

The influence of [Pentecostal churches](#) on female marriage dynamics in southern Mozambique

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

While the influence of religious beliefs and practices on demographic behaviour have widely been researched in many parts of the World, including in sub-Saharan Africa, most studies have focused on mainstream religions, such as Catholicism, mainline Protestantism, or Islam, and little is known regarding the role of small and emerging religions and churches. In this paper, we examine the relationship between membership in emerging Pentecostal-type churches and female marriage dynamics, focusing in particular on age at marriage and polygyny. Using multivariate statistical analysis we compare women affiliated with mainstream denominations to women in Pentecostal-type churches.

As elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa (Anderson 2005; Gifford 1994; 1998), in recent decades the number of African-initiated Zionist and other Pentecostal-type churches has been rapidly increasing in southern Mozambique. Appealing religious and social doctrines and the combination of prayers and curative activities have contributed to attract more people (particularly women) away from the mainstream religions who often join these religions hoping to see their health and or social problems solved. According to the 1997 National Census, these types of religion accounted for about 20% of the national population and more than 40% of the southern region population; Zionist women constituted a quarter of all the southern respondents of the last Demographic and Health Survey (Table 1), and it is believed that their share has since increased, particularly among women, who greatly outnumber men among churchgoers (Agadjanian 2002).

| Table 1: Percentage Zionist in 1997, 2003 and 2007 | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------|-------|------------------------------|-------------|-------|---------|
| Region | 1997 Census | | | 2003 DHS Females 15-49 | 2007 Census | | |
| | Total | Males | Total | | Total | Males | Females |
| North | 1.2% | 1.2% | 1.2% | 0.3% | - | - | - |
| Centre | 16.5% | 16.3% | 17.8% | 9.3% | - | - | - |
| South | 39.5% | 37.9% | 42.6% | 25.5% | 34.9 % | 32.8% | 36.7% |
| Mozambique | 17.4% | 16.4% | 19.2% | 13.6% | - | - | - |
| Source: Mozambique 1997 and 2007 Censuses and 2003 DHS | | | | | | | |

While the influence of religious beliefs and practices on the demographic behaviour have widely been researched in many parts of the World, including in sub-Saharan Africa, most studies have focused on mainstream religions, such as Catholicism, mainline Protestantism, or Islam, and little is known regarding the role of small and emerging religions and churches. In this paper, we examine the relationship between membership in emerging Pentecostal-type churches and female marriage dynamics, focusing in particular on age at marriage, polygyny and marital dissolution. The analysis uses data from a representative survey of 2064 women aged 18 to 50 years conducted in 2008 in 82 urban and rural communities of Chibuto district, a predominantly Christian area in Mozambique's southern province of Gaza.

Using multivariate statistical analysis we compare women affiliated with mainstream denominations to women in Pentecostal-type churches. For the analysis of age at first marriage we apply ordinary least square regression models. For the analysis of polygyny and marital dissolution we first use logistic regression for binary dependent variables to determine the odds of being in a polygynous union and of experience divorce/separation, respectively. In the next step of the analysis, we will also apply event-history statistical model, which will allow us to account for the effects of changing religious affiliations on these outcomes.

Data and methods

The analysis uses data from a representative survey of 2064 women aged 18 to 50 years conducted in 2008 in 82 urban and rural communities of Chibuto district, a predominantly Christian area in Mozambique's southern province of Gaza.

For the analysis of age at first marriage we applied a proportional hazard model (Halli and Rao 1992), which is a multivariate life table technique adequate for the analysis of censored data. The risk of first marriage was calculated from birth and it was assumed that the relative risk of entering into first marriage in women from different religious affiliation was proportional. A total of 1494 women were included in the analysis. The median age at first marriage is 18.9 and by age 30 more than 90% have been married.

Marriage in Mozambique can be customary/traditional, religious, civil or mutual consent union/cohabitation (Arnaldo 2004). In this analysis we do not make any distinction between these types of marriage.

For the analysis of polygyny we use logistic regression for binary dependent variables to determine the odds of being in a polygynous union.

Preliminary Results

Preliminary cross-sectional results show that while women affiliated with Pentecostal-type churches were not different from women affiliated with the mainstream denominations in regard to age at entry into first marital union. However, Pentecostal women were more likely to be in a polygynous union. However, the patterns of entry into church memberships differed greatly between mainstream and Pentecostal churches. Thus, women affiliated with the former typically belonged to them from birth or due to marriage. In contrast, women affiliated with Pentecostal-type churches typically joined them as adults often to seek cure to a health or social problem as well as through marriage.

Table 2

| Risk of first marriage and odds ratio of being in a polygynous union | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--|
| Predictors | First marriage | | Polygyny | | |
| | RR | Std. Err. | OR | Std. Err. | |
| <i>Religious affiliation</i> | | | | | |
| None | 1.01 | 0.13 | 2.78 ** | 0.31 | |
| Zionist/other pentecoastal | 0.94 | 0.05 | 1.43 * | 0.14 | |
| Mainline church ® | 1.00 | - | 1.00 | - | |
| <i>Education</i> | | | | | |
| None ® | 1.00 | - | 1.00 | - | |
| 1-4 years of schooling | 1.39 *** | 0.07 | 0.87 | 0.16 | |
| 5 or more years of schooling | 1.21 * | 0.08 | 0.67 * | 0.20 | |
| <i>Age group</i> | | | | | |
| 18-20 | 1.68 | 0.09 | 0.58 | 0.32 | |
| 21-30 ® | 1.00 | - | 1.00 | - | |
| 31-40 | 0.68 *** | 0.07 | 1.35 | 0.18 | |
| 41-50 | 0.41 *** | 0.09 | 2.11 *** | 0.21 | |
| <i>Husbands occupation</i> | | | | | |
| Miner ® | | | 1.00 | - | |
| Other occupation | | | 0.69 | 0.19 | |
| <i>Electricity in Household</i> | | | | | |
| Yes | 1.00 | 0.07 | 1.11 | 0.17 | |
| No ® | 1.00 | - | 1.00 | - | |
| <i>Bridewealth payment status</i> | | | | | |
| At least some bridewealth paid ® | 1.00 | - | 1.00 | - | |
| No bridewealth paid | 0.88 * | 0.06 | 0.74 | 0.16 | |
| <i>Marital disruption</i> | | | | | |
| No experience of m. disruption ® | | | 1.00 | - | |
| With experience of m. disruption | | | 3.11 *** | 0.18 | |
| <i>HH owns cattle</i> | | | | | |
| Yes | 1.01 | 0.06 | | | |
| No ® | 1.00 | - | | | |
| <i>Number children ever born</i> | | | | | |
| None | | | 0.78 | 0.30 | |
| 1-2 ® | | | 1.00 | - | |
| 3-4 | | | 1.13 | 0.16 | |
| 5 or more | | | 1.13 | 0.24 | |
| <i>Age first marriage</i> | | | | | |
| Constant | | | -1.3 | | |
| - 2 Log likelihood | 18933.7 | | 1311.9 | | |
| Chi-Square | 226.0 *** | | 116.1 *** | | |

| No. of cases | 1494 | 1910 |
|--|------|------|
| Notes: r=Reference category; * p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001. | | |

Discussion and Conclusions

The results of this analysis show that affiliation with the emerging Pentecostal-type churches do not have an impact on the age a woman enters into a first union but increases the odds of marrying a polygynist. The absence of any impact on first marriage is not surprising as most of women join these religious later in life (after they have been married) in some cases in hope of solving a social or health problem.

The positive impact on polygyny may reflect more tolerance of these churches on this practice as well as their closeness to the local tradition as some of the procedures used in healing process are very similar to those used by the traditional healers.

The analysis also found a strong relationship between marital dissolution and polygyny. On the one hand, divorced women tend to remarry a married man as junior wives (Hayase and Liaw 1997) but the causal effect may go in both directions, that is, divorced and or widowed women may tend to join Pentecostal religions in search of a solution for their 'misfortune'.

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