

Perception and Representation of the Premarital Medical Examination by Believers in the MBATA Parish Mayangi in Kinshasa-Ngaliema, Democratic Republic of Congo

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DOI: 10.36348/sijog.2023.v06i01.001

| Received: 13.10.2022 | Accepted: 18.11.2022 | Published: 05.01.2023

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Abstract

Introduction: The aim of this study is to understand the perception and representation of believers in the MBATA MAYANGI parish on the premarital medical examination in order to propose strategies to meet the expectations of believers in this church. **Method:** To carry out this study, we used a phenomenological survey method, supported by the face-to-face semi-structured interview technique and the instrument is the interview guide on a reasoned non-probability sampling of 20 participants. **Results:** concerning representation, the participants believe that the premarital medical examination does not represent much because it is God who protects, is an obstacle to the marriage of young people today, the premarital examinations are presented as a condemnation, finally, is comparable to the competition for admission to married life. For their expectation on the part of families, they have expectations that they have expressed in the following two ways: Parents must educate their children from an early age on medical examinations and also an awareness of youth on the well-being based on the premarital examination. **Conclusion:** the Christians of this parish do not have a good perception and do not imagine prenuptial examinations well, hence the need to popularize the importance of these examinations in different Churches.

Keywords: Perception, representation, premarital medical examination, believers.

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INTRODUCTION

There are many young people who begin the marriage process without thinking about doing premarital tests. To multiply and populate the earth is one of the missions that God has entrusted to man. To enjoy this happiness, it is essential to check and anticipate everything that could disturb the peace of the couple. Life together is already difficult because of the differences between spouses. It is then good to prevent all other elements which will add to the difficulties (AJOULAT P *et al.*, 2006).

Premarital examinations remain almost non-existent and are rarely taken into account among the prerequisites for marriage. And although we talk about

it in some circles, the majority of couples received at the hospital for the examination in question are unaware of its merits because they were not informed at the base. This task of information is incumbent on religious leaders and civil status authorities who should send engaged couples to the hospital for this purpose (BARDEM I. and IGABATO, 2006). And to make a valid contribution to a society's health promotion program, the doctor must ensure the availability of adequate and continuous monitoring of couples and people who are candidates for marriage. Become familiar with the area of the important interrelationship between human reproduction and health (BOZON M., 2006).

In all circles, it should be noted that the phenomenon of uncontrolled reproduction often remains at the root of the poor state of health of individuals at all levels. The poor state of health characterized by the emergence of sexually transmitted infections, hereditary diseases, maternal-fetal diseases and high-risk pregnancies are today an indisputable reality observed here and there (KASEREKA, 2005).

All these parameters create a demographic influence on the one hand by the resulting high-risk birth, and on the other hand by the overall mortality of young people, fathers, mothers and related children. However, all these consequences can be avoided somewhere if the phenomenon of human reproduction is very carefully controlled (CN GOF, 2018).

Although marriage is a sign of population growth in the family, the community and even the church, one should also be aware that it can become a sign of social disaster if it operates out of control. By way of illustration, the marriage of people living with HIV/AIDS, to cite just this example, would amputate more than one generation from humanity in a few years through the systematic losses due to AIDS. And if such marriages continued to be celebrated without being accompanied by preventive precautions, society would eventually disappear one day (DEVERS G., 2008).

The laws in force in the United States of America where this examination has also been legally instituted are even stricter in some States, the other countries have for the moment still only societies which recommend this examination, and the Netherlands can in this regard we serve as an example.

In Austria, the same in Belgium (Antwerp and Brussels), and in Italy (Milan); premarital consultations work. The local health insurance funds bear the examination costs; professional secrecy is rigorously maintained, leaving the engaged couple absolutely in control of their decisions.

Premarital sexual activity among young people has increased in Africa in the context of the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and numerous interventions promoting safe sexual behaviors have targeted young men and women in recent decades. survey data show that while the use of condoms q increased over the period, the sexual relations of young Africans remain insufficiently protected. Moreover, the rate of HIV contamination remains higher among unmarried young people in Africa (BOOG G., 2007).

With regard to the chromosomal announcement of a future parent, it should be noted that the risk is relatively frequent. This type of anomaly affects one in 600 people, i.e. one in 300 couples. A marriage in which one of the parents has a chromosomal anomaly characterized by the occurrence

of spontaneous abortion in repetition with the birth of a child is even Unbalanced chromosomal formulas often vary in rate (LANSAC *et al.*, 1999).

This is why, in order to reduce the number of disabilities and illnesses caused by genetic disorders, consultations in the field of genetics during the premarital examination strive, as far as possible, to identify with as much precision as possible, couples who are at increased risk of having an abnormal child in order to inform them of the alternatives available to them. When both parents are carriers of the same abnormal recessive germ, the risk of having a new affected child is 25%. Hence the need during the prenuptial examination to submit the couples to the examination of the karyotype in search of a chromosomal anomaly (DOUGNON V, 2010).

Some young people take the risk of getting married without having passed the premarital examinations. In the name of love, they prefer to unite without having assessed the consequences that this may have on their offspring. Some couples then end up with anemic children. Their health care weighs heavily on the family budget.

In Kinshasa, the premarital examination is misunderstood by the general public. A study was conducted in the health zone of Lemba on 20 engaged couples questioned, 16 couples or 80% avoid having premarital examinations. However, the prenuptial examination is a medical test that the suitors to a marriage must do to ensure in particular that from their genetic crossing would not come a being who can present a major anomaly or to avoid certain diseases which, in the long run will cause harm to the couple and their offspring. To say that one can detect certain faults that conceal one or the other fiancé.

The aim of this study is to understand the perception and representation of believers in the MBATA MAYANGI parish on the premarital medical examination.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Presentation of the field of study

The survey was carried out in the MBATA MAYANGI parish of the evangelical alliance community in Congo. MBATA MAYANGI is located on avenue NKOY-MOKE in the Maman Yemo district in the commune of Ngaliema, city of Kinshasa / DRC.

The MBATA MAYANGI parish is one of the parishes of the community, given the evangelical alliance in the Congo which is the 18th of the church of Christ in the Congo and has its headquarters in the city of Boma, district of Moanda, province from Kongo Central.

As a parish, it is in 1971 that it grows and all the countries, Kingabua, Sanga Mamba, Mangungu all meet at MBATA MAYANGI.

Having become a large assembly, around 1984, given the distances that separated believers, they got along from this community and several other parishes emerged: Kimbwala, Ozone (Nkiama), Mangungu, Malweka, Tende.

This parish receives a large number of faithful mostly young and single, since the church also plays a big role in building families, pastors frequently bless newly created; this is how our attention was drawn to this parish in order to collect the data there.

2.2 Target Population and Sampling

To determine the sample for this study, we used a non-probability or empirical sampling method because people were not chosen by a random process. In this case, no database can provide us with an exhaustive list of all the faithful belonging to the chosen population and guarantee reliable randomization. This method is most frequently used in opinion polls (Ardilly, 1994).

The final sample size was determined by the saturation of information on the different research themes. The size of the sample retained is therefore 20. Here again, the size of the sample chosen does not correspond to a statistical rule but to a realistic and reasonable choice of the number of individuals included in the sample. Representativeness in a sample method to judge the validity of the study.

2.3 Data Collection Methods , Techniques And Instruments

We used a method of phenomenological investigation. The choice of this method is justified by the fact that our study is based on the subjective senses. The phenomenon brings importance to the interpretation that the subject gives to the events.

The face-to-face semi-structured interview as a technique was used to collect the data. Here, the researcher has some idea of the topics that need to be covered and can use a topic list as a cheat sheet, but exercises minimal control (Omanyondo, 2017). The mirror and memory type prompting questions helped us clarify confusing ideas.

The interview guide served as a data collection instrument. The interview guide contains open-ended questions giving participants the opportunity to express themselves. This instrument is divided into 3 sections: the first section presents the explanatory memorandum (the presentation of the researcher, the purpose of the interview, the estimated duration and the aspects of confidentiality), the second section examines the profile of the respondents and the third section is reserved for

the two main questions as well as the subtopics of the possible follow-up questions.

Various tools were used for this purpose, namely: the dictaphone to record verbatim; pen, papers and computer for transcribing data.

The validation of the instrument (interview guide) was carried out by using the judge's method, which consists of submitting the guide to analysis by experts in order to test the relevance of the questions in relation to the field and questions of research.

2.4 Conduct of the survey

In connection with this study, a pilot survey was conducted among the faithful of the Parish of Kintambo / Velodrome of the Evangelical community of the alliance in Congo in order to detect possible ambiguities in the content of the instrument and in its understanding. . This approach also allowed us to strengthen our skills in conducting the interview, in explanations and in attentive listening and time management.

Given the confidential nature of the interview, we requested outside support. This is how two investigators were recruited and trained over one day (July 08, 2018) on the subject of the study and the interview method.

Data collection was carried out over a period of time from July 9 to 14, 2018 depending on the availability and willingness of the participants. Equipped with duplicating papers, a dictaphone and a pen, we were able to collect the testimonies of the participants in the study.

2.5 Analysis Plan

Data was collected through qualitative individual interviews and focus groups using interview guides. The interviews were recorded on a dictaphone, and recorded by taking notes. The focus groups were digitally recorded. A therapeutic content analysis was performed.

A thematic analysis grid was developed based on the interview guides and the reading of a sample of the corpus. All of the data was then manually coded using this thematic grid relating to the perception, representation and expectation of premarital examinations.

For his part, Ajoulat (2006) explains that the analysis of the material collected always begins with a division of this material into categories of analysis which frequently correspond to themes. This is referred to as thematic and categorical analysis.

We proceeded first by transcribing the recorded speeches: for a 30-minute interview, we

needed on average one hour of transcription after hearing on the computer. Thereafter, we proceeded by a closed coding of the interviews according to a matrix of thematic analysis of the data with three columns; from the selected sub-themes and categories supported by verbatim, the understanding given to a phenomenon being valid only in the context in which the phenomenon takes place: it cannot be generalized.

The cross-sectional categorical analysis consisted of grouping together (by going back and forth) the verbatim (in the form of ideas) with regard to the categories and themes in coherence. Our unit of analysis was therefore syntactic. The syntactic unit is a sentence or a group of words from the verbatim of interviews or observation notes; that is, ideas (ghiglione and Matalon, 1985 cited by Akenda, 2015).

The data analysis was only centered on the speeches. The redundant verbatim were then grouped together in a cloud to bring out the categories. The meanings given to these categories allowed us to obtain answers to the research questions under the different aspects that we wanted to address, by eliminating repetitions.

RESULTS

After reading our transcripts of recorded interviews with 25 participants in their entirety; having used the syntactic analysis unit in a closed encoding of the interviews, according to a data analysis matrix at four levels: Subtheme, categories, verbatim and meanings.

Our central theme is: "**The prenuptial medical examination**".

This theme is divided into two sub-themes namely: Experience of Christians on the premarital medical examination and expectation of Christians on the premarital medical examination.

- **Sub-theme 1 : experience of Christians on the premarital medical examination**

From this first sub-theme two categories have emerged at the end of the analyzes made, namely:

- 1) Perception of Christians on the premarital medical examination;
- 2) Representation of Christians on premarital medical examination;

- **Sub theme 2: Expectation of Christians on the premarital medical examination.**

At the end of the analyzes of the data carried out, two categories emerged, which are:

- 1) Waiting with the Church;
- 2) Expectation from families.

The analysis consisted of grouping the verbatim reports in relation to the corresponding

category, to which we attributed a meaning; it is our meanings that constitute the results of this study, which are discussed in the next chapter.

Sub-theme 1: Experience of Christians on the premarital medical examination

Category 1: Perception of Christians on the premarital medical examination

The Christians answered the following question: tell us about your perception of the premarital medical examination?

Christians view the premarital examination in three ways:

1) A new practice for contemporary brides

... Thanks. Premarital exams are new in our community. Pastors used to just ask for the pregnancy test since they are not allowed to bless newlyweds with a pregnancy... "REP. 1"

...Apart from the results that are scary to expect but people have to dress up for that or it's upsetting... "REP. 2"

... Thank you... well... premarital exams well we're talking about them now, our parents got married without exams, we were born, we got married, we have healthy children without exams, so now if we recommends examinations it is the results of the life young people lead today... "REP. 3"

2) Is a cause for concern

... Now young people are worried and do everything to avoid these exams. They announce their wedding just sometime before the set date. So since it's a new way, it's difficult for young people or adults who want to remarry to accept... "REP. 2"

... When the pastor asked us to go and take the exams, I couldn't stand it, I almost fell down... "REP. 4"

... My heart had started beating rapidly as if I had a serious problem... "REP. 5"

... I started to review how I lived my past with a lot of questions. Subsequently, without my wife knowing it, I was reviewing hers. From that stemmed concern as assurance on a few points so that fortified us until we accepted to pass them... "REP. 6"

3) Is a way to prevent

... For me these examinations I can say that it is a favorable moment so that we can know our state of health... "REP. 8"

... We are going to get married but we don't know what can happen tomorrow... maybe we won't have children we will accuse the parents, the uncles, our aunts and we will tax him with wizards here... and the SS children , children who are too ill are suffering so to avoid this so the prenuptial examinations are a favorable opportunity for the future spouses... "REP. 19"

... well it's like a discovery... a discovery in the sense that I didn't know much about it, especially with regard to the state of health which requires a certain control at

all times, because we don't know what can happen to us
REP 7

*... the premarital examinations before our marriage were like a way to remake our life, a satisfying life in complete safety, therefore a way to adopt a new behavior in relation to our past.*10

...So for me, it's a way to find out about the state of health of the bride and groom... “REP. 11”.

...Now there are too many illnesses, AIDS, syphilis ...a lot like also the SS children, so to avoid all that the only way is to pass these premarital examinations and the results will be used to guide the future couple... “REP. 12”.

Category 2: Representations of Christians on the premarital medical examination

The question was to know, how do you imagine the prenuptial medical examination? To this they cited the following four representations.

1) Does not represent much because it is God who protects

... Good for us it means nothing in the sense that by the grace of God we were spared... “REP. 12”.

... It's like a gunshot long after the game has passed, so a shot for nothing. It's like they say any weapon forged against you will be null and void... “REP. 13”.

... But for the stubborn it is also the same door that gives way to misfortune for those who will say we can't do anything anymore, let's continue... God will not abandon us. At the CPN we also do exams so why ask us now? So it's useless to demand them from us... “REP. 21”.

... Ah... when we ask future spouses for examinations, many think of it as a pregnancy test, since in our country we cannot give a marriage to a couple whose wife is pregnant, so it is only to detect a pregnancy on rest doesn't matter... “REP.22”.

...I know a couple who were denied a marriage blessing because the wife was pregnant and they ended up leaving the church... “REP. 23”.

2) Is an obstacle to the marriage of current young people

... So to represent that I may miss the terms but it's like a wall that hides what is behind and that we have to overcome to discover what is there... “REP. 23”.

... When I consider all the time and everything we did during the engagement period, I perceive it as a brake that comes to prevent us from continuing our life as we lead it... “REP. 24”.

... It's like a door that allows either to let pass for happiness or to prevent passing in case of unfavorable results... “REP. 25”.

... It's hard to imagine that but it's like a storm that always ends up calming down despite there being so much confusion, sadness, anger... we will always end up finding a favorable solution for the future couple... REP. 16”.

... As I have already said, it's like a hammer that discourages engaged couples because it can break long-established relationships... “REP. 17”.

... I imagine the premarital examinations as a handicap to the good relations already woven. Because the two families have already known each other and are ready to celebrate the wedding... “REP. 18”.

3) Premarital exams come as a condemnation

... Especially when the bride and groom make reports they perceive it as if the pastor is making an accusation against them, yes since he is trying to find out if there is pregnancy or not so as not to uphold the reputation of the Church... “REP. 7”.

... As soon as we learn that we must first go and be examined by a doctor before the nuptial blessing but it is like a thunderclap in the ears so something we have never heard ah it is difficult ...really it's not easy to accept... “REP. 8”.

... It's a blunder on the part of the pastor who waited a long time before demanding them not only from us but from many others so it's a total disappointment. Oh to the level where we are opposing our marriage it's like killing us... “REP. 9”.

... Well, it's like someone being taught a death sentence, so feel what I felt... so it's a very serious problem, the premarital examinations, especially for us young people... “REP. 13”.

4) Is comparable to the competition for admission to married life

... I see these exams as an admission exam so when the results are really positive there is marriage (meaning by positive so there are no diseases) but when these exams are really unfavorable I break it despite it is difficult... “REP. 6”.

...Ah...that...I can say that it's like a path that leads either to a happy home or to an unhappy home. Who really we can get married but afterwards we don't have children I don't think the parents will be happy, it's difficult... “REP. 7”.

... So the exams were for us a test that pushed us to lie since we must not disappoint the parents, the guests and the faithful... “REP. 8”.

... As an obligatory passage, the premarital examinations before marriage are a gateway to a stable and happy home. Yes, when there is only one door, to refuse is to miss happiness... “REP. 9”.

Sub-theme 2: Expectation of Christians on the premarital medical examination

Category 1: Expectation from the Church:

The question was to know, what is your expectation from the Church on the premarital medical examination?

1) Prepare the youth early on the premarital medical examination

...Let the pastors demand them from those who have not yet committed so that he prepares youth in general and adults in particular so that they demand them from their children before any commitment... "REP. 11".

... So the expectation of the faithful is that pastors organize training seminars in our parishes in order to prepare the church... "REP. 12".

... The expectation is that pastors instruct young people on these exams before committing themselves... "REP. 13".

... Pastors must hold seminars, train the faithful young and old alike... "REP. 14".

2) Recommend premarital examinations at the very beginning of the engagement

... As long as we were with him all the time he couldn't ask us in time but just a few days before the wedding so it's the most difficult moment... "REP. 14".

... It's difficult to break up because we already know each other and then we spent a lot... we ask the pastors to ask this before. Then that everyone must pass the exams to know their blood type beforehand and their condition so that when we love each other that ... "REP. 15".

... As an expectation, we then ask pastors as soon as they see that two young people are beginning to show a taste for marriage to ask them before formalizing the engagement ... "REP. 17".

Category 2: Waiting with families:

The expectation was obtained thanks to the following question: what is your expectation with the families on the premarital medical examination?

1) Parents must educate their children from an early age about medical examinations

... That the parents facilitate the task of the pastor from the house. From an early age accustom children to general examinations not only for marriage, but for good health... "REP. 1".

...Parents have a heavy burden of caring for their members in basic education, in health education... "REP. 1".

... Having the culture of parents from an early age of their children to make them pass general exams... "REP. 1".

2) Awareness of the youth on the merits of the premarital examination

... Now our expectation that young people may accept these examinations not only for marriage but for his life ... "REP. 3".

... May the young person take this to heart and change their behavior, the way of life and understand that besides the word of God there is also science which helps a lot on health... "REP. 4".

... Well, I can only say that those who want to commit comply ... "REP. 20".

DISCUSSIONS

Regarding the perception that Christians have, they perceive the premarital medical examination as: a new practice for contemporary brides; a source of concern and also a means of prevention.

For Ajoulat *et al.*, (op cit), there are many young people who begin the marriage process without thinking of doing premarital tests. To multiply and populate the earth is one of the missions that God has entrusted to man. To enjoy this happiness, it is essential to check and anticipate everything that could disturb the peace of the couple. Life together is already difficult because of the differences between spouses. It is therefore good to prevent any other element that will add to the difficulties.

As for MERGER (2004), the premarital examination remains the only possible means of controlling reproduction and must be conceived within the more general framework of information on lifestyle, sexuality and family planning. It is above all of great interest with regard to the research of transmissible affections since currently all medicine is moving towards prophylaxis, to put into practice the old principle: Prevention is better than cure.

Consider these statements: ... *Thank you. Premarital exams are new in our community. Previously the pastors just asked for the pregnancy test since it is not allowed to bless newlyweds with a pregnancy... "REP 1". Another respondent adds... But young people are worried and do everything to avoid these exams. They announce their wedding just some time before the set date... "REP 2". The other adds: ... For me, these examinations I can say that it is a favorable moment so that we can know our state of health... "REP 8".*

Regarding representation, the participants believe that the premarital medical examination does not represent much because it is God who protects, is an obstacle to the marriage of young people today, the premarital examinations are presented as a condemnation, finally, is comparable to the competition for admission to married life.

During the survey by MONGALI and Coll, (op cit), 70% of young people said they were concerned about postponing their marriage in the event of a problem. This leads to consider that, on a behavioral level misunderstood, or interpreted as expressing a lack of confidence in the future spouse, or even, a questioning of the relationship).

Compulsory until the end of 2007, for all couples wishing to marry. It consisted of a visit to a doctor and aimed to screen for risk factors or pathologies with a view to possible conception. At the end of the consultation, an established certificate issued

in the name of the law, given to each future spouse and the latter should be given to the civil registrar before the marriage so that it can be celebrated. The marriage was then to be celebrated the two months following its establishment (Le Goaziou and Figon, 2003).

On this subject, a participant declares: *... Good for us it does not represent anything in the sense that by the grace of God, we were spared... "REP. 12". A second says... It 's like a door which allows either to let pass for happiness or to prevent to pass in case of unfavorable results... "REP. 25".*

As for waiting with the Church, they expect the Church to be able to prepare young people early on the premarital medical examination and still recommend premarital examinations at the very beginning of the engagement.

For Berdem and Igabato (2006), premarital examinations remain almost non-existent and are rarely taken into account among the prerequisites for marriage. Although we talk about it in some circles, the majority of couples received at the hospital for the examination in question are unaware of its merits because they were not informed at the base. This task of informing, however, falls to religious leaders and civil status authorities who should send the engaged couple to the hospital for this purpose.

The others add that, we have acknowledged below that the premarital medical examination test and its results can frustrate applicants. It is therefore necessary that they receive beforehand a psychological and psychic preparation which can enable them to face this examination and its result well. This work falls to a certain extent to the parents of the betrothed, to the spiritual shepherds, to those in charge of the churches (pastors, priests, etc.) and to the civil status authorities.

These observations are supported by these verbatim: *... That the pastors ask those who are not yet committed so that he prepares the youth in general and the others in particular so that they demand them from their children before any commitment ... "REP. 11".*

...As long as we were with him all the time, he couldn't ask us in time but just a few days before the wedding so it's the most difficult moment ... "REP. 14".

Regarding their expectations from families, they have expectations that they have expressed in the following two ways: Parents must educate their children from an early age on medical examinations and also an awareness of youth on the merits of the premarital examination.

Today, many young people who rushed blindly into marriage without going through the ordeal of the premarital examination, find themselves contaminated

by their spouses and generally regret their sad fate. Others found themselves prematurely widowed, leaving in disarray HIV/AIDS orphans. AIDS therefore wreaks inestimable havoc.

Consider participant statements when he says : *... Let parents make it easier for the pastor to work from home. From an early age accustom children to general examinations not only for marriage, but for good health... "REP. 1 » Another speaks : ... Now our expectation that young people can accept these exams not only for marriage, but for his life ... « REP. 3".*

CONCLUSION

The Christians of Mbata Parish mayangiperceive the premarital medical examination as a new practice for contemporary brides; a source of concern and also a means of prevention.

Regarding representation, the participants believe that the premarital medical examination does not represent much because it is God who protects, is an obstacle to the marriage of young people today, the premarital examinations are presented as a condemnation, finally, is comparable to the competition for admission to married life.

To this, they expect the Church to be able to prepare young people early on the premarital medical examination and still recommend premarital examinations at the very beginning of the engagement. They also expect that parents should educate their children from an early age on medical examinations and also an awareness of the youth on the merits of the premarital examination. From all the above, we suggest that the authorities of the Church regularly advise the bride and groom to be examined before the wedding to secure the couples and the future offspring; and for future researchers to conduct a quantitative study of Christians' knowledge, attitude and practice of premarital examinations.

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