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Evlilik Kurumunun Botswana' daki Dönüşümü Üzerine Ampirik Bir Çalışma: Francistown Örneği

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Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı Botswana'da evlilik kurumunun nasıl bir dönüşüm içinde olduğunu araştırmaktır. Evlilik hakkındaki görüşler farklı kültürler, dinler ve toplumlar arasında değişse de, dünya genelinde evlilik olgusu sosyal açıdan kabul görmektedir. Botswana'da evlilikler aileleri bir araya getirir, akrabalık ilişkilerini güçlendirir ve çoğu durumda aileler ve topluluklar arasında siyasi ve sosyal ittifaklar oluşturur. Evlilik kurumu Tsvana toplumu tarafından önemli olarak görülmektedir ve sosyal, politik ve ekonomik kurumların yapı taşını oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma sorusunu ele almak için bu çalışma, evlilikteki değişiklikleri tartışmak ve analiz etmek için nitel ve nicel ikincil kaynakları kullanarak küreselleşme ve modernleşme gibi faktörlerin bu değişikliklere nasıl etki ettiğini araştırır. Bulgular, Botswana'daki insanların hala evlenmeyi seçmelerine rağmen, evlilik oranlarının düştüğünü ve evlenmeden birlikte yaşayan çiftlerin giderek arttığını göstermektedir. Ebeveynler, çocuklarının kiminle evleneceği konusunda otoriteyi kaybetmektedirler. Bogadi (başlık parası) hala uygulanmaktadır ancak bazı aileler ile kızları için tazminat almak adına bir fırsat olarak da kullanılmaya başlanmıştır. Bu olguların Tsvana evlilik kurumunun temeli olan gelenek ve değerleri değiştirdiği gözlemlenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

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An Empirical Study on the Transformation of Marriage in Botswana: A Case Study Of Francistown

Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the transformation of marriage in Botswana. Even though the view on marriage varies between cultures, religions and societies around the world – it is socially recognised worldwide. Marriage in Botswana brings families together, kinship relations are strengthened, political and social alliances between families and communities are formed. Marriage forms a significant part of Tswana society and it has been the building block of social, political and economic institutions. To address the research question, the study uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative secondary sources to discuss and analyse the changes in marriage, and explore how factors such as globalisation and modernisation have contributed to these changes. The findings show that despite the fact that Botswana still choose to get married, the marital rates have decreased and there is a growing increase of couples that are living together without being married. Parents have lost the authority over who their children will get married to. Bogadi (bridewealth) is still practised but it has become more commercialised with some families using it as an opportunity to seek compensation for their daughter. These changes have altered the traditions and values that are the foundation of Tswana marriage.

Keywords

Marriage
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About Article

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INTRODUCTION

Many people – including sociologists, anthropologists and economists have questioned the long-term future of marriage as an institution (Tokuhiko, 2010). Between the 1950s and today, just over half a century later, something quite important has happened: neither the meaning nor the promise of marriage are particularly robust, or even well understood (West, 2007). The reason why marriage exists is to bring a man and a woman together to become husband and wife and raise children within that union (Anderson, 2013). Furthermore, the institution of marriage has been in existence for a long time, even before governments came into existence and the government sees it as beneficial to society like no other. The purposes it serves publicly are viewed as far more than those it serves privately which means that it goes much further than just two people coming together.

This highly regarded institution has been undergoing inevitable changes the last couple of decades and all societies are experiencing these changes to some degree. Marriage was seen as a social institution that was more than just about two people starting a family, it spoke the needs of the larger group. Coontz (2005) states that it converted strangers into relatives and

extended cooperative relations beyond the immediate family or small bond by creating far-long networks of in-laws.

There has been a decline in marriage rates, a rise in divorce rates and the defining characteristics of marriage have changed (Stevenson and Wolfers, 2007). Amato (2005) asserts that the decline of marriage as argued by some scholars has created problems in society. Two of the major social changes at the turn of the twenty-first century include the decline of marriage and the growth of living together before or outside marriage. Fewer people were getting married, postponement of marriage to a latter age, a smaller portion of one's life spent in wedlock, a shorter duration of marriage, and a rising preference for competing types of social unions (Popenoe, 1988).

All across the globe, the bar keeps getting raised on what needs a spouse should meet (Gadova and Larson, 2014). The different expectations that individuals have are the complete opposite of what used to be before. A wife was expected to rear and nurture the children and perform household duties, the husband was expected to be the provider, protector and head of the house. But in this modern era, spouses are now expected to be educated, to be soul mates, co-parents, romantic, financially stable and educated. 'Experts and the public alike, therefore, engaged in a constant negotiation between trying to hold on to "traditional" relationships and transforming marriage into a thoroughly modern institution that could survive in the face of prevalent and relatively accessible divorce' (Celello, 2009:3).

Over the last decades, the old African traditions have gradually been fading away as we adopt western traditions and slowly conform to western influence, this continues to happen right before our eyes. The institution of marriage in Botswana and its old marriage traditions have not been immune to the influences by the western culture. Marriage is a significant part of life in African traditions as it bestows respect and in the context within which family lives are extended.

Shapiro and Gebreselassie's (2014) study on marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa analyses factors associated with trends in marriage, most notably woman's education and economic well-being. 'Women spend more time in school (and particularly secondary) this tends to lead to delays in marriage that ultimately also contribute to family transition' (p.232). Shapiro and Gebreselassie indicate that attendance at school takes girls out of the domestic environment and offers literacy and exposure to ideas and values that may compete with traditional customs leading to early marriage.

Amin and Al-Bassusi (2004) state that young women in Egypt are now more likely to be in school, less likely to enter the workforce, and less likely to be married than women in the same age group 10 years ago. The authors further note that these changes have taken place during a time of greater global integration of the economy but also a time during which high rates of return, migration led to considerable social change, including a rising fundamentalist political movement opposed to the emancipation of women (p.1296).

Traditionally, marriage is the social institution that permitted procreation to take place in Botswana (Mberengwa, 2007). Marriage brings people together, it unites families and it becomes more than just about the two individuals getting married, communities come together. In Botswana, marriage is a communal affair (Moeti and Mokgolodi, 2017). However, marriage in Botswana is on the decline and according to Solway (2017), not only is marriage on the decline, but there is a contraction in the scope of kin and generations involved in marital

activities and a contraction in time, with rituals and exchanges that once occurred over decades now collapsed into a narrow time frame.

According to Kubanji (2004), data censuses from the past have shown that 17.1% of male and 19.9% of females were reported married in 2001 as compared to 44.4% and 41.5% respectively, in 1981. There has been a decline in marriage and the value of marriage in Botswana over the years and this has been noted as a worrisome development. Kubanji further states that the institution marriage in Botswana is not thriving due to demographic, socio-economic and globalization effects. The changes in marriage have been linked to globalisation, the western culture and modernisation therefore there is need to explore these factors and how they have contributed to the changes that have occurred within the institution of marriage.

Botswana

Botswana is a landlocked country in Southern Africa bordered by Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Botswana was declared a British protectorate in 1885 (Leith, 2005), known as Bechuanaland but later changed the name upon independence in 1966. Botswana is a term used to refer to all the citizens of Botswana. The country is sparsely populated with a population of a little over 2 million people. English is the official language but Setswana language is widely spoken by the majority of the population. One of the world's poorest countries at independence in 1966, afterwards it rapidly became one of the world's largest development success stories.

According to Fotter (2013, p.3): 'in Botswana, newly independent as of 1966, modernization has been accelerated, as illustrated by its moving from being the second poorest country in the world at the time of its independence to its current status as a middle income country'. With modernization came progress which affected communities and various institutions, the institution of marriage included. Botswana has slowly adopted western traditions and have conformed to western influence. Marriage in Botswana as indicated by Solway (2017), was a "total social phenomenon" entailing the intermingling of the economic, social and political spheres and continual gift circulation, thereby fostering dense social networks. 'Marriage as union between two families, regardless of any shortcomings brought with it assets', (Fotter 2013, p.5). He further notes that unifying families creates a strong community and all the love and support that comes with that.

'Marriage is the original institution, uniting men and women in genetic reproduction and household production', (Adshade & Kaiser, 2008, p.2). Wimalasena (2016, p.166) asserts that 'the fundamental basis of marriage is defined as a personal association between a man and a woman and a biological relationship for mating and reproduction. Furthermore, as a social, legal and religious institution, marriage has undergone any number of modifications and changes, nevertheless, its basic realities remain the same'.



Image 1: Location of Botswana

TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE IN BOTSWANA

When a young couple announce to their families that they intend to marry, negotiations between families start and this is called patlo (from the term “to seek” meaning to seek the girls hand in marriage) and these are the foundations of a traditional marriage (Denbow and Thebe, 2006). This is followed by bogadi (bride wealth) negotiations. According to Denbow and Thebe (2006), bogadi (bride wealth) normally given in the form cattle was given to the bride’s family by the groom’s family to legitimise the marriage in the eyes of the public. Bogadi was also a token of appreciation to the bride’s family for raising her and it ensured that

children born within the union would have the right to any inheritance or property in case of any questions arising later.

Parents often made decisions about marriage with little to no input from the couple that is to be married. Marriage was arranged by the bride and the groom's family and once both parties had agreed, the betrothal was announced. Marriage was therefore seen as a relationship between families rather than individuals (Denbow and Thebe, 2006). For the wedding ceremony to take place, the groom's family would first send messengers to the bride's family to request permission to discuss the ceremony details.

When proper procedure is followed according to culture then parents from both parties meet to begin the process of marriage and it is only after the parents have met that a series of activities and preparations take place until the marriage day.

TYPES OF MARRIAGE

According to Molokomme (1990) there are two types of marriage officially recognized in Botswana and the first one is marriage under customary law which is governed by the traditional laws and practices of the different tribes and second is marriage under statute which is regulated by the Roman-dutch law and statutory provisions. Jobeta and Nwauche (2015) in their article about double marriages in Botswana identifies three types of marriage officially recognized in Botswana, two of which were identified by the author Molokomme.

"The first is a civil marriage which is conducted before the district commissioner or any other marriage officer appointed in accordance with the marriage act including those conducted before a minister of religion in a Christian church in terms of part 1 of the marriage act. The second type of marriage is a customary marriage contracted in accordance with customary law defined as consisting of rules of law which by custom are applicable to any particular tribe or tribal community in Botswana, not being rules which are inconsistent with the provision of any enactment or contrary to morality, humanity, or natural justice. Religious marriages contracted according to other religions which are non-Christian, such as Muslim, Hindu, etc. is the third type of marriage", (Jobeta and Nwauche, 2015:2).

CHANGES IN THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE IN BOTSWANA

Mberengwa's (2007) findings from the study on family strengths perspectives from Botswana indicated that all interviewees acknowledged that today's marriages do not survive. The study concludes that this is due to the fact that there is no more preparation for marriage. Boys and girls used to go to initiation schools which aimed at training them and preparing them for marriage and their respective roles in society as men and women. There is no doubt that the institution of marriage is still a significant part of Tswana society but the traditional values associated with it have diminished, some of the customs have been discarded, new forms of relationships or unions have been formed. According to Denbow and Thebe (2006), traditional elements such as patlo (the process of seeking the girl's hand in marriage) and go laa (the advice ritual) still continue to be practiced regardless of the many changes.

The transformation of marriage in Botswana has been due to factors such as globalisation and modernisation. Botswana's integration into the world economy caused to shift from a rural agricultural society to a cash society. With the post-independence and impact of wage employment and globalization, the cash economy permeated every aspect of urban and rural areas in Botswana (Raditloaneng and Molosi, 2014). The growth of cities and industrialism

brought about a sense of liberation as people became more individualistic as they got rid of old, traditional systems and resorted to modern or contemporary way of living.

Globalisation and Modernisation

Globalization modernisation have brought about technological advances and international migration amongst other factors and these opened up more opportunities for people from different cultures to interact. As a result, marriage and family institutions were affected and there was a change in their structure and function (Vaughn, 2010). Because of the technological advances, the internet has become a platform people use to meet their life partners/spouses or potential partners and marriages have come out of that. In modern day Botswana, platforms such as online dating (www.datingbotswana.com), the 'let's get personal' (LGP) column in The Voice Botswana Newspaper as well as 'Ask Gase' section have been established to give single men and women an opportunity to find their desired partner, to seek advice or counsel concerning their relationships.

The LGP column has had several success stories of couples of who met through the platform and got married. Extracted from the The Voice Newspaper online, a young man of 31 years old narrates how he met his then fiance of 32 years:

"I browsed through the LGP profiles weekly searching for my perfect match until a post by a lady from Maun caught my eye. Initially I was bit reluctant to contact her since I didn't know anything about Maun but took a chance and got in touch."

And he further says that:

"We are grateful to The Voice for facilitating the LGP platform, which connects people like us. We had both reached the point where we ready to give up on love but thanks to LGP we'll be saying 'I DO' next year."

In the past, it was more common compared to now for the groom's parents go seek the girls hand in marriage from her parents. Parents no longer help to identify and select potential partners for their children (Mukiza-Gapere and Ntozi, 1995). Today, young people have a much greater say in the selection of their spouse and much more involved in the process (Denbow and Thebe, 2006).

Emphasis on education and self-fulfilment is now at the core of who should get married to whom, when and why. As a result, the age at first marriage is rising and has been for the last couple of decades. As the availability of education and birth control has grown in Botswana, as well as a general expansion of the formal sector, women have become able to envision their lives in new ways where polygyny and even marriage, would place them in restrictive and undesirable situations (Solway, 1990). Marriage used to be the only option women had to attain security, status and assurance that they will be taken care of but the high literacy and education levels have indicated that marriage is becoming an option for them. As African societies have become more urbanised over time, and getting an education has become more widespread and a declining proportion of women first marry in their teenage years (Gage-Brandon, 1993).

Commercialisation of Marriage

Marriage celebrations in Botswana have become more than just a communal spirit or bringing two families together to form and strengthen kinship relations. Even though the

traditional aspects of marriage and wedding celebrations are still an important part of Tswana society, there has been an introduction of white wedding celebrations in the last 30 years. According to Penner (2004), the white wedding has become universal, and there has been a list of symbolic objects and customary practices that have accompanied this widely practiced lifestyle which include wedding rings, cakes, gowns, flowers, honeymoons, and gift giving.

According to van Pauli and van Dijk (2017, p.262):

“Marriage has thereby become the object of consumer driven appetites of conspicuous consumption, such as for the “white wedding,” in terms of the resources required to create glamour, grandeur and prestige, and of the ways in which this has an impact on gender roles, masculinities and femininities. Marriage has become a paradigm of calculation. Firstly, this means that, contrary to the past, the institution has become both a marker and a producer of class-formation; it is squarely placed in processes of social stratification, signalling a situation in which not everyone will in principle marry”.



Image 2: Wedding Expo

White weddings in Botswana are a part of the middle class consumption lifestyle and there are those who have discovered the need to turn weddings into profit making ventures by being service providers. What we now see in the wedding market in Botswana is personal loan providers, wedding planners, cinematographers, huge celebrations, invitation cards, wedding magazines, bridal wear, wedding advertisements and honeymoons. All these phenomena were never a part of the traditional marriage and celebrations before but they have emerged because of the need to meet the demanding needs of the middle class located within the capitalist and neoliberal market.

According to van Dijk (2017, p. 29):

“Weddings have not only become costlier than before and much more crucial in the making of class, status and prestige, they have also given way to reformulations in the responsibilities concerning

marital arrangements, in the provisioning of resources and in the taking charge of the glamorous styling of these events and the aesthetic notions these require”.

Firms and businesses such Botswana Youth Online, Lenyalo magazine, Botswana wedding, Kutlwano magazine provide ideas, advice and guidance about wedding preparations, budgeting, latest wedding fashion, ideas on what to consider before settling down, how to dress, the best décor for your wedding day and many more marriage and wedding related lookouts. The responsibility of incurring all the costs concerning the wedding arrangements and celebrations now rests on the couples getting. Van Dijik (2017) indicates that among marriages that he studied in Botswana, couples whose decisions are more intimate with the exclusion of their parents and elders of the family are faced with the responsibility of financing their wedding celebration.

Businesses such as Tashy’s Royal Gardens in Botswana have wedding competition opportunities that couples can enter with the possibility of winning their dream wedding as well as wedding promotions that couples can take advantage of. As a result family members no longer take part in contributing financially towards the success of their children’s wedding celebration. The couple involved take independent decisions regarding anything that concerns their marriage. Below is an example of one of the advertisements by Tashy’s Royal Gardens to attract couples:



Image 3: Wedding Promotion

Another aspect of marriage in Botswana that has been commercialised is bogadi (bride wealth). Giving of bogadi was always intended to appreciate and acknowledge the bride’s family for giving away their daughter to the groom’s family and this was done in the form of cattle. Denbow and Thebe (2006) notes that, today, however, the concept of bogadi has changed, it has become more commercialised to the extent that some families demand a higher

as compensation in the case where they have incurred greater costs in raising and educating their daughter. Payment of bogadi is now accepted in the form of money and not just cattle.

Trends in Marriage

According to Gaisie, (1995) the labour migration that took place between the 1940s – 1970s had a great impact on the institution of marriage to the extent that marriage patterns were greatly changing by the 1970s. Statistics Botswana (2016) reported that from 1966-2016 47.1% males and 42.9% females were married in 1971 and the percentage dropped to 18.8% and 17.9% in 2011 respectively. The report indicates that there were no living together persons between 1971 and 1981. In 1991 the living together category was added and it shows that 12.2% males and 12.0% females was recorded and it increased to 20.6% and 20.8% in 2011 respectively. Botswana demographic survey report 2017 indicates that 54.4% of the population from 12 years and over were never married and this shows a decrease from 64.2% in 2006. Those who are living together have increased from 11.4% in 2006 to 21.8% in 2017. And those who were reported to be married show a slight increase from 18.2% in 2006 to 18.4% in 2017.

The statistics show that the number of people getting married has declined over the years but there has been an increase of the living together category. 'Another notable recent trend is the increase in the proportion of people who live with partners of the opposite sex in sexually intimate relationships without being legally married—a living arrangement known, inter alia, as cohabitation, cohabiting unions, consensual unions or living together' (Mokomane, 2005:1). Cohabitation has become an increasing phenomenon in Botswana.

The gradual erosion of traditional marriage customs in favour of more informal types of unions has been observed in many African societies especially among the better educated and urban segments of the population (Meekers, 1993). The decline in marital rates and the emergence of new forms of unions indicate a development in people's freedom of choice in selecting sexual partners and determining the future of their relationship without the involvement of parents or any family member. Parents and relatives have lost the authority over the choice of marital partners.

DISCUSSION

This study has identified several factors that explain why marriage in Botswana is on the decline despite the fact that it is considered an important part of the Tswana society.

'We can easily identify a number of important explanations for the decline in marriage. One is a strong rise in the costs of marrying, in particular due to a substantial increase of the cost of bridewealth and the growth of expensive wedding celebrations', (Pauli & van Dijk, 2017:259).

Marriage used to signify a union of families and the essential elements for a valid marriage included in some cases consent of the parties, consent of the guardians, negotiations between families and payment of bogadi. The institution of marriage has not always been like it is today, it has twisted, turned and transformed and has been re-invented. Even though the institution of marriage has experienced transformation over time, it is still a big part of society and still practiced but in slightly different ways as compared to the past decades. Even though the processes of getting married are not as before, people still desire and do get married.

This study has explored how marriage in Botswana has transformed over the years by looking at the changes that have occurred as a result of factors closely associated with modernisation and globalisation and Botswana's integration into the world economy. The

transformation of marriage has altered the traditions, values and processes that define traditional Tswana marriage. Even though most Batswana still embrace the old traditions, they do not engage their families when searching for a life partner, Batswana couples can marry without parental consent when they are of age.

The increase in educational attainment for women meant that they can participate in labour force market therefore having an effect on the age at first marriage or marriage delay. The cultural foundations that been in existence for decades have been undermined by cohabitation which has been on the rise for the last 20 years and online dating. The value of bogadi is questionable. It is still a significant part of the marriage process in Botswana and even though it is still highly practiced, the way Batswana approach it today is different from the past. While it is still considered as a gift to the bride's family, some people have used it as an opportunity to charge high bogadi.

CONCLUSION

Marriage celebrations in the past were a symbol of communal spirit and it strengthened relations between families but the opposite is happening today. There has been an evolution of lifestyle that has adopted the global culture which is identified by white wedding celebrations, invitation cards, bridal magazines, cohabitation, bridal fashion just to mention a few. It is important to note that marriage is still highly regarded as important regardless of the fact that it is undergoing transformation. The institution of marriage in Botswana is still at the core of Tswana society and central to people's lives and is part of the natural progression in lives of both men and women.

The paper aims to stimulate research on the transformations of marriage in Botswana and Africa. At the same time it will engage and enrich current debates on global trends of changing marriage practices and traditions.

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