

An Exploration of the Experiences of Women in Polygamous Marriages: A Case Study of Matizha Village, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

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Abstract : This study highlights what people in polygamous marriages face on a daily basis. It argues that there are more disadvantages for women in polygamous marriages than their counterparts in monogamous relationships. The study further suggests that the patriarchal power structure seems to take a powerful and effective role on polygamous marriages in our societies, particularly in Zimbabwe where this study took place. The study explored the intricacies of polygamous marriages and how these dominances can be resolved. The research is therefore presented through the 'lived realities' of the affected women in polygamous marriages in Gutu District located in Masvingo Province of Zimbabwe. Polygamous marriages are practised in different societies. Some women who are practising a polygamous lifestyle are emotionally and physically abused in their relationships. Evidence also suggests children from polygamous marriages also suffer psychologically when their fathers take other wives. Relationships within the family are very difficult because of the husband's seeming favouritism for one wife. Children are mostly affected by disputes between co-wives and they often lack quality time with their fathers. There are mixed feelings about polygamous marriages. There are some people who condemn it saying inhumane. However, considerations must be made of what it might mean to other people who do not have choices of any other form of marriage. The other factor that has to be noted is that polygamous marriages are not always negative. There are some positive things that result from the polygamous marriages. The study was conducted in a village called Matizha. In the study, a qualitative research approach was employed to stimulate awareness of the social, cultural, religious and the effect of economic factors in polygamous marriages. This approach facilitates a unique understanding of the experiences of women in polygamous marriages, their experiences being both negative and positive. The qualitative type of research method enabled the respondents to have an open minded when they were being asked questions. The researcher utilised the feminist theory in the study. The researcher employed guide interviews to acquire information from the participants. The chapter focuses on the participants who took part in the study, how the participants were selected, ethical considerations, data collection, the interview process, the research instruments and the summary. The data was obtained using a guided interview for all the respondents ranging from all ages who are in polygamous marriages. The researcher presented the demographic information of the participants. Thereafter, the researcher presented other aspects of the data collection like social factors, economic factors and also religious affiliation. The conclusions and recommendations are made from the four main themes that came up from the discussions. The recommendations were made for the women, the policies and laws affecting women, and finally, recommendations for future research. It is believed that the overall objectives of the study have been met and research questions have been answered based on the findings of the study discussed.

Keywords : co-wives, egalitarianism, experiences, polyandry, polygamy, woman

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