

Why Marrying a Married-man? Qualitative Exploration of Plural Marriage System

By

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Abstract

The motivations of polygynous marriage are far from been settled, while some believe in the age-long marital arrangement, others claim that it is absolutely oppressive to women folks. This paper provides qualitative and pragmatic description of why Yoruba women marry married-men despite the arguments and disadvantages credited to this plural marriage system. The study primarily relied on findings from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews research strategy among polygynous women in two typical Yoruba settings of Ile-Ife and Modakeke, South-western, Nigeria. The findings unearthed factual reasons why polygyny is likely to outlive its welcome in traditional societies of Africa. The study concluded that discussion of polygyny needs to be understood from women's perception before agreeing to the previous plausible consensus and explanations about polygyny in literature since economic security, religion injunction, deception, culture and tradition beliefs were considered as major determinants of polygamous way of family life among the Yorubas.

Keywords: Polygyny, Marry, Women, Qualitative, Perception

Introduction

In the contemporary African societies, 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. This kind of marriage system is referred to as polygyny. *Polygyny* has been defined as 'the marriage of a man to two or more women at the same time' (Moorehead, 1991:311), or in a simpler term the 'practice of plural marriage' (Altman and Ginat, 1996:3; Al-Krenawi, Graham and Slonim-Nevo, 2002).

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 a traditional practice that is sanctioned by customary law which governs marriages and family formation (De Cruz, 2010). It is equally considered a valid form of marriage in Algeria, Benin, Chad, Congo, Ghana, Togo, Tanzania (Welch and Glick, 1981). In a nutshell, either sanctioned or covertly practiced, polygyny has been observed and reported as a norm in most African societies, a very common practice in most rural sub-Saharan Africa countries (Westoff, 2003). While Arthi and Fenske (2018) estimated roughly 25% of married women in polygynous marriages in sub-Saharan Africa, it was reported in

Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2013 final report that not less than 33% of married women in Nigeria are in polygynous marriages (NPoPC and ICF International, 2014).

The effects of polygyny have been discussed overtime and many discussants conclude that it is associated with diverse negative effects (socially, economically and health-wise) on women and children in such marital arrangement and relationship (Al-Krenawi, Graham, and Slonim-Nevo, 2002; Al-Krenawi and Lightman, 2000; Amey, 2002; De La Croix and Mariani, 2015; Ebenezer, 1976; Gaffney-Rhys, 2012; Hadley, 2005; Gibson and Mace, 2007; Larsen, 1995; Munro, Kebede, Tarazona-Gomez and Verschoor, 2010; Strassmann, 1997; Titilayo, Anuodo and Palamuleni, 2017; Uthman, Lawoko and Moradi, 2010; Wagner and Rieger, 2011). Some of the disadvantages of polygyny as identified by people in Yoruba land and other settings include poorer nutritional status and growth performance in children of polygynously married mothers relative to monogamously married mothers, premature death, most especially in the case of children (Strassmann, 1997; Hadley, 2005; Munro, Kebede, Tarazona-Gomez and Verschoor, 2010; Wagner and Rieger, 2011), low saving and inadequate resources to cater for the needs of the family (De La Croix and Mariani, 2015; Gaffney-Rhys, 2012; Tertilt, 2005), high and widespread cases of HIV/AIDs (Brahmbhatt *et al.*, 2002), high levels of infant and child mortality (Strassmann, 1997; Smith-Greenaway and Trinitapoli, 2014), depression, spiritual and physical attacks and incessant quarrelling and bickering in the homes (Ickowitz and Mohanty, 2015; Adewuya, Ola, Aloba, *et al.*, 2007). Consequently, some voices spoke against polygynous marriage settings. They literarily see women who go into polygynous home (those wives in the 2nd, 3rd or more positions) as gold-diggers, and 'bush' or rural dwellers and illiterates who are not brought up in a good Christian home (Shoneyin, 2010). They ascribed strife and disharmony which is full of bristling with discord, unhealthy rivalry, heartache, rebellion, reduction in sexual and emotional attachment and availability of their men, shortage or inadequacy of resources and care for women and children to polygynous marriages (Adams and Mburugu, 1994; Jankowiak, Sudakov and Wilreker, 2005; Wittrup, 1990). Even though its benefits to first wives in terms of child health

outcomes have been reported in some studies (Gibson and Mace, 2007; Sellen, 1999), Gibson and Mace (2007) particularly reported a more surviving number of children of first wives and better physical health for first wives in their study among rural Ethiopian families but Segun-Okeowo (2016) wrote 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 (56).

The adverse impact of polygyny on the marital relationship may be aggravated by co-wives rivalry, particularly if the wives are forced to share a home. 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) pointed 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 hitches attached or traceable to the practice of plural marriage, other reports and evidences abound with benefits accrued to all individuals involved in polygamous marital union (Adams & Mburugu, 1994; Batchelor, Watson & Wilde, 2000; Boserup, 1970; Hartung, 1982). They see a period of long post-partum abstinence as advantageous (to give chance for other co-wives) for long breastfeeding period 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) even though, the polygyny-postpartum hypothesis has been challenged by Ember *et. al.*, (2007) in their multiple regression analyses of data for the societies in the standard cross-cultural sample.

Societies that practice or allow the practice of polygyny have overtime 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 phenomena. Culturally, polygyny is seen as a form of marriage shaped by dominance of male partners; the feminists have always accused polygynous men of oppressing, suppressing and repressing the rights of women against their (women) wishes. It was claimed that the cultural practice of polygyny favours and serves the interest of men rather than their female counterparts or joint interest (Lawson, James, Ngadaya *et. al.*, 2015). Simply put, polygyny is frowned at because it is regarded as the height of patriarchy. Consequently, radical feminists wage war against men who enslave women and every individual or institution that stands against their position. Therefore, some 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', Luce Irigaray (1985) investigates the representation of sexuality that privileges Phallogentrism (26). She argues that women must not be treated as man's *other* or 'a use-value for man' (31). 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... (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.

The practice of polygyny is 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 level 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 futile and uninteresting life (Shoneyin, 2010). Also, some children (those of unfavoured wives) are at great risk of morbidity and mortality (Oni, 1996). Little wonder 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, toogun toogun*' (Polygynous home is full of battle, rancour and war, full of fetish and charm). '*Ile Olorogun ogba were*' (Polygynous home is lunatic/psychiatric yard); and because of these popular sayings, Yoruba people conclude by saying '*Orisa jen pe meji obinrin kosi*' (No woman ever prays to ever have a co-wife). '*Orisa jen pe meji obinrin ori awon lomo*' (The wishes of a woman for a mate in her matrimonial home ends 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 practices, it is astonishing that some women still go into this form of marriage as 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 family arrangement.

Methodology

This study primarily draws on findings from a qualitative research strategy with particular emphasis on verbal accounts/interview (Bryman, 2004) of currently or ever married women in a typical Yoruba setting of South-western part of Nigeria. It is a face-to-face focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with polygynous Yoruba women in second, third or more position within the family setting. To cater for the multi-cultural diversity and biasness, only Yoruba women were selected and interviewed in this study. Though Yoruba people, the second largest ethnic group in Nigeria, are typically 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 40km distance between the towns and Osogbo (the State capital) and 78 km away from 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 the 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). Until recently, the two communities have been in warring relationship, fighting for original ownership to land, and they have both witnessed a very long history of communal clashes which have negatively affected them economically, structurally and politically. Until very recently, this warring and unhealthy relationship has drawn back development in both towns and so makes them remain relatively underdeveloped.

Despite the structural closeness and the ‘not too clear’ boundaries of the two communities, they are being administered by different Local Government administrations. While traditional and ancient Ile-Ife is the administrative headquarters of Ife Central Local Government, Modakeke is being 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, Kola nuts as the major crops. Ile-Ife has a major market where people from neighbouring communities and States patronize for business purposes. Similarly, the Modakeke people also have a market which deals more with agriculture produce than the one in Ile-Ife. Both markets are also patronized by the members of the communities and outsiders.

Seven focus group discussions (FGDs) of 8 discussants in each section (totalling 56 discussants) and 5 in-depth interviews with married women all aged between 21 and 60 years were conducted. All the 56 discussants and 5 in-depth interviewees were born and bred in south western region of the country; thereby all participants and the interviewees were Yoruba women by birth. The discussants who must be married into a polygamous family setting (must be in the 2nd, 3rd or more position as at the time of the survey or at a point in time) cut across socio-economic and demographic characteristics but the in-depth interviewees are not necessarily from polygamous background. After the identification and selection of the first participant for each of the FGD, the other participants were identified and selected through snow balling 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

have been employed to access 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 discussion or interview. All discussions and interviews were conducted in indigenous language (Yoruba language). The study period spanned between July 2017 and August 2017.

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 each from the communities who directed us (researchers) and led to randomly selecting twenty (20) Enumeration Area maps (EAs) from the EAs which were previously collected from National Population Commission Offices of the two affected local government areas. As stated above, we then adopted snow balling sampling technique to systematically recruit all 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 Yoruba language, being the original language used in the course of data harvest. All the transcriptions were later verified by a language expert to ensure a proper and accurate translation so as to ensure a 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 western Nigeria', afterward, thematic content analysis was engaged for data analysis as presented in the results section.

Ethical Consideration

Either verbal or written informed consent was obtained from all the discussants and participants of the study. No discussant or participant was coerced into the study; they were all recruited and 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 21 and 60 years (lowest and upper boundaries respectively). All discussants married into polygamous family and were either second, third or fourth wife in their respective matrimonial homes. The discussants consist of Christians, Muslims and 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 marital experiences. All the discussants and the interviewees were of Yoruba origin and understood the culture and tradition of Yoruba very well.

Economic Security

Women had different perceptions and reasons why they marry already married men, that is, there were so many different reasons why women enter into polygamous home. While they claimed knowing the intricacies attached to polygamous home, the participants across all the socio-economic strata made the revelation that they married because of the affluence of their husbands. Even those considered as low socio-economic status still claimed to have married their husband having economic security in mind. Though some still refer to love at first sight, but more of the discussants made reference to wealth as their reason to have ventured into such 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. (Married, 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 has two wives before me. (Married 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 can 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 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 opposed to 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 have 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 compared those men who marry one wife with those of two or more wives. Those one 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 wife. He became an 'irresponsible' man after my second child to him. He became 'super-irresponsible' when he had the third wife (Muslim, Married, school teacher, 47 years).

Consideration of Religion Injunction

Religion affiliation and assertion were so prominent for some women in the choice of the man they married. Some claimed that the number of wives a man has before proposing to marry them never matter to them, what matter is his 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 marital knot and thereafter. After all Islam as a religion permitted 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 God to all women. Religion does not allow us to go against what are their desires and wishes in all things. So I choose 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 (her 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)

Findings from in-depth interviews corroborated these religion perceptions.

As a good Muslim, a woman should not interfere or reject whatever Allah brought her way most especially in the case of marriage (whom to marry). More so, Islam supported 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

Though age at marriage is so important due to its influence on the onset of childbearing but 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 ever 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 disappointment twice and couldn't waste this opportunity or wait any longer when he came to marry me. I know 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 have no many options to choose from. It was like "my beggar has no choice" I quickly jump 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 cunning way of life of men and deception. Some of them are so 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 had 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 has even remarried. I believed him not knowing that he was lying. He deceived me into marrying him. It is a decision I so much regretted 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 in marrying them. Some of them will tell you lie that will take many years before knowing the truth. In short men are evil, snake is better than some of them (An extract from an in-depth interview).

My own case was love at first sight. I was so much in love with him the very first day we met that despite the fact that I knew he was a married man I could not back out of the relationship again. It was a foolish and fake infatuation. I had moved into his house as a wife before I realize all the dangers in what I have done (Trader, aged 48).

I never planned to marry a married man, but I became one due to circumstance 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 stays 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 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 daughters to have husbands like their father (Petty trader, separated, adult).

I met him as I was coming out of college (graduating from college of education). He appeared mature and responsible. He actually told me that he was married but that he lost his wife in a motor accident (he even pointed to a scar in his face as a result of the accident) not knowing that he was laying. I later agreed to his marriage proposal and here I am as his third wife (An extract from an in-depth interview).

Culture and Lifestyle

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 home, some others categorically mentioned belief in what ‘*Eledaa*’ 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 Gbolahan (husband) 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 (Married, Christian, 54).

Everything, I say everything that happens to everyone in life has been predetermined by the ‘*Eledaa*’ 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. 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).

God forbids, in the occurrence of husband death, some women might not have option than to marry their late husband brother. And if so, she has no control over marrying a single man or already married man. Though fading away but 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 result to fate due to their known lifestyle. They fall ‘victim’ of marrying a married man in the course of their lifestyles. Unwanted, mistimed or too-early pregnancies do forced some women to 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 (Married, Muslim, adult).

Any woman that fails to preserve her dignity, who has lost her ‘flower’ and has become ‘empty shell’ has no option than to marry whoever comes her way. Most of them will eventually get to the hands of married men who will make them second or third, if not fourth wife in the house (An extract from an in-depth interview).

Discussion

Family formation or family type which begins with marriage obviously has significant implication on population growth. It affects the general health and well-being of everyone in the family. Thus, our study on the determinants of polygyny deserves attention of the general public due to its demographic,

socio-economic and health implication on the population at large. With the aid of qualitative approach data, this study explored the determinants of polygyny from women's perception and experiences. The question is if women, particularly those wives in the 2nd, 3rd or more positions and their children do not stand to gain so much in polygyny then why do this high prevalence of the cultural practice in sub-Saharan Africa countries even at this modern age? We are not claiming that there were no previous articles or empirical studies on this subject matter but interestingly, to the best of our knowledge, this present study is the first qualitative empirical study on the determinants of polygyny from women perceptions. Other (see Ware, 1979) that was close in methodology to our study did not limit their investigation to women who actually experience polygyny but all women generally.

As opined by Fenske, (2012), only Yoruba women were purposively selected for the study for historical and cultural balancing. It was a self-expression interview where participants expressed their minds freely on the subject of discussion 'why Yoruba women agree to marry a married man' that is 'why do they agree to become the 2nd, 3rd or more wife'? Participants who all range from age 21 to 60 years were either currently married or ever married as at the time of the survey. They were of diverse religious background and also cut across various socio-economic strata. There was no difference in the perception and expressions of the participants from the two Yoruba towns.

The findings were sub-grouped thematically, some consensus were observed from the responses and discussions of the participants. Religious belief cannot be overemphasized most especially in a culturally encrypt matter like marriage and family formation despite the fact that religion explanations are unsatisfactory as stated by Lawson, James, Ngadaya *et. al.*, (2015). While some participants (mostly Muslim) wholly agreed to religion dictate and teaching other women expressed culture and lifestyle as the significant predictors of their marrying a married man. These findings are consistent with previous studies as reported in Lawson, James, Ngadaya *et. al.*, (2015). For instance, the cultural rite known as 'opo' rite (remarriage to a late husband's relation) as reported by some participants was what Lawson, James, Ngadaya *et. al.*, (2015) called levirate marriages or widow inheritance. The

ultimate Yoruba belief in what ‘*Eledaa*’ divinity (the creator) has for them in life supersedes every other predictor anyone might think of. According to some women, the most important predictor 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’ provide for them when it is time to marry; it does not matter if the to-be husband is a single young or old man.

The impact of economy was also prominent in the understanding of the perception of motivation for polygamous marriage. It was reported by the women in the survey that ‘*the man who blows the economic trumpet will surely dictate the tune*’. They conclude that they ended up marrying the men that could make ‘adequate’ economic provision for them. This is consistent with the literature (Fenske, 2012; Lawson, James, Ngadaya *et. al.*, 2015; Shoneyin, 2010; Townsend, 1994). While 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. Lawson, James, Ngadaya *et. al.*, (2015) suggested that prohibiting polygyny in an economy with large difference in male wealth may be more disadvantageous to women. Likewise, Ickowitz and Mohanty, (2015) in their study of polygyny and women’s welfare in Ghana found little evidence to support the view that women experience economic benefits from polygynous marriages. This economic power and polygyny nexus as found in this study is also in line with the polygyny threshold model which state among others that higher wealth predisposes males to having more wives. In another view, some women believed that marrying a married man is a sure guarantee to have a man with wealth of experience in taking care of wives. They went further to prove that since experience is the best teacher, a polygynist is much likely to take good care of wives than a man who will not go beyond 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 ‘old cargo’ (aged) like her again.

Deception was another conspicuous reason mentioned that could make women marry a married man. Overwhelming number of the discussants and those of the in-depth interview subscribed to the fact that most women were deceived into marrying a married man. That they would not willingly go into such relationship.

Conclusion

The discussion of polygyny needs to be understood from women perception before agreeing to the previous plausible consensus and explanations about polygyny in literature. While it is not within the scope of this study to determine whether polygyny is good or bad, it is concluded that economic security, religion injunction, deception, culture and tradition beliefs were considered as major determinants of polygamous marriage for women Yorubas.

Limitations

We did not mean to generalize our findings across all tribes and culture in sub-Saharan Africa but the strength in our study was in the qualitative method that was adopted in the study; it gave the opportunity to have a depth in sight and understanding into the world of women in polygamous family setting. We thereby recommend future qualitative exploration of cross-cultural background of this family formation probably with a much larger sample.

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