

Review

Changes in marriage practices among the Bafumbira of Western Uganda

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This paper examines changes in marriage practices of the Bafumbira, an ethnic group in Western Uganda. The paper uses data obtained from primary data that included focus group discussions (FGDs) in Kisoro District and Kampala City and compliments it with secondary data. It shows that some marriage practices threatened by modernization through formal education, migration and urbanization are still very relevant to the society. These include: “pulling”; parents’ involvement in choosing marriage partners; abstinence before marriage; using traditional items in payment of bride price and rare divorce rates. The paper also recommends that practices like early marriage and polygamy be discouraged.

Key words: Bafumbira, urbanization, formal education, modernization, migration, marriage practices.

INTRODUCTION

The Bafumbira, one of the 56 tribes in Uganda are ethnically the same as the Banyarwanda of Rwanda. They were selected to represent the western region because of their heavy concentrations in some parts of Kampala. The Bafumbira were sampled from Kamwokya parish, Central division and Kyebando parish in Kawempe division. These are areas with heavy concentrations of Bafumbira who originate from Kisoro District. Kisoro district represented western Uganda in a comparative study (see map 1). Kisoro District is the indigenous district of the Bafumbira in Uganda. It experiences a high rural–urban migration of males who leave the rural areas in search of jobs in urban areas resulting into a low sex ratio of 82:100 (number of males to 100 females).

Urbanization is one of the most important geographic phenomena in today’s world due to its transformative

capacity. The size, density and variety of urban populations tend to have a liberating effect on people, allowing them escape the rigidities of traditional, rural society and to participate in a variety of lifestyles and behavior (Knox and Marston, 2003). With 16% of Uganda’s urban population (UBOS, 2014) and 5.1% urban growth rate (UNFPA, 2007) far reaching implications on development prospects in the country are expected. Marriage practices are not exceptions. This is because urbanization emphasizes the economic aspects of marriage rather than the social ones.

Objective of the paper

This paper examines the indigenous marriage practices of the Bafumbira that are being changed by modernization

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through urbanization, migration and formal education.

Sources of data and research methodology

The data in this paper are derived from a wider comparative study that covered Kampala City whose boundaries overlapped those of Kampala district and four rural districts that represented the four regions of Uganda. Kampala was chosen because of a number of reasons. Kampala is the largest urban area of Uganda in terms of population and size. It is the capital city of Uganda. Kampala remained the prime urban center throughout the period 1969-2014. The proportion of the population of Kampala city to the total urban population of Uganda was 54% in 1969, 41% in 1991, 40% in 2002 and 25% in 2014 (MOFPED, 1973; MOFPED, 1991; UBOS, 2006 and UBOS, 2014). It was therefore seen as the most representative of urban areas. Being a capital city and the most cosmopolitan urban area, all the ethnic groups in the study could be found in big numbers.

Four ethnic groups namely: Baganda; Bagisu; Lugbara and Bafumbira were studied. Each of the four ethnic groups represented one of the four regions of the country namely: Baganda (Central); Bagisu (Eastern); Lugbara (Northern) and Bafumbira for Western. In order to establish the changes in marriage patterns as a result of urbanization, rural areas in four districts of Uganda where the four ethnic groups originate were also covered. These included: Mpigi; Sironko; Arua and Kisoro respectively (Figure 2).

Primary data were obtained from all persons aged 15 years and above found in households from each of the ethnic groups qualified for interview. Age 15 was chosen because it is the one used to calculate singulate mean age at first marriage in Hajnal (1953)'s formula that assumes that no first marriages occur before age 15.

Judgmental (purposive) sampling was used to get four ethnic groups for the study. According to Kitchin and Tate (2000), judgmental sample is the most subjective sampling method. Here, sample elements are selected based on judgment derived from prior experience. Sampling elements are selected based on the interviewer's experience that they are likely to produce the required results. The Bafumbira, Bagisu, and Lugbara who come from different regions of Uganda are known to be concentrated in some areas of Kampala. It was therefore easy to find a good number of each ethnic group in Kampala to be used to compare with those who have remained in the ethnic districts of the selected tribes of Uganda. The Baganda on the other hand comprise the biggest single ethnic group in Kampala and central region as a whole.

Snowball sampling was used to get respondents in urban areas. Snowball sampling is non-random sampling method, which is used with the selection of people. This is based on a number of initial contacts that are asked for names and locations of any other people who might fulfill the sampling requirements. For example, the respondents

interviewed would help to inform the interviewers the location of their fellow members of the same tribe. The Bafumbira would help to locate fellow Bafumbira and so would the Lugbara, Bagisu and Baganda. Snowball sampling was effective because, even Kifumbira in Kamwokya, which is a well known area of residence of the Bafumbira, is also occupied by other tribes. The sampling method also helped in getting cases of inter-tribal marriages.

In the rural areas, Systematic Sampling was applied. Using household lists of the villages provided by the Local Council (LC) officials, even numbered households were selected. After securing a Local Council (LC) official as a guide, the group (principal investigator, two interviewers and the LC official) moved around, interviewing all the members of the households above 15 years. To make sure that all the eligible members were interviewed, those who were not found at home would be followed where they were working, for example in the gardens.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) using an interview guide in 2004 facilitated the acquisition of detailed information on indigenous marriage patterns among the Bafumbira and other tribes. In case of the Bafumbira, two focus groups i.e. one for women and another for men from Nyakabande and Kanyabukungu villages, Gisorora parish, Nyakabande sub-county in Kisoro district were used (Figure 1). Two similar Focus groups were acquired from Kamwokya parish, Central division, Kampala City. This was because, in order to get good information from the groups, men had to be separated from the women. It was strongly believed that women would be too shy to talk about sensitive marriage issues in the presence of men. The focus group discussions (FGDs) comprised men and women above 18 years. In selecting the people to participate in the discussions the following characteristics were considered: age; religion; level of education and occupation. This was meant to avoid getting a whole group of people of similar characteristics.

The FGDs were complimented by the 2004 survey that covered four tribes in Uganda namely: Bagisu, Baganda, Lugbara and Bafumbira in the districts of Sironko, Mpigi, Arua and Kisoro as observed from Figure 2. Secondary data sources were also utilized.

Logistic regression analysis was used to test the effects of the independent variables (area of residence, religion, education, tribe and occupation) on the dependent variable (age at first marriage).

Preparation for marriage

The cultural practice of "pulling" or stretching a woman's labia minora (the inner lobes of the vagina just below the clitoris) is highly cherished by the Bafumbira as the case is with the Baganda. Among the Baganda, the cultural practice is referred to as visiting the bush ("Okukyalira ensiiko"). This is because traditionally, a group of girls is taken to the bush by an old woman for about a week and taught how to pull. After that, the girls are advised to

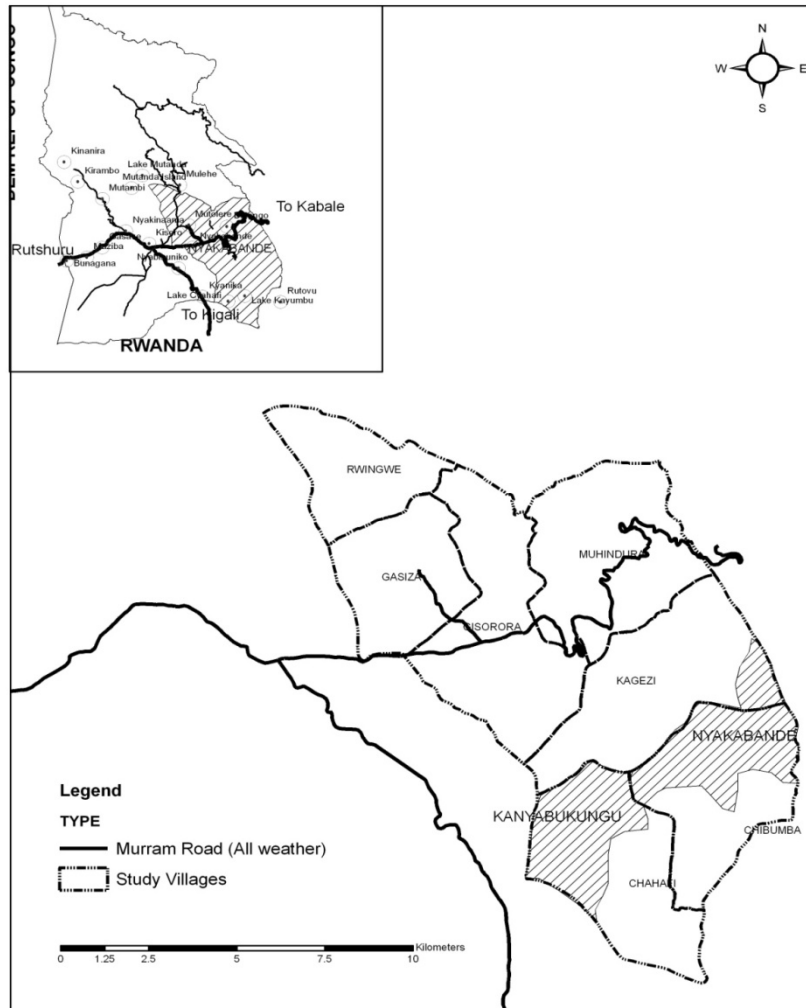


Figure 1. Kisoro District showing the sub-county, parish and villages of study.
Source : The 2002 Population and Housing Census Maps.

continue pulling on their own. Among the Bafumbira, “pulling” is started by the mother of the girl when she is young and the practice is continued by the girl as she grows. This agrees with Etyang and Natukunda (2005) that elongation of the labia minora (“pulling”) is a common practice among the Baganda in the central region and some tribes in western Uganda.

Informants in focus group discussions of Bafumbira were asked whether they considered “pulling” to be important in marriage. All the groups, both in rural and urban areas highly praised the practice. The main reason given in support of the cultural practice was that it makes sex more enjoyable although different expressions were used. Given below are some of the expressions that were used: Sexual arousal and satisfaction is faster with a woman who pulled. This is because, the clitoris, the most sensitive part of the vagina, is connected to the labia, so, long labia help the woman reach orgasm quickly.

The girls were closely watched by their mothers and aunts. Virginity was highly prized. This was indeed a very

good tradition that should be encouraged today as a big strategy of guarding against HIV infection before marriage because it encourages abstinence. This concurs with Lamptey et al. (2006) that abstinence is the prevention method emphasized in the programming directed at youths, the group with the highest rate of new infections of HIV. Pre-marital pregnancy was unwanted. A girl would be thrown into a forest and left to the mercy of wild animals if she conceives before marriage. This practice is no longer practiced as it would be regarded as child abuse and torture according to the constitution of the Republic of Uganda.

Choosing marriage partners

Formerly, parents would arrange marriages for their children. This method shows the social importance of marriage, especially as it concerns the families and relatives of the couple. But there was “*gufata*” or “*gaturura*”. This was an acceptable forced marriage in



Figure 2. Location of the study districts in Uganda. Source: Population and Housing Census Map, 2002.

which a boy would conspire and carry away a girl by force to become his wife (Nzita and Mbaga-Niwampa, 1997). Among the Bahutu, there was “*ukwijana*.” This was a pre-arranged marriage in which the girl would sneak away from her parents and go to a boy’s home to get married. This occurred whenever a girl had a pre-marital pregnancy. Both “*gufuta*” and “*ukwijana*” were socially accepted but not praiseworthy.

Informants agree with Shalita (1993) in the practices of identifying and choosing marriage partners among the traditional Bafumbira. Parents of a boy would begin planning how to get him a partner when it became clear that he was now of age. They would make “surveillance” in homes where there were young females in a bid to identify the “right” bride befitting their son. The followings were the guidelines: the conduct of the parents of the girl; the relationship of those parents vis-à-vis the neighbors

(community); the wealth status of the family and the level of discipline in that family. The process of surveillance was called “*kurambagiza*”.

The father of the boy would select a person to act as a go between (“*umuranga*”) to mediate between the side of the boy and that of the girl. The process of identifying the bride was known as “*kuranga umukobya*”. Once the father of the boy’s proposal was accepted by the father of the bride-to-be, then the former would prepare alcohol (“*inzoga*”) and dispatch the “*umuranga*” to the home of the bride-to-be. The father of the bride-to-be would also have assembled a team of persons and a spokesman. The “*muranga*” would say “*nshaka ubuhake bwo kuzamp’umugeni*” meaning ‘I’m requesting for a girl to marry from this home’. The spokesman of the father of the bride-to-be would respond: “*tuguhaye umugeni ariko nti tuguhay’inka*”, literally meaning we have given you a

bride but not a cow. Upon this pronouncement there would be clapping of hands as a sign of appreciation. This would be followed by request for bride price ("*inkwano*").

Tumwine (1995) indicates that there has been a general decline in parents choosing marriage partners for their children. An extreme case was observed from the males because while about 10 percent had their partners chosen by their parents among respondents aged fifty and above, the percentage fell to zero among those aged 15 to 24 years. The change was attributed to modern education that has reduced the authority of the parents on the children. Moreover, many parents who reside in the villages may know few educated youth fit for their children because it is not common for educated people to marry uneducated ones since many formal marriages begin with cohabitation. Education also increases the chances of cross marriages between tribes and marriage partners may not necessarily have to be from the same locality as observed from the increase in the number of intermarriages. Education has also increased individualism in young people. A wife is as thus meant for the husband and not the whole family as it used to be in the past.

Bride price

Bride price refers payment in form of money, property or other valuable asset by the family of the bridegroom-to-be to the family of his bride-to-be. The Bafumbira understood bride price as a concrete symbol of the marriage covenant and security. It bound the marriage covenant, legitimized children born in that relationship, contributed to the prestige of the bride and her family. It also added to the wealth thereby giving the bride in turn the right to privileges of a legally married woman. Bride price allowed the groom, the exclusive right of sexual access to his wife. It gave the right to her productivity as a mother and worker, and allowed him a welcome reception whenever he went to his father-in-law's home and family. Bride price was understood as a kind of marriage certificate that certified as a public pledge, the husband's rights over his wife and children and empowered him to be called a man ("*umugabo*") among men.

The father of the bride-to-be would make arrangements for the ceremony of payment of bride price. He would brew alcohol ("*kwenga inzoga*") in ample quantities and also invite pledges and contributions of the same from relatives and friends. On the date of payment of the bride wealth, the father of the bride-to-be would send an envoy to his prospective in-laws inviting them to come. The envoy would carry alcohol ("*inzoga*") as part of the ritual. The father of the bridegroom-to-be would have assembled a team of people to go for the ceremony. Upon reaching the home of the father of the bride-to-be,

men would talk in a stylish manner ("*kwivuga*") and the women would ululate ("*gutera impundu*"). The in-laws ("*abakwe*") would be given seats and the process of ("*gukwo*") would follow.

After the bride price (animals etc) was accepted, both sides would embark on alcohol drinking. The drinking would gradually lead to traditional dancing, harping and ululating. At the end, the mother of the bride-to-be would bring alcohol in a big and special calabash. This terminal alcohol was known as "*agashingura cumu*" and would mark the end of the ceremony. The "*abakwe*" would then be given their long walking sticks ("*inkoni*") and they would depart amid "*kwivuga*".

Today, bride price has been commercialized to include cows, manufactured items like soda, bags of sugar, cartons of salt and beer, envelopes containing big sums of money for many relatives of the girl, beef and a variety of vegetables. Moreover, many people are invited unlike in the past when payment of bride price was a small family affair.

The general observation is that today, money is preferred to the traditional physical items such as animals, clothing and food. There was general consensus from the informants that commercialization of bride price that has negated the noble intentions of bride price should be fought and the positive cultural values of the system be maintained by those who cherish them (Tumwine, 2007).

The wedding day

A number of events preceded the marriage ceremony. Before the marriage itself the "*abakwe*" would bring alcohol to remind the father of the bride-to-be, of the agreement they reached. This was called "*gutebutsa*". The family of the bride-to-be would ask for delivery of other rituals such as "alcohol for uncles, brothers, grandmother and stepfather" etc. Lastly, the "*abakwe*" would bring the "alcohol of the grandmother", a lamb and "*inzoga y'icyimutso*" literary meaning the alcohol ultimately shifting the bride-to-be. Once that happened, the bride-to-be would not stay an extra night at her father's home.

The wedding day was called "*ubukwe*" or "*ubushytsi*". The marriage ceremony was called "*gushyingira*". A special team of elders, youths (unmarried males and females) and women would be identified to facilitate the marriage. The bride-to-be's aunt and uncle would represent the biological parents of the girl and were leaders of the delegation. The bride would be carried to the bridegroom's home on a litter ("*ingobyi*"). At the bridegroom-to-be's home, the entourage would be warmly received by the groom-to-be and his mother who would present to the bride-to-be a calabash ("*igisabo*") in which milk would be stored. There would be traditional dancing during the night. In the morning, the bride's aunt

and other girls would take the bride to the groom's hut (*"indaro"*). Thereafter, they would depart. The groom would then enter the hut and thereafter come out and proclaim to the visitors (*"abashyitsi"*) that he had consummated the marriage. Upon this proclamation, there would be ululations (*"impundu"*). In case he discovered that the girl was not a virgin, he would send a hoe-stick to the bride's home as a sign of disapproval.

Soon after marriage

After the marriage, a number of events followed immediately. The bride would not take any meals until she was offered presents that included goats, cows, rings, anklets etc. This was called *"kurisha"*. After four days, the bride would visit her home to greet relatives. This was called *"kuramukanya"*. Two children; a boy and a girl would accompany her. Her father would offer her a goat (*"ihene yindamutso"*) in addition to alcohol and cooked food. The trio would go back in the evening. The bride would spend a long time performing domestic activities such as cooking, house/ compound sweeping, cleaning household utensils and serving food to household members when they returned from day's work. The father-in-law would not physically see her until after offering a he-goat or a cow. The period was called honeymoon (*"kwarama"*). After some time the bride would be taken to her father and she would be filled with necklaces, rings and anklets. She would be given three hoes which effectively marked the end of *"kwarama"* and beginning of real public life.

Age at marriage

The Bafumbira informants agree with Kagambirwe (1972) that early marriage was encouraged. After puberty and in some cases before it, marriage was consummated and the earlier one married, the more respect and pride one had among the relatives and the sex grade. Among the Batutsi, the boys were usually pressed to marry even before they were ready. Early marriage was in consonant with practices of keeping virginity and avoiding pregnancy before marriage.

However, today, early marriage should not be encouraged because it hinders education and increases maternal mortality when women conceive before 20 years of age. This is because bodies of young mothers (10-19 years) are not yet ready to handle pregnancy. They often get difficult labour usually due to a disproportion in size between their small pelvises and the big size of the baby which cannot easily make it through the narrow birth canal. That is why 13 percent of the maternal mortality is caused by obstructed labour (UNFPA, 2005). Tumwine (2007) also notes that education significantly increases the age at marriage.

In the regression model, age at marriage was categorized into two broad groups. The first age group, 10 to 19 years represented early marriage and the second age group, 20 and above represented late marriage. Age group 10-19 was assigned value 1 while 20+ was given value 0. This grouping was based on the fact that in Uganda, marriages occur early. Although the minimum legal age for a woman married is 18 years in Uganda, this is not the case. Among women aged 20 to 29, 15% were married by age 15 and 49% by age 18 (UBOS, 2012). Logistic regression was applied to understand the effect of the selected variables on age at first marriage as shown in Table 1.

It was found that education was the most significant factor in affecting age at first marriage. The results clearly show that the lower the level of education, the higher the chances of marrying earlier. Table 1 shows that respondents with no education were 21 times (Exp (B) = 20.7) more likely to marry earlier than those with tertiary education (reference category). Those with primary education were 10 times (Exp (B) = 10.2) and those with secondary education 5 times (Exp (B) = 4.6) more likely to marry earlier than those with tertiary education. Therefore, it can be inferred that urbanization operates indirectly through education to affect age at marriage. Age at marriage has significant implications on fertility. The higher the age at marriage, the lower the fertility. High fertility increases poverty in that big families are associated with reduced savings, investments and failure to educate the children. Thus, urbanization through education may help in the reduction of poverty.

This agrees with "the results of the 2002 Uganda Population and Housing Census" UBOS (2006) that showed that Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM) was 18.2 for women with no education and increases with education. The SMAM was observed to be 24.9 years for women with post secondary level of education showing a difference of 6.7 years between the SMAM for women with no education and those with post secondary education. Similar observations were made for the males. Those with no education enter marriage at an earlier age (SMAM was 22.9 years) than those with post secondary level of education (27.5 years). Staying in the school system withdraws people from the marriage market and therefore raises the age at first marriage. Attainment of education influences an individual's way of living and is strongly associated with enhanced decision making. For example, educated girls cannot easily be forced by their parents to marry early as opposed to their uneducated counterparts.

Relatedly, results presented in Table 1 also show, that occupation of respondents is significantly associated with age at marriage. This is because, education influences the occupation of an individual. Farmers were 35 times (Exp (B) = 34.7) and traders 20 times (Exp (B) = 20.1) more likely to marry earlier than the students (reference category). This is partly because farmers and traders are

Table 1. Results of logistic regression analysis showing impact of education and selected variables on age at first marriage.

Age at marriage: 10-19		B	Std. Error	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
	Intercept	-6.996	.809	74.710	.000	
Residence	Urban	.281	.175	2.557	.110	1.324
	Rural #	0(a)	.	.	.	1.000
Religion	Catholic	.123	.140	.769	.380	1.131
	Moslem	.257	.222	1.343	.247	1.293
	Protestant #	0(a)	.	.	.	1.000
Education	None	3.029	.406	55.684	.000	20.685
	Primary	2.322	.373	38.823	.000	10.196
	Secondary	1.518	.372	16.637	.000	4.563
	Tertiary #	0(a)	.	.	.	1.000
Tribe	Baganda	1.273	.205	38.473	.000	3.571
	Bafumbira	.417	.209	3.987	.046	1.517
	Lugbara	.924	.206	20.104	.000	2.519
	Bagisu #	0(a)
Occupation	Professionals	2.661	.750	12.587	.000	14.304
	Farmer	3.548	.731	23.532	.000	34.737
	Other	3.154	.724	18.977	.000	23.429
	Trader	3.003	.736	16.659	.000	20.148
	Student #	0(a)	.	.	.	1.000

= Reference category.

also likely to have low levels of education and the latter affects occupation of respondents. The professionals were 14 times (Exp (B) = 14.3) more likely to marry earlier than the students.

Polygamy

Polygamy (plural marriage or where a person is married to several persons simultaneously) was an acceptable practice among the traditional Bafumbira. They liked and encouraged polygamous marriages because of the following reasons: A polygamous family provided many social services to the family as well as the clan. It also provided a guaranteed security in old age. It protected fathers from attacks of both wild animals and enemies. Chances of all children dying were fewer with many children. The Bafumbira informants also agreed with Katahwaire (1989) that inheritance custom was one of the causes of polygamy. If a man did not get any children from his first marriage or if the first wife bore him only daughters, he married another wife. The aim of multiple marriages was to get at least a son, who would inherit one's property and continue one's lineage. Traditionally, a woman could not inherit the property of the departed.

This was attributed to the patrilineal nature of the society. If the deceased had no son, a close relative of his would be chosen to be his heir.

However, it was observed that only the old people are polygamous because at the time they married, there was more land per individual than the case now. The focus group discussions revealed that polygamy is becoming unpopular in the area and that they would wish to see it disappear. This is regarded as a positive development in poverty reduction. Large family sizes and poverty are closely related. The Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Report (UPPAP) (2002) identified large family sizes as the primary cause of poverty. Tumwine (2010) further observes that the southern districts (Kisoro and Kabale) have the highest population densities. High population densities are associated with problems of land fragmentation, soil erosion, landslides and encroachment on forest reserves and national parks.

UBOS (2012) shows that polygamy has declined steadily over the last decade from 32% in 2000/2001 UDHS to 28% in 2006 UDHS and 25% in 2011 UDHS. There is an inverse relationship between education and polygamy. Therefore, with Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) polygamy is more likely to continue declining.

Table 2. Percentage distribution of the causes of divorce according to sex and area of residence.

Rural areas Reason N	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Failure to understand each other	9	42.9	4	20.0	13	31.7
Partner hash / mistreatment	1	4.8	7	35.0	8	19.5
Poverty. Not buying necessities /no bride price	4	19.0	2	10.0	6	14.6
Adultery	2	9.5	2	10.0	4	9.8
Barrenness/ impotence	1	4.8	2	10.0	3	7.3
Partner married another wife	0	0.0	3	15.0	3	7.3
Wife failed to cope with partner's relatives	2	9.5	0	0.0	2	4.9
Wife aborted	1	4.8	0	0.0	1	2.4
Alcoholism	1	4.8	0	0.0	1	2.4
Total	12	100.0	20	100.0	41	100.0
Urban areas						
Adultery	2	13.3	10	30.3	12	25.0
Failure to understand each other	8	53.3	4	12.1	12	25.0
Poverty. Not buying necessities /no bride price	3	2.0	5	15.2	8	16.7
Partner hash / mistreatment	0	0.0	6	18.2	6	12.5
Alcoholism	0	0.0	4	12.1	4	8.3
Partner married another wife	0	0.0	3	9.1	3	6.3
Wife aborted	1	6.7	0	0.0	1	2.1
Barrenness/ impotence	1	6.7	0	0.0	1	2.1
Wife failed to cope with partner's relatives	0	0.0	1	3.0	1	2.1
Total	15	100.0	33	100.0	48	100.0

Source: Tumwine (2007)

Divorce

Divorce is one of the indicators of marital instability. It is a legal dissolution of an established family. Mbiti (1986) looks at divorce as the final culmination of other marriage problems. It is the final stage brought about by a number of other factors. Among the traditional Bafumbira, it was very rare. Divorce (*"kwahukana"*) was however accepted due to the following reasons: drunkenness, ill treatment, adultery, gluttony, refusal or inability to offer sex and other socially undesirable instances. It would be allowed after the father of the girl reimbursed the bride price. This was called *"kuzimura inkwano"*. The pot in which the father of the boy initially carried alcohol at the time of making the marriage proposal would also be returned. Re-marriage was allowed after divorce and reimbursement of bride price.

Tumwine (2007) observes that divorce has increased due to the following reasons: Lack of patience and disrespect by women as a result of women emancipation. The respondents were of the view that women who regard themselves as liberated and independent do whatever they want. Whereas in the past, a woman knew that a man was supreme. Today, women are more involved in family decision making, pursuing their own needs and interests. They expect their husbands to share in the household chores such as childrearing responsi-

bilities. With more economic power and slightly better laws in place, women are increasingly dragging their husbands to courts of law due to mistreatment. Women can own or buy land and other property and can therefore fend for themselves after divorce.

Poverty, which includes the failure of the husband meeting simple needs of their wives and failure to pay bride price was yet another leading cause of divorce. It was emphasized that until all the bride price is paid the bride is not fully regarded as one's wife. However, after it has been paid the woman is encouraged as much as possible not to divorce since the man has the right to claim the bride price from her kin. Related to poverty is alcoholism. UNFPA (2006) shows that excessive consumption of alcoholic drinks is a major cause of poverty in terms of the amount of money spent on it and its effects. Large numbers of chronically poor households and those that later fell into poverty devoted more than one quarter of their household's budget to purchases of alcoholic drinks. In addition, alcohol deprives the partner of the company and comfort because the partner is always away from home. Bafumbira women FG in Kampala said: "alcohol increases interest in sex yet it reduces performance of the man".

Table 2 shows causes of divorce were viewed differently according to urban and rural respondents. The main causes of divorce in urban areas included adultery

(25%) and failure to understand each other (25%). With the HIV/AIDS scare, adultery cannot be taken lightly. The most common mode of HIV transmission is sexual contact. Men and women with multiple sexual partners are among the groups with the highest risk of sexual transmission. Therefore, mutual fidelity as well as limiting the number of sexual partners are some of the most effective preventive behaviors of HIV infection. Adultery is therefore a cause of worry because of the AIDS pandemic. Husbands need to consider the views of their wives and vice versa. This is because without consulting each other one will not be able to know the needs and interests of the partner.

On the other hand, the most common cause of divorce for female respondents in rural areas was mistreatment by their husbands (35%) and husbands marrying other wives (15%). This is not surprising because Christianity stresses monogamous marriages and therefore Christian women would find it difficult to keep in marriages when their husbands marry other women and start mistreating them.

The rural respondents had unique reasons such as wives failing to cope with relatives of the husband (5%). In the rural setting, although married sons construct houses spatially separate from those of their parents, the absolute distance between them due to the increasing population density may not necessarily be long enough to provide the independence required by the young couple. Couple's scope of independence in managing their own affairs is reduced and controlled by a large family or a group of relatives who interfere in matters that would otherwise be left to the husband and wife. In case the parents of the husband who would want to dominate the new couple to achieve their expectations, results in creating antagonism. Sometimes competition develops between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law for affection of the son and husband respectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Preparation for marriage was a good practice that is neglected in many societies of Uganda. It is recommended the example of the communal cultural learning "ekisagate" of the queen "Nabageleka" of Buganda should be emulated by all the tribes in Uganda. In the same vein the practice of "pulling" should be continued as it is meant to make sex enjoyable. This is because, sex is the foundation of a happy marriage and without it, marriage can break. The traditional practice of discouraging pre-marital sex should be continued. Abstinence is one of the core teachings in Uganda in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

In order to avoid spread of hereditary diseases such as tuberculosis, asthma, sickle cell and elephantiasis as well as bad practices such as witchcraft and theft, young people are encouraged to find out about the families of the intended spouses before making commitment to

marriage.

Bride price has been commercialized. Modern families should accept what in-laws can afford to provide instead of fixing for them exorbitant items and money. This is because educated girls are expected to get married to educated boys and both parents spend money to educate both sexes. Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) should be improved by the parents contributing to the education of their children through provision of school uniform, books, meals, supplementing teachers' salaries as well as building funds. This will go a long way to increase age at marriage, reduce fertility and poverty.

Alcohol has been noted to cause poverty and divorce. Therefore, alcohol consumption should be limited between 5.00 and 10.00pm. This is to prevent the consumption of alcohol throughout the day and night as is the case in most of the parts of the country.

Conclusion

Traditional marriage is a social event that involves many members of society. Due to modernization through urbanization, formal education and migration some marriage practices such as abstinence before marriage, parent involvement in choosing marriage partners for their children and strong families as exemplified by rare divorce, are under threat. The paper also shows that some traditional marriage practices like early marriage, polygamy and commercialization of bride price should be discouraged to foster better health for women and reduction of poverty.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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