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THE PREVALENCE OF WOMEN SEXUAL LOCKING IN A GENDER VIOLENCE CONTEXT – A PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

ABSTRACT

Marriage is highly regarded in Africa. Many taboos and rituals were put in place to ensure that marriage endures for as long as the couple lives. Any attack on marriage was rendered as a great enemy that deserved to be arrested and destroyed. In order to curb extra-marital relationships that were a threat to marriage, some African communities applied sexual locking. Although it had been observed that cases of ‘stealing each other’s wives’ existed, these were not expected traditions among Africans. Some prefer this practice in order to eliminate treachery and fornication, but the experience thereof is humiliating to the couple, the family, and the community. The unliberated areas of African women’s lives are evident through their being locked sexually. This article aims to research and argue the downside of this unusual practice, which is growing among South African communities.

1. INTRODUCTION

The article entitled “Yeoville husband locks cheating wife’s vagina with *muti*, lover gets stuck” did not only go viral on the Internet and social media, but also raised questions about gender-related issues. The naked couple was stuck to one another and there was no help, even though police managed to break into the room. It was said that this kind of practice is common in some African countries as a way to prevent women from engaging in sex with other men

outside their marriage (Times Live, 2015:1). In Africa, varying degrees of punishment were imposed on cheating wives, and this is one of them. In the other report, Singo (2015:14) was not concerned about the habit of men who keep bewitching their wives' *punanis*, while they enjoy other women's *punanis* out there; this is also a concern of both the women and the commission on gender. This outcry came as a result of the creeping tendency of men who lock their wives so that they cannot have sexual intercourse with other men in the absence of their husbands. Although the practice was known for some time in some African countries, it is a new trend in South Africa. This study attempts to unveil how the sexual locking of the cheating people can become a challenge not only for the church, but also for human rights and gender commission. Recent incidents where men were found locked with women who were not their wives will be used as case studies to articulate how society can avoid such embarrassing and gender-sensitive human rights issues.

2. RELEVANCE, FOCUS AND PRACTICALITY OF THE STUDY

Recently, the misuse and abuse of sexual relationships and other relevant issues has been a thorn in African marriages. There is a real decline in marriages resulting from misinformation and misunderstanding on sexual matters. Men and women, who experienced sexual issues as a weapon of domination and oppression, gradually developed a need to get rid of marriage. Meanwhile, the practice of cohabitation, rape and other sexual offences is escalating, because the respect and true understanding of the intention of sex has escaped the imagination of many. Instead of enjoying sex in the confines of a committed marriage, people are using many different means for sexual gratification for fear of marriage itself, because sex has been used to dominate people. The practice of locking women's sexual life as another way in which men stamp their authority and domination over women is a theologically worrying factor. Practical theology cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the ongoing practice not only of misinterpreting what God intended with marriage and sexual intercourse, but also of men using God's gift to dominate women. This is a sign that there are still unliberated zones in which theology needs to come to the rescue in the lives of both South African and African women. Although there are scientific and medical views on the issue of sex locking, this article focuses on sex locking as it is inflicted through some kind of magic. In my view, it would be fair to mention that there are other causes for this, but the intention is to discuss the issue from the point of view of magic, particularly in an African context.

3. BACKGROUND

According to French (2008:278), after the end of slavery, the colonial authorities promoted marriage and male dominance as a means of social control. This kind of arrangement is rooted in an African patriarchal system, which already relegated women to be available for childbearing and childrearing as their sole purpose in marriage. Sexual matters, whether in or outside marriage, are not perceived to be publicly talked about in the majority of African tribes. It is for this reason that, even nowadays, sex education is a problem between the vast majority of African parents and their children. I agree with Mema (2012:1) who argues: "In Africa, good women or respectable women are those that do not talk about sexuality and pleasure in public." Sexual language remains a seriously private matter, even within the confines of marriage. That is why some of the primary duties for women in marriage are to ensure their husband's sexual pleasure and to bear children. Unfortunately, research still indicates that, if women are fearless and open to reveal the joy they have in sexual relationships, they are usually perceived as evil or bad women. The suppression of their erotic desires and sexual pleasure availed them to the vulnerability of exploitation and sex starvation, while their husbands enjoyed sexual freedom outside their home and working environments (Mema 2012:1). The truth is that the capitalist system, which emphasises the regulation of women's sexuality and reproduction, strengthens the male dominance and exploitation of women in many ways. Men in Africa, even if they are far or dead, are regarded as the owners of their married wives' sexuality. That is why levirate marriages were even fostered at the expense of the woman's wish, but this is not the focus of this study. Women are owned and controlled by their husbands and their in-laws. Although, as happened in Zimbabwe, a man's ex-wife sexually locked him, it is usually women who are locked (*New Zimbabwe* 2014:10).

In Africa, it was believed that everyone must grow up and get married. Even the ways of raising boys and girls conditioned them to accept marriage as the ultimate way of life (Ali *et al.* 2011:2). That is why unmarried people were not easily accommodated in society; they were even suspected of many abnormalities in their lives. In this way, marriage became the backbone of society to an extent that everyone was expected to get married. In marriage, it was also expected that, for the sake of procreation, which was the main aim of marriage, sexual intercourse would, therefore, be enjoyed only in the confines of the home and for the purpose of giving birth.

One wife can only be married and have sexual intercourse with one husband, but the husband can have more than one wife and have sexual

intercourse with them. Since treachery and fornication had always been suspected, strict rules and regulations were put in place to ensure that a wife never cheats on her husband, even though the husband may cheat. Unfortunately, these regulations were within the patriarchal framework, which always ensured that women were treated as inferior compared to men. This is one of the reasons why women were given strict rules such as even being locked to stop them from having extramarital affairs. This is in line with what Mtika (2015:14) reported about a woman who assaulted her boyfriend after finding out that he put needles and her panties in a Coke bottle, claiming that it would ensure that, whenever she sleeps around with any man, he would get stuck in her.

Kremer (2014:1) is correct in indicating that, for centuries, stories and tales of people getting stuck together during sexual intercourse abound, and it is time that those stories become a witnessed reality. The article of the front page entitled 'Sex cheaters get stuck' is a real story, in which two lovers got locked together while having sexual intercourse in Dena Court flats, Yeoville, Johannesburg (Luhanga 2015a:1-2). The photo on the front page shows that armed members of the police services blocked many people who tried to get to see the two locked people who were heard crying and seeking help to be separated from their sexual orgy. One of the neighbours of that particular flat echoed what *sangoma* Thabo Mofokeng stated, namely that locking a woman with *muthi* was a common way in which men used to catch cheating wives in Zimbabwe. She went on to indicate that, until the husband comes back to separate them, the two will remain locked. The majority of South Africans used to hear about this kind of issue happening in some African countries, but it has become a tragedy in this country.

A second incident reported by Luhanga (2015b:1) about three days after the previous incident was that of a woman who claimed that a married lover (Saidi) locked her so that she could not have sex with other men; while he was not showing any signs of marrying her, she was yelling that he must choose between unlocking or marrying her. She went on to claim that ten men, who tried to be involved with her, ran away, because they could not have sex with her; meanwhile, she is not married. This article aims to argue that the practice of locking women from sex is gender imbalanced as well as humiliating women. According to Tumfweko (2012), a 44-year-old Zimbabwean man and a 38-year-old married woman got stuck for 48 hours before the woman's husband came to rescue them in Zimre Park Ruwa, Harare. It is said that the couple was kept in the Harare police station, while waiting for the husband from South Africa.

4. THEOLOGY OF SEXUAL INTERCOURSE IN BRIEF

God created both man and woman and married them in the Garden of Eden, where He allowed them to enjoy each other's company, including having sexual relationships with one another. This means that, when God created human beings, the creation of sexual intercourse was not excluded. Despite this, Paul David Tripp calls contemporary life a sexually insane culture; Lepine (2013:2) is correct in mentioning that "sexual intercourse was God's idea". Hebrews 13:4 confirms this: "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." This verse indicates that God designed sex; it becomes bad only if it does not conform to God's pattern, when it occurs outside wedlock. Many people argue that, if God did not want people to have sex, He would have created them both as being one sex. That is why the concept "*kenegdo*" (meaning "like him or fitting to him") played an important role in the creation of woman. To God, this term means that the woman will be "another helper", different from the man. The biblical discussion of "leave and cleave" also has its own significance as to the sexual union of people. The oneness in marriage is symbolically observed in the act of sexual union. The other important point of discussion is the reason why God created sexual relationship between man and woman. It is very clear that sex was made to be enjoyed by married husband and wife. That is why sexual relationships outside marriage will usually be harmful and destructive. Slick (2015:1) supports this view:

The point is that the nakedness, viewing the nakedness, the touching of the private areas, fondling, etc., are all reserved for the marriage bed between a husband and wife.

One example of this is when Amnon forced himself on, or raped Tamar; the incident caused tremendous hatred towards her as well as a great deal of discomfort for her (2 Sam. 13:15-19).

The other important matter is that, when Paul spoke about marriage in the New Testament, he did not indicate that any inequality should exist between two married people. The question as to who has the authority, the wife or the husband, helps Paul emphasise the point of equality. He argues that

[t]he wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife, no one owns his body (1 Cor. 7:4).

This argument lays down the main basic reason why one must talk about equality between husband and wife. The principle of sexual equality, which stems from *ha-'adam* in Genesis 1:27, indicates that there is no hint of ontological or functional superiority between both sexes (Davidson 1988:7). It can be argued from Davidson's point of view that male and female have equal participation and responsibility in the image of God. Many husbands expect women to have a sense of self-control and discipline, while they themselves can live as they wish, without self-control or discipline. The Jewish rabbinical and Muslim teachings forbade women from wearing shorts. The Daily Mail Reporter (2011:1) confirms this, indicating that New York Rabbis have banned Jewish women from wearing tank tops and short skirts, regardless of the weather. Thus, men are free, while women are subordinated.

5. THE POSSIBLE CAUSES FOR LOCKING

There are many causes for sexual locking, but, for the purpose of this study, the focus will be on two issues namely, prevention of sex outside marriage and *coitus captivus*. The emphasis will be on the tradition of prevention of sex outside marriage, because that is the backbone of the African marriage in the context of this article.

5.1 Prevention of sex outside marriage

Waruta and Kinoti (2000:106) quoted John Mbiti:

Adultery, fornication, incest, rape, seduction, homosexual relations, sleeping with a forbidden relative or domestic animal, intimacy between relatives, children watching the genitals of their parents, all constitute sexual offences in a given community. African people are very sensitive to any departure from the accepted norm concerning all aspects of sex. For this reason, many of the offences must be followed by a ritual cleansing whether or not the offenders are physically punished otherwise misfortunes may ensue.

This quotation indicates that African people, even before the arrival of western civilization and religion in their land, already disliked and put measures in place against any form of sexual intercourse outside marriage. In fact, they regarded it as an abomination and taboo. Mabhunu (2013:86) argues that, among other reasons, the prevention of sex-related illnesses such as HIV/AIDS needed sexual prevention, which has proved to be insensitive to the cultures of African people. One Kenyan video clip confirmed that even police and doctors were unable to separate the sexual locking of the couple found cheating in the house. The reporter, Nehada

Radio (2012:1) confirmed this: “Yes, it works”, referring to the act as a doing of the witchdoctors. The method of sexual prevention in this case would be sex lock, the prevalence of which in Zimbabwe proved to deal with the prevention of HIV/AIDS. Infidelity and taking one another’s wives is not only taboo in the African context, but is also not allowed. Hence, sex locking was one of the measures against it. This is what Marunguto (in Box Media 2012) argued, while charging money to unlock another fellow villager who was stuck with his wife, Christene Kadebe, in 2008.

African patriarchy orchestrated, among other things, the inequality between genders, in which women are always treated as inferior or secondary human beings. This kind of worldview affected an African man in all aspects and areas of life, including his sexual life, in which women, particularly married women, do not have control over their sexuality. In the article entitled “Women as sex object”, Baloyi (2010) argues the point where women are often reduced to please men sexually. If a woman is treated like an object, locking her sexual life cannot be regarded as a problem. This kind of locking is related to African mythology and witchcraft. In 2012, in Kenya, a case was reported where, after the husband visited a witchdoctor, his wife was locked with a man who was only released after promising to pay 20,000 Kenyan shillings and prayers (Kremer 2014:2). In this context, sexual locking is a deliberate practice that is influenced by patriarchy. But there is also another unintentional locking that has nothing to do with patriarchy, namely *coitus captivus*.

5.2 *Coitus captivus*

According to Rivas (2014), *coitus captivus* is a medical term referring to the penis being held captive by the vagina during sexual intercourse. Rivas emphasises that this is not a myth. The other name he uses is *penis captiva*. Rivas argues that, from his own experience, it is a rare occurrence that only lasts between five and ten minutes. The blood flows out of the penis before the penis starts going down after orgasm, at which point the man can withdraw. According to Thornhill (2015:1), Dr John Dean, a UK-based sex physician, defines *penis captivus* as

when the penis is in the vagina, it becomes increasingly engorged while the muscles of the woman’s pelvis floor contract rhythmically at orgasm and they get stuck.

Medics confirmed that, in exceptional cases, a man’s penis could become trapped inside a woman (Thornhill 2015:1).

Kremer (2014) argues that this is one of the medieval myths and stories, which F. Kraupl Taylor (author of the 1979 review) believes may bear only

a tenuous connection with the actual facts. This means, according to him, that people getting stuck during intercourse is simply a story and a myth. The argument that denies this claim is that there are practical examples in which people became witnesses, as in the case in Yeoville, Johannesburg. In his article entitled “Penis Captivus or Magun”, Folakemiodoaje (2014) argues that, in Yorubaland, Nigeria, the term “*penis captivus*” is called *magun*, meaning “don’t climb”. For him, it is a belief of the Yorubaland people that the spell was cast on an unfaithful woman. When she stepped over the doorway, on which the spell was placed, she was loaded with it and any man who tried to have intercourse with her was getting stuck.

Dr Alverston Bailey, President of the Medical Association of Jamaica (MAJ), confirmed that, although he has never seen it himself, it is theoretically possible for a male and a female to get stuck in such a compromising position. According to him, the woman’s vaginal muscle spasms during intercourse and traps the man. This was made known after the report that a couple got stuck during intercourse and was rushed to a popular hospital where it was also said that the man’s penis had to be severed, since he was unable to withdraw from the woman (*Jamaica News* 2008:1). This kind of locking is different from the previous one, because this can also happen between a husband and wife; thus, it had nothing to do with trying to avoid sex outside marriage.

6. CRITICAL EVALUATION

Masenya (2005:102) correctly states:

It becomes understandable that male-oriented societies have a tendency to confuse or even equate sexual activity with sexual violence. Female bodies become sacrifices at the altars of male power and pleasure.

After she felt humiliated by what men were saying to her, one woman very correctly stated: “I have a right to wear whatever I want. This is my body.” This argument was raised by women against men who were scolding and trying to humiliate a woman wearing a mini-skirt in the Matanzima Cemetery in Uitenhage (Mbovane 2015:4). This kind of response is always an indication that, although our African patriarchy is still very slow in transforming men to accept equality between genders, some women already know and understand their rights as far as gender issues are concerned. The disgusting part of the story is that only men were making their bad and emotional comments to the woman mentioned earlier, while no woman was mentioned to have said something against or to her.

Besides men (even though not husbands) seeing women as sexual objects, as mentioned earlier, it is clear that men still want to control female bodies to the extent of prescribing what they should wear in public. The above incident connects with the focus of this study in addressing a human rights issue in the context of gender imbalances. This also draws attention to Zimbabwe's first lady's utterances that invited a great deal of criticism from gender activists, even in South Africa. She was quoted as saying, on 21 November 1025, while addressing a ZANU-PF rally in Mberengwa, Southern Zimbabwe:

If you walk around wearing mini skirts displaying your thighs and inviting men to drool over you, then you want to complain when you have been raped? It's unfortunate because it will be your fault. Wear clothes like Mai Mugabe or you can chose trousers, but not those which are too tight. These types of clothes are the signs of moral decadence in our country (Pitjieng 2015:1).

Although this occurred in a Zimbabwean context, human rights on what to wear and what not to wear is a serious cause for concern, particularly as she only addressed what women, not men, should wear. If this kind of patriarchy continues to be naturalised in the minds of respected African women like her, then the fight to retain and ensure women's dignity and enhance gender equality in Africa as a whole will always be difficult.

One of the most addressed issues of redress in this country is that of disallowing any form of discrimination on account of many issues, gender included. If only women are supposed to be checked and locked to avoid extramarital sexual relationships, then the very unsettling question would be: Why are men not locked? Without promoting any extramarital affairs, I am of the opinion that it would be fair if husbands and wives received the same treatment as far as the issue of sex locking is concerned, because many men are found in these kinds of offences, but nothing happens to them. It is not fair to continue promoting the agenda of making women properties of men. It is a big concern that the most common and widespread human rights abuse in South Africa is within the confines of family and domestic violence (Levendosky & Graham-Bermann 2001:2).

One of the obvious threats resulting from the practice of locking women's sexual activities is the fear of getting married, particularly for young women. The fact that these things happen mostly within the confines of marriage demonises and attacks the institution of marriage. Many young women start viewing marriage as slavery. They would be afraid to get married, because, once they are "owned" by their husbands, they may be subjected to such an experience. It is mostly jealous men who try to trap

anyone who gets involved with their wives who do this. It has been argued on many occasions that men who do not want to commit to marriage open their options to cut loose and escape their partner's life when things get too hot for them. Jackson (2012:1) cited lack of appropriate role models as one of the main reasons why Black men take longer or even avoid getting married. This is closely connected to this research, because children who do not have fathers and mothers as good role models when they grow up, particularly with regard to marriage relationships, easily view marriage as a monster with which they do not want to be classified.

7. THE WAY FORWARD

7.1 The church's role

Besides the fact that it was dominated by African patriarchy, which wrongly perpetuated gender inequality that gave rise to domination of women, it is about time that the African church should correct the past wrongs. For this reason, Baloyi and Manala (2013:4) argue that the church, more than anyone else, must head the fight against the gender imbalances of the past, without reservation. The church can use preaching, pastoral caregiving as well as other community engagements as weapons against this injustice.

Biblical teaching about sexual intercourse being a joy for married people has been clear for a long time. The church must not shy away from adhering to such teachings, regardless of the criticism she will receive. This is one of the problems that lead to the escalation of many other issues such as rape, cohabitation, and fornication. Jesus Christ discouraged the desire of someone's wife:

But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt. 5:28).

Henry (2004) realised that, even though many people refer to sex more externally and physically, Jesus in this instance includes intent, imagination and thoughts. Every prophetic voice must continue biblical teaching against any form of lust. At weddings, funerals and on other occasions, the church is afforded the opportunity for such teaching, thus preventing this kind of pathology.

7.2 Marital and premarital counselling

Africans used their uncles and aunts to counsel their young ones prior to marriage, and such practices helped many marriages last. Unfortunately,

western civilization, which influences people as individuals, fragmented families to such an extent that it has affected this kind of extended family relationships. In the context of *Ubuntu*, Africans must start thinking of re-introducing these relationships in order to help the young ones. On the other hand, pastoral caregivers and counsellors must prepare young people for marriage. Baloyi (2013:71) argues that premarital programmes such as “prepare and enrich” must come into play whenever young people intend to marry. This will give pastoral counsellors the opportunity to talk about, among other things, the role of sexual relationships in marriage.

Pastoral counsellors should play a big role in building marriages by helping young people understand the role of sex in marital relationships. Although the discussion about sex among traditional Africans has been relegated to older people and only within the confines of the bedroom, our changing world demands that sex issues be taught to our school-going children. It is imperative that pastoral counsellors know about sex when preparing those who are about to marry.

7.3 The role of men and women

African people always respected marriage and never wanted a marriage to break up. This is why issues that would lead to a break-up were avoided at all costs. Treachery and cheating are some of the problems that some Africans have always discouraged and even punished. Unfortunately, these discouragements and punishments have been patriarchally one sided, suggesting that the woman is always the object of subjection. For this reason, mainly women have been targets of sexual locking.

The hegemony that has been used to entrench women into mere sexual objects cannot be abolished without ascertaining the real positions and importance of men and women in their respective societies. From generation to generation, African people have transferred their traits and traditions to their offspring. If men and women of a particular community can get rid of patriarchal stereotypes, this can easily pave the way for the young and upcoming mothers and fathers to understand their value in terms of sexual life and education in the community.

7.4 Sex education at school level

It is a public concern that sex education should be included in the education system at schools. The lack of sex education has been evidenced not only by teenage pregnancies and the escalation of HIV/AIDS, but also by multiplication of sex-related scandals in the education environment. Besides the fact that the government supports this idea, the implementation of the issue should be everyone's responsibility, including parents, teachers, and

children. I support Kings (2012:1) in that it is imperative to have programmes that support young people's quest for knowledge about sex. In my view, the involvement of parents will reduce the stereotypes of those who think that sexual education will encourage their children to have sex. As much as this kind of reduction is achieved, it would help those school teachers who get sexually involved with children. According to Naidoo (2006:12), parents, men and women, in particular, must shoulder the primary responsibility for the overall education of their children, including sex education. It is advised that parents and schools can also learn from Durex Connected, a brand working with sex education in schools in order to improve students' understanding of sexual matters (Monaheng 2015:20).

7.5 The government on gender imbalances

As gender-related violence is escalating, one can suggest that the government should ensure that sex-related offences receive additional punishment. In my view, the democratic government has made progress towards improving the lives of people, but the issue of gender inequality is one of the hurdles that must still be overcome. This is because Chapter 2 of the *Constitution* of this country clearly spelled out the rights of people, including the rights of women:

No person shall unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone or more on grounds listed in subsection (3), which includes gender, sex, race, pregnancy (Republic of South Africa 1996:7).

After more than twenty years of democracy, the pathology that entrenches gender imbalances from culture to religion has not yet been thwarted or destroyed; hence, the loss of many female lives daily. It is a cause for concern for law-abiding citizens of the country to see those who are sexually violating women and young women walk free after a short detention or arrest.

8. CONCLUSION

The patriarchal system has always subjected women unconditionally. This has led to the issue of sexual locking mainly to stop women from getting involved in extramarital relationships. There is nothing wrong when Africans denounce extramarital relationships and fornication, but my concern is that men are usually exempt from these rules and regulations. Besides unfaithfulness, it is understood that, from a medical perspective, *coitus captivus* can also get people stuck to each other during sexual intercourse. But attention was mainly paid to the intentional act of

preventing fornication. This is where gender imbalance is orchestrated. The Bible and African traditions are against unfaithfulness. The Christian church, schools and other relevant organisations need to work hand in hand to make people aware that women deserve to be treated like equal human beings to men.

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