Urbanization fueling marriage dynamics among the Baganda of central Uganda

Description of the topic

Urbanization is viewed as a dominant factor in fueling changes in marriage practices and patterns among the Baganda tribe in central Uganda. This is because the Baganda tribe which is about one fifth of Uganda's population live in central Uganda which is the fastest growing urban region in the country. Apart from Kampala, the capital city of the country, Wakiso district that surrounds it, is home of fast growing urban centers such as Kira Town Council, Nansana Town Council, Wakiso Town Council and Entebbe Municipal council. The Baganda are also the most spread tribe to other regions of the country compared to the other 56 tribes. The study examines the influence of urbanization on marriage practices such as "pulling", practice of abstinence before marriage, payment of bride price and divorce as well as marriage patterns that include: secret marriage, cohabitation, polygamy and mixed marriages with reference to the Baganda.

The theoretical focus

In the study, urbanization represented by area of residence is compared with other factors such as education, occupation, religion and tribe in influencing marriage patterns (cohabitation, polygamy, secret marriages and mixed marriages). The paper takes special emphasis on the Baganda, the largest tribe in the country.

The data sources and research methods

The data in this paper is derived from a wider comparative study that covered Kampala City whose boundaries overlapped those of Kampala district and four rural districts that represented the four regions of Uganda. Kampala was chosen because of a number of reasons. Kampala is the largest urban area of Uganda in terms of population and size. It is the capital city of Uganda Kampala remained the prime urban center throughout the period 1969-2014. The proportion of the population of Kampala city to the total urban population of Uganda was 54% in 1969, 41% in 1991, 40% in 2002 and 25% in 2014. It was therefore seen as the most representative of urban areas. Being a capital city and the most cosmopolitan urban area, all the ethnic groups in the study could be found in big numbers.

Four ethnic groups namely: Baganda; Bagisu; Lugbara and Bafumbira were studied. Each of the four ethnic groups represented one of the four regions of the country namely: Baganda (Central); Bagisu (Eastern); Lugbara (Northern) and Bafumbira for Western. In order to establish the changes in marriage patterns as a result of urbanization, rural areas in four districts of Uganda where the four ethnic groups originate were also covered. These included: Mpigi; Sironko; Arua and Kisoro respectively.

Primary data was obtained from all persons aged 15 years and above found in households from each of the ethnic groups qualified for interview. Age 15 was chosen because it is the one used to calculate singulate mean age at first marriage in Hajnal (1953) formula assumes that no first marriages occur before age 15.

Judgmental (purposive) sampling was used to get four ethnic groups for the study. According to Kitchin and Tate, (2000), judgmental sample is the most subjective sampling method. Here, sample elements are selected based on judgment derived from prior experience. Sampling elements are selected based on the interviewer's experience that they are likely to produce the required results.

Snowball sampling was used to get respondents in urban areas. Snowball sampling is non-random sampling method, which is used with the selection of people. This is based on a number of initial contacts that are asked for names and locations of any other people who might fulfill the sampling requirements. For example, the respondents interviewed would help to inform the interviewers the location of their fellow members of the same tribe. The Baganda would help to locate fellow Baganda and so would the Lugbara, Bagisu and Bafumbira.

In the rural areas, Systematic Sampling was applied. Using household lists of the villages provided by the Local Council (LC) officials, even numbered households were selected. After securing a Local Council (LC) official as a guide, the group (principal investigator, two interviewers and the LC official) moved around, interviewing all the members of the households above 15 years. To make sure that all the eligible members were interviewed, those who were not found at home would be followed where they were working for example in the gardens.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) using an interview guide facilitated the acquisition of detailed information on indigenous marriage patterns among the tribes. The FGDs were complimented by the survey that covered four tribes in Uganda namely: Bagisu,

Baganda, Lugbara and Bafumbira in the districts of Sironko, Mpigi, Arua and Kisoro. Secondary data sources were also utilized.

Findings

The cultural practice of "pulling" or stretching a woman's labia minora (the inner lobes of the vagina just below the clitoris) that is highly cherished by the Baganda is threatened by urbanization. The cultural practice is referred to as visiting the bush ("*Okukyalira ensiiko*"). This is because traditionally, a group of girls is taken to the bush by an old woman for about a week and taught how to pull. After that, the girls are advised to continue pulling on their own.

Formerly, parents would arrange marriages for their children. This method shows the social importance of marriage, especially as it concerns the families and relatives of the couple. Findings indicate that this has greatly changed.

Bride price refers payment in form of money, property or other valuable asset by the family of the bridegroom-to-be to the family of his bride-to-be. The general observation is that to-day, money is preferred to the traditional physical items such as animals, clothing and food. Divorce is one of the indicators of marital instability. It is a legal dissolution of an established family. It appears to be increasing as well.

Logistic regression analysis is used to show area of residence and tribe significantly impact on marriage patterns namely: Polygamy, cohabitation, secret and mixed type of marriages.