,8%
Very rarely	6	60,0%	20	27,4%	26	31,3%
Often	3	30,0%	2	2,7%	5	6,0%
Very often	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Source: Data research, April, 2021

It is obvious in the table above that 60,0% of those who argued that women are able to perform mens’ responsibilities within the couple claim that men rarely agree to stay at home and carry out household chores. Among the interlocutors who think it is impossible for women to perform mens’ responsibilties in a couple, 65,8% argue that men can never stay at

home and take care of the house. Even if he might do so, it is very scarce that this happens (27,4%).

**3.3 Authority and Power Enactment within the Couple**

This paragraph presents all the variables that are required while talking of authority exertion in a couple.

**Table VIII: The link between the variables « sexes » and « resources and authority deserving within the couple »**

Sex, Resources_and_Right_to_Authority						
	Male		Female		Total	
	N	% cit.	N	% cit.	N	% cit.
Never	2	4,3%	3	8,1%	5	6,0%
Rarely	1	2,2%	1	2,7%	2	2,4%
Very rarely	1	2,2%	3	8,1%	4	4,8%
Often	1	2,2%	26	70,3%	27	32,5%
Very often	41	89,1%	4	10,8%	45	54,2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Source: Research data, april, 2021

The information from the above table reveals that people have different perceptions of Authority incarnation in a couple. For men, the question of authority within a couple is a fact of the quality and quantity of resources the authority owner has at his disposal. As far as women are concerned, they believe

that such a power enactment is subject to the same parameters mentioned by men. Having financial and or material resources gives then authority in a couple, nomatter the gender of the person who has those resources.

**Table IX: Link between the variables « sexes » and « Woman’s authority related to ressources within a couple »**

Sex, Authority_of_woman_related_to_resources						
	Male		Female		Total	
	N	% obs.	N	% obs.	N	% obs.
Never	43	93,5%	5	13,5%	48	57,8%
Rarely	1	2,2%	2	5,4%	3	3,6%
Very rarely	0	0,0%	1	2,7%	1	1,2%
Often	0	0,0%	1	2,7%	1	1,2%
Very often	2	4,3%	28	75,7%	30	36,1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Source: Research data, April, 2021

The above table shows that men think the fact that a woman works and satisfies her couple needs, as her husband is jobless, never gives her (93,5%) a power or an authority upon the couple. But women (75,7%)

argue that as they work and provide the couple with the resources needed, and more importantly while the man is jobless, they should be given authority and superiority in the couple.

**Table X: Link between woman’s authority or genders consideration and conflicts within couples**

Authority_of_woman_and_harmony_of_couple Genders_Role_implemented_and_absence_of_conflic						
	Yes		No		Total	
	N	% cit.	N	% cit.	N	% cit.
Yes	0	0,0%	9	10,8%	9	10,8%
No	1	1,2%	73	88,0%	74	89,2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1,2%</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>98,8%</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

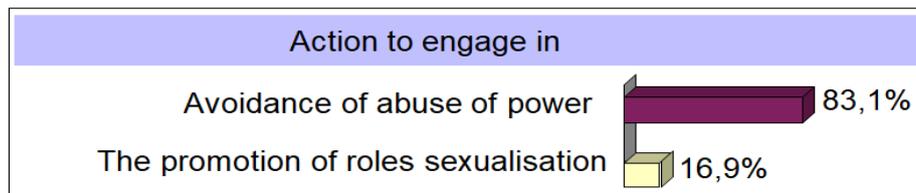
Source: Données de terrain, avril, 2021

As we can read in the above table, interlocutors (98,8%) think, if it happens that the woman is the only one who provides the couple with financial or material resources, this doesn't guarantee harmony and concord in the couple. In addition, some interlocutors (89,2%) think, if man is the the only person who works and provides the couple with resources, and the woman stays at home for house

cares, the couple is exempt from conflicts related to gender roles.

### 3.4 Intervention Approach for Intramarital Conflicts Reduction

Conflicts reduction within couples where woman shows a masculine femininity, requires the intervention of social psychologists. Those social psychologists should abide by some key principles in order to succeed in their mission.

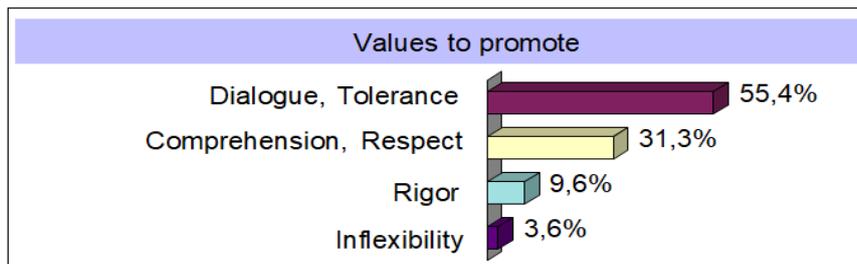


**Graphic 1: Action We Should Engage in to Reduce Constantly Intramarital Conflicts**

Source: Research data, April, 2021

As we can see throughout the above chart, interlocutors (83,1%) think that to reduce constantly intramarital conflicts within couples, partners should

avoid abuse of authority. Other interlocutors (16,9%) argue we should promote gender roles separation.



**Graphic 2: Values to Promote to Help in Intramarital conflicts Reduction**

Source: research data, April, 2021

Through the above graph, it is made clear by interlocutors that dialogue and tolerance (55,4%), followed by mutual understanding and respect (31,3%) are the values to promote so as to reduce conflicts within couples.

## DISCUSSION

The distribution of roles in couples under the barren of gender is organized, kept and transferred through cultural historiography. This cultural historiography is a set of transcript or oral ancestral data, and in the current context, it is the fundamental element which guides couples in roles attributions according to partner's gender. It is one of the key reasons why R. Steele (1719), quoted by A. Chatenet (2009, p.33) has indexed this historiography related to gender roles within couples. For him, the husband is the actual chief of the house, the woman has just a subservient authority.

Moreover, A. d'Espinassy (1764, p. 66), claims that women have to be a background support to their husbands who is busy performing important tasks

or regularly absent at home due to his professional responsibilities. In the same vein, C. Rollin (1728, p. 103) gives a bit more details, when he states that high responsibilities belong to men and women should be limited to household chores, which he qualified as «small care and meaningless details». This kind of historiographical organisation is still ingrained in beninesses' mind-sets, and even more, in 2021 in the 21st century, thoses realities appear in their behaviours and their way of thinking as well as in couples. For some beninesses, (65,8%) men will never accept to stay at home and take part in house works, no matter the condition; or if he has to, some beninesses (60,0%) think, it is rare. They support those men have to get out for work and it is women's responsibility to do houseworks. But can strict gender roles distribution facilitate the setting up or hope of harmonious couple?

For some beninesses (54,2%) social regulations or Law can not define partners' roles within couples as it is specifically related to cultural principles. Male groups (81,3%) stress that gender role permutation is unthinkable even if the female community (80,0%) believes the contrary. That is what motivates today

women (70,0%) and urges them to proudly show the masculinity they bear in their femininity. But men (58,9%) do not think so. They (56,6%) contend women should be subjugated to men's authority, according to cultural principle (73,3%) and Bible recommendations (61,9%). In the same way, C. Rollin, 1728 quoted by A. Chatenet (2009, p. 33), argues that women's subjugation is natural. Unfortunately, the misunderstanding between woman and man related to subjugation issue, brings intramarital conflicts and breaks couples apart. But men still think they should be the ones satisfying couple needs. Those which men exhibit is what is considered either in cultural orientation or biblical one and which become a pretext to consider himself the only authority owner within the couple and the one who has to work and feed his couple. So, the foundational thing which gives men influence and authority upon women is the quantity and quality of the resources he has. R. O. Blood and M. D. Wolfe (1960, p. 30) rightly state that within a couple, from now on, the authority depends on « resources comparison » of partners with the principle « may the best wins ». However, nowadays, men are conscious of the fact that being the only one who has to work and satisfied conveniently his couple needs, no matter the quantity or quality of his resources is an inoperative option.

That is the main reason why J. Coenen-Huther (2001, p. 190) sustains that even men whose revenue is highest within the couple doesn't get enough with regard to the couple daily needs and ambitions. Woman's contribution is more and more uncontested when men's revenue doesn't fit today's socioeconomic challenges. He, (J. Coenen-Huther, 2001p. 189) goes further in his analysis adding that « *If women have a constant evolutionary professional carrier and do not quit on work, it is because of a necessity than a sake of being independent and full-blown* » Women, regarding the daily socioeconomic challenges, should contribute to diversify the couple's revenue in order to help her man. Nowadays, they work both in private and public sectors and make money. In this social dynamic, women become less dependent and do not accept to be under estimated. If it happens that man loses his job, woman, who owns resources will then back him up and then express obviously her authority as her man used to do toward him. R. O. Blood and D. M. Wolfe (1960, p. 12-13) endorse that view when they contend « the partner who can significantly satisfy the other's needs or contribute to the couple's resources more than he has to, will turn power to his advantage. ». Despite the logic of that principle, men feel frustrated and claim the enactment of authority. This, leads to conflicts and drives the couple into abyss.

In Benin republic, men and women (89,2%) come to the conclusion that the respect of gender role subdivision within couples with men's domination under estimating women gives way to intramarital

conflicts. In addition, the same benineses (98,8%) state that resources availability at women's disposal, which can give her power or authority, is not without consequences. In fact, men and women suggest to partners to avoid abuse of authority in couples. For (55,4%) of interlocutors, promoting values such as dialogue and tolerance in couple is very important to spare couples of conflicts. Those values will help partners not to come at an « absolute authority » of any gender upon the other. This calls for mutual efforts and resources share for bliss and harmony in couples. Obviously, this will not be an easy task; it calls for empathy. Therefore, each partner has to treat his/her counterpart the way he or she would want to as much as possible; even if all couples may not come to that result. For that sake, they can ask for professionals support, as psychologists, couple advisers, etc. That will help them to rearrange, rebuild their couple and start new adventures through a new dyadic process, gage of peace, bliss, harmony and serenity within their couple.

## CONCLUSION

Man and Woman are invited to live in a couple for sake of many reasons. For some, is a question of breeding and build setup a family. For some others, is a fact of natural care and pleasure. No matter what the reasons may be, through this cohabitation each of them finds themselves performing a specific role in a couple, lays on cultural and social rules. However, the roles separation referring to sexes, is inadmissible according to men; where women, particularly intellectual do not share the same opinion and think that partners role within couples can be permuted. This women perception, irritates men who focus on cultural considerations and tell how they are authority owner for the simple reason of being the one who work and satisfy couple needs. However, women point out the socioeconomic dynamics which weaken significantly men resources and start working in aim of contributing to couple needs satisfaction and back her men's up. Pursuit of power and authority showing from either side, leads couples into a distrustful and conflictual environment. But for a release perspective, the analysis data reveals that dialogue and tolerance are values to promote so to overcome abuse of authority. It is a contentious work that requires effort and professionals support to surround prejudices and give to one partner the attention and love he/she deserves for couple's well-being.

## REFERENCES

- Wolfe, D. M. (1960). *Husbands & Wives: the Dynamics of Married Living*. New York: Free Press; London: Collier-MacMillan [1960].
- Bosquet, M. F. (2009). Féminité et société ou l'amour en question: le point de vue des conteuses utopistes. *Dix-huitième siècle*, (1), 319-338.
- Broqua, C., & Doquet, A. (2013). Les normes dominantes de la masculinité contre la domination

- masculine?. Batailles conjugales au Mali. *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 53(209-210), 293-321.
- Castro, J. (2012). Les filles sont trop matérialistes : tensions et soupçons dans les échanges économico-sexuels à Bamako, in Assin, D. F., & Eideliman, J. S. (dir.), *Économies morales contemporaines*, Paris, La Découverte, 309-330.
  - Chatenet, A. (2009). La femme, maîtresse de maison? Rôle et place des femmes dans les ouvrages d'économie domestique au XVIIIe siècle. *Armand Colin, Histoire, économie & société*, 4(28), 21-34.
  - Coenen-Huther, J. (2001). Dominance et égalité dans les couples: Un réexamen de la théorie des ressources à la lumière de sous-cultures familiales. *L'Harmattan, Cahiers du Genre*, 1(30), 179-204.
  - Cukier, A., & Debray, É. (dir.), (2014). *La Théorie sociale de G.H. Mead. Études critiques et traductions inédites*. Lormont, Le Bord de l'eau, coll. « La bibliothèque du Mauss ».
  - Darmon, M. (2006). *La socialisation : domaines et approches*. France, Paris, Armand Colin.
  - Espinassy, A. (1764). *Essai sur l'éducation des demoiselles*, brochure in-12 de 84 pages, Paris, B. Hochereau.
  - Favez, N. (2013). *L'examen Clinique du couple: théories et instruments d'évaluation*. Belgique, Bruxelles : Edition Mardaga.
  - Fellous, M. (1981). Socialisation de l'enfant bambara. *Journal des africanistes*, 51(1), 201-215.
  - Hoffman, B. (2002). Gender Ideology and Practice in Mande Societies and in Mande Studies. *Mande Studies*, 4, 1-20.
  - Kone, K. (2002). When Male Becomes Female and Female Becomes Male in Mande. *Mande Studies*, 4, 21-29.
  - Le Van, C. (2010). *Les quatre visages de l'infidélité en France. Enquête sociologique*, Paris, Payot.
  - Margaret, M. (1935). *Sex and Temperament: In three Primitive Societies*, William Morrow and Co.
  - Perronnet, C. (2016). *Qu'est-ce qu'être une Femme - un Homme : Nature ou Culture?: Journées d'études de l'association des Professeurs de Sciences Médicosociales à Lyon, France*, <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01414113>
  - Rollin, C. (1728). *Traité des études*, nouvelle éd. Revue par M. Letronne, Paris, Firmin Didot, 1863, 3(1).
  - Scanzoni, J., Polonko, K., Teachman, J., & Thompson, L. (1989). *The sexual bond: Rethinking families and close relationships*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage
  - Steele, R. (1719). *Bibliothèque des dames contenant des règles générales pour leur conduite, dans toutes les circonstances de la vie*, Amsterdam, François Changuion, (rééd. 1723), 2.
  - Goldbeter-Merinfeld, É. (2006). *Cahiers critiques de thérapie familiale et de pratiques de réseaux*, Volume2, N°37, Années 2001 à 2021, Éditeur: De Boeck Supérieur, Site: [revuesdbsup.cairn.info](http://revuesdbsup.cairn.info), Sur Cairn.info: pp. 35-53.
  - Klapisch-Zuber, C., Segalen, M., & Zonabend, F. (1988). *Histoire de la famille*, sous la direction de André Burguière, [compte-rendu]de François Héran, *Revue française de sociologie* pp. 547-552.

---

**Cite This Article:** Tossou Tata Jean (2022). Psychological Perception of Masculine Femininity under the Prism of Intermarital Conflicts Complexity in Cotonou/Benin Republic. *EAS J PsycholBehavSci*, 4(2), 54-64.