

WHY MARRYING A MARRIED MAN? A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF WOMEN'S PERCEPTION OF POLYGyny

¹Titilayo* A., ²Owoeye M.O. and ³Madamidola O.

¹Department of Demography and Social Statistics, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

²Department of Sociology, Bowen University, Iwo, Nigeria

³Department of English, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Abstract

Motivations of polygynous marriages are far from been settled. While some scholars believe in the age-long marital arrangement, others claim that it is a form of slavery and oppressive to women folks. This paper examines the pragmatic reasons and provides answers to "Why Yoruba women marry married men" despite the afore argument that polygyny fundamentally enslaves women. This study primarily dwell on findings from a qualitative research design with particular emphasis on narratives of married women in typical Yoruba settings of Southwestern Nigeria. Both focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were conducted among Yoruba women in polygynous marriages, specifically those in second, third or more positions. Yoruba women from Ile-Ife and Modakeke towns of Osun State, Southwestern Nigeria were purposively selected for the study. The findings reveal the reasons polygyny is likely to outlive its criticisms in traditional and contemporary societies of Yorubaland. These reasons which include economic security, religious injunction, deception, cultural, and traditional beliefs were considered. The study concludes that the discussion of polygyny needs to be understood from women's perceptives in contrast to the previous consensus and explanations about polygyny in extant studies.

Introduction

In the contemporary and traditional African societies, some people regard men who marry more than one wife as selfish or, in most cases, oppressors, because they bring more than one woman into their household at the same time. This kind of marriage system is referred to as polygyny. *Polygyny* has been defined as “the marriage of a man to at least two women at the same time” (Moorehead, 1991), or in a simpler term the “practice of plural marriage” (Altman and Ginat, 1996; Al-Krenawi, Graham and Slonim-Nevo, 2002). Polygyny has become a valid form of marriage in most African societies with almost 55 percent of women in some settings living in polygamous marital arrangements. Polygyny has also been considered as a social problem as many feminists, feminist scholars, and other social writers have attacked the act in many ways. To these individuals and groups, polygyny kind of marriage is full of unhealthy rivalry, rebellion, and needless and avoidable war. To them, a polygamous home is likened to a psychiatric home or rehabilitation center for the “mentally deranged individuals” (Ebenezer, 1976; Larsen, 1995; Strassmann, 1997; Al-Krenawi and Lightman, 2000; Al-Krenawi, Graham, and Slonim-Nevo, 2002; Amey, 2002; Munro, Kebede, Tarazona-Gomez and Verschoor, 2010; Uthman, Lawoko and Moradi, 2010; Wagner and Rieger, 2011; Titilayo, Anuodo and Palamuleni, 2017). While they find it difficult to see any tenable reason why women would choose to settle for such marital arrangements, some other groups of people still encourage the practice of this plural marriage and would do everything to support its continuation. They see many advantages in such homes for men, women and children who are in the marital arrangement. With all this, the motivations and rationales behind this assumed “oppressive marriage system” are contentious and far from been concluded – hence this present qualitative exploration from women's perception.

Literature Review

Polygynous marriages are recognised in many African and Asian countries. In several African jurisdictions, such as Nigeria, Mozambique, Kenya, Botswana, Mali, and Malawi, polygyny is seen as a norm, a traditional practice that is sanctioned by customary laws which govern marriages and family formation (De Cruz, 2010); it is equally considered a valid form of marriage in Algeria, Benin, Chad, Congo, Ghana, Togo, and Tanzania (Welch and Glick, 1981). In a nutshell, polygyny has been observed and reported as a norm in most African societies either sanctioned or covertly practiced. It has been estimated that anywhere from one-fifth to one-half of all marriages in Africa are polygynous (Goody, 1973; Kuper, 1982; Caldwell and Caldwell, 1990; Jacoby, 1995).

As valid and widely practiced as this traditional marriage system is, many still conclude that the diverse negative effects (socially, economically and health-wise) on women and children locked up in the polygyny marital system outweigh any advantages that could be accrued to it (Ebenezer, 1976; Larsen, 1995; Strassmann, 1997; Al-Krenawi and Lightman, 2000; Al-Krenawi, Graham, and Slonim-Nevo, 2002; Amey, 2002; Munro, Kebede, Tarazona-Gomez and Verschoor, 2010; Uthman, Lawoko and Moradi, 2010; Wagner and Rieger, 2011; Titilayo, Anuodo and Palamuleni, 2017). Some of the disadvantages of polygyny, as identified by people in Yoruba land and other settings, include premature death, especially in the case of children (Strassmann, 1997; Munro, Kebede, Tarazona-Gomez and Verschoor, 2010; Wagner and Rieger, 2011), low savings and inadequate resources to cater for the needs of the family (Tertilt, 2005), high and widespread cases of HIV/AIDs (Brahmbhatt *et al.*, 2002), high levels of infant and child mortality (Strassmann, 1997), hypertension, depression, spiritual and physical attacks, and incessant quarrelling and bickering in the homes (Ebenezer, 1976; Adewuya, Ola, Aloba, *et al.*, 2007).

Consequently, the majority of women both in monogamous and polygynous settings want a total eradication of the practice, while a good number of their male counterparts, especially non-Muslims, also advocate for legislation against polygyny. They see women who go into polygynous homes as gold-diggers and “bush” or rural dwellers, illiterates who are not brought up in good Christian homes (Shoneyin, 2010). They ascribe strife and disharmony, unhealthy rivalry, heartache, rebellion, reduction in sexual and emotional attachment and availability of men, and shortage or inadequacy of resources and care for women and children to polygynous marriages (Wittrup, 1990; Adams and Mburugu, 1994; Jankowiak, Sudakov and Wilreker, 2005). In his own word, Segun-Okeowo opined in his book *Why men marry two wives*, that:

Human beings are possessive, so don't expect anything less than warfare from where two women are sharing what ordinarily should belong to only one of them. It is expected that one of them will try to edge out the other (Segun-Okeowo, 2016:56).

The adverse impact of polygyny on the marital relationships may be aggravated by co-wives rivalry, particularly if the wives are forced to share a home. Professor George Olusola Ajibade, a Professor of Yoruba Literature, opined in his inaugural lecture that the fact that polygyny is practiced among Yoruba should not be taken to mean it is ideal or a model for marriage among them. He supported his argument by Ifa Corpus (*Oyeku Meji*), which says the following (Ajibade, 2019:43):

- Okan soso poro l'obirin dun mo lowo oko* - A man should marry only one wife
- Ti won ba di meji* - When they increase to two
- Won a dojowu* - They become envious
- Ti won ba di meta* - When they increase to three
- Won a deta-itule* - They become home-breakers
- Ti won ba di merin* - When they increase to four
- Won a di nigba ti o rin mi, ni mo rin o* - They laugh derisively at one another
- Ti won ba di marun-un* - When they increase to five
- A di lagbaja lo rungun oko wa* - they accuse one another of destroying their husband' fortunes
- To ba di mefa* - When they increase to six
- Won a ni, kin ni ikin oko awon tile fore aya se?* - They retort that "why did their husband's Ifa say that it foresaw the good of another wife during consultation?"
- Ti won ba di meje* - When they increase to seven

- Won a daje* - They become witches
- Ti won ba di mejo* - When they increase to eight
- A di eni ti ko je ki imo wa jo* - This is a threat to our harmony
- Bi won ba di mesan-an* - When they increase to nine
- A di eni ti ko ni sanjo de* - They say to one another, "this is the worthless wife of our husband"
- Ti won ba di mewaa* - When they increase to ten
- A di e wo eni to tun n wa oko wa wa* - They say, "look at the one that our husband is seeing behind us".

Ajibade went further that men who marry two or more wives only use them (women) as instruments or materials to satisfy their human or fleshly gratification (Ajibade, 2019). Demographically, polygyny has been recognised as a good avenue to balance the deficit of "prospective husbands" in the "marriage market". Some other sets have identified reasons for polygyny only in favour of men alone. They see the marriage system as a good opportunity for men to satisfy their sexual urges and to achieve their social, economic and mere egoistic desire of having many children. In the case of raising the children, the polygamous marital system has also been observed as a good system to have multiple mothers to care and cater for the children as they grow up (Batchelor, Watson and Wilde, 2000). Mikhail (2002) explains that young girls who are married into a polygynous union find that their principal role is to serve the senior wife or wives. Bove and

Valeggia (2009) once described polygyny as “co-operative conflicts within households”. Von Struensee (2005) points out that the economic position of women is made even worse if their husbands die or divorce them. According to Heinrich (2010), children of polygynous families are also disadvantaged economically because polygynous men invest less in their offspring. This is partly because they have more offspring than their monogamous counterparts, and also because polygynous men “continue to invest in seeking additional wives” (Heinrich, 2010:21). Despite all the intricacies and burdens attached or traceable to the practice of plural marriage, some other reports and evidences (Adams & Mburugu, 1994; Hartung, 1982; Boserup, 1970; Batchelor, Watson & Wilde, 2000) abound with benefits accrued to the practice of a polygamous marital union. They see a period of long postpartum abstinence (to give chance for other co-wives) as advantageous for long breastfeeding periods for the child (Blendsoe, 1990; Timaeus & Reynar, 1998) and this period also encourages longer birth interval which is advantageous and important for child survival (Amey, 2002).

Societies that practice or allow the practice of polygyny have over time been referred to as patriarchal by feminists and feminist scholars who have always advocated for the equality of sexes in all spheres of life except the natural. Culturally, polygyny is seen as a form of marriage shaped by the dominance of male partners; the feminists have always accused polygynous men of oppressing, suppressing and repressing the rights of women against the women's wishes. Consequently, radical feminists wage war against men who enslave women and every individual or institution that stands against their position. They argue that if polygyny is right then there is nothing morally wrong for women to engage in polyandry (Ajibade, 2019). Simply put, polygyny is frowned upon because it is regarded as the height of patriarchy. Consequently, scholars have focused more on the disadvantages of polygyny, probably in a bid to eradicate this form of marriage.

In "This Sex Which Is Not One", Irigaray (1985) investigates the representation of sexuality that privileges phallocentrism. She argues that women must not be treated as man's *other* or "a use-value for man" She pronounces:

For woman is traditionally a use-value for man, an exchange value among men; in other words, a commodity. As such, she remains the guardian of material substance, whose price will be established, in terms of the standard of their work and of their need/desire, by "subjects": workers, merchants, consumers. Women are marked phallicly by their fathers, husbands, procurers... (Irigaray, 1985:31).

In view of the above, such literary works as Mariama Bâ's *So Long a Letter* and *Scarlet Song*, Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Kehinde*, Es'kia Mphahlele's *Chirundu*, Lazarus Miti's *The Prodigal Husband*, Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes*, Sue Nyathi's *The Polygamist*, Sembene Ousmane's *Xala*, Rebecca Hourwich Reyher's *Zulu Woman*, Miriam KWere's *The Eighth Wife*, T.M. Aluko's *One Man One Wife*, Aminata Sow Fall's *The Beggars' Strike*, Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, and many others all use polygyny to highlight the inconsistencies between the ideals of one humanity and the facts of life as experienced by African women. These texts reflect a real and peculiar social problem in Africa. They cast light on the inequalities that prevail in polygynous relationships and imply that the principle of equality cannot be achieved in Africa as long as polygyny exists.

In recent times, it has been opined that the practice of polygyny, still common in many societies, can promote significant inequalities within the household, providing a catalyst for potential conflict. Bird & Shinyekwa (2003) argue that polygyny often causes a significant discrimination against unfavoured wives and their children, resulting in heavier domestic workloads, poorer

access to education, and in some cases, poorer levels of nutrition and healthcare. For many women, polygyny is a serious cause of conflict, contributing to increased domestic violence and eventual household break-up, while for children, the unequal allocation of resources and tasks significantly affect their life-chances (Bird and Shinyekwa, 2003). Polygyny has been seen as resulting in a futile and uninteresting life (Shoneyin, 2010). Also, some children (those of unfavoured wives) are at great risk of morbidity and mortality (Oni, 1996; Strassmann, 1997; Munro, Kebede, Tarazona-Gomez and Verschoor, 2010; Wagner and Rieger, 2011). There is little wonder therefore that it was stated in *My Great Ordeal*, an autobiography by Ebenezer Williams, that:

Polygamy is not against God's ordinance. But it is against the ordinance of economic happiness and against the dictates of a happier social order. All those who run foul of that ordinance and those dictates of today pay for it with hypertensions not only in themselves but in their women. And, only too often, is the painful inadequacies suffered by the children of the arrangement (Ebenezer, 1976:113).

We think the Yoruba people reasoned along this line when they say “*Ile Olorogun kiki iyonu, togun togun, togun togun*” (The polygynous home is full of battle, rancour and war, fetishes, and charms), and “*Ile Olorogun ogba were*” (The polygynous home is a lunatic / psychiatric yard). Because of these popular sayings, the Yoruba people conclude by saying “*Orisa jen pe meji obinrin kosi*” (No woman ever prays to ever have a co-wife). The wishes of a woman for a mate in her matrimonial home end only on the lips.

All the foregoing notwithstanding, despite the arguments that the practice of polygyny fundamentally enslaves women and all the disadvantages credited to this plural marriage practice, it is astonishing that some women still go into

this form of marriage as a second, third, fourth, ...wife. This study is therefore, an empirical attempt to find out from women in polygynous marriages, who find themselves in second, third, fourth or more positions, reasons why they agreed to marry already married men despite the overwhelming ills embedded within such familyhood.

Methodology

This study primarily draws on findings from a qualitative research strategy with particular emphasis on verbal accounts / interviews of currently or ever married women in a typical Yoruba setting of the Southwestern part of Nigeria. Face-to-face focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were used with polygynous Yoruba women in second, third or more position within the family setting. To cater for the multi-cultural diversity and biases, only Yoruba women were selected and interviewed in this study. Yoruba people, the second largest ethnic group in Nigeria, are typically homogenously in the Southwest geopolitical region of Nigeria but Ile-Ife and Modakeke towns in Osun State (one of the six states in the geo-region) were purposively selected for the study for historical and convenience purposes. Ile-Ife and Modakeke are two neighbouring towns located on the longitude 4.6 and latitude 7.5N in the eastern part of Osun State. From traditional and historical sources, Ile-Ife is regarded as the ancient home of the Yoruba race and thereby referred to as the cradle of Yoruba race. There is about a 40km distance between the towns and Osogbo (the State capital), and they are located 78 km to the North-East of Ibadan, the Oyo State capital. Ile-Ife is made up of five core traditional quarters namely Irewo, Okerewe, Moore, Ilode and Ilare.

Historically, Modakeke, as a town, was created as a settlement by Ile-Ife to absorb them after they were forcefully displaced from the Old Oyo Empire during the invasion of the Old kingdom by the Muslim jihadists (Johnson,

1921). Despite the structural closeness and the “not too clear” boundaries of the two communities, they are administered by different Local Government administrations. While traditional and ancient Ile-Ife is under the administrative headquarters of Ife Central Local Government, Modakeke is administered by the newly created Ife North-East Local Council Development Area. According to the 2006 National Population and Housing Census in Nigeria, Ife Central was populated with 167,204 inhabitants and Ife East, which housed Modakeke then, had 188,614 inhabitants (Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette, 2009). Despite all these differences, both communities share a lot of things in common. Ile-Ife, being the cradle of Yorubaland, is known as the custodian of the Yoruba traditional religion and beliefs. Agriculture (most times, peasantry) is the preoccupation of the local economy. They specialize mainly in cash crops with cocoa, palm oil, and kola nuts as the major crops. Ile-Ife has a major market that people from neighbouring communities and states patronize for business purposes. Similarly, the Modakeke people also have a market that deals more with agricultural produces. Both markets are also patronized by the members of the communities and outsiders.

Discussions focused on seven focus group discussions (FGDs) of 8 discussants each (totalling 56 discussants) and 5 face-to-face in-depth interviews with married women all aged between 21 and 60 years. The inclusion criterion for all the 56 discussants and the 5 in-depth interviewees were women born and bred in the south western region of the country; all participants and the interviewees were Yoruba women by birth. The discussants were married into polygynous family settings (women who were in the second or more position as at the time of the survey or at a point in time) and they cut across socio-economic and demographic characteristics but the in-depth interviewees were not necessarily from polygamous backgrounds. After the identification and selection of the first participant for each of the

FGDs, other participants were identified and selected through snowball sampling technique. The qualitative interviews and discussions were carried out in planned and convenient places chosen by the participants. As have been used previously, FGDs were employed to access vital information from people (see Morgan, 1988; Ruff, Alexander and McKie, 2005).

After the explanation of the research objectives to the intending qualified participants, the researchers obtained verbal consent from all the participants before proceeding with further discussions or interviews. All discussions and interviews were conducted in the indigenous language (Yoruba language). The study period spanned between July 2017 and August 2017.

The purposive sampling technique was adopted to select participants for the FGDs and the In-depth Interviews. The very first step in the selection process was to locate the predominant areas where the Yoruba who are core indigenes of the two purposively selected communities (Ile-Ife and Modakeke) reside. This was done through a chief from each the communities who directed us (researchers), and this led to randomly selecting twenty (20) Enumeration Area maps (EAs) from the EAs that were previously collected from National Population Commission Offices of the two affected local government areas. As stated above, we then adopted the snowball sampling technique to systematically recruit other the participants for the survey.

Data Analysis

As stated in the methodology section above, being an exploratory research, only qualitative tools were employed for the study. The recorded interviews and discussions were transcribed into English from the Yoruba language, being the original language used for the data harvest. All the transcriptions were verified by an English Language expert to ensure a proper and accurate translation so as to guarantee proper and accurate representation of the

participants' views and opinions. As adopted by Agunbiade and Titilayo (2012) in their work titled "Ageing, sexuality and enhancement among Yoruba people in South West Nigeria", thematic content analysis was engaged for data analysis as presented in the results section.

Ethical Consideration

Verbal or written informed consent was obtained from each discussant and participant of the study. No discussant or participant was coerced into the study; they were all recruited and they participated voluntarily. They were all informed of their right to decline discussion or participation at any point of the study.

Results

Focus Group Discussants and Interviewees Profiles

The mean age of all the discussants was 37 years with the age range of 16 to 60 years (lowest and upper boundaries, respectively). All discussants married into polygamous families and were either second, third or fourth wives in their respective matrimonial homes. The discussants consisted of 22 Christians, 23 Muslims and 11 indigenous traditional worshipers; they were of various educational backgrounds ranging from no formal education to those who possessed tertiary education. Furthermore, the discussants marital status revealed four different categories (currently married and living with husband, currently married but living separately, divorced, widowed). Of the 5 in-depth interviewees, the mean age was 45 years and they were with varied marriage experiences. All the discussants and the interviewees were of Yoruba origin and understood the culture and tradition of the Yoruba very well.

Economic Security via Husband Financial Capacity

Women had different perceptions and reasons for marrying already married men, that is, there were many different reasons why women entered into polygamous homes. While they claimed knowing the intricacies attached to polygamous homes, the participants (all women) across all the socio-economic strata made the revelation that they married because of the affluence of their husbands. Even those considered as being in a low socio-economic status still claimed to have married their husbands having economic security in mind. Though some still referred to love at first sight, majority of the discussants made reference to wealth as their reason for venturing into this marriage type (polygynous).

I agreed to marry my husband because I know that he has money to take good care of me. He has his own personal house in our town and his trading business was going on well (Christian and aged 52).

All I was looking for in a man was somebody that could establish me economically. As soon as he agreed to open a shop for me in the central market of our town, I moved to his house as his third wife not minding whether he had two wives before me. (Christian, aged 48).

He was a "God sent" to my life. I met him at a time of my life that all hope had been lost. He was taking good care of me, giving me everything money could buy as a young woman. So the question of monogamy or polygamy wasn't something that could be considered before I became pregnant for him (Trader,

married, aged 48).

I was jobless despite my higher level of education and a man came into my life with the promise of a job placement in the state ministry of education. I quickly jumped into the second offer of marrying him before another woman would snatch him away mindless of his marital status (Christian, married but living separately, aged 50)

My father was opposed to my marrying him but he was a man that was giving me economic happiness. He used to dash me money and other material gifts which I was using to settle so many bills. So I had no option than to marry him regardless of being the second wife (Muslim, widow, semi-illiterate, 60 years).

I don't see anything wrong with polygyny. The difference is clear if you actually compare those men who marry one wife with those of two or more wives. Those with more than one wife do have better marital understanding and do take good care of their wives. So I never disturbed myself when I wanted to marry him. He already had two wives before me (Christian, Civil servant, aged 39).

I only considered two reasons before I made my final choice to marrying my husband. The first of my two reasons was that he must be a Muslim and the other was that the man must be capable and ready to provide for every of my needs (Muslim,

Married, school teacher, 53 years).

It was late before I knew that money is not everything. I decided to marry him because of the money he was giving me then but he became a changed man almost immediately I parked to his place as his wife. He became an "irresponsible" man after my second child to him. He became "super-irresponsible" when had the third wife (Muslim, Married, school teacher, 47 years).

Consideration of Religion Injunction

Religious affiliation and assertion were also prominent for some women and determined their choice of the man they married. Some claimed that the number of wives a man had before proposing to marry them never mattered to them, but what mattered was his faith in religion and ability to take good care of them.

No marriage on earth is perfect but what matters to me is his religion and his ability to provide for my needs even before the marital knot and thereafter. Afterall, Islam, as a religion, permits all men to marry more than one wife. So, who am I to go against Islamic injunction (Tailor, Married, Muslim, aged 45 years).

Men are small gods to all women. Religion does not allow women (wives) to go against the desires of the husband. So I chose to marry him despite the fact that he already had one wife at home. I did not mind to be the second wife because my religion does not allow me to go against his (my husband)

wishes (Trader, Married, Muslim, adult).

You can see from my dressing that I am a Muslim. I am the second wife of my husband. Marrying him was not a problem to me. Yes, he was already a married man but he promised keeping me in another place (house) different from where his first wife was. He kept to this promise, furnished the place and I moved in to marry him (Contractor, Married, Muslim, aged 48 years).

As a good Muslim, a woman should not interfere or reject whatever Allah brings her way most especially in the case of marriage (whom to marry). More so, Islam supports multi-wife marriage, provided the man can take good care of the wives equally (Muslim, Married, aged 65 years).

Have you forgotten what the holy book says? That a time would come when women will be begging men to marry them just for them (women) to have a name to bear and to have crown on their heads. So the time has come and if women now say they don't want to marry a married man who else would they marry? (Trader, Muslim, Married, adult).

Age at Marriage

Age at marriage is so important due to its influence on the onset of childbearing, however, due to globalization, urbanization and rising educational attainment, men and women marry late. There were assertions among the discussants that supported this claim:

When you marry late like myself you have no option on whom to marry than to take anyone that comes your way, regardless of the age gap and number of wives already married by the man. I was 38 years of age before I met my husband who proposed to marry me. So it was not important to me whether it is polygamous home or not (Classroom school teacher, Christian, aged 50 years).

I was advanced in age before marriage and I could not delay marrying him when the offer came from my husband. I had marriage disappointments twice and couldn't waste this opportunity or wait any longer when he came to marry me. I knew he was a married man but I never bothered myself with that (trader, Christian, aged 52).

I was already of age when we met. It was almost late for me – though I had gotten a child when I was in the college – but I needed to marry so I did not have many options to choose from. It was like “my beggar had no choice” I quickly jumped into the marriage (Civil servant, Christian, aged 50).

Deception

Many of the discussants and the interviewees were of the opinion that they were deceived into marrying a married man. They attributed their engagement into such relationship to the cunning way of life of men and deception. Some of them are very bitter and would not have loved to marry a married man.

He didn't tell me the truth. I later found out that he was married, but it was late then because I was already pregnant for him. If I had known that he was a married man, maybe I wouldn't have fallen into the trap (Christian, housewife, married, 38 years).

Yes, he told me that he was married but separated, and that the former wife had even remarried. I believed him not knowing that he was lying. He deceived me into marrying him. It is a decision I regretted so much in life. I don't even like discussing it. I now put it behind me (Christian, Divorcee, 52).

Men could go any length to convince women to marry them. Some of them will tell you lies that will take many years to unravel. In short men are evil; snakes is better than some of them (An extract from an in-depth interview).

I never planned to marry a married man, but I became one due to circumstances of life. We met in school during our undergraduate days and nobody knew he was married as at then, though fairly older than most of us back then. I could just say I was deceived into the polygamous marriage (Christian, Divorcee, 60 years).

It was a deception. He stayed abroad and came home when we met. He never told me he was married, even with three kids, despite all my efforts to know. I was deceived into the relationship and since I became pregnant for him I had no

alternative than to marry him (Married, Nurse, Muslim, 49 years).

He pretended to be a good man in the beginning, not knowing that he was a cheat, liar, womanizer, and a good for nothing man. He enjoyed having me as a mistress than a wife. I tricked and forced him into marrying me. I cannot pray for my own girls to have husbands like their father (Petty trader, separated).

Culture and Lifestyle

The Yoruba tradition and culture, which was perceived in three ways, was another reason some women eventually found themselves in polygynous homes. While some claimed “opo” rite (remarriage to a late husband's relation) as the reason for their being in polygamous homes, some others categorically mentioned belief in what “Eleda” divinity has for them in life. More so, some listed their early childbirth (lifestyle) as the main cause of marrying a married man.

I had to marry baba after the untimely and unfortunate demise of his brother (my first husband). He (present husband) had married one wife then and I am now the second wife (Christian, 54).

Everything, I say everything, that happens to everyone in life has been predetermined by the “Eleda” divinity (the creator). One cannot change what God has in plan for you. If yours is to marry a married man no Jupiter can change it. It doesn't have

to do with any other determinants. There is no other determinant beyond what has been written for everyone. All that is needed is to consult “ifa” divinity or the “fortune teller” (An extract from an in-depth interview).

May God forbid, but in the occurrence of the husband's death, some women might not have an option but to marry their late husband's brother. And if so, she has no control over marrying a single man or an already married man. Though fading away, it was a common phenomenon in the recent past. I know three women who married in this manner. Only one of them was lucky to have a single brother of her late husband to marry her. I think this is better than – staying without husband again (An extract from an in-depth interview).

When it is time to marry, some women would have next to nothing to choose from. They only have to resort to fate due to their nymphomania way of life. They fall “victim” of marrying a married man in the course of their pre-marital sexual acts. Unwanted, mistimed or too-early pregnancies also do force some women into marrying a married man (An extract from an in-depth interview).

I married him out of pity. His first wife could not give him a child when I became pregnant for him, I had to pity his situation and marry him. The first wife is still childless up till date and I have five children for him (Muslim, adult).

Any woman that fails to preserve her dignity, who has lost her “flower” and has become an “empty shell”, has no option

than to marry whoever comes her way. Most of them will eventually get into the hands of married men who will make them the second or third, if not the fourth wife in the house (An extract from an in-depth interview).

Discussion

Our study on the determinants of polygyny from women's perception deserves the attention of the general public. With the aid of a qualitative approach, this study has explored the determinants of polygyny from women's perceptions and experiences. We are not claiming that there were no previous articles or empirical studies on this subject matter but ours is distinct in filling the gap in knowledge; it is the first qualitative empirical study on the determinants of polygyny from women's perceptions. As opined by Fenske, (2012) for historical and cultural balancing, only Yoruba women were purposively selected for the study. It was a self-expression interview where participants expressed their minds freely on the subject of discussion "why marrying a married man". There was no difference in the perception and expressions of the participants from the two Yoruba towns.

Religious beliefs cannot be overemphasized especially in a culturally encrypt matter like marriage and family formation. Some participants (mostly Muslim) wholly agreed to religion dictates and teachings as their reasons for marrying a married man. This was not surprising due to the fact that the Islamic religion permits men to marry between one and four wives provided the man can cater for them (Medhavan, 2002). Some other women expressed culture and lifestyle as the significant predictors of their marrying a married man. The ultimate Yoruba belief in what "*Eleda*" divinity (the creator) has for them in life supersedes every other predictor anyone might think of. The most important thing for an average Yoruba woman is what the "*Ifa*" divinity or "*Aworawo*" (fortune teller) tells them on inquiry when they

want to get married. They dare not question whoever their “heads”, as stated by the fortune teller, provide for them when it is time to marry – it does not matter whether it is a single young man or otherwise.

The impact of economy was also prominent in the understanding of the perception of the motivation for polygamous marriage. It was unanimously reported by most women in the survey that the man who “blows the economic trumpet will surely dictate the tune”. They came to this conclusion that they ended up marrying the men that could make “adequate” economic provision for them. This is consistent with literature (Townsend, 1994; Shoneyin, 2010; Fenske, 2012); it was particularly reported in Fenske, (2012) that women who received unfavourable rainfall draws in their prime marriageable years are more likely to marry a polygynist. In another view, some women believed that marrying a married man is a sure guarantee to have a man with a wealth of experience in taking care of wives. They claimed that since experience is the best teacher, a polygynist is more likely to take good care of wives than a man with just one wife. Demographically, discussants expressed the influence of age at marriage on the family type. It was declared that a woman who marries late will definitely marry a married man otherwise she might not see anyone to go for such an “old cargo” (aged) like her again.

Deception was another conspicuous reason mentioned that could make women marry a married man. An overwhelming number of the discussants and interviewees subscribed to the fact that many women are deceived into marrying a married man, and that they would not willingly go into such a relationship.

Conclusion

The discussion of polygyny needs to be understood from women's perspectives before agreeing to the previous plausible consensus and explanations about polygyny in literature. Economic security, religion injunction, deception, culture, and tradition beliefs were considered as major determinants of the polygamous way of family life among Yorubas.

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