

# INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL BELIEF ON WOMEN EDUCATION IN MAKURDI METROPOLIS OF BENUE STATE

By

**LOKO TERSOO**

*Department of Early Childhood Care Education,  
College of Education, Katsina-Ala,  
Katsina State.*

**JOHN ONAH IDIKWU, Ph.D**

*Centre for Food Technology and Research,  
Benue State University, Makurdi,  
Benue State.*

And

**OKPE JOSEPH OKPE, Ph.D**

*Department of Educational Foundations,  
Nasarawa State University, Keffi,  
Nasarawa State.*

## Abstract

*This study investigated the influence of cultural belief on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study comprised 6,215 parents with female children in 11 council wards in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State. A sample of 311 parents from three council wards was used for the study. The selection was done using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. A 10-item structured four-point rating scale questionnaire titled "Impact of Cultural Beliefs Questionnaire (ICBQ)" was used for data collection. Data obtained from the field study were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of goodness of-fit was used*

*to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The findings indicated that early marriage and forced marriage have significant influence on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State. It was recommended among others that Government should create a public forum whereby parents will be oriented concerning the negative implication of early marriage so that they would desists from such acts capable of not only jeopardizing the academic pursuit of their female child but destroy's their future.*

**Keywords:** cultural belief, women education, early marriage, forced marriage

The issue women education in the contemporary society has bordered many stakeholders today. This is because of the way women in some societies are been denied the opportunity of going to school which may be as a result of cultural belief. Culture according to Akinwale (2004, p. 5) is the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization, thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours. It includes a people's peculiar patterns of values, attitudes, knowledge, skills. Culture also depicts the different ways by which each society copes with similar problems. It provides a map by which we can read people. In other words, culture includes the way a society commonly reacts to situations they find themselves. It is not static but it persists.

In the opinions of John (2000), cultural belief is the values and norms that are respected and practiced by a people and is passed down from one generation to another, and that someone has simply absorbed from other people, without examining it for him or herself. Cultural belief includes ethical or moral beliefs -that is, beliefs about the ways in which people should conduct their lives and treat other people (John, 2000). Cultural belief of people in contemporary society seems to have negative influence of education particularly the women. In recent times, conferences, workshops, seminars, and symposias educational matters has been organized to discuss about the need for women education in the development of the nation, this is a way of doing away with the cultural belief that women are not supposed to be educated.

Many women especially young girls are seen roaming the streets hawking instead of been in school. The cultural belief seems to forget the fact that education is one of the fundamental aspects of human rights that should be given to all human beings irrespective of sex. This implies that whether one is a man or woman, the opportunity of going to school to acquire knowledge should be given to all.

Education is the process of providing information to an inexperienced person to help him/her develop physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, politically, and economically (Ocho, 2005). Ocho further sawed education as the process through which

individuals are made functional members of their society. In another perspective, Akpakwu (2012) defined education as the transmission of relevant knowledge to the learner. This according to Akpakwu is to enable him to effectively adjust to his environment and live a useful life. It also enable him to be able to use the knowledge acquired to make contributions to his community and society as a whole. In the opinions of Obiabo and Alachi (2003), education is a neural process that is instrumental to something worthwhile, or the intentional bring about of a desirable and state in a morally unobjectionable manners. It is through education that an individual is able to internalize the cultural norms and values of the society. Though, within society today, it appears that many children especially women are hindered from receiving education because of cultural beliefs of some ethnic group or tribe

Women education is a significant controlling factor and a key to economic and sustainable development. In this era of globalization, the education of women is considered a strategic investment in human and intellectual capital. However, the contextual realities for girl children and the state of their education in Africa are daunting. In sub-Saharan Africa, illiteracy among women continues to be high due to inability of countries to enroll and retain girl children in school (UNESCO, 2003).

Relevant educational stakeholders in the study have speculated that there are common traditional beliefs such as: early marriage and forced marriage among others which seem to have impeded women education. Early marriage refers to any marriage of a child younger than 18 years old. This is in accordance with article 1 of the convention on the right of the child. Child marriage affects both sexes though girls are disproportionately affected as they form the majority of the victims. In the opinions of Dashen & Dashen in Akus (2016), cultural beliefs and practices sees the chastity of the women as best protected when given out early for marriage assumable, before she is “exposed”, Parents who believes in this position, place the women at the level of a commodity to be negotiated usually by the parents who are indifferent to the girl’s feeling. Some parents get bizarre level to trace the girl to the school and coerce her into abandoning her education for marriage. She becomes enslaved to the wish of her parents. In some communities, the practice of ‘gunshot’ to force a girl to marriage is still prevalent. This is a practice whereby the woman is tricked into a man’s house in the pretext of friendly visit and eventually a gun is shot announcing a marriage for the innocent girl. The girl cannot afford to go because a tight security of hefty men have already been arranged to guard her. In the night, the girl-child faces a great humiliation by subjecting her to merciless sex. The girl-child eventually is married and has no option but to discontinue her education at whatever level.

The second belief which appears hindering the women education is forced marriage which is closely related to early marriage. Forced marriages often deprive young girls of their basic human rights. Forced marriage is described as a marriage that takes place without the consent of one or both of the partners under physical or emotional duress. Forced marriage is a serious human right violation, the requirement

for the free and informed consent of both parties to a marriage is recognized in numerous legal instruments at international, national and local levels, despite these legal instruments only a few countries have specifically criminalized the practice. Many ethnic groups in Nigeria have disregarded these laws as they have continued the practices of forced marriage. Forced marriage is a persistent problem that occurs mainly among young women and girls. Lifanda (2005) asserted that “some tribes believe that women/girls do not need education, therefore women and girls have no right to get educated”. Among the Wazarano tribe for example, most girls stop their education at standard seven and then get married.

Fisho-Orideji (2001) asserted that a girl child is giving out in forced marriage to friends, benefactors, visitors, strangers or betrothed to local hero or cleric. In some cases she is forced to marry an older man in his 50s or 60s. The requirement for the free and informed consent of both parties to a marriage is recognized in numerous legal instruments at international, national and local levels. These instruments, along with all major world religion condemn forced marriages. Such practices seem to hinder women education of which the study area seems not to be an exception. It is against this background of education as determinant of peoples contribution to society and status and the fact that girls and women worldwide are not sufficiently equip to contribute to the development of society that the researchers sought to establish the influence of cultural belief on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State with particular focus on marriage and forced marriage.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Concern has been expressed by relevant educational stakeholders in the study area on the issue of women education in recent times. This is because; it appears a lot of women or girls who are supposed to be in school are rather seen roaming around streets, hawking and some even prostituting. Stakeholders are worried on this development and are kin to ascertain what could be the cause. They have expressed much concern on how concentration is more on the men or boy child rather that both female and male which is their fundamental human right.

The researchers personally observed in the study area that some women at a very tender age are seem with a child at their back in the name of marriage instead of been in school. Some are seem looking very unhappy and unkept. Based on this situation, one may ask, what could be attributed to this. Could it be that the women prefer the men to go to school while they sit at home or get married at tender age? Or could it be that their parents refuse to send them to school? This study is therefore sets out to critically examine the situation in Benue State where such situations have appeared to be prevalent. Thus, the problem of this study stated in question form therefore is: In what ways does cultural belief influence women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to examine the influence of cultural belief influence women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. find out the influence of early marriage on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State.
2. ascertain the influence of forced marriage on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. What is the influence of early marriage on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State?
2. What is the influence of forced marriage on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho<sub>1</sub>. Early marriage has no significant influence on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State.

Ho<sub>2</sub>. Forced marriage has no significant influence on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey design According to Ali (2006), descriptive survey is concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual or a group or a phenomenon as they are without any manipulation of what caused the event or what is being observed. The study is confined to Makurdi metropolis of Benue State which has 11 council wards namely: Agan, Ankpa/Wadata, Bar, Central South Mission, Fiidi, Mbalagh, Market Clark, Modern Market, North Bank I North Bank II and Wailomayo ward respectively. The population for the study comprised 6,215 parents with female children in 11 council wards in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State. A sample of 311 parents from three council wards was used for the study. The selection was done using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. A 10-item structured four-point rating scale questionnaire titled "Impact of Cultural Beliefs Questionnaire (ICBQ)" was used for data collection. The respondents were guided with the modified four point rating scale with a response mode of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. The questionnaire was validated by two experts in Educational Management and one in Measurement and Measurement from the Faculty

of Education, Benue State University, Makurdi. A pilot study was conducted on 20 parents with female children in two one council ward in Tarka Local Government which was not part of the study population and sample of the study and a reliability coefficient of .79 was obtained after analysis of the data collected which indicated that the instrument was reliable for usage in the field work. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to answer the two research questions. A mean cut-off point of 2.50 was used for decision making. Any mean score of 2.50 and above was regarded as having the desired influence while any mean score below 2.50 was regarded as not having influence. The hypotheses were tested using chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of goodness of fit at .05 level of significance.

**Results and Findings**

This section presented and discussed the results of the study.

**Research Question One**

What is the influence of early marriage on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State?

**Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of the Respondents on the Influence of Early Marriage on Women Education in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State**

Item No	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	A female child with less than 18 years also have a mindset of been giving out early marriage rather than going to school.	178	111	6	16	2.75	1.10	Agree
2	Most parents see the girl as a source of wealth to them and give them early in marriage rather than putting them in school.	157	132	17	5	2.92	1.04	Agree
3	A female child in giving out early in marriage so that the boy child will go to school.	145	109	22	35	2.81	1.10	Agree
4	Early marriage is more important to some parents than educating them.	119	162	13	17	2.85	0.97	Agree
5	Parents prefer their girl child to marry and be trained by their husbands than them.	104	116	26	65	2.99	0.99	Agree
<b>Cluster Mean</b>						<b>2.86</b>		<b>Agree</b>

Data on Table 1 showed that the mean rating for items 1-5 are 2.35, 2.92, 2.81, 2.85 and 2.99 respectively with their corresponding standard deviations of 1.10, 1.04, 1.10, 0.97 and 0.99. Based on the decision rule, it means that respondents accepted all the items in the cluster that have mean scores above the cut-off point of 2.50. The

standard deviation scores of the respondents are small signifying homogeneity for the items raised. The cluster mean of 2.86 was also found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that early marriage influence women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State.

### **Research Question Two**

What is the influence of forced marriage on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State?

**Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of the Respondents on Influence of Forced Marriage on Women Education in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State**

<b>Item No</b>	<b>Item Description</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b><math>\bar{X}</math></b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Decision</b>
6	Most parents compel their child to get married against their wish for them to get money and solve their problem.	136	133	31	11	2.90	1.11	Agree
7	Parents stop the education of their female child and force them to get married against their wish when they can no longer pay their school fees.	155	110	21	25	2.86	1.01	Agree
8	Most girl child are betrothed to a boy child and compelled to marry against her wish rather than send been sent to school.	165	105	29	12	2.97	0.99	Agree
9	The consent of the girl child is not considered on issues of marriage in most culture at the detriment of her education.	117	123	23	48	2.99	0.97	Agree
10	Forced married affect the future education of the women.	131	162	11	7	3.09	0.91	Agree
<b>Cluster Mean</b>						<b>2.96</b>		<b>Agree</b>

Table 2 indicated that the mean ratings for items 6–10 are 2.90, 2.86, 2.97, 2.99 and 3.09 with their corresponding standard deviations of 1.11, 1.01, 0.99, 0.97 and 0.91. Based on the decision rule, it means that respondents accepted all the items in the cluster that have mean scores above the cut-off point of 2.50. The standard deviation scores of the respondents are small signifying homogeneity for the items raised. The cluster mean of 3.27 was also found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that forced marriage influence women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State.

### **Hypotheses Testing**

#### **Hypotheses 1**

Early marriage has no significant influence on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State.

**Table 3: Chi-square test of the Influence of Early Marriage on Women Education in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State**

<b>Opinions</b>	<b>Observed N</b>	<b>Expected N</b>	<b>Residual</b>	<b>Level of Sig.</b>	<b>df</b>	$\chi^2$ -cal	<b>P-value</b>	<b>Decision</b>
SD	53	77.8	-24.8	0.05	3	95.32	0.00	Sig.
D	22	77.8	-55.8					
A	133	77.8	55.3					
SA	103	77.8	25.3					
<b>Total</b>	<b>311</b>							

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 77.8.

Table 3 revealed that  $\chi^2=95.32$  at  $df=3$  and  $p=0.00$ . Since  $p$ -value of  $0.00 < 0.05$  at 3 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis which states that early marriage has no significant influence on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State is therefore, rejected. This implies that early marriage has significant influence on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State.

**Hypotheses 2**

Forced marriage has no significant influence on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State.

**Table 4: Chi-Square test of the Influence of Forced Marriage on Women Education in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State**

<b>Opinions</b>	<b>Observed N</b>	<b>Expected N</b>	<b>Residual</b>	<b>Level of Sig.</b>	<b>df</b>	$\chi^2$ -cal	<b>P-value</b>	<b>Decision</b>
SD	57	77.8	-20.8	0.05	3	123.28	0.00	Sig.
D	10	77.8	-67.8					
A	140	77.8	62.3					
SA	104	77.8	26.3					
<b>Total</b>	<b>311</b>							

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 77.8.

Table 4 revealed that  $\chi^2=123.28$  at  $df=3$  and  $p=0.00$ . Since  $p$ -value of  $0.00 < 0.05$  at 3 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis which states that forced marriage has no significant influence on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State is therefore, rejected. This implies that forced marriage has significant influence on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State.



### **Discussion of Findings**

The first finding of the study indicated that early marriage has significant influence on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State. This result is in agreement with the opinion of Dashen and Dashen (2004) who stated that cultural beliefs and practices sees the chastity of the women as best protected when given early in marriage at teenage age, assumable, before she is “exposed”, Parents who believes in this position, place the women at the level of a commodity to be negotiated usually by the parents within-difference to the girl’s feeling. Some parents get bizarre level to trace the girl to the school and coerce her into abandoning her education for marriage. She becomes enslaved to the wish of her parents. In some communities, the practice of ‘gunshot’ to force a girl to marriage is still prevalent. Dashen and Dashen further maintained that this is a practice whereby the woman is tricked into a man’s house in the pretext of friendly visit and eventually a gun is shot announcing a marriage for the innocent girl. The girl cannot afford to go because a tight security of hefty men have already been arranged to guard her. In the night, the girl-child faces a great humiliation by subjecting her to merciless sex. The girl-child eventually is married and has no option but to discontinue her education at whatever level.

The second finding of this study revealed that forced marriage has significant influence on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State. This also corroborate with the views of Fisho-Orideji (2001) who asserted that a girl child is giving out in forced marriage to friends, benefactors, visitors, strangers or betrothed to local hero or cleric. In some cases she is forced to marry an older man in his 50s or 60s. The requirement for the free and informed consent of both parties to a marriage is recognized in numerous legal instruments at international, national and local levels. These instruments, along with all major world religion condemn forced marriages. Such practices o hinders women education.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results of the study, it was concluded that early and forced marriage has significant influence on women education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State, Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommended as follows;

1. Government should create a public forum whereby parents will be oriented concerning the negative implication of early marriage so that they would desists from such acts capable of not only jeopardizing the academic pursuit of their female child but destroy their future.
2. Government through the legislatures should enact a law that would protect teenage girls from been forced in to marriage rather than educating them. Any parent

who forces a girl child for marriage should be arrested and prosecuted accordingly as it would not only serve as deterrent to other parents but also enhance women education.

### **References**

- Akinwale, A. O. (2004). The Nigerian Theatre and Cultural Development. In P.A. Dopamu (Ed) *African Culture, Modern Science and Religious Thought*. Ilorin: African Centre for Religions and the Sciences (ACRS).
- Akpakwu, S.O. (2012). *Educational management: Theory and practice*. Makurdi: Destiny Ventures.
- Akus, Y. (2016). Impact of cultural impediments and socio-economic status on girl-child education in Ankpa local government area of Kogi State. *An Unpublished Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Curriculum and Teaching, Faculty of Education, Benue State University, Makurdi*.
- Fisho Orideji, D (2001). The Girl-child developing the potentials of girl child a national challenge. *European Scientific Journal*, 10 (2), 14-23.
- John S. M. (2000). *African religions and philosophy*. California: Heinemann.
- Lifanda, K.N. (2005). *Education and training of women and the girl-child*. On the discussion for review of Beijingeco (UNICEF).
- Obiabo, A & Alache, O.A. (2003). Sustaining democracy through education. *Benue State University journal of education*. 4(1), 136-140.
- Ocho, O. (2005). *Culture and girl-child education. conference of women in colleges of education*, Kaduna: Ministry of Education Publication.
- UNESCO, (2003). Educational Webmaster. World Conference on Higher Education Framework and Action, [www.jyu.fi/unesco2003/conference.html](http://www.jyu.fi/unesco2003/conference.html) .Accessed 24 th August 2010. *DSM Business Review v Vol. 2 , No. 2 (December, 2010) Ukertor Gabriel Moti*.