



The Causes of Early Marriage in the Different States of the Niger-Delta Region

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Abstract: The children's rights throughout the globe are regarded very important. But forces and early weddings have become some of the ways children's rights are abused. This paper aimed to shed more light on why girl child are victims of forced and early marriages and the impacts and implications of such marriages on the child and society. The analyzes used the basis for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Through hermeneutical, descriptive and analytical techniques, data collected from both main and secondary sources were evaluated. The results of this article are the damaging development of early and compelled marriages, Psychological and physical implications for the child; have adverse impacts on culture and the nation as a whole; that scriptural claims in protection are merely manipulative thoughts to cover up moral failures; and that whatever reason is provided for child marriage, the catastrophic impacts on the victims outweigh them and render child marriage unquestionably a social evil. The article concludes that early and forced marriages exist in Nigeria and need to be curbed, and subsequently proposes approaches to better enforce such legislation in order to efficiently curb forced and early marriages in Nigeria.

Keywords: Girl Child, Early Marriage, Niger Delta.

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INTRODUCTION

Child marriage is the practice of marrying a young girl (generally defined as below the age of fifteen) to an adult. This practice, according to Ogunniran, (2010) mostly involves a young girl getting married to a man. It is a situation where female adolescents and teenagers are married to adult husbands. In these instances, sometimes, the men can be twice their ages and these females become child brides. Globally, the rights of a child is considered to be very important. The convention on the rights of the child defines a child as every human being below the age of 18 years. A child has the right to life, education, protection, provision, social, emotional, psychological and physical health care. Most often than not, those who should protect the

child ends up being violators of these rights of which girls are the most vulnerable.

Historically, the aristocracy of some culture tends to use child marriage among different factions or states as a method to secure political ties between them. The son or daughter of a royal family of a weaker family would sometimes arrange to marry into the royal family of a stronger neighbouring power, thus preventing itself from being assimilated. In the lower classes if they were fortunate, families could use child marriage as a means to gain financial ties with wealthier people ensuring their successions. Ibid

Child marriage customs, a situation whereby children are given into marriage well

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before they attain puberty occur all over the world particularly in Africa, Asia, and South America. Notably, there is an indication that 41 percent of child marriages occur in West and central African countries, and Nigeria in the Region has the highest number of Child brides (UNICEF, 2018). Some of the causes of early marriage in Nigeria include conflict, poverty, religion, and tradition. This practice is extremely prevalent in some communities in the southern region of Nigeria. In this post, we take a look at the prevalence, causes, and effects of early marriage in Nigeria.

Marriage is an institution accepted globally regardless of belief, colour or race. It is a communal and legal coming together between a man and a woman though few cultures tolerate same sex marriage (Adekola, Akanbi & Olawele-isaac, 2016). Marriage is said to be a gift from God. Agibikim (2015) as cited by Benard (2016) defined marriage as the "Socially and ritually recognized union or legal contract between spouses that establishes rights and obligations between them and their inlaws. It is an institution where two individuals of the opposite sex chose to bond themselves by marriage for the purpose of companionship, procreation and maintaining a family (Omoniyi-Oyafunike, Falola & Salav. 2014).

United Nations children's fund (2015) defined Early/child marriage as a formal marriage or informal union before the age of 18. A child below the age of 18 years is immature both physically, psychologically, physiologically and cannot in any way handle the marital responsibilities of companionship, maintaining a family and the huge one procreation due to the undeveloped bony structures of the female reproductive system. Early/child marriage is a practice carried out all over the world and in most cases a young girl is married to an adult male who sometimes is old enough to be her father.

Conflicting reports exist on the actual statistics of child marriage globally, but Unicef, (2015) posit that over 700 million woman between the ages of 20-49 and 36% of youths aged 20-24 years were already married or in union before reaching 18 years of Age. Niger republic tops the list with the highest indices of 76% prevalence rate in Africa while Nigeria our beloved country share 60% prevalence rates of early/child marriage burden in Africa.

The betrothal of female children to adult males has been and is still a regular occurrence in many places, especially among the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group of Northern Nigeria (Elizabeth, 2009) and, to a lesser extent, is prevalent also in other

parts of the country (Braiman, 2014). In Northern Nigeria, child marriage is a traditional/cultural practice that is greatly influenced by Islam (Elizabeth, 2009). According to United Nations Population Fund (2013), about 48 per cent of Hausa-Fulani girls of Northern Nigeria are forced into marriage by age 15, while over 78 per cent are married by age 18. These appalling statistics led Elizabeth (2009) to describe the life of a girl child in Northern Nigeria as pathetic. To buttress her assertion, she maintains that, while the ideal marriage age of women, though varies, is between 20 and 26 years old, in the Northern Nigeria, little girls who have started menstruating are considered mature for marriage. In some cases, a girl of 12years old can be given out for marriage based on this premise (Braiman, 2013).

Similarly, World Health Organization (2016) opined that globally, about 16 million girls between the ages of 15 to 19 years gets married annually while 2.5 million girls under 16 years give birth annually in developing countries. Nigeria has one of the highest prevalence rate of child marriage in the world. National demographic Health Survey (2013) puts the number of Nigerian girls who get married before the age of 18 as 58.2%. The prevalence rate of early/child marriage vary according to region in Nigeria with North west as high as 76%, North east 88%, North central (33%) South east (10%) and South South which constitute part of the Niger Delta region which is the region under discuss is (17%).

The Niger-Delta region which is the southern part of Nigeria initially was made up of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers State until Akwa Ibom, Abia, Cross River, Edo, Ondo and Imo were included in year 2000. This region is about 70,000 sqkm, and make up about 7.5% of Nigerians landmass and is rich in crude oil deposits (Olawale, 2018). Not much work has been done on the Early/child marriage in the Niger Delta region but NDHS, (2013) puts the figure of women who get married before the age of 18 as recorded below:

Abia State	16.2%
Akwa Ibom	39.8%
Bayelsa	57.9%
Delta State	37.7%
Edo State	25.3%
Imo State	18.9%
Ondo State	30.5
Rivers State	23.3%

This narrative review examined the causes and consequences of early marriage with a view to establish framework to assess the perception on factors among Niger Delta of Nigeria. Unpublished stories are appraised alongside news media and published literature to illustrate scenarios that

exemplify discussed causes. Several causes of early marriage were noted and gender discrimination, ignorance, and unexpected pregnancy appear salient or are under-discussed. There is evidence that men and women prefer husbands to earn higher wages than wives and females are less ambitious. Although, there are public health concerns in the literature, data on perception of parents, especially those in low socioeconomic status, regarding public health is lacking. Critical appraisal posits that early marriage is not only shrouded in legalities, but is also caused by multiple factors. The factors that cause or lead to early marriages need to be identified for each society to appropriately address the associated ramifications. The lack of data on perception of parents suggests that educational intervention needs to start with community needs assessment. Due to the prevalent negative impact of Early/child marriage on the education, social development as well as health, mental and physical well-being of the victims.

Statement of the Problem

Child marriage in Niger Delta region is an issue that has continues to draw debates among various school of thoughts. However, the impact of child marriage can have devastating impacts of the child being married off and the society at large. The child is denied the opportunities of attaining her educational and employment prospects, is exposed to VVF, risk death through child birth as well as expose them to sexually transmitted diseases to mention but a few. The society on the other hand, is faced with population pressure as a result of increased cost of health care, spread of HIV/AIDS, increased mortality and morbidity rates as well as undermining efforts by governmental and non-governmental agencies at fighting poverty etc.

In the Niger Delta area, child marriage is now becoming a problem that has continues to attract discussions between different schools of thought. The effect of child marriage, however, can have catastrophic effects on the child being married and the society as a whole. Chances of achieving their academic and employment prospects are denied, and they are sometimes subjected to VVF, risk death through childbirth, and exposed to sexually transmitted diseases, to name but a few. Society, on the other side, is facing population pressure as a consequence of enhanced health care costs, the spread of HIV / AIDS, higher mortality and morbidity rates, and governmental and non-governmental attempts to fight poverty is being threaten.

Study Objectives

The objective of this study is to investigate the causes of early marriage in the different states of

the Niger-Delta Region as well as the consequences of early marriage as a public health problem. It is hoped that this may provide data that could help to change parents' attitude towards practices, customs and traditions against early marriage. It is also intended to provide government and non-government agencies the needed impetus to control early marriage.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:

1. What are the causes of early girl-child marriages in the southern Nigerian?
2. What are the impacts of early girl-child marriage on the Niger Delta society?
3. What strategies should be employed to mitigate the impact of girl-child marriages in the Niger Delta?

METHODOLOGY

The research was an opinion survey designed and sought the opinions of varying categories of respondents across the south-south region on the issue being researched and available literatures books and library and personal observations around the writer's environment and personal experience on the issue raise.

Early Marriage

The most commonly used early / child wedding definition is marriage under 18 years of age (Kyari & Ayodele, 2014). Therefore, the term "early marriage" is used to refer to both formal and informal marriages in which a girl lives with a partner as if they were married before the age of 18 (UNICEF 2005). In the same vein, UNIFPA (2006) defines early / child marriage as any marriage that takes place before the girl is physically, physiologically, and psychologically ready to take on the responsibilities of marriage and childbirth. Therefore, child or early marriage includes either one or both spouses as kids and may occur with or without official registration, and under civil, religious or customary laws, and involves minors who are deemed incapable of giving informed consent.

The distinctions between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage must be emphasized. They're not the same. Both spouses are free to choose whether to acknowledge the agreement in an arranged marriage (Nwogugu, 1996; Otoo-Oyortey & Pobi. 2003). For one or both spouses, this consent is missing in a forced marriage.

Causes of early/girl child marriage

Early marriage is due to various factors including among others, the search for economic survival, protection of young girls, peer group and

family pressure, controlling female behavior and sexuality, wars and civil conflicts and socio-cultural and religious values (Umana, 2019).

In many of these early marriages in Nigeria, the children are given to the men free for economic gains to the family or to build alliances for business or political benefits, particularly in the northern part of the country. It is also believed in most parts of northern Nigeria that a man can marry a child as young as the age of 9 as long as sexual relations with her is 'postponed' until she has attained puberty (Umana, 2019). The same scenario is also applicable in the southern part of Nigeria except in the Northern Region where kidnapping and insurgency (Boko Haram) is an emerging cause of forced/early marriage. In some instances, they are used to secure and maintain political ties. Families cement financial and or political ties by having their children marry. The betrothal is considered a binding contract upon the families and the children. In such cases breaking the betrothal can have serious consequences for the families as well as for the betrothed individuals themselves

a. Poverty/Financial level of parents.

Poor socio-economic status is a major cause of early marriage.

- i. Parents/guardian see the girl child as a commodity to be sold to acquire financial and material gratification.
- ii. The girl child is sometime used to settle debt owed by parents
- iii. Giving out the girl child in marriage also reduces the financial burden on the parents who assume that girls are expensive to bring up (Edlund & Layer 2006).

b. Claim of Morality and honour

- i. The desire to control female sexuality and preserve virginity before marriage is a factor that motivates parents to marry their daughter early Braima (2004).

c. Fear of homosexuality of Parents.

Audi (2006) opined that the fear of child involvement in homosexuality drives parents to force/coerce their wards into heterosexual marriage early.

d. Immigration and citizen purposes

Child marriage is consummated to enable community member living outside their own locality to come back or remember their origin (Williamson, 2014).

e. Cultural Expectation

Parents succumb to societal expectations by allowing their under aged girls marry to earn

prestige as failure could lead to ridicule and disapproval by community members (Bayisenge, 2010).

f. Religions Belief

- i. Most Adult male hide under the guise of religion to perpetrate this inhuman act of child marriage. The Juju priest of the traditional religion could claim that a girl child is betrothed to a deity in the spirit world and by implication, he marries the girl since he is the physical representative of the deity.
- ii. Secondly, the Islamic religion sees nothing wrong in child marriage. A good example was the marriage of a Nigerian senator and a former governor within middle age marrying a 13 year of Egyptian girl bride after divorcing a 17 year old whom he married at the age of 15 as a fourth wife who was nursing his child. Sunday Punch (2010).
- iii. Parents force their children to marry whoever gets them pregnant to avoid excommunication in the church.

g. Family alliance

- i. Family ties are consummated or family alliances are consolidated by parents who lure their girl children into marriage.
- ii. Sometimes family disputes are settled through child marriage which in some cases these children are betrothed before they are even born (UNIFPA, 2006).

h. Ignorance

Parents believe that the girl child is saved from sexual attacks and violence by early marriage.

i. Kidnapping.

The rising insurgency has made the girl child victims of kidnapping and subsequent forced marriage or sex slaves by their captors e.g Chibok girls.

j. Gender discrimination.

Societal gender roles ascribed to the girl child see her as a wife and mother so parents prefer to train their male children because they believe that training the girl child who will end up answering another man's name is a waste but this trend has changed in recent times.

k. Unplanned Pregnancy.

Adolescents who end up being pregnant are either forced to marry who got them pregnant or marry an older man to avoid shame.

l. Limited educational attainment of parents

Societal superstitions and misinterpretation of marriage is common with parents that lack

educational qualification and form of training (Mooyart & Liefbroer/no 2016).

m. Limited health information services.

Lack of knowledge about the consequences of early marriage to the health of the girl child makes parents gullible to superstition.

n. Peer Pressure Influence.

Some girls are coerced into early marriage by their peers.

o. Location of Parents /the girl child.

Girls who reside in rural areas are more likely to get married early than their counterparts who live in urban areas. This could be credited to little or no education and lack of awareness on reproductive health issues.

p. Large Family Size

Having more siblings also was significantly associated with being married among the girl children.

Prevalence rate of early/child marriage in the different states that constitute Niger Delta region

The NDHS (2013.) shows that Abia State has the lowest indices (16.2) of women who get marriage before the age of 18 and this is follow by Imo State (18.9) meaning that the South eastern State has the lowest prevalence rates in the region.

Rivers State and Edo State has a prevalence rate of 23.3% and 25.3% respectively. Ondo State has a prevalence rate of 30.5%

Cross River, Delta and Akwa Ibom States has prevalence rates of 36.8%, 37.7% and 39.9% respectively.

Bayelsa was carved out of the old Rivers State in October 1996, its located within the Edumanom forest reserve and has a population of approximately 2 million it has highest prevalence rate (57.9%) of early marriage in the Niger Delta region.

This could be credited to the large population of rural dwellers and cultural/traditional practices such as Female Genital mutilation (FGM) common in Bayelsa (Mulongo, & Amao, 2014).

Secondly, majority of the population are uneducated. The area is underdeveloped due to years of neglect by the central government hence its inhabitants are underprivileged. Inaccessibility to most communities completely covered by water could be another reason (Onyido & Brambaifa, 2018).

In the south eastern States, (Abia and Imo State) causes of Early Marriage is credited to high number of siblings, family alliances, community pressure and girl child betrothal which seem to be fading off. The low prevalence rates of child marriage is credited to education of the girl child (NDHS, 2013).

Difference in Cause of Child/Early Marriage in Different States of The Niger Delta Region

The Niger Delta region consist of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers State.

Not much difference exist as regards to causes of early/child marriage in the Nine (9) states of the Niger Delta region. However; Bayelsa State has the highest prevalence rate of 57.9. This could be related to the Traditional practice of Female genital mutilation common in the State, it is believed that FGM improves the health of the girl child, hygiene, prospects of marriage and fertility, hence once it is done, it attracts suitors to the child (Mulongo, Mc Andrew & Hollins, 2014). Secondly, the culture of the Bayelsa people permits the women to fend for the family, so the rural dwellers train their females to conform with this norm.

The communities are inaccessible because most of its land space are covered by water. Also due to the long neglect by the central government, the state is under-developed and its population uneducated. This gives room for constant interactions especially with the opposite sex as a result unplanned pregnancies with subsequent child marriage is inevitable.

2. In States like, Abia, and Imo woman are celebrated for having upto 10-12 children. What is called (Ewu-Ukwu) that is a goat is killed to honour her for having used her waist effectively for delivery. She is showered with gifts and this ceremony attracts respect.

Due to numerous children, poverty could set in because of scarce resources and this is a cause of early/child marriage (Alhassan, 2013).

Also much value is placed on children, hence the people tend to give their girl child out in marriage early in order for her to have enough time to bear all her children as soon as possible Dimegwu, (1998), Ibisomi, (2008).

Only male children inherit kindred land, consequently there is preference for male children, so women tend to bear many children in order to have as many sons as possible this culture encourage early marriage. But this practice is almost

phasing off. In Edo and delta States, the story is not different.

In addition to other causes, quest for wealth and affluence are contributing factors (Agege, Nwose & Odfimogho 2017). In their article identified gender discrimination, ignorance and unexpected pregnancy as major cause of early pregnancy among Urhobos in Delta State. Child trafficking and female prostitution is said to be common and this could result to unplanned pregnancy and subsequently end up in forced marriage or co-habitation.

In Rivers State, poverty, illiteracy, and lack of self awareness seems to be the major cause of early marriage in addition to several other causes. Igwe, (2016) posits that 89% of young ones in Ahoada East Local Government Area of Rivers State are unchartered for and can hardly fend for themselves. These girls sometimes, voluntarily follow older men to better their lot and the well being of their family while sometimes they are coerced or forced into early marriage.

In Cross Rivers State, early /child marriage still exist, according to a punch newspaper publication (2018), Money woman or money marriage is a marriage culture still practiced in Becheve land in Obanhiku Local Government Area of Cross Rivers precisely in northern Cross Rivers State near the famous Obudu Cattle range. The Becheve tribe migrated from Kalele in Cameroon. A parent who is indebted to a man, sells his/her female child (born or yet to be born) to offset the debt.

Sometimes this agreement is done as early as 2 years, 5 years or seven years, also a family member can borrow money from a friend with the promise that the unborn child of a relative will become his wife if the child is a female.

The girl bride stays with the man who most times is 50 years or more and refers to the man as father until about puberty she assumes a slave wife role.

The money woman is expected to fend for both the man and the children so produced. Requirement for this marriage include, Goat, pig, 25 litres of Palm oil, clothes, cow, chicken etc.

It is believed that if a money woman objects to this marriage she is tied like wet clothes, with her legs as tribe and corn seeds thrown towards her genitals and find led to eat the corn seeds. Any woman subjected to this kind of treatment is believed will never have a child and will end up been murdered in the community.

Another preventive used to blackmail this girls, is what is called Effigy bond.

Gifts bought by the husband are recorded in an instrument called Olaumbe an effigy used to track run away money woman after the consummation of marriage and when the man has taken full possession of his commodity (woman) so sad.

Gifts bought are represent by a special Knothing of the Olumbe which is like a cord in other to record the type of gift given.

If the girl is unyielding the husband can decide to harm or even kill the money woman all he need do is call the girls name seven times and the olambe is activated. He invokes the effigy as tradition allows by inserting it into a hole bored in a banana tree. The girl is believed to die whenever such that banana tree is cut down.

Secondly, the Olambe could be placed near a fire and the money woman will experience internal heat wherever she is.

Thirdly, the Olambe could be thrown into a bowl of water, and as it absorbs water and increases in size it is believed that the money woman will keep swelling physically until she dies.

Money marriage is regarded as a status symbol for rich men. A man is regarded to be rich by acquiring as many money woman as possible for men in Ugbakoko I Community, money marriage is seen as a symbol of accomplishment or meeting the Maslow's hierarchy of need of self-actualization.

Consequences of early/child marriage

Forced marriage is a worldwide occurrence, but is most common in Africa and South Asia, according to WLUML (2013). In developed nations, such as the United Kingdom, there are recorded instances of forced marriage, but it includes South Asian families, Middle Eastern and African families in most instances (Williamson, 2014).

A type of child abuse is forced marriage involving anyone under the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2005). A kid forced into marriage is at danger of important damage due to physical, sexual or mental violence, according to Adeyemo (2013). In other words, forced marriage can adversely affect the health and growth of a child. Giyan. (2009) further posits that a child in such a situation would be absent from school resulting in the loss of educational opportunities, and possibly also future employment opportunities.

There are countless detrimental effects associated with early marriage, including physical, developmental, psychological and social implications of forced marriage involving kids. Physical abuse in the form of domestic violence and sexual abuse is a severe result of forced marriage (An-Na'im & Howard, 2000). Women marrying younger are more probable to be physically abused by their spouses, according to WLUML (2013). Furthermore, anyone compelled into a marriage faces a severe danger of rape or sexual abuse because they may not wish to consent to sexual intercourse or may not be of legal age (UNICEF, 2005). Young women forced into marriage can also be confronted face unwanted or enforced pregnancy and in many cases enforced abortion (Otoo-Oyortey & Pobi, 2003)

Early/child marriage is a violation of the fundamental human right of the victim who most times are girls and young women who are deprived of their sexual and reproductive rights thereby limiting their life choices and freedom to make decisions sexually, Isolated from her peers and increase in sexually transmitted diseases including HIV Aids infection because child brides face difficulty accessing all family planning services due to their age and need for partner consent (Girls not bride, 2018). This in turn leads to increased fertility and complications of child birth such as: Obstructed labour due to contracted /undeveloped pelvic structure., Obstetric fistulae (vesico and recto vaginal fistula). Records show that about 86% of cases of obstetric fistulae are girls under the age of 18 (Girls not bride, 2018), Maternal mortality is said to be four times higher among girls below the age 16 and their new born rate is 50%. Higher compared to women who give birth at 20 years and above (Envuladu, Umaru, Lorapuu, Osagu, Okoh & Zoakah, 2016). Post partum haemorrhage, uterine rupture and sepsis are the most cause of death, serious medical complications such as Rectovaginal (RVF) and Vesico vaginal fistula (VVF), the child bride is considered unclean and ostracized by society. About 150,000 women are affected off which 86% are under 18 years. Out of these, 80-90 percent of wives with VVF are divorced by their partners (Ogunniran, 2010). Dropping out of school which limits their access to information and education about sexual reproductive health and rights. Poor mental health due to emotional, physical and psychological abuse as most of these girls are married to partners much older than them. study show that the greater the age difference the more likely they are exposed to intimate partner violence (NDHS, 2013).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

Early marriage has health consequences such as cervical cancer, death during child birth, obstetric fistulae and sexually transmitted diseases /

HIV infections. Beyond these risks, there is the risk of death –the girl committing either murder (killing the man) or suicide. Due to legalities around culture, religion and tradition, and the necessity to work within customary and statutory laws, it is important to note the determinants and effects of early marriage (Emmanuel, Agege, Ezekiel & Odjimogho, 2017). Ignorance of the effects and causes could lead to perpetuation of early marriage. Therefore, Education programmes targeted towards early marriage prevention should be broadened to include parents/guardian and men who seek under aged girls for marriage (Brammah 2014). Health providers should carry out initial need assessment of communities to determine parents' perceptions about early marriage. Major cause of early marriage should be identified and addressed appropriately. Associated public health issues identified should be addressed in targeted educational campaigns.

PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGIES TO REDUCE CHILD MARRIAGE AND THEIR IMPACTS

Legislations to assist the public health workers to reach the girls at risk with targeted programs and services has been suggested as one potential step towards improving social protection for child brides (Machel, Pires & Carlsson, 2013). For over half a century, it had been proposed that a system of courts (English, religious and customary) cannot be perpetuated indefinitely and Sharia laws need to be addressed to curtail child marriage. Apart from the laws, several other strategies could be designed to halt this practice and prevent its precarious outcomes (Blake, 2016). Another suggestion has been that existing child-marriage prevention programs targeting unmarried girls should be broadened to include education of parents and also the men who might pursue young girls for marriage as well as provision of interventions for women already married as children (Fayokun, 2015) and Brammah (2014). Further effort to prevent early child marriage could be social change programs to provide education and job opportunities for girls in rural areas [Raj, 2009]. It is a known fact that education mitigates early marriage and empowers women (Sabbe, 2013; Singh, 2015; Erulkar, 2009).

CONCLUSION

Early marriage in Niger Delta region is a barrier to many girls' formal education as they abandon the pursuit of education and begin to rear children immediately they enter into a husband's house. Early (child) marriage in Nigeria is a violation of the fundamental human rights of women as many girls are forced into marriage against their freewill and consent. Early marriage in Niger Delta region is against international conventions mentioned earlier in this work, which placed the legal age of consent to marriage at 18 years. Early marriage in Nigeria

results into poor sexual and reproductive health for child brides, as they are incapable of negotiating safe and protected sex with their partners who are much older than they are. It is important that, Nigeria endeavors to prosecute and hold culprits who have been found guilty to account and those who cover up for them if this country will completely eliminate or prevent gender crimes. Indeed, child marriage is a fundamental violation of human rights and a gender-based violence; especially as these young girls are married out to older men without their free and full consent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to eradicate or reduce the prevalence rate of early marriage the writer recommends the following:

Recommendations First, in order to safeguard the girl child from child marriage, a 'Prohibition of Child Marriage Act' needs to be enacted, which should address the problem of child marriage in a broad manner. Such law should prevail over religious and cultural adherence, and any religious and cultural practice promoting child marriage should be sanctioned by law.

Second, the Nigerian government should see in the correct view the inability to fulfill its global and regional human rights commitments. As a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the CRC, the African Charter on Children and the African Protocol on Women, Nigeria is required to maintain its women's protection agreement, including the girl's kid.

Therefore, in order to fulfill its treaty commitments in good faith, the Nigerian government must make a concerted attempt to implement the child rights regulations in order to tackle the adverse effects of child marriage.

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