

## **Introduction**

In Nigeria, the rate of teenage mothers was reported in 2008 to be 22.9% and the poor socio-demographic status of the pregnant teens play a major role in the poor maternal and child health indices and contributed to the slow pace of attainment of the related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Envuladu, Agbo, Ohize, & Zoakah, 2014). (Buga, Amoko and Ncayiyana (2006) had enumerated the risk factors associated with teenage pregnancy as disruption of education, future unemployment, sexually transmitted infections, including the dreaded HIV-AIDS, poor mental health, increased risk of preterm births amongst other. This has far-reaching implication on the development of policies, that will reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy and that can give equal access to essential facilities, which will subsequently improve the health and social wellbeing of teenagers in low-income countries like Nigeria.

Invariably, the Federal Republic of Nigeria has a population of more than 160 million, the largest in Africa and a fast-growing economy. About 70 per cent of the population live in rural areas with extreme poverty and limited access to services such as good schools, good roads and well equipped health centres and other social amenities such as safe drinking water (Sarkar & Chakrabarti, 2007). Moreover, due to the inadequate and dilapidated infrastructural facilities common to majority of the rural communities in Nigeria, poverty is especially severe among rural dwellers. This in turn increases the menace of teenage pregnancy in the rural areas, as up to 80 per cent of the population live below the poverty line. The limited social services and infrastructures coupled with the difficulties faced by dwellers in rural communities make some teenagers to engage in illicit and often unprotected sex which leads to pregnancy, STIs, and unsafe abortion (Envuladu et al., 2014).

Aligned with this background, teenage pregnancy has therefore become a socio-economic challenge and an important public health problem for rural communities (Kanku & Mash , 2010). Pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers are more likely to experience complications during pregnancy and delivery than older mothers. According to the National Population Commission (NPC), the rate of teenage mothers in the country as at 2008 was 22.9% while that of pregnant teenagers was 31.5%. It was then projected that the figures may increase to over 6

million by the year 2015 (National Population Commission (NPC) [Nigeria] and ICF Macro, 2009). Added to this threat, (Obansa & Orimisan (2013) noted that the health, social and economic implications of teenage pregnancies are enormous as pregnancy is the greatest killer of teenagers in Nigeria. This invariably means that teenage girls in rural settings lack adequate knowledge on how to cater for themselves during pregnancies (WHO & UNICEF, 2014).

### **Rurality, Patriarchy and Child marriage**

Rural environment represents the framework of regulations, institutions, and practices in villages which define parameters for the sustainable use of environmental resources while ensuring security of livelihood and a reasonable quality of life (Hahn & Nunan, 2000). Services are often difficult to access, often little choices are provided at times and in ways which are inappropriate and often cannot provide the confidentiality and anonymity which young people feel they need as they explore their sexuality. Based on this, rurality in this study, simply means the environment/communities whose dwellers are primarily farmers, with varying cultural practices, determined by the topography and ecology of the location.

Patriarchy in this study is a social system in which family systems or entire societies are organized around the idea of father-rule, where males are the primary authority figures in the family. Define patriarchy as a system of society in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it. Teenage pregnancy is inherently patriarchal in the sense that it keeps a woman in her place, and usually does so for life. According to (Deanna (2012), supporting teenage mothers and a woman's right to choose the course of her own life by having children at a young age has been seen as an incredibly feminist issue. Sigot (2000) in (Aina, Aransiola, & Osezua (2006) in a patriarchal setting, the woman achieves her personality and status simply by bearing and caring for children. Motherhood, therefore, gives the married woman cultural dignity and respect, while simultaneously providing the validation of her subordination. In addition, (Aina et al., 2006: ) stated that, "Women generally lack sexual autonomy in many cultures of the world, thus, unwanted pregnancies as a result of powerlessness over contraception usage are the end result".

Child marriages can therefore be described as teenage girls who are forced into marriage against their will before the age of consent, which is eighteen years. Teenage mothers are those who have given birth to child/children before age eighteen, which is the legal age in Nigeria. Child marriage happens because adults who are significant others in the lives of the teenagers believe they have the right to impose marriage on them. Teenagers, who are seen as prospective mothers are denied rights to make a choice as to who they want to have marital relationships with. Their dignity and the opportunity to make choices that are central to their lives seriously undermined. Choices define humans with rights and allows one to realize one's potentials. Child marriage robs girls of this chance (UNICEF, 2015). Nigeria Child's Right provision forbids betrothal and marriage of children.

## **Method**

### *The Study Setting*

The study population consisted of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers in Ilokun and Irasa communities of Ado local government area of Ekiti State, Nigeria. Ilokun and Irasa communities are situated along Iworoko Ekiti. It is a farm settlement dominated by Ebira and Igede people, who are migrants from Kogi and Benue State, North central Nigeria settling in rural communities in Ado local government area of Ekiti State.

### *Design*

The study used descriptive cross sectional design to documents the experiences of teenage mothers arising from child marriage and pregnancies within wedlock in the study communities. Face-to-face in-depth interviews were used to obtain information from the teenage mothers and the pregnant teenagers' views on factors influencing the occurrence of teenage pregnancy within . One-on-one interviews build rapport between the researcher and the participant and give participants the opportunity to reflect, speak, and be heard (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009).cited by Agunbiade (2014).

### *Sample Selection*

Recruitment of participants was among teenage girls (13-17) who are pregnant or nursing mother residing in Ilokun or Irasa community. The rationale was to reduce bias in the interviews. The purposive selection of participants was with the assistance of an informant who knew a number of pregnant teenagers in the study location due to his profession as midwife. He is a student of Nursing School in Ado Ekiti and he has been in the community from his childhood. This resulted in the initial selection of the core group of participants who referred us to friends and acquaintances who they perceived to be “similar to them.” Despite the limitations with the snowball technique, (Karasz and McKinley 2007) observed that is an approach useful for a study of this nature. From the peer referral, additional 4 pregnant teenagers and 5 teenage mothers were found. With this, experiences of 15 willing participants are presented in this study.

### *Interview Procedure*

With an unstructured interview, interview guide focused on major aspect of the teenagers’ life were used. The first part dealt with their family structure, Next to this was a look at those socio, economic and cultural factors which led to the present conditions. The interviews were conducted in the participants preferred locations and language (Igede, and Ebirá language) the indigenous language of the participants. Two females and a male field worker assisted the researchers in the data collection. The research assistants were trained with the interview guide. The interview sessions lasted an average of 55 minutes.

### *Analysis*

A thematic content analysis approach as suggested by Ryan and Bernard (2003) was adopted in analyzing all the interviews. The primary aim throughout the analysis process was to make sense of the rich information to establish a sense of salient themes, patterns, and shared experiences (Marshall and Rossman 1995). The analysis was done in stages. At the first stage, the recorded data obtained from the field were translated to English language, second stage, the translated data were transcribed and verbatim quotations were utilized to describe the responses from the qualitative instrument; descriptive and informative issues that emerge from sorting, categorization were organized into easily retrievable sections. Each interview was given a code while field notes were broken up into sections identified by date, and context, names. Other forms of identity of the respondents were removed from the transcription to ensure anonymity of the respondents, at the third stage, the data were examined in details, and themes were identified.

Lastly, relationships between the data categories were explored. The pattern and relationships found under the themes formed basis of the findings which included extracts from the original data.

### *Ethical Consideration*

Ethical clearance was obtained from Ekiti state teaching hospital (EKSUTH). At each of the selected study site, all the participants were duly informed and their consent was sought after the objectives of the study was explained to the participants for proper understanding of the study towards encouraging their voluntary participation. Pseudo names were used to protect the identity of the participants. In addition, the interviewees were duly informed about the recording gadgets used and the participants preferred language was used to conduct the interview.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### *Profiles of Participants*

Out of the 15 participants, Majority of the teenage mothers and pregnant girls in Ilokun and Irasa communities are 15 years with the value (9), while 2 are 16 years, and the remaining 4 are 17 years. In addition, all the 15 respondents are married and are from polygynous families. There are more Christian (8) than Muslim (7). High proportions of the respondents are farmers with the value (12) and (3) had no job. 3 of the respondents had Primary School Leaving Certificate, 11 had Junior Secondary School Certificate and only 1 of the respondents had Senior School Certificate. These reveal a very low level of educational attainment among the young ladies. Also, it was observed that the study community held marriage in high esteem and since education is known to be one of the major factors that delays ladies marriage (Barcena, 2013). The participant had to drop out of school and this is a significant factor which accounts for the prevalence of early teenage pregnancy and teenage motherhood in the communities.

### *Cultural Practice that Aid Teenage Pregnancy in the Study Communities*

Cultural practices include norms, belief system, marriage practice or pattern, and other aspects of social life of the people that are societal based. In the study communities, the notion of sexuality vis-à-vis the teenager is deeply embedded in the cultural ethos of these migrant communities that engender unsafe sexual practices among the adolescents. The practices in the community enhance male authority over the female and sustain the cultural devaluation of

women. The female child is brought up to accommodate male influence and instructions. The practice makes the women folk 'silent' on matters that have to do with age at marriage or choice of marriage partner. And the married women are equally quiescent on matters concerning the marriage of their daughters.

The cultural regulation of women folk has a very strong impact on the marriage of the girl-child who is denied the right to choose her spouse or determine her time of marriage. The time and the choice of marriage partner of the girl-child is ultimately the prerogative of the father. This is an important factor in the communities that leads to an increase in the occurrence of teenage pregnancy.

Teenage pregnancy is not viewed as a social vice by the communities. Girls are married off early because they are viewed as 'someone else's wealth' and even a liability to be got rid of as soon as possible. In addition, some parents think that if they marry off their daughters earlier, then they can reduce the expenditure of food and education (Sharma, 2002). A key informant in response to how the community view teenage pregnancy and affirmed that:

Based on our custom, a lady must be given out in marriage from age fourteen upwards. This is done to prevent her from becoming a prostitute, because if she is under the control of her husband, no man can just come to her, they will be afraid of her husband and as you know that "ile ti ko bani lekun ni were n sa wo" (A house without door is easily infiltrated by a mad man)...

**Extract 1: IDI/Male/80 years/community leader**

He emphasized the primacy of a firm decision of the father on his daughter's choice at marriage. In almost all instances, a girl's choice of a marriage partner should be treated as irrelevant or as a brazen effort to usurp the father's duty. The key informant, when asked whether the girl to be married out might be unhappy with the suitor, chosen for her by the father, retorted (with amusement):

...as long as the father of a girl is in support of the marriage irrespective of the age of the girl, the man can marry her. You know in our culture the father determines the right time to give his daughter hands out in marriage not the mother or the girl, women are not allowed to intervene in any crucial matter in our culture.

### **Extract 2: IDI/Male/80 years/community leader**

This practice of disregarding the choices of the girl-child in marriage matters even in this 21st century looks queer in the face of modernization, female liberation and rational choice campaigns. The practices in most modern societies in Nigeria, matured females choose, court, and determine marriage partners from among their many suitors. Only after that is the approval and blessing of the parents sought. In certain instances, the marriage is contracted with or without the parents' approval. What most people emphasize as the basis of marriage these days is 'love'.

However, in the situation where the feelings and the choice of the girl-child on the issues of her marriage rarely matters, questions of how such a practice is sustained and why it subsists are very important. By anthropological intuition and in line with the "functionalist perspective" a cultural practice only subsists because it performs the function of maintaining the structure of the society. Drawing more on this principle therefore, since teenage pregnancy is encouraged by the communities through early marriage, the choice of a marriage partner cannot be left in the hands of the uncouth, inexperienced teenage girl. The father therefore has to play the role of a guardian in choosing a marriage partner from a family in whose care he is confident, he could entrust his inexperienced child. In a way, teenage pregnancy has been used as a way to checkmate irresponsible sexual adventures by the adolescents.

The negative effect of the cultural practice of teenage pregnancy through early marriage is very obvious. Pregnant girls and expecting teenage mothers automatically drop out of school. One of the health education teachers interviewed revealed that the marriage custom in the community is peculiar. He confirmed that the people value their custom over their children's education. He explained that the children hardly complete their junior secondary education because of the insistence of their parents to give them (the female ones) out in marriage. He concluded that this act predisposes the female child to helplessness and fatalism in early and later life.

Under normal circumstances, early marriage and consequently teenage pregnancy enhances fecundity and may lead to large family size. This may be another 'functional' purpose of teenage pregnancy in the study community. As earlier discussed, these two settlers are

completely agrarian and derive their livelihood from the cultivation of yams and other tuberous food crops. The part played by family labour in such communities cannot be over-emphasized.

From the above mentioned, it is apparent that teenage pregnancy is tacitly supported by the culture of the subjects of study through the endorsement of Child marriage, large family size which rests on a woman's fecundity and hence commencement of child delivery at an early age, which encourages teenage pregnancy in the community. The quest to prevent promiscuity by child marriage attachment and the need for large labour in the farm are also contributing factors. It is a known fact that when a teenager starts having children, the tendency is higher that such a person will not only attain her desired family size at the end of her reproductive age but will have more children than she would have loved to have, if she did not start motherhood as a teenager.

### *Patriarchy*

Findings from the study reflect that the communities were strictly a patriarchal one. The belief on the domineering position of the man in the society is another salient factor that predisposes teenagers to early pregnancy in the study community. Patriarchy is a system where men are in authority over women in all aspects (Oke, 2006). Radical feminist define patriarchy as a social system in which men are appropriate with social roles and keep women in subordinate positions. Patriarchal beliefs is noted in the family and perpetuated through socialisation. This dominance of men over women in the society begins from the socialization of the children into the society: a boy is trained to see himself as the breadwinner, as someone who has to be very hardworking, have courage, be strong, and who should not be emotional but rather, secretive. On the other hand, girls are trained to be submissive, humble, sensitive, emotional, and be dependent.

Therefore, based on this mode of socialization, the female folks are denied the right to talk when the men are talking, and they must make sure they respect males. Hence, with this picture in their mind, they grow up with the idea that they are inferior to the men, and must depend on men for assistance. This in turn deprives the woman from being able to choose whom her spouse will be. The society sees choosing of a spouse for a female child as the responsibility of the father of the girl, and the mother must be silent as the culture forbids her from intervening. A female household head, when asked of her opinion on the appropriate age for a lady to get married, exclaims:



Ha, I don't know. Assuming my husband is still alive, he will answer that one, because in our culture, I do not have the right to give my daughter's hand in marriage. It is only the father that can determine the appropriate age for her to get married.

**Extract 3: IDI/female/household head/65 years**

In addition to this, a key informant clearly states that women are to be silent on important issues:

...Who is the mother to interfere? That shows she is ready to go back to her father's house. And, in the case of the girl, they don't need her consent on whom she is to marry. All we need is the father's consent...

**Extract 4: IDI/female/Community leader**

In this vein, the situation in the communities becomes tougher for girls, especially the teenagers. Findings from the study communities show that, patriarchy devalued women, as it lowers the socio-economic status of the women. The situation in the communities makes it difficult for women to independently train their children either in school or in other vocational studies, as they do not have their own personal pocket. A female household head, when asked how much she realizes monthly states:

I do not know because whatever I made after selling I do give to my husband and that is what we are using to pay our children tuition fees....

**Extract 5: IDI/Female/Household head/50 years**

Akin to the above statement, a student, when asked during one of the FGD sections, who do they think children should go to during financial difficulties, reveals that, her mother depends solely on her father, she could not afford to buy just biro for them to take to school:

I will go to my daddy, and he will give me whatever he has, or I will go to my friends or our church members, because if you ask my mummy for even money to buy biro, she will tell you she has given all the money she made from her market to my daddy and that is what a good wife should do....

**Extract 6: FGD/Female/SS1/discussant 1/15 years**

She explains further that any time the mother asks her to hawk, she has a way of making her own money to make contribution in the school with her friends in order to be able to meet

her immediate needs, especially when the father is not in the right disposition to give them anything.

In addition, it was observed from the study community that the patriarchal nature of their society affects the girl-child status in the family. Teenage girls are made by the society to understand that the only thing they can become in life is to be responsible wives to their husbands. This cultural orientation could be traced back to the fact that the people of the communities are migrants from North-Central Nigeria, a region not too popular for the high premium placed on their women. This fact can be clearly seen from the recent response of President Buhari to a question posed to him in Germany about his wife's comment on his government. President Buhari's rejoinder that his wife "belongs to my kitchen, . . . my sitting room, . . . and the 'other room'" encapsulates the view of those from northern extraction on the position of a woman in the society, and educational qualification and religious inclination often do not change the cultural orientation and views of some individuals.

The cultural mode of socialisation exhibited by the Nigerian president is equally applicable to the study communities. The females believe that no matter how much they strive in life, once they have reached the society-stipulated age for marriage, they have to follow the decision of their father and get married. Findings from the study communities reveal that, girl-child education is viewed by the communities' dwellers as the responsibility of the husband of the girl, and not that of the parents. The parents see training a girl-child in school as carrying out another man's responsibility.

Although, the community is not against western education and understands its importance as an instrument that helps both male and female to make edge in life, the patriarchal nature of the society makes the dwellers believe that girl-child education should be the sole responsibility of her husband and not the parents. The education of the girl-child by her husband is believed to make the female folks respect and see their husbands as lord. In addition, it is believed that in other for wives to be subjected to their husbands, they have to be trained by them. The societies believe that a girl trained by the husband will be more submissive to the husband compared to those trained by their parents. In the light of this, most of the respondents opined that if a female child is trained by her parents to higher institution level, she will be very proud and have no

regard for whoever she marries, as she would not see any reason to be submissive. An interviewee affirms that:

...Oju to ti rokun to ti rosa ni, kini omi agbara loju re.... (Someone who has seen a lot in life will not value small issue).

**Extract 7: IDI/Male/household head/50years**

In a statement similar to the one above, one of the community's leaders, when asked if there is anything wrong in a father training his daughter to higher institution level, maintains:

If a lady is allowed to stay till the time she finishes her university education, she can become a prostitute and you cannot guarantee her virginity by the time she graduates. But if she is under her husband, she will fear the man and would not involve herself in any unnecessary relationship...

**Extract 8: IDI/Male/community leader/80years**

Another key informant further elaborates on the effect of the dominant patriarchy on female children:

Most of the girls here are not allowed to have higher education because I can remember one in my class. She was very brilliant and she won this Cowbell scholarship, but the father said she needs to get married. Despite all my objection and discussions with him, he took the girl back to their village. So, I think their culture does not support western education

**Extract 9: IDI/female/health teacher/34years**

However, majority of the male household heads interviewed affirmed that if a lady is allowed to get to high institution before she is given out in marriage, she would have come across different men in life and she would have been able to identify their strengths and weaknesses. This discovery would therefore not make her to have regard for men. To buttress their point, most of the respondents affirmed that such a girl would end up becoming a prostitute, as western education is like an eye opener for ladies to display their infidelity. A community leader, when asked of his take on girl-child education, openly states:

Ha! Education is good and it is good to train your children in school because if you don't give them education, they will definitely become the slave of those who went to school. But concerning the female child, if you allow them to go to UNAD, they would be exposed to the opposite sex, and you will see them keeping two, three intimate friends, which is an abomination. So, it is better for them to be under the control of their husband while schooling.

**Extract 10: IDI/Male/Community leader/80years**

In summary, it was observed from the findings that the society is organized and run by men. Men make the rules and dominate in all areas including making decision on how the women run their businesses. The man determines the kind of job the wife will do, the type of cloth she will wear, and even where she goes to. Specifically, the study community reduces women power totally, and lowers their economic value since they are not allowed to manage their resources themselves.

**Religious Belief of the Study Community**

Religious belief is related to belief in a religion practice, and teaching. The two major dominant religion practice in these communities are Islamic and Christian religion. The findings reveal that the practices of the people are derived from these two religions. In the study community, the findings shows that, there is a high rate of teenage marriage, and the reason given for this is that the “bible preaches against promiscuity and infidelity, and therefore advises everyone to get married and have planned pregnancies”. Based on this biblical reference, majority of the key informants reported that early marriage prevents promiscuity in a lady's life, gives a man sense of responsibility, and that God even instructed them to get married.

In the same vein, a male household head points out that:

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was betrothed to Joseph when she was twelve years and Holy Spirit did not say she was a small girl. She got pregnant and gave birth to Jesus Christ. Also, in the Quran Mohammed married Aminatu in her tender age. So God himself did not support late marriage for ladies

### **Extract 11: IDI/ male/household head/45 years**

Akin to this argument, a key informant remarks:

In the bible, King Saul gave his daughter to David in her tender age, and even the bible referred to David as a boy. So, according to God, we need to marry early, so that we can fulfil God's plan for man to replenish the earth.

In addition, some of the respondents said the Quran gives the father the power to give his daughter's hands in marriage at any age that pleases him, and which was in line with their existing culture. It was observed from the study community that teenage marriage was viewed as a religious act which pleases God as it assists the communities' dwellers and, especially the ladies to keep God's commandment that says "thou shall not commit adultery". Also, some of the respondents reveal that they believe so much in their culture than in Islamic or Christian religion, and that whatever these religious groups teach that is against their cultural practice is totally ruled out. The study community only believes and agrees with the religious teachings that are in line with their traditional beliefs. Based on this, a key informant points out:

No religious practice is superior to our tradition. You know culture is supreme as no religion can overcome culture because it has been in existence before we were born. Many of these western religions are just deceiving us, as they will never tell us the truth. In our own place, we don't value western religion like our tradition.

### **Extract 12: IDI/Male/Community leader/80years**

However, it was observed from the study area that religion is sometimes a central element of culture, and that the two are inseparable. Majority of the teenage pregnant girls who are Christians affirm that Christian teachings were against women disobeying their husband or going against their parents' will. So, based on the Christian teaching, they see the man as the crown on a woman's head that she must worship till death. Also, the teaching that 'children should obey their parent for their days to be long in the land of the living' was also supported by

the Quran on the instruction that Allah gave to Musa that children are to follow their father's instruction, and women should remain silent as they are unclean beings. In line with all these religious teachings, teenage pregnancy was seen in the community as a practice that has the backing of their culture and the dominant religious teachings.

A teenage mother, when asked how she felt when her father told her to marry her husband, replied:

Hmm! I was not happy, but you know the bible said we should honour and obey our parents. And my mother used to tell me when I was young that men are the crown on ladies' head; that a lady without this crown is not honoured or respected in the society. So, I agreed to marry him.

#### **Extract 13: IDI/Teenage mother/ 17 years**

#### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study is to explore the socio-cultural factors in early teenage pregnancy among rural dwellers of Ilokun/Irasa community. Teenage pregnancy is a global epidemic as more than half of the world population falls into this category. The findings from the study reveal that polygyny and traditional role of man in the society as a decision maker as one of the factor contributing to teenage pregnancy in the study communities. Findings from the study also reveal that majority of the teenage girls in the study area are traditionally married and got pregnant before they reached the legal age of maturity, which is 18 years in Nigeria. This shows that the community practice encourages child marriage. The teenagers abandon school just to get married immediately they attain puberty. This is in line with the work of (Walker (2012) which highlighted the fact that child marriage leads to school drop-out, lower levels of education among girls, and the inter-generational transmission of poverty.

It was equally discovered that a larger proportion of the participants who are either nursing or expecting mothers had little or no formal education, as majority of the respondents claimed to have stopped school at their junior secondary level. The educational qualification of these young wives and mothers plays a major role in determining the rate of teenage pregnancy, the time of first sexual intercourse, and delays marriage. This discovery agrees (Marteletto & Dondero (2013) that educational attainment is negatively associated with teenage pregnancy.

This practices which against sexual rights of the girl child and their right to sexual autonomy usually resulted in unhealthy sexual health for the victims as most of them suffer psychological and emotional trauma, violence, and low self-esteem in their husband house.

According to WHO (2002), “sexual rights are universal human rights, based on inherent freedom, dignity and equality of all human beings”. This however presumes level of sexual equity between both partners in the marital union. It involves control of one’s body from any form of feature or mutilation and violence of any sort (Olabisi, Aransiola and Osezua, 2009). This denial of sexual right of the female child in the study communities was rooted in their cultural practices which support women subordination in marriage. The female children in the family suffer the consequence of this harmful cultural practice as most them finds it difficult to cope with the unprepared marriage, and face various forms of violence in the husband’s which include rape, abuse, battered and denial of right.

This denial of right was aggravated by patriarchal system in the communities as some traditional roles were attributed to the father by the society, and women were silent by the community on some important issue relating to their children or themselves. Also, lowers the economic status of the woman by forcing them to be accountable to their husband. This corroborated Deanna (2012) arguments that Teenage pregnancy is inherently patriarchal in the sense that it keeps a woman in her place, and usually does so for life. Also, Sigot (2000) cited by Aina, Aransiola, and Osezua (2006) “in a patriarchal setting, the woman achieves her personality and status simply by bearing and caring for children. Motherhood, therefore, gives the married woman cultural dignity and respect, while simultaneously providing the validation of her subordination.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the above fact, most of the practices in the community were based on their traditional belief which was in line with their religious belief. Due to these beliefs and strong cultural retention in the study community, they are very resilient to the culture of the host community and other enlightenment programmes available to the community dwellers. This strict adherence of the community to their traditional practices and norms, and their inflexibility in imbibing the culture of their host community could be explained by Ogburn’s cultural lag theory. According to Ogburn, cultural lag is a common societal phenomenon due to the tendency of material culture to evolve and change rapidly, while non-material culture tends to resist change and remains fixed for a far longer period of time. Despite the changes in family structure and different laws governing sexual relationship, the study community can be said to still be policed by traditional social rules, folktales, customs, mores and values.

Finally, education is a very strong instrument to increase a child’s confidence, to fight against poverty and reduce early marriage. Education eliminates welfare dependency and provides employment opportunities. Therefore, teenage education can be an effective intervention for improving parental attitudes and beliefs. This can have a huge impact in terms of

preventing adverse childhood experiences and early marriage, as it will help in promoting modernity, acculturation and also developing skills that can sustain life.

*Based on these the researcher recommended that:*

The policy on education must be reviewed to include adult education, and pregnant girls should be allowed to go to school in the community.

Rights activists should also ensure the continued protection of human/women's rights and severe punishment should be prescribed for non-compliance by any community or any individual.

Child right should be enforced in the community

Religious committees and traditional leaders should be uniquely positioned to prevent and respond to the call to end child marriage

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