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**Conception and Perception of Marriage among the Isukha People, Kakamega County, Kenya, 1990-2010**

By

Leen Kavulavu, John Koskey Chang'ach and Prisca J. Tanui

School of Arts & Social Sciences, Department of History, Political Science & Public

Administration, P.O Box 3900-30100 Moi University

Correspondence: leenkavulavu@yahoo.com, jchangach@yahoo.com ptoo212@gmail.com

**Abstract**

From the 1990s there was a major shift in the traditional conception and perception of marriage. Marriage was viewed less as an alliance between families, and more as a relationship between the two individuals concerned, this betokens a movement from collective responsibility to individual accountability in mate-selection. This shift in the focus of marriage from a family relationship in which people shared their joys and sorrows together, to an alliance between two individuals was not only diminishing the parental and family role in the marriage process and weakening the sense of community but also re-defining the basis for and the order of priority in the marriage enterprise. This article provides an analysis and discussion of the changing paradigm shift in ideas and trajectories about African marriages with specific focus on Isukha marriage. Many families among the Isukha faced serious moral dilemmas because of conflicting conceptions of what was “right and wrong” owing to a general lack of consensus on acceptable standards of marital behaviours. Specifically, primary and secondary data were used to gather information for the study. Primary data was collected through personal interviews and group discussions. Secondary data was collected through library research. This study argues that at the end of the day reverting to the basic essential value of marriage will go a long way in the preservation of some of these ills that are associated with marriage. It expects that society will be able to learn from the traditional system, that indeed not for nostalgic reasons, the core of marriage is to be preserved in life.

**Key words:** Kenya, Culture, Isukha Kakamega Luyia and Marriage

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## **Conception and Perception of Marriage among the Isukha People, Kakamega County, Kenya, 1990-2010**

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### **Introduction**

The 1990s paradigm shift in the political and economic spheres had their major impact in the social sphere in which marriage was imbedded. This followed the emergence and spread of ideas as alternatives marriage options such as single parenthood, mistress phenomenon, cohabitation and childless marriages, among others. Those who had education landed lucrative government jobs in the independence government and this became an incentive for many parents to take their children's schooling seriously. Better and affordable healthcare services led to an increase in population as fewer children died younger. Population pressure led to land scarcity and people who no longer continued relying on land-based development (farming and livestock rearing). Education, as was clearly stated by leaders, became the "key to good life". Education impacted marriage decisions of the "uhuru (independence)" generation. On their part, the churches continued to shape marriage patterns as they did in the pre-independence period. However, the position of the mainstream churches with regard to marriage seemed to remain as was the case during the colonial period, although less strict. Though in favour of monogamous marriages, polygamous couples were encouraged to join the church and they were tolerated rather than expelled.

Another aspect that is important to the analysis in this paper is the global advocacy for increased participation and representation of women in politics. The advocacy was spearheaded by civil society organizations whose numbers increased as a result of the opening up of the political space and pressure, on the Kenyan government, by international donors and development partners for good and accountable governance. The economic sphere was also expanded through privatization of the public sector. Government privatized many of its parastatals. Services which had hitherto been provided by the state were taken up by the private sector. Consequently, the informal sector, which employs more women, also expanded. Akin with increased participation of women in the informal sector were calls for expanded credit facilities to enable women access capital from financial institutions. Many women-centered Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) sprout with the intention of offering credit as well as training to women. These NGOs tended to target single parents especially women-headed households. Households which had been hit by Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) pandemic also became a target. Generally, poverty alleviating programmes, with a community focus, increased in the post-1990s. The internet and a surge in the use of mobile phones have also been blamed for easing the spread of foreign ideas about marriage. In spite of the various strands of condemnations, some Kenyans came out in the open to declare their embrace of the supposedly foreign influences on African, and by extension, Isukha marriage. This article thus provides an analysis and discussion of the changing paradigm shift in ideas, practices and trajectories about African marriages with special focus on Isukha marriage.

### **Literature Review**

Marriage historically conferred a legitimate status on an offspring. It entitled an individual to the various privileges set down by the traditions of a particular community, which included the right of privileges accruing to the family lineage. In most African societies, marriage established the

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permissible social relations allowed to *bona fide* members, including the acceptable selection of future spouses. Mbiti's explanation of the nature of marriage stated that; "Marriage was a major transforming ceremony in African culture. It was viewed as a community activity that involved all members, those who were currently physically living in the community, the ancestors and those yet to be born" (Mbiti, 1969, p.133). A variety of communities found in Africa, with diverse cultural orientations, practiced marriage as a significant rite of passage. Individuals who got involved in marriage become "socially adult." Marriage thus, marked a significant transition from, "one social category to another, because for at least one of the spouses, it involved a change of family, clan, village, or ethnic group. Sometimes the newly married couples even established residence in a new house" (Oduyoye and Gennep, 1960, p.116). It was within marriage that individual legally exercised their procreative rights (Magesa, 1997, p.15). There is no doubt that colonial situation introduced new discourses regarding land, which undermined but did not completely replace the principles that undergirded pre-colonial social formation (Ndege, 2016, pp. 10-18). A situation which simultaneously led to changes in marital relations.

Post-independence Kenya created conditions favourable to autonomous decision making. Capitalism, urbanization, and social mobility exposed many Kenyans to other options in deciding who to marry. Although there was still some social pressure exerted on the individual in considerable measure, the male had the final say on who to marry. This is however not the case for females. The thrust of this argument is reflected by Gicheru when he mentioned that "single mothers are generally viewed as home-breakers and therefore isolated, yet the same judgment is not applied to men who are bachelors" (Gicheru, p.128). This indicates that patriarchal attitudes were still alive.

The declaration of 1975 as Women's year, local initiatives towards gender equity, globalization in the 1990s have led to the emergence of scattered studies which attempt to examine the changing patterns and marital relations in the post-colonial period. The pattern of mating, parenting, kinship utilization, and sexual division of labour is extremely robust and widespread and shows few signs of changing under the influence of modernization. It has its roots in an earlier pre-colonial period when the availability of land, the farming technology, the sexual division of labour, and polygamy enabled a domestic organization for which the men's contribution as husbands and fathers were not essential to the maintenance of women and children. Under such circumstances male reproductive effort were not channeled into parenting, but into mating.

At postcolonial the social and economic contexts in which people live changed markedly, yet old values persist; multiple contradictions accumulate both at the level of individual experience and at the level of the functioning of institutions. A good example comes in the case of "outside wives" (Hunter, 1961, pp. 200-210). Many men, of the skilled and educated upper-status groups, reported that they are monogamously married, a technically correct response. However, men often maintain other women and make variable contributions to these women as long as the relationship lasts. These outside wives consider that they are not "legally" married but they and their neighbours recognize the unions as customary. The men recognize paternity of offspring and may arrange for their children to be fostered to families in their own kin group. The outcome, however, from the point of view of women regardless of whether they are legally or customarily married and their children is that the father's resources in the form of time, energy, cash and influence are spread thinly (Draper, 1989, p.154). These studies were however, useful guide in demonstrating their application and effects of westernization in Isukha are concerned. From the review of literature, the study has established that there are drastic changes taking place in the marriage systems of many African communities. There is need to examine what factors can be held responsible for the changes in marriage among the Isukha and what were the impact of these changes on the social life

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of the people. This article thus provides an analysis and discussion of the changing paradigm shift in ideas, practices and trajectories about African marriages with special focus on Isukha marriage.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Social and economic impact of postcolonial policies have acted as agent of change to the core beliefs, values and marriage practices of the Isukha community in Kenya. However, there is evidence to show certain elements have resisted change. This article, therefore examined the nature and extend of the change and to establish the aspects of Isukha marriage beliefs and practices that have resisted change and which continue to exist within the study period in the present time.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main aim of the study was to evaluate the changes in marital relations of the Isukha in the period 1990 to 2010.

### **Study Area**

The study was carried out among the Isukha. The Isukha people are part of the patrilineal Luyia community who live within Kakamega County in Kenya. Administratively, Isukha is located in Shinyalu Sub-county that has six wards. Agriculture is the main economic activity with 80% of the population involved in agriculture-based activities of both subsistence farming and cash cropping of tea and sugarcane by small scale farmers. Isukha are famous in western Kenya for their *isukuti* dance and *bullfighting*. This is exhibited especially during initiation, funerals, weddings and ceremonies.

### **Materials and Methods**

This study was based on both primary and secondary sources. Oral interviews were conducted among the Isukha in December 2017- January 2018 based on prepared unstructured interview schedules. The participants were identified through purposive sampling and snowballing sampling procedures. Focused Group Discussions were also used to gather additional information for the study. Interviews were recorded by note taking and voice recording (with the consent of the participants). The voice recording information was later transcribed. All the information was later scrutinized and subjected for analysis with a view to arrive at viable historical conclusions. Since there was possibility of some participants to exaggerate certain information, the researchers corroborated the information gathered from different participants so as to ascertain the truth. In addition, secondary information was used to support an analysis and discussion based on primary sources and in search of information relevant to the study. This study however, relied heavily on primary sources for purpose of originality. Data analysis was done using two methods. The first one involved extensive field notes gathered during oral interviews were corroborated with secondary data. This was done to remove any bias and to ensure accuracy and reliability. Lastly, collected data was analyzed qualitatively. This method provided ways of discerning, examining, comparing and contrasting, and interpreting meaningful patterns or themes on which conclusions were drawn.

### **Result and Discussions**

#### **Increasing Cases of Singlehood and Single Parenthood among the Isukha**

Cases of single parent's especially single mothers were on the increase in the post-independence Kenya. Many Kenyan communities seemed to have accepted the defeat. A most significant trend among the Isukha family life and one that had far-reaching consequences for child welfare was the

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increase in the number of single-parents' families, particularly those headed by women. One of the causes of this was the effect of HIV/ AIDS. Whereas HIV/AIDS emerged in the 1980s, its effect, in terms of mortality, was felt in the 1990s. This created fear among the Isukha people towards marrying as well as wife inheritance. Some women were sent away by their husbands upon diagnosis of HIV/AIDS pandemic. In most cases, it was women who were blamed for the spread of HIV/AIDS. Taking place during the era of advocacy for women's rights, many civil society organizations sprung up to help single women by helping them initiate income-generating activities. This was meant to reduce the need for women to continue depending on men for economic support, for it was this dependence on men which exacerbated the spread of HIV among the Isukha. It was observed during field research, that, most of the female headed house-holds were attributed to widowhood. There were however, many factors which influenced the rate of widowhood; one of them was the fact that women generally had longer life expectancy than men, and another was the tendency for older men to marry extra wives who were several years younger. Almost invariably, the younger wives out-lived their husbands and had to share whatever resources previously owned and controlled by the husband. Issues concerning property inheritance often generated hostility among co-wives on the one hand and between the widows and their deceased husband's adult kinsmen on the other.

While some women remained single because of a variety of social and cultural barriers, others became single by choice. Voluntary single-parenthood arose from changing expectations of marriage, women's economic empowerment and increased freedom to choose a family lifestyle that suited individual needs. However, among the Isukha marriage was still treasured even with the professional men and women in many parts of Isukha who were not choosing single life. Many of them were married before while others were "single but searching". Some single participants mentioned that they preferred marriage but had settled for single lifestyles because they were unable to find suitable partners to admit them into heterosexual monogamy (Oral Interview, Gilbert Shigami, 16/01/2018). Commenting on the social trend and its inherent contradictions in the Kenyan context, Kilbride noted:

In Kenya: professional women were rejecting marriage altogether because many of them felt that men on the whole were unsympathetic to their attempts to leave careers: to seek education beyond the bachelor's degree and to practice independent lifestyles frequently associated with modern professional occupations. At the same time, many women felt that men too frequently involved themselves with other women (mistresses) while they expected their wives to remain home caring for the children (Kilbride, 1994, p.114).

Although many professional women were opting against marriage they had not given up their desire to have children. For this reason, such women frequently found themselves in a position of seeking out a man, married or single, to give them a child or to become a father to that child or one they already have. Kilbride's book on plural marriage concretizes the reality of the ongoing reinvention of family options in Isukha. Many Isukha men and women were delaying marriages and a growing number of well-educated and financially more secured women opted to have children without getting married. Although such women were exercising their right to choose, many of them recognized the importance of having a father or a father figure for their children and therefore remained single mothers with male companions, but not husbands. Their views reflected the fundamental changes in social and cultural values as many of them no longer considered being a mother and a wife as the only valued achievements of womanhood. Some of the women held the view that marriages were no longer made to last because of their instability and the tendency to take



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women's reproductive roles in the care-economy for granted. This view was expressed by one of the female participants in the following words:

I wouldn't mind cooking, cleaning or laundering for my husband even after toiling in the office until evening, but I have seen many women do this and not get any acknowledgement for their efforts. The modern woman is against being taken for granted and that is what puts her off the whole marriage thing (Oral Interview Everlyne Makona 24/01/2018).

Based on this kind of perception and concomitant behavior change, some women felt that being a mother was a much more fulfilling experience and a better option than being a wife. The emerging trends in new family configurations seemed to indicate that many young, educated and upward moving professional Isukha women were constructing social and sexual relationships for themselves. Most of these "customized" social relationships were matters of personal choice; some were based on romantic love, commitment and loyalty while others were driven by convenience and expediency. The reason for this trend was due to increased freedom of courtship and mate-selection. Such selections were established with little or no involvement of the larger community moral nets. Perhaps one of the most profound transformations of family life which significantly contributed to the prevalence of the mistress phenomenon or "informal polygamy". The pattern that emerged was that of formal monogamy, which was frequently practiced alongside delocalized, informal or clandestine polygamy according to which some married men kept mistresses whom they supported. However, given the high polygamous tendencies of many African men, more women choose between marrying down, and not marrying at all or entering into quasi-polygamous relationship with a married man. Paradoxically, this option made women get into the very same relationships which they resented, when it affected their own marriages (Suda, 2007, p.46).

The participants pointed out that many young people engaged in pre-marital sex that resulted in teenage pregnancies. The boy not being ready to take up any responsibility left the girl alone to take care of the child. The young girl may be economically incapable of taking care of the child and his necessities hence the need to have a "sponsor" husband or father. Besides, some girls who contemplated about marriage got children while in the process of trying to find somebody to marry them. Then if it so happened that the persons, they were seeking were not interested in marrying them. Further, some parents neglected their parental duty and left their role to their partners; for instance, an alcoholic husband abandoning his home and goes to live irresponsibly with other women in the urban centres. Through acquisition of education and employment, some women deemed themselves independent from their husbands. If their husbands didn't show them their due respect, they parted each other with or without children. The participants however, acknowledged that there were problems faced by children of single parents. One of the participants mentioned that:

Children of single parents were disturbed psychologically. They ask themselves various questions such as why one of their parents was absent and to some extent, they felt insecure in being in an incomplete family. They also felt inadequate in the presence of other children with both parents and hence longed to know and live with the other parent if they were still alive (Oral Interview, Silvester Imbugwa, 24/01/2018).

The cultural habit of referring everyone by his or her father's name gives an impression that a child who is known only by his or her baptism and original name lacked identity to tie them to their

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father or rather there was a stigma in his identity. Children were thus deprived of the missing parents' part in their lives. The single parent responsible for the family was often too busy that he or she had no adequate time for the children. Given that most single parents were financially handicapped and were the sole bread winners for their family, they spent much time in trying to generate income while leaving their children under the care of neighbours or relatives especially to grandparents. Such children lacked proper parental care and some grew up to unruly, in disciplined, and even adopted anti-social behaviours like smoking and taking alcohol. If living with their mother, the children may not identify themselves with any place of origin. At times conflicts emergencies especially over inheritance whereby they were viewed as non-members of the family. Hostility also arose from relatives who viewed them as burdens especially where their assistance was sought to feed and clothe them. At times they were made to perform the duties of the absent spouse such as cooking, washing and other child-abuse related chores. Some lacked in essentials such as education, good diet and medical care in cases where their existing parent was financially handicapped. Participants also cited that:

Single mothers in Isukha were viewed with suspicion as people of loose morals. At times they were accused unfairly of having affairs with husbands of other wives. Moreover, to the woman some men assumed they were of loose morals and tried to demand sex and for the man on the other hand, women were always at his side to snatch whatever he had toiled for (Oral Interview, Martha Yadudo 24/01/2018 and Nancy Igonga 24/01/2018).

Majority of single parents faced problems in bringing up their children. Some children lacked discipline because the parents were afraid to be hard on them. The children sometimes showed their feelings for the absence of the other parents thus, emotionally pushing the existing parent. Stigma also rested on those who had children out of wedlock's. Many participants however, agreed that Isukha society, still did not respect a woman who was a single parent. She was blamed as somebody who had betrayed the community by bringing forth a child without a social father. Such women were still not looked as good examples and many Isukha parents forbid their daughters to mingle with them. In many families, when such a woman died, they were still buried next to the fence of their parents' home especially if they had attained marriage age (Oral Interview, Roslyne Nechesa Musiami 16/01/2018).

### **Polygamy and the Mistress Phenomenon among the Isukha**

The mistress phenomenon emerged largely as a consequence of deteriorating economic conditions, and rising cost of living that made the plurality of wives an expensive economic proposition. Most men could hardly afford more than one wife, and many modern Isukha women were not interested in sharing a husband, at least not formally, particularly because of their growing desire for companionship and quality-time with their partners. The research identified several factors which contributed to extra-marital relationships and offered useful insights into the mistress phenomenon. According to many participants, these factors included; lack of sexual fulfillment in marriage, domestic violence, peer pressure and poverty, all of which were mentioned by participants. Other factors were lack of communication between spouses, revenge, the mid-life crisis, media influence, childlessness poverty and wealth. Some of these factors were gender specific while others were gender-neutral. It was pointed out, for example, that domestic violence of whatever nature and lack of affection, attention and appreciation often led to estrangement in a relationship and led a spouse to look for "happiness" outside marriage, which they sometimes found it but, quite often, and they didn't. In terms of communication, a 40-year-old divorcee female stated:

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Sometime the man just wants to talk, and the wife is nagging, but mistress will listen to him and make him feel special. Men preferred mistresses who were single and a place where things were cool, quiet and cozy. Some men regarded these women a prize and if they are young and beautiful, the man tended to boast about them. An educated woman who is single is highly valued and men win them with a lot of money. For some older married men, the mistress deal is all about prestige and they feel that they can still attract young beautiful women (Oral Interview Nancy Ingonga, 24/01/2018).

These sentiments reinforce the general perception that a mistress provides the services the man does not always get from his official wife. They are also consistent with the point of view that keeping a mistress is less stressful because there is peace in the mistresses' abode as she gives the man full and special attention. A 43-year-old divorcee man regretted that:

Sometimes you cannot laugh when you are in your house because you are constantly reminded of school fees and other outstanding obligations and responsibilities. So from the time a man eats his supper to the time he goes to bed, he is usually in no mood for anything intimate (Oral Interview Silvester Imbugwa, 24/01/2018).

The media which exposed people to new and innovative ways of managing relationships was also a key factor that contributed to mistress phenomena in Isukha. For example, information on "how to cheat on your husband or wife" was available on the internet. To illustrate the extent of media influence, a 35-year-old bachelor man said that "what a man can do with a mistress, he cannot do with his wife. A man is usually gentle with his wife but tries different styles with a mistress and it is more fun" (Oral Interview Gilbert Shigami, 16/01/2018). This indicates that sexual adventures were more likely to be pursued outside rather than within marriage, reflecting an old-fashioned but unpopular view that coitus marriage was mainly for procreation rather than recreation.

Peer influence also contributed to the establishment of extramarital relationships. It applied equally to men and women particularly when they had a large network of friends or were affiliated to a group. A 35-year-old single female noted that:

When marriage becomes boring, a man returns to his friends and discovers that they have girlfriends. Since he does not want to lose his friends, he gets a mistress in order to belong. Such a man cannot go out with his wife to meet his friends because she might tell his friend's wives that they are having girlfriends. Typically, the men's ages normally range between 35-50 years while the girls tend to be in their 20-35 years (Oral Interview Roselyne Nechesa Musiami, 16/01/2018).

Changing patterns of marital infidelity were part of the reason why many mistresses remained unmarried. On the basis of this stereotype about the wife-mistress role differentiation, some men came to the conclusion that marrying a woman who was a "girlfriend material" was not good for family stability. It also emerged that the girls themselves did not wish to be married. Part of the explanation was that many girls had engaged in relationships with married men when it was not the right time for them to get married. It was therefore common for friends with long-term commitments to have very clear expectations. But even when the man was not looking for children and the woman too was not looking for a future husband. Extra-marital relationships were usually kept as a secret from the official wife. Social stigma and the risk of breaking the man's marriage



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were among the reasons for the secrecy. This discreet and non-committal nature of extra-marital relationships was therefore not accidental but a deliberate choice on the part of both parties, and when the mistress eventually decided to get married, she informed the man who accepted and allowed her to move on.

In some cases, the mistress didn't get married at all, because this would make her assume the roles and responsibilities of a wife. One of the participants reported that some young women preferred older and wealthier married men commonly known as 'sponsors or sugar daddies' to younger boy-friends. Poverty thus, drove many young women and men into extra-marital relationships primarily for economic gain. Young women dated older and wealthier married men because of financial support. Very often, the man took care of her expenditure sets her up in business and lavished her with expensive gifts regardless of how much she earned. For many girls, the other reason was flexibility. One of the female participants further clarified that "dating an older married man was more convenient for the girls as it gave them more space and financial supports to focus on their studies and careers, and time to hang out with their friends" (Oral Interview Nancy Igonga, 24/01/2018). It was reported that girls, didn't get this opportunity when they were in a relationship with young single men who needed their attention and also tended to monitor their movements from time to time.

The research also indicated that some married men preferred dating married women. Much of the appeal for married women was derived from the expectation that both parties won't talk or brag about relationship. Relationships between married people usually occurred either because one or both of them were dissatisfied with their marriages but didn't want to end them, and secondly, because both parties knew that they had to be discreet about the affair so both of them managed the extra-marital affair carefully. The key point in this arrangement was the understanding that none of the parties expected marriage, and if the man knew that the woman was having problems with her husband, he would not like to keep her either. It was also reported that, in some cases, when the mistress became pregnant the man took off, partly because it threatened his marriage since he had no intention of a long-term relationship and also because he was not sure that the child was his. Another explanation lied in the perception that a married woman was "cheap" to run because her husband met most of her financial needs. A common view was that men who dated married woman did not wish to incur expenses. But perhaps the most intriguing idea related to the view that married women were generally 'safer' than young girls or single women because they tended to carry 'less risk of HIV/AIDS infection.'

### **Childless Marriages and Use of Family Planning**

The prime reason for marriage in traditional Isukha society was to get children. Marriage without children was viewed as incomplete and hence a failure. Childless couples were still viewed as a continuous state of discontentment. This is so because they lived in a culture where the ultimate goal of marriage was child-bearing. The Isukha viewed childlessness as un-dignifying, especially where there were no direct heirs in the family. Lack of children, was not an adequate reason for dissolving a marriage as far as the Isukha community was concerned. Many participants observed that staying together with an infertile spouse was not logical since children were expected to cater for them in old age. Those who said they would appreciate the situation asserted that due to the prevailing socio-economic difficulties children were more of liabilities than an asset and in some cases promoted unhappiness in marriage in the pursuit of trying to meet their basic needs. They would, therefore, be contented with the situation because this would be interpreted as the will of God. Furthermore, what mattered most in marriage was companionship. Some male participants, however, felt that they would retain the infertile wife and marry a second one. They argued that this ensured the love they had for the first wife was not lost and at the same time they got children who

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satisfied them psychologically. Some were for the idea that they would adopt a child to bring happiness in the home and in some way strengthen their marriage. They felt that this would enable them to adhere to their wedding vows and stay together until death separated them and at the same time get an heir (Oral Interview, Simon Osiango 07/01/2018).

There were however, social problems faced by childless couples among the Isukha. They suffered from anxiety and frustrations because they were expected to have children so as to be treated as normal people in the society. The woman in particular was blamed for childlessness and she becomes the topic of discussion, ridicule and gossip in the society. Childless couples were regarded as inferior and incomplete and there were a lot of speculations as regards to the causes of their infertility. Some wondered aloud whether the cause of their infertility was through abuse of sex before marriage. They also suffered from loneliness because they did not feel free to intermingle and socialize with the rest of the community. Such couples tended to avoid such functions and activities that involved family matters such as seminars on how to bring up children and responsible parenthood, since in this forum they feel inferior to those couples blessed with children and hence the uneasiness. A majority of participants also felt that childless couples faced discrimination in certain quarters in the church such as being appointed as leaders for youth or in other related areas where parental experience was sought. If interested and not chosen they felt the reason behind this was simply because they were childless. Besides, through various gestures such as being greeted by one's name instead of being referred to as a mother or a father of so and so, while in the company of others who were not greeted in such a manner the spouses were reminded that there was none to continue or even marry a second wife.

Family planning was blamed to have led teenagers and singles to engage in premarital sex facilitating adultery and abortion. Majority of the participants felt that long absenteeism in sexual union with a mother of a young baby was comparatively easier in the olden days because many men had several wives. With the emphasized on monogamous marriage, it became extremely difficult to some Isukha people to effectively promote monogamous and faithfulness in marriage at the same time. Many men were known to engage in extra-marital sex. Unlike the traditional Isukha practices, the couple shared a bed instead of sleeping separately. Responsible parenthood or spacing of children then becomes a major issue. They cannot share the same bed same night and then be able to space the birth of their children with a two- or three-years traditional period. They are taught in church that to sleep separately symbolized lack of love for each other. Most participants however said that economic constraints determined the number of children a couple should have.

## **Conclusion**

This article has examined four key issues namely, increasing cases of singlehood and single parenthood among the Isukha; the fate of polygamy in Isukha; marriages during the economic crisis of 1980/1990s with particular emphasis of spread of HIV/AIDS and the impact of globalization on the stability and quality of marriage and family life among the Isukha.

The article has established increase of single parenthood in Isukha especially with the millennial was due to pre-marital sex and marriage instability. Children from such parents suffered from feelings of insecurity, social stigma, lack of proper parental care and general abuse, while single parents suffered from being accused of leading a loose life, conflict over family property and lack of good place for them in the community. Childless couple among the Isukha suffered a great deal in the community. There were social stigma and many felt uncomfortable while in the presence of couples blessed with children. Some ended up taking a second wife or ensuring the bride was pregnant before they wedded. Moreover, it was observed that traditional family planning method such as abstinence had been ignored by the Isukha society. Despite decrease of polygamy marriage from the 1990s, some Isukha men from monogamous marriages still practiced it secretly

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by maintaining mistresses. It was also noted that marriages of widows and widowers were very minimal in Isukha society. Most homes of those who remarried were full of stress due to incompatibility and some of those who did not marry were involved in extra-marital sex. A part from population pressure and poverty the people of Isukha also encountered the reality of the emerging HIV/AIDS epidemic that declined marriage pattern in Isukha.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the findings of this study, it has come out clearly that marriage in general among the Isukha is still valued. This study has provided considerable evidence to show that most of the changes in the Isukha marriage have been borrowed thus, Isukha marriage is a mixture of the old and new trends which are co-existing. Therefore, not all traditional aspects of marriage have been phased out. The new teachings on sex have eroded the youths' morals. The introduction of contraceptives has been interpreted to mean the legalization of pre-marital sex. In view of the findings of the study it is recommended that most parents should seek help to learn the best methods of initiating their children into the facts of human sexuality. It may be advisable for the community elders to initiate educative discussions and seminars held by wise knowledgeable persons to address issues on facts on human sex to parents in their community and villages. Parents should also resume their duty of instilling life education to their children right from childhood. In particular parents should be encouraged to answer children's questions about sex faithfully according to their levels of understanding. This will enable children to learn more about sex and marriage within a context of African cultural morality rather than within a context of experimentation. With this interaction children will have an opportunity to discuss the best solutions to the problems facing their life.

Voluntary single parenthood should be discouraged. It is wrong for a man or a woman to bring forth a child who will suffer the stigma of illegitimacy. The basic needs of any child are a family where both parents co-operate harmoniously in its up-bringing. Every effort need to be made in form of guidance and counselling to reduce the incidence of single parenthood and to offer assistance to those already involved especially for the sake of their children. This would make such parents and their children to feel that they belong to a community that loves and respects them as human beings. In addition to single status, the negative attitude towards the unmarried should be strongly condemned. While young people should be encouraged to marry, they should not be forced to do so or ill-treated if they fail to marry. This is so because there are many reasons such as impotence, which could cause this condition. Their families should help them to fit and feel fully integrated in society. This can be done by teaching both the unmarried and the society to accept that unmarried state is as honorable as the married state.

Indeed, Kenya has strived to expressively incorporate laws relating to ownership and acquisition of matrimonial property into the Kenyan Constitution 2010. The constitution also points out the two types of marriages; monogamous marriages and polygamous marriages that are to be registered (Republic of Kenya, *Constitution of Kenya, 2010*). This is geared to ensure that all celebrated unions are registered in order to protect the matrimonial rights of the parties to the union. With this information, the study noted that many Isukha marriage do not have any certificate and that traditional marriages were more acceptable and practiced thus, a fairly large population are in marriage by cohabitation. This might complicate property ownership upon death of the spouse as women will be faced with the dilemma of providing existence of a union without any legal documents. The study recommends the need for sensitization of knowing basic constitutional provisions and knowledge on matrimonial property in Isukha to enable easy understanding of the term within its context. This will also underline matrimonial rights available to spouses.

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