

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Divinity

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: AN ASSESSMENT OF MEMBERS' PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS POLYGAMOUS CONVERTS IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH OYO CONFERENCE, NIGERIA

Researcher: Isaac Oluwafemi Ayodeji Osagunna

Primary Adviser: Isaiah O. Abolarin, PhD

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Polygamy has been a significant issue in the Western part of Nigeria since the missionaries introduced the Gospel to this region. Polygamous marriage has been a contentious subject, with early missionaries sharing similar approaches to polygamy. This thesis sought to examine the perception and attitude towards polygamous converts among members of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church Oyo Conference, Nigeria. The thesis focuses on the Biblical understanding of polygamy as it affects the church today, investigating whether polygamous converts should be baptized, accepted into the church, and allowed to partake in the ordinance of Holy Communion.

Additionally, this thesis seeks to uncover the factors encouraging polygamy, the impacts of polygamous practices on an individual's sensibilities, and their relation to SDA Church policy and practices. The research adopted the religio-cultural principle and the general Biblical interpretation technique to examine polygamy in

Africa, as well as the teachings and principles of the SDA Church. The study used members' responses on polygamy to gather the necessary information for the thesis.

In the first chapter, the thesis considers various backgrounds, objectives, purposes, problem statements, significance, limitations, and methods related to polygamy. The second chapter reviews the literature and the Biblical perspective on polygamy, discussing the factors that lead to polygamy, church attitudes and principles concerning polygamy, and Ellen G. White's comments on the topic. The third chapter addresses various Biblical canons related to marital togetherness and polygamous marriage principles. It examines the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT) principles on polygamy, considering whether they align with Biblical teachings. It also considers the Biblical standards, theological beliefs, and church positions on polygamous marriage, both in the present and the past. The chapter traces and analyzes polygamous practices in the Bible, focusing on characters such as Lamech, Abraham, Esau, Jacob, Elkanah, Gideon, Rehoboam, Jehoram, Joash, David, and Solomon. The background of the SDA Church in Oyo Conference and polygamous marriage in Yoruba land is also considered. The fourth chapter analyzes the questionnaires and interviews from the respondents.

This research also examines the attitudes of members in the Seventh-day Adventist Church Oyo Conference towards polygamy and the erroneous beliefs held by some members that polygamous marriage is unbiblical, sinful, immoral, erroneous, and devilish. The research further explores the Biblical principles regarding whether polygamous individuals should be baptized and allowed to partake in the ordinance of foot washing and Holy Communion. The study investigates the consequences of polygamous marriage as related to people's perceptions and attitudes according to SDA Church policy and practice.

Overall, the research utilizes a descriptive analysis research design, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods. The target population is three thousand nine hundred and twenty-eight (3,928) church members, ten (10) polygamous converts, ten (10) pastors, and five (5) Executive Directors. A sample size of three hundred and seventy (370) respondents was used, consisting of three hundred and forty (340) church members, five (5) polygamous converts, fifteen (15) elders, five (5) pastors, and five (5) Executive Directors. Data were collected from the field using interviews and researcher-administered surveys or questionnaires. A simple random sampling method was used to select the respondents, including the five (5) pastors, fifteen (15) elders, and five (5) Executive Directors of the conference.

Furthermore, the research concludes that polygamous converts deserve better treatment. They should be baptized and allowed to partake in the ordinance of foot washing and Holy Communion. As indicated in the findings, the research observes that the Bible is silent on polygamous marriage, and negative attitudes towards polygamous converts should be eliminated among the members. The study recommends that members of the SDA Church Oyo Conference should comply with the principle that polygamous converts should not be denied baptism and Holy Communion. The research advocates that the SDA Church Oyo Conference in Nigeria should accept polygamous converts and not deny them membership through baptism.

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A project

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of the requirements for the degree
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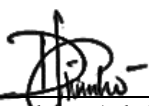
APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:



Primary Adviser
Isaiah O. Abolarin, PhD



Programme Director, MDiv
David Odhiambo, PhD



Secondary Adviser
David Odhiambo, PhD

Dean, Theological Seminary
Feliks Ponyatovskiy, PhD

Adventist University of Africa

Date: March 2025

To God be the Glory.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is not a prohibited practice in West Africa for men to marry more than one wife, a practice referred to as polygamy.¹ Historically, many Africans embraced this cultural tradition, and even today, the polygamy rate is high. According to Eugene Hillman's calculations, there are on average 1.5 wives for every married man in Africa, with a ratio of 150 wives to 100 husbands.² Polygamy has been a source of controversy both in societies and in the church of God. Adrian Hastings referred to it as a social problem that dates back to the mid-nineteenth century and persists to this day.³

However, for over a century, missionaries have viewed polygamy as a problem that needs to be addressed in African churches. Polygamy has been the most persistent and perplexing problem related to marriage that churches and missionary organizations have encountered. Although polygamy is an acceptable practice in

¹ The *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines Polygamy as “a form of marriage in which several wives are united to one man each having the status of legal comfort, while her offspring are regarded as legal descendants of the husband.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. “Polygamy: Polygamy, Multiple Wives, Polygyny,” last modified 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/polygamy-marriage>.

² Eugene Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered: African Plural Marriage and the Christian Churches* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1975), 47.

³ Adrian Hastings, *Christian Marriage in Africa: Being a Report Commissioned by the Archbishops of Cape Town, Central Africa, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda* (London, UK: S.P.C.K., 1974), 72.

Africa, most missionary churches did not allow male polygamists to be baptized during the colonial period.⁴

In like manner, polygamy regarded popularly, as an African problem has been discovered to have its various types. This has indeed turned out to be universal concern as scholars have observed.⁵ The practice of polygamy in contemporary West Africa especially, Nigerian society with the attendant disagreements among Christian scholars and churches, raises some social, ethical and religious questions as to where lies the place of the church's mission to African polygamists?

On the other hand, from its cultural milieu, polygamy was morally, ethically and socially accepted in Africa, prior to the advent of Christianity.⁶ Lynoid Harries states that a polygamist may perhaps not be accepted as Christian.⁷ In contrast, Oswald challenges that polygamists are restricted from becoming a Christian because Christianity should be contextualized.⁸ Stephen Neill is of the opinion that polygamy is biblically acceptable and should not be debated by human being.⁹ Hillman also contributes by arguing that since polygamy is a legal practice according to the Mosaic Law, it should be accepted and supported.¹⁰

⁴ Klaus Fiedler, *Christian and Africa Culture: Conservative German Protestant Missionaries in Tanzania, 1900-1940* (Blantyre, Malawi: Claim, 1999), 69-76.

⁵ Mmagu M. Uduma, "Polygamy in Igboland of Eastern Nigeria" (MA Thesis, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1980), 16.

⁶ Onyebuchi Pu Nwankpa, *The Ethical, Social and Spiritual Angst of Polygamy: A Pastoral and Spiritual Challenge Cum Strategies* (Aba, Nigeria: Okman Prints, 2014), xv.

⁷ Harries Lynoid, *Christian Marriage in African Society, Marriage Survey of African and Family Life* (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1953), 89.

⁸ Fountain Oswald, "Polygamy and the Church," *Missiology*, January 1974, 111.

⁹ Stephen Neill and Owen Chadwick, *A History of Christian Missions* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1964), 37.

¹⁰ Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered*, 52.

Although, polygamy practices are fading away gradually but still frequent in West Africa. It was stated according to “Polygamy Remains Common and Mostly Legal in West Africa,” “33% of Nigerian women are said to have husbands who have two or more wives.”¹¹ Nigeria has placed polygamous and monogamous practices of marriage as identical and of no different. Considering the population of people in West African, polygamists are few in number when comparing with monogamous marriages.¹² It is difficult to determine maybe polygamists are ever-increasing or decreasing.

Apart from preserving polygamous marriage in Nigeria customary law, Islamic religion preserves polygamous marriage in Nigeria’s customary law in authorizing men to marry at least four wives.¹³ However, twelve (12) out of the thirty-six (36) Nigerian states are of the opinion that polygamy is equal to monogamy. These twelve states mentioned above are from Northern Nigeria that is governed by Sharia Law which authorizes men to marry many wives in as much as the men are capable of treating their wives equally.¹⁴

Background of the Study

Going through the church’s history, the disagreement among theologians is a great concern. According to Hillman, Augustine supports polygamous marriage. He

¹¹ West Africa Brief, “Polygamy Remains Common and Mostly Legal in West Africa,” accessed December 5, 2023, <http://www.west-africa-brief.org/content/en/polygamy-remains-common-and-mostly-legal-west-africa>.

¹² Benezere Kisembo, Laurenti Magesa, and Aylward Shorter, *African Christian Marriage* (London, UK: G. Chapman, 1977), 67.

¹³ *Owonyin v. Omotosho* (ALLNLR 304 at 307 1961).

¹⁴ Jeremiah Aluwong, “Discover Nigeria: The Status of Polygamy in Nigeria,” *Connectnigeria Articles*, 2021, accessed December 7, 2021, <https://articles.connectnigeria.com/discover-nigeria-the-status-of-polygamy-in-nigeria/>.

also argued that polygamy is not sinful, if the reason behind this is to increase the population.¹⁵ The missionaries encountered cultural practices in the course of being faithful to the Gospel Commission and making disciples of all nations. To provide biblical answers to some of the cultural practices such as polygamous marriage, they faced a lot of challenges.

Again, Christian churches have always been faced with theological, missiological and biblical issue about polygamy and have always considering a suitable way to treat people who are involving in polygamous marriage.¹⁶ In the first century, polygamous marriage has been the major controversy in Christianity.¹⁷ Strong condemnation of polygamy came late to Christianity.

In addition, there are three (3) major church responses in the direction towards convert polygamist among Christianity. First response is that a converted polygamist must change his marital status by accepting one wife and sending away others before he can be eligible for baptism and the name can enter the church record.¹⁸ The third response recognizes baptized polygamists partial church membership but denies them right to holding an office or partaking in the ministry.¹⁹

No doubt, those Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) members are facing challenging issues regarding polygamy in Nigeria. According to John Webster, the

¹⁵ Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered*, 52.

¹⁶ Stefan Hoschele, "Polygamy Among the Tanzanian Maasai and the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Reflections on a Missiological and Theological Problem," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 2, no. 1 (2006): 44-56.

¹⁷ Leopold Foullah, "A Socio-theological Evaluation of Polygamy," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 19, no. 1 (1995): 75.

¹⁸ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Church 2021-2022 Edition* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2022), 159.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

attitudes, perception, and policies of the early missionaries to polygamous marriage recommended to invent Africans to Victorian Bourgeois Society of England. He also took part in bringing down the desire of African for the benefit of Europe. Further to them, polygamists were over-comers and imitators, even the lesser breeds without the law.²⁰ Webster states in conclusion that the pompous Yoruba people did not undergo this disagreement to go unconcealed.²¹

Furthermore, the Church of God is being accused and disparaged based on the way the issue of polygamous converts is being dealt with. Part of the vexing problems facing Seventh-day Adventist Church today especially in Nigeria is the position we put polygamists in the Church. The stand is so because the doctrine of Seventh-day Adventist Church supports monogamy form marriage not polygamy as the ideal form of biblical marriage. There are many benefits that polygamists are being denied of such as full church membership, not able to participate in the ordinance of baptism, foot washing and to partake in the emblem of the Holy Communion.

In addition, the attitudes and perceptions of church members towards polygamous families are uncharacteristic and bad, considering the biblical scholars in their interpretation according to the books of Genesis 2:24, Ephesians 5:31, and Matthew 19:5.²² It was emphasized that when a polygamist accepts the gospel of the kingdom and ready to be baptized into the church as a regular member alongside with his wives and the children, only the first wife and the children are eligible for baptism

²⁰ John B. Webster, "Attitudes and Policies of the Yoruba African Churches towards Polygamy," in *Christianity in Tropical Africa*, ed. C. G. Baeta (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1968), 228.

²¹ Ibid.

²² David T. Ejenobo, "Attitude Critique of the Nigeria Churches to the Practice of Polygamy in Nigeria," *International Journal of Theology and Reformed 2* (2010): 43-68.

while the polygamist and the remaining wives are not permitted. Another idea is that the husband may be baptized if he is ready to keep the first wife and divorce the others.

Also, Alalade Adekunle states that there are thousands of innocent polygamists that came to accept the Gospel but cannot enjoy full membership of the SDA Church in Nigeria and millions of other polygamists in Nigeria who are up till now are not yet reached with the gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ.²³ There are so many other polygamists not encouraged due to lack of conducive environment, bad attitudes of the members toward them and these engendered lack in interest in being part of the church.

Moreover, there is no doubt that the perceptions and what members believe about polygamous marriage is bringing disagreement with worldwide church policies on our attitudes and our perceptions towards the polygamous converts. Considering how SDA Church members treat the polygamists, in that they are not eligible for baptism, their names are not in the church membership records and are not allowed to participate in the ordinance of Holy Communion until they divorce their wives and retain the first one.²⁴ The polygamous converts in SDA Church Oyo Conference are not full-fledged members and are not entitled to any position in the church which makes them think that they are not worthy of salvation.²⁵

²³ Adekunle Alalade, *Limiting Factor to the Success of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa: The Nigeria Case Study* (Ibadan, Nigeria: AgboAreo, 2008), 179-180.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 180.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Statement of the Problem

The Christian Church has officially opposed polygamy, and Christians generally believe that polygamous marriage is unscriptural, of the devil and contrary to the will of God. The above notion brings about the question about the approach of SDA Church members in Oyo Conference towards men who are involving in polygamous marriage and their family members. The policy of the church as the guiding principle of SDA Church is not silent about polygamous marriage. According to the manual of SDA Church, a marriage involving more than one woman to a man is an appearance of the effects of sin on the issue of marital principle. It also states that polygamous marriage practiced in the Old Testaments are not according to the principle and divine plan of God from the Garden of Eden.²⁶ Polygamous converts are experiencing segregation, and in dilemma in their fellowship with other believers as a result of their marital status. No matter what may be the policy and principle surrounding the issue of polygamy, the polygamists in the church should find warm fellowship in the church of God.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this research is to scrutinize the perception and attitude of members towards polygamists converts in Oyo Conference of SDA Church, Nigeria. This research will establish the suppositions fundamental diverse arrangement in relating with polygamous converts in Oyo Conference of SDA Church.

²⁶ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 2015), 156.

Specific objectives for the study will be to:

1. Assess the interactions between SDA Church members in Oyo Conference and polygamist converts through quantitative measures, such as frequency of engagement and perceived acceptance levels.
2. Analyze the doctrinal stance of the SDA Church concerning polygamous converts, identifying key beliefs and doctrines related to their reception and non-reception.
3. Examine the SDA Church's stance on the participation of polygamous converts in Baptism and the Lord's Supper, using statistical methods to identify trends and variations in the church's position.
4. Utilize quantitative methods to identify and analyze alternative perspectives among SDA Church members regarding polygamous converts, and statistically evaluate proposed solutions to gauge their viability and potential impact on members' perspectives.

Research Questions

This study investigates the perception of church members' attitudes towards the polygamists who were denied full membership. Polygamy has been seen as one of the most importunate impediments to the physical and spiritual growth of the church. Approximately 90 percent of age population of church membership has been disqualified due to the issue of polygamous marriage.

How do individuals who have practiced polygamy perceive their acceptance or non-acceptance as members of the SDA Church, and what factors contribute to these perspectives?

1. What beliefs, values, and doctrinal considerations within the SDA Church influence its stance on the baptism of individuals with a history of polygamy?
2. How do polygamous converts within the SDA Church experience and interpret the church's position on their participation in the Last Supper and what factors contribute to their understanding?
3. "What strategies, policies, or cultural adaptations can be identified or proposed to facilitate the integration and accommodation of polygamous converts within the SDA Church, and how do these align with the perspectives of both the converts and the church community?"

Significance of the Research

The significance of this thesis depends on its capacity to bring unique enlightenment into the phenomenon of polygamy by analyzing the outlooks of both church members and polygamist converts. By probing into these views, the study intends to disclose elements of polygamy that other authors have not thoroughly delved into, thus enhancing a broader comprehension of the topic. It will attempt to assess the attitude of church members of SDA Church Oyo Conference towards the polygamous converts.

Delimitation of the Study

This research approaches the thesis thesis presumptuous that polygamous marriage is not God original marriage plan from the beginning. This research is not to investigate or debate whether polygamy is approved or not. The scope of this will cover the polygyny, not polyandry marriage since polyandry is not biblical. The study focuses on the attitude and perception of members towards the polygamous converts in SDA Church Oyo Conference Nigeria.

Limitation

Oyo State is a vast and one of the largest states in Nigeria. Due to large in the size of the state, the researcher will be limited to churches within the cities in Ibadan and also solicit for the support of some church pastors, elders and women leaders within Oyo Conference to administer and gather back the questionnaires from the church members who have been baptized into the church for over ten (10) years and who have been fully involved in the leadership of the church. The interview will be conducted in the local churches, and with pastors, elders, elderly men and women. The mediums through which the interview will be carried out due to the vast area of Oyo Conference are WhatSapp, Zoom, Google Meet cloud and phone calls together

with face-to-face interviews. More of non-polygamists will be interviewed due to limited polygamous converts within Oyo Conference of SDA Church and the interview will be reduced to sample size.

Methodology

This thesis will be designed to understand and evaluate the assumptions of members' perception and attitude towards polygamous converts among members of SDA Church Oyo Conference, Nigeria using qualitative research method approach. This study will involve the use of questionnaire, interviews, observation techniques and personal observations, as well as collection and data analysis to verify and validate the obtained responses from the questionnaires administered. The questionnaire will be sent to seven (7) districts that make up of Ibadan Metropolis, served by seven district pastors and ten church pastors. All the tribes that are stationed in Oyo Conference of SDA Church will be interviewed without any discrimination.

In addition, Oyo Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church has 3,928 memberships. Using sample size calculator, 351 surveys are required to have assurance of 95% which is the real value within 5% of the surveyed values.²⁷ The researcher will be distributing three hundred and seventy (370) questionnaires to the members of SDA Church in Oyo Conference especially within Ibadan City metropolis of Oyo State. The interviews will be focused on male members who are involved in polygamous marriage for a minimum of five (5) and who are converted to the church after series of evangelistic efforts. The polygamists who are fellowshipping in the church but who are not opportune to be baptized and have their names in the church

²⁷ Sample Size Calculator, "Sample Size," last modified 2023, accessed January 31, 2023, <https://www.calculator.net/sample-size-calculator.html>.

record will be considered in the interviews. A minimum of five (5) participants who are polygamists will be considered in the data collection method.

For this reason, this researcher work will use a non-probabilistic purposeful distinctive sample of a minimum of ten (10) contributors' permits the researcher for interview to expand ideas which leads to polygamous marriage in our society. Data collection techniques and procedures will be used to identify and analyze information regarding the questionnaire and interviews. The presentation of data, analysis and discussion of the data collection results and proposed recommendation for the solution to polygamous converts will be the composition of the fourth chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter of the thesis aims to present the literature review of the work, to assess some relevant writings and describe and analyze the similarities, differences, inconsistencies, and issues concerning polygamy concepts. It also evaluates how Christianity and traditions contradict or disagree with each other on the issue of polygamous marriage. The concept of polygamy has been a lasting dispute among Christians especially in Africa for a long period of time. The introduction of Christianity to African by foreign missionaries has no sympathy for polygamists because they decide not to compromise the principle of marriage from the beginning. The polygamous converts were denied privilege of church membership and access to the ordinances of the church.¹

However, there are other continents of the world where polygamy is practiced. Igenzoa Andrew emphasizes that the following questions need adequate answer: is polygamous marriage practiced in Africa solely a matter of culture and tradition about which the Christians should not bother? Is anything morally or spiritually questionable about it?² What are the perceptions and attitudes of the churches toward polygamous converts in the church? These questions will be answered in the course of the work.

¹ Frederick Mawusi Amevenku and Isaac Boaheng, *African Biblical Christianity & Contemporary Ethics* (Accra, Ghana: Noyam, 2020), 40.

² Andrew Igenzoa, *Polygamy and the African Churches: A Biblical Appraisal of an African Marriage System* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian, 2003), 2.

Moreover, one of the challenges confronting Christian Church in Africa is the dispute as a result of different principle on the issue of polygamous marriage especially from the mid-nineteenth century until the 1970s.³ To Africans, polygamous marriage is not just a principle of marriage but a medium by which African value systems are enhanced. It is an acceptable norm and cultural principle because they see it as a potential way of improving and sustaining people's social prestige, economic security, satisfying desire for large family, exercising men's power and finding solution to women's barren problem.⁴ Till the 21st century, the disagreement among theologian on the issue of polygamy cannot be over emphasis.⁵ Many biblical scholars are of the opinion that polygamous marriage should not be questioned by any human being because it is an acceptable biblical principle from God.⁶ Tippet is of the opinion that polygamists who divorce other wives and retain one of them can become a Christian.⁷

Likewise, this research examines the deliberations and disagreements among different biblical scholars and seeks to make inquiries into biblical teaching regarding polygamous marriage in an attempt to find lasting solution or to reduce the contents between polygamists' converts and anti-polygamists. The conflict can be reduced if

³ Hastings, *Christian Marriage in Africa: Being a Report Commissioned by the Archbishops of Cape Town, Central Africa, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda*, 72.

⁴ Yasuko Hayase and Kao-Lee Liaw, "Factors on Polygamy in Sub-Saharan Africa: Findings Based on the Demographic and Health Surveys," *The Developing Economies* 35, no. 3 (1997): 293-327.

⁵ Stefan Hoschele, "To Baptize or Not to Baptize? Adventists and Polygamous Converts," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 34, no. 1 (2015): 35-46.

⁶ Neill and Chadwick, *A History of Christian Missions*.

⁷ Alan R. Tippet, "Polygamy as a Missionary Problem: The Anthropological Issues," *Missiology: An International Review* 17, no. 2 (1970): 75-79.

the validity and invalidity on polygamous marriage can be determined.⁸ There are many biblical scholars and religious leaders challenging the biblical principle on the issues surrounding polygamists' converts whether they should be abandoned or divorced their families to allow them to get baptized into the Christian church. The major reasons for this research are to reveal the biblical stand and response to the challenge facing polygamous marriage and to establish the Bible standard and the acceptable rule of faith.

Historical Background of Polygamy

Oxford Dictionary of English Language defines marriage as a legal or formal recognized union between a man and a woman in a personal relationship.⁹ According to John Wright, marriage is a state whereby a man and a woman reside together as husband and wife with sexual relationship as approved by the social group.¹⁰

Polygamy simple denotes man having multiple wives at the same time. Most common form is polygyny, by which a man is permitted to marry many wives. The irregular principle but established in some society in the world is the practice of polyandry by which women are allowed to marry many husbands as possible. In the three-fourths of pre-industrial traditional societies, polygyny principle is the most acceptable and preferred form of marriage. This form of marriage is common in a society where wealthy and political elites claims to prove how wealthy they are and having many children to defend the family property. In such a society, men love to marry as many

⁸ Ikechi Chidi Ekpendu, "A Biblical Response to the Practice of Polygamy in Eastern Nigeria," *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry* 11 (2015): 81-96.

⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989), s.v. Marriage.

¹⁰ John Wright, "Marriage," *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982), 742.

wives as possible to have enlarge products, structure feasts or grow food which could be used to cater for the poor members of the society.¹¹

Also, polygamy is considered as a social asset among the Africa Traditionalist. A man marrying many wives is a prestige or esteem, also having many children and to cater for them is a sign of wealthiest. In Africa, having good number of children is a sign that marriage is blessed. The number of children that a man has is an evidence of the greater glory of marriage.¹² The manifestation of men's prestige and respect they command is according to more children in the family.¹³ Therefore, polygamous marriage and the number of children a man has determine the public merit and recognition.

Furthermore, the Western World from which Christianity made its entry into sub-Saharan Africa is monogamous in culture.¹⁴ Hillman also states that the Western World has been influenced not only by Christianity but also by ancient Roman culture. In the ancient Roman World, monogamy marriage was the only legal form of marriage while polygamous marriage was forbidden and rejected.¹⁵ From another perspective, he says that; Augustine endorsed polygamy. Barrett David, states that as long as the aim of polygamous marriage is to multiply the human race, it is not wrong.¹⁶ Following this background, the missionaries who came from their

¹¹ Stephanie Coontz, "Polygamy Fact Sheet: A Historical Background," last modified 2006, accessed February 12, 2023, <https://sites.utexas.edu/contemporaryfamilies/2006/05/08/polygamy-fact-sheet-historical-background/>.

¹² John Arthur, *African Women Immigrants in the United States: Crossing Transnational Border* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 166.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁵ Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered*, 20-21.

¹⁶ David Barret, *Schism and Renewal in Africa* (Nairobi, Kenya: Oxford University Press, 1968), 116.

monogamous milieu to Africa, instead of found the polygamous culture they met difficult to understand and even to deal with, and as a result, they unflinchingly and straightforwardly adamant on monogamy marriage the way they understood it. There are different church denominations and different approaches to the issue of polygamous marriage in Africa.¹⁷

In addition, polygamy practice is dated back to the Scriptures times when men married many wives according to their financial capabilities, for example King Solomon had seven hundred (700) wives and three hundred (300) concubines according to 1 Kings 11:3. In some societies where polygamous marriage is a tradition, husband and wives lives together as a large family without any trouble. There are communities where polygamists' men and women are dominated and they live in harmony without any dispute. Some people practice polygamous marriage in other to prevent younger ones from getting married before the elder-sibling (Gen 29:26). In such a scenario, the eldest daughter must get married before the younger daughter and to fulfill this, they allow their daughter to get marry to a man who already has a wife at home. To Islamic religion, polygamous and prolific procreation have strategic religious reasons.

Polygamy in Africa

Polygamy prevailed as style of marriage in the Sub-Saharan Africa continent before most primitive visit of European explorers to Africa in the fifteenth century. Biblical scholars state that polygamy practice is traceable to African when tribal wars were universal.¹⁸ Polygamy is wide-spread, prevalence and extensively practiced in

¹⁷ Igenoza, *Polygamy and the African Churches*, 28-29.

¹⁸ Charles Caverno, "Polygamy," ed. James Orr, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1939), 4:2416.

almost all Africa. Polygamy is prominent in a number of Central and West African nations and also legalized by the civil law to permits men to marry four or more wives under a certain condition. Muslim in Africa allows a man to marry at least four or more women as long as the man has financial capacity to support and cater their wives and the children.

In some countries in Africa, polygamous marriage is limited to a man marry two wives at a time. Gitari David also affirms that, whenever a society sees polygamous marriage as a social ideal, traditionally and culturally acceptable, it takes pleasure in superior reputation which makes men to marry more women. As a result of this polygamy acceptance, monogamy marriage may lose its potential and polygamous marriage may become the norm for the society.¹⁹

Nevertheless, no matter the proliferation of polygamous marriage, it is still outnumbered by monogamous principle of marriage outnumber in our society. In African cultures, there are few polygamists compared to the monogamists. Also, in African cultures, polygamous marriage is one of the forms of marriage and acceptable institute.²⁰ Polygamous marriage has been existing among African from time immemorial and has become part of lifestyle until recently that the missionaries challenged the practice as a result of Christianity.

However, certain factors encourage the practice of polygamy in Africa and lead many people to accept it as a social asset. Among traditional African men, marrying multiple wives, having numerous children, and being able to provide for them is considered a symbol of high status. Within the African cultural context, many

¹⁹ David Gitari, "The Church and Polygamy," *Transformation* 1, no. 1 (1984): 3-10.

²⁰ G. Makoka and E. Shomag, "African Customary Forms of Marriage: Are Polygamous Marriages Unchristian," Teenet, last modified 2022, <https://www.teenet.net/articles.htm>.

men aspire to have large families, as they believe that the number of children determines the prestige and success of their marriage.²¹ The number of children a polygamist is able to bear determines honor and respect that will be given in the society.²² In other words, a man can receive public recognition and merit award based on the number of children he is able to bear.

Likewise, Africans believe that engaging in polygamous marriage ensures a man has consistent access to sexual relations. If one wife is unavailable, the second or third can fulfill this role. A man with only one wife may face challenges related to irregular sexual activity, particularly when his wife is menstruating, pregnant, or experiencing health issues.

In African culture, a man is traditionally expected to abstain from sexual intercourse with his wife for two years while she is lactating. During this period, if he does not have another wife, he may be at risk of committing adultery, which is considered forbidden or an abomination in many African societies. To avoid this, men often marry multiple wives so that when one is unavailable, another can fulfill his needs.²³

In addition, African culture sees polygamous marriage as a way of providing security for spouses. Having many wives and they being able to bear many male children and the children are great in life will guaranteed their care in the old age. Therefore, when a man has one wife and that wife is not bearing man-child that makes the husband to marry additional wives in other to have male children. Polygamous

²¹ Eugene Chuma, "Polygamy in Igboland, Nigeria and Salvation in the New Era of Evangelization" (Doctoral diss., Pontificia Universitatis Lateranensis, 1986), 25-26.

²² Arthur, *African Women Immigrants in the United States*, 167.

²³ Amevenku and Boaheng, *African Biblical Christianity & Contemporary Ethics*, 27.

marriage gives man privilege to bear children with other wives when the first wife cannot give the desired children that the husband needs. Polygamous marriage serves as security for man, woman and the children especially when the man is so rich to cater for his children. Polygamous marriage also serves as protection for a childless woman to be able to have the children of other wives as her children. It also generates social security for widows and the orphans when an elderly brother died, the younger brother can marry the wife of the deceased and takes care of the children left behind.²⁴

In addition, polygamous marriage became a taboo or forbidden after the colonial era in African and monogamy marriage became the order of the day when the missionaries took over religions. Many people believe that monogamy practice in Africa is as a result of economic challenge or poverty.²⁵ Polygamous marriage is a widespread form of marital practice found in the whole Africa, but it has a propensity and more popular in West African countries. This form of marriage is more accepted by the Muslim and Animist group of religions.²⁶ Fenske James in his study concludes that polygamous marriage is more in Sub-Saharan Africa with major attentiveness in West Africa.²⁷

Polygamy in Nigeria

Polygamy in Nigeria remains a hot issue because it is more prominent and universally practiced in major parts of Nigeria particularly in the northern and western

²⁴ Amevenku and Boaheng, *African Biblical Christianity & Contemporary Ethics*, 27.

²⁵ Elizabeth Olosore, "Polygamy in Nigeria: The Extent of Polygamy in Africa, Any Role the Information Professionals in Curbing Further Spread?" *Information and Knowledge Management* 6, no. 6 (2016): 7-14.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ James Fenske, "African Polygamy: Past and Present," Centre for Economic Policy Research, last modified 2013, accessed January 13, 2023, <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/african-polygamy-past-and-present>.

parts of Nigeria not considering their tradition or religion beliefs. Polygamous marriage lingers in Nigeria and remains a subject of discussion. It is largely experienced in both urban and rural areas of Nigeria and by both rich and poor people. Ola Peter emphasized that average home in Nigeria has a polygamous marriage background.²⁸

On the other hand, polygamous marriage is dated back to the ancient times of the various kingdoms that joined together to become the sovereign state Nigeria. The major kingdoms that made up Nigeria are the Ibos in the Eastern part, Yorubas in the western part and Hausas at the northern part of Nigeria. In the eastern part of Nigeria which are Ibos, due to the prevalence of Christianity men were not permitted to marry many wives. As a result of early adoption of Christian religion, polygamous marriage is rare in that part of the country and polygamous marriage practice is disapproved of even among the traditionalists.²⁹

Earlier than the opening and reception of the English Common Law in Nigeria, customary Law has power over people's standard of living including their marital lives. Customary Law has exceptional way of mirroring the acceptable usage of the unwritten laws.³⁰ Although, considering the Customary Law that is prevailing in Nigeria, there is no uniform system but it comes into view that polygamous marriage is prevalent in all tribes. With this view, someone can justifiably conclude that polygamous marriage is widely practiced in the major part of Nigeria.

Notwithstanding, there are different people with different tradition but both Muslims

²⁸ Peter Ola, "Reflections: The Ugly Side of Polygamy in Nigeria," *Within Nigeria*, 2022, accessed January 12, 2023, <https://www.withinnigeria.com/piece/2022/05/08/reflections-the-ugly-side-of-polygamy-in-nigeria/>.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

and Christians including traditional believers practice polygamous marriage. Despite that Nigerian practice different cultures and different customs, polygamy cannot be rule out.³¹

Apart from the fact the polygamous marriage is prevalent in different Customary Laws in Nigeria; Islamic religion has the highest practice of polygamy and permits men to have up to four (4) women to evade fornication or adultery.³² According to Nigeria Civil Law, polygamous marriage is acceptable and recognized. In the Northern State of Nigeria such as Bauchi, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kastina, Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara etc, polygamous marriage is widely recognized, culturally acceptable and comparable to monogamy marriage. In some Northern States of Nigeria which are governed by Sharia Law, men were permitted to marry many providing that they are ready to treat the women equally without any partiality.³³ S This group of people accepts polygamous marriage as medium by which they can increase their population.

Furthermore, the major religions that dominate Nigeria are Islamic and Christianity.³⁴ There are majority of Muslim in the Northern part while the Christians are in the Southern part of Nigeria. It has been discovered that the ladies in the Northern part usually experience early marriage. Mansoori Mahdavi states that the early marriage of the ladies is as a result of polygamous marriage. Islamic religion

³¹ Answers Nigeria, "How Many Wives Can a Nigerian Man Have?" last modified 2022, accessed January 9, 2023, <https://answersnigeria.com/how-many-wives-can-a-nigerian-man-have/>.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ola, "Reflections: The Ugly Side of Polygamy in Nigeria."

³⁴ Embassy of the People's Republic of China, "Cultural Exchanges," *Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, last modified 2022, accessed February 12, 2023, <http://ng.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zngx/whjl/>.

permits men to marry many wives at least four (4) women.³⁵ It was emphasized that polygamous marriage reduces the temptation of committing adultery or fornication. Also, it helps many women to get marry to their husbands as a result of women population against men. The attitude of Africans on unmarried women is not encouraging.

Moreover, in the Southern part of Nigeria, which is predominantly Yoruba tribes, polygamous marriage is also more dominant among the Islamic and traditional believers than the Christians.³⁶ According to Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey in 2008, one out of three Nigeria married women are into polygamous marriage and 16% of married men are having additional wives. In the year 2013, it increases to 33% of men engaging in polygamous marriage and having more than one wife.³⁷ With this analysis above, one can say that Nigeria recognizes polygamous marriage and practice adequately.

According to the study from Ola, Monarchs in Southern Nigeria are known for marrying more than one wife. Many of these kings inherit their wives when they got to the throne according to the culture. For example, the 45th paramount ruler of Oyo Alaafia in Oyo State, Oba Lamidi Adeyemi married eighteen (18) wives while he was alive.³⁸ Presently, based on the economic challenges facing Nigeria as a whole, men and women are encouraged to be monogamous to reduce the high cost of commodities and promote quality living. More so, it has been discovered that the

³⁵ Muhammad T. Mansoori, "Reviewed Work: Women's Rights and Islamic Family Law: Perspectives on Reform by Lynn Welchman," *Islamic Studies* 48, no. 2 (2009): 45-56.

³⁶ Ola, "Reflections: The Ugly Side of Polygamy in Nigeria."

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

principle of marriage we engage in determines our mental health, and social balance; and it helps us to manage having large family for children not to suffer. According to Ola, engaging in monogamous marriage encourages small family unit for the benefit the generation to come.³⁹

Current Prevalence and Acceptance of Polygamy in Nigeria

Polygamy is highly practiced in Nigeria with 33% of women living in polygamous household.⁴⁰ Since the modern Nigerian is still influenced by traditional and cultural beliefs, the lineage and clan are still valued in this part of the world. Toyin Falola states that Nigeria is highly rich in culture and traditions which influence the principle of polygamous marriage.⁴¹ Asiyanbola Abidemi in his opinion highlighted that traditional and cultural system are prominent in Nigeria.⁴² The patrilineal lineage system is so prominent in Nigeria that it makes men more socially advantageous than women. This makes men to be recognized in the society women are not recognized no matter their status. In a community of patrilineal lineage system, men are regarded as successors and endowed the role of headship in the household. Considering this in this 21st century, such gender forces signify gender inequality and imbalance between men and women in the society.⁴³

³⁹ Ola, "Reflections: The Ugly Side of Polygamy in Nigeria."

⁴⁰ National Population Commission, *NPC/Nigeria and ICF Macro. 2009. Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2008* (Abuja, Nigeria: National Population Commission, 2009), 40.

⁴¹ Toyin Falola, *Culture and Customs of Nigeria* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 22.

⁴² Abidemi Asiyanbola, "Patriarchy, Male Dominance, the Role and Women Empowerment in Nigeria" (Presented at the Presentation as poster at the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP/UIESP) XXV International Population Conference Tours, Paris, France: International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, 2005), 2.

⁴³ Mustapha C. Duzé and Ismaila Z. Mohammed, "Male Knowledge, Attitudes and Family Planning Practiced in Northern Nigeria," *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 10, no. 3 (2006): 53-65.

However, patrilineal lineage system is not the merely practiced in Nigeria; matrilineal is being observed in many places. For example, in Ilaro community of Ogun State, there is no large amount of separation among male and female and their responsibilities. The sexual responsibility makes men to be the head of their household. In such a community, men and women supports one another in agricultural production and other domestic activities. In agriculture, men prepare the field for planting whereas women are held responsible for planting, harvesting along with selling of the crops harvested.

In addition, one of the major inspirations on marriage in Nigeria is the issue of reproduction. Culturally in many societies in Nigeria, the pressure of reproduction is so physically powerful. One of the challenges facing young married women in Nigeria is the pressure to bear children for the family. It is naturally believed that when a woman marries, she must be able to procreate as soon as possible. As a result of this notion, many people enter into early marriage in Nigeria. Infertility is considered a shame and misfortune to a married woman.⁴⁴ There are great influences from extended family on married men whose wives are infertile to have additional wives to avoid community embarrassment. Taking another will prevent the man from involving in divorce which is a taboo. From the Ijaw society of Ondo State, unproductive women are characterized as an “unlucky being.”⁴⁵ According to the lineage expansion, any man who is not able to bear children through his wife is perceived as an irresponsible man in the society.

⁴⁴ Daniel Denga, “Childlessness and Marital Adjustment in Northern Nigeria,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 44, no. 3 (1982): 799-802.

⁴⁵ Merida Hollos, “Profile of Infertility in Southern Nigeria: Women’s Voices from Amakiri,” *Journal of Reproduction Health* 7, no. 2 (2003): 46-56.

Moreover, it is traditionally believed that the purpose of marriage is reproduction and bearing many children. Nigeria as a society encourages reproduction and favors multiple children. Falola buttresses that businessmen depended on their wives to bear many children to facilitate businesses and companies.⁴⁶ In addition to having many wives and children to increase human capital or income, it is also a medium by which a man gains more prestige. Brown summarizes that the major motivations for polygamy are reproduction, social prestige, religious reasons and cultural beliefs.⁴⁷

It is considered that having wives and children in polygamous marriage indicates that when men are at their old ages, they will have future assistance from the wives and the children. More so, men's polygamous impetus is linked to economic gains from the traditional agrarian system. Since many communities still practice traditional and rural farming, men who are farmer needs plenty women and children to help them in their family production. In the Northern part of Nigeria, farming and pastoralism are the Fulani's major occupations which require assistances from family members. In Nigeria, there are domestic responsibilities for women to cater for the household. In this part of Nigeria, women's contribution is vital both in the house and in the farm. Through polygamous marriage, men are able to take full advantage of women in building their economic, social status and reproductive capabilities through the efforts of their wives and children.

Moreover, adding another wife into a family is a means of sharing family responsibilities and to reduce the load of one wife. According to Hellen Ware, one of

⁴⁶ Falola, *Culture and Customs of Nigeria*, 22.

⁴⁷ Judith Brown, "Polygyny and Family Planning in Sub-Saharan African," *Studies in Family Planning* 12, no. 8/9 (1981): 322-326.

the advantages of polygamous marriage is division of labor among women.⁴⁸ In the Nigerian culture, women's social and economic statuses are dependent on their husbands. This shows that men have high influence and authority over their wives on domestic sphere. Some part of Nigeria particularly the Eastern side, wives refer to their husband as "lord or "master" and men have authority on their wives and make major decisions for the household.⁴⁹

Also, in Nigerian culture, men are seen as the head of the house having power and authority to decide on what happens in the family. Uche Isiugo-Abanihe states that in spite of the financial status of a man in the house, children represent his accomplishment and achievement. The ideal is that having numerous wives and good number of children is the fundamental achievement for higher social status.⁵⁰ In addition, having many children may be seen as an additional economic burden but in this Northern and Eastern part of Nigeria, having many children is valued and it bring prestige in the society.

Factors Encouraging Polygamy in Nigeria

There are a good number of reasons deduced for the continuous practice of polygamous marriage in Nigeria. Mbiti emphasizes that polygamous marriage is traditionally acceptable all over Nigeria community. Below are the factors encouraging polygamy in Nigeria.

⁴⁸ Helen Ware, "Polygyny: Women's Views in a Transitional Society, Nigeria 1975," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 41, no. 1 (1979): 185-195.

⁴⁹ Uche C. Isiugo-Abanihe, "Reproductive Motivation and Family-size Preference among Nigerian Men," *Studies in Family Planning* 25, no. 3 (1994): 149-161.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Economic Values

Having many women participating in jobs with good salaries and involved in the workforce enhances economic development.⁵¹ Often polygamous marriage practice is not only to get social prestige but economic and wealth advantages. According to Uche C. Isiugo-Abanihe, having many wives motivate and build the economics of the family as a result of women productivity and reproductive value in the community. He says further that the resources a man can derive from having many wives will promote business transactions and economic prosperity.⁵² Thus wives and children in polygamous marriage will be of benefit to men at the old age when they can no longer work adequately. To some women in Africa, polygamous marriage is the best option for their financial breakthrough. Some would prefer entering into polygamous marriage than to allow their husbands have extra marital affair outside with mistresses.

Also, it has been discovered that women entering into polygyny motivate and enhance their economic status especially where women need to cater for her household. In addition, through polygamous marriage, Agrarian community women in Nigeria grow a structure of self-government. The people in the Eastern part of Nigeria believe that the higher the number of female children they have, the means of generating more finances for the family when their suitors come to pay their bride

⁵¹ Michel Garenne, "Age at Marriage and Modernization in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Southern African Journal of Demography* 9, no. 2 (2004): 59-79.

⁵² Isiugo-Abanihe, "Reproductive Motivation and Family-size Preference among Nigerian Men," 149.

price. Hence, payment of female child dowry is another business strategies crowd investment income.⁵³

Social Prestige

In those days, people's status in the community are determines by their involvement in polygamous marriage especially the kings, chiefs, spiritual leaders and the intermediaries. Polygamy was seen as a symbol of status and rank in the society. Many people became polygamists as a result of influence from friends and they wanted to change their statues. It was seen some time ago as a symbol of being a gentleman. Mbiti adds that one of the things that encourage polygamous marriage is social factor when people who are polygamists are honored, respected and adored. As a result of this, many people perceive polygamous marriage as a satisfactory structure of marriage. Without any doubt, people who married more wives are persuaded or convinced that polygamous marriage convey higher status or prestige than monogamous marriage.⁵⁴ Man's wealth or riches can be determined based on the number of wives and the number of children in his custody.

Also, there are many people who married many wives for heightening their prestige, boost their ego among their peers, and enhance their status within their community. Even though the additional wives taking are not legal, having another wife still brings esteem among his peers and in the community. Through polygamous marriage, men gain social prestige and high esteem.⁵⁵

⁵³ Lipton Matthews, "Polygamy Is a Problem for Economic Development," Wire, last modified 2022, accessed February 20, 2023, <https://mises.org/wire/polygamy-problem-economic-development>.

⁵⁴ John S. Mbiti, *Love Marriage in Africa* (London, UK: Longman, 1973), 192.

⁵⁵ Isiugo-Abanihe, "Reproductive Motivation and Family-size Preference among Nigerian Men," 151.

Reproduction

Reproduction is one of the major factors encouraging polygamy in Nigeria. Polygamous marriage is mostly supported when one wife is unable to produce children for the husband. When a woman cannot bear children, in some situations, people believe that it is the wife to be blamed. In such a situation, the man may be encouraged to marry another wife as a solution for the inability to bear children.⁵⁶

Polygamous marriage increases in Nigeria due to societal pressure especially when the wife is infertile. Man may be encouraged to take another wife that can bear children and still maintain the first wife in order to avoid divorce. Denga states that a woman who is into a monogamous marriage but infertile will personally encourage her husband to marry another wife even among Christians in Nigeria.⁵⁷ There is a big stigma for infertile women in the society and their marital status is at stake because of the challenges of not being capable of bearing children for their husband. People see these types of women as infidels and unworthy to be recognized in the society.

Security

In most African societies, people believe that having many children serves as security at the old age especially the male children. Many regions in Nigeria, polygamous marriage are seen as a way to guarantee family security and stability. In addition to this, having more children provides values, emotional support and aptitude to provide sufficient security for parents at the old age. The higher the number of children a man has the higher is the economic growth and productivity in the family. The wives and children are safe from attack when they are in a larger household. A

⁵⁶ Isiugo-Abanihe, "Reproductive Motivation and Family-size Preference among Nigerian Men," 151.

⁵⁷ Denga, "Childlessness and Marital Adjustment in Northern Nigeria," 802.

larger house symbolizes prosperity while small family connotes poverty and shame.⁵⁸ In the modern days, when a man is a government worker and transfers from one city to another, such a man can decide to have two wives; one at home and another wife at his place of work to avoid adultery or fornication. It is acceptable as part of African culture that when a man dies, his brother or uncle from the same family can decide to marry the widow, in other to secure the woman and the children the man left behind.

In addition, it is a custom in western part of Nigeria when a brother died, the younger brother takes his brother's wife (widow) to enable the children retain their family identity and their inheritance. In many places, polygamous marriage helps their children to remain under their control and also to maintain family properties for future generation.

Religious Motives

Religious motives are part of the factors which is promoting polygamy. There are two major religions that are prominent in Nigeria; Islamic and Christianity. Islamic religion permits men to marry at least four (4) women,⁵⁹ as long as the man is able to treat them equally. Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh) explains that Holy Quran allows polygamous marriage for a special situation especially during post-war. This is the periods when large number of widows and orphans are left to be catered for. Men were encouraged to marry more wives due to the number of women without husbands. The same scenario occurred during Second World War in Germany where

⁵⁸ Olasore, "Polygamy in Nigeria: The Extent of Polygamy in Africa, Any Role the Information Professionals in Curbing Further Spread?" 8.

⁵⁹ Mansoori, "Reviewed Work," 45-56.

large number of virgins, young widows, and rejected spinsters were in the cities without men to marry them.⁶⁰

However, because of the above situation, some church promotes the practice of polygamous marriage during the mid-1800s to reduce the level of adultery and fornication. The religious leader teaches that polygamous marriage was according to the will of God. More so, the motive behind the commandments was not well explained to the people.⁶¹

Personal Motives

It has been discovered that polygamous marriage gives men chances to marry women of their choice. This connotes that if the current wife is not satisfactory, such a man can marry another wife to fulfill his desire. Mbiti is of the opinion that having many wives will help men avoid being alone at the old age. Marrying many wives and having many children will secure the agitation of who is to take care of him when he is old.⁶² Many people think that the number of children one is has will determine how gloriously his burial ceremony will be attended.

Tradition and Culture

Polygamous marriage is part of cultural and traditional custom in Africa. Polygamy is culturally acceptable in many communities. According to Mpolo Masamba, polygamy has cultural and traditional motivation for longing to care for the

⁶⁰ Mirza Tahir Ahmad Hazrat, *Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues* (Islamabad, Pakistan: Islam International, 2007), 98.

⁶¹ Church of Jesus Christ, "Polygamy: What Latter-day Saints Really Believe," last modified 2021, accessed February 27, 2023, <https://ph.churchofjesuschrist.org/polygamy-mormons-plural-marriage>.

⁶² John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Oxford, UK: Heinemann, 1969), 147.

widows in the societies.⁶³ In African culture, it is traditionally accepted that when a man dies and leaves a wife behind, the immediately brother or close relative takes such a woman his wife to avoid the woman departing from their family with the children. Mpolo points it out that in the Old Testaments; there are two women that kept their levirate right, the woman called Ruth in the book of Ruth and Tamar in Genesis.⁶⁴ Looking at African culture, traditional kinship influences polygamous marriage and modern Nigerian men till today. Many people are motivated to go into polygamous marriage as a symbol of power and authority.

Polygamy during the Reformation Period

During the reformation period, the form of marriage was monogamy not polygamy. The ideal that the context of wife's sickness prevents men from having sexual relationship with their wives change a lot of issues about marriage. Martin Luther, the founder of Protestant Reformation confesses not to forbid people from marrying so many wives because that does not go contrary to the Scriptures. If any man wishes to marry many women, such should be asked if he is pleased in his sense of right and wrong according to the Scriptures. In this situation, civil power has no authority over the matter.⁶⁵ In the era of reformation, Martin Luther taught that marriage did not guarantee anyone for salvation. The practice of polygamous

⁶³ Mpolo Masamba, *Families in Transition* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 1987), 101.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Catholic Forum, "Martin Luther on Polygamy," last modified 2005, accessed August 26, 2024, <https://www.catholicforum.com/forums/showthread.php?67565-Martin-Luther-On-Polygamy>.

marriage began during the time of Joseph Smith and widely spread in the time of Brigham Young.⁶⁶

During the period of reformation, in some cases, polygamous marriage was allowed. The desire to bear more children forced people to practice polygamy. Some of the reformers manifested a high level of degree of difference in opinions about the issue of polygamous marriage. For example, John Calvin argues that polygamous marriage is forbidden by natural law and it obstructed domestic peace and unity. He says further that polygamy is the worst practice and a detestable crime in the society.⁶⁷

Also, Bernhard Rithmann who was the leader of Anabaptist opposed the initiative of polygamous marriage. He later wrote a theological defense on polygamous marriage and he himself married nine (9) wives. He further says that God has reinstated the observance of true holy matrimony among people which is polygamy.⁶⁸ Martin Luther seems to accept both side i.e monogamy and polygamous marriage for Christians. He emphasized that Christians are at liberty under the gospel to make their choices either to marry one wife or two wives.⁶⁹ In a work titled “Polygamia Triumphatrix” a Lutheran minister, Pastor Johann Lyser strongly defends polygamous marriage. And as a result of this, he was beaten, imprisoned and banished

⁶⁶ Sarah M. S. Pearsall, *Polygamy: A Very Short Introduction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2022), 56–66.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁶⁸ Rational Response, “Are Christians Actually against Plural Marriages?” *Rational Response*, last modified 2012, accessed February 28, 2023, <https://rationalresponses.blogspot.com/2012/12/are-christians-actually-against-plural.html>.

⁶⁹ Barret, *Schism and Renewal in Africa*, 117.

from Italy to Holland and the book he published was burned by the public executioners.⁷⁰

In addition, there are numerous churches in Nigeria that allows their clergy and laymen to marry many wives. For example, the Celestial Church of Christ permits their clergy men marry and remain many women as wives. The Cherubim and Seraphim Church of God is not left out, both clergy and laymen are allowed to keep multiple wives. A decision was made in 1988 at Lambeth Conference by Anglican Church to accept people who are involved in polygamous marriage to be converted to Christianity with restrictions.⁷¹ The resolution made by the same church in 1958 that, the Conference recognize monogamy marriage as the divine will of God but the problem of polygamous marriage is as a result of women who are not opportune to get marry. It was advised to make effort to advance women's status so that all may get married.⁷²

In 1988, Anglican Church in their Conference advocated and declared that monogamy marriage is God's original arrangement from the beginning and the acceptable marital standard between a man and a woman. Nonetheless, it was recommended that polygamists that accept salvation through the gospel of Jesus Christ and desire to become a member of Anglican Church must be baptized alongside with their wives and all the children. Below conditions were mapped out for the polygamist's converts: (a) a polygamist converted shall swear not to marry another wife after his conversion to the church. (b) the Local Church where the polygamists were to be received must vote them in. (c) no polygamists should be

⁷⁰ Rational Response, "Are Christians Actually against Plural Marriages?"

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

forced to divorce any of their wives in order not to face the consequences of their sins. (d) it was recommended that the churches facing polygamy challenges should persuade to follow pastoral approach or discipline to those who were Christians before becoming a polygamist.⁷³

The Churches Attitudes towards Polygamy

Polygamy has been seen as one of the hindrances to the gospel and the growth of the church in Africa. Christians have taken different stands regarding polygamous marriage. Some believe that polygamy is sinful, adultery and should be eliminated from Christianity. Some say that it is unacceptable or substandard form of marriage practice. Some people are of the opinion that polygamy should be tolerated even though it is not God's model for marriage from the beginning. Some churches teach that polygamy should be acceptable as an alternative form of marriage to monogamy.⁷⁴ Many Christians see polygamy as a great evil and sinful before God. Some take the situation of polygamous marriage as satisfactory based on the patriarch that were seen in the Bible as an example. Many people support polygamy because they think that the Bible permit or tolerate the carry out of polygamy.

The place of polygamous marriage in Nigeria church is one of the most troublesome challenges confronting the growth of the churches. The reason is that church teaches that monogamy is the ideal form of marriage according to the Bible and polygamists were disallowed to be full members in the church and to partake in the ordinance. This is bringing a lot of dispute, difference and disunity in the church. Part of church members' attitudes and perceptions is regarding polygamists and their

⁷³ Rational Response, "Are Christians Actually against Plural Marriages?".

⁷⁴ Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered*, 145.

family as unworthy group of people and they are not for salvation. The Church in Nigeria considers polygamous family as anomalous and immoral according to the Western Interpretation of Genesis 2:24, Ephesians 5:31 and Matthew 19:5. The ideal family from the beginning according to the Western Church is monogamy. The church endorsed monogamy not polygamy while polygamists are treated with condescension.

Missionary Attitude

Considering the background of the missionary, monogamy was the only legal or lawful form of marriage. It was difficult for Western Missionaries to agreement with the subject of polygamy they encountered with in the course of their ministry in Africa Continent.⁷⁵ Without compromising their faith, they maintained the standard of marriage which is monogamy which latter created numerous social and pastoral problems in the church. Different denominations treat polygamous dilemma with different approaches. Most Protestant Churches counseled that a polygamous convert should divorce other wives and retain the earliest wife which is rightful and legal wife.⁷⁶ It was primarily the problem of polygamy that missionaries themselves attributed their failure to convert African rulers and dignitaries.

Catholic Church

The form of marriage in Catholic Church has been associated to one man with one woman. The church upheld monogamy marriage as the only suitable marriage permitted by God from the Garden of Eden. During the sixteenth century, Council of Trent announced having several wives at the same time as an abomination and was

⁷⁵ Igenoza, *Polygamy and the African Churches*, 29.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

forbidden under the divine law of the church.⁷⁷ Even while Africans who were Catholic made an investigation on the authenticity of polygamous marriage in 1980s, John Pope needs not to think before he answered the only acceptable form of marriage is monogamy the need to be considered. According to Urrutia, Pope Nicholas I wrote: if a man has two wives at the same time, he should be encouraged to divorce one and maintain the first wife.⁷⁸ This idea triumphed throughout the centuries in the Catholic Church but in this modern era, polygamous marriage has heaved a serious dispute.

More so, some of the documents from Roman Catholic Church states that monogamy is commanded as God's revelation to man.⁷⁹ Pope John II in 1980s undoubtedly repeated that Roman Catholic Church's stand on polygamous marriage is unchangeable. He also categorized polygamous marriage as abortion and divorce.⁸⁰ John Pope argued further that polygamous marriage fundamentally contradicted God's covenant on marriage which says that two becomes one in flesh. The subject of polygamy contradicts the map of God revealed from the beginning at the Garden of Eden.⁸¹

Furthermore, it has been discovered that the dispute on polygamous marriage in Roman Catholic Church is yet to be resolved despite the counsel and commands from John Pope II. Hastings states that official Roman Catholic missionary practice in

⁷⁷ J. Waterworth, ed., *The Council of Trent: The Twenty-fourth Session* (London, UK: Dolman, 1848).

⁷⁸ Francisco J. Urrutia, "Can Polygamy Be Compatible with Christianity?" *African Ecclesial Review* 23, no. 5 (1981): 276.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 280.

⁸⁰ Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered*, 166.

⁸¹ Eugene Hillman, "The Polygamy Debate: A Progress Report," *Missiology: An International Review* 10, no. 2 (1982): 162-169.

the sixteen and twentieth centuries never changed. The position of polygamous marriage is as follows:

1. Polygamous marriage is firmly disallowed and prohibited. If a polygamist which to be baptized, such must divorce all his wives and keep only one. Additional wives from a polygamist cannot be baptized except the first wife.
2. A polygamist should be allowed to decide which wife he want to retain in as much as the wife chosen is ready to be baptized with her husband.⁸²

Anglican Communion

A historian called Timothy Jones observed this concerning Anglican missionary that with few exceptions, refused to permit polygamist to be converted into Christianity. This resolution was formalized at Lambeth Conference in 1888 but it was later annulled after one hundred years.⁸³ A polygamist is not permitted to be baptized but is allowed to be candidates at instruction and Bible study class until they accept the law of God and decide on what to do with his wives.⁸⁴ The Anglican Province of West Africa provided that a male polygamist in exceptional circumstances is admitted to baptism with bishop's written permission.⁸⁵

Moreover, the Anglican Church Communion proposed that polygamists who accept the gospel of salvation and desire to be baptized in other to join the church with all his wives and the children must follow the following conditions:

1. Such a polygamist shall vow not to remarry again after conversion even if his wives are still alive.

⁸² Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered*, 218.

⁸³ Willem J. Timothy, "The Missionaries' Position: Polygamy and Divorce in the Anglican Communion, 1888-1988," *Journal of Religious History* 35, no. 3 (2011): 393-408.

⁸⁴ Igenoza, *Polygamy and the African Churches*, 31.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

2. Accepting a polygamist into the church must be approved by the Local Anglican Church Community.
3. The polygamists must not be compelled to divorce any of his wives based on the stand of social deprivation he may encounter.
4. The church provinces facing challenges related to polygamous marriage should be encourage educating their members on pastoral approach and church discipline upon a Christian who decided to become a polygamist.⁸⁶

Baptist Convention

When Baptist Church also encountered the challenge of polygamous marriage, they went into series of debates and discussions. They agreed that the issue of polygamous marriage should not be handed over to the local congregation but the executive committee to handle. Due to this, the executive committee of Baptist Mission in the year 1903 determined to counsel all the local congregations to stop admitting or tolerating polygamists from becoming the members of their church. Baptist Church has a strong stand against polygamous marriage.⁸⁷ The Baptist Protestant denomination has the following positions against polygamists:

1. All wives and children of a polygamist can be baptized but the husband should not be baptized.
2. Those who are not polygamous should be baptized.
3. A polygamist can be baptized if he divorces all his wives and chose one.
4. A polygamist, wives and children may be baptized with an understanding that any successive polygamous marriage is prohibited.
5. Based on their testimony or confession, all of them may be baptized without any condition.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Igenoza, *Polygamy and the African Churches*, 35.

⁸⁷ Lamin Sannah, *West Christianity: The Religion Impact* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 35.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

In 1900, Kaku was denied baptism because he failed to renounce his plural wives to keep to only one of them. For him, the good news became “bad news.” He then gave up Christianity and converted to Islam instead, with about six hundred of his people.⁸⁹

Lutheran Church of God

The official of Lutheran Church position on the principle of marriage has been monogamy marriage. The church endorsed monogamy as the biblical standard of marriage. In the year 1951, the Lutheran Church approved the following policy as a guiding principle for their members on marriage:

1. Any members who enters polygamous marriage shall be disfellowshipped or excommunicated from the church.
2. A polygamist with remorse and who shows evidence of genuine faith in Jesus Christ may be baptized but such cannot hold any church office.⁹⁰

Furthermore, the conference and consultations held recently by the Lutheran Church leaders in Africa has significant manifestation on the issue of polygamous marriage in the church. They argued on the case of Isaac and Ishmael in the Bible which shows that the promises of God were fulfilled during the former not latter. Since polygamy practice of marriage refuted people from their identity as an independent individual before God, monogamy was God’s intention for mankind.⁹¹

Deeper Life Christian Fellowship

Looking at the principle of Deeper Life Christian Bible Church on the matter of polygamous marriage, Williams Kumuyi says that the Bible is against polygamy

⁸⁹ Sannah, *West Christianity: The Religion Impact*, 39.

⁹⁰ *Antsirabé: A Record of the Second All Africa Lutheran Conference, Antsirabé, Madagascar, Sept. 8-18, 1960* (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), 175-176.

⁹¹ Masamba, *Families in Transition*, 114.

and the New Testament emphasizes that marriage be supposed to be one man to one woman.⁹² He says further that the Old Testament patriarch practiced polygamy but God did not command it.⁹³ In the beginning at the original institution of marriage in the Garden of Eden, God made one woman for one man.

Polygamous marriage is contrary to the New Testament principle of marriage. When a polygamist becomes converted into the church, there are compulsory restitutions and reconciliations to be made before such person can be baptized into the church.⁹⁴

Seventh-day Adventist Church

Seventh-day Adventist Church missionaries entered Africa with policies and procedures on the issue of polygamous marriage.⁹⁵ The Church encountered the issue of polygamous marriage in an unprepared manner in the course of their open outreaches.⁹⁶ Despite all these challenges, the missionaries remain truthful to their biblical and hermeneutic teaching concerning the issue of polygamous marriage.

Thus, it has been unanimously agreed that polygamous marriage is not an alternative practice to monogamy. For those who are Christians already, polygamous lifestyle is not acceptable for membership. The leaders of the church did not fail to discuss the ways to deal with polygamous converts who were ready to be part of the

⁹² Masamba, *Families in Transition*, 50.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Tiwatola Abidemi Falaye, "The History, Founder, Beliefs and Practices of Deeper Life Bible Church, Nigeria," *Historical Research Letter* 26 (2015): 23-27.

⁹⁵ Ronald Lawson, *Church Sponsored Injustice: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Polygamous Coverts*, PDF file, May 3, 2018, <https://ronaldlawson.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/3-polygamy-paper-refs-rl-5218.pdf> .

⁹⁶ Stefan Hoschele, *From the End of the World to the Ends of the Earth: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Missiology* (Nurnberg, Germany: Verlagfur Theologieund Religions wissenschaft, 2004).

church. There are considerable debates on the approach of treaty with polygamous converts. These discussions are fueled by several controversial questions such as:

1. Who among the polygamous family should be baptized: none of them, the husband only, all the wives or all the children?
2. On what condition should they be baptized: no divorce, divorce all the wives and chose the first one, divorce all the wives and marry a new one?
3. What really constitutes for these actions: biblical examples, biblical commandments, theological principles, and traditional administrative, hermeneutical principle or policy matters?

Celestial Church of God

The Founder of Celestial Church of God for the Heavenly Christianity, Pastor Prophet Samuel Biléou Joseph Oshoffa (Papa) had already two women as Wives, before receiving the “call” on May 23, 1947. He was childless at this time, and he wanted children that will carry his name from generation to generation. He is a lover of Monogamy, but fate has made him a Polygamy man. The other woman in the life of Papa Pastor Founder was his first Wife, Mother Yaman the woman of great recognition who was his first love. She was also a member of the Cherubim and Seraphim (Christian congregation in the Benin Republic). When Oshoffa received the revelation, the Lord did not ask him to separate from one of his wives. He took other women and more, so that he may one day become a Father of all nations.⁹⁷

Also, Falade asserts that even though the wives were not forthcoming with childbearing, the Lord Jesus did not condemn him to marry only one wife and divorce the other woman. That is the reason the church accepted polygamous practice. This is

⁹⁷ Yves Jonas Ahoyo, “Why The Church of Heavenly Christianity Tolerates Polygamy?” *Christianity Today*, last modified 2012, accessed January 17, 2023, https://web.facebook.com/ccckabalaDoki/photos/why-the-church-of-heavenly-christianity-tolerates-polygamythe-founder-of-the-chu/993755907655249/?_rdc=1&_rdr.

also in keeping with the spirit of the Bible.⁹⁸ He says further that the Bible declares that we must respect the authorities of the countries in which we live. From this perspective, it is obvious that in countries where polygamy is not allowed or accepted, celestial Christians must respect the laws of the land and marry only one woman.⁹⁹

Furthermore, Papa Pastor Prophet Founder (PPF) may not be a man with one wife, but he obeyed the teachings of loving his wives equally and controlling/managing his children and household in the word and standard of God, he was indeed above reproach, he was faithful to his wives, he was temperate and he had self-control. A responsible man, he was hospitable to both family and strangers, he was a great teacher (tutor), he was blameless not given to drunkenness and immorality, he was never violent but gentle, he was never quarrelsome but a peacemaker, he was never a lover of money but a lover of giving to others no matter your status (whether poor or rich); he was a great giver (Philanthropist). If you are a Christian or a celestial Christian and you want to get married, that is a good thing. But try to make a heavenly Christian wedding. That is what God wants.¹⁰⁰

Ellen Gould White and Polygamy

Ellen G. White states that polygamous marriage had been prevalent in our society that it had ceased to be considered as sinful. She condemned polygamy as a practice contrary to God's original marital arrangements¹⁰¹ from the Garden of Eden. From creation, God gave Eve to Adam which reveals God's derivation plan for marriage. After the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, men desire to follow

⁹⁸ Ahoyo, "Why The Church of Heavenly Christianity Tolerates Polygamy?"

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ellen G. White, *Daughters of God* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998), 27.

their sinful way and the outcome has been crime, rapid wretchedness and increase in corruption.¹⁰²

Also, polygamy is no longer considered sinful, no more regarded as violation to the law of God. There is no doubt that Abraham's marriage to Hagar the second wife led to evil, violence and calamities not only for his immediate family but for the future generation.¹⁰³ Polygamous marriage was one of the sins that attract God's wrath upon humanity. White clearly states that David's murder and adultery was distinguished from polygamy.¹⁰⁴

Moreover, White further emphasizes that Sarah was seen as the first and only true wife of Abraham¹⁰⁵ while Hagar was considered a concubine because Bible does not call her Abraham's wife (Gen 16:3). She states that Sarah's action for sending Hagar away from the House was never condemned by God.¹⁰⁶ This indicates that the plan of God on marriage is one woman to one man. Beside this, for God to allow Abraham to send Hagar and her son away from his house shows God's direction and also to serve as lesson for those who desire happiness in their marriage.¹⁰⁷

Additionally, White asserts that polygamous marriage is a sin without equating the practice to adultery and sees it as an unbiblical marriage contrary to the will of God. She affirms that multiple wives or practices of polygamous marriage

¹⁰² Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1998), 91.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 271.

¹⁰⁴ Ellen G. White, *Testimony on Sexual Behavior, Adultery and Divorce* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1989), 94.

¹⁰⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist, 1870), 1:98.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:104.

increases unhappiness, troubles and wickedness.¹⁰⁸ She says further that polygamous marriage joins together, corruption and idolatry.¹⁰⁹ There is no doubt the reaction of Ellen White to polygamous marriage is not different from Bible reaction. More so, quietness on treatment on polygamous converts resembled God's responses throughout the Bible.

The Reflection on Polygamy in the African Cultural and Christian Context

Polygamy has been the center of critical attack on the gospel and the church of God in Africa.¹¹⁰ The church and the communities in Africa have cordial relationship but the issue of polygamous marriage has been an impediment to the growth of the church in this part of the world. Africans see polygamous teaching as a strange bell. But the issue of polygamous marriage in the church and its earthly human communities became strange bed-fellows. Kahiga Joseph states that whereas polygamous marriage was official in Africa, it has taken the form of anonymous polygamy with associates or concubines disguised in different locations.¹¹¹ He also says further that the level of divorce and remarriage in the Western world equal to consecutive polygamy because any of the partner will be planning to remarry after divorce.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist, 1864), 3:63-64.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Sunday Igwe Ukoha, "The Plight of Polygamists in Contemporary African Society," *Lwati: A journal of Contemporary Research* 14, no. 2 (2017): 178-189.

¹¹¹ Joseph Kiruki Kahiga, "Polygamy: A Pastoral Challenge to the Church in Africa," *African Ecclesial Review* 49, no. 1 & 2 (2007): 120.

¹¹² Ibid., 120.

Furthermore, according to Maillu, part of the battle that the colonial church has been fighting against tradition and culture has been on the issue of polygamy that it is opposed to the teaching of the Scripture.¹¹³ The argument and the agitation of the many missionaries and scholars in Africa were not different from this reflection.

Moreover, from the cultural view, polygamous marriage is distinguished and legalized under the civil law which permits men to marry up to four (4) wives under any certain circumstances including financial competence to support many wives and the children that will come after. The function of polygamous marriage within any Africa community is multifaceted. The establishment of polygamous marriage in Africa was not only the means of fulfilling male desire. The institution of polygamy in traditional Africa was not merely a means of satisfying male lust but to assist in stabilizing family, regulating social relationship and to avoid fornication or adultery. One of the pride and blessing of marriage is procreation of many children and to avoid barrenness which is seen as a curse in marriage, men were therefore motivated to marry many wives. It also helps to keep family heritage and genealogy of such a man.¹¹⁴

In additional, polygamous marriage helps to reduce temptation of men committing fornication and adultery. Polygamous marriage is seen as an opportunity to help unmarried women who were looked down upon to belong to a man. Polygamous marriage helps to care for the widows and their children. Okorie states that Africans belief that polygamous marriage is a means of taking care of the

¹¹³ David G. Maillu, *Our Kind of Polygamy* (Nairobi, Kenya: Heinemann, 1998), 1.

¹¹⁴ Ukoha, "The Plight of Polygamists in Contemporary African Society," 178.

widows.¹¹⁵ In Africa, divorce and remarriage is at low rate but multiple wives is adopted to support marital stability, communal identity, social ministry, economic status and social security for women and children.

Conclusion

From the review of the literature and the preliminary studies conducted in this thesis, it is evident that polygamous marriage provides men with increased access to sexual intimacy, reproduction, social security, and other services traditionally provided by women. Studies indicate that while polygamy was not the original model of marriage, it was not explicitly condemned in the Bible. Social, cultural, and economic conditions have played a significant role in the prevalence of polygamy, particularly in Africa.

In contemporary society, polygamous marriage is increasingly preferred, especially in Africa, as people view it as a means for women to attain financial security, access material resources, achieve economic stability, and avoid the social stigma of not being married. The church, therefore, must take a clear stance on the principles of marriage, particularly regarding polygamy, for those seeking to become members.

Furthermore, examining the lives of biblical patriarchs who practiced polygamy reveals that conflict was inevitable, as many experienced psychological distress due to favoritism by either the father or mother toward certain children or wives. On the other hand, polygamous marriage has both advantages and disadvantages when compared to monogamy. Following the principles of an ideal marriage aligns with the intent of the one who instituted marriage from the beginning,

¹¹⁵ A. M. Okorie, "African Widowhood Practices: The Igbo Mourning Experience," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 14, no. 2 (1995): 79-84.

promoting peace and harmony among individuals. While the Bible remains silent on explicitly endorsing polygamous marriage, it does not condone it. However, the absence of explicit condemnation does not imply that polygamy was divinely justified.

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON POLYGAMY

It was difficult for biblical scholars to determine whether the Bible condemned polygamous marriage or not. The first instance recorded in the Scripture was Lamech in the book of Genesis 4:19. The first situation of polygamous marriage was mentioned in the Old Testament when Lamech took unto himself two wives. In the New Testament, monogamy was considered as the only form of marriage among Christians and for men who desire to hold one office or the other in the church (1 Tim 3:2, 12, Titus 1:16). When Jesus Christ was teaching His disciples, he used principle of marriage in the Old Testament that the two become one flesh (Gen 2:24) to also call their attention that divorce is not negotiable (Matt 19:5; Mark 10:8). Polygamy in the gospel needs examination from the OT and NT.

Bible does not directly use the word “polygamy” nor openly prohibit the practice of polygamous marriage. The Scripture is more clearly stated that monogamy as the only true definition of marriage. Hillman states that Mosaic Law on polygamy is considered as normal and approved form of marriage.¹ William Blum also coincides that polygamous marriage is in conforming to the requirements of the law in

¹ Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered*, 145.

the Old Testament time.² He also says further that this practice was excluded from the New Testament.³

This research paper examined the issue of polygamy in both the Old and New Testaments. The teachings on polygamy, the commands, and the laws were examined in detail to understand the acceptable form of marriage according to Scripture. Bible commentaries and biblical encyclopedias were consulted to provide details on the issue of polygamous marriage. Biblical examples of polygamous marriages were analyzed, and the advantages and disadvantages of polygamous marriage in the Old Testament were explained. The reasons for polygamous marriage were investigated, and meaningful conclusions were drawn accordingly.

Biblical View about Polygamy

The Scriptures give a detailed account of the issue of polygamous marriage without hiding the practices of the noble and famous patriarchs. Polygamy is presented in the Bible from a purely male-centred perspective – one man marrying more than one wife in a concurrent marital relationship.⁴ The first recorded polygamist in the Bible is traced to the genealogy of Cain in Genesis chapter 4, through the man, Lamech who married two wives (Gen 4:19-23). Polygamous marriage among the children of Israel was acknowledged in the Scriptures. It was glaring from the Bible that polygamous marriage is neither acceptable nor condoned.

However, polygamous marriage was spread not only through the patriarch and children of Israel alone, but among the ancient Near Eastern. Polygamous marriage

² William G. Blum, *Forms of Marriage: Monogamy Reconsidered* (Nairobi, Kenya: AMECEA Gaba, 1989), 186.

³ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁴ Nwankpa, *The Ethical, Social and Spiritual Angst of Polygamy*, 16.

can be seen from the time of Lamech to monarchs like David, Solomon, Levites to the time of Elkana.⁵ Scholars states that having laws regulating the practices of polygamous marriage in the OT demonstrates that it was acceptable form of marriage and legal amid the Jews until the sixth century Justinian reforms.⁶

Also, the primary aim of marriage in the Ancient Near East was to provide a male heir of their communities. The purpose was to ensure that when they are old, a male child will be there to take care of them and their inheritance. It can be seen from the history that the Ancient Near East and Old Testament culture was tolerant of polygynists though they were mainly monogamists. Longman Tremper characteristics uncommonness of polygamous marriage to some of the requirements attached to marriage such as paying the bride price and some other payments that less privileged people could not meet up with.⁷ This simply means that the form of marriage from the beginning is monogamy and polygamous marriage was added as a consequence of human prevailing conditions such as; barrenness, poor financial income, women outnumbering men in population, social prestige, levirate practices and cultural demands.⁸

Polygamy in the Old Testament Teaching

The OT of the Bible contains numerous examples and practices of polygamous marriage even among the devoted men of God. History made it clear that

⁵ Russell Staples, “Evangelism among Resistant Peoples with Deeply Entrenched Polygamy,” *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 2, no. 1 (2006): 1-25.

⁶ C. C. Kroeger, “Women in Greco-Roman World and Judaism,” ed. Crain A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, *Dictionary of New Testament Backgrounds* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 1277.

⁷ Tremper Longman III, *Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2013), s.v. “Family.”

⁸ “Multiply Wives” [Deut 17:17], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1978), 1:1014.

the practice of polygamous marriage was permitted throughout Egyptian society.⁹ To those who could avoid marrying multiple wives in Egyptian society, it was a practicable option for their people. Considering the Old Testament record, polygamous marriage was practiced by sixteen different men.¹⁰ Polygamy in the Old Testament will be examined either good or bad.

The Polygamy of Lamech (Gen 4:19)

Lamech was the sixth descendant of Cain and the first to be recorded as a polygamist in the Bible. Lamech was singled out for arrogance, polygamy and violence even among the children. Although we can see the positive effects of polygamous marriage in the family of Lamech for his children were with different varieties of talents and God-given abilities (Gen 4: 20-22).

However, some conservative Bible scholars see Lamech and his polygamous life in a different way, for his arrogant, murderous sword-song and his godless life.¹¹ No matter the achievement of Lamech's children, the continuous development of sin does not make the family to have a good moral example.¹² Lamech polygamous marriage experience is a complete contradiction to God's principle for humanity.

Moreover, because of Lamech's arrogance and wickedness in his marital life, many scholars have concluded that polygamous marriage is condemned. Samuel Kunhiyop opposes the opinion and states that the moral character of a man cannot be

⁹ Robert Francis Harper, *The Code of Hammurabi, King Babylon* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1904).

¹⁰ Orville J. Nave, *Nave's Tropical Bible: A Digest of the Holy Scripture* (McLean, VA: MacDonald, 1962), 12.

¹¹ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament* (Wilmington, DE: Associated, 1994), 11.

¹² Anthony O. Nwoka, "The Church and Polygamy in Africa: The 1988 Lamech Conference Resolution," *Africa Theological Journal* 19 (1990): 145-146.

used to justify polygamous marriage because there were reputable patriarchs and men of God who practised polygamy in the Bible.¹³ The practice of polygamous marriage couched in contexts of distrust, haste, grief, violence and frustration. The situation that surrounds Lamech and the family shows that polygamous marriage is never portrayed as a God-honoring practice for human life.

Also, polygamous marriage did not start from the godly descendant of Seth but from the evil and arrogant offspring of Cain. The descendant of Cain changed the marital relationship originated by God and led humanity to the diversity of exploitation including polygamy.

The Polygamy of Abraham (Gen 16-22)

We need not be surprised that after Lamech, Abraham was the next polygamist in the Bible. Many scholars state that Abraham was the first godly polygamist both in the OT and NT. Seeing Abraham as a righteous man who practices polygamy, how people perceive and treat polygamous marriage could provide vital insights into our understanding and our attitudes towards the polygamists. Abraham's background cannot be ignored for his brother Nahor has many concubines (Gen 33:20-24).

In addition, some scholars argue that Abraham was not a polygamist, but rather had an illegitimate son by his concubine Hagar. Genesis 21:18-21 records that God commanded Abraham to send away Hagar and her son. God did not endorse Abraham's act with Hagar and excluded the illegitimate son Ishmael from the inheritance. The consequences of Hagar's affair with Abraham on Israel, religion, and

¹³ Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Hippo Books, 2008), 229.

the world today cannot be overemphasized. Had Abraham remained with Sarah, his wife, the promised child might have spared the world from the current dilemmas.

Furthermore, Abraham was not guilty of adultery. Kunhiyop asserts that, if God Himself did not openly condemn Abraham's act with Hagar, neither should we condemn it.¹⁴ John Kisaka also concurred that if Abraham who was a friend of God had taken Hagar to cover the shame of not having a child;¹⁵ we need not query the authority of God. Many of the highly responsible men of God in the Bible were involved in polygamous marriage without condemnation from God. Mbiti affirms that many of the polygamists in the Bible were men of faith and they were accepted by God without restraint and consequences for their sins.¹⁶

The Polygamy of Esau (Gen 26-28)

Esau was the oldest son of Isaac who was a twin brother to Jacob. Esau had six (6) wives (Gen 26). He married foolishly, married ungodly idol worshipping women and his children followed their ways. Esau's marriages with unbelievers made life miserable for Isaac and Rebekah (Gen 26:35). At the age forty (40) years, Esau married Judith the daughter of Beerli the Hittite; the daughter of Elon the Hittite called Basemath (Gen 26:34-35). Esau later went to Canaan and married Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite and Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah. Also, He married Bashemath the daughter of Ishmael (Gen 36:2, 3); Mahalath the sister of Nebaioth and the daughter of Ishmael son of Abraham (Gen 28:9).

¹⁴ Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 230.

¹⁵ John A. Kisaka, "The Adventist Church's Position and Response to Socio-cultural Issues in African" (DMin diss., Andrews University, 1979).

¹⁶ Mbiti, *Love Marriage in Africa*, 190.

More so, Esau realizes how his marriage with the Canaanite displeased his father Isaac because they brought grief to him. Mann records that his marriage with Mahalath was positive because Mahalath was a God-fearing woman.¹⁷ Esau lived his life recklessly, especially on the issue of marriage. When one woman offends Esau, he rashly marries another one without any real thought of his action.

Furthermore, the combination of these verses with the record of Esau's marriage's family tree in (Gen 36:2-14), with all his wives being called Esau's wives throughout his record makes Richard Davidson conclude that Esau was a polygamist different from Abraham.¹⁸ Once again, going through this passage, there is contention against polygamous marriage from God.

More so, Esau botched to live a godly life because of his polygamous life and probably because of the women who worship idols that surround him. The women he married influenced him towards their worship

The Polygamy of Jacob (Gen 29:30)

Jacob was one of the figures in the Bible that practised polygamy. Jacob was deceived by Laban his father-in-law into marrying the older daughter Leah instead of Rachel the young sister whom he truly loved from the beginning. Philip Turkey states that more approaching on the bonds within polygamous marriage can be perceived in Jacob's life than any other polygamist in the Bible.¹⁹ The challenges related with polygamy in the life of Jacob need to be mentioned. The dark side of polygamous life

¹⁷ Mbiti, *Love Marriage in Africa*, 16.

¹⁸ Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 189.

¹⁹ Philip Craig Turley, "The Status of Polygamy in the Old Testament" (MTh thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas, 1979), 22.

cannot be overemphasized.²⁰ Jacob loved Rachael more than the other three wives which made Jacob love Joseph more than the other children which led to family violence. The fighting was so serious between Jacob's wives which resulted in Leah buying relations with her husband.

The life of Jacob was a sad tale of polygamy. Turkey submits that polygamous marriage was not part of Jacob's plan when he was planning to get married.²¹ His purpose and desire was to marry Rachael whom he loved (Gen 29:18-25). Polygamy became manifest in the household and the potential to extend unequal love to the children jeopardized family relationships.

Moreover, the story of Jacob's polygamous marriage outlines some consequences that came upon the family. The life of Joseph demonstrates the disastrous dealings that result from polygamy which could have ended his life.²² The above crises concerning Jacob, together with the fact that he gave birth to twelve boys who are the intellectual movement of the tribe of Israel, require that we examine his marital life and the reason why he chose to become a polygamist. Jacob finally marrying four wives shows that he was not compelled as we thought from the beginning.

On the other hand, it was not written in the Scriptures that God unambiguously condemns polygamy. Clifton Maberly states that no record confirms that God disapproves of Jacob's polygamous life or asks him to put away his four wives and

²⁰ Edward Geoffrey Parinder, *The Bible and Polygamy: A Study of Hebrew and Christian Teaching* (London, UK: SPCK, 1958), 15.

²¹ Turley, "The Status of Polygamy in the Old Testament," 23.

²² Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 187.

retain one.²³ Mbiti likewise conceives that God fully accepted Jacob's polygamous life²⁴ for not condemning the acts of marrying four (4) wives,

The Polygamy of Ashur (1 Chr 4:5)

Ashur was among the holy men of God in the Bible from the tribe of Judah; the father of Tekoa has two wives (1 Chr 4:5). The Bible only mentioned his name, the name of his wives and the children. The tribe of Ashur was known for its prosperity and good food with fertile plot of land where they grew olives tree. No comment was said about his polygamous life either negative or positive.

The Polygamy of Gideon (Judg 8:30)

The book of Judges recorded Gideon's as another example of a polygamist in the Bible. Gideon's polygamy came as a result of his apostasy in his later life. He became polygamous and at the same time an idolatrous (Judg 8:24-28). Gideon has many wives, a concubine and seventy (70) children. Out of ninety (90) verses of the Bible that deals with the story of Gideon (Judg 6:11-8:35), his polygamous life was mentioned in two verses. The story of Gideon teaches us that God does not see us the way we see ourselves.

Nevertheless, despite that Gideon has many wives that resulted to violence and death; he was still a servant of God. The empathy of this murderous difference was polygamy as a result of little love for one another because they have different mothers. Considering Gideon's family as a polygamous house, it is evident that polygamy leads to chaos and hatred. No matter the scenario, how do we understand

²³ Clifton Maberiy, *The Polygamous Variant: The Policy and Practice of a Church* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Heritage Center, James White Library, Andrew University, 1975), 39.

²⁴ Mbiti, *Love Marriage in Africa*, 190.

the polygamous marriage in the life of God's servant and the nonattendance of any open disapproval or approval of the act?

The Polygamy of Elkanah (1 Sam 1:2-8)

The polygamous life of Elkanah requires special attention since the Bible says that he practiced polygamy. The Bible explicitly recorded that Elkanah among the children of Israel practiced polygamy. Elkanah married Peninnah and Hannah who were against each other. There was competition between them on the issue of childbearing. It was recorded that Elkanah loved Hannah more than Peninnah which brought jealousy and hatred to the family

Furthermore, there is meaningful information that immediately followed when Elkanah's record of polygamy was revealed, the two sexually immoral priests are mentioned that is, Hophni and Phinehas (1 Sam 2:22). Taking into consideration that Israel's spiritual leaders were immoral. It is not a surprise that Elkanah had two wives and practiced polygamy, especially in those days when everyone did just as they pleased (Judg 21:25).

In addition, although polygamous marriage solved the predicament of Elkanah's childlessness, we need to know that it created more problems for Hannah. Peninnah's worrisome brought about dreadful sorrow to Hannah to the extent that she refused to eat and went to Shiloh weeping. David Mace suggests that Hannah was the first wife but because she was barren, Peninnah was taken as a second wife to be able to provide him with offspring.²⁵ Ellen White corroborates this idea to secure offspring because Hannah could not bear a child just like Abraham took Hagar because Sarah

²⁵ David R. Mace, *Hebrew Marriage: A Sociological Study* (London, UK: Epworth Press, 1953), 126.

was barren.²⁶ A wealthy, influential man and a spiritual leader called Elkanah marrying two wives to secure offspring just like other patriarchs in the Bible.

**The Polygamy of David (1 Sam 25:39;
2 Sam 3:2-5; 5:13; 1 Chr 14:3)**

In the Bible, the life of David may have been the most dramatic recorded on struggle with sin, failed to measure up with the standard of being a man after God's own heart. Many scholars believe that God support polygamy to some extent since it was practiced by David who was so dear to God (1 Sam 13:14). Maan based his submission on 2 Samuel 12:8 that David marrying many wives had positive effect.²⁷ This was said with the assumption that despite this disobedience by David, God still blessed him.

Also, David's continuous polygamous marriage was proofed after the period of silence. David practice of polygamous marriage was repeated severally during the period that he violated the commandment of God (1 Sam 25:39-43; 2 Sam 3:2-16; 5:13-16; 11:1-27). According to Deuteronomy 7:17, David's marrying many wives and concubines was a direct disobedience to God's law. Before David began to take additional wives and concubines, he has seven wives already.

It is noteworthy that God blesses David despite his disobedience to the commandment of God does not signify that God approved polygamy. The issue of Uriah and his wife Bathsheba with David is enough for God to openly condemn polygamy during the time of Israelites. David has been guilty of adultery, theft, and murder. Ellen Whites states that David already had a wife when he married Abigail

²⁶ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1958), 568.

²⁷ Pamela S. Mann, "Toward a Biblical Understanding of Polygamy," *Missiology* 17, no. 1 (1989): 16.

but the tradition of his environment distorted his judgment and manipulated his actions.²⁸ She furthers that God did not approve of the polygamous union of David because it was contrary to the original plan of God and design for human relationships having only one wife.²⁹

The consequence and tragedy of polygamous marriage upon David's family cannot be over-emphasized. David's daughter was raped by his son, his son murdered another of his son and another son sleeps with David's wife. There was chaos among the children when they struggled for the throne of their father which led to the death and deposition of a talented man. Ellen White says that David had a choice either to take one wife or many wives as a king. The kings today are following David's practices marrying many wives on the throne. David could loyally follow God's commandments rather than marry many wives which was not approved by God.³⁰

The Polygamy of Solomon (1 Kgs 11:1-8)

Solomon, David's son was known for wisdom and God allowed him to ask for what he wanted. The polygamous life of King Solomon creates some difficulties. According to 1 Kings 11:3, the Bible says that Solomon had one thousand (1,000) women in his life. He had seven hundred (700) wives and three hundred concubines. This is a remarkable and extraordinary number of wives and concubines compared with other early polygamists in the Bible.

God was annoyed with King Solomon for having many wives and having many concubines who later turned his heart to pagan worship against God. As a result

²⁸ White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 668.

²⁹ Ellen G. White, "The Work of a Peace-Maker," *The signs of the Times*, October 26, 1888.

³⁰ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1945), 4:86.

of Solomon's polygamous life, his wives turned their hearts against God and split his kingdom into two. 1 Kings 11:9 says that God was annoyed with Solomon because he turned his heart against his Creator as a result of forbidden unions with pagan women (Exod 34:11-16; Deut 7:1-4).

More so, the Scripture asserts that Solomon grew old, his wives twisted his heart against God, and he followed other gods and failed to fully devote his life to God Almighty (1 Kgs 11:4). King Solomon's heart was not fully devoted to God anymore and began to tailspin into the deep hole of disobedience. Due to the polygamous life of King Solomon and following other gods, the Almighty God rose an adversary against him and the children of Israel could not regain the glory they enjoyed during the reign of David his father.

Moreover, it is not possible to quantify the tragedy caused by practising polygamy and marrying foreign wives by King Solomon. The calamities that came upon the Israelites because of Solomon's family and the children of Israel show that God did not permit polygamous marriage.

The Polygamy of Rehoboam (2 Chr 11:18-23)

Rehoboam was a king who had eighteen (18) wives and sixty concubines (1 Chr 11:21) and they bore him twenty-eight (28) sons and sixty daughters. The effects of the polygamous practice of King Solomon reflected on his son Rehoboam which resulted in idolatry, presumably his negligence of the commandments of God. King Rehoboam's wickedness and his foolishness diminished his kingdom to a darkness of its former.

Also, the two generations of David's polygamous tree had grown up into a crooked with an acidic fruit. Rehoboam maintained the polygamous marriage practice of his father along with family crisis and tragedy (1 Chr 11:21).

The Polygamy of Abijah (2 Chr 13:21)

The Bible made it clear that Abijah increased mightily and married fourteen (14) wives and had twenty-two (22) sons and sixteen (16) daughters (1 Chr 13:21). Paradoxically, Mann records Abijah whose polygamous practice brought good effects on the household.³¹ When examining Abijah's life, the comment of Mann was a strange one although the effects of the fourteen wives (14) were not mentioned in the Bible.

In addition, Abijah reigned for three years altogether, he must have had most of his wives and children before his ascension to the throne (2 Chr 11:21-23). Apart from a single event in which Abijah performed righteously as a king, he has made nothing praiseworthy. He is barely a responsible model for polygamists.

The Polygamy of Jehoram (2 Chr 21:14)

Jehoram was a king and the eldest son to King Jehoshaphat who succeeded his father but did not trust God like his father. His insecurity appears to become great that he murdered his six brothers and other officials who might have challenged his rule. Jehoram adopted Baal worship that his father-in-law introduced. The Bible says that Jehoram married many wives and had many sons (2 Chr 21:14). Mann states that indistinguishable reference in the letter of Elijah and the effect of his polygamy she leaves blank.³²

Furthermore, Jehoram married Athaliah the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (2 Kgs 11:1). Under Athaliah's influence, Jehoram was introduced to Baal worship

³¹ Mann, "Toward a Biblical Understanding of Polygamy," 16.

³² Ibid.

which contributed to his spiritual downfall.³³ Looking at the history of the kings in Judah, King Jerobaom was one of the wicked and evil kings in the land.

The Polygamy of Joash (2 Chr 24:3)

Many of the great figures in the history of Israelites had many wives including Joash who was the youngest king in Judah. Polygamous life of Joash can be found in the book of 2 Chronicles 24:2, 3. The Bible says the Joah took two wives for himself and had many sons and daughters. We can decode that polygamy was really one of those borderline practices among the kings in Judah.

It can be seen that among the patriarchs, polygamy was tolerated and regulated under the Mosaic Law. Philip Turkey posits that the possession of two wives for king Joah seems from this passage to have been an arrangement that was proper in the sight of God.³⁴ Polygamy is not easily condemned as the neither is it praised in the Bible. On the other hand, someone may think that for a righteous high priest to be given to wives might means that this was a good practice. Mann enumerates the effect of polygamous marriage positive for the case of King Joah³⁵ but his later life was surely not endorsed for righteous practice.

The Polygamy of Ahab (2 Kgs 10:1)

According to the book of 1 Kings 20:3-7, in the Northern kingdom, only the polygamous practice of Ahab was recorded. The genealogical records of Chronicles also mention several polygamists. For Ahab to have seventy (70) sons means that he

³³ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *A History of Israel from the Bronze Age through the Jewish Wars* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 335.

³⁴ Turley, "The Status of Polygamy in the Old Testament," 25.

³⁵ Mann, "Toward a Biblical Understanding of Polygamy," 16.

has many wives. It should not be surprising that a wicked king who sold himself to work wickedness (1 Kgs 21:25) was a polygamist.

Also, despite that wickedness and polygamous marriage was associated with King Ahab, it worth knowing that the negative polygamous marriage was not mentioned.

The Polygamy of Jehoiachin (2 Kgs 24:15)

The Bible states the status of Jehoiachin that he married more than one wife. When Jehoiachin was eighteen (18) years old, he began to reign as a king. He reigned for only three (3) months. Jehoiachin did was evil on throne to the extent that Jeremiah prophesied that none of his offspring will ever occupy the throne again (Jer 22:30).

Although, one can categorically say that the Bible did not directly condemn polygamous marriage in the OT but it must be understood that it did not reflect the original plan of God for marriage. The fact that there are many examples of polygamous marriage in the OT does not mean that God approve or permitted polygamy as a model of marriage.

Polygamy in the Intertestamental Period

There is no doubt that polygamous marriage prevailed during the intertestamental period which was associated with the fact that polygamy was culturally and socially acceptable to people. The practice of polygamy began to be condemned and rejected during this period³⁶ but many people were still practicing it to the time of New Testament. The Dead Sea Scrolls document reveals that view sects

³⁶ David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 59-62.

within Judaism prohibits the practice of polygamy before the time of Jesus Christ and thereafter.

However, the practice of polygamous marriage was a common way of life in the Jewish society during the intertestamental period. The king Herod who reigned before the birth of Jesus Christ married ten (10) time which the Bible recorded eight (8) of his wives.³⁷ Josephus does inform that it was a practice continued within royal families in Palestine.³⁸

More so, among the Jewish and many traditional societies, polygamous marriage was lawful form of marriage. People of this period see polygamy as form of marriage because of their experiences in the Old Testament and they don't see polygamy as adultery. With Jewish encountered with God, God never once condemned polygamous practice but slowly changed people and direction to monogamy as a real form of marriage.³⁹

On the other hand, polygamous marriage was not practiced among Greek or Roman societies of that time. Hillman states out that though there were numerous outlines of polygamous marriage, monogamy still predominantly prevailed at that time.⁴⁰ In the Roman world outside Palestine, although there was adultery but polygamous marriage was illegal. Among the Jews, Polygamy was not acceptable.

³⁷ Tal Ilan, "'Herodian Women.'" Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women," *Jewish Women's Archive*, last modified 2009, accessed December 13, 2023, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/herodian-women>.

³⁸ Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston, 4 vols. (New York: Oakley Mason, 1860).

³⁹ Hillman, "The Polygamy Debate: A Progress Report," 140.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

Polygamy in the New Testament Teaching

All through the NT Bible, complete silence was observed on the issue of polygamous marriage or polygamists. This has been read widely that some denominations condemned polygamous marriage while some are of the opinion that only the church leaders should not be polygamists. There are some extra-biblical historical records that reveals that some Jewish practiced polygamy as a form of marriage before the birth of Jesus Christ.⁴¹ Many OT examples regarding polygamous marriage have been observed and the reason why people practice polygamy as a structure of marriage has been mentioned but not totally expanded. There is need for more insight for the reason why people are practicing polygamy in the New Testament. Karl Barth emphasizes that looking at the principle of marriage in the New Testament, polygamous marriage seems to have been suddenly disappeared from view.⁴²

In view of the nonappearance of direct allusion to polygamous marriage in the NT, Jeremias still asserts that King Herod had ten (10) wives and many concubines. Dunran states that the behavior of Herodian family that polygamy which survived as a theoretical part of the traditional customary laws was a privilege reserved by rulers.⁴³ Henri concludes that both polygamous and monogamy marriages were practiced during the time of Jesus Christ but monogamy predominated polygamy.⁴⁴ The New

⁴¹ Joachim Jeremias, F. H. Cave, and C. H. Cave, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1969), 90.

⁴² Karl Barth, *On Marriage*, Social Ethics Series (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1968), 22.

⁴³ Berett J. Dunran, *Jerm's Audience: The Social and Psychological Environment in Which He Worked* (New York, NY: Seabury, 1973).

⁴⁴ Henri Daniel-Rops, *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (New York, NY: Hawthorns Books, 1964).

Testament gives a clear picture and confirms that monogamy is the acceptance model of marriage and not polygamy.

Polygamy in Yorubaland

Yoruba people are group who occupies the Western parts of Nigeria. They mostly live in Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo States (formerly known as Western State); and Lagos, and Kwara. The culture of a man marrying multiple wives is both traditionally and modernly acceptable among Yoruba people.⁴⁵ There are so many reasons why people are practicing polygamous marriage such are: inability for the wife to bear children, unable to bear male child, health challenges, the need to have more women to help in agricultural works, to fulfill sex desire and to maintain status or prestige in the society.

Moreover, polygamous marriage is widely practiced among Yoruba people that men can marry as many and possible without any limitation. A highly proportion of the Yoruba women are into polygynous marriage and most of those who are into monogamous marriage are potential wives of polygynists. As a result of this, many try to have many children that they can bear.⁴⁶

However, among the Yoruba in South West Nigeria, polygyny is not a new phenomenon. The Yoruba Muslim men practice polygyny and they can marry at least four (4) women at a time.⁴⁷ Among Yoruba in South Western Nigeria, men marry

⁴⁵ Apejuwe Ebi, "Family Description," UGA Today, accessed June 21, 2023, http://africa.uga.edu/Yoruba/unit_03/cultureunit.html#:~:text=Polygamy%20is%20practiced%20among%20the,parts%20of%20the%20nuclear%20family.

⁴⁶ J. Ahmed, "Polygyny and Fertility Differentials among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria," *Journal of Biosocial Science* 18, no. 1 (1986): 63-73.

⁴⁷ Dauda Ashir Egbeolowo, "The Practice of Polygyny among Contemporary Yoruba Muslims in South-Western Nigeria: Its Implications for Societal Peace," *KIU Journal of Social Sciences* 6, no. 1 (2020): 231-241.

many women as long as their finances are capable of taking care of them. People in this part of the world believe that to marry many wives bring physical development and prestige in the society.

In some part of Yorubaland, the man's wealth, affluence, status, and popularity determines the number of wives he can marry and the number of children to bear. The society was influenced due to the teaching of Islamic religion that allows members to marry up to four (4) wives. Islamic scheme of polygyny without any difficulty fitted into the agrarian economy of Yoruba society. Akintoye states that the advent of colonialism resulted to introduction of western civilization to change the orientation of Yoruba people on the form of marriage. The civilization changed the economy of Yoruba people like those of other African countries.⁴⁸

Polygamy in Oyo State

In the modern Nigeria and especially the Western part recognizes polygamous marriage under customary and culture as form of marriage. Oyo State happens to be one of western part. Under Islamic customary marriage, no one can marry more than four wives simultaneously or successively. According to tradition, there is no limit to the number of wives that a man can marry.⁴⁹ Since 2002, the Northern Nigerian has made several attempts to implant Sharia Law in to the Southern part of Nigeria especially Oyo State.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Stephen Adebajji Akintoye, *A History of the Yorubas* (Dakar, Senegal: Amalion, 2010).

⁴⁹ Nonyelum Ossai, "Understanding Polygamy in Modern Nigeria," Skabash, last modified 2015, <https://www.skabash.com/polygamy-in-modern-nigeria/>.

⁵⁰ The Guardian Nigeria News, "Polygamy in Nigeria - Legality of Polygamy by State - Oyo State," last modified 2020, accessed May 9, 2023, <https://guardian.ng/news/unicef-urges-collective-effort-to-tackle-open-defecation/>.

The civil law permits only monogamy marriage but culturally polygamous marriage overrules the legal systems. While the implanting of Sharia was unsuccessful, numerous Sharia courts were set up in Oyo State to serve Muslim legal cases. Sharia has yet to be introduced to the entire state as the governing legal system.⁵¹

Traditionally, Monarchs are known by their power and authority to marry many wives even when they are on the throne. Some of the kings in Oyo State are mandated to marry more wives and inherit some to fulfill the authority of the throne. For example, the 45th Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Lamidi Adeyemi had eighteen (18) wives with unnumbered concubines when he was alive.⁵²

Conclusion

This chapter of the thesis concludes by recognizing that OT polygamy was surrounded by tradition, cultural and social practice. Polygamy has been seen as a permitted and accepted traditional custom that is against legal framework and although not outrightly prohibited, discouraged and showcased its negative consequences.

Also, considering the Bible concerning polygamous marriage, there is no clear condemnation or permission whether to marry many wives or not. Bernard Adeney emphasizes that there are no OT laws against polygamy and the NT not also explicitly forbade it except those who are leaders or who want to hold one office or the other in the church.⁵³

⁵¹ The Guardian Nigeria News, "Polygamy in Nigeria."

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Bernard T. Adeney, "Polygamy: How Many Wives in the Kingdom of God?" *Transformation* 12, no. 1 (March 1995): 2.

Furthermore, the whole New Testament except of Genesis chapter 2, explained by Jesus in the NT seems undecided on the issue of polygamous marriage. Polygamous marriage has absolute forbidding statements in the NT. The following Bible passages confirm that NT does not support polygamous marriage such as: (Matt 19, Mark 10 and 1 Cor 7:2). Paul says that “Nevertheless, to shun fornication, every man must have his own wife, and every woman to have her own husband.” (1 Cor 7:2). The above passage connotes singular statement, man to have one wife and the women should have one husband.

On the other hand, Paul in the book of 1 Timothy 3 emphasis that for anyone to become a church leader, there are list of qualification that must be followed. He taught that each church leader should have only one wife; he is prohibited from both polygamy and promiscuity. This research reveals that the patriarchs who were polygamists in the whole Bible, no one has positive outcome that can be recommended for those who desire to practice polygamy. There were powerful recommendations against polygamous marriage, but no prohibition from the Bible.

The focal point of this thesis is not on the member of the church who went and married the second wife but to allow the polygamists who desire to be baptism to join the church. The teachings and statements of Jesus Christ on the form of marriage are sufficient to validate that Christians are not permitted to marry more than one wife. Our attitudes towards a polygamist who was one, before accepting Jesus Christ for salvation should be different. They should be treated as candidates of the kingdom of God.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

This chapter of the research presents data generated for the project work. The primary and secondary data were gathered for this study work. In turn to collect the primary data, questionnaires were drawn and distributed to some selected baptized members of the church. The second source of primary data was interview. Face to face interview will be conducted with some pastors, Oyo Conference Director and some of the polygamists in Oyo Conference.

Also, charts, tables and short description of the questionnaire outcomes for each of the questions are drawn out which highlighted one of the key features of the research. Comments and more lights are shed on some of the research questions under each of the tables. Discussion on the questionnaire results and discussion on the interviews on grouping of subjects that is frequent among the contributors and answer in the study questions.

History of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria

The SDA Church in Nigeria did not surface from a religious vacuum. According to Alalade, the President European Division, L. R. Conradi travelled down to West Africa from Germany to conduct a Missionary Conference meeting in Freetown, Sierra Leone in December 1913, which involved both foreign and National

workers.¹ In the meeting, David Caldwell Babcock, an America missionary was appointed to pioneer the ministerial work in Nigeria.²

Furthermore, SDA Church in Nigeria commences with the entrance of David C. Babcock with his family alongside with R. P. Dauphin, a Ghanaian minister and S. Morgue, a Sierra Leonean minister.³ Alao asserts that there were many Christian Missions in Nigeria before the arrival of the Adventist Missionaries.⁴ According to David Bablola, on February 1914, they left Freetown by boat,⁵ arrived Lagos port of entry, the first capital city of Nigeria⁶ on 7th March, 1914. They moved from Lagos to Erunmu as a due to an invitation received from Chief of Ibadan.⁷

Thus, Erunmu a town located at about twelve miles East of Ibadan⁸ in Egbeda Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. Erunmu town became the pioneer for SDA Church in Nigeria. Babalola states that the missionary's instructor and one Chief Oyelese's son, Erunmu kingdom Bale, Chief Samuel Oyeniya was very supportive and accommodating to the reason of the gospel at Erunmu. He understood Yoruba

¹ Alalade, *Limiting Factor to the Success of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa*, 46.

² Alalade, *Limiting Factor to the Success of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa*, 46.

³ David O. Babalola, *Sweet Memory of Our Pioneers* (Lagos, Nigeria: Emaphine Reprographics, 2010), 28.

⁴ Dayo Alao, *90 Years of Adventist in Nigeria 1914-2014: A Compendium* (Lagos, Nigeria: Communication and PARL Department of the Seventh-day Adventists Church in Nigeria, 2004), 24.

⁵ Babalola, *Sweet Memory of Our Pioneers*, 30.

⁶ Alalade, *Limiting Factor to the Success of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa*, 46.

⁷ Babalola, *Sweet Memory of Our Pioneers*, 28.

⁸ Alalade, *Limiting Factor to the Success of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa*, 46.

language, English and Hausa languages very well which help to interpret fluently for David C. Babcock and his team.⁹

However, in the year 1915, when Erunmu station was well established, David C. Babcock was persuaded to move to another station and leave and handover Erunmu to R. P. Dauphin and S. Morgue. David Babcock left for Ilorin which is the capital of Kwara State.¹⁰ Due to the fact that the highest populations of the people living in Ilorin are predominantly Muslim, he progressed to Sao. This is a village which is eleven (11) kilometer Northwest of Ilorin.¹¹ The after port of call was a village in Ekiti State called Ipoti Ekiti, an Anglican Church region and as a result of the impact of Adventist messages; almost all the former members of Anglican Church accepted the new faith from SDA Church.¹²

Furthermore, in 1930, SDA Church in Nigeria was formally organized as Nigeira Union Mission (NUM) while William McClements became the first President of the Mission. The headquarters of the Union Mission was in Ibadan, Oyo State capital.¹³ In 1946, NUM was reduced to the status of one mission, and it was made part of West African Union Mission (WAUM)¹⁴ with the increase in Nigeria Union Mission (NUM) membership, the administrator of WAUM could not manage NUM

⁹ David O. Babalola, *On Becoming a Conference: The Story of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Yoruba 1914-2002* (Ibadan, Nigeria: OSB Design, 2002), 27.

¹⁰ Babalola, *On Becoming a Conference*, 27.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 38.

¹³ Alao, *90 Years of Adventist in Nigeria 1914-2014*, 37.

¹⁴ Ibid.

from Ghana. Thus, they decided to revert the action of 1943 by creating the new NUM in 1972.¹⁵

In addition, in 1972, Nigeria Union Mission was inaugurated¹⁶ with her headquarters in Maryland, Ikeja, Lagos State not in Ibadan as it was before. In 1973, Caleb O. Adeogun became the first indigenous President of SDA Church in Nigeria.¹⁷ Also, in October 10, 2004, the General Conference of SDA Church Executive Committee took an action to re-organize NUM into two (2) Mission Fields. Executive Committee took an action to re-organize the Nigeria Union Mission into two mission fields. The Union comprises of Eastern Nigeria Union Mission (ENCM) with her Headquarters in Aba, Abia State, and North-Western Nigeria Union Mission (NWNUM) with her Headquarters at Maryland Lagos.

Again, at the third constituency session of NWNUM held at Akure, Ondo State on September 5-8, the NWNUM was re-organized into two (2) Union Conference that is, Northern Nigeria Union Conference (NNUC) with headquarters at Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja and Western Nigeria Union Conference (WNUC), headquarters at Maryland Lagos.¹⁸ WNUC is comprised of the following Conferences, Mission and Region: Delta, Edo, Ekiti, Kwara, Lagos Atlantic, Lagos Mainland, Ogun, Osun, Oyo Conferences, Ondo Mission and Kogi Region¹⁹

¹⁵ Alao, *90 Years of Adventist in Nigeria 1914-2014*, 37.

¹⁶ David T. Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History in West Africa (1888-1988): A Mustard Seed* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Lasob, 2001), 21-23.

¹⁷ Babalola, *On Becoming a Conference: The Story of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Yoruba 1914-2002*, 38.

¹⁸ Western Nigeria Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Report of the 3rd Constituency Session and the Inaugural Session of the Western Nigeria Union Conference* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Western Nigeria Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2013), 12.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Short History of Oyo Conference

The history of SDA Church Oyo Conference would not be completed without mentioning defunds West Nigeria Conference (WNC). As reveals previously, 1914 marked the beginning of SDA Church in Nigeria which also serves as the commencement of the presence of Adventist message in Oyo Conference. David C. Babcock arrive Ibadan which is the state capital of Oyo State and moved to Erunmu town in Egbeda Local Government, Oyo State. In those days, it was a mark of reputation in the society for a village chief to accommodation white missionaries in his province. The above was the reason why Chief Oyelese invited David C. Babcock to come and stay in his house. The first project he did was that he erected a church building and dug a well at th church premises in Erunmu called Babcock well which is still existing till today.²⁰ This well serves as a means of supplying portable water for the entire community and the church worker in the whole Erunmu town.

Also, Jacob Alao who was hailed from Inisa in Osun State became one of the interpreters for the missionaries. Agboola confirms that Alao was spared to David Babcock by a Baptist Missionary Stationed in Ibadan.²¹ At Erunmu, many chiefs and few adult embraced Adventist faith and were baptized into the church. In a situation where David Babcock could not reach the adults, he established a village school and started impacting knowledge to children to catch them young.²² The primary intend of the missionaries was to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the children and use them as medium to reach the hearts of their parents.

²⁰ Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History in West Africa (1888-1988)*, 23.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

However, in the year 1930, the west Nigeria Mission was formally organized with William McClements as the first director.²³ And it became the West Nigeria Mission in 1944.²⁴ The status of the church in West Nigeria Mission (WNM) changed to West Nigeria Conference (WNC) in June 1989²⁵ with D. O. Babalola as the last mission president and the first conference president.²⁶ At the constituency meeting held in Ibadan, Joseph A. Ola was elected to take over from David Babalola and he led the conference till 1995.

More so, the rapid growth of WNC resulted in a major reorganization in 1998²⁷ under the leadership Onaolapo Ajibade.²⁸ Also, WNC territory covered eight (8) out of the thirty-six State in Negeria. The states under WNC were Ekiti, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Ogun and Oyo states.²⁹ Alao states that West Nigeria Conference was reorganized at a mini constituency meeting held on June, 29, 1997 at Oke bola, Ibadan.³⁰ Six months later, another step was taken at the Executive Committee Meeting of WNC held on January, 14, 1998 in which South West Nigeria Administration Unit was formally put in place.³¹

²³ Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History in West Africa (1888-1988)*, 23.

²⁴ Cornelius A. Ajani, "Oyo Conference," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventist Church*, last modified 2020, accessed May 8, 2023, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=IC2L>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Alalade, *Limiting Factor to the Success of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa*, 52.

²⁷ Babalola, *Sweet Memory of Our Pioneers*, 241.

²⁸ Alalade, *Limiting Factor to the Success of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa*, 53.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Alao, *90 Years of Adventist in Nigeria 1914-2014*, 105.

³¹ Ibid.

Furthermore, in 2012, under the leadership of Ezekiel Adeyemi Oyinloye as the president, WNC was re-organized into five (5) fields namely: Kwara, Lagos Atlantic, Osun, Oyo Conferences, and Kogi Region.³² Oyo Conference from its inauguration has ten (10) Districts which has increase to thirteen (13) districts to the glory of God. The thirteen Districts under Oyo Conference are: Airport, Ayede, Basorun, Erunmu, Ibarapa, Irefin, Iwo Road, Koloko, Oke Bola, Oke Ogun, Ososami, Owobaale and Oyo Districts.³³ According to Seventh-day Adventist Yearbooks, the total membership for Oyo Conference as of 10th June, 2022 stood at 3,928 with 32 organized churches.³⁴

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section explains the data gathered through the questionnaire. Three hundred and seventy (370) copies of the questionnaire were administered to conference officers, directors, district pastors, church pastors, elders, and baptized members of the SDA Church within Ibadan Metropolis. The questionnaires were distributed, completed, and returned to the researcher. The entire process of distribution, completion, and submission took place between March and June 2023.

Section A: Demographic Information

This section is designed to get the gender, educational status, occupation, age and marital status of the respondents. Table 1 reveals that 207 respondents, representing 56%, were male, while 163 respondents, representing 44%, were female.

³² Oyo Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Inaugural Program: Oyo Conference First Constituency Session and Inauguration* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Oyo Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2023), 5.

³³ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁴ Ajani, "Oyo Conference."

This shows that both male and female members of the Oyo Conference of the SDA Church responded to the questionnaires. There were more male respondents than female respondents.

Table 1. Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	207	56
Female	163	44
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 2 reveals that there are 18 respondents aged between 10 and 20 years, representing 5%. Those aged 21 to 30 years comprise 36 respondents, accounting for 10%. Additionally, 60 respondents, or 16%, are aged 31 to 40 years. There are 106 respondents aged 41 to 50 years, representing 29%. The 51 to 60 age group includes 120 respondents, making up 32%, while those aged 61 years and above include 30 respondents, which account for 8%. The age distribution of the members indicates that most individuals in the Oyo Conference of the SDA Church are adults capable of sharing their views on their attitude toward polygamy in the church.

Table 2. Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
10–20	18	5
21–30	36	10
31–40	60	16
41–50	106	29
51–60	120	32
61 and above	30	8
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 3 reveals the marital status of the members in Oyo Conference of SDA Church. This show that majority of the respondents 307 are married which are 83%, 52 respondents which are 15% declared that they are singles, 3 respondents which are 0.8% are legally divorced, while none is separated. This data analysis shows that most of the respondents were mostly married men and women who know what marriage is all about.

Table 3. Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	307	83
Single	52	14
Legal Divorced	3	0.8
Widow/Widower	8	2.2
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 4 shows the educational qualifications of the members in the Oyo Conference of the SDA Church. A total of 119 respondents, representing 32%, have at least a Secondary School Certificate. There are 215 respondents, or 58%, who are graduates. Thirty-two respondents, making up 9%, hold a Master's degree, while 4 respondents, or 1%, have a PhD. This reveals a high standard of literacy in the Oyo Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Table 4. Educational Background of Respondents

Education Background	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary School	119	32
Graduate	215	58
Master's degree	32	9
PhD	4	1
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 5 reveals the occupations of the members of the Oyo Conference of the SDA Church. According to the responses, 175 respondents, representing 47%, indicated that they are civil servants. Seventy-four respondents, or 20%, are businessmen and women. Eighteen respondents, or 5%, are farmers; 36 respondents, or 10%, are students; 37 respondents, or 10%, are artisans, while 30 respondents, or 8%, are retirees. This indicates that the majority of the members are working-class people.

Table 5. Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Civil Servant	175	47
Businessmen/Women	74	20
Farming	18	5
Student	36	10
Artisan	37	10
Retiree	30	8
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 6 reveals the members positions of the respondents in the church. It is indicated that 60 of the respondents which are 16% are Elders; 48 of the respondents which are 13% are Deacons, 52 of the respondents which are 14% are Deaconess, 18 of the respondents which are 5% are AMO members, 64 of the respondents which are 17% are AWM members, 80 of the respondents which are 22% are Youth members, 15 of the respondents which are 4% are Church Clerks while 33 of the respondents which are 9% are others. This indicates that many of the members belong to one position or the other in God's church.

Table 6. Membership Status of Respondents

Membership Status	Frequency	Percentage
Elder	60	16
Deacon	48	13
Deaconess	52	14
AMO	18	5
AWM	64	17
Youth	80	22
Clerk	15	4
Other	33	9
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 7 reveals the respondents' length of membership in the church. The table indicates that 36 respondents, representing 10%, have been in the church for 5 to 10 years. Twenty-seven respondents, or 7%, have been members for 11 to 15 years, and 82 respondents, or 22%, have been members for 16 to 20 years. Meanwhile, 225 respondents, or 61%, have been members for 21 to 30 years. This analysis suggests that a significant number of respondents have been long-standing members of the church and are likely to be well-acquainted with its standards and principles due to the duration of their membership

Table 7. Respondents' Length of Membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Length of Membership	Frequency	Percentage
5–10 years	36	10
11–15 years	27	7
16–20 years	82	22
21–30 years	225	61
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Section B: The Perception and Attitude towards Polygamy

Table 8 reveals the reasons why members of the Oyo Conference of the SDA Church married more than one wife. The results indicate that 125 respondents, representing 34%, showed that members married multiple wives due to family demands and traditions. Additionally, 114 respondents, or 31%, indicated that members married more wives because their first wives could not bear children or could not bear male children to preserve the family name.

Furthermore, 55 respondents, or 15%, stated that members married more wives to have additional manpower for working on their lands and performing household chores. On the other hand, 28 respondents, or 8%, indicated that members who have more than one wife did so to avoid divorcing the first wife due to cultural and religious rules and regulations. Finally, 48 respondents, or 13%, showed that members married more wives to have more sexual partners. Therefore, it could be said that many people who married more than one wife had specific reasons for doing so.

Table 8. Why Do Some People Have More than One Wife?

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
a. Family demands and traditions	125	34
b. The first wife cannot have children or does not have male children	114	31
c. To have people work the land and do household chores	55	15
d. Cannot divorce the first wife due to religious and cultural rules	28	8
e. They want to have many sexual partners	48	13
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 9 reveals the major reasons why many people believe that one should have only one wife. According to the analysis, 232 respondents, representing 63%, indicated that God created Eve for Adam, establishing the principle of one woman for one man from the beginning. Additionally, 24 respondents, or 6%, stated that the practice of polygamy violates women's rights in society. Moreover, 86 respondents, or 23%, pointed out that the Bible condemns polygamy. Lastly, 28 respondents, or 8%, expressed that they have no reason to support polygamy. This suggests that the majority of respondents believe that, according to creation, God intended for one man to be with one woman.

Table 9. Main Reason Why People Should Not Have More Than One Wife

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
a. Polygamous is against the laws of the country	0	0
b. Polygamy is adultery	0	0
c. God created one man for one man	232	63
d. Polygamy violates women's rights	24	6
e. The Bible condemns polygamy	86	23
f. No reason	28	8
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 10 reveals what the Bible says about polygamy. The results indicate that 170 respondents, representing 46%, believe that the Bible discourages the practice of polygamy. Additionally, 98 respondents, or 26%, indicated that the Bible neither condemns nor approves of polygamous marriage. Meanwhile, 44 respondents, or 12%, disclosed that they are unsure of what the Bible says about polygamy. This suggests that the majority of respondents believe the Bible condemns polygamy, while some believe the Bible neither condemns nor encourages the practice.

Table 10. What Does the Bible Say about Polygamy?

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
a. The Bible Condemns polygamy	170	46
b. The Bible discourages polygamy	58	16
c. The Bible neither Condemns nor Approves Polygamy	98	26
d. The Bible Allows Polygamy	0	0
e. The Bible Approves Polygamy	0	0
f. I am not sure	44	12
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 11 reveals the resolutions for a man who has more than one wife. The results indicate that 106 respondents, representing 29%, believe that the first wife, regardless of the circumstances, should be retained. Additionally, 184 respondents, or 50%, indicated that the legally married wife should be retained. Meanwhile, 20 respondents, or 5%, suggested that the wife with the youngest children should be retained. Furthermore, 24 respondents, or 6%, signified that the wife whom the man loves most should be retained, and 36 respondents, or 10%, believe that the wife who needs the most support should be retained. This reveals that most respondents are of the opinion that the first wife is legally married and should be retained.

Table 11. If the Man Keeps Only One of the Wives, Which One Should It Be?

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
a. The First Wife under all Circumstances	106	29
b. The Wife to Whom he is Legally Married	184	50
c. The Wife with the Youngest Children	0	0
d. The Youngest Wife	20	5
e. The Wife Whom the Man Loves the Most	24	6
f. The Wife Whom Most Needs Financial Support	36	10
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 12 reveals whether the former husband should cater to his divorced wives. The results indicate that 52 respondents, representing 14%, believe that a separated wife should be given a separate house. Additionally, 163 respondents, or 44%, indicated that a separated wife should receive provision and that the former husband should be responsible for the children’s education, clothing, and feeding. Furthermore, 84 respondents, or 23%, believe that a separated wife should be provided with food and clothing. Meanwhile, 71 respondents, or 19%, stated that the separated wives are no longer the former husband's responsibility. This suggests that most respondents think that the ex-husband should provide for the ex-wife, including covering the children’s education, clothing, and food.

Table 12. Should the Ex-husband Take Care of the Separated Wives?

Opinion	Respondent	Percentage
a. Give her a Separate House	52	14
b. Provide Only for the Children’s Education, Clothing and Food	163	44
c. Sexual Satisfy those who are Unable to Remarry	0	0
d. Provide her with Food and Clothing	84	23
e. She is No Longer his Responsibility	71	19
f. Other, Specify	0	0
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Section C: Attitudes towards Polygamy

Table 13 above reveals the members’ attitudes towards maybe the polygamous converts should be baptized or not. The result shows that 330 of the respondents which are 89% indicated that the polygamous should be baptized while 40 of the respondents which are 11% showed that the polygamous should not be baptized. This shows that many of the members in Oyo Conference of SDA Church want the polygamous converts to be baptized into the church.

Table 13. Should Polygamous Converts Be Baptized?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	330	89
No	40	11
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 14 reveals what should happen to a polygamist who desires to be baptized. The results indicate that 78 respondents, representing 21%, believe that the man should choose one of his wives and drive away all the others. Additionally, 104 respondents, or 28%, indicated that a polygamist should drive away all his wives and stay with the first wife. Furthermore, 32 respondents, or 9%, suggested that the man must drive away all his wives and marry a new woman. Meanwhile, 156 respondents, or 42%, believe that a polygamist should not drive away any of his wives. This suggests that the majority of respondents think the man should not drive away any of his wives, while some believe he should send away all but the first wife, and others think he should choose the best wife and remove the rest.

Table 14. What Should Happen to the Wives of a Polygamous Man Who Wishes to Be Baptized?

Opinion	Respondent	Percentage
a. The Man must Choose One and Send away all the Others	78	21
b. The Man must Send All away and Stay with the First Wife	104	28
c. The Man must Send All away and Marry another Woman	32	9
d. The Man must not Send away any of his Wives	156	42
e. Other, Describe Briefly:	0	0
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 15 reveals whether polygamists should partake in the foot washing and Holy Communion services. The results show that 274 respondents, representing 74%, believe that polygamists should be allowed to partake in these services, while 96

respondents, or 26%, indicated that polygamists should not partake in the foot washing and Holy Communion services. This suggests that the majority of respondents believe that polygamous converts should be permitted to participate in the foot washing and Holy Communion services in the Oyo Conference of the SDA Church.

Table 15. Should the Polygamous Partake in the Foot Washing and Holy Communion Services?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	274	74
No	96	26
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 16 reveals whether the women and children of a polygamist should be baptized even if the husband is not. The results show that 310 respondents, representing 81%, believe that the women and children of a polygamist should be baptized, but the husband should not. Conversely, 69 respondents, or 19%, believe that neither the women nor the children of a polygamist should be baptized, including the husband. This implies that the majority of respondents support the idea of baptizing the women and children of a polygamist, even if the husband is not baptized.

Table 16. Should Women and the Children of a Polygamous Be Baptized, but Not the Husband?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	301	81
No	69	19
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 17 reveals whether the children of a polygamist should be baptized separately from the women and the husband. The results show that 312 respondents, representing 84%, believe that the children of a polygamist should be baptized, apart from the women and the husband. In contrast, 58 respondents, or 16%, believe that neither the children, women, nor the husband should be baptized. This implies that the majority of respondents support the idea of baptizing the children of a polygamist and allowing them to be part of the church in regular standing.

Table 17. Can the Children of the Polygamist Be Baptized, apart from the Women and the Husband?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	312	84
No	58	16
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 18 reveals whether a polygamist who keeps his first wife after separating from the other wives should be baptized. The results show that 245 respondents, representing 66%, believe that a polygamist who has divorced his other wives but retained the first one should be baptized, while 125 respondents, or 34%, indicated that such a polygamist should not be baptized. Therefore, this suggests that a polygamist husband must divorce all his wives except the first one before he can be baptized.

Table 18. Should the Husband Be Baptized, if He Retains His First Wife while Divorcing the Others?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	245	66
No	125	34
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 19 reveals whether a husband who divorces his wives but retains his most preferred wife should be baptized. The results show that 98 respondents, representing 26%, believe that such a husband should be baptized, while 272 respondents, or 74%, believe that he should not be baptized. This implies that a polygamist who divorces his other wives but retains his preferred wife should not be baptized.

Table 19. Can the Husband Be Baptized, if He Divorces All but Chooses the Most Preferred Wife?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	98	26
No	272	74
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 20 reveals that 300 respondents, representing 81%, believe that members should have positive attitudes towards polygamous converts and accept them into the church. Members should view polygamous converts as God's creations and part of those for whom Jesus died on the cross, recognizing that they are candidates for God's kingdom. Members are encouraged to help them experience God's power to build up their faith and support their spiritual growth. Members should avoid being judgmental and allow them to be baptized and become full-fledged members, even though they may not occupy any position in the church.

Furthermore, 312 respondents, or 84%, state that marriage does not determine human salvation. Salvation is based on our relationship with the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Polygamy should not threaten Christian faith; polygamous individuals should be incorporated into church programs and not neglected. Polygamous converts should not be condemned; instead, they should be accepted just as Jesus Christ

accepted us and forgave our sins. There should be no discrimination among members due to polygamous practices. Genuine love should exist regardless of marital status, and members should allow the Holy Spirit to minister to everyone, as no portion of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation condemns polygamous marriage.

Table 20. Please, Suggest Way(S) You Know by which Members Can Have Positive Attitudes towards Polygamous Converts

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	300	81
No	70	19
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 21 reveals that 279 respondents, representing 75%, assert that polygamous converts should be accepted in the church but should not be given any position as church officers. It also indicates that 250 respondents, or 67.5%, believe that as long as the family is peaceful, exhibits Christ-like behavior, and does not bring shame to the church, they should be accepted, baptized, and allowed to partake in the Holy Communion service.

Table 21. Is there Any Need for the Church to Accept the Polygamous Converts into the Church?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	279	75
No	91	25
Total	370	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Interview Results and Analysis

Interview with Members

In the course of this research, ten participants shared their experiences regarding the perceptions and attitudes of members of the SDA Church towards polygamous converts in Oyo Conference, Nigeria. The interview comprised different sections, and the responses were categorized into six main categories.

Responses of some church pastors and members on the reason for polygamy. Pastor A states that the reasons for polygamy include childlessness and unfaithfulness. Elder B shares a similar view, suggesting that polygamy often results from men seeking a male child to preserve their family name and manage their properties after death. Mrs C adds that many people enter polygamous marriages due to dissatisfaction with their partner's behaviour, lack of commitment from the man, and issues such as indiscipline and adultery. Pastor D mentions that people may practice polygamy because their first wives are barren or due to family traditions or religious beliefs. He further explains that pressure from the husband's parents, particularly the mother, due to delays in childbearing can lead to polygamy. Elder B also notes that many people, especially farmers, turn to polygamy to have more workers for their farms. Pastor E believes that unresolved marital crises between husband and wife often lead to polygamy.

Responses on the baptism of polygamy converts. All participants agreed that polygamous converts should be baptized if they have genuinely converted and accepted Jesus as their Lord and personal Savior. Mrs C believes they should be baptized if they truly and genuinely accept Jesus as their Lord and personal Savior. Pastor E asserts that they should not be prevented from baptism because the Bible does not say so. Pastor D states that polygamous converts should be baptized as long

as they are willing to make restitution since their actions were committed in ignorance, a time when God overlooked such actions but now calls them to repentance. Mr F believes they should be baptized because they have not sinned.

Responses whether the wives and the children should be baptized or not.

Many of the contributors point out that men, their wives, and children should be baptized. Pastor D believes they should be baptized because the children were not involved in the decision to practice polygamy; they found themselves in the situation without fault and are just victims of circumstance. Mrs C asserts that they should all be baptized because Christ Jesus accepts us as we are.

Responses on whether a polygamist should participate in the ordinance of foot washing and Holy Communion. Pastor D believes they should partake after they have begun a new life in Christ and made restitution. Mrs C notes that only Jesus Christ knows the heart of everyone. Pastor E points out that Jesus Christ did not stop Judas Iscariot and Zacchaeus from eating with Him, and Paul did not send anyone away during the Holy Communion services conducted after Jesus Christ's ascension to heaven.

Responses on members' attitudes to polygamous converts. Elder B believes that members should not view them as outcasts. Mrs C feels they should not be given church offices, as doing so could serve as a deterrent to others from becoming involved in polygamy.

Responses on how to treat the polygamy converts. Elder B believes we need to treat them as part of the church and interact with them as members of God's family. We should not see them as outcasts but rather show them more love. Pastor E feels that if they are encouraged and adequately trained, they can be active in soul-winning by sharing their testimonies with non-believers based on their encounter with

Jesus Christ. Mrs C and Mr F agree that they should be treated with love, mercy, and kindness. We should explain what Jesus Christ wants from us and help them understand why marrying many wives is not acceptable. They need to be encouraged to make the best decisions concerning their situations, as nothing can be forced upon them—they must choose for themselves. Pastor D suggests they should be treated as fellow believers for whom Jesus Christ died and seen as fellow pilgrims on the spiritual journey to heaven, who, like everyone else, need daily grace to reach their destination.

Responses on the benefits of retaining polygamous converts in the church.

Pastor F believes we are increasing the number of candidates for heaven. Pastor E sees it as a way to recruit more workers for the church and enhance its financial strength for growth. Pastor D feels we are gaining souls for the kingdom of God.

Responses on educating members on polygamous convert. Elder B

suggests that the Church and District Pastors should organize seminar programs to educate members on their attitudes toward polygamous converts. Mr F emphasizes the need to educate members on how to retain polygamous converts in our churches and help them become candidates for heaven. Pastor D believes that the need for this education cannot be overemphasized. There appears to be a lack of education on this subject as things stand. Therefore, there is an urgent need to educate members, as many of them are our neighbours, colleagues, acquaintances, and friends. Pastor E recommends that pastors include such issues in their sermons and place more emphasis on them alongside other general studies.

Interview with the Polygamists

An interview was conducted to share the views of four polygamists who desired to become full-fledged members of the SDA Church after accepting the Gospel of Jesus Christ and were ready to be baptized.

Reasons for marrying more than one wife. Three out of the four polygamists interviewed provided reasons for marrying multiple wives, while the fourth did not have a specific reason for engaging in polygamous marriage. Mr G states, “I see polygamy as a way of increasing my family wealth, resources, and status, not as a result of cultural influence or following others.” Mr H declares, “I desire polygamous marriage because it boosts my family productivity, provides more labor, and maximizes my resources.” It is evident that economic factors have a significant influence on Mr H's marital life. Mr I explains that he was a Muslim before converting to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, where Islam accepts polygamy and allows a man to marry up to four wives, provided all wives are treated equally. His polygamous marriage was influenced by his religious background and beliefs. Mr I also testified, “My multiple marriages are a result of peer pressure, as my friends married many wives and it became competitive.” His practice of polygamy began due to peer pressure and competition with friends.

All participants indicated that they did not see anything wrong with polygamous marriage until they joined the Adventist Church and studied the Bible's principles on the subject. Mr J says, “I don't have a specific reason for marrying many wives; it was just that my father married many wives.” Mr G explains that his polygamy resulted from his first wife being unable to conceive and bear children because he desired a large family. His parents had many wives and numerous children. On the other hand, Mr H indicates that his desire for additional wives

stemmed from his first wife's inability to bear a male child. This shows that his inability to meet his desires led him to practice polygamy.

Condition for baptism. All participants desired to be baptized and have their names recorded in the church records, but they were denied baptism. They all testified that they were not asked to send away any of their wives before being baptized. Mr G states, "I understand from the church manual that those who have two or more wives are not allowed to be baptized, and anyone who wants to be baptized must have only one wife." Mr J indicates, "The church leaders are not concerned about our spiritual condition and were not ready to educate us on how to grow spiritually." The issue of polygamy has not received adequate attention in the Oyo Conference of the SDA Church.

Retaining and sending away other wives. The issue of which wife should be sent away, and which one should be retained is another significant decision that requires serious consideration. Mr H says, "I am not ready to send any of them away because I don't want my children to suffer." Mr G and Mr I indicate that it is not their plan to send anyone away, but they can decide to leave on their own. Additionally, they have built houses for each of their wives, and they no longer live together in the same compound. Mr H expresses concern, stating, "If I send my wives away, they may continue to commit adultery, and God will not be happy with that." He is worried about the consequences of the decision to send away his wives. Mr J declares, "If the church board says that the only criterion for me to be baptized is to send away the other wives and retain one, I am ready for that." It is difficult for him to make such a decision because he does not understand why he entered a polygamous marriage in the first place.

Partaking in the Holy Communion. All participants indicate that they have not been allowed to partake in the Holy Communion service due to their polygamous marriages. Mr H says, “I would love to partake in the Holy Communion service if I am allowed.” This shows that some of them would like to be part of the sacred service. Mr G declares, “When it comes to the Holy Communion service, the members of the church see us as second-class citizens in the church.” They are viewed as Christians with fewer rights and privileges in the house of God and are permanently on probation.

The attitude of church members towards polygamous converts. The approach of members towards polygamous converts is preventing this group from attaining Christian maturity. Mr G says, “We are considered less privileged in the church because we cannot contribute to lesson studies, hold any position in the church, or be part of the decision-making body of the church.” The church policy makes it clear that a polygamist cannot hold any office in the church and cannot teach the congregation. Mr J also points out, “My children always look inferior to other children because their father is not an elder, and they are denied many opportunities in the church.” This attitude is causing the Christian church to lose more converts than it gains.

Discussion of Findings

Polygamy is neither explicitly approved nor forbidden in the Scriptures. The Bible does not openly condemn having multiple wives, though it was not God's original plan and is not considered the ideal form of marriage. There is a permissive silence about polygamy in the Scriptures. While the Bible presents monogamous marriage as the ideal form in both the Old and New Testaments, those who married more than one wife were not condemned or considered sinners.

In the Old Testament, prominent men used by God, such as Abraham, Jacob, Gideon, Elkanah, David, Solomon, and others, practised polygamy, and God did not abandon them. Abraham, the father of faith, had more than one wife and was mightily used by God. Elkanah was a polygamist, and it was one of his wives, Hannah, who was the mother of Samuel, the famous prophet. David, described as “a man after God's own heart,” also had many wives, and God was not displeased with him. Moreover, King Solomon, known for his extensive polygamy, had 700 wives and 300 concubines. God did not condemn him; rather, Solomon was used by God to build a temple for His glory.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ condemns adultery, homosexuality, and divorce, but polygamy is not explicitly forbidden. I support Jesus Christ's teaching on divorce, which applies equally to both monogamous and polygamous marriages. Additionally, the Bible emphasizes that monogamy is a qualification for spiritual leaders of the church. Although the Scriptures contain laws against incest, fornication, adultery, prostitution, and various forms of immorality, there is no specific prohibition against men having more than one wife. Based on this thesis, God's attitude toward polygamy was not one of disapproval.

Furthermore, the Gospel Commission from Jesus Christ instructs us to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19). This commission does not exclude polygamists who are yet to be converted in the church. Similarly, when the Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip, “Here is water; what is to prevent me from being baptized?” (Acts 8:36), Philip did not inquire whether the eunuch was a polygamist. The eunuch was baptized based on his faith alone.

Likewise, pastors should show love, compassion, and concern for polygamous converts without feeling compelled to immediately address their marital status. Instead, they should first present the gospel of the kingdom, emphasizing liberty, contentment, and the power of forgiveness.

Conclusion

This research aimed to examine the perceptions and attitudes of church members towards polygamous converts in the SDA Church, Oyo Conference, through questionnaires and interviews with members within the conference. The questionnaires were administered in writing, and all information collected was reliable and valuable for the research. The respondents were selected based on their religious background, age, academic qualifications, SDA membership, and their responses confirmed their perceptions and attitudes towards polygamous converts in the SDA Church in Oyo Conference.

Additionally, the analysis of both written and oral interviews was instrumental in this research, facilitating a clearer understanding of people's views on the topic. Church members, pastors, conference administrators, and polygamous individuals within the SDA Church Oyo Conference participated in the interviews, providing useful information that contributed to the success of this research.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This section of the thesis summarizes the research on the perceptions and attitudes of church members towards polygamous converts in the SDA Church, Oyo Conference, Nigeria. The research began with a statement of the problem, including the definition of terms and the historical background of the issue. The study emphasizes and demonstrates the effects and reasons leading to polygamous practices across many cultures for centuries; it has been predominantly an African matter.

Chapter two of the research reviews the literature on polygamy and outlines the factors leading to polygamous marriages among Africans. Some of these reasons are more lawful than others, from civilizing, social, traditional, and anthropological viewpoints. Chapter three examines biblical figures involved in polygamous marriages in both the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT). The biblical perspectives were explored through records of polygamist patriarchs, even though the Bible does not endorse the practice.

Chapter four analyzes the questionnaires and interviews regarding the perceptions and attitudes of members in the Oyo Conference towards polygamous converts. Additionally, polygamous marriage is one of the obstacles for individuals with multiple wives seeking baptism into the SDA Church. Many believe that before a polygamous convert can be baptized, they must divorce the other wives and choose

only one. Readers need to understand the difference between a member who became a polygamist and new converts coming to Jesus as polygamists.

Conclusion

Various factors lead to polygamy, and some societies practising polygamy have justifiable reasons. The Bible does not consider polygamous marriage as adultery; rather, adultery is defined as a man having sexual intercourse with another woman, or a woman having extramarital relations with another man. The Bible neither explicitly condemns nor approves of polygamous marriage. It emphasizes that polygamous converts should not be denied baptism, as they are all candidates for salvation. Baptism is a matter of individual choice. The church members should minister to polygamists and guide them towards salvation instead of condemning them.

Moreover, polygamous converts, along with their wives and children, need to be loved and accepted by the church. The wives and children should not be sent away, as they need their father's companionship, and he cannot provide sufficient love if they are separated from him. Church members should embrace the children of polygamous families who come to church as new converts. The Bible records that when David slept with his wives, it was not considered adultery, but his intercourse with Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, was counted as such. God did not ask David to send away Bathsheba when he married her.

Furthermore, since the Bible does not attach any condition for partaking in the rites of foot washing and Holy Communion, polygamous converts should be allowed to participate in these ordinances. The SDA Church Manual does not prohibit any person from taking Holy Communion. The SDA Church practices open communion and invites anyone who has committed their lives to Jesus Christ to partake. Holy

Communion is not meant for saints alone; it commemorates and remembers the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. God's and Jesus' attitudes should guide members in their interactions with polygamous converts. Reflecting on Jesus' attitude towards the woman caught in adultery (John 8:4), our perspective towards polygamists should be transformed. Although Moses' Law demanded stoning for such offenses, Jesus extended grace and did not condemn her. Similarly, polygamous converts deserve God's grace, not condemnation. While they may not hold positions in the church, they should not be denied baptism, foot washing, or Holy Communion.

Discrimination against polygamous converts must end in the SDA Church.

Polygamists and their families should be welcomed with open arms and received for salvation.

Recommendations

1. It is vital to understand that the SDA Church policy on polygamous marriage applies only to existing polygamists in the church and not to converts coming through evangelistic activities. Therefore, the church should baptize polygamists without discrimination or requiring them to put away all other wives and choose one before qualifying for baptism. A convert who is a polygamist should be allowed to join the SDA Church membership, as there is no biblical command prohibiting or hindering this, although they should not hold any church office as indicated in 1 Timothy 3:1-2.
2. During His ministry on earth, Jesus did not cast anyone out, including the woman caught in adultery. Therefore, polygamous converts should be permitted to partake in the ordinances of foot washing and Holy Communion without exclusion. Individuals should have the freedom to decide whether to partake based on their conscience, without being compelled by any church leader.
3. Since there are no biblical expressions of condemnation, prohibition, or forbidding regarding polygamous marriage in both the Old and New Testaments, polygamous converts who desire to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior should not be discriminated against in the church.
4. The SDA Church should create awareness and educate members about the disadvantages of polygamous marriage instead of discriminating against and condemning polygamous converts. They should be recognized,

accepted, and accommodated within the church. To facilitate the proclamation of the three angels' messages, the General Conference's working policy should be revised to address the issue of polygamous converts.

5. The researcher recommends that the Oyo Conference of the SDA Church encourage pastors and evangelists to include messages on marriage in their sermons during outreach activities and seminars to the public.
6. The Oyo Conference of the SDA Church should encourage each church to establish a marriage counselling unit to address challenges related to polygamous marriage and ways to overcome them.
7. Given the different opinions on polygamy within the SDA Church, the Oyo Conference should organize seminars for leaders to harmonize their attitudes and perceptions towards polygamous converts. The issue of who should be baptized and who should not should also be discussed and clearly defined.
8. The Oyo Conference should empower and train its pastors to effectively implement pastoral care for individuals in polygamous marriages and to find ways to minister to them.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

**SCHOOL OF THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA
NAIROBI, KENYA.**

**QUESTIONNAIRE
AN ASSESSMENT OF MEMBERS' PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE
TOWARDS POLYGAMOUS CONVERTS IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH OYO CONFERENCE, NIGERIA**

Dear Sir/Madam,

You are humbly invited to participate in this survey regarding members' perceptions and attitudes toward polygamous converts. The information required is for partial fulfilment of a Master of Divinity Degree Thesis. The purpose is to gather the perception and attitude of SDA Church members and pastors of what should happen when someone with two or more wives accepts the gospel and makes the decision to join the church through baptism. The results will help the church share the gospel with people who live in polygamous relationship and better nurture them spiritually after they join the church.

Therefore, the responses shall be treated confidentially. Your candid and factual responses are highly needed to the best of your knowledge. Do not write your name on the questionnaire. Thank you for taking the time to answer this questionnaire, remain blessed in Jesus Christ name.

Yours sincerely

Isaac O. A. Osagunna.

Master of Divinity

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHY INFORMATION

INSTRUCTION: Kindly tick any box ([]) that gives the correct answer as applicable and write as it is required.

1. Gender: a. Male [] b. Female []
2. Age: a. 10–20 [] b. 21–30 [] c. 31–40 [] d. 41–50 []
e. 51–60 [] f. 61 & above []
3. Marital Status: a. Married [] b. Single [] c. Legal Divorce []
d. Widow/Widower [] e. Separated (does not live with husband/wife) []
4. Education Background: a. Secondary School [] b. Graduate []
c. Master Degree [] d. PhD []
5. Occupation: a. Civil Servant [] b. Business Man/Woman []
c. Farming [] d. Student []
e. Artisan [] f. Retiree []
6. Membership Status: a. Elder [] b. Deacon []

- c. Deaconess []
- d. AMO []
- e. AWM []
- f. Youth []
- g. Clerk []
- h. Others []
- 7. Length of Membership in SDA Church
 - a. 5–10 years []
 - b. 11–15 years []
 - b. 16–20 years []
 - d. 21–30 years []

SECTION B: THE PERCEPTION TOWARDS POLYGAMOUS

Kindly tick the appropriate box for the question below.

1. In your opinion, why do some people have more than one wife?
 - a. Family demands and traditions []
 - b. The first wife cannot have children or does not have male children []
 - c. To have people work the land and do household chores []
 - d. Cannot divorce the first wife due to religious and cultural rules []
 - e. They want to have many sexual partners []
2. What would be the main reason why people should not have more than one wife?
 - a. Polygamy is against the laws of the country []
 - b. Polygamy is adultery []
 - c. God created one man for one woman []
 - d. Polygamy violates women's right []
 - e. The Bible condemns polygamy []
 - f. No reason []
3. What does the Bible says about polygamy?
 - a. The Bible condemns polygamy []
 - b. The Bible discourages polygamy []
 - c. The Bible neither condemns nor approves polygamy []
 - d. The Bible allows polygamy []
 - e. The Bible approves polygamy []
 - f. I am not sure []
4. If the man keeps only one of the wives, which one should it be?
 - a. The first wife under all circumstances []
 - b. The wife to whom he is legally married []
 - c. The wife with the youngest children []
 - d. The youngest wife []
 - e. The wife whom the man loves the most []
 - f. The wife whom most needs financial support []
5. How should the ex-husband take care of the separated wives?
 - a. Give her a separate house []
 - b. Provide only for the children's education, clothing and food []
 - c. Sexually satisfy those who are unable to marry []
 - d. Provide her with food and clothing []
 - e. She is no longer his responsibility []
 - f. Other, specify []

SECTION C: ATTITUDES TOWARDS POLYGAMOUS

Instruction: Kindly respond to the following questions

6. Should polygamous converts be baptized?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
7. What should happen to the wives of a polygamist who wishes to be baptized?
 - b. The man must choose one and send away all the others []

- c. The man must send all away and stay with the first wife []
- d. The man must send all away and marry another woman []
- e. The man must not send away any of his wives []
- f. Other, describe briefly:
- 8. Should polygamists partake in the foot washing and Holy Communion Services?
 - a. Yes []
 - b. No []
- 9. Should women and the children of a polygamous be baptized, but not the husband?
 - a. Yes []
 - b. No []
- 10. Can the children be baptized, apart from the women and the husband?
 - a. Yes []
 - b. No []
- 11. Should the husband be baptized, if he retains his first wife, while divorcing the other?
 - a. Yes []
 - b. No []
- 12. Can the husband be baptized, if he divorces all but chose the most preferred wife?
 - a. Yes []
 - b. No []
- 13. Please, suggest way(s) you know by which members can have positive attitudes towards polygamous converts
Respond: _____
- 14. Is there any need for the church to accept the polygamous converts into the church?
Respond: _____

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS POLYGAMOUS CONVERTS AMONG MEMBERS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH OYO CONFERENCE, NIGERIA.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your name sir/ma?
2. Are you born or converted Seventh-day Adventist member?
3. How long have you join SDA Church?
4. What does the Bible says about polygamous marriage?
5. What does Seventh-day Adventist Church beliefs on polygamy?
6. What are the reasons why people married more than one wife?
7. Should a polygamous convert be baptized into the church?
8. Should the wives and children of the polygamous be baptized?
9. Should a polygamous converts leave/divorce some of his wives to be baptized?
10. Which wife should a polygamous converts leave before he can be baptized?
11. Should a polygamous convert partake in the foot washing and Holy Communion services?
12. How would you measure the attitude of SDA Church members toward a polygamous converts?
13. Are you satisfied with the attitudes of members toward polygamous converts in Seventh-day Adventist Church?
14. Could you kindly explain the way(s) members should treat polygamous converts in the SDA Church?
15. Can you explain the role of church members toward polygamous converts?
16. What do you think could be done to improve and curb the negative attitude of members toward polygamous converts?
17. What are the benefits of retaining polygamous converts in the church?
18. Is there any need for more education on attitude and perception of members towards polygamous converts?

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VITA

BIO DATA:

Name Isaac Oluwafemi Ayodeji Osagunna
Date of Birth 31st May, 1977
Gender Male
Marital Status Married
Religion Christianity (Seventh-day Adventist)
Address Seventh-day Adventist Church Mission House, Beside Female
Prison, Surulere, Ondo City, Ondo-State. Nigeria
Contacts Email: isaacosagunna@gmail.com
Phone number: +234 803 8210917, +234 905 394 6976

EDUCATION:

Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun -State. Nigeria
Master in Public Administration 2013-2015
Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun-State. Nigeria
Bachelor Degree in Theology 2004-2008
Onaolapo Memorial High School, Ikirun, Osun-State. Nigeria
Senior School Certificate 2002-2003
Ipoti High School, Ipoti-Ekiti, Ekiti-State. Nigeria
West African Examination Council 1989-1994
Seventh-day Adventist Primary School, Ipoti-Ekiti, Ekiti-State. Nigeria
First School Learning Certificate 1982-1988

WORK EXPERIENCE:

Sector Leader 2018 to date
District Pastor 2012-2018
Associate Youth Director 2011-2013
Church Pastor 2008-2012
Assistant Pastor 2004-2008
Literature Evangelist 2002-2004
Assistant Church Pastor 2001-2002
Literature Evangelist 1999-2001