

UNDERSTANDING THE 'SMALL HOUSE' PHENOMENON IN SELECTED PARTS OF HARARE

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ABSTRACT

'Small house' has become an oft talked about phenomenon in Zimbabwe's urban space. The study explores the nature of 'small house' phenomenon in Harare, how individuals involved in this arrangement perceive their social categorisation and how they cope with other competing duties and societal expectations. The study adopts qualitative methodology involving the use of semi-structured interviews amongst participants recruited using purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. The 'small house' is a practice permitting a man to have lifelong secret erotic affairs with a woman, with the chances of having children accepted by the man. Rational Choice and Cruel Optimism models were utilized. The findings made herein show that inasmuch as the small house is a conscious art/ purposive behaviour, it is a co-dependent relationship rife with 'false' hope. Small house partners are effectively 'married' as the bond amid them carries the marriage meaning, committed themselves to their 'small housing' life. The never-ending search for fulfilment of 'unattainable' dreams, 'good life' appetite or social mobility prospects keeps the 'small house' adherents clinging to this phenomenon. The mystification of life precarity, emotive attachment and the optimistic habitus inherent in small housing is 'cruel' in keeping the members in 'problematic relationships' hoping for eventual miraculous pay offs, while it obscures one's alternative effort to prosperity. Because of the 'problematic' experiences in 'small house' relations, sometimes it is 'marriages' without love, love without sex, and sex without love- all messed up, for it has mixed aftermaths to the participants in terms of achievements, experiences and harms.

KEYWORDS: Attachment; Optimism; Outsideness; Precarity; Rational; Small House.

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the 'small house' phenomenon and its implications to participants. The phenomenon affects the society variously, hence, the study explores the meaning or self-perceptions that those individuals involved in the practice attach to their social standing and experiences with or within small houses as they interlink with wider changing socioeconomic and political contexts in which they are located. Studies by other researchers tend to emphasize on the negative consequences of this phenomenon to society. This work contributes to the understanding of the complex interconnections between sexual intimacies, desire and socioeconomic manipulation inherent in small house relationships. It generates knowledge regarding the meaning small house participants attach to their status as they interlink with wider shifting socioeconomic settings in which they are located, the level of fulfilment of the push factors that drive people into entering this living

arrangement, how ‘things’ appear and are experienced by those into it. Two theoretical models inform the study: [1]’s Rational theory and [2]’s Cruel Optimism model. It is grounded within qualitative research methodology utilizing in-depth interviewing technique with participants recruited through snowballing in Harare’s various residential areas.

A huge figure of town men is small housing [3], becoming part of the social and political discourse in Zimbabwe’s urban spaces and the phenomenon is not unique to Zimbabwe [4]. Myths and models signifying polyamorous (polygynous and polyandrous) conduct are worldwide [5], and the small house is found in several nations and referred to by different home-grown names [6], like concubines or mistresses in the West, Misyar (Saudi Arabia) Diriyanke/ Mbarane (Senegal) among others [7; 8; 9] respectively. Zimbabwe has not been spared by a looming polygynous marital conduct that is different from simple ‘extra-marital affair’, it is a long-term relationship and children could be born. The ‘small house’ is a practice permitting a man to have lifelong secret erotic affairs with a woman, with the chances of having children accepted by the man [3]. In such relationships, [5] used the term ‘sexualove’ to define the incorporation of love and sex.

Traditionally, among the Shona people in Zimbabwe, a man could have big and small houses. This is probably where the ‘small house’ notion comes in today’s urban areas that men are having other family unions not known initially by the first wife but eventually this may be known or left until the death of the man when the ‘small house’ will appear with her children. The word ‘small house’ comes from bygone polygyny practice in which men have senior and junior wives but now denoting any single woman in a covert lasting relationship with a married man [10], thus driven by the need to re-establish patriarchy. It is a common talk that some women in these unions may have other partners as they need different men to service their different needs; one could be for rentals, the other for clothes, yet another for food and inter-alia. Research by [4] and other researchers into this phenomenon indicates its prevalence and the reasons for its existence. A woman may be a small house for own ‘conviction-social status’ and sex pleasure but at one end, the relationship may be purely economic as either partner is an economic provider [11]. On the far extreme, love notions, fantasies, socio- political contexts all play a role in describing diverse forms in which any particular small house union is molded [4]. Thus, small house is a multidimensional occurrence, impossible to separate any single sociocultural, economic, demographic or social condition as having caused it. The phenomenon cut across social strata suggesting that one’s socioeconomic status has nothing to do with small housing sexual behaviour [11].

People live in a ‘re-cycling’ era, nothing dies once and for all [12]. Probably, Mapoto unions studied by [13] are being re-cycled to small house unions. The manifestation of the small house phenomenon in Zimbabwe befitted a street jargon in the early 2000s. It became ubiquitous during the era of economic and political calamities that then created social chaos in relations [3], conveying

a growth in multiplex simultaneous partnerships, extramarital relationships and intergenerational sex [4]. During this age, the 'small house' really resembled a quasi-polygynous union, women having men supporting them as secretive 'second wives' by renting a room elsewhere. The phenomenon has endured for so long because it is flexible to adjust to the demands of capitalism and tradition [11] (the nuclear family and traditional component/ polygynous lifestyle). Besides of the stigmatised nature of the phenomenon, secretly people continue engaging in these unions. The practice of women bartering sex/ marital relation for material or non-material gain is worldwide proliferating [7]. Thus, the rise of 'small houses' from diverse individuals of varied social strata remains a great area of research.

Definitional Issues

Researchers such as [6, 3 and 10] seem to concur on the relative permanence of small house relationships. [6: 1] defines 'small house' as informal, long term and 'covert' erotic relationship with a woman who is not a man's legitimate mate, practiced in a 'small house' a smaller kind of the main house (formal bridal) in another housing area. In some cases, children are born from these unions and the husband secretly paying bride wealth for the women [3]. Thus, contrary to [6]'s 'legitimacy' views, 'small house' is official marriage if the first wife has not been married under Chapter 5: 11 of the marriage Act. Marriage may not only involve the ceremony performance, family negotiations and exchange of vows to render it legitimate [7]. Thus, polygynous types of marriages entered under customary unregistered marriages do not qualify 'small houses' as illegitimate at all, but rather, accepted in light of the provision of tradition and customary Marriage Act in Zimbabwe and Africa. It seems there is consensus in the literature that what weigh heavily in the definitional equation of 'small houses' is the parameters. These parameters include the fact that it is secretly practiced, regular sexual relations, permanence; one partner has an official partner, separate residence, children born and recognized by the man, locally and globally qualifies some similar but distinct marital relations to 'small houses'. Based on these parameters, it becomes evident that small house-like unions based on quasi-polygynous and quasi-polyandrous relationships existed in colonial and post-colonial Africa. As highlighted before, some similar but distinctive relationships meeting the small house parameters are ubiquitous.

The 'Small House' type Unions in Various Parts of the World

[8] in her study in Saudi Arabia found out that, secret and unregistered 'misyar' marriages amid a married man and unmarried woman are common mainly among the Sunnis. Just like Zimbabwe's 'small house' unions, the misyar/ mut'a marriages need no witness, nor registration required. The difference is that, in misyar unions, partners first agree on the life span of the relationship, a missing aspect in 'small houses'. The life span of the mut'a contract is determined by the wishes of the partners, ranges from an hour to 99 years [8], and the 99-year symbolises permanence. This paper is concerned with small house in Zimbabwe, providing knowledge on types of individuals involved in

small housing that can be entered into a number of ways, in affective transactional or otherwise. It concerns the extent of satisfaction of co-residential courting providing participants with all of the profits of sharing a secret home, passionate, bodily and every day.

In Nigeria, a similar practice to small housing is prevalent, though vice-versa in a pseudo de fact polyandrous form. "In Northern Nigeria several people practice clandestine 'secondary marriages' where a wife gets married and lives with another husband without divorcing her primary husband" [7: 19]. As Zimbabwe's 'small housing' men sometimes secretly 'officialise' (bride-wealth payment) their 'small house' relationships, and sometimes the big house come to know about the union [3], 'secondary marriage' in Nigeria is officialised by the wife's new spouse's bride wealth imbursement to her family and eventually the primary husband come to know about the secondary husband. Occasionally, the wife would return to, and briefly stay with her primary husband [7]. [7] coined a term 'cicisbeism', a female version of concubinage where a woman would have a secret sexual partner in a regular and lasting fashion outside marriage. This study contributes to the 'small house' knowledge in Zimbabwe, its structure and the participants' expectations within and from the 'small house' union.

Motives for Participating in Small House Unions

[4] utilised post-structuralism perspective and with this perspective, she understood 'small house' participants' actions as made within a social reality by macro forces or social discourses. The model views the complexities in 'small house' union as unconscious pleasures, worries and desires. This theory omits conscious, agency or reflexivity in the acting of 'small house' identity. Yet, the motivation of 'small housing' has some rationale as a basis for entering into it. [7; 9] and others have alluded to the benefits of these unions as well as their pitfalls. Locally, [4; 10] and others have done explorative studies of the same phenomenon. True, as rational theorist like [1] has pointed out; there is definitely an element of cost-benefit-analysis going on when people choose to enter into these unions. Rational theory is a means-to-end theory; telling that whatever a person does, is aimed at achieving the desired end. Humans are cognitive actors who weigh means and ends, costs and benefits, and make a rational decision.

Women's Motives and Perceived Paybacks of Small Housing

Extensive work points to socioeconomic incentives [6; 3] as contributing to 'small house'. Being a 'small house' provisionally provide some women with contentment of home and monetary backing, providing men with the 'comforts missing from home' [3]. Such relationship is poverty driven [6; 10], but the notion that woman hang on man for survival is not the one or finest approach to read 'small house' [4]. There cannot be a solitary explanation of the cause of a 'small house' given the difficulty of the nature and participants' lived experiences in these relationships [14]. However, there are central likenesses in 'small house', such as the point that the women are involved in erotic

affairs with married men and that, all women are after some form of individual gratification or benefit. [6]’s economic assumption seems in solidarity with [7], who carried a study on secret quasi-polygamous unions (similar to small houses) in Africa and Asia and found out that women enter into these relationships for socioeconomic reasons. The current work seeks to generate knowledge regarding the meaning small house women attach to their status as they interlink with wider shifting socioeconomic settings in which they are located.

In Zimbabwe, socioeconomic and political quandaries contributed to some women’s involvement in survival transactional sex [3]. [10]’s study on small houses focused mainly on young women’s small house motivations, arguing that their erotic involvement with men is primarily survival reasons. While some economic stressors are met in small houses, [10] seems overlooking the fact that it’s not only young poor women who are small housing. [4] found out that the economically stable women were small housing, yet not survival but for other reasons. The secret permanent marital relations in Akan-Ghana are a result of women trying to access large material resources from their partners [7] and not survival. Acknowledging the rational social exchange matrixes, this work goes beyond the analysis of the sex exchange for economic gains, examining the degree of the equilibrium of exchange and accumulation. The work provides an understanding of the complex interconnections between sexual intimacies, desire and socioeconomic manipulation inherent in small house relationships. It is about understanding the level of fulfilment of the push factors that drive people into entering this living arrangement, which thus shapes the process of small house experiences.

As stressed above, many small house studies in Zimbabwe have essentially been attentive to the poverty matrixes. Recent scholarship on small house like [4] has started interrogating the economic motive. She focused on middle class economically stable women to understand women’s sexual conducts in Zimbabwe displaying that the chemistry of sex and economics is not just a direct poverty argument, disempowerment or generous sexuality. These women could take care of their needs as well as those of the man. In some cases, these women are looking for a lasting relationship or even marriage [11]. [4]’s ‘queue-sera’ small house type expected to have children and marriage formalisation, hoping that their relationships could progress into a formal polygynous marriage and become legitimate second wives. With this in mind, one or another motive of this present research is to extend the hopeful consideration, what [15] calls ‘promise of happiness’; to empirical experiences of small house participants. The work contributes to the understanding of small houses, not only vis-à-vis the motives but answering whether the institution is problem free to the actors, how ‘things’ appear and are experienced by those into it.

Drives and Benefits for men in Small Housing

Literature consensus is that, for men, small houses provide ‘peace’, ‘affection’, ‘romance’, ‘pleasure’ and everything missing from the first wives

Small house affords men with some peace and different from the formal mate and visiting relatives, stress free moments in a space one is pampered, not bombed by financial issues, a space where one renews the affective dimensions of a relationship forgetting about being a husband or family man [4: 111].

[11] argues that male participants depict an image of ‘small house’ as an institution of milk and honey with limitless socioeconomic-cultural and political possibilities where men rest psychologically. The small house is a ‘painkiller and a shock absorber mechanism’ to the difficulties found in the official family [11]. Sex is a sparking device, with romance as means to an end [16]. This resonates well with [17] and what [18] calls bounded authenticity that men search for an interpersonal connection seen as candid desire, pleasure and emotive ties with sex workers. However, [4] and [11] seem to have missed the point of power issues within these unions. Thus, the divergence with this work is its concern on the politics involved amid small house participants.

The literature demonstrates that small house unions operate based on mutual understandings and missing legal support, thus, making them vulnerable to breaking-up if mutual understanding amid partners ends. In Senegal, [9] found out that the Mbarane unions (small house) were based on mutual understanding. Like the [4]’s middle class small house in Zimbabwe, [9] detected that some Diriyankes were business ladies, wealthy and able to compliment men with money and hand-outs. These women were specialists in the seduction art, knowing how to make their ‘husband’ vibrate with pleasure, doing it well making even the most devoted religious specialists forget the time for prayers [9: 304]. The two seem silent to the fact of ‘balancing the competing social duties’. Thus, this study concerns the small housing men as men of the market and home [19], and men’s balancing relational tricks to cope up with other social duties. Inversely put, a good understanding of their challenges and perceptions towards their social categorisation helps to understand the small house institute.

Negative Narratives of Small House

Literature shows that most researchers have tended to be critical of small house. The narrative portrayed by researchers like [6] and [10] is that small house practice is a danger to society. They assume that small house is causal to social ills while ignoring [20] ideology idea and participants’ agency that shapes the nature of small house institution. Not only [6] and [10] perceptibly make assertions about the effects of the small house that are very much limited to the community, they also talk of its impact to the control of HIV and AIDS, arguing that it is a causative aspect in spreading HIV/ AIDS in Zimbabwe. This is based on the predictable claim about the hazards it poses to society. Nevertheless, the missing point is that, not only small housing that contributes to HIV. Thus, the divergence with this work is its concern in providing knowledge on what [16] calls

ontological security, partial, confined, realised or not, or the nature of 'security' in 'small house'.

Literature has shown that, small house type relationships like the misyar unions in Saudi Arabia, socioeconomically and politically affect the urban 'inside' marriages (main house) [8]. In her study in Nigeria, [7] concluded that problems associated with these relationships are vast and diverse. Due to these problems, small house women exercise agency to create a negotiating man. However, how do these small house women achieve creating a negotiating man in a patriarchal society like Zimbabwe? [21] qualifies the unusual conduct of men in any marital relation to concoctions by spouses trapping men to their side through charms, a kudyiswa/ kupfuhwirwa process (to be blinded) in Zimbabwe. Under such setup, "out of their partners, women make persons who are docile and useable to their interests, needs and agendas" [21: 90]. However, whereas mupfuhwira is seen as detrimental to men, it is functional to the administering 'partner', ensuring that she remains in the relationship. Similarly, [9] argues that men are advised to relate precautionally, not carelessly eating food prepared by any woman for if they want to keep men, all mbarane women cook, there is likelihood of charms, to capture and cage love. Visits to marabouts (medicine man) are prevalent among women, and early deaths among men with a diriyanke/ mbarane are sometimes credited to 'stomachs swollen with grigris administered by diriyankes wanting to ensure that their men are faithful and generous with money [9]. A diriyanke hunting for a husband or disappointed by man, still looks for another, hoping for Mr 'Perfect' [9]. This current study goes beyond the stratagems involved in keeping small houses relations intact and attempts to understand optimism inherent in small houses.

[22] is more negative about the small houses' effects to traditional family and children's socialisation process and development. [23] claim that small house is an insecure union. In Ghana, [7] observed that, women in 'outside marriages' tended to be long-term very insecure and left destitute if the cash paying 'husband' lose interest in them. [6] and [3] have not attended to the idea of relational attachment. They missed the point of relational optimistic attachment. [4] and [11] pay lip services to the 'commitment' idea but then overlook any of the implications of this relational optimistic attachment, may be on the assumption that the small houses' advantages outweigh the negatives. Thus, this study contributes to whether this belonging and attachment to the 'small house' institute in light of its challenges and dangers of many negative effects [10], is cruel or not to the participants. This contributes to the small house participants' 'designations' [24], understanding of the common attachments to 'stressful' self-conformist lives and normativity taken as an optimistic, progressing and disjointed bunch of hegemonic promises about the present and the future functions of social belonging by small house participants.

On the grounds of various studies [11] and [22], among others, the small house union is perceived as modern urban polygyny. [22] argues that small house is purely a euphemism for polygamy. The

small house is a modification of polygyny, a ‘hidden or veiled urban polygyny’ [11], a modern version of a junior wife [10]. Studies on polygamy type relationships reported more on women and children’s experiences than men [25]. [26] work talks of women and children’s experiences in Christian polygamous marriages. Little is known about the men’s experiences in ‘polygamous’ families [25], particularly small house. Rejecting the tradition of focusing on women, this study is about both the diverse and unclear meanings and management styles around the small house as spaces of intimacy and adjustment, threat and safety, comfort and likelihood. It is about the on-going prospect of good life within small house, making possible imagining living the ‘proper’ life.

The literature seems falling short on the ‘hopefulness’ aspect inherent in small house unions and the participants’ self-definition, especially the strategies employed to balance their relationship with other competing social duties and expectations. How the participants make sense of their situation is important if an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon is to be gained. This work fills the gap by unravelling the intimate definitions and analysis given by the small house participants for their lived-in situations and by exploring the nature of ‘small house’ and level of satisfaction within small house unions, which therefore shapes their attachment, and providing better appreciative factors encouraging small house participants to cling to that living arrangement.

Research Methodology: Qualitative

The nature of the study called for qualitative methodology that accommodated narratives of how the small house actors conceptualized their marital terrain and beliefs. Qualitative research is about the opinions, revealing the logic of lived experiences, feelings of individuals generating subjective data and describing social occurrences as they happen naturally [27]. Epistemologically, this researcher’s position is that, in qualitative methodology, data is contained within the small housing people’s perspectives and because of that, this researcher engaged them in collecting data. Qualitative methodology is exploratory and interpretive in nature, produces data expressed in words from the small house respondents who had real experiences and the method penetrated the frames of the meanings within which actors operated allowing an understanding of narratives given by participants themselves [28]. With this method, the researcher produced the data that was ‘rich’ in detail and closer to the informants’ perceived ‘small house’ world. Thus, qualitative paradigm is imperative in narrative research as it prices the objective of learning the meaning that partakers hold about small house phenomenon [29].

A qualitative research is “a located activity locating the researcher in the world, consisting of explorative and interpretive practices making the world visible” [30: 3]. This narrative approach enabled the researcher to place certain balance of power back in the informants’ hands, thus reversing the traditional power relations between researchers and researched. Interviews always take place within power relations and part of researcher’s use of qualitative methodology was to

overcome power imbalance. A narrative interview leaves it up to the interviewee in what order and which topics are covered [31], thus, qualitative research is moulded, to a substantial extent, by the 'subjective perspective' [32: 11] of the small house informants and their testament shaped the course of the research. This methodology allowed the elicitation of rich texts what [33] terms thick description as well as thematic and structural understanding of the small house practice. However, qualitative methodology relies much on the researcher skills [34], so it is attacked for failing to meet high reliability/ replicability standards.

Gaining Entry

Sometime in early 2018, when I was taking a drink at Spaceman shopping centre, two men discussed the small house issue and I joined them. During the discussion, one man hinted that he was waiting for his small housewife's friend coming from Utsanana polyclinic where his partner in small house had gone for delivery. He further highlighted that the woman he was waiting for is also a small house. Upon her arrival, introductions were made and she was at liberty to express her opinions and her small status. The researcher befriended her. During the fieldwork, as the researcher had prior interactions with individuals who met the inclusion criteria, purposively these were the initial respondents. The researcher asked that woman to connect him to her small housing friends; she linked him to one woman who was in Glen View high-density suburb and the sample size kept growing through the referral system.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

There is no sampling frame/ database for 'small houses' in Harare thus rendering probabilistic sampling procedures unrealistic. A sample is a part of the population under study. A sample is a subset/ portion of the research population selected to participate in a study representing the whole research population [35]. The study recruited ten participants conveniently through purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. [36] define sampling as a process of collecting part of a population in order to represent the entire population. The distinctive varieties of these non-probability sampling approaches increased the richness of the data.

Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling is a method where participants are selected for a specific purpose, their distinct position, familiarity and knowledge [37]; hence known or judged good information source. The small housing persons were selected for the vital small housing information they provided. Purposive sampling is selecting a sample based on one's own knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of one's research aims [38]. This technique enabled the researcher to use personal judgement to select respondents who had small housing experiences that helped to answer the research questions and meet the study objectives. Thus, [28] considers purposive sampling the most important kind of non-probability sampling to identify the primary research participants.

Snowball Sampling

Snowball sampling way was used to identify participants for it was difficult to identify and openly recruit small house participants due to the ‘stigma’ attached to it. Snowballing is a technique of escalating the sample by requesting an informant to recommend others for interviewing [38]. The researcher requested the purposive sample interviewees to refer or give, at their discretion, the names and contact details of small housing persons to be included in the study. The researcher’s initial participants were those whom he knew, who had openly disclosed their small house status. Snowballing sampling is the process of accumulation in which each subject suggests other subjects [38]. Given the sensitivity of the investigated matter, snowballing was worthwhile since each participant helped with the location of other members of the sample whom they knew.

Data saturation was reached at ten participants. Boyd cited by Groenewald [39:11] regards two to ten study subjects as adequate to reach saturation and [29] recommends lengthy interviews with up to ten people for a qualitative study. The study captured narratives of six women and four men aged between 30 and 56, regardless of their wide range social attributes. This age group was considered right for the study given that most of the small housing in Harare occurs between these age ranges [4] and were mature enough to understand issues of sexuality and small housing. Older participants were preferred because they had been in small house or marital issues (formal or informal) for a long time hence had more information and experience about small house. More women than men were sampled because women are normally less represented or misrepresented in social science researches [7] and demographically, women outnumber men in Zimbabwe [40]. Inasmuch as a larger sample was desirable, it was unlikely to select a larger sample owing to the nature and the sensitiveness of the research topic as individuals consider marital/ sexual issues too personal. More-so it was unwelcomed to have a larger sample than this as in qualitative research people perceptions cannot be quantified.

Data Collection Tools

Data collection tools are research instruments of data collection used to conduct a research [28]. Qualitative interviewing was valuable for probing people’s experiences of small housing life events, permitted in depth exploration and a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. In depth-semi-structured interviews were utilized to gather data from the ‘small house’ participants on their perceptions and relational strategies. The method was largely ‘user-driven’ with the subject matter in charge of the respondents.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The main basis of research was the primary data and to obtain open-ended responses, flexibility and uniformity, semi-structured interviews were utilised. Semi-structured interview is a data collection

method in a research, involving direct personal contact with the respondent who is asked questions that are not stringent, pre-determined and allows respondent to share experiences centred on mutual trust with the researcher [41]. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews generated data on small house participants' experience, feelings and socio-psychological support to their stigmatised social standing enabled the researcher to gather as much information as possible on the topic. The central concern here was that the researcher wanted to understand the small house world from the standpoint of the participants, rather than as an outsider looking in. Therefore, this data collection tool provided more in-depth probing into the answers given by the small house participants. With this method, the researcher obtained more specific and detailed information by comparing the facial expressions and responses of small house participants. The participants stated their own definitions to explain the small house practice and suggest their own solutions to questions. However, the Hawthorne effect occurred as the presence of researcher somehow affected the respondents as sometimes, they tried to tell storybook issues. The observer effect and close rapport resulted from connections with studied small house members had tremendous strain on the researcher, both in and out of the field setting.

Repeat Interviews

Readers value the number of participants interviewed in a study [42], but hardly consider how many times each interviewee is interviewed. Despite fairly the short fieldwork period, some concerns led to a repeat-interview design as single interviews, though useful, provided a snapshot of real experience and not providing robust account essential for the holistic understanding of the small house phenomenon. Crucial was a notion that interview is interpersonal where parties reciprocally influence each other and meanings are co-constructed, thus repeat interview design improved the interviewer-interviewee relationship, improving trust, leading to noble study results as the second or third interviews allowed the follow up issues of enquiry or 'helpful feedback', seeking more clarity on previously discussed topics. Repeat interviews is apt for study dealing with stigmatised people and sensitive issues or study aimed at capturing experiences and perceptions or on study needful of trust amid the researcher and researched [43].

Carrying Out Interviews

As the semi-structured interviews were like a conversation among acquaintances, small house participants broadly expressed their views on the practice; freely developed on the topic giving their personal opinions, explaining and elaborating using examples of their own experiences. The research questions elicited stories, feelings, and memories not personal theories and thoughts of small house. A good research question arouses memories of events that have been lived through rather than thoughts about the phenomenon [44:38]. The semi-structured interviews were organised around a set of general topic questions with a prior probe designed to obtain additional insight into actors' interpersonal and intra-psychic scripts. For clarity, a series of follow up cross-referencing questions

and prompts to structure and focus the interview conversation followed on each interview. This was done to make sure that the interviewee's understanding of what will have said is the intended meaning, checking that aspect of the study was clear, ensuring rigour in interviewing and clarification of the experiences recounted. In each interview, the researcher sake to probe deeply, drawing out the personal story of each participant's small housing familiarities, opening up and ascertaining the meaning and dimensions of the phenomenon.

To ensure that participants narrated all their experiences using a language that they were comfortable with, data collection was done in Shona, the participants' first language. Interviews were held at confidentially agreed places to enable freedom of expression and privacy, taking an average of one-two hours. The research scenery offered a chance to engage the actors in more in-depth conversation on small house issues. On the second and third encounter with the respondents, it was easier to address sensitive questions. In qualitative interview, 'it is literally an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest, where investigator tries to apprehend the world from the subjects' viewpoint [42: 1-2]. Therefore, the focus was on 'what goes on within' the participants and got them describe their feelings, capabilities and convictions in a language as free as from the constructs of the intellect and society as possible.

Repeat interviews style provided 'thick' descriptions [33] and holistic understandings of 'small housing'. Four participants (two men and two women) were interviewed three times over the 5-month period, six (two men and four women) were interviewed twice. On the first interviews as a stranger participants talked more freely because the researcher did not know them, but, being a stranger, somehow led to protected replies. First, I was a stranger and over the fieldwork period, I became less of a stranger. Thus, the second interviews were very dissimilar from initial ones as we were more comfortable and trusting each other and the respondents offered more and I probed less. The personal and possibly sensitive topics I wanted to present made repeat interviews a must as it was impossible talking about 'small housing' without speaking about sexual issues; and I wished not to exclude certain topics from the discussions. Without repeat interviews, the research findings and analysis would indeed have been different.

Data Analysis Procedure

The phenomenological data analysis was used. As [38] advised, the researcher goes through the data collected from the research questions, highlighting significant statements and quotes. Then, "clusters of meaning" [29], were developed into themes. Thematic data analysis approach was chosen because it averted unnecessary repetition in the recording of findings, and for [45], this is common in many case approaches. The researcher then employed textural description of participants' narratives. Then, imaginative variation/ structural-fulfilment description was employed whereby the participants' perceptions were described. The final stage was the presentation of the invariant structure (essence)

consisting of the description of participants' social categorization experience, whose advantage, for [28] is to bring a better understanding of lived experiences. Overall, this was done through the systematic organization of the findings from semi-structured interviews, writing responses into topics identified from the recurring data.

Research Findings

STRUCTURING OF 'SMALL HOUSE' UNIONS:

Residency, 'Openness' or Hidden Union

Women in this study presented complex narratives about the openness and secrecy of their unions. Either, the small house relationship was masked from the public and the families of parties concerned or known but not sanctioned or known and acknowledged. There seems to be convergence from the interviews that women in 'small house' relations did not tell all their relatives that they are 'living in' 'married', but their kinsfolks knew of their small house status. Asked whether her man had introduced her to the family members, Fungi said:

No.... by coincidence, we met his nephew in town...but at first, neither did I know maiguru (official wife) nor other family members. However, after the birth of our two children, some of his relatives are now aware of me as well as my relatives are aware of him, though they have varying views regarding my house (small house status) ... Some relatives condemned the 'house' while others find it right.

For some partners in 'small house', safeguarding the secrecy of their unions took precedence over the ambition to have children. These types of unions were childless and the partners had their own children from previous unions and felt at liberty to have no progenies together.

The small house arrangements were varying from conditions where the man relocated into the woman's house and recognised himself as the household head by subsidising monetarily, or asked the woman to look for another accommodation, for which he paid the rental and utilities. Two female respondents concurred that, at first their partners relocated to their (females) houses, but later they changed the residency all together. A 39-year Glen Norah woman in small house union stressed that she relocated from Mufakose to Glen Norah and her man was in Budiriro and the distance amid the locations was about eight kilometres. Stella a colleague of her arrived whilst we were about to conclude the discussion and I learnt that she was also in small housing. Asked to comment on her relationship, she jokingly said:

Ini ndini ndakatoroora murume (man became a bride) because he relocated and joined me in my household. You see, it is very unusual to find somebody who has had one sexual mate for entire life....my 'husband' is different from one of previous relationship I quitted because he failed to

satisfy much of my expectations.

Reproduction and Productivity in Small House Unions

The research found out that some of the unions produced children. The decision to procreate depended on reasons for engaging in the union. For example, if both partners needed a child or the female-partner in small house union needed a man's financial support could have children with him to cement the relationship and stake a claim on his property. A 47-year-old man with a 30-year-old partner who previously was their house maid said: My small house resides in Mabvuku, she now has a boy child and my wife has four girls. Asked whether they fell in love while she was still their house maid, Cabin said:

I feel humiliated my wife, a civil servant, kumuparika (polygyny union) with her maid... I am paying rentals for my small house and I intent to open her tuck-shop since I have already secured a cabin and a place to fit it.

Cabin stressed that the money he got from other income sources is channelled to the upkeep of his extra partner. Asked if he was free to give the mobile number of his partner, with an astonish face, he asked why, to which I told him of my intentions to interview her. He provided the number, made a call requesting for an appointment with her. She agreed to meet me the following week and interviews were conducted in her partner's car at his work place where he could observe us talking but not necessarily hearing our conversation. Asked how she felt of her marital status, Ropo scoffed those who condemn the unions saying:

I have been in this relationship for three years and no longer think of anything as I eat and wear what I want. Now my child at two owns a stand in Harare, zvinokonekwa navakawanda (many are failing) probably you don't own one (jokingly). Being his only son, I inherit his inheritance (laughing) through my son who I deliberately conceived

However, for some women who enjoyed financial independence, and had their own children, they did not need children for economic reasons. An economically independent woman who seemed to be an entrepreneur stressed that she had remained single for long time and had resolved to have one child for life, as she was satisfied with just having a partner.

The research established that the economic base of the small house union varied subject to precise circumstances and mainly the women entered the small house union partly for money did not always get what they bartered for or assured by their partners. In some cases, problems occurred and both partners contributed towards the productive activities of the 'house' but the man was expected to provide more, though some men did not disclose their capital to their partners. One female cross

border Saru aid:

Though I disclose my profits to him after sales, he does not communicate his earnings, when I ask him he simply say he has nothing. All the same, he will bring something to meet the needs of our family. I don't get everything I expect from him, but I know that just as fleeting illness is as illness of time, so the relational problems, zvichaita chete (all will be well).

The spouses in 'small house' sometimes contributed towards a joint budget while in other circumstances preferred individual budgets, having independent sources of income to supplement the insufficient contributions received from their men or known incomes. Rudo stressed that when it comes to look for money, as a couple they were as free as birds for her partner has to look for alternative income sources not known by amaiguru (formal wife) because she accounted for every cent appearing on the pay slip.

Mapping a Typology of Women Involved in Small Houses Unions

The types of women in small house unions varied from those that were once married or not, mothers or not, employed in the public-private sector or self-employed. The self-employed women engaged in individual income generating activities like cross-border trading and entrepreneurship exercised a level of autonomy over the resource use produced from these activities, their individual returns were mainly spending on their own consumption needs and own children. Women in 'small housing' who were somehow economically empowered did not want a man for financial support, but to fulfil sexual needs, companionship and in some cases having children. These women indicated that their major challenge was that their erotic relationships did not last beyond two years because men felt threatened with them and preferred younger poorer women.

The previously divorced, widowed, or having their own children, these women in 'small house' viewed the relationships as their second proving chance, an opportunity to end up with a marriage. Such women assumed that the new bond could restore their dignity and help them regain self-confidence. These women were open to their men about their history. Asked to comment on the state of his relationship, Ticha said:

My wife had been married before, she has a lifetime of training and now knows what is expected in the house. ...now knows what to expect from baba (husband), knows when something is not as it should be. Because of that, our relationship is surviving without any major misunderstandings and I don't think ticharambana (breaking-up).

Gender Roles and Power Relations in Small House Unions

The research unearthed that power relations and gender roles within the small house unions are

similar to traditional patriarchal family where a woman is expected to do the domestic chores. Role differentiation benefitted both parties. A man as 'presumed head' of the household performed the husband duties and on decision-making process, most female respondents stressed that they suggested for a man to approve but on rare cases could their suggestions be rejected. It was further found out that a child of a small house union provided power to the mother to control the man through varied means. Fungi said:

Having two boy children made known our relationship as it vested me power and a means of participating in the continuity of his family name and traditions.

Fungi stressed that when her partner was rarely coming to her home, she threatened to tell his official wife and going to court for maintenance claims and as a result, their relationship was normalised. On consumption related issues, better offs female partners were de facto breadwinners who made spending and consumption decisions. Two female respondents seemed concurring that they made decision on what to eat and how to spend their finances.

Female respondents perceived small house status as advantageous, more open relationship since they were 'married' than none and they retained some independence in everyday life. Some women in 'small housing' highlighted that they did not consult their partners before spending money. These respondents perceived their status as both materially and socially important. Materially, they depended on their mating partner to access resources and economic needs- rentals, food, etc. Socially, they defined themselves as married and as mothers and wives. Their perceptions were that the small house status was better than 'formal' marriage for it allowed them to avoid facing problematic issues inherent in legal marriage. Jane a degreed respondent known to some of her partner's relatives stressed that:

...because of modernity, marriage modes have reformed and any style that joint two parties together qualifies to be called marriage. In one way or the other, we are in an unregistered customary marriage...not accepted by civil law but known by tradition.

The research found out that sometimes 'small houses' are 'marriages' without love, love without sex, and sex without love- all messed up. On the second encounter, Jane stressed sensitive issues leading this researcher to request for her partner's mobile number. She said laughing, haaa shuwa here, haa handioni chakaipa (sure, I don't see any problem) and she gave me the number. I phoned her man who was a taxi driver and made an appointment for 11: 00. This couple was in their late thirties (Jane) and mid-fifties (Taxi) and have been together for six years, with two children. The couple had the traditional 'till death do us part' agreement, but from the separate discussions held; it was evident that neither partner was sexually satisfied. Taxi lamented that Jane was no longer

sexually appetising and that he was afraid of leaving the relationship for a variety of reasons. Jane highlighted that her biological clock was ticking when she decided submitting into a small house union with Taxi. She emphasised that Taxi was a good provider and passionate father but prefers soccer to sexual intimacy. Jane's increasing sexual frustration and loneliness had her fantasizing about having an affair, but she was afraid of ending up 'divorced'. She said:

Superficially, we look like a perfect couple but I would leave in a heartbeat if it were not the sons of ours. I don't want to hold my partner prisoner and I don't want to be caged either. However, I hope this will be well one day.

SELF PERCEPTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS IN SMALL HOUSES:

Demonstrating Masculinity

Persons in 'small house' expressed a level of discomfort with the way this union is perceived by public and despite the small house labels attached by society, for them, 'small housing' makes sense. Remarking on 'small house', John gave a monogamy-mono-cropping analogy:

Individuals are not certainly monogamous, if they were, they would mate once for life and never again do it. Insisting that everyone stick to big house is akin to mono cropping in farming where farmers plant acres with just one crop, destroying the complex interrelated assortment of species that coevolved healthily, viable ecosystem over many generations. Listen Alex, this is the ecology of intimate relationships.

Generally, men perceived their 'small housing' status as only achieved by talented individuals, viewed themselves as talented people. Men liked sharing love and sexuality with more than one lover and sharing love was not only by choice, but seemed more of an uncontrollable drive for the excitement and sexual juice. Ronnie a male respondent said:

The basic trait among successful small house marriage and us in it is that we have a talent for intimate relationships. Macheso has a gift for music, and others are natural footballers. I have a gift for relating, for giving and receiving love. If one is empathic and kind, enjoying sharing life's pleasure and sorrows with multiple female lovers, then he has a talent for relating intimacy. Without this talent, it can be a struggle to handle one meaningful relationship even yekumba chaiyo (official wife).

Requested to comment on having multiple sexual partners, Cabin laughed saying:

I am very comfortable.... I find that there is something missing in me when I have one wife.... I feel like when I limit myself to one woman, I feel as if that I am in a cage.... It's almost like it does not

feel like love to say that I am with one woman. I feel that I deny myself being open with other God given women and that excludes sexuality.... I am denying something that is quite natural to me, handinganamati (fail to worship).

Jealousy, Contentment and Self-Perception among Female Partners

The research established that despite the women's small house status and that they are in love with a man having his first wife already, these women felt jealous. When Rudo was asked about the degree of emotion and attachment to her partner, she leaped into speaking about the emotive truths of her most painful experiences of jealousy as if she was diving into a pool in an oasis in a dry desert. Jokingly, she concluded:

I love him so much, so much attached to him. I would rather die or see him dead than know that he has someone else besides amaiguru and me. Ndingatomuindira kwamadzibaba Mhozi (Moses) or kun'anga chaiko (consult a white garment prophet or a medicine man).

The research further established that despite their positive perception of their social standing, the women in 'small house' felt lonely and isolated, for they were not interacting with the extended family members. At the individual level the most disadvantage female partners identified was that small house union deprived them joy of dressing as brides and having a show off memorable wedding. Some female respondents stressed that they hoped to marry and meet with other relatives, but their partners were not prepared for that. Ropo aid:

In this union, you do not know the majority of the relatives. As a woman and a mother to my 'husband's' only son, I want to go all the family gatherings with my child, but the man has problems with that and he does not allow this to transpire.

The bond between the partners in 'small house' carried the meaning of marriage as both parties committed themselves to their 'family', leading independent lives conforming to their perceptions and convictions. Despite the non-payment of bride wealth, female partners explained that their relationships were not different from the formalised ones as the romantic language and personal arrangement in the small house institution were similar to official marriage. These women perceived their marital position as not more changed from official wives, and took pride of themselves as tacticians good man handlers. Fungi a female respondent of six years small housing experience asked:

Brother, how different am I from his wife at home? Majority of people disregard small house, but typically only a smaller part of these population does not actually practice it. Our marriage is just like maiguru's (official wife), when I am with him I call him 'daddy' 'sweetheart', and he too calls

me 'sweetie', 'mamma', showing that we are both his wives. Is six years not marriage? She asked and burst into laughter.

Male and female respondents concurred that they were in a polygynous marriage structure. A 47-year old John with two children from 'small housing' stressed that both official and private unions involve one living with an intimate partner. He concluded his tales saying:

We are today's polygynous marriage couples and small house union is a 'normal' family since it is a regular and lifelong sexual union. We have children hence it's an alternative reproduction mode in society that provides socio-emotional security to the off springs and us especially at old age.

The Fulfilment of Small Housing Promises

The research established that there seems to be a consensus among participants that not all expectations are achieved in 'small housing'. Women who entered 'small house' mainly for material gains could get it but sometimes sexually starved, and could remain in the relationship fearing losing the benefits and hoping that, with stimulators, one day their men could miraculously perform actively. Many women in 'small house' saw a pleasing sex as a key requirement for a satisfactory small house life. Rudo said:

I love sex but sex with him has become horrible, chombo chake hachichina power (his male organ is now weak) that he quickly quit halfway. I love sex that sometimes I got tempted looking for one to satisfy me, but ndotyia kubatwa ndikarambwa (am afraid of being caught and divorced). Yes, he provides much of everything a woman would fell for.... I hope the herbs from my friend who has gone rural home will work for him.

I probed further, as to what kind of the herbs and how it worked, to which she laughed saying: bhudhi hamuzivi muchemedza mbuya unoiswa mumahayu or mudoro ramasese (brother don't you know the sexual herb that is administered in maheu or opaque beer to stimulate man's sexual power).

As illustrated by the tales below, the study established that, though not all their hopes materialised, those women taking small house as their second marriage persevered to the small house problems. Jane whose partner insensibly reciprocates her love explained:

I started living with this man, newly in love with... Always, I keenly anticipated our time together, visualizing how pleasing it was enjoying the love of a man I loved and who said he loved me. He however, starved me enough time. With time, I found myself feeling more and more uncomfortable, feeling of unworthiness begun overwhelming me. My usual calm and self-confident, self-esteem

disappeared. At first, I misunderstood what was happening and tried to push the troubling feelings away, but they only got stronger. I found myself wondering whether I deserved this. However, now I have adjusted and hopeful that one day God will avail peace in my relationship.

Stella, her dreams seemed shuttered narrated:

The bond began with more hope than I have ever dared. Looking back now, I can see marks of warning signs that I ignored, misconstrued, reimagined to fit my hopes that hid my extreme anxiety for enduring love. Over the time, my returns changed... I first reacted quickly, annoyed, angry, fully expecting him to change his behaviour. I could show him his errors and would not correct them. I later changed to defensive behaviors. This is truly where I lost for myself trying maintaining a relationship that was more in my head than in my life. Life is full of hurt, despair... finally; I was convinced that this misery was now for life. If he knew how much he hurts me, surely, he could stop; I still hope that he will change

Additionally, the research established that, from a socioeconomic and political perspective, some men regretted entering into this institution. In their view, the small house institution and involvements were sometimes detrimental to life investment and prevented them from fully committing to the official family. Ronnie having a four-digit household income said that:

In entering a small house relationship, there is really no free lunch, no careflessness to open your heart and not be vulnerable, no way to take on the bonding of your soul with woman's and not accept new responsibilities of the union as part of the ideal.

However, men highlighted that regardless of the problems faced in the small house institution, love could still be shared with more than one significant other and for a variety of reasons, a large part of the population in small housing did not want to leave the institution.

STRATAGEMS: COPYING WITH COMPETING SOCIAL DUTIES AND EXPECTATIONS:

The 'Who to Accompany the Husband, Why and Where' as a Balancing Strategy

The research found out that different wives were taken to different functions and within his close friends, men brought whichever wife they wished. Nevertheless, on official gatherings, official wives accompany the men because they were publicly known and bear the husband's title. The female partners in 'small house' were brought to more fun and unofficial events. Similarly, these men had some clothes located in the wardrobes of their partners in 'small house', making the matrixes of identity when walking with the 'small house' partner by official wife complicated since she did not know these clothes.

Communication Strategy

The communication skill was a strategy used by men in balancing small houses and other competing social duties. Communication was found to make or break any marital relationship and was not limited to the ability to 'house' words well (though that helped). Awareness of nonverbal cues and body language was found to be important in navigating the complexities of these relationships. The capacity to express needs, hatreds, appreciation and hurt feelings effectively negotiate win-win solutions to conflicts inherent in 'small house'. One respondent highlighted that withholding one's true thoughts and feelings does much damage to one's partners by replacing affection with alienation and block the free flowing of loving energy. He stressed the emotional withdrawal and bitterness that invariably follow from not telling the truth deadening one's love and sexual response. For small housing business, men used chimbudzi cell phones where partners' names were saved as diaspora numbers (+44 67898978 or + 27456789123) instead of real names. Men could communicate, either asks for the loan from a partner in small house relation to cover the official wife and vice-versa.

Punishment as a Balancing Strategy between and Within Relationships

The research discovered that punishment was a strategy used to control small house relations and with other relations. Some men used small house unions as a weapon in a power struggle to punish a controlling, possessive and demanding official wife. However, it appeared that, the husband could not divorce his first wife even if he spends more time with his partner in 'small house'. When asked whether spending much time with his partner in 'small house' was a precursor to divorce his official wife, Cabin a 47-year old male respondent lamented:

If I had such intentions, it would have been easier for me to divorce her right away and marry another woman without contracting a small house union.

As a punishment, sometimes some women in 'small housing' were hesitant to concede to sexual demands especially if the man omitted the visiting timetable. The women in small house used the 'punishing' technique to timely keeping the man with them. Two male respondents seemed concurring that women get devastated when men began neglecting them for a new woman. Ticha indicated that women do not want to be left in the dust when a new woman comes along their men:

To balance my main house obligations and the demands of the small house, I pretend having a new woman. To cover up, when a woman wants talking, I get defensive, my 'anger' kicks in and then shut down and leave for other obligations.

Agreements and Decision-Making Processes: Terms and Conditions Tactic

The study established that couples in small house had many life areas where they reached

agreements about handling issues affecting them, the ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’, imagined or not. Couples in ‘small house’ usually agreed to a ‘schedule’ that allowed the men to maintain an officially monogamous marriage to their first wives. The agreed terms and conditions set mostly by men included issues like the times he could be available for his partner in ‘small house’ and the time she could call or not communicate with the men. Terms and conditions was a useful tool that individuals applied to avoid both their inner and outer conflicts. Sometimes these couples made agreements they could not live up with in order to keep the peace. John discovered that he preferred to allow his mate in ‘small house’ to be the boss:

We were both overriding characters and at start, we clashed everything all the time. It was unpleasant. After a while, I decided trying letting her decide if we disagreed on something. Amazingly, I found that I liked being more submissive to our relationship and she liked this too. We are now going along very well from then on, and this allowed me to perform well other obligations outside the small house marriage.

Secret Keeping and the Management of the Small House Relationship

The research found out that small housing is a complex and demanding love-style, requiring a higher level of self-awareness and interpersonal skills. One respondent stressed that one need to use good measurement about when to divulge something that may be difficult for one’s partner to hear. In most cases, the males, not the women were keen to keep the affair secret. Jane stressed that the challenges inherent in small house unions were not made public as they could breed more problems and there were issues not to tell everyone or one’s partner because what one would have told him will sometimes cause problems. She said that:

You can’t see what hit you, or what you might have hit. Maproblems acho will be from various angles zvekuti haungazivi chamakonzeresa (you don’t the causes). The one who knows your secret, peels you....and you remember that individuals are deadly and unreliable, even if you press your body to theirs, as in the sex encounter.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The Rationalised End Value to Participants

The element of ‘permanence’ in small house union as a ‘marriage’ type provide participants with the paybacks of sharing a household, emotional and bodily as women enjoy the marriage benefits like regular sexual act with a permanent partner and reproduction where children insure the relationship. Intimate interactions depend on gaining a reward or profit from the relationship [1]. The fact that women in small house unions are known by some of their partner’s relatives, reproduce children acknowledged by men, permanent bond between partners and the similarity of the union’s arrangement to the formal marriage entail that, demographically, women in ‘small house’ are

effectively married; hence, small houses are a marital strategy that urban women adopt. Marriage may not only involve the ceremony performance, negotiating the union specifics and exchange of vows and or gifts [7]. The separate residency, 'openness' and 'secrecy' of 'small house' point that men and women in small house unions are officially monogamous but secretly polygamous and officially single but covertly married respectively. Hence, calculatedly, small house union is manipulated, claiming one sort of relationship on one occasion and other relationship on another occasion to suit individual needs [7]. Thus, the benefits partners derive from the small house relationships suggest that these unions are a result of rationale social exchanges of services. The married men need the sexual and other services the women offer, and the women need the resources (food, rent e.t.c) the men provide.

Ropo's case of acquiring a residential stand from 'small housing' shows the sexual-economic link, as rationally, women in small house select indirect way to pleasure and socioeconomic success. Emotional realism, intricately and explicitly is incorporated into the sex economic contract, showing that commodification and small house intimacy does not constitute hostile worlds [46]. The fact that small house unions are slackly structured relationships is their strength as they are branded by joint decision-making process, emerging what [13] termed negotiating men, a new breed of men believing in equality. These negotiating men like John who allowed her partner to be a boss are somewhat positive in terms of gender relations in Zimbabwe. The small house unions function outside the structures levied by socio-legal structures acting as survival networks ensuring women continued stay in town [10]. Thus, [13] avows that the permanent informal marital unions with married men offer a survival strategy for urban women in Zimbabwe.

The relocation of men to their partners' houses and the 'hiding' of female partners or relationships mean that the end value of small house institution is the independence it offers to female participants from both bridegroom family and own family of origin as officially married women endures marriage control from their parents and female agents of patriarchy enforcing patriarchal traditions. Thus, the female partner is independent as the virilocality principle is absent (bride living her family to join the husband's family). The 'bridegroom's' parents stay afar and do not know of their son's secret partner while diminishing their interference ability in the small house household and control their 'daughter in-law'. Hence, 'small house' is a rationalised union used as an emancipatory strategy for other women. The copying stratagems with competing social duties and rational relational dimension in small housing spans what [47] calls the 'outthereness' and the 'in-hereness'. These are the connections between the 'small house' and the 'main house' as whichever side the men finds himself (small or big houses) he talks of the 'in-hereness' and the 'outthereness', that 'I am with you here, never mind of her who is out there'.

Men's use of the 'small house' unions as a weapon in a power struggle or battle with or to punish a

controlling, possessive and demanding official wife and Cabin's narration that he has no intent of divorcing her official wife shows that, for men, small house union is a rationalised 'divorce proof' protecting the 'big house'. Men believe that small housing allows them dealing with problematic marriage issues or solve problems in the main house [11]. Yet, the terms and conditions in small house union, what [1] terms negotiated interdependence, mirrors the patriarchal conjugal relations where there are values, practices and norms legitimating unequal power relations amid the parties involved. Nonetheless, the small houses' emphasis on stability, coerce participants to keep secrets, withhold info or say things one knows to be false if speaking the truth result in shaking the relationship. This is so since participants perceive themselves married, explain their social standing and keep small house problems secret, not only from the impersonal principles, but also from understanding the marriage dictates that family issues should not be made public.

John's monogamy-mono-cropping analogy account that humans are naturally not monogamous and Ronnie's narration of talent of intimate relationship entail that, for men, the small house concept assumes that it is possible, valid and worthwhile maintaining sexual relationships with more than a person. The small house individuals rationalize; find it better struggling to live a plural family lifestyle, though subjected to strong pressures to be loyal to the dictates of the small house institution [6]. This loyalty and the link between production and reproduction create a strong attachment to the institution. However, calculatedly, the various forms or practices and role differentiation in small house are not all based on the same principles and beliefs; they are rather responses to a particular internal and external circumstance facing a specific union.

Precarious Imagination and Hopeful Dependency

The fact that 'small housing' partners take their relationship as a panacea to socioeconomic problems and flourishing means that they store romanticising attitudes about how the small house institution 'add up to something', imagining positives to come from these relationships. The ongoing prospect of good life makes possible imaging living the 'proper' life [2]. Thus, due to ambitions, individuals in small house unions perform the estimated feeling of belonging to a flourishing world that does not yet exist reliably. Fantasy brings the uncertainty and itinerancy of belonging [2] to a partner and the union. Fictional images make women in small house relations appear logical to herself and to the partner. The persons in 'small housing' face the cruelty of losing the binding that imaginary has allowed to potentially risky domains of yet untested and un-lived life. Thus, small housing is cruel binding; taking shape as a double bind: a binding to fantasies blocking the satisfactions they offer and a binding to the promise of optimism such fantasies represent [2].

Small housing offers the 'life chances' leading Harare women to cling on it. The small house union is a unit of production, reproduction, consumption and accumulation; thus, [23] note informal marital relations have mixed outcomes to the practitioners in terms of attainments, challenges and

harms. The men's views that small house involvements are sometimes detrimental to life investment, preventing them from fully committing oneself to the formal family and the material contentment by female partners like children owning residential stands and that they eat and wear as they wish coming from the relationship hinders participants' progression. While enhancing the chances of realising some of the reasons in entering into it, these realizations may heighten 'small house' members' vulnerability and constrain people's flourishing [17]. Thus, [2] hypothesizes that individuals are trapped up in cruel optimism when their relationship is certainly an inhibition to their flourishing but optimistic that the relationship and benefits will improve, even when it is to the contrary. It is not automatic that small house improves life chances of Harare women as others have changed to, changed partners and still clinging to it but not fully realising their expectations. The institutional attachment is inherently optimistic as it forged through promises but agents may not realise or 'feel optimistic' [2].

The unfulfilled marriage formalization, relational challenges like the relationship between Jane and Taxi, Stella's case of unachieved hope and Rudo's sex starvation shows that small house is 'problematic' relating where expectations are not 'fully' met. [17] notes that informal unions are 'imperfect institutions' filled with challenges and risks of several undesirable effects where small housing ambitions are seldom fulfilled. Men do not introduce their partners to relatives, thus [7] notes 'outside wife' has a partial social recognition and prestige since her husband does not publicly declare as his wife. Those women taking 'small house' as their second marriage chance like Jane and Stella's cases testify cruel optimism in 'small housing'. Thus, [2] queries the basis behind individuals remaining attached to 'conventional' good life fantasies in relationships when the signal of their volatility and cost abounds. In light of hopes' fulfillment in 'small housing', [2] notes cruel optimism is attachment to compromised circumstances of probability whose realisation is either difficult, utter imaginary or possible and toxic, conserving a connection to a challenging relationship in advance of its loss.

Stella's narration that it is unusual for one to have one sexual mate in life displays that 'small housing' habit is an addiction as individuals enter, come out and reenter 'small house' relations. Any habit is addiction [16]. The fact that 'small house' union is a unit of reproduction, production and services means that partners depend on one another. For [16: 92] partners in small house unions are core dependant for they find their identity through the services exchange. [12] calls it reciprocal interdependence, stressing 'dependent interpersonal transactions. Gender roles, toxic masculinity and Zimbabwe's urban space predetermine the marital relations of small house partners. Therefore, [48] theorised bio-politics as fashioning subjects to a certain kind of life and [24] theorised necropolises as a means of designating black populations for death, destruction and disposal. Fixated small house relationships assume role separation, each individual depends upon an alterity a partner offers, but neither is able to know or come to terms with the nature of his or her dependence upon

the other [16:90]. Thus, [2] claimed that optimism might not feel optimistic.

Jane and Taxi's case that superficially they are perfect couple but internally heartbroken, and Stella's narration that life is full of hurt and despair signify that small house concept as shade or stress buster for participants is more myth than actuality. The relationship can be good from the outside but there are some mess up close [15], experienced entirely different by participants. In small house unions, there is more than a side to the story or even more than one story for each relationship at different life points. What works or does not is not similar for all individuals or couples at different times [12]. Outwardly, small houses present a 'story book fascinating mythical' union rather than exposing the difficulties and conflicts involved. Each small house relationship has a unique flavour and history that give itself a distinctive quality. Women in small house can live relationships that they are unhappy with for leaving that relationship can leave one without social insurance. Therefore, the challenges individuals encounter in 'small housing' are trivialized compared to the small housing life. The small house institution is cruel as actors project qualities onto it manipulating it for having those qualities which it misrepresents [2]. The main difficult with 'small house' is that it is hard to do it well, but the same can be linked to the 'big house'. Sometimes the small house is violent to its participants, but the violence is silent, hence, is cruel. Thus, small house relations are 'power with rather than power over'.

Feeling of jealous and consultation of 'prophets' like Rudo's case suggest that while the small house union can reduce stress, it can increase it as women find babyhood competition with mum for the attention of father renewed when relating with a man who has an official wife. Thus, because of jealous, women in small house relations view men as territory or possessions that can be owned like property and have a right to control. Therefore, the expectations in small house unions submit that individuals set the attainment scale in their relationships to measure the accrual of assets that mean something to them. Having a 'good life', would be the realisation of such accumulation in a small house relationship, where there is time not only for small house relational duties and social obligations, but also enjoying those 'things' that mean something to participants. [2] claims that all attachment is optimistic and branded optimism as the sway moving one out of themselves into the society bringing nearer the satisfying something that they cannot make on their own but sense in the rouse of a small house relationship. People in small house relationships believe that adjusting to small housing life will secure one's happiness.

Attachment to Bunch of Potentials and the Promise of Contract Value

Individuals in small house relations see a bunch of possibilities embedded within the union, and the cluster of desires coerce them keeping magnetised to it. Female partners continue struggling in painful and costly forms and the 'technologies of patience' suspend questions about the cruelty of the 'now', [2] as there is 'consensual promise' in small houses and actors misrecognise that

consensual promise as an achievement. Subscribing to [1], small house participants make affective deals about the costliness of one's attachments. The matrix of 'small house' can best understood in a [19] way when he talks about the public-private zoning of typical being, a split within the man of modernity, who is a man of the house and of the market. Thus, the men's outsideness and insideness (official and informal houses) tells the potential of balancing a 'queer anti-normativity' union. The persons in small house relations cannot stand detached from the promise of their small house habituated life and thus thrive in the openness of desire.

The way the small house union is structured, partners perceptions, gender roles and power relations allude that small house subjects and institution is core produced and individuals define and are defined by it; becoming part of the small house effects. Thus, [33] notes humans are cultural beings who spin their own webs of meaning. Small house actors constantly invent new meanings making sense of their life. Hence, the 'affective structure' of small house relational attachment involves a liking to return to the societal life normalcy enabling the partners to expect that this time around, nearness to 'this sexual partner' will somehow differentiate life. As [20]'s ideology is where critical theory gets explanations of affective realism and how people's desires become interceded through attachments to life modes, small house is thus an ideological relation, where relational life mode provides a seemingly neutral, trusty framework for enduring in relationship as the 'cycle and interchange of hope'. The partners figure out how to stay attached to small house life, safeguarding hopes they have for that, for they are concerned with pleasure assured up in small house making and maintaining looking on futures. Desire are promises that people want 'small housing' to make possible for them [2] thus, cluster of promises is implanted in small house institution.

Hopeful Falling Man and Screaming Man: Precarity and Vulnerability

The pay backs of the small house union and how the adherents make sense of it means that it is a kitchen where the things of exchange become 'thingness', holding actors and map the world for them. The partners' hope, contentment with, and challenges in small house suggest a hybrid, 'situation tragedy': a marriage between tragedy and situation comedy where partners in 'small housing' express their joy and flaws. Optimism keeps the event open, for better or ill [2]. The cases of Jane and Stella are problematic yet they are hopeful and imaginary. Thus, what is striking in the imaginary of persons in small house unions is the ways they look forward to a stable condition to be 'somewhere' and make a 'good' life. The hope that partners store on 'small house' union entail that, social mobility in 'small housing' is imaginary of endless upwardness shifting to the aspiration of achievement. Thus, partners in small house unions are in love with the promise that there will be a moment of reciprocal 'something' between them and even the world if they become good subjects of promise.

Jealousy, attachment to, and the unfulfilled desires in 'small house' relations paint the cruelty of

‘small housing’. [10] calls the small house ‘the ruthless life’ devoted to stirring to the good life’s normative zone. Thus, for some partners, leaving a small house impasse is an unattainable ambition; rather partners develop skills for adjusting to pressures. The female partners self-interpret and actualise; thus, [2] notes cruel optimism attends to practices of self-interpretation and self-suspension specifying individuals’ struggle to adjust terms where their hope has been cast. Therefore, cruel optimism in small housing is stimulus to dwell and track the affective attachment to the ‘good life’; that is for others like [10], [22] a bad life tiring out the participants who at the same time find their circumstances of opportunity confined in it. Cruel attachment is upholding an attachment to a somehow ‘tricky’ ‘problematic relationship’ [2]. Thus, persons in small house relationships are in shocking environments, for they are attached to a heteronormative good-life modality that is probably not good for anyone in it.

Gender roles, power relations, reciprocity and optimism in small house relations take many forms, some as collaboration, some produce a context of trust in interdependency, some coerced or tactical (stratagems to competing social duties), all of which are ambiguous, compromised and unstable, hence cruel. Practices of contractual reciprocity between partners in small house keep the institution lively and capably responding to it and societal demands [2]. The terms and conditions in ‘small housing’ means that partners ‘hate’ the instabilities, incongruities, antagonisms, ambiguities and messes that sometimes constitute their optimistic lives. Optimism in small housing is logic of negotiated sustenance making life endurable as it presents itself uncertainly, haphazardly and disjointedly [2]. Stella’s case started with problems and she ignored, misinterpreted and reimagined them to fit her hopes, evidences that some women in small house relations have never been secure. Informal marital unions are associated with insecurity [23]. Thus, whatever else it is, whichever one enters it, the small house, as a relation of on-goingness, absorbing monogamy and polygamy, without having marital type itself is middle without boundary and a shape, experienced in transitions and transactions. The problems female partners experience shows that they are sometimes dejected but remain ‘happily’ managing relations or ‘fascinated’, hence, are like a puppy that, when picked up, never stops moving its legs.

The negative experiences of partners in ‘small housing’ extend the small house phenomenon to ‘precarisation’, becoming precarious and destabilised. [2] notes precarity is a condition of dependency. The partners’ positive hope or good life promise in small housing masks precarity to the partners. Thus, the mystification of life precarity and strong attachment to ‘small housing’ obscure one’s alternative effort to prosperity. Cruel optimism survives when something one desires is actually an obstacle to their flourishing [2], as actors’ mentality of an infinite realm of hopefulness opens up toward a mysterious amassing. Thus, optimistic ‘small housing’ is not naturally cruel; it only becomes cruel when the relationship and needs that magnets participants’ attachment actively obstructs the ‘good life’ that initially brought them to it. Taxi and Jane’s relationship and Stella’s

account that started with more hope testifies that optimism in small house is cruel when the actors' relationship that ignites a sense of life possibility actually makes it difficult to realize the vast change for which partners risk endeavouring. Doubly, small house is cruel, as the very pleasures of being inside a small house relation become 'sustaining' irrespective of the content of that small house relation, such that a participant finds destined to a circumstance of intense threat and at the same time, profoundly endorsing and confirming.

The negative experiences are kept secret entailing that collaborates in small house unions are members of the precarity class, lives mired by hidden union's problems. The telling signs of small house are dramatic and undramatic versions of hopelessness, helplessness, fright, anxiety, stress and worry [2]. What makes small housing a cause of cruel optimism is its dreamscapes, some gratifications and fantasies that enable everyday life to be lived in small doses of leisure promising to become scenes of enjoyment that are sometimes unfulfilled. Upward mobility is replaced by sideway mobility as small house participants sometimes change partners and not flourishing. Therefore, there is cruel optimism in the small house, that being in it or sitting in the small house situation will allow more of a flourishing, a prosperous that sometimes never achieved.

The problematic relationships of Jane and Stella show that sometimes small house fails to provide 'life' comfort. Women in 'outside marriages' tend to be insecure if the cash paying 'husband' lose interest in them [7; 23]. Informal unions are 'incomplete institutions' [17] but the 'hope' Jane and Stella have asserts that persons in 'small house' find it difficult and vulnerable to detach themselves from these unions. At times, it is awkward and threatening to detach from what is already not working [2]. Thus, the experiences of women in 'small housing' like Ropo and Jane-Stella cases has brought some women some cheer but taken some women one-step forward into their desires and two steps back into optimistic reality. The informal unions affect differently the urban main marriages and the 'outside' marriage participants [8; 7]. The small house actors cling to the small house union, thus [15] reasons that investment in our relationships' main narratives of what it means to lead a joyful living can be so robust that when it does not deliver what it promises, persons do not query the narrative itself. Instead, partners in small house unions assume that some-way they failed to do it properly; hence, [15] asserts that it is hard labour to identify sadness and dissatisfaction, when one lives a life meant to be glad but is not, meant to be full, but feels empty. Many small house actors are conditioned to be optimistic having boundless faith in their goal achieving capacity even when their chances of doing so are slim.

CONCLUSION

The 'small house' is a rationalised 'dependent interpersonal transactional' institution where partners are reciprocal interdependents or co-dependent pursuing images and ideals of 'good life'. The small house institutional experiences are shaped by multipart interfaces amongst socioeconomic and

psychological factors. Men utilise the philosophies of ‘outsideness’, ‘insideness’, ‘inhereness’ and ‘outthereness’ to ‘divorce proof’, protecting the ‘official wife’ and balance the relations within and other competing social duties and expectations, as women in ‘small house’ are effectively married for they perceive and enjoy most of the marriage benefits. Men and women in small house unions are publicly monogamous but covertly polygamous and formally single but secretly wedded respectively. Small house institution has mixed aftermaths to the participants in terms of successes, encounters and harms. Despite these diverse outcomes, the unions remain vital to the adherents. In small house unions, people constantly (deliberately, involuntarily, dynamically) renegotiate the term of transaction that outline their situation.

As the ‘small house’ union’ issues are kept secret, in the small house situation there are always screaming men and falling men and one does not much witness them as they live off the societal screen. They are the type of persons living on in unsteady and devastated ordinaries, erecting a new nervous system around them, no longer centred on foreclosure but in the optimism of learning from their precarity. The partners’ optimistic hope or ‘good life’ promise in small housing conceal precarity to the partners, impede one’s alternate effort to ‘success’, obstructs the ‘good life’ that initially brought them to it. Therefore, small house liaison is not naturally cruel; it is cruel only when the institutional involvements and attachment to it actively obstruct the objective that gotten individuals to it initially. Despite optimism inherent in ‘small house’, agents may not realise or ‘feel optimistic’. Small house actors develop the spheres for their insights, habits and kinds of affect management in recognition of the small house business of the bygone and current moment they are living on in, where they live the rhythm of the small house habit. The concealed strain in the small house forces its subjects not only into sheer stuckness but into wide-ranging, enduring perceptions about the way they live in a now that is emerging.

Women in small house relations can live in affairs that are fateful for exit that relationship can deprive one of social insurance, thus, cruel for it offer silent or passive violence to participants. Thus, the challenges persons bump into in ‘small housing’ are trivialized as compared to the small housing life. Individuals in small house relations see a bunch of possibilities embedded within the union, and desires coerce them keeping magnetised to it. My point of closure is that, while some small house relations has made new avenues for some people to enjoy life and given them a great sense of optimism, in other respects they have had detrimental effect and have become a basis of frustration for them but remain attached to these unions, hence, a cruel binding. Though ‘stigmatised’ relationship, the rationalization of small house is optimistically practised variously pointing to the fact that it is not an endangered species and is far from being a dying phenomenon since optimistically participants do cost-benefit analysis.

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