

Assessing the Effects of Polygamy on Child Rearing in Sierra Leone

(A Case Study of Six Sections in Kenema City)

Florence Wuyah Baion, Neima Rita Samai, James Koiva Senesie, Marion Baby-may Nyakoi, Eric Komba Foyoh Mani

ABSTRACT

Marriage is indispensible to humanity because it is the lifeblood of the family. Through marriage, the human race is perpetuated. Different marriage systems exist across the globe. The variations are determined by cultural, political, economic and regional differences. The culture of many African societies permits men to have multiple wives and this is one reason why women have been kept in subservience. In some other instances men are polygamous as a way of cultivating their material alliance for possible political gains. Some other men are polygamous because of economic reasons. This is more so with the traditional milieu where agriculture is the mainstay of the people and is labour intensive. Yet, some other marry multiple wives for religious considerations though none of the two dominant religions of Christianity and Islam in Sierra Leone outrightly permit it. Members who are polygamous do so to satisfy their heart desires. No matter what might be the justification for being polygamous, it has excruciating effects on the family and more particularly the children. It is such effects that this dissertation seeks to shed light on.

INTRODUCTION

The first group of contact for this child is the family. For the reason, the family is called the primary group of agent of socialization. Every individual is born into a family. The adult members of the family (father and mother) or the substitutes cater for the needs of the child the moment he/she is born. They feed, clothe, house, educate and do many more for the child. The child is first socialized by the family then by the other groups.

A family emerges from marriage which is a union between a man and a woman such that the children born to the woman are recognized as legitimate offspring of both partners. The definition is not conclusive because there is a form of marriage, same-sex marriage, which

contravenes the definition. Such a marriage can be initiated between a man and his fellow man or a woman and her fellow woman. However, God's intension of marriage from the religious point of view is that it should ensure between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:18-24).

Different types of marriage exist. They include:

- Guy marriage, the marriage of a man to another man.
- Lesbian marriage, the marriage of a woman to another woman;
- Group marriage, the marriage of a number of men to a number of women. In this type of marriage, a child born belongs to every member of the group.

There are two forms of polygamy, polygyny and polyandry.

Polyandry is the type of polygamy in which a woman has more than one husband. Type of marriage is practiced in only a few cultures notably among the Tibet in Nepal and Todas of Southern India.

Polygyny is the other type of polygamy in which a man has more than one wife. Many cultures approve of a man having more than one wife. The wives can be acquired at different times in life. The custom of men marrying later in life promotes Polygyny. Among the Kanurl people of Bornu, Nigeria, men marry many wives. Men between the ages of 18 and 30 years may marry women between the ages of 12 and 14 years. The age differences create a pool of widows and widowers. In Baunda, the major pre-colonial state of Uganda, the king married hundreds of wives representing all the clans in the kingdom. Everyone in the kingdom therefore became the king's in-law and so all clans had access to the throne. Among the Bestileos, Madagascar, the different wives live in different villages. A man's first and senior wife lives in the village where he cultivates the largest rice field and that is where he spends most of his time.

Unlike a few communities, but like many others, the system of polygamy practiced in Sierra Leone is polygyny. It works with some agreement between the husband and the existing wife or wives when another wife is to be added to their number. The culture requires the consent of the previous wife or wives be sought should another wife be brought home. If they, especially the first wife (the senior wife) refuses the husband should plead with them/her. If he pleads and they

insist on not accepting, the husband d can then use his digression. The relationship between the firs wife and the succeeding one(s) is senior and junior wife/wives respectively. In certain cases, it is the senior wife who chooses a junior wife or wives for the husband usually from close kings men in order to command obedience, respect from and control over them. The wives are expected to work in partnership in performing the husband chores complementing each other's efforts and in meeting their marital obligation with the husband. The latter is the most disheartening part of polygamous marriage because what is highly cherished is shared with other competitors.

Child rearing refers to the upbringing or socialization of the child compounded with catering for his/her needs in terms of food, clothing, housing, education, medical and other needs. The practice of polygamy in Sierra Leone has important consequences on a child's upbringing. This investigation is therefore geared towards assessing the effects of polygamy on child rearing in Kenema town.

AIM

The aim of the study is to investigate the effects of polygamy on child rearing in Kenema.

OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of this work are

- Identifying the causes of polygamy in the study area.
- Discussing the effects of polygamy on the family, especially the child.
- Providing recommendations for ameliorating the negative effects of polygamy.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Men in many African countries have good reasons for being polygamous. Some inherit wives from their deceased relatives and add them to theirs. Others find pleasure in plural wives because they consider it a source of prestige. Still others use polygamy as a tool for economic and political advancement. No matter what might be the reason for the initiation of a

polygamous marriage, it is charged with the responsibility of protecting the members especially the more vulnerable ones like the children.

Thus, polygamous families usually have multifarious problems.

- Petty jealousies are nurtured among the members of the family leading to tension, brawls and frequent quarrel.
- Academic achievement of the children is stifled by inability of the parents to adequately support them in school. Some of the children may not even access education, and of those who access it, a good number drop out of the school system soon.
- The health of the family is exchanged and at a very high risk. The husband cannot sexually, materially and otherwise satisfy the needs of the many wives. Each therefore goes her own way to make ends meet at the expense of the health of the entire family because whatever disease is contracted is likely to be shared among the rest.
- Some women cannot continue to bear the rigours of polygamy and may initiate divorce proceedings regardless of whether they have children in the relationship or not. Children in such instances are left to bear the brunt of their mother's foibles. They can be maltreated by their mother's mates who may remark that they did not drive their mothers away.
- Like in many polygamous homes is very miserable. Members live in squalid conditions over crowded with both children and adults each of whom can be vulnerable to disease outbreak. Polygamy is a feature of primitive communities where farming is a predominant activity. In such communities, men marry many wives with the intent of bearing many children to make up the labour force required to work on the farm. This is more so with African societies where farming is labour intensive.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses are tested in this exercise:

1. The nutritional status in polygamous homes is usually low.
2. Many children from polygamous homes do not have access to education or drop out of school
3. Children born and bred in polygamous homes are usually sociable.

JUSTIFICATION

Culture renders men and even women blind to the ills of polygamy and do not therefore see the problems associated with it. Even where they see them, they remain silent because they consider it a normal thing. This document serves as an eye opener, especially to women, to more clearly visualize the problems of polygamy. Gender activists can use it as a weapon to fight against the practice which is one of the major forms of discrimination against women. This document can serve as a reminder to the government of Sierra Leone to enforce the convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The thorough enforcement of the acts is believed to tilt the story in favour of women. There is common saying that “unity is strength”. The ills of polygamy contained in this document are believed to engender enthusiasm in women to fight a common course. With concerted efforts, they are expected to make a break through. Violence is an unavoidable act in polygamous homes committed by men against women, women against their mates and children and still older children against they younger ones. This will be succinctly brought out in this essay. Stakeholders with then be left with the challenge of finding ways and means of changing the situation. This document can also provoke researchers to carry out similar research in other areas/communities. Data gathered in the different communities can be compared and used for drawing valid conclusions and for making valuable recommendations on women’s right violations. Finally, this research document can be a bait for attracting more funds for the protection of women and children’s rights.

LIMITATIONS

One of the constraints faced in carrying out this research was finance. The existence was undertaken in Kenema City. The cost of soliciting information was pretty high. The researcher found it difficult to acquire information from the target population. Some were reluctant and demanded financial compensation to provide information. Some openly said the researcher would make plenty money from the exercise and should therefore be given their own share of the gains. In addition, certain details that were required were considered very sacred and so it was not easy for the respondents to let go of the information. Some of the questionnaires that were administered were not returned besides some of the questions on the ones that were returned were not properly responded to.

DELIMITATION

The research was done in Kenema, the regional district and chiefdom headquarters of the Eastern Region, Kenema District and Nongowa Chiefdom respectively. Kenema is one of the biggest settlements in the Province. It is divided into many sections including Kenema center, Gombu, Rural Training Institute (RTI), Burma, Plane Field, Lekpetei, Nyayawama, Lumbebu, BadruDeen, Samai Town, Farma Town, Kpayama, Kissi town, Diema, Dauda Town, Koryagbema, Kambowabu, Lebanese Camp, Fonikor, Nyandeyama, Kpetewoma and Reservation.

The investigation was done in six sections. The sections were Gombu, RTI, Burma, Lekpetei, Nyandeyama and Koryagbema. The communities were selected because they found at the outskirts of the town. They were formerly villages around the town but have been fused into the city as it expands with the building of more and more dwelling houses and other establishments to accommodate the scaring population. Since these communities were previously villages, the elements replica of traditional polygamous marriage are still glaringly prevalent.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

INTRODUCTION

It is spelt out in chapter one that this investigation was done in six sections in Kenema. The sections include Gombu, Rural Training Institute (RTI), Burma, Lekpetei, Nyandeyama and Koryagbema. Few years back, these communities were villages around Kenema, but have now been amalgamated to the city. However, the inhabitants still hold on to their former practices in almost every respect of life including the system of marriage which is, to a greater extent polygamous, Interview schedules and questionnaires were designed and administered and each set was ascertained to be useful in achieving the desired goal of the investigation. The questions were directed to adult males and females and in some instances, children were interviewed.

STUDY SITE

As stated above, this investigation was done in six sections in Kenema City. Kenema is a gap town partially cut off from the rest of the country towards the Southern regional headquarters of Bo by the Kamboi hills except for the small opening close to Bandama. Kenema is the third largest community in size and population in Sierra Leone, according to the 2004 National Population and Housing Census results. It is a predominantly Mende community, but being the regional headquarters of the Eastern region, it attracts people of other ethnic origins from within Sierra Leone and elsewhere in the sub-region, Africa and Western world. The people engage in diverse economic activities to make ends meet. Some people especially those at the peripheries engage in farming, others engage in commercial activities, transportation, architecture and clerical activities. They practice both Christianity and Islam though the number of Muslims outweighs the Christians as of the moment. One reason for the high number of Muslims is that Islam has a number of things in common with the traditional practices of the people. Kenema is blessed with a myriad of opportunities ranging from health to education, communication, and a host of others. In addition to the government hospital, there are private hospitals like the Arab Hospital, the Chinese Hospital, the Ralph Mini Hospital, the Banya Hospital, many pharmacies and drug stores. The quality of health personnel is also better than many other areas in the region as there is a good number of trained and qualified medical personnel in the hospitals and health centres.

There are cell phone companies and five radio stations that operate in the town. The cell phone companies are Orange (formerly Celtel), Tigo, Africel and Q- Cell. The radio stations are the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service (SLBS), Eastern Radio, Radio Nongowa, Star Radio and United Nations Radio (UN Radio). The presence of the cell phone companies and radio stations has immensely eased communication in the community.

Non-Governmental Organizations including International Rescue Committee (IRC), GOAL Sierra Leone/Ireland, Defence for Children International (DCI), Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS), Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), German Agro, GTZ, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), CARITAS, Lutheran World Federation/World Services (LWF/WS) and a host of others present.

TYPES OF SOURCES OF DATA

Statistical and scientific methods were used in the collection, presentation and analysis of data to assess the effects of polygamy on child rearing in Kenema City. The methods included the use of interviews, questionnaires and observation. The investigation reasonably used primary and secondary source of data. Primary data were gathered through the administration of questionnaires and the conduction of interviews. The interview schedules were used to collect information from the illiterate members of the communities under study. The questionnaires were designed for the illiterate members of the same communities. Other sources of data were casual interviews, discussions and empirical evidence. Structured and unstructured questions were used to ascertain the effects of polygamy on child rearing in the selected communities.

The careful analyses of the data collected have greatly helped in reaching the conclusions, and in making recommendations that have been found to be of great value in trying to analyse and find situations to the effects of polygamy on child rearing in Kenema.

MEETING

To meet the first objective, interviewees were asked to respond to questions on the cause of polygamy in their communities. The second objective was met by the use of questionnaires, interviews and home visits to practically see the effect of polygamy on child rearing in the individual homes.

The third objective was reached by asking respondents to make suggestions for ameliorating the negative effects of polygamy on child rearing.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaires were administered to the literate members of the target communities. The questions were to be completed within two weeks. A total of 120 respondents were selected to answer the questions. The number of respondents selected in the individual communities differed. The variations were based on the size and population of the communities. Men, women and children were selected for the purpose to get their different points of view about the topic of the investigation.

TABLE 1: SAMPLE POPULATION SIZE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

COMMUNITY	MEN	WOMEN	CHILDREN	TOTAL
Gombu	12	8	6	26
Burma	12	8	6	26
Lekpetei	8	6	4	18
Nyandeyama	10	8	6	24
Koryagbema	8	4	4	16
RTI	5	3	2	10
TOTAL	55	37	28	120

THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview schedules were administered in each of the six communities. A simple size of 25 interviews of 10 men, 10 women, and 5 children was selected from each community for interview. The selections for the interview were done by taking the tenth person out of every ten men or women and the fifth person out of every five children.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

The effects of polygamy on child rearing in six sections in Kenema City were investigated by the use of questionnaires and interview schedules. The findings show that cultural, economic, religious and political considerations are the main reasons why people, especially males in the study areas are polygamous. The effects of such marital relationships are far reaching and are not borne by children alone, but by women who are usually required to be subservient and even the men who may have to put with a lot of embarrassments on account of the obnoxious relationships they establish. Polygamy is still firmly rooted in the traditional African culture though to the greatest disadvantage of women and children.

SAMPLE SELECTION

Varying number of men, women and children were selected for answering the questionnaires to make a fair analysis and careful judgement of the effects of polygamy on child rearing in respective communities of study. An equal number of men and women (10 each) and half that numbers of children (5) were interviewed to ascertain their responses.

TABLE 2: SAMPLE NUMBER OF PEOPLE FOR QUESTIONNAIRES AND INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

RESPONDENTS							
COMMUNITY	QUESTIONNAIRE			INTERVIEW SCHEDULES			TOTAL
	MEN	WOMEN	CHILDREN	MEN	WOMEN	CHILDREN	
Burma	12	8	6	10	10	5	51
Gombu	12	8	6	10	10	5	51
Koryagbema	8	4	4	10	10	5	41
Lekpekei	8	6	4	10	10	5	43
Nyandeyama	10	8	6	10	10	5	49
RTI	5	3	2	10	10	5	35
TOTAL	55	37	28	60	60	30	270

Table 2 shows the total number of men, women and children that responded to the questionnaires that were administered and or interview schedules. The number of questionnaires administered and varied from one community to the other based on the size and population of the individual communities. Some communities however had equal number of respondents because their population figures fell within the same range. On the contrary, an equal number of men and women (10 each) and half the number of children (5) was selected from each of the communities for the interview.

MAIN RELIGIONS

Two main religions are practiced in the communities under investigation, Islam and Christianity with Islam being the dominant religion. One possible reason for Muslims dominance is that

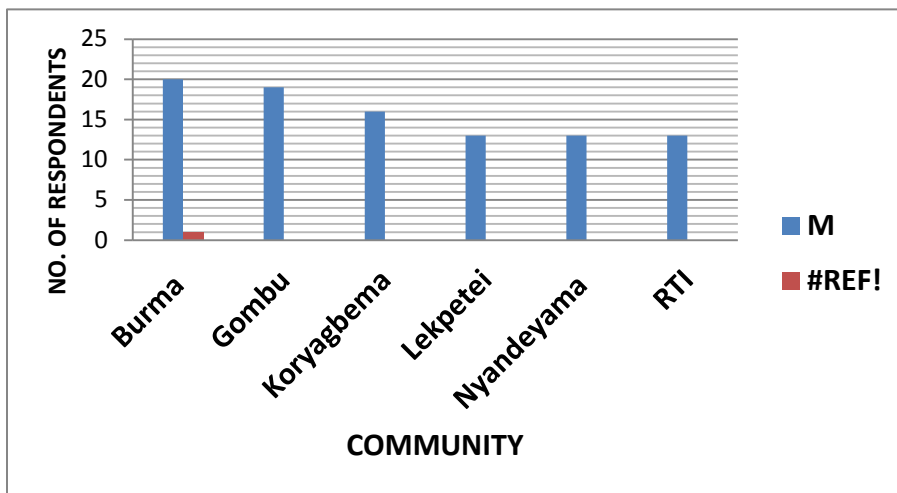
Islam offers a lot in consonance with Traditional African culture. Prominent among these is polygamy.

TABLE 3: RELIGION OF THE PEOPLE

RELIGION PRACTICED							
COMMUNITY	CHRISTIANITY	%	ISLAM	%	NONE	%	TOTAL
Burma	13	4.8	32	11.9	6	2.2	18.9
Gombu	11	4.1	29	10.7	11	4.1	18.9
Koryagbema	10	3.7	24	8.9	7	2.6	15.2
Lepekei	10	3.7	19	7.0	14	5.2	15.9
Nyandeyama	14	5.2	26	9.6	9	3.3	18.1
RTI	6	2.3	21	7.8	8	3.0	13.0
TOTAL	64	23.7	151	55.9	55	20.4	100%

Religion plays a key role in the life of an individual. It determines many aspects of the individual’s life including the system of marriage and child bearing tendencies. Table 3 shows that the study area are Muslim dominated, a religion that permits a man to marry as much as four wives. With many wives, the ultimate result is many children because every woman would like to legitimize her hold on the husband and the property they acquire. This is presented in the bar chart below.

FIGURE 1: Religion on the People in the Community.



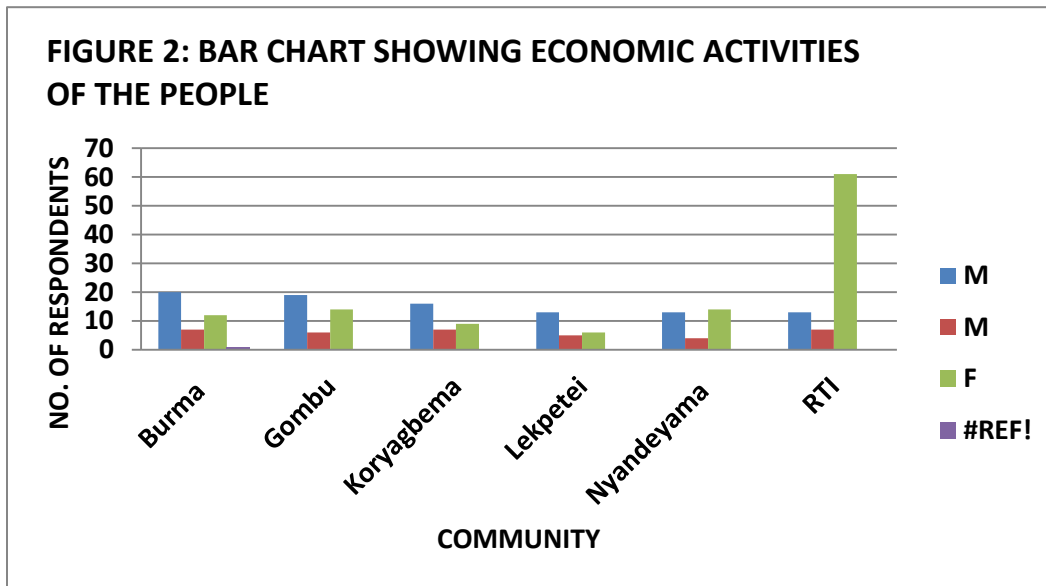
ECONOMIC ACTIVITY PRACTICED Marriage is essential for procreation, an element of culture. Marriage is a universal culture since it exists in all cultures. However, it varies from culture to culture. The variation is influenced by a number of factors including economic activity practiced. The study areas are mainly farming communities. The farming practices are labour intensive and so individuals especially men have little or no choice but many more than one wife who constitute the labour force needed for the farm work.

TABLE 4: ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF THE PEOPLE

COMMUNITY	NO. OF RESPONDENTS		ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES PRACTICED							
	M	F	FARMING		PETTY TRADING		TEACHING		OTHERS	
			M	F	M	F	F	M	M	F
Burma	22	18	19	15	-	2	3	1	6	2
Gombu	22	18	16	14	1	3	2	-	7	1
Koryagbema	18	14	15	11	-	4	1	-	2	-
Lepekei	18	16	12	13	2	6	4	2	5	4
Nyandeyama	20	18	17	14	3	7	6	2	3	4
RTI	15	13	12	9	-	3	-	-	4	2
TOTAL	115	97	91	76	6	25	5	5	27	13

Table four shows the economic activities of the people in the selected communities of investigation. The figures in the table show that farming is the main economic activity. Some of those engaged in other activities like teaching; still do farming to augment their income from other sources. With farming being the chief economic activity, there is every possibility for

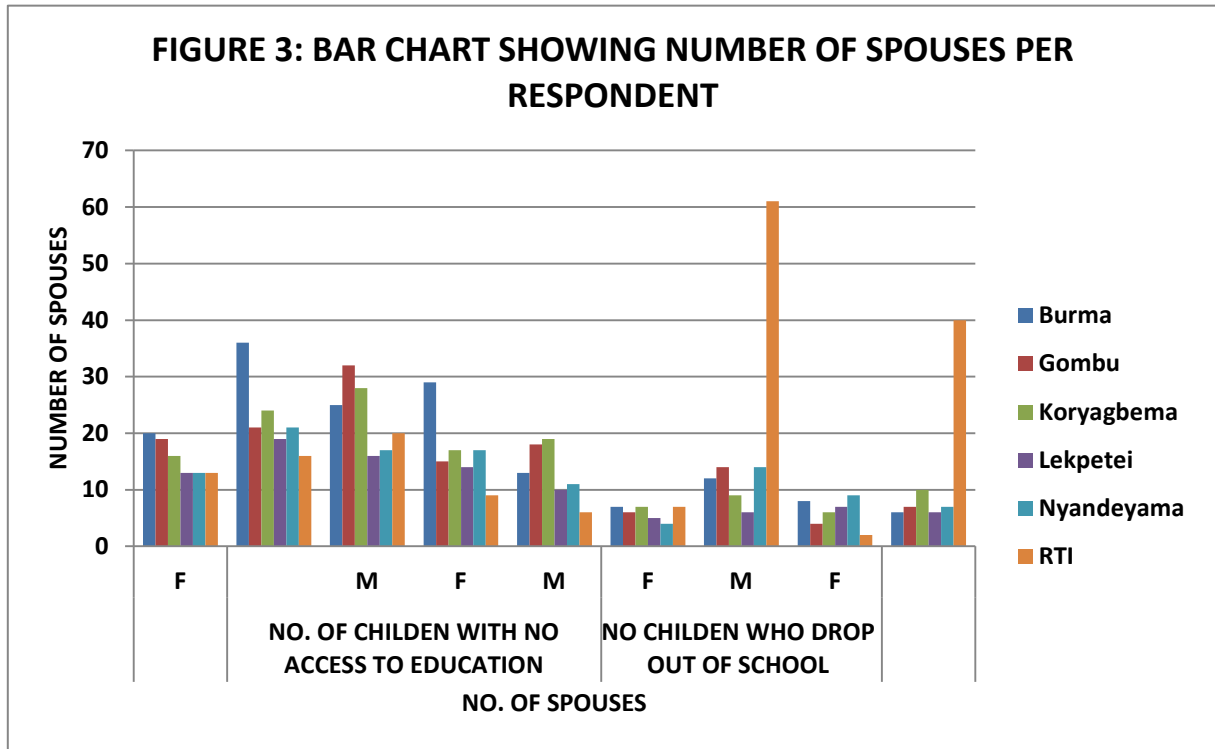
polygamy. The information is shown in the bar chart below.



NUMBER OF SPOUSES PER PERSON Polygamy has been defined in this work as the marriage of a person to more than one spouse. In Sierra Leone and probably many other West African societies, it is usually men that marry more than a spouse because they consider it a pride. In fact society frowns that a women having more than a partner. **TABLE 5: NO OF SPOUSE(S) PER RESPONDENTS**

COMMUNITY	NO. OF RESPONDENTS		NO. OF SPOUSES							
	M	F	1		2		3		4	
			M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Burma	22	18	2	18	11	2	3	1	6	2
Gombu	22	18	3	18	13	3	2	-	7	1
Koryagbema	18	14	2	14	10	4	1	-	2	-
Lekpekei	18	16	5	16	9	6	4	2	5	4
Nyandeyama	20	18	7	18	13	7	6	2	3	4
RTI	15	13	2	13	9	3	-	-	4	2
TOTAL	115	97	21	97	6	25	5	5	27	13
PERCENTAGE	100	100	18.3	100%	56.5	0	17.4	0	7.8	0

Table five shows that it is men that are polygamous in all the communities of the investigation. While all the women responded to have or have had only a spouse, the number of spouse per man ranged between one and four. This information is also translated into the bar chart below.



ACCES TO EDUCATION BY CHILDREN FORM POLYGAMOUS HOMES/

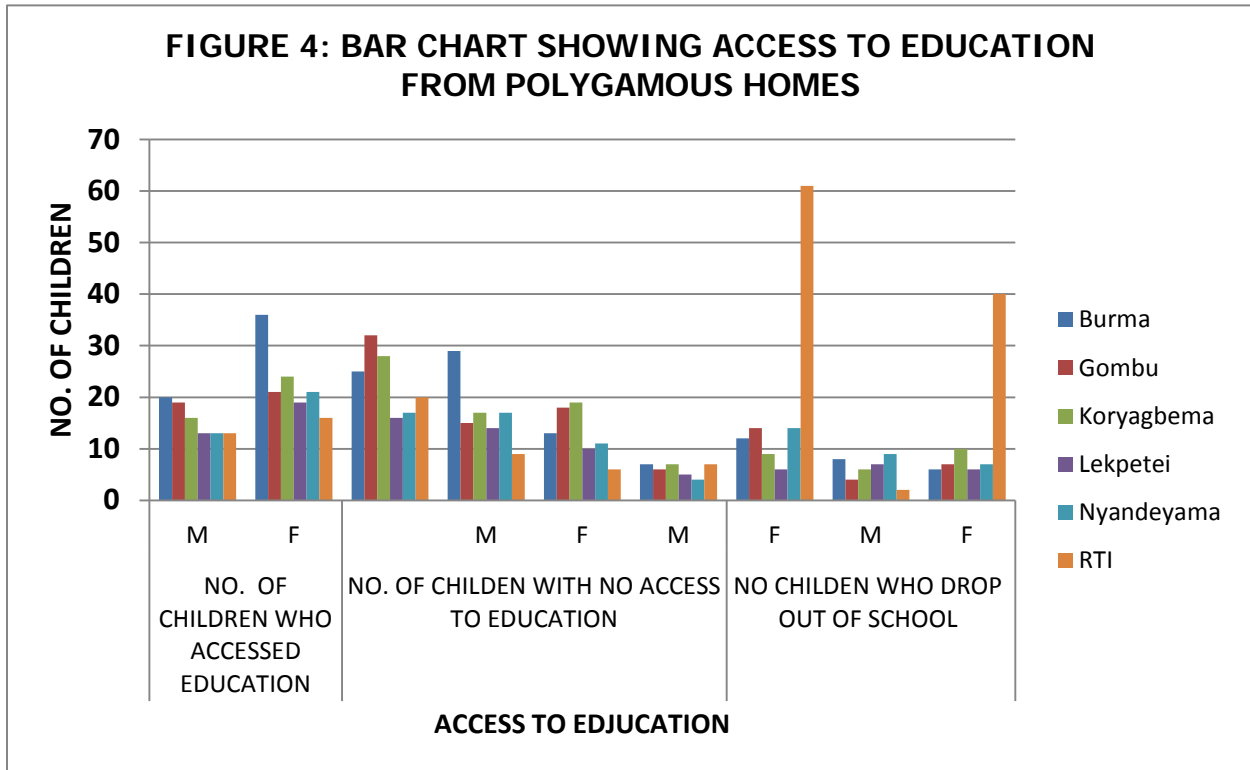
FAMILIESOne of the millennium development goals is the reduction of literacy by 2015. Polygamy poses a threat to the attainment of this goal. The simple reason is that most polygamous families cannot afford the cost of educating a good number, if not, at all of the children. Some of the children may have initial access, but drop out sooner or later after ward because of the family’s inability to sustain the support for schooling.

TABLE 6: ACCESS TO EDUCATION BY CHILDREN FROM POLYGAMOUS HOMES/FAMILIES

	NO. OF FAMILIES ACCESSED	NO. OF CHILDREN		ACCESS TO EDUCATION					
				No. of children who accessed education	No. of children with no access to education	No. of children who drop out of school			
COMMUNITY		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Burma	20	36	25	29	13	7	12	8	6
Gombu	19	21	32	15	18	6	14	4	7
Koryagbema	16	24	28	17	19	7	9	6	10
Lekpekei	13	19	16	14	10	5	6	7	6
Nyandeyama	13	21	17	17	11	4	6	9	7
RTI	13	16	20	9	6	7	14	2	4
TOTAL	94	137	138	101	77	36	61	36	40
PERCENTAGE	100	100	100	73.7	55.8	26.3	44.2	26.3	29

Table 6 reveals that males have more access to educational opportunities than females. In many African traditional homes, education is the domain of males because of the perception that is males that caters for families while females can be passive recipients of what men bring. The table further makes clear that the attrition rate among females is higher than males. Some families send girls to school to await puberty. A puberty, they (girls) are withdrawn from school and given in marriage. This is more so in polygamous families where the family incomes are low and children are used to augment their parents’ meagre incomes for the upkeep of the home. Some children are even engaged in street trading instead of going to school. The information is presented in the pie chart below.

FIGURE 4: BAR CHART SHOWING ACCESS TO EDUCATION FROM POLYGAMOUS HOMES.



ACCESS TO FOOD IN POLYGAMOUS HOMES The configuration for food access in many polygamous is 0-0-1. What is also worth mentioning is the quality of the food that is eaten and the time it is made available to eat. The food is usually carbohydrate dominated and therefore not balanced to promote the healthy growth of the partakers. In addition, the meals are eaten lately, mostly at bed time. Needless to say that children and even adults in most polygamous homes are found malnourished and fagged because of poor diet intake.

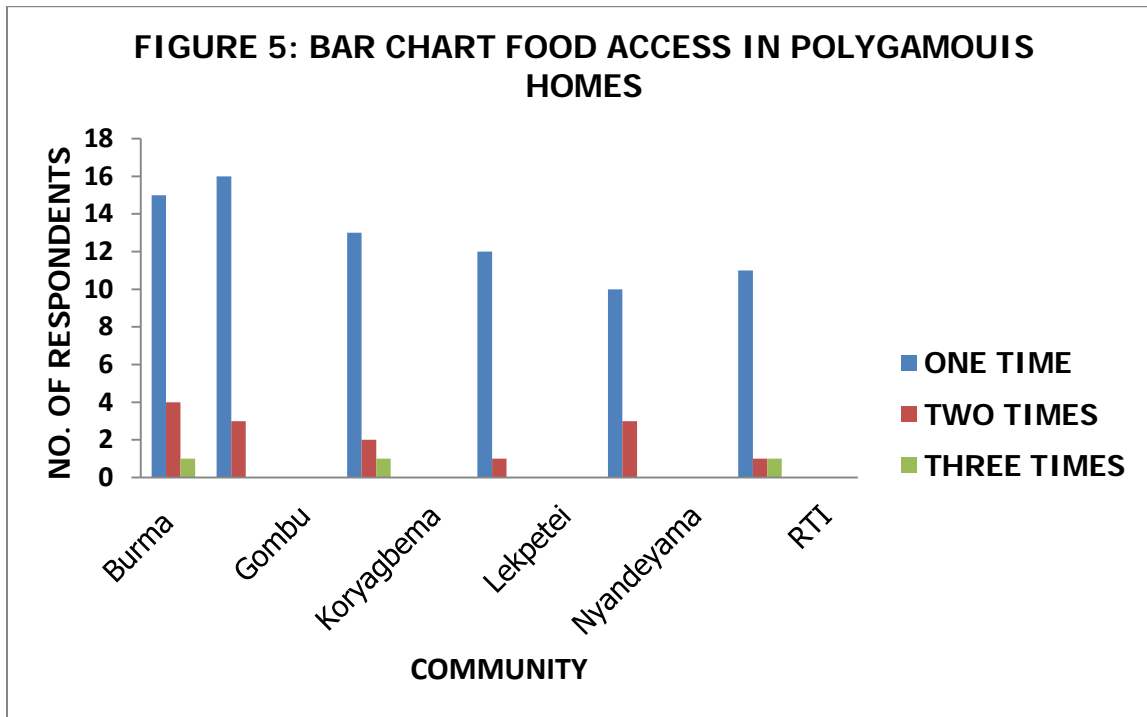
TABLE 7: FOOD ACCESS IN POLYGAMOUS HOMES

COMMUNITY	NO. OF FAMILIES ACCESSED	FOOD INTAKE (NO. OF TIMES) PER DAY		
		ONE TIME	TWO TIMES	THREE TIMES
Burma	20	15	4	1
Gombu	19	16	3	-
Koryagbema	16	13	2	1
Lekpetei	13	12	1	-

Nyandeyama	13	10	3	-
RTI	13	11	1	1
TOTAL	94	77	14	3
PERCENTAGE	100	81.9	14.9	32

For normally healthy grown and physical well-being, a person should have three balanced meals per day. This is farfetched in polygamous homes. Intact, it is difficult to have one square meal per day let alone three. Table 7 shows that many polygamous families in the target communities of study have one meal per day while a few have two or three meals. It should be noted that to increase the number of meals per day, some families keep left over food per day to be used the following day. Such foods are not usually very useful at the time they are eaten, as they would have lost their nutritive value. This information is presented in the component bar chart below.

FIGURE 5: BAR CHART FOOD ACCESS IN POLYGAMOUS HOMES OTHER PROBLEMS FACED BY POLYGAMOUS FAMILIES



Polygamous families have multifarious problems in addition to those that have already been discussed. When a family has more members than in carrying capacity, it is bound to face a myriad of problems .

TABLE 8: OTHER PROBLEMS OF POLYGAMOUS FAMILIES.

PROBLEM FACED	BUR MA	GOM BU	KORYAGBE MA	LEKPE TEI	NYANDEYA MA	RT I	TOTAL
Malnutrition	6	5	2	3	2	2	20
Poorclothing	9	8	5	10	6	6	45
Poor Housing	13	10	8	8	7	7	52
Poor HealthFacilitie s	12	9	10	7	6	5	49
HighMortality rate	5	6	4	3	3	2	23
PettyJealousies and quarrels	7	4	5	6	3	3	28
Incidence of street children	6	5	4	2	4	3	22
Poverty	15	13	12	13	6	7	66

Table 8 shows some of the other problems faced by polygamous homes ranging from malnutrition to poor clothing, housing, poor health facilities, high mortality rate, petty jealousies and quarrels, cases of street children and poverty.

PROOF OF THE HYPOTHESES

Three hypotheses were put forward in chapter one (1.6) for testing. First, it was postulated that the nutritional status in polygamous homes is usually poor. This was found out to be correct. The investigation shows that diet in polygamous homes is carbohydrate dominated with little or none of the other food ingredients like protein, vitamins, fats, and oils. This prevents the growth and development of the family members, but more especially children. Second, it was hypothesized that many children from polygamous homes do not access education and that even some of those who access educational facilities sooner or later drop out of the school system without attaining any appreciable level of education. This is was also seen to be correct. Finally, it was also stated that children born and bred in polygamous homes are usually sociable. This

too was found out in the research. The sociability of the children starts right from their own homes where they live with many other children and other family members, when a child learns to live with many people at home; it is possible event that he/she will turn out to be a mixer.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

There are many things in society that are anti-developmental in outlook, but nobody seems to be paying attention to their hazardous effects simply because they are considered to be part and parcel of society. This investigation is a wake up on all stakeholders in society to be very vigilant for such things. The center focus of this investigation has been to identify the effects of polygamy on child rearing and to recommend ways of ameliorating the negative ones. Though highly entrenched in the culture of the society of which we are a part it should be noted that the circumstances of the present time do not favour such a marriage system. Polygamy is marked by raising large families which the world is fairly moving away from because of unfolding economic trends.

CONCLUSION

The investigation has shown varying effects of polygamy on child rearing. One effect of polygamy on child rearing is that it limits the child's access to educational facilities. When a man has more than one wife, there is the likelihood of raising a large number of children. The cost of education is rising rapidly and so with many children, it is not often possible to educate them all. Initial attempts can be made so send all to school, but the probability of sustaining support to them all can be slim. The poor feeding system translates into the health of the family members. They, more particularly children, often and again face food related health problems, a cause of infant and maternal death's in many homes. The poor conditions in polygamous homes fans the flame of poverty. Some women may sometimes not cope with the hard times and thereof initiate divorce proceedings to the greatest disadvantage of the children born in the home. Leaving the children behind can be as disastrous as carrying them to another home where they do not have their legitimate father. Polygamy further increases the incidence of street children. Surveys have proven that apart from orphans, children from polygamous homes form another large category of street children. A society with a huge volume of street children has potential

enemies who can be transformed into anything that does not promote the development of society. The aforementioned effects of polygamy on child rearing do not in any way suggest that the effects are altogether negative. Polygamous families have some positive effects on child rearing. First, life is sandwiched by good and bad times. Polygamy hardens children's indulgence to put up with the difficulties of life and to strive hard to become responsible persons in society. Children from polygamous homes are normally sociable because of the type of home they come from. This explains why some can easily fit into other homes when they abandon their homes because of hard times. With love and unity, prevailing among them, children from polygamous homes can easily come to the defence of each other when the need arises. The security of each of them is therefore ensured. This goes with the saying that "United we stand, divided we fall."

RECOMMENDATIONS

The negative effects of polygamy on child rearing and society at large are tremendous. Society must therefore tread cautiously in dealing with such negative effects. First, people need to be sensitized about the negative effects of the marriage system on individual especially children, a society's hope for the future. Members of polygamous families should check their fertile instinct by using contraceptives. They need to know what the world is fairly moving away from raising large families. Equally important, they need to know that they should not only consider their potential to give birth to children, but their potential to adequately cater for the needs of the children especially in the area of education. Government should enact laws that prohibit polygamy should it be allowed to continue, an upper limit of two wives per man should be put no matter what explanation can be given in favour of having more than that number of wives. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security should improve facilities for agriculture which is one main reason identified in this investigation to be responsible for men's marriage of many wives. With improved facilities for agriculture through the provision of machines to make it less labour intensive and credit facilities to the hire labour, men engaged in agriculture will see the need to cut down on the number of wives they have. It was found out in the investigation that young girls are given in marriage should be enforced. Punitive measures should be taken against those who violate the law.

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