

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

Extended Abstract

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

Table 1: Percentage Zionist in 1997 and 2003

| Region | Percentage Zionist | | | |
|------------|--------------------|-------|---------|---------------|
| | 1997 Census | | | 2003 DHS |
| | Total | Males | Females | Females 15-19 |
| North | 1.2% | 1.2% | 1.2% | .3% |
| Centre | 16.5% | 16.3% | 17.8% | 9.3% |
| South | 39.5% | 37.9% | 42.6% | 25.5% |
| Mozambique | 17.4% | 16.4% | 19.2% | 13.6% |

Source: Mozambique 1997 Census and 2003 DHS

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

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

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

Preliminary Results

Preliminary cross-sectional results show that while women affiliated with Pentecostal-type churches were not different from women affiliated with the mainstream denominations in regard to age at entry into first marital union. However, Pentecostal women were more likely to be in a polygynous union and have a history of marital dissolution. However, the patterns of entry into church memberships differed greatly between mainstream and Pentecostal churches. Thus, women affiliated with the former typically belonged to them from birth or due to marriage. In contrast, women affiliated with Pentecostal-type churches typically joined them as adults often to seek cure to a health or social problem as well as through marriage. These patterns of religious affiliation call for a more dynamic analysis of its effects on marriage outcomes, which we intend to carry out using our rich retrospective data. When our analyses are completed, we will discuss the results in light of the transformation of social institutions triggered by the increasing proliferation and influence of Pentecostal-type churches.

References:

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