

THE EFFECT OF THE CUSTOMS AND NORMS ON FERTILITY:  
A Case Study of The Bemba People in Kasama District, Northern Zambia.

BY

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A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Population Studies

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby do declare that this dissertation “**The effect of the customs and norms on fertility: a case study of the Bemba people in Kasama District, Northern Zambia**” is my own work and has not previously been submitted for a Degree, Diploma or other qualification at either the University of Zambia or any other University in the world.

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**Date**

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**APPROVAL**

This Dissertation of **Moyo Stephen** has been approved as fulfilling the requirements or partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the **Degree of Master of Arts in Population Studies** of the University of Zambia.

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## ABSTRACT

The general objective of this study was to explain the ways by which cultural practices and norms adhered to by the Bemba people heighten their fertility. The study used a case-study research design to collect data using a stratified random sampling technique.

This inquiry specifically assessed and ascertained the social customs and norms followed by the Bemba people of Kasama with regard to reproductive practices. The study proved that fertility-promoting lessons were taught to the initiate girls (*Nacisungu*) that were secluded in a rite of passage called *Cisungu*. It is these pro-natalistic lessons that motivate them to have high fertility by way of causing them to desire large family size; to enter first marriage at an early age; and to prefer the use of the comparatively inefficient traditional birth control methods (*ifya ciBemba*) to modern scientific ones because they assert that modern ones *filaleta efyuulu munda* (they cause growths in wombs) leading to more incidences of obstetrics operations or caesarean delivery. They also say that modern contraceptives were so dangerous that *filaocha amani munda* (they burn ova in wombs of women). On the other hand some Bembas wait a short time before resuming sexual intercourse after birth of each child. For example some Bembas begin coitus immediately the wife heals after the birth of each child. Additionally a short duration of postpartum exclusive breastfeeding among Bembas in avoiding *ukuambula ebele* (contamination of the breast milk) in public, a combination of which end up leaving the lactating Bemba mother at risk of conceiving hence their high fertility levels. The study also demonstrated that other cultural pro-natalistic counsels were given to both the bride (*Nabwinga*) with the bridegroom (*Shibwinga*) during *Ukucindilwa* traditional rite of passage. The lessons hovered around *Nacisungu's* hygiene during her menstruation and how she was to avoid making men infertile. Similarly, *Nabwinga* and *Shibwinga* were taught on how sex (*ukupana cupo*) was to be done successfully in their new home.

It is hoped that findings of this study will help stake holders such as individuals, relevant government and private officials like socio-economic planners, monitors and evaluators of Health Programs in understanding past, current and future trends of population size, composition and growth in Kasama and the country of Zambia as a whole. Knowledge of this nature will help in bringing about mitigation of the many socio-economic ramifications that come as a result of having high fertility as prevailing among the Bemba in as far as bringing development to this part of Zambia is concerned.

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my Loving Mother Mary Kasamba Moyo in Livingstone. She saw me through my education from grade three up to the Masters level. You are so kind Mum, may God bless you. Continue being so good and the Lord will keep lifting our family up from glory to glory.

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