

iscte

INSTITUTO
UNIVERSITÁRIO
DE LISBOA



The Impact of Child Marriage Interventions: The Case of “Money Marriage” among the Becheve Community of Southern Nigeria

Uche Louisa Nwatu

Erasmus Mundus Masters in Social Work with Families and Children

Supervisor: Cláudia Patrícia da Cruz Pereira (PhD)
Assistant Professor
Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

Co-Supervisor: Jorge Manuel Leitão Ferreira (PhD)
Assistant Professor

Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

June, 2023

iscte

INSTITUTO
UNIVERSITÁRIO
DE LISBOA



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First, I am forever grateful to God! May your name be praised forever! My deepest gratitude goes to Prof. Cláudia Pereira and Prof. Jorge Ferreira for their invaluable contributions, exceptional guidance, kindness, and warm personalities throughout this research period. Your remarkable ideas and insightful feedback have made this journey truly unforgettable. Without your unwavering support, this dissertation would not have been possible. I am forever grateful for the knowledge and wisdom I have gained under your supervision during this research experience. Your contributions have significantly enhanced the quality of my work. I sincerely hope to have the opportunity to collaborate with both of you again in the future.

My gratitude goes to my uncles, Fr. Felix Nwatu and Mr. John O. Nwatu, my mother, Mrs. Elizabeth N. Nwatu, and my siblings (Nonye, Ngozi, Oge, and Chinwendu). I sincerely appreciate your unwavering support, encouragement, and unconditional prayers throughout this demanding academic journey. I also extend heartfelt thanks to all my friends who have been by my side, helping and showing concern for my well-being. Your love and care mean the world to me!

I also thank the European Union and the board of the European Masters in Social Work with Families and Children for providing funding and offering me an extraordinary experience over the past two years. These years have been a combination of exceptional moments and significant challenges, making them some of the most memorable in my life. Thank you for this invaluable opportunity.

Many thanks to my lecturers from the University of Stavanger, University of Gothenburg, University Institute of Lisbon, and Makerere University. Your contribution made my study period truly valuable, thank you for being great and impactful teachers. I extend a special thanks to Prof Mikhail Gradovski, the MFamily Programme Coordinator, and Prof Claudia, who skillfully coordinated the dissertation period at ISCTE. Your support and coordination are greatly appreciated.

Finally, I am also thankful to the professionals who generously volunteered to take part in this study. Thank you for placing your trust in me and sharing your stories. I sincerely appreciate the time and effort you have dedicated to this research.

Abstract

Title: The impact of child marriage interventions: The case of “money marriage” among the Becheve community of southern Nigeria

Author: Uche Louisa Nwatu

Keywords: Children, Child marriage, Intervention, Empowerment, Nigeria

Child marriage is a widespread issue that extends across the globe, and its prevalence is still significant in various regions of Africa, with Nigeria being particularly affected. Due to child protection issues in Nigeria, child marriages have continued to thrive despite national and international laws protecting children and not much is known about interventions by non-governmental organisations towards ending child marriage in Nigeria. Thus, this study aims to analyse the impact of child marriage interventions towards survivors of child marriage in Nigeria, considering how child marriage affects childhood and the focus of interventions towards ending the practice. Following the theoretical framework of empowerment and the Child Rights Based Approach, qualitative data was collected ethically from a purposive sample of eight professionals engaged with NGOs and FBOs. In-depth interviews were conducted to gather the data, which was subsequently analyzed using thematic analysis. Results revealed that empowerment is at the core of child marriage interventions in Nigeria, different organisations channel their efforts towards eliminating child marriage and organises a range of empowerment programs for children, families, and communities. The results also shows that these interventions have led to heightened awareness and a significant change in attitudes toward child marriage within the community, which accounts to the decreased prevalence rate of child marriage in Nigeria. The study recommends that more intervention should be channelled to addressing child marriage at a macro level, with the government taking proactive measures to expedite economic development and reinforce legal structures aimed at eliminating child marriage.

LIST OF ACRONYMS USED IN THE STUDY

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CRA	Child Rights Act
CRBA	Child Right Based Approach
FBOs	Faith Based Organisations
HBRA	Human Right Based Approach
ICRW	International Centre for Research on Women
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Emergency Fund
VVF	Vesicovaginal Fistula

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION..... 1

1.1	BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	1
1.2	STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	3
1.3	RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.....	5
1.4	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	5
1.5	SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	5
1.6	IMPLICATIONS TO SOCIAL WORK WITH FAMILIES AND CHILDREN.....	6
1.7	STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY	7

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW..... 8

2.0	INTRODUCTION	8
2.1	THE CONTEXT AND LITERATURE ON CHILD MONEY MARRIAGE	8
2.2	MONEY MARRIAGES AMONG THE BECHEVE COMMUNITY OF CROSS RIVER STATE NIGERIA ...	9
2.3	FACTORS PROMOTING CHILD MARRIAGE IN NIGERIA.....	11
2.3.1	THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND CULTURE IN THE PRACTICE OF CHILD MARRIAGE IN NIGERIA	11
2.3.2	POOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS	12
2.3.3	GENDER INEQUALITY	12
2.3.4	WEAK IMPLEMENTATION LAWS AND POLICIES	13
2.4	CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD MARRIAGE IN NIGERIA	14
2.4.1	IMPACTS ON HEALTH	14
2.4.2	IMPACT ON EDUCATION	15
2.4.3	IMPACTS ON CHILDHOOD	16
2.4.4	INCREASED RISK OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE	17
2.5	EFFORTS TOWARDS THE PREVENTION AND ELIMINATION CHILD MARRIAGE IN NIGERIA	18
2.5.1	LAWS AND POLICIES PROHIBITING CHILD MARRIAGE IN NIGERIA.....	18
2.5.2	THE CHILD RIGHTS ACT OF 2003	18
2.5.3	THE VIOLENCE AGAINST PERSONS (PROHIBITION) ACT OF 2015:	18
2.5.4	THE NATIONAL POLICY ON THE ELIMINATION OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (2014)	19
2.5.5	THE NATIONAL GENDER POLICY (NGP).....	19
2.5.6	THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE CHILD	19
2.5.7	EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF GIRLS AND WOMEN IN NIGERIA	19
2.5.8	EDUCATION STRATEGIES	19
2.5.9	AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS	20
2.5.10	ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT	20
2.6	AN OVERVIEW OF MONEY MARRIAGE INTERVENTIONS IN CROSS RIVER, NIGERIA.....	20

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWEORK.....22

3.0	INTRODUCTION	22
3.1	EMPOWERMENT THEORY	22
3.1.1	KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL ACQUISITION.....	23

3.1.2	INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING	23
3.1.3	JOINT COMMUNITY ACTION FOR CHANGE	23
3.1.4	COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY AND COHESION	23
3.1.5	CONTEXTUALISING THE EMPOWERMENT THEORY	24
3.2	CHILD RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH (CRBA).....	24
3.2.1	CONTEXTUALISING THE CRBA	26
3.3	MICRO AND MACRO LEVEL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH CHILD MARRIAGE.	26
3.3.1	MACRO LEVEL	27
3.3.2	MICRO LEVEL	28

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY30

4.0	INTRODUCTION	30
4.1	RESEARCH DESIGN	30
4.2	STUDY SETTING	31
4.3	METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION	32
4.4	RECRUITING AND STUDY SAMPLE	33
4.5	DATA ANALYSIS.....	35
4.6	ETHICAL CONSIDERATION	35
4.6.1	INFORMED CONSENT	35
4.6.2	PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY	36
4.6.3	POSITIONALITY.....	36
4.6.4	CLARITY OF NO COMPENSATION.....	37
4.7	TRUSTWORTHINESS	37

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION39

5.0	INTRODUCTION	39
5.1	PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	39
5.2	PRESENTATION OF STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS.....	39
5.3	CHILD MARRIAGE AS AN INHIBITING FACTOR FOR CHILDHOOD IN NIGERIA	40
5.3.1	ABSENCE OF AUTONOMY	40
5.3.2	SOURCE OF TRAUMA AND PHYSICAL HARM	41
5.3.3	DENIAL OF ACCESS TO EDUCATION.....	43
5.3.4	HINDERS CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT.....	44
5.4	THE FOCUS OF CHILD MARRIAGE INTERVENTIONS IN NIGERIA.....	45
5.4.1	VOCATIONAL AND SKILLS ACQUISITION PROGRAMS	45
5.4.2	HEALTH-BASED PROGRAMS	47
5.4.3	EDUCATION-BASED INITIATIVE	48
5.4.4	FOOD SUPPLIES	49
5.5	REGION-SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR ADVANCING EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS IN ELIMINATING CHILD MARRIAGE IN NIGERIA.	50
5.5.1	INCREASED STAKEHOLDER'S COLLABORATION	50
5.5.2	POLICY IMPLEMENTATION	51
5.5.3	GATEKEEPERS' INVOLVEMENT/SUPPORT	53
5.5.4	SOCIAL WORKER'S INVOLVEMENT	55
5.6	SYNERGISING STUDY FINDINGS WITH THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND EXISTING LITERATURE	56
5.6.1	CHILD MARRIAGE AS AN INHIBITING FACTOR FOR CHILDHOOD IN NIGERIA.....	56
5.6.2	THE FOCUS OF CHILD MARRIAGE INTERVENTIONS IN NIGERIA	57

5.6.3	REGION-SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR ADVANCING EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS IN ELIMINATING CHILD MARRIAGE IN NIGERIA.....	61
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION		64
6.0	INTRODUCTION	64
6.1	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	64
6.2	STUDY LIMITATIONS	65
6.3	IMPLICATIONS TO SOCIAL WORK AND POLICY	66
6.4	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	67
REFERENCES.....		68
APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE		83
APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM		85
APPENDIX 3: CODEBOOK.....		86

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of professionals working to eliminate child marriage Nigeria.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 A typical household in Becheve community
Figure 2 Effects of child marriage on childhood in Nigeria
Figure 3 Empowerment theory and child marriage

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

....empowering both the young girls and their families is what we have been committed to, the reason is to be able to defeat poverty which is at the root of child marriage, we make efforts to ensure that children are enrolled in school and are sensitized enough about their rights and for their families, we are more interested in empowering them financially so that lack of resources will not push them into seeing their girl children as a bait to escape hardships (*Participant 1*)

The excerpt above from one of the study participants reveals the focus of child marriage (used interchangeably with “money marriage” in the rest of the study) intervention efforts by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working to eliminate child marriage in Nigeria, which is the aim of this research. This chapter presents the study background, statement of the research problem, the study’s significance, the objectives of the study and research questions, implications to social work with families and children and then the structure of the thesis report.

1.1 Background to the Study

Child marriage is a global problem ravaging the lives of young children in different countries across the world, but more common among the third world countries. Statistics shows that the percentage married women who got married before their 18th birthday globally is at 21% (Population Council, 2004; UN Youth Envoy, 2016). Child marriage is endemic in some countries among the Sub-Saharan Africa such as Nigeria, Niger, Kenya, Ethiopia among others, including some countries in South Asia (Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Indonesia etc), Latin America and countries in the Middle East, meanwhile Africa and Asia dominate the global ranking for continents with the highest prevalence of child marriages across the globe, where 37% and 30% of girls are married before the age of 18 respectively (Adekola, Akanbi & Olawole-Isaac, 2016; UNICEF, 2017). This practice is recognised by international conventions a complete violation of the fundamental rights of children which is clearly stated in the article 1 of the Convention on the Right of the Child that 18 years is the minimum age before entering any marital union, in addition to the fact that full and free consent (UNICEF, 2019b) In the case of child marriage, children are given out and sometimes forced into marriages without their free and full consent (Adebambo, 2010).

In Nigeria, Child marriage remains prevalent in different parts of the country despite that national conventions prohibit any marriage before the age of 18 (Toyo, 2006, UNICEF, 2001). The country is known to have the third highest rate of early marriage across the world with over 3.5 million girls below the age of 18 currently married and tops the list of African countries with the highest number of child bride (Adedokun, Adeyemi & Dauda, 2016, Girls Not Bride, 2019, UNICEF, 2019a). The practice differs significantly across the six geopolitical zones in country, with a higher prevalence in the northern zones (39.0%-67.6%) which is predominantly the Muslims, compared to the southern region (13.9%-21.6%) that are mostly Christians. According to Mobolaji, Fatusi and Adedini (2020), child marriage in Nigeria has not recorded any significant improvement over the past three decades, with only but 1% decrease, notwithstanding the efforts made by the Nigerian government to combat the menace. The population of child brides in Nigeria is projected to double by the year 2050 if nothing is done about the current trend (UNICEF, 2019b).

Globally, Child marriage is globally attributed to unequal gender norms that are deeply embedded in local socio-cultural contexts, it is also associated with poor socio-economic conditions of families, low level of education, among others (Bicchieri, Jiang & Lindemans, 2014; Mobolaji, Fatunji & Adedini, 2020; Wahhaj, 2019). The prevalence of Child Marriage is caused by a combination of religious, cultural, economic, and social factors (Adedokun, Adeyemi & Dauda, 2016; Olatubosun, 2001). These factors are also attributed to child marriage in Nigeria, survivors of child marriage usually come from a poor socio-economic family backgrounds and low level of education; this is evident in the “Money Marriage” practice where parents use their female children in exchange as collateral to adult male creditors for failing to repay their loans; this simply denotes that some families adopts this practice as a survival strategy to get relieved from their teeming financial burdens at the expense of the fundamental rights of survivors (Adediran, 2021; Adekola, Akanbi & Adebanye, 2015; Akpambang, 2020; Bob-Manuel & Azuonwu, 2022; Buzome et. al 2018; Igwe, 2016; Isiugo-Abanihe, Oyediran & Fayehun, 2022; Onyido & Brambaifa, 2018). In addition, Child marriage is viewed as a culturally appropriate practice that can reduce sex outside of marriage, encourage modesty, and avoid the stigma of teenage pregnancies, and the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society further aggravates the practice (Bolarinwa et al., 2022)

Child Marriage is a complete violation of fundamental human rights and a deviation from both international and national laws protecting the lives of children, it is a form of sexual

exploitation, child labour, domestic slavery, and child trafficking (ECPAT, 2013, Bob-Manuel & Azonwu, 2022), the practice is associated with various psychological, physical, and emotional impacts of the survivors. It predisposes them to health risks such as death, high risk of cervical cancer and infant mortality, Vagino-Vesico Fistula (VVF), sexually transmitted diseases among others (ECPAT, 2013; Igwe, 2016; Iyabode, 2012; Raj, 2010). Children who fall victim of child marriage are stripped off their childhood care and protection and forced to take up adult responsibilities of home-keeping, childcare, the consequences are also not unconnected to lack of access to basic education, social exclusion, and traumatic disconnection from their social networks (Braithair, 2014; Girls Not Bride, 2018; 2020; Adedokun, Adeyemi & Dauda, 2016; Wodon, Nguyen & Tsimpo, 2016).

The vulnerable conditions of these child brides have resulted in interventions at the international, national, regional, and professional levels. In a bid to protect the fundamental rights of children and protect them against child marriage, the Nigerian government adopted the Child Right Act in 2003 in which 18 years was stated as the minimum age of marriage (Adebowale, 2018, UNHCR, 2019). This was followed by the Violence against Persons Prohibition Act which was set aside to address concerns such as female child marriage, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and domestic violence (Bolarinwa et al., 2022). In addition to these, other national and international legal instruments and promulgations were adopted including efforts made by both national and international non-governmental organisations to ensure the elimination of this practice. However, these interventions have recorded a very low impact across the country due to lack of implementation, a significant proportion (40%) of children are forced into marriage before their 18th birthdays (Braithair, 2014; Itebiyi, 2016; UNICEF, 2018).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The devastating experiences and the vulnerabilities imposed on children with the continuous practice of child marriage (Adedokun, Adeyemi & Dauda, 2016; Diala, 2019; Itebiyi, 2016; Onyido & Brambaifa, 2018) warrants the intervention of various child protection professionals who provide both preventive and curatives roles to ensure that every child is protected at all costs. Notwithstanding that these efforts to save children from the menace of child marriage has been confronted by various cultural, religious, and socio-economic barriers in different parts of Nigeria, efforts to put an end to money marriage have not been adequately addressed, leading to the continued prevalence of this practice. The government's policies and laws aimed

at protecting children from money marriage have suffered from insufficient implementation, and law enforcement agencies have struggled to hold those responsible for the practice accountable, hindering its eradication. Furthermore, child marriage interventions in the Becheve community have not gained much traction due to its remote location, making it a challenging area for both government and non-government agencies to reach compared to more accessible regions. Nevertheless, numerous organizations are striving to eradicate child marriage in the Cross Rivers area of Nigeria. These organizations have forged close partnerships with various communities and families that face the risk of child marriage. They offer extensive support to these communities in their efforts to eliminate child marriage. Consequently, it becomes crucial to assess the effectiveness of interventions by NGOs and FBOs in combatting child marriage and to acknowledge their diverse contributions to the well-being of survivors of such marriages and their families.

In southern Nigeria, the impact of interventions towards the survivors of child marriage (Money Marriage) is quite invisible in literature, this is because much emphasis is placed on the northern part of Nigeria which has the highest prevalence of child marriage in Nigeria due to the dominance of Sharia law in that region. Seeing that interventions towards protecting children from this menace are being inhibited by various factors, it is especially relevant to gain insight into previous interventions specifically targeted at combating Money Marriage in Becheve Community of Cross River state and to examine the extent to which these interventions have impacted the lives of children and their families. Although there are numerous scholarly works on child marriage issues in Nigeria (Adediran, 2021; Adeyemo, 2013; Akonam, 2019; Bob-Manuel & Azuonwu, 2022; Fayokun, 2015; Evulade et al., 2016; Igwe, 2016; Isiugo-Abanihe, Oyedira & Fayehun, 2022; Mobolaji, Fatusi & Adedini; 2020; Itebiyi, 2016; Orjiako, 2018), but most of them were conducted in Northern Nigeria. There is a gap in literature on child marriage studies in Cross River State especially on issue of Money Marriage. Therefore, this study is aimed at filling this literature gap by focusing on analysing the impact of Money Marriage interventions on children and how the practice inhibits childhood in Nigeria.

1.3 Research Objectives

The general objective of the study was to analyse the impact of interventions towards survivors of child marriage in Nigeria. In a bid to achieve the study's main objective, the study addressed the following specific objectives:

- To what extent does child marriage act as an inhibiting factor for childhood in Nigeria.
- To find out the focus of child marriage intervention efforts in Nigeria
- To generate region-specific proposals for advancing effective solutions in eliminating child marriage in Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

The main research question guiding this study was: "What are the impact of interventions towards survivors of child marriage in Nigeria?" Specifically, the study's research questions include the following:

1. How does child marriage act as an inhibiting factor for childhood in Nigeria?
2. What is the focus of child marriage intervention efforts in Nigeria?
3. What are the region-specific proposals for accelerating effective solutions in combating child marriage in Nigeria.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Numerous studies have been on the issues of child marriage in Nigeria with so much emphasis on child marriage in Northern Nigeria, but there is no scholarly work on how child marriage interventions generally impact the lives of children in Nigeria. Interestingly, Akonam (2019) conducted a study on how Money Marriage impacts the psycho-emotional state of female children in Becheve community, to the best of my knowledge, making it the only research that has addressed the issue of Money Marriage in Cross River state. However, this study is the first exploratory study to investigate the focus of child marriage (Money Marriage) interventions and assesses what impact it has in the lives of children from the perspectives of professionals. Therefore, the study's theoretical importance is that it fills the existing research gap in knowledge and generally adds to the body of literature on child marriage, child protection and social work practice intervention in Nigeria, Africa, and the world at large.

Moreover, by revealing the impact of child marriage on childhood and how interventions have impacted the lives of children, the study presents an evidence-based knowledge that can be utilized by social work practitioners, government, and non-government agencies as well as international organisations, in carrying out their duties more effectively to survivors of child marriage. The findings could as well act as a reference document to policy makers and may bring about the formulation and or advancement of humane child protection policies that will prioritize the best interest of the child principles in its interventions.

The study's findings have important implications for the education and profession of social workers in Nigeria. It can help them develop effective curricula that will address the various complexities of working with children at risk of child marriage and adopted in various departments, schools, and colleges of social work in Nigeria. Lastly, findings can also be used to train social workers and other professionals who work with the vulnerable children in Nigeria. It provides a framework for conducting further research on the various aspects of working with survivors of child marriage and children in adverse life situations in Nigeria.

1.6 Implications to Social Work with Families and Children

The welfare of children and families in adverse life situations is fundamental to the Masters' programme and to social work profession in general (Berg & Kelly, 2000; Fraser, Galinsky, & Richman, 1999; Kamerman & Gatenio-Gabel, 2014; Munro, 2008; Welbourne, 2012). As a rights-based profession, social work is committed to the protection of rights and welfare of children and families in adverse life situations such as the child marriage menace, evidenced by the accompanying neglect, sexual abuse, physical and mental abuse (International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), 2014; National Association of Social Workers (NASWS), 2008). In relation to social work practice intervention, survivors of child marriage constitute the vulnerable population of children who face various kinds of abuse, and it is important for social work and child protection practitioners to consider the impact of interventions on childhood.

Since this study falls within the scope of social work with children and families, social workers as child protection workers have the responsibility of providing care and support to children and their families against child marriage. Therefore, the study holds a huge implication for social workers since they are well equipped with the requisite skills and knowledge needed to

work with families and children, they are trained to provide various services to children suffering abuse and they are better positioned to understand the needs of the vulnerable population. Social workers who work directly with child brides are well informed about international and regional child protection frameworks, the impact of child marriage on childhood and the need to work collaboratively with other helping professionals to ensure that the rights of children are protected, and that the child's best interest is given uttermost priority.

1.7 Structure of the study

This study is organised in six interconnected chapters. The first chapter of the work is the introduction of the study which comprises the study's background from the broader context down to the Nigerian context of child marriage. The chapter further presents the statement of the research problem, the objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study and the implications of the study to social work with families and children. The second chapter is the literature review section, it contains a review of both empirical and theoretical literature with specific references to previously published journal articles, books, media reports and other digital resources about issues of child marriage in Nigeria and globally. The literatures were reviewed with a focus on the factors promoting child marriage, consequences of child marriage, measures and strategies adopted to prevent and eliminate child marriage and progress at preventing/eliminating child marriage in Nigeria.

In chapter three, the study's theoretical frameworks were presented and theories that are relevant to the study were reviewed. The social change and empowerment theories was used to provide a clarity of how child marriage intervention efforts are predicted to affect the transformational result and how intervention plans are used to empower girls and communities through adequate sensitization on the need to take control and defend their rights. The study methodology is presented in the fourth chapter; describing the motivations for the research design and strategies (sampling procedures, instruments of data collection, methods of analysis and ethical concerns) adopted.

The fifth chapter presents the study findings and discussions which contains a presentation of the study findings in themes and the discussions in relation to the study objectives and questions. Lastly, chapter six presents the study conclusion in the following order summary of findings, study limitations, implications of findings to social work, study limitations and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This literature review chapter presents literatures from previous studies on child marriage in Nigeria, it begins with an overview of child marriage in the context of child protection in Nigeria and an overview of money marriages among the Becheve community of Cross River state Nigeria, followed by a presentation of the factors that promote it. In the next section, the discussion centres on the consequences of child marriage in Nigeria and the efforts towards the prevention and elimination of it. The chapter ends by presenting an overview of child money marriage interventions in Cross River state, Nigeria.

2.1 The context and literature on child money marriage

Child protection is one of the fundamental concerns that is deeply embedded in the profession of social work, its fundamental principle is structured around the protection of children against all forms of abuse and amplifying their voices of children (Gillingham, 2015; Healy, 2014). One of the critical interventions towards the elimination of Child marriage to respond to the needs of children who are forced into marriage (Girls Not Brides, 2021). On the other hand, child marriages have been marked as a complete infringement on the fundamental rights of children that negates both national and international child protection laws (Adediran, 2021; Akinwunmi, 2010; Raj, 2010). In the light of the above, child protection in social work is committed to protecting children who fall victim of child marriage, and it goes further to help mitigate the numerous debilitating consequences of child marriage. The impact of child marriages on the physical, social, and psychological wellbeing of children can never be overemphasised and has stood as one of the greatest threats to actualising some of the goals of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals such as gender equality, quality education and no poverty (Australian Association of Social Workers, 2015).

Among the African countries with the highest prevalence of child marriages in Africa, Nigeria happens to be among the country with a slowest improvement in the efforts to combat the practice, coupled with the fact that the country has the highest number of child brides across countries in Africa estimated to be around 22 million (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2018). Children who become survivors of child marriage in Nigeria and made to face several lifelong consequences which endangers their lives and makes them unproductive (Adebola, 2020). Similarly, the practice of child marriage goes against child protection principles and not in line with the best interest of children. Since parents and guardians force their children into marriage for their financial gains against the free consent and opinions of their children, it becomes a

matter of concern to the United Nations convention on the rights of the child which clearly states that the voices and opinions of children must be given due consideration in matters that involve their wellbeing. In view of this, children have the right to take part in the decision-making process about their welfare and protection. Giving children their voice and freewill contributes to the development of the child centred approaches and in line with the basic principles of article 12 of the UNCRC (Henriksen, 2021; United Nations, 2020).

Childhood is seen as a period of innocence and a golden age of happiness, when children should be cared for, protected, and given freedom to express themselves, also devoid of any adult responsibilities which inhibit their growth and development. Child marriage on the other hand robs children of their childhood and innocence, undermines their future and impose adult responsibilities of childbearing, childcare, sexual responsibilities, and housekeeping. These underaged children do not have the maturity to negotiate safe sex and are susceptible to sexually transmitted diseases as well as domestic violence. Child marriage is synonymous to the absence of child agency with deep roots in gender inequality seen in the inability of female children to take part in deciding an all-important aspect of their life which is marriage (Chukwuemeka & Ugwu, 2018). Child brides also suffer trauma of sexual abuse and marriage to men who are in their father's and grandfather's age (Addaney & Azubike, 2017; Svanemyr et. al, 2015)

2.2 Money marriages among the Becheve community of Cross River state Nigeria

Money Marriage is the most common type of early marriage in Cross River state, Nigeria. It is a practice among the Becheve community in which under aged girls are forced into early marriages with adult men in the community in exchange for financial or material gains; as low as ten thousand Nigerian naira (approx. €13), livestock such as yam and pigs, yam tubers among others (Igwe, 2016). In other words, children between the ages of five and seventeen years are exchanged or used as a permanent collateral for money borrowed by their parents or guardian. The practice is deeply rooted in the people's culture and tradition, in addition to poor socio-economic conditions of families. (Bob-Manuel & Azuonwu, 2022; Odey & Sanya, 2018). In the study carried out by Richards (2019), money marriage was regarded as one of the forms of modern-day girls' slavery and quite synonymous to sexual exploitation of the girl-child and human trafficking. The survivors of the Money Marriage practice are referred to as "Money Women", this practice is as old as their tradition and mostly perpetrated without

the free informed consent by the girl in question to clear the debts owned by their families even before they were birthed in some cases.

Furthermore, some adult men use this money woman practice to prove their socio-economic status and as a sign of pride as among the wealthy and most influential members of the community. In a situation where the victim's husband dies, tradition demands that his next of kin takes over as the girls' husband and the family of the 'money woman' is expected to replace the 'money woman' with another girl child if the first victim dies without giving birth to children (Igwe, 2016; Girls Not Bride, 2013). The 'money women' are not allowed access to formal education and does not have right to her own opinion in all the marriage arrangement, she is sold into marriage where she is expected to fend for herself and supposed husband and on no condition should she return to her parents' house irrespective of how she is been treated by her husband. Money marriages have increased the rate of girls being molested by males, trading young women for profit and benefits to the point that young women who should be pursuing formal education are out there working long hours to satisfy their "money men's" demands (Bob-Manuel & Azuonwu, 2022; Mudiaga, 2018). In the sales of the children or wards, the parents of the "money women" have a substantial influence that may be directly or indirectly related to the socioeconomic conditions that are prevalent at the period. Some practitioners also hold the view that money marriage is a long-standing, conventional custom that cannot be abolished.

Several attempts have been made in Nigeria concerning money marriage practice, this ranges from advocacy and awareness raising to put an end to the practice. The practice still thrives because of its deep roots in the people's culture and tradition despite all these intervention efforts. This child money marriage practice has been strictly criticised for commodifying women and promoting gender inequality (Igwe, 2016; Raj, 2010). The practice is perceived as an important part of their culture that needs to be preserved, this is another reason for the persistence of the practice. Child marriage is also applauded for helping to safeguard marriages by protecting couples from divorce since there is a financial agreement. Overall, the practice of Money Marriage remains an important aspect of Becheve culture, and it is likely to continue for generations to come if all the stakeholders fail to collectively eliminate such practice (Odey & Sanya, 2018; Buzome et. al 2018; Girls Not Bride, 2013).

2.3 Factors promoting child marriage in Nigeria

Some of the underlying reasons of child marriage identified by the United Nations (2023) include, but are not limited to, customs and traditions, gender inequities, harmful practices, gender stereotypes, and discriminatory cultural norms. One of the key factors driving child marriage in Southern Nigeria is the poor economic position of some households; many girls are coerced into marriage since a high percentage of these girls are not catered for by their parents. (Bob-Manuel & Azuonwu, 2022). Braimah (2014) agrees with this concept, pointing out that poverty remains the key factor fuelling child marriage in Nigeria, citing National Bureau of Statistics estimates that put the country's poverty rate at 67.1 percent.

2.3.1 The role of religion and culture in the practice of child marriage in Nigeria

According to a report by UNICEF, child marriage is prevalent in Nigeria due to deeply entrenched cultural and religious beliefs that perpetuate the subordination of girls and women (Bob-Manuel & Azuonwu, 2022; Braimah, 2014, Igwe, 2016; UNICEF, 2020). In many parts of Nigeria, child marriage is seen to preserve the honour and reputation of families. Parents believe that marrying off their daughters at a young age will protect them from premarital sex, unwanted pregnancies, and other social vices. Additionally, some cultures believe that girls are more valuable as wives than as students or workers, which leads to the devaluation of girls' education and empowerment (Adekola, et al., 2015). Religious beliefs also contribute to the practice of child marriage in Nigeria. Some interpretations of Islam and Christianity allow for child marriage, and religious leaders often play a role in endorsing and perpetuating the practice. In some cases, religious leaders may even perform the marriage ceremonies themselves, making it difficult for legal authorities to intervene (Itebiyi, 2016; Namwiinga, 2017; Ochen et al., 2020). In a study by Suyanto et al. (2023) on the causes and impacts of early marriage in East Java Indonesia, the study found that sociocultural factors are at the root of early marriage in Indonesia, this is linked to one of their strong cultural values which supports early marriage and places a strong prejudice on girls who marry later as adults. In the study, sociocultural factors among other factors are the major causes of early marriage in Indonesia. Chukuwemeke et al., (2015) linked child marriage to traditional and religious practices as they are of the opinion that one of the major causes of child marriage are the age-long cultural and religious practices that exists in various communities in Nigeria. Bob-Manuel and Azuonwu (2022) also corroborates the above findings and emphasized the role of

culture in exacerbating child marriage in Cross Rivers state, Nigeria, they stated that money marriage practice has something to do with gender inequality which is also common among the Becheve community and that community members justifies such practice based on culture.

2.3.2 Poor socio-economic conditions

Poverty is widely recognized as one of the major factors that encourage child marriage in Nigeria (Adekola et al., 2015; Raj, 2010). According to a report by UNICEF (2017), poverty and economic insecurity are among the main reasons why parents in Nigeria marry off their daughters at a young age. In many cases, families living in poverty see child marriage as a way of reducing their financial burden by transferring the responsibility of caring for their daughter to her husband's family. In addition, poverty also limits access to education and healthcare, which makes girls more vulnerable to child marriage. Girls who drop out of school due to poverty and lack of resources may be seen as more suitable for marriage, as they are not perceived to have any other options. Lack of access to healthcare also makes girls more susceptible to early pregnancy and childbirth, which is a common consequence of child marriage (Braumah, 2014; Nour, 2006).

Poor socio-economic status of families plays a significant role in the prevalence of child marriage in Nigeria, and addressing poverty is a crucial step towards eliminating this harmful practice. Adekola et al., (2015) carried out a qualitative assessment on the effects of child marriage in Nigeria and the findings shows that poverty central to perpetrating child marriages in the country which breeds limited access to education and renders women powerless thus making them susceptible to child marriages. Braimah (2014) corroborates this finding and emphasised that poverty remains one of the primary factors fuelling child marriages in Nigeria and that some families force their wards into early marriage due to the attached financial gains. According to Nour (2006), parents from financially disadvantaged households perceive early marriage as a poverty survival strategy, they consent to early marriage to relieve themselves of the financial burden of catering for the girls' needs and to earn the money that will be paid for their bride prices.

2.3.3 Gender inequality

Female children are devalued and considered inferior in various communities compared to their male counterparts, they are always relegated to the background and restricted by societal gender roles of procreation and performing marital duties for their husbands. This idea

reinforces poverty and inequality and propels early marriage and lack of education (Adediran, 2021; Babatunde et al., 2018; United Nations, 2023). Child marriage still thrives in many Nigerian communities due to the preference to the male child over female children, some of the cultures see girls as liabilities or commodities and so prefer to marry them off as early as possible in order to ease the burden of raising them, girls in these climes are considered properties of other men and to them it is enough justification not to put them in schools or invest in them (Alabi et al., 2014; UNICEF, 2018). Moreover, girls are denied of educational and employment opportunities, making them more vulnerable and putting them at risk of early marriage. According to the United Nations Population Fund (2021), early marriage predisposes drop out of school, deny them opportunities to economic freedom and puts them at risk of death during childbirth.

The low value placed on girls in many societies, denial of opportunities, and limited agency all contribute to the prevalence of child marriages (Ochen et al., 2020; United Nations, 2023). Ochen et al., (2020) qualitatively investigated the causes and consequences of child marriage among survivors and their families in Uganda and the findings shows that the dominance of masculinity and femininity stereotypes, the dominance of male, and subordination of female increases the prevalence of early marriage in Uganda. In addition, Alabi et al. (2014) emphasized in their study that female gender discrimination has become so pronounced in third world countries to the point that female children are treated as second class citizens and have restricted access to formal education as opposed to their male counterparts. The study found that the dominance of patriarchy promotes child marriage since female are less valued and considered not worth enough to access education.

2.3.4 Weak implementation laws and policies

Child marriage still thrives in Nigeria due to lack of implementation of child protection policies regardless of numerous policy documents protecting the rights and welfare of children, and the national laws protecting children from abuse. However, weak, or non-implementation of policies including lack of political will and issues with governance gives room for child marriage in Nigeria (Brammah, 2014; Itebiyi, 2016). The lack of policy implementation is evident in the Nigerian Child Rights Act of 2003 passed into law with the aim of protecting children but it is yet to be adopted or domesticated in all the 36 states of the federation, the few states that have adopted it into their state laws have failed to enforce it (Akinwunmi, 2010). According to Girls Not Brides (2021). most of the efforts by the government of Nigeria to

eliminate child marriage has been criticised as insufficient. Some of their intervention approaches is lacking in actions and clear goals. A study by Friedman (2012) revealed that child marriage has not been eliminated in Nigeria due to lack of enforcement of law by the judicial arm of government. Similarly, Plan Zambia (2015) is of the view that lapses on the side of the law has stood as obstacles to ending child marriages in Zambia. In the legalities of child marriage in Nigeria by Fayokun (2015), the author examined the issues surrounding the legalities of child marriage in Nigeria and found that there are loopholes in Nigerian laws thereby causing a huge confusion in child marriage laws. Finally, the lack of political will and corruption in the implementation of policies have also contributed to the persistence of child marriage in Nigeria (Ojediran & Salami, 2019). For instance, some traditional and religious leaders, who are influential in their communities, promote child marriage despite its illegality, and their actions often go unpunished due to their status and influence. Nwonu and Oyakhiromen (2014) added in their study on the legal issues of child marriage in Nigeria, that child marriage is still perpetrated in the guise of religion due to the complete absence of political will, diverseness of laws and lack of punishment of child marriage offenders.

2.4 Consequences of child marriage in Nigeria

Child marriage has numerous negative consequences on the physical, psychological, and socio-economic well-being of children it has has negative effects on the health, education, and economic empowerment of girls in Nigeria (UNICEF, 2020, WHO, 2021, UNFPA, 2021). The practice is a violation of their human rights and a barrier to their full and equal participation in society. Child marriage has been noted as the major cause of gender-based violence and has subjected the survivors to both physical and sexual abuse. This underscores the overarching importance of implementing policies and programs geared towards raising awareness of the risks associated with child marriage practice and promoting the rights of women. Previous studies have documented the negative impacts of child marriage and the need to implement relevant policies to empower both young girls and their families. For instance, studies have that child marriage affects not only children and their parents but society at large (Adeyemo, 2013, Male & Wodon, 2016; Orjiako, 2018; Williamson 2014; Women Living under Muslim Laws, 2013),

2.4.1 Impacts on health

Health-related complications have been identified as one of the major effects of child marriage. This is because child marriage exposes children to early pregnancy which is noted as one of the commonest outcomes of child marriage in Nigeria. Child pregnancy therefore constitutes

health risk as it increases the chances of maternal and infant mortality which often occur through health complications obstetric fistula and painful delivery.

Child marriage can have serious health consequences for girls, including early pregnancy and childbirth, which increase the risk of maternal and infant mortality and morbidity. According to UNICEF, girls who marry before the age of 18 are more likely to experience complications during pregnancy and childbirth, such as obstetric fistula, which can result in chronic pain. Additionally, girls who marry early may not have access to adequate healthcare services, increasing their vulnerability to health problems. (Adeyemo, 2013; Ahmed et al., 2014; Girls Not Bride, 2018; Raj, 2010; UNICEF, 2020). A study aimed at assessing the impact of early marriage on the effective use of maternal health services in Nepal found that it has adverse effect on the health-seeking behaviours of young mothers; reduced number of antenatal appointments, professional attendance at birth, hospital-based child delivery, and utilization of postnatal care. The results may have been influenced by women's limited access to household resources, diminished independence in making decisions, social exclusion, and the overpowering position of husbands and mothers-in-law. Tackling women's societal vulnerability as an impediment to health care access may aid in increasing the utilization of maternal health services (Sekine & Carter, 2019). Ahinkorah, et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between early marriage and access to maternal healthcare in Sub-Saharan Africa, it found that young girls who engaged in child marriage are less likely to access antenatal care than young girls who did not experience child marriage. Consequently, child marriage is the reason for the low access and utilization of maternal health care services in sub-Saharan Africa.

2.4.2 Impact on Education

Limited educational opportunities are another problem orchestrated by child marriages; it often leads to the discontinuation of education for girls. In Nigeria, girls who marry early are often forced to drop out of school, limiting their opportunities for personal development and economic empowerment (Aminu, 2019). Limited education also means that these girls are less likely to have the knowledge and skills needed to protect themselves from abuse, exploitation, and other harmful practices. The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) reports that in many countries, girls who marry early are expected to prioritize their domestic duties over their education, which can result in poor academic performance and low levels of literacy (Male and Wodon, 2018; ICRW, 2021). In a cross-sectional study of young girls in secondary school by Envuladu et al. (2016) on the determinants and effect of girl child marriage which

aimed at assessing the effect of child marriage on health and education, married girls reported backwardness in their education as one the downside of child marriage based on their personal experiences. The study by Sanni, Thompson and Daniel (2016) explore the impact of early marriage on girls' education in Nigeria, using data from the NDHS. It finds that early marriage is associated with lower levels of education for girls, particularly in northern Nigeria. In the same vein, Jahan, and Islam (2019) examined the impact of child marriage on educational attainment for girls. The authors find that child marriage significantly reduces the likelihood of completing secondary education for girls.

2.4.3 Impacts on childhood

Child marriage is a violation of children's right to participate fully in decisions that affect their lives, as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children who are married before the age of 18 are often denied the opportunity to participate in decisions about their education, health, and well-being. They are also denied the opportunity to choose their own life path, which can result in limited economic opportunities and social mobility. Child marriage defies child protection principles by exposing children to a wide range of negative impacts, including the interruption of education, increased risk of physical and sexual abuse, and the violation of children's right to participate fully in decisions that affect their lives (Addaney & Azubike, 2017; Dhital, 2007; Raj, 2010). Child marriage imposes adult responsibilities on children and takes away childhood in several ways. According to a report by UNICEF, "Child brides are often expected to take on adult responsibilities, such as managing the household and raising children, before they are physically and emotionally ready to do so" (UNICEF, 2020). This includes performing domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning, and taking care of younger siblings. Child brides may also be forced to engage in sexual activity with their older spouses, which can lead to physical and emotional harm. As the report states, "Child brides are often not physically or emotionally ready for sexual activity, which can result in unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and sexually transmitted infections" (UNICEF, 2020).

In addition, child brides are often expected to contribute financially to the household, either by working outside the home or by managing the household finances, which can be a heavy burden for a child who is not yet fully developed. Child marriage also takes away childhood by depriving children of the opportunity to enjoy their childhood. According to the same UNICEF report, "Child marriage robs girls of their childhood and denies them the opportunity to develop their full potential" (UNICEF, 2020). Child brides are often deprived of the opportunity to play,

socialize with peers, attend school, and pursue their interests, limiting their ability to develop physically, emotionally, and mentally. Child marriage can be seen as a negation of the western construction of childhood because it challenges the idea that childhood is a distinct phase of life that is characterized by innocence, playfulness, and dependency on adults. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), child marriage is defined as a formal marriage or informal union in which one or both parties are under the age of 18. In many cases, child marriage is associated with practices such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and dowry-related violence, which can have severe physical, emotional, and psychological consequences for the child bride (Plan International, 2013; UNICEF, 2021). In the western construction of childhood, children are seen as vulnerable and in need of protection from harm, and this has led to the development of laws and policies aimed at safeguarding their rights and well-being (James & James, 2012). Child marriage challenges this construction by exposing children to harmful practices that can have long-term negative effects on their physical, emotional, and social development. Furthermore, child marriage can also be seen as a negation of the western construction of childhood because it undermines the idea of children as active agents in their own lives. In western societies, children are encouraged to develop their own identities, interests, and aspirations, and to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives (Woodhead, 2006). It denies children these opportunities by forcing them into adult roles and responsibilities before they are ready, thereby limiting their agency and autonomy. Therefore, child marriage can be seen as a negation of the western construction of childhood because it challenges the idea of childhood as a distinct phase of life characterized by innocence, playfulness, and dependency on adults, and undermines the notion of children as active agents in their own lives (ibid).

2.4.4 Increased risk of gender-based violence

Another negative impact of child marriage is the increased risk of physical and sexual abuse. Child brides are often subjected to sexual relations with their husbands, which can result in early and unintended pregnancies (International Centre for Research on Women, 2017; Itebiyi, 2016; Otoo-Oyortey & Pobi, 2003). Early marriage often exposes girls to situations where they are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, particularly in situations where there is a significant age gap between the girl and her husband (Population Council, 2019; Save the Children, 2018). Several studies conducted in Nigeria have shown that child marriage contributes significantly to gender and sexual abuse of children. The studies reveal that child marriage increases the likelihood of sexual violence and exploitation, unwanted pregnancies, and sexually transmitted

infections, leading to physical and emotional trauma for the girls involved. According to a study conducted by Girls Not Brides Nigeria, girls who are married before the age of 18 are more likely to experience gender-based violence, including sexual abuse, than girls who marry later. The study found that child brides in Nigeria are often subjected to sexual violence by their husbands and are less likely to seek help or report the abuse due to cultural norms that encourage the acceptance of violence within marriage (Girls Not Brides Nigeria, 2018). Another study conducted by the Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey found that girls who are married before the age of 18 are more likely to experience domestic violence, including sexual abuse, than girls who marry later. The study also found that child brides are less likely to seek help or report the abuse due to social and cultural barriers (National Population Commission, 2019).

2.5 Efforts towards the prevention and elimination Child Marriage in Nigeria

2.5.1 Laws and Policies Prohibiting Child Marriage in Nigeria

Nigeria has several laws and policies in place to prevent child marriage, both at the national and international levels. The Child Rights Act and the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act specifically prohibit child marriage and provide for punishment for offenders (Addaney & Azubike, 2015; Alemika et al., 2005; Gemignani & Wodon, 2015; Onuora-Oguno, 2015; Wodon, 2015). The National Gender Policy and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child also recognize child marriage as a violation of girls' rights and commit to preventing and eliminating it.

2.5.2 The Child Rights Act of 2003: The Child Rights Act (CRA) is a federal law that was enacted in Nigeria in 2003. It defines a child as anyone under the age of 18 and prohibits child marriage. Section 21 of the CRA states that "no person under the age of 18 years is capable of contracting a valid marriage, and accordingly, any marriage so contracted is null and void" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003). This means that child marriage is not legally recognized in Nigeria, and anyone who engages in it can be prosecuted under the law (Akinwumi, 2010; Okpalaobi, & Ekwueme, 2015).

2.5.3 The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act of 2015: The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP) is a federal law that was enacted in Nigeria in 2015. It prohibits all forms of violence against persons, including physical, sexual, and psychological violence. Section 29 of the VAPP specifically prohibits child marriage and states that "any

person who marries a child commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding twenty years or a fine not exceeding N2,000,000 or both" (Akinwunmi, 2010; Braimah, 2014).

2.5.4 The National Policy on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (2014)

This policy prohibits the practice of female genital mutilation, which is often linked to child marriage in some communities. In addition, the National Action Plan to End Child Marriage (2016-2021); this action plan was developed by the Nigerian government in partnership with civil society organizations and other stakeholders. It aims to prevent child marriage, protect the rights of children, and provide support and services to girls who have been affected by child marriage.

2.5.5 The National Gender Policy (NGP)

The National Gender Policy is a policy document that was developed by the Nigerian government in 2006. It outlines the government's commitment to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Nigeria. The NGP recognizes child marriage as a form of violence against girls and commits to preventing and eliminating it. The policy states that "the government will undertake measures to prevent child marriages, including awareness-raising, community mobilization, and support for girls' education" (Braimah, 2014; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2006).

2.5.6 The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is an international human rights treaty that was adopted by the African Union in 1990. Nigeria is a signatory to the charter and has ratified it. Article 21 of the charter prohibits child marriage and states that "the betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage" (Akinwunmi, 2010; Anyanwu & Onuora-Oguno, 2013).

2.5.7 Education and Empowerment of Girls and Women in Nigeria

Child marriage is a global issue that affects millions of girls worldwide, including Nigeria. According to UNICEF, Nigeria has the highest number of child brides in Africa, with over 20 million girls married before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2021). The Nigerian government and several organizations have made efforts towards eliminating child marriage through education and empowerment programs.

2.5.8 Education Strategies

Education is one of the most effective ways to empower girls and reduce child marriage rates. Educated girls are more likely to delay marriage, have fewer children, and enjoy better health outcomes (UNICEF, 2020). The Nigerian government has made efforts to increase access to education for girls. For instance, in 2018, the government launched a Girls' Education Project (GEP3) aimed at improving the quality of education for girls in six states in Nigeria, including Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto, and Bauchi (UNICEF, 2020). The government has made primary and secondary education free and compulsory for all children (Federal Ministry of Education, 2020). Similarly, several organizations have also implemented education programs to encourage girls to stay in school and avoid early marriage. For example, the Girl Child Education program, implemented by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), provides scholarships, school supplies, and mentorship to girls to help them stay in school (UNICEF, 2021).

2.5.9 Awareness Campaigns

Awareness campaigns aimed at changing cultural and social norms that support child marriage are essential. Such campaigns target parents, community leaders, and religious leaders to create awareness about the negative impacts of child marriage on girls and the society at large. One example of such a campaign is the Girl Generation campaign, which is a pan-African campaign aimed at ending female genital mutilation and child marriage (Addaney & Azubike, 2017; Orowolo, 2022).

2.5.10 Economic Empowerment

To tackle the problems such as poverty any socio-economic related problem which puts girls and families at the risk of child marriage, economic empowerment has proven an important solution to the increasing rate of the problem. Economic empowerment programs such as providing vocational training and microfinance to girls can improve their economic status and reduce their vulnerability to child marriage (UNICEF, 2018). The Nigerian government has implemented several programs aimed at empowering girls economically. For instance, in 2016, the government launched the Youth Employment and Social Support Operation (YESSO) aimed at providing job opportunities and social services to vulnerable youth, including girls (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2021; Onuora-Oguno, 2015; World Bank, 2022). Child marriage prevention programs are being initiated and successfully run by NGOs, the Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) is a good instance as they are committed to providing vocational training and economic literacy to girls and women to empower them economically and prevent early marriage (WRAPA, 2021). Similarly, the

Adolescent Health and Information Projects (AHIP) provides sexual and reproductive health education, life skills training, and economic empowerment to adolescent girls to prevent early marriage and promote their overall wellbeing (AHIP, 2021; UNICEF, 2018).

A study by the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) undertook a study on the importance of education towards ending child marriage and found that education is one of the most important strategies for combating child marriage, the findings in line with UNICEF (2017) which posits that girls who spent more years in school have lower chances of becoming a child bride. The findings align with that of Clark and Dude (2006) which evidenced that early admission and more years of schooling is important in preventing girls from child marriage. Consequently, education and empowerment efforts are crucial in eliminating child marriage in Nigeria. The Nigerian government and several organizations have implemented various programs to empower girls and prevent early marriage. To tackle the major causes of child marriage, more interventive efforts are required from all the relevant stakeholders.

2.6 An overview of money marriage interventions in Cross River, Nigeria

Interventions by the government and NGOs that addresses the problem of child marriage in Nigeria has been making waves, as they are channelled towards eliminating the practice and promoting gender equality. Ogban (2014) noted that an intervention referred to as the Becheve Women Forum has been initiated to empower women, create awareness, and promotes advocacy campaigns.

The United Nations Women is an international organisation involved in the money marriage issue in Cross Rivers state Nigeria and one of their major foci is to promote gender equality and tackle all forms of Gender-Based violence in various communities in the state. Raising awareness on the risks associated with child marriage and advocating for social justice and equal opportunities for all genders have been part of the organisation's mission (UN Women, 2021). Programs that focus on empowerment and creating equal access to education has been brought to local communities by some NGOs and FBOs, these programs specifically provide girls with empowerment schemes, granting them scholarship through school, provision of skill acquisition programs that help them become financially independent. Irrespective of the progress made towards putting an end to child marriage in Becheve community, a lot more need to be done by all the relevant stakeholders for a more effective outcome, this can be achieved by accelerating women empowerment programs, removing all gender barriers, making education accessible by all, advocacy programs and by enforcing law and order.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the theoretical framework for examining the impact of child marriage interventions in Nigeria is presented. The chosen theories aim to explain the analysis and comprehension of child marriage interventions in Nigeria, enhanced through the application of the empowerment theory. The Child Right Based Approach goes on to consider the issue of child marriage from the perspective of child rights, best interest of the child principles and views the practice as a violation of the rights of children. Further, the micro and macro level factors at the root of child marriage in Nigeria. the micro and macro level factors at the root of child marriage in Nigeria.

3.1 Empowerment theory

Empowerment theory is a social work approach developed by Julian Rappaport (1981), the theory aims to strengthen individuals and communities by enhancing their sense of control over their lives, decision-making abilities, and resources, the theory emphasizes the importance of addressing power imbalances and creating opportunities for individuals and communities to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives (Rappaport, 1987; Zimmerman, 2000). The idea about power and having the ability to make decisions, and influence others is one of key element of the theory of empowerment, the theory emphasises that people who feel disempowered and are not able to achieve their goals are said to be lacking power. This denotes that individuals and groups can make positive changes in their lives if they are empowered, this empowerment can be realised through various means such as education, skills training, community organising and advocacy. For instance, a community development initiative that provides leadership training and advocacy is aimed at helping members of the community living in a low-income setting to advocate for a better services and resources. The empowerment approach might be used by the social worker to assist service users develop the confidence and skills needed to deal with their challenging situation (Rappaport, 1981; Zimmerman, 1995).

The empowerment theory is a useful framework for working with communities and individuals, it lays emphasis on the need to develop the capacity to wield control over one's life and make adequate changes (Zimmerman, 1995), the theory aids a better understanding of how individuals can make a difference in their lives. This theory is useful for addressing power

imbalances and promotes the decision-making power of individuals and community members. According to Gutierrez (1991), the empowerment theory can help enhance people's sense of control and awareness through the creation of a just and equitable society. Below are the key elements of empowerment:

3.1.1 Knowledge and skill acquisition

According to Foster-Fishman et al. (2001), community members can make informed decisions on issues affecting their lives when they are empowered through the acquisition of skills and knowledge. This goes without saying that community members can be empowered through sensitization workshops and training where they are trained on relevant themes such as leadership, advocacy, and healthcare.

3.1.2 Inclusive community participation in decision making

A study by Chavis et al. (2001) noted that community members can be empowered through active and inclusive participation on issues affecting their welfare. In this sense, there is the likelihood that community members can be empowered if they are given the opportunity to take part in community meetings and group discussions. Active participation in such meetings gives them the opportunity to share their opinion and views on community actions which seek to address the needs of the people.

3.1.3 Joint Community Action for Change

Community empowerment according to Zimmerman (1995) can take the form of organising joint community action for change on issues that affects their lives negatively. Here, the emphasis is to motivate the community members to act on things that are negatively affecting them. Notable among the approaches here are community-based advocacy where community members jointly stand against any oppressive cultural practices.

3.1.4 Community Solidarity and Cohesion

Community members can be empowered in contexts where there is a sense of community solidarity and cohesion (Chavis et al. 2001). In other words, community members will feel empowered when they have a sense of belonging to community actions and activities. In this sense, efforts should be geared toward fostering community networks, relationships shared identity and cohesion.

3.1.5 Contextualising the empowerment theory

Empowerment promotes access to resources, information and decision-making power by individuals and members of the community to be able to make informed decision and take action to improve their situation, it is an important approach that offers a useful understanding the impact of interventions targeted at eliminating child marriage. According to Joseph (2020) and Kabeer (1999), effective interventions aimed at eliminating child marriage should be structured toward providing young girls with economic and educational opportunities as well as providing legal support in cases of forced marriage. Empowerment theory therefore argues that when young girls and their families are provided with adequate resources, skills and education, they are likely to know about rights as well have develop high self-worth and as such, are better equipped to resist child marriage.

Specifically, interventions geared toward eliminating child marriage should be able to provide families with access to health care, economic opportunities, and basic education. This empowerment approach equips them with the skills and knowledge needed to understand the risks associated with child marriage and the power to resist the practice. Empowerment based interventions aims to change the power dynamics within communities and challenge the social norms that perpetuate child marriage, within families and communities, practitioners work to enhance people's participation in decision making process. This theory offers a better understanding of the relevance of interventions in terms of social change, interventions are also evaluated based on its impact on societal norms, power relations and community attitudes and how they contribute to ending child marriage.

Moreover, addressing the root causes of child marriage such as gender inequality, poverty, lack of education and cultural norms is at the core of empowerment theory, young girls, their families, and the community members are empowered to resist cultural and discriminatory practices propelling child marriage. The theory is suitable for designing effective interventions geared towards ending child marriage, the theory in addition offers a better understanding of the complexities of child marriage and engages stakeholders actively to eliminate the practice and protect the fundamental rights of children.

3.2 Child Rights-Based Approach (CRBA)

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the late 1990s introduced the Child Rights Based Approach (CRBA) which was targeted at protecting the rights of children. The

CRBA was also established to promote all-inclusive child rights and aided the mainstreaming of child rights as a key aspect of UN child rights interventions. According to Curtice and Exwothy (2010), the policy mandates of CRBA are synonymous with Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) which was implemented by the UN to promote cultural, social, economic, political, and civil rights. The HRBA has been at the forefront of ensuring that the rights of people are not only protected but safeguarded. The CRBA is therefore an expansion of the HRBA but specifically geared towards protecting the rights of children.

The core objective of CRBA is to ensure that child rights are given the utmost attention hence it prioritises child rights as the core of policy-making and developmental interventions. The CRBA also checkmate on the authorities entrusted with the mandate of protecting the rights of children to ensure that they fulfil their obligations and responsibilities as it concerns child rights policy implementations. Further, at the core mandates of CRBA is the empowerment of people to know their rights especially as it concerns child rights principles and guidelines (Debeliak & Mackat, 2015; UNICEF, 2016). CRBA aims to eliminate discrimination by advancing the principles of fundamental human rights. In other words, CRBA believes that everyone should be treated equally regardless of any circumstances. It further ensures the protection of marginalised and vulnerable populations by ensuring that they are not excluded from decisions affecting their welfare. This is crucial and relevant in the context of the elimination of child marriage in Nigeria. According to Ife (2016) and Voloshenyuk (2022), CRBA ensures and facilitates the promotion of child rights through participation, non-discrimination, and empowerment.

The CRBA further advocates for the recognition of individuals as having the autonomy, worth and dignity and capable of participating fully in the affairs of their lives regardless of any prevailing situations (Ife, 2016, Martinez & Charnle, 2018). This further highlights the relevance of CRBA in the eradication of child marriage in Nigeria. For instance, CRBA ensure the eradication of all forms of child abuse which in Nigeria is well reflected in child marriage. It therefore ensures that children are given full protection and treated with worth and dignity. A report by the United Nations Population Funds (2013), child marriage can be eradicated through the elimination of its root causes such as unhealthy cultural practices, lack of education, poverty, and discrimination. In the context of Nigeria where child marriage is strongly embedded in the cultural norms, a lack of education poverty, the insights from CRBA could provide guidelines for understanding measures that can be taken to eradicate the practice.

3.2.1 Contextualising the CRBA

The United Nations children's fund alternatively referred to the HRBA as the child rights-based approach. This approach emphasises the promotion and protection of children's rights with the goal of ensuring that children's welfare and wellbeing are at the centre of all decision-making and actions (International Council on Human Rights Policy, 2006; UNICEF, 2016; 2023). This approach recognises that the children are entitled to certain fundamental rights and freedoms which should be upheld, respected, and fulfilled. These are the right to life, the right to education, and healthcare the rights to play and recreation, to be protected from all forms of human rights abuse and the right to have a voice in important life's decisions (Bell, 2008; Noh, 2021; UNICEF, 2013). The CRBA as a version of the HRBA seeks to empower children, support their development and offering them the needed help to live a meaningful life and be productive members of the society. This approach is grounded in the best interest. Of the child principle and fights discrimination and ensuring that children's right to participation in decision-making is respected.

In the context of child marriage, an CRBA would prioritize the rights of children to education, health, and protection from harm, including early and forced marriage. Such an approach would focus on empowering young girls and women to exercise rights and make decisions about their own lives, including decisions related to marriage and reproduction. The CRBA is considered appropriate for this study because it will guide the researcher in understanding that child marriage violates the rights of children and that there is need to protect the fundamental rights of children. Moreover, using the CRBA would help the researcher for inquire if child marriage interventions are designed and implemented in a manner that is inclusive and respectful of children's rights, or considers the unique social, cultural, and economic factors that contribute to child marriage. finally, a child rights-based approach is highly appropriate for conducting research on child marriage, it ensures that the research process is guided by commitment to promote and protect the rights and wellbeing of children.

3.3 Micro and Macro level factors associated with child marriage.

Child marriage is a complex issue that involves multiple factors at different levels of society. Therefore, preventing child marriages requires a comprehensive approach that considers both macro and micro-level factors (Girls Not Bride, 2015).

3.3.1 Macro level

At the macro level, poor socio-economic situation, lack of education, cultural and religious beliefs, gender inequality and weak legal frameworks are primary drivers of early marriage. For example, families living in poverty may marry off their daughters at an early age to reduce the financial burden on the household (ibid). According to Erulkar (2013), cultural and religious beliefs that prioritize early marriage and limit girls' education and mobility can perpetuate the practice of child marriage. In some cases, legal frameworks may even allow child marriage to occur, either through a lack of enforcement or by allowing for exceptions in certain circumstances. Again, lack of education, particularly for girls, can rob children of opportunities and expose them to early marriage. Gender inequality on the other hand can perpetuate harmful attitudes and beliefs about women and girls and can also result in limited legal and social protections. Cultural practices, such as the belief that girls should be married young, can also contribute to child marriage (Muthengi et al., 2021; UNICEF, 2018c). Addressing the issue of child marriage at the macro level has to do with addressing problems at the root of the practice. Macro level intervention involves an all-inclusive approach involving the government, community members, civil society organisations and other relevant stakeholders.

Stakeholders at government level are saddled with the responsibility of enacting laws and child protection policies shielding children from child marriages, providing them equal access to educational opportunities, access to health care and legal services. Laws and policies must be enforced at the government level to ensure that perpetrators of child marriage are held accountable for child rights violations. The government must in addition promote gender equality and women empowerment, which are key to eliminating child marriages. As part of the macro level intervention, advocating for the protection of the rights of children are the important roles that international organisations and NGOs play in the fight against child marriage (Girls Not Brides, 2015; Wodon et al., 2018), they work towards creating awareness and sensitization about the negative implications of child marriage, they also contribute to funding educational and health programs targeted at children at risk of child marriage.

Various community and religious leaders also play an important role towards ending child marriage, these stakeholders have the capacity to change the attitudes of community members by promoting and emphasising girls' education, promoting delayed marriage and providing all the needed support for children at risk of marriage (UNICEF, 2018a). At the macro level, the different stakeholders working to prevent child marriage can partner with each other to ensure a more impactful intervention, this could be in the form of enacting policies and enforcing laws

that promote gender equality, providing access to basic education for all children without gender discrimination, access to healthcare and awareness creation. Parents must also not be left out in the interventions, they also contribute to promoting positive social norms and protecting children from harm (Ahonsi et al., 2019).

3.3.2 Micro level

Notable factors which can promote child marriage at the micro level are lack of child agency, peer and societal pressure, and family dynamics. This goes without saying that there is a lot of pressure on young women to get married in Nigeria which is normatively and socially constructed. In this sense, women are expected to get married at a certain age which also marks the transition to womanhood in Nigeria. Consequently, to conform to societal expectations and standards, parents are often under pressure to give out their daughter's hand in marriage. The situation appears complicated among young girls who lack agency and are solely dependent on their parents for education and other sustenance. These categories of young girls, therefore, are more vulnerable to being forced into child marriage by their parents. According to a study by Girls Not Bride (2015), the eradication of child marriage at the micro level in Nigeria is unequivocally imperative.

Approaches geared towards eradicating child marriage at the micro level have been identified among which are providing educational support to vulnerable young girls. In this context, educational support could be in the form of life-sustaining skills, mentorship, and scholarships. It is expected that when these vulnerable girls are supported and enlightened through education, they are less likely to yield to forced marriage. More so, education can also reduce child marriage at the micro level through the enlightenment of parents on the need to train their female children in schools as well as the risks associated with forcing their female children into child marriages. Studies such as Bolarinwa et al. 2022 and UNICEF (2018c) stressed the importance of assisting the survivors of child marriage with health support such as counselling and routine health check-ups to avert health-related complications.

Additionally, education could play a significant role the changing the orientations of community members on the internalised attitudes and social norms regarding child marriage. In this context, education could also be structured in the form of community sensitisation programmes and media jingles as well as working with traditional and religious leaders to educate sensitize the people on the need to eliminate unhealthy cultural practices such as early

marriage of young girls. Previous studies have also documented the importance of eliminating child marriage through its root causes which are embedded in the micro-level structures. Eliminating child marriage through the micro level interventions tends to be more effective because not only eliminates the structures but educates and empower young girls on their rights (Male and Wodon, 2018; Shakya et al. 2020). Lastly, the elimination of child marriage requires the interplay of approaches at both micro and macro level interventions and specifically, policies that engender access to education and protections of rights for young girls are important in the eradication of child marriage.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the methodology and research design employed in the study are elucidated. A qualitative approach was utilized, with a purposive sampling technique (snowballing) being employed to select the eight participants. To gain a comprehensive and participant-centered understanding of the research topic, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide as the primary source of data. Additionally, this chapter outlines the essential stages involved in carrying out the research, such as participant selection, data collection methods, and ethical considerations.

4.1 Research Design

In a bid to find out the impact of the interventions by non-governmental and faith-based organisation towards ending child marriage in Cross Rivers State, Nigeria, the study adopted a qualitative research method and case study design. The method of data collection that was adopted by the study is the in-depth semi-structured interviews. The rationale for adopting the qualitative method was because it is appropriate for the open-ended research questions posed, which do not rely on hypotheses, and require detailed data to gain a deeper comprehension of the participants' situation. This method was chosen over the quantitative data collection methods because quantitative methodology relies on statistical trends and patterns and would not have been appropriate for this investigation, since the study aims at examining the effectiveness of child marriage interventions on children who are survivors of child money marriage (Bryman, 2016; (Delanty, 2005; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). On the other hand, the rationale for choosing semi-structured interviews over Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and other qualitative instruments because of the provision of focused attention on each question, resulting in detailed responses.

Case study design is a research method commonly employed in social science research to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon, individual, group, or organization within a real-life context. It involves the comprehensive analysis of a single case or a small number of interconnected cases over an extended period.

A case study is to explores, describes, and explains the complexities and dynamics of the chosen case, often focusing on unique or exceptional circumstances. It allows researchers to delve into the rich details of a specific situation, enabling a holistic examination of various factors and their interplay. The case study design is appropriate for researching money marriage

in the Becheve community of southern Nigeria due to its ability to provide an in-depth exploration of the complex and culturally embedded practice within the specific context, allowing for a holistic understanding through rich data collection and analysis. Overall, a case study design would enable researchers to delve deeply into the intricacies of money marriage in the Becheve community, offering a comprehensive understanding of this practice within its specific social, cultural, and economic dimensions (Bryman, 2016; 2012).

Additionally, interviews were deemed more advantageous than FGDs because of the sensitivity of the subject matter, which could compromise confidentiality in the latter method (Edwards and Holland 2013). In semi-structured interviews, building rapport and fostering dialogue comes more easily, allowing participants to provide detailed explanations and yield valuable data (Edwards and Holland, 2013). However, the primary drawback of qualitative interviews is their limited generalizability due to the small sample size, which cannot represent the larger population being studied (Bryman, 2016). As such, the study's findings should be approached with caution, as they aim to offer a thorough comprehension of a specific context and group of subjects.

4.2 Study Setting

The study was conducted in Becheve community located in Obanliku Local Government Area of Cross River state, Nigeria. The Money wife tradition is practiced by all 17 villages of the Becheve community in Obanliku LGA, Cross River State. Obanliku LGA, where the tribe resides, is situated in the Northern Senatorial District of Cross River state and shares its borders with Kwanda Local Government of Benue State to the North, Obudu Local Government Area to the West, and Boki Local Government Area to the South (Nigeria Galleri, nd.). Obanliku LGA has a land area of 1,057 km² and a population of 110,324 according to the 2006 census (Nigerian Population Commission, 2006). The LGA has ten wards including Busi, Basang, Bebi, Bisu, Utanga, Becheve, Bendi 1, Bendi 2, Bishiri North, and Bishiri South, with its headquarters located in the town of Sankwala. The local economy is mainly based on agriculture, which accounts for 80 percent of production. The area has rich and fertile land that is ideal for growing various cash and crop products, and most of the inhabitants are farmers. The reason for selecting this study area was due to the prevalence of child marriage, which persists in the community because of their long-standing tradition known as the Money Marriage (Igwe, 2016).



Figure 1: A typical household in Becheve community

4.3 Method of Data Collection

The exploratory nature of the research was complemented by the interactive format of the one-on-one interviews, which facilitated unrestricted conversations between me and the participants to investigate the effectiveness of Child marriage interventions implemented by non-governmental and faith-based organizations. To maintain some level of structure for the interviews, a semi-structured interview guide was developed in English language according to the research questions. However, participants were given the freedom to discuss topics they considered to be more significant (see appendix 1: Interview Guide). The interviews were conducted virtually because it happened in a period when the researcher could not travel to the study area in Nigeria because of insecurity issues in the country, which was heightened by the election and post-election crisis of the 2023 Nigerian general election.

The need to conduct research remotely has arisen, leading to the use of Zoom for interviews. This platform was selected due to its ability to securely record and store sessions without relying on third-party software, which is crucial for safeguarding highly sensitive data. Additionally, the reduced labour and travel costs of using Zoom enabled wider participant recruitment and multi-site data collection, making it a cost-effective choice (Archibald, 2019; Gray, et al., 2020; Oliffe et al., 2021). Although some participants experienced technical issues, Archibald et al. (2019) reported that most found the interview experience highly satisfactory, rating Zoom higher than other mediums like face-to-face meetings, phone calls, and other

videoconferencing services. While electronic qualitative tools are still a developing data collection method (Novick, 2008; Drabble et al., 2016), they are becoming more relevant in situations where physical distance or security concerns prevent face-to-face meetings. Despite its limitations, zoom interviews can be effective with proper technical management (ibid.).

A pilot interview was conducted to test-run the instrument; the interview lasted 30 minutes and was conducted with a social worker in Nigeria who was not part of the study's participants. The actual interviews with participants were conducted in English and lasted an average of 61 minutes and 4 seconds. The interviews were recorded using the zoom recording tool, transcribed to accurately capture the participants' expressions, and supplemented with notes taken during the interview. Demographic information, notable reactions, and follow-up points were also noted down during the interview. To ensure data quality, important observations were recorded immediately, following the guidelines of Hammersley & Atkinson (2007).

4.4 Recruiting and Study Sample

To succinctly explore participants' opinions on the impact of interventions aimed at curbing child marriage, and to gain insight into why it persists despite these interventions and receive insider recommendations for the way forward, the research utilized an exploratory qualitative approach. The study participants were recruited through snowball sampling, which was preferred due to its efficiency in finding participants and its ability to uncover unexpected population characteristics that may have gone unnoticed if the researcher was physically present to recruit participants. Additionally, limited records were available regarding the activities of NGOs and FBOs who have worked on the issue of child marriage in the Becheve Community. (Bryman, 2016).

To prevent sampling bias that may result from initial subjects nominating acquaintances, purposive sampling was utilized in addition to snowballing. This method ensured that a diverse range of participants were selected, as the initial sample obtained through snowballing may only represent a small subgroup of the population due to shared traits and characteristics. Furthermore, I deliberately chose participants who could offer in-depth insights into the influence of non-governmental and faith-based interventions on the practice of Money Marriage, as outlined in Bryman (2016). I utilized this sampling technique to obtain a particular group of individuals who possess the necessary knowledge and expertise on the topic of money marriage in Becheve. Specifically, the focus of the study was on individuals who have

participated in money marriage interventions in Becheve community for a minimum of five years. The reason for selecting participants with at least five years of experience working in the Becheve community is to ensure that they accurately reflect the perspectives of the broader Becheve community, drawing from their first-hand knowledge of the area. This ensures that they possess a comprehensive understanding of the community, particularly regarding the subject of interest, which is money marriage. To recruit participants, I enlisted three individuals from my personal network and asked them to recommend others who met the criteria.

Due to the study's emphasis on investigating experiences and uncovering personal narratives within a limited timeframe, selecting many participants was not feasible. As a result, only eight professionals who had worked with NGOs or FBOs in Becheve community of Cross Rivers state, Nigeria, were chosen based on predetermined criteria. This smaller sample size allows for data saturation and management, as recommended by Cresswell and Poth (2018) and Guest et al. (2006), as a larger number of participants may overwhelm the researcher and impact the research outcome.

The age range of the participants was 27 to 60 years, and they were all graduates of higher institutions with experience in working to eliminate child marriage in Cross Rivers state, Nigeria, with five females and three males included in the sample. The professionals include two social workers, two missionaries, two nurses, one humanitarian worker as well as one therapist, all working with these organisations to put an end to child marriage. The table below is a summary representation of the demographic features and pseudonymized of the study participants.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of professionals working to eliminate child marriage Nigeria.

S/N	Names	Type of Organisation	Sex	Highest Educational Qualification	Profession
1	Jane	FBO	F	Bachelor's Degree	Missionary
2	Maria	NGO	F	Master's Degree	Therapist
3	Ekemini	FBO	M	Master's Degree	Social Worker
4	Etim	FBO	F	Bachelor's Degree	Missionary
5	Ekom	NGO	M	Bachelor's Degree	Humanitarian Worker
6	Okon	NGO	M	Bachelor's Degree	Nurse

7	Ayade	NGO	F	Bachelor's Degree	Nurse
8	Itim	NGO	F	Master's Degree	Social worker

4.5 Data Analysis

The data that was recorded was transcribed to the best of its ability while ensuring that all names were anonymized. Subsequently, a thematic analysis was conducted, which involves identifying, interpreting, and reporting patterns of significance within the data (Ritchie et al., 2014). Thematic analysis was chosen due to its flexibility (Braun and Clarke, 2006), which is particularly useful in exploratory research where the findings are uncovered during the analysis process based on the data. The analysis process began with a review of the interviews alongside transcriptions and field notes to become familiar with the data and ensure transcription accuracy. Subsequently, Nvivo 12, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), was utilized to code the data. An inductive approach was followed for coding, without any pre-existing coding structure or codes. Following van Manen's (1997) recommendation, I read the entire text multiple times before commencing analysis of the data to identify themes and establish a clear structure on the topic of working to eliminate child marriage.

The researcher engaged in a process of continuous comparison both within and between cases, merging codes that had similar meanings and consolidating those that were duplicated. Additionally, the researcher identified connections between separate nodes and created a hierarchical structure for related concepts, resulting in a coding tree with parent, child, and grandchild nodes. After coding, I reviewed the coded data by utilizing the interview field notes and the original interview transcript to ensure that all pertinent information had been accurately coded.

4.6 Ethical Consideration

The study raised ethical questions regarding consent, anonymity, and confidentiality, which are important considerations in qualitative research according to Ritchie et al. (2014). These ethical issues were carefully addressed by the researcher in accordance with the growing importance placed on ethics committees of various research institutions. Specifically, the researcher identified privacy and confidentiality, informed consent, positionality, and clarity of no compensation as crucial ethical issues to be addressed in the study.

4.6.1 Informed consent

Prior to conducting the interviews, the participants were provided with a detailed oral introduction that included information on the research purpose (Bryman, 2016), the reason for their selection, the implications of participating in the study, the data processing and analysis procedures, and the potential use of the collected data (Pittaway, Bartolomei & Hugman, 2010). Additionally, they were informed of their right to refuse participation or to decline answering any questions. Before commencing data collection, verbal permissions were obtained from the participants. Considering the potential for participants to disclose personal information that they would not typically reveal to a researcher, as noted by Deane and Stevano (2016), the participants were informed of their entitlements to request that confidential information not be shared with others.

4.6.2 Privacy and confidentiality

In accordance with the guidelines of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) in 2017, the confidentiality of shared information was communicated to the participants. Prior to data collection, the individuals involved were made aware of the importance of maintaining confidentiality regarding any information shared. To preserve anonymity, identifying details such as participants' names and personal information were withheld, and only accessible by myself. To further protect the privacy of participants, any specific organizations, or communities in which they worked were not disclosed. The data collected was saved on a password-protected computer, and all original materials and transcripts were stored solely on a separate password-protected computer, accessible only by me.

4.6.3 Positionality

My position as an insider-outsider in both the research and setting had the potential to impact the research process (Kanuha, 2000). While my Nigerian upbringing exposed me to various forms of child abuse and gave me valuable insights into how Nigeria operates and interprets certain expressions, I also found myself as an outsider in this study. This was due to my status as a postgraduate student residing abroad in a child-friendly environment that prioritizes the welfare of children, which made me unfamiliar with the experience of addressing a particular type of child marriage called "money marriage." As an outsider, I may have overlooked some significant information that someone with relevant experience could have easily recognized, and as an insider, I may have taken some information for granted. Therefore, I carefully evaluated my position in the research and consistently reflected on its potential influence to

avoid any biases. Throughout the entire research process, I remained mindful of my biases and sentiments, and how my position could impact the research and findings, as emphasized by Hammersley and Atkinson (2005) and Bryman (2016).

4.6.4 Clarity of no compensation

As an international student researcher, I imagined a scenario in which participants anticipate financial assistance for their organization, potentially if I have received research grants. However, I was concerned about the participants' expectations of financial support for their organization, particularly since I come from a culture that places a high value on gift-giving as a way of showing appreciation. Despite feeling inadequate for being unable to compensate them tangibly, I expressed my gratitude by sending Thank-You notes via email, mailing them a copy of their transcribed interviews, and asking for feedback on anything they were uncomfortable with that needed to be changed. I also promised to send them a copy of my dissertation when it was completed and graded. Although there were no financial compensations, some participants may have chosen to participate for altruistic reasons.

4.7 Trustworthiness

In contrast to quantitative research, which utilizes standardized tools to measure research validity and reliability, qualitative research relies on trustworthiness. This involves addressing the credibility, transferability, conformability, and dependability of research findings (Morrow, 2005). To ensure trustworthiness in my research, I employed various strategies based on these standards. To enhance credibility, which refers to my confidence in the findings, I utilized a standardized study methodology and conducted the research within a familiar context (Gobena, 2018). By carrying out the research with fellow Nigerians from a familiar work environment, I was able to avoid translation mistakes and develop a thorough understanding of the background. Although investigating a context that was familiar and relatable raised some concerns about subjectivity, I made a deliberate effort to be aware of my biases and prior knowledge, and to remain neutral throughout the interviews.

The study was carried out in a credible manner by involving professionals who were not personally acquainted with me, and no special treatment was given to anyone. Participation was requested from professionals who met the inclusion criteria, and the study respondents were volunteers who were not provided any incentives to participate. Individuals who willingly participated in the interview did so with the intention of sharing their experience in combating child marriage, without any prior knowledge of the desired outcomes of the study. This

eliminated the possibility of them providing biased responses to please the interviewer. Furthermore, the consistency in the stories shared by the professionals, although not completely identical, serves as evidence of the credibility of the sources (Pierre, 2016).

To tackle the aspect of reliability, which pertains to the degree of consistency in obtaining similar outcomes (Shenton, 2004), I employed a comprehensive and detailed approach to describing the methodology and incorporating background information from the literature reviewed. Additionally, in line with Morrow's suggestion (2005), I also highlighted the limitations of the methodological choices made in the study as a means of addressing concerns related to dependability. To ensure the credibility of the study, various steps were taken. The professionals who participated in the study were well-versed with the interview questions and provided candid responses. Additionally, the sources utilized for the study were primarily from trustworthy websites and peer-reviewed journals, thus contributing to the overall reliability of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, we initially provided a concise overview of the socio-demographic profiles of the study participants. These participants shared their experiences regarding efforts to eradicate child marriage in Nigeria, specifically highlighting the effects of child marriage interventions. The study's findings will be presented in three main themes, aligned with the study's specific objectives. These themes include how child marriage inhibits childhood, the focus of child marriage interventions and the region-specific proposal for bringing a lasting solution to the practice. In this chapter, the participants' identities will be kept anonymous while selected excerpts from their interviews will be used to discuss the central position they hold. The terms "professionals" and "participants" will be used interchangeably to refer to those involved in the study. Furthermore, the findings of my research are examined in relation to existing literature and theories.

5.1 Participants' Demographic Characteristics

The participants involved in the study are made up of eight professionals working with NGOs and FBOs to eliminate the prevalence of child marriage in Cross Rivers State Nigeria, they include two social workers, two nurses, one humanitarian workers, two missionaries and a therapist. Among the participants, three belong to FBOs, while the remaining five represent NGOs operating within the community. All these organizations have been actively involved in the community for a minimum of three years, with the longest-standing organization having served for eleven years. The participants included in the sample were individuals with experiences in combating child marriage in Cross Rivers state, Nigeria. They were all graduates of higher institutions, ranging in age from 27 to 60 years. The sample consisted of five females and three males.

5.2 Presentation of study findings and discussions

This section of the study presents the study findings and an accompanying discussion of findings. The findings will be presented and discussed in line with the existing literature already reviewed in the study, alongside the theoretical framework that guided the study. In line with the study's objectives, this chapter will produce answers to the research question; "What are the impact of interventions towards survivors of child marriage in Nigeria?" it will in addition answer the study's sub questions which includes "How does child marriage act as an inhibiting factor for childhood in Nigeria? What is the focus of child marriage intervention efforts in

Nigeria? What are the region-specific proposals for accelerating effective solutions in combating child marriage in Nigeria.”

5.3 Child marriage as an inhibiting factor for childhood in Nigeria

This is one of the three major themes in the study which dwells on findings on the impact of child marriage on children in cross rivers state Nigeria. An understanding of how child marriage affects childhood is necessary in ascertaining the impact of the interventions by non-governmental and faith-based organisations on ending child marriage in Nigeria. This is an indication that child marriage acts as an inhibiting factor in the following ways: Absence of autonomy, source of trauma and physical harm, denial of access to education and hinders Childhood development. The study participants shared experiences with working in the community to ending child marriage and recounts how childhood development of child brides is distorted due to early marriage.

5.3.1 Absence of autonomy

The study participants recounted how child brides in Becheve community are adversely affected by early marriage and they mentioned that such arrangement deprives children the opportunity to be part of the decisions making process especially as regards the decision to get married, they are left powerless and are unable to exercise control over their lives and are literally forced into such marital relationships. They believed these children lack the needed intellectual and psychological maturity to make informed decision about marriage at their young age. As a result, these children experience a significant loss of autonomy and are not allowed to take part in the decision-making processes that shape their lives. This is in line with Woodhead (2006) who opined that child marriage limits children’s agency and autonomy, it also denies children the liberty to develop their own identities, interests, and aspirations, and to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. In the case of child marriage in Nigeria, parents are found taking such important decision on behalf of their children instead of protecting them from such vulnerability and this simply denotes a negation to the best interest of the child principle as parents prioritizes their own interest against that of children (Braithwaite, 2014; Raj, 2010). According to the participants, the debilitating effects of child marriage can never be overemphasised as it excludes children from being involved in taking important decisions related to their wellbeing and are compelled to conform to cultural and traditional standards mostly enforced by their parents or guardians.

Honestly, I can categorically tell you that the decision to get married in this community is solely between parents or guardians and the supposed in-laws, to them it is not

necessary to get the children involved in such decision. In their opinions, children are there to take just obey their parents and not argue with them, so it does not matter whether they are okay with their marriage plans or not. This is part of our sensitization journey in their community, we have interfaced with parents and guardians to teach them that is a child right abuse to impose marriage on children (*Participant 3*).

Corroborating this view, another participant shared her experience of working in the community. “Most of these parents think that they can decide for their children, and they see any child who tries to question their decision as disobedient and wayward, you and I know that this is an error (*Participant 1*)”

Well, child marriage is generally against the child protection principle which clearly prioritises the best interest of the child. The interests of these parents who sell their children comes first and they do not care how it affects the children. I remember a family that I worked with, they have already made plans to take their 15 year old girl to a man they borrowed money from to support their farming business, the mother clearly told me that the favour they got from their would be son-in-law is enough and there is nothing wrong with giving him their daughter after all it is nothing new in the community (*Participant 8*)

Overall, this lack of autonomy and exclusion from decision-making processes results in limited agency and this points to the negative effect of child marriage on a child's ability to exercise control over their own life, participate in important decisions, and shape their own future. Undoubtedly, this practice hinders children’s personal development, denies them access to basic education limits their economic prospects, and perpetuates cycles of poverty and gender inequality.

5.3.2 Source of trauma and physical harm

It was indicated by the participants that child marriage is a significant source of trauma and physical abuse to the survivors of child marriage in various communities where the practice still thrives. Children while in their husband’s houses are subjected to domestic violence including but not limited to emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, this results in traumatic experiences given that these children are forced into marriage without being physically and psychologically ready for such marital relationship. Several studies have confirmed that these children experience issues such as depression, low self-esteem, powerlessness, and anxiety, they also face isolation from family members and are disconnected from their social network (John et al., 2019; Kidman, 2017; Meyer et al., 2007;). Some of the participants recounted their

experiences in the community as they highlight some of the traumatic experiences that child brides are subjected to in the community.

...secondly, these children are subjected to a lot of traumas, emotional and psychological trauma, judging from the fact that they are subjected to a lot of abuse in their husband's houses. We have reports of children who are being raped by these older men as young as they are. Added that they are not yet mature to engage in sexual activities or give their consent to sex and even negotiate sexual activity. So even the trauma of being raped by their supposed husband is already too much for them

(Participant 5)

Similarly, Adedokun, Adeyemi and Dauda (2016) agrees with the above as they posit that child brides often lack the necessary psycho-social skills to navigate the complexities of marriage, including family dynamics and the politics involved with their spouse and in-laws. Consequently, they are frequently unprepared for the responsibilities thrust upon them in intricate family environments. Unfortunately, these young brides frequently endure various forms of mistreatment, including psychological distress, domestic abuse, coerced sexual acts, marital rape committed by their spouse and extended family members, and are treated as domestic servants due to their vulnerable status as a young wife.

Some child brides are just treated as slaves and some are treated as a sex tool because she belongs to the man and the man determines what happens to her because the parents no longer have a say. I have worked with girls who were beaten up because they are just like property belonging to the man *(Participant 1)*.

The situation for young girls in early marriages is truly distressing. They often experience depression, and research indicates that a significant number of women who suffer from postpartum depression can attribute it to getting married at a young age. Postpartum depression is a disorder that occurs during pregnancy and after childbirth, and it is influenced by the circumstances surrounding the marriage. The girl's unhappiness in the marriage and the multitude of painful life experiences she encounters contribute to this challenging situation. Various mental health conditions may develop in girls who are not emotionally and psychologically prepared for marriage *(Participant 7)*.

The above findings clearly indicate that women and girls who are survivors of child and forced marriages may endure conditions within their marital union that align with the "internationally recognized definitions of slavery and slavery-like practices." These conditions encompass servile marriage, sexual slavery, child servitude, child trafficking, and forced labour (Bošnjak,

2013; Raj, 2010). Furthermore, a significant portion of child marriage cases seems to fall under the category of the worst forms of child labour as defined by the International Labour Organization Convention. When marriages are imposed without the child's consent and occur due to physical or emotional coercion, they constitute a form of violence against children that disproportionately exposes girls to physical, sexual, and emotional harm (Sabbe et al., 2015; Svanemyr et. al, 2015). Such practices deviate from the fundamental principles of the Child Rights Based Approach, which is rooted in upholding children's rights and advocating for the protection of both girls and boys from birth to adulthood. This approach prioritizes the best interests of the child and supports their rights to information, expression, and involvement in decisions that affect their lives.

5.3.3 Denial of access to education

Participants stated that child marriage has a significant impact on children's educations especially girl children who are more susceptible to child marriage than their male counterparts, the practice subject child brides to a limited access to education since the community as well as families place priority on marriage instead of education of children. As a result, child marriage survivors do not have access to basic education due to poor socio-economic situation in various families. They pointed out that even some of them who were already in school are forced to drop out since they are expected to take up their wife duties such as domestic chores, child-rearing among others.

The major challenges that these girls face is quite glaring. Number one is that they lose access to education. Their rights to education are denied of them because the major reason why they are being forced into marriage is because of lack of money. So obviously some of the children do not even go to school from their parents' house. When they are taken to these older men, they are also not put in school. So, it is a very bad and negative way of denying children of their rights to access basic education **(Participant 6)**.

...the thing is that some of these parents are so carefree and do not make any efforts whatsoever to enrol their children in school even when schooling is free both at the primary and junior secondary level. To them they value marriage more than education especially because of the material benefits they will get from marrying off their daughters **(Participant 4)**.

This aligns with the research outcome of Plan International (2013) which found that 84.2 percent of girls married in Kenya reported no access to education because they have assumed

a new role and so need to stay back to assume their wife responsibilities. Several studies corroborate this finding as they maintained that child marriage is associated with lower levels of education for girls in Nigeria and that child marriage significantly reduces the likelihood of completing secondary education for girls (Jahan & Islam, 2016; Male & Wodon, 2014; Nguyen & Wodon, 2012). Therefore, this clearly shows one of the dimensions upon which child marriage negates the Child Right Based Approach which promotes children's right to basic education, the practice denies children the opportunity to have formal education thereby preventing them from fulfilling their full potentials and acquiring sustainable skills.

5.3.4 Hinders Childhood development.

Participants pointed out how child marriage undermines children's rights by denying them the chance to live a healthy, safe, and fulfilled childhood. In addition, they emphasised that survivors of child marriage in Cross River Nigeria are faced with limited cognitive development due to early exposure to adult roles and responsibilities. Similarly, child marriage breeds social isolation as child brides suffer isolation from family, peers, and other social networks, they have no access to recreational activities and social interactions as kids which have adverse effects on their childhood development. These adult roles or parentification of children are considered unacceptable following child protection principles that considers childhood as a period of innocence devoid of any adult worries of responsibilities (Cohen, et al., 1999). This is consistent with Woodhead (2006) who is of the view that practices such as child marriage challenges the idea of childhood as a distinct phase of life characterized by innocence, playfulness, and dependency on adults, and undermines the notion of children as active agents in their own lives. In the same vein, the study participants also indicated the struggles that child brides go through in the cause of their marriages.

Money marriage is directly affecting girls, number one because as young teenage girls they are forced to become mothers at an early age which affects their wellbeing and education as well as distort their life process in any way you would think about it. It also denies them the opportunity of being children and then makes them take up the adult caring roles as mothers and wives. Imagine a 13- or 14-year-old nursing a child, you would not know how to keep calm and watch such a terrible situation (*Participant 7*).

One of the major responsibilities of children into the money marriage arrangement is that they have a responsibility of providing food for the family, so at a very tender age, children deal with burdens and responsibilities of bringing food to the table, procreating

and childbearing, that is a situation that requires taking care of their children when they should ideally be taken care of (*Participant 2*).

5.4 The focus of child marriage interventions in Nigeria

The focus of child marriage interventions in Nigeria is one of the major themes in the study. In a bid to critically analyse the impact of child marriage interventions in Nigeria, it is imperative to delve into the focus of the intervention efforts by non-governmental and faith-based organisation towards ending money marriage in Cross River state Nigeria. Participants revealed that interventions targeted at ending child marriage in Nigeria is mainly focused on vocational and skills acquisition programs, provision of food and relief supplies, health intervention programs, support for parents and caregivers and education-based interventions. So, they were able to relate these interventions to their own specific organisations while recounting their work in Becheve community.

5.4.1 Vocational and skills acquisition programs

Participants recount that vocational and skill acquisition program is one of the major foci in their efforts to ending money marriage, the organisations made efforts to empower them by providing skill acquisition programs to young girls and teenagers that have already been given out as money wives including those of them at risk of child marriage in the community. This initiative played a significant role in empowering them to be productive and self-sufficient, it also helped the beneficiaries to learn skills that are marketable and which in turn paved way for employment opportunities and financial independence. Participants noted skills such as bakery, fashion design, soap making, catering among others. “Skill acquisition remains one of our best intervention strategies towards ending this problem, teenagers among them are enrolled into skill acquisition program as a way of helping them have more control of their lives and to be productive (*Participant 6*)”

.... because we are basically working with teen mothers, some of them were not ready to go back to school, and that is how the skill acquisition program came about. My organisation decided to enrol them into skill acquisition programs of their choice, we have skills like hairdressing, catering, sewing and bakery. We now have teen mums who are now making a living from these skills because we don't stop at teaching them the skills, we also support them to set their crafts running (*Participant 2*).

Participants also added that this empowerment and skills acquisition is also extended to families, parents are also empowered and supported with either their businesses or farm work

to enable them fight poverty which is at the root of child marriage. Studies also confirmed that poor socio-economic situation of some families is one of the major drivers of child marriage, so the girls are not catered for, instead they are forced into marriage as a way of easing off financial burden as well as getting financial benefits from in-laws (Adekola et al., 2015; Bartels et al., 2018; Erulkar, 2013; Mourtada, 2014).

So, we look for avenues to reach out to parents, to talk with them about their challenges to find out whichever way we can help them in terms of supporting their businesses, giving them funds to support them such that this poverty issues will not be their excuse for engaging and perpetuating this heinous against their children (*Participant 3*).

Okay, I remember a family we once supported, they were already making marriage plans for their teenage daughter the moment we intervened. So, we supported them money to buy seedlings for their farming business and they were able to make out something meaningful from their farm, their crops yielded so well that they realised enough money to offset the bill other than selling their child, I still remember this case clearly and I can confidently say that it was a success (*Participant 5*).

Parents and guardians are also our target, we understand that empowering children alone without their parents might not make much impact in our intervention, so we reached out to the women in their church meetings. As a missionary it was much easier to get to talk to women in their numbers, I arranged with the president of various women groups, and they gave us the platform to sensitize mothers on why they should desist from involving children in marriage. What made this outreach unique was that it was a form of church gathering, we even included prayer sessions and our sensitization was kind of biblical (*Participant 1*).

The data reported above clearly articulates one of the foci of these organisation towards ending child marriage in Nigeria, the findings is consistent with findings from previous literature on child marriage interventions, these studies noted that majority of initiatives primarily focus on empowering girls by providing them with educational and skill-building opportunities. These programs also involve families and community members, aiming to transform the deep-rooted social norms that contribute to child marriage. The studies added that many of such interventions provide economic incentives to parents, encouraging them to prioritize education and positive behaviours while preventing child marriage (Lee-Rife et al. 2012; Malhotra et al. 2011; Sinha & Young 2009).

5.4.2 Health-based programs

Interventions targeted at ending child marriage also focuses on health, the aim of this health intervention is to help manage the health risks associated with child marriage. Participants acknowledged the variety of health risks faced by child brides in Nigeria, this health-related risks includes complications associated pregnancy and childbirth, which leads to maternal and infant mortality and morbidity. Child brides deal with health condition such as obstetric fistula and higher risks of contracting Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STIs) such as HIV/AIDS due to inability to negotiate safe sexual practices and lack of access of primary reproductive health services. However, according to the participants, this health-related risks is the major motivation for channelling their interventions towards health by ensuring that young girls get access to primary health care, organisation health talks and sensitisation for child brides and teen mothers to teach them the need to seek for antenatal care during pregnancy, the important use of contraceptives, their health outreach also includes free routine medical checks for pregnant teens in the community.

.... that is the major reason I work with them as a nurse, helping them to deal with the numerous health challenges. Some of them does not enrol for antenatal care services when they are pregnant, and this always result in serious complications during childbirth. Now this is what we do, ensure that they start antenatal care. We also make out time to speak to these young mothers in group, at the community centre, teaching them about safe sex and the use of condoms to ensure a healthy living (*Participant 4*).

We reach out to them and ensure they are registered for antenatal care and ensure that they continue using the services of the health centre even after delivery to avoid any complications and for the safety of the baby as well (*Participant 6*)

The analysis of the data shows that organisations working to end child marriage in Nigeria delve into its health impact, they work with the community as well as child brides and their families to forestall the health impact of child marriage. This is a necessary area to focus child marriage interventions since several studies have revealed the debilitating impact of child marriage on the health of young girls, these studies maintained that girls who marry before the age of 18 are more likely to face complications during childbirth and that young girls in marriage are less likely to access antenatal care. (Ahinkora et al., 2022; Ahmed et al., 2014; Akpan, 2003; Clark, 2004).

5.4.3 Education-based initiative

In addition to the discussion on the focus of child marriage interventions in Nigeria, most of the participants mentioned that the organisations also focus on education of girl children, both children who have been rescued from child marriage and those whose parents are not able to sponsor their education. They noted that their organisations offer scholarships and provide stationeries for girls from poor families to ensure that they are enrolled in school which is a sure way to delay marriage. They also help young girls who have been rescued from child marriage return to school to continue their education as a way of delaying marriage and getting the enlightened to be able to exercise their agency. “For example, we have a child education program to educate girls and give them scholarship to go back to school (*Participant 2*)”

We understand that basic education is the fundamental right of children and because of that, we assist children from poor homes with writing materials, school uniforms and other basic materials they need for their education. Let me also tell you that the reason we put them in school is to empower them to be aware of their rights and give them a voice. (*Participant 8*).

... another thing we do in addition to creating awareness is to ensure that teen mothers who desire to go back to school are enrolled in school, so we try to support their families with little funds to be able to provide the girls with everything they need in school (*Participant 1*)

The above clearly shows that child marriage has a negative impact on the education of children, the practice denies children access to education and makes children to drop out of school as a result, since child brides are required to take up their full-time wives’ responsibilities and other domestic chores. Jahan and Islam (2019) share the same findings in their study, their study findings also shows that the possibility of completing secondary education is hindered by child marriage. Other studies corroborate this finding and still maintained that girls who get married early are often forced to drop out of school, thereby limiting their personal development and economic empowerment (Aminu, 2019; Envuladu et al., 2016).

In line with the organisations’ interventions, the study analysis show that organisations make efforts to ensure that children are supported with their educational needs. They do this with an understanding of the role that education can play in empowering girls and helping to address the issue of child marriage. However, this education-based intervention is a strong

empowerment tool for the girls since education is considered as a powerful intervention tool for combating child marriage. Similar findings were shown in a study in West and Central Africa, revealing that one of the best ways to delay marriage is by keeping girls in school (Male & Wodon, 2018). Therefore, education is a highly impactful method for empowering girls and diminishing the prevalence of child marriage. When girls receive education, they are more inclined to postpone marriage, have fewer offspring, and experience improved health outcomes. Educated girls possess a greater likelihood of delaying marriage, exhibiting lower fertility rates, and enjoying enhanced overall well-being (Clark & Dude, 2006. Girls Not Bride, 2018).

5.4.4 Food supplies

While discussing the focus of the interventions towards ending money marriage in Nigeria, some of the participants added that their intervention also includes food supplies to support teen mothers who have already resumed schooled or have been enrolled into a skill acquisition program, the essence of it is to ensure that they focus on their schooling and skill acquisition and still have their basic need been met. The food supplies also covers both teenage mothers and their kids. According to them, the whole essence of this is to also aid empowerment and ensure that aims of all the empowerment plans is not defeated. One of the participants who identified as a missionary also added that the provision of food to their beneficiaries is their Christian duty towards the poor and that is part of their motivation for providing food items to them as a relief supply to help manage the child marriage situation in the community.

This usually takes place during festive periods and during this event we design a program that will support them to feed their children including themselves. Just in form of a food bank project, providing for teenage mothers on a larger scale. We think about it as how can we provide food for teenage mothers as they go to school. So, the idea behind the food programs that every day as they go to school, they're able to eat, they feed themselves and feed their children (*Participant 2*)

As a missionary, I understand that it our Christian duty to provide for the less privileged. So, we usually donate food items to some of the families who are really finding life difficult especially families that are at a higher risk selling their children in exchange for money, just for them to be able to put food on their table for some time. Through the Christian women executes, we reach out to those who need the most help just to avert the menace of money marriage (*Participant 5*).

The provision of food supplies as a relief material to help foster the empowerment plans of ending child marriage and to solve the problem of poverty which is known to be at the root of child marriage, as evidence shows that families with poor socio-economic situation have a higher tendency of giving out their girl children for child marriage, evidence from the scoping review shows that several comprehensive child marriage interventions were focused on improving the livelihood and everyday living of children and their families as a way of addressing poverty which is at the root of child marriage (Gandhi & Krijnen, 2006; Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021).

5.5 Region-specific proposals for advancing effective solutions in eliminating child marriage in Nigeria.

This section of the thesis presents themes regarding the region-specific proposals for eliminating child marriage in Nigeria and this was provided by the participants based on their experience of working in the community to eliminate money marriage, this is also important because it will give them the avenue to make effective recommendations to cover the gaps that their interventions have created while working in the community. The themes that emerged from the analysis of data include, increased stakeholder's collaboration, policy implementation, gatekeepers' commitment, and social worker's involvement.

5.5.1 Increased stakeholder's collaboration

When asked about region-specific proposals that could be adopted to end child marriage in Cross River state Nigeria, all the participants suggested that increased stakeholder's collaboration will make all the difference and bring about an effective intervention towards ending child marriage in the community. While making this proposal, participants complained that one of the challenges that their interventions have faced over time is lack of harmony among all the organisations working against child marriage, they are of the opinion that their programmes are disjointed and lacks sustainability which always result to relapse. All the organisations make efforts to fight against the practice without wanting to know what other organisations are doing or how they can collaborate to come up with a more comprehensive programme that will be sustainable and that will give room for an assessment of progress level. However, in a bid to provide a solution to this challenge, the participants suggested that there is need for these organisations to team up and leverage on the expertise of the various organisations to come up with a more comprehensive interventions that will address all the aspect of child marriage. "...I don't know how this can be achieved but if non-governmental

organisations can partner more with each other, to know what other organisations are doing, this will help them to plan their interventions properly.”

So for me, the number one thing that organisations should do is to increase collaboration among themselves. They should plan this intervention together and go as a stronger force. Example, using government authority to mobilize all the relevant stakeholders working to eliminate child money marriage, bringing together the collective efforts of international bodies, local leaders, paramount chiefs and leaders of community organisations, human right lawyers, faith-based organizations. This also makes me conscious of the need for my organisation to increase collaboration and join voices with other bodies to make a huge difference in the community and in the life of the girl child (*Participant 2*).

One of our greatest setbacks is lack of collaboration, some of our organisations think can make the required impact alone. So, you find different organisations doing the same thing in different ways, I know about five other organisations working in this community on the same money marriage thing. So, I am proposing that organisations team up and work with communities, this will help address the situation more. Their impact will be more felt if they come together, it is an example of this common saying that a tree cannot make a forest (*Participant 7*).

The above data indicates the need for non-governmental and faith-based organisations to collaborate and partner with each other for a more effective intervention. They suggested that instead of various organisations doing the same thing at the same time (duplicating programmes), it will be more ambitious for organisations to come together to develop a more sustainable intervention that will incorporate an assessment of intervention outcome as well as address all the aspects of the problem. A study by Baral (2019) revealed a similar finding, the study concluded that ending child marriage will be more achievable with collaboration and partnership of multiple stakeholders. Pankhurst (2014) and United Nations (2022) also added that all stakeholders, including government agencies and services, civil society organizations, educational institutions, and the media, must work together to put an end to these practices within a generation.

5.5.2 Policy implementation

All the participants in the study proposed that child marriage interventions can make the most impact if child rights and child protection policies are implemented by all state bodies. As they highlight the challenges that their intervention efforts have faced in the past years, lack of policy implementation was mentioned by all the participants as the major factor confronting

them despite that Nigeria is a signatory to both international and regional documents protecting children. They cited that different laws and policies in Nigeria such as the Child Rights of 2003 has been put in place to protect children from all forms of abuse including child marriage, yet the practice still thrives because such laws lack implementation. As a result, the protection of children in Nigeria is left at the mercy of their families, NGOs, FBOs and other private bodies and this frustrates their intervention efforts.

We have the Nigerian Child Right Act of 2003, the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act of 2015, the National Policy on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation of 2014, I can go on and on. Now, do you think that we will still be here discussing about child marriage if these laws have taken its full cause? These laws are supposed to protect children from early marriage, but it is unfortunate that they are just mere paperwork. The point I am trying to make is that government should properly implement these laws, ensure that all government stakeholders wake up to their duties because they are just negligent of their duties. Implement these laws and everything about child marriage will be history (*Participant 8*).

My first recommendation goes to the government because it is their duty to protect the rights of children, Nigerian government should adhere to her own laws and legal codes, ensure that the citizens fell the impact of your policies and if this is done, every other intervention will make more sense (*Participant 1*)

In line with this, some of the participants are of the view that interventions can be more impactful if law enforcement agencies are diligent with discharging their duties and the offenders of are duly punished. They suggested that this goes hand in hand with policy implementation because if offenders are made to face the law, it will serve as a deterrent to others. “Even when government speak about this practice that has been in existence not even one person has been arrested and prosecuted, they just abuse the rights of children and get away with it” (*Participant 6*).

If the police can cooperate with our organisations and ensure that offenders dance to the tune of the law, child marriage would have been reduced to the barest minimum if not eliminated. Sometimes the attitude of the police can frustrate your efforts, let the police and other law enforcement do their job and support what we do, then our interventions will achieve greater milestone (*Participant 3*).

The above findings corroborate with Friedman (2012) pointed out that one of the reasons for the persistence of child marriage practice is due to lack of enforcement of laws and policies by the judiciary, while the Brides and Plan Zambia (2015) maintained the same view as loopholes

in the established legal system impede the elimination of child marriages in Zambia. In the legalities of child marriage in Nigeria by Fayokun (2015), the author examined the issues surrounding the legalities of child marriage in Nigeria and found that there are loopholes in Nigerian laws thereby causing a huge confusion in child marriage laws.

The analysis of data shows that effective implementation of policies will make a significant impact in child marriage intervention efforts, non-governmental and faith-based organisations working in to eliminate the practice recommends that their activities could make more impact in the lives of children and the community if child protection policies are well implemented. Hence the importance of policy implementation can never be overemphasised, since laws and policies can set a clear legal limit for marriage, provide opportunities and services, raise awareness on the debilitating impacts of child marriage and enhance collective efforts to change. Policies can address poverty and other associated risk factors of child marriage, empower children and families and challenge cultures that encourage the practice which will eventually bring about the elimination of child marriage in our societies. Similarly, Fayokun (2015) recommended harmonised laws and policies to strengthen child marriage interventions, the study urged states in Nigeria to domesticate the CRA in Nigeria. Other studies added that a comprehensive policy geared towards ending child marriages in Nigeria should be duly implemented (Agege et al., 2017; Girls Not Brides, 2018)

5.5.3 Gatekeepers' involvement/support

Participants suggested that increased support and involvement of community gatekeepers can make a significant impact on child marriage intervention efforts. This recommendation was given based on the challenges they have faced while working in the community, they narrated that some of the community leaders or traditional rulers can be indifferent or unsupportive of their intervention efforts. They added that on occasions where they will need the permission of some of the leaders to carry out their activities, the gatekeepers can decide not to give them a go ahead, sometimes it could be that they are expecting some monetary or material inducement from these organisations, some of them fall within the category of those who are always in the habit of dismissing the existence of child marriage practice in the community, once they hear it is about child marriage, they are more interested in protecting the “image” of the community instead of allowing organisations to go on with their works.

Well, I think it's just one thing and that is getting the community gatekeepers to get themselves committed to this course because for it to end is with them and for it to continue is also with them. Let them stop acting unbothered and understand that the interventions will benefit members of their community (*Participant 1*).

The government can do very little if gatekeepers are not in agreement. I said that because these communities are not easily accessible. So if the community gatekeepers do not get involved there is little they can do, even when you explain the details of what you intend to do, they will not even do anything to support or encourage (*Participant 4*).

.... if community leaders can cooperate with us, then our interventions will make a huge difference, if they can voluntarily work with us without expecting to receive money from us or expecting other benefits. But the problem is that we come to the community to support child brides and their families and create awareness to see to the end of this practice, but the moment we leave, things will begin to fall apart, there are nobody there to always check on our beneficiaries. Now we take the extra stress of coming to almost start over again even when we don't have enough funds to support our work. Let these leaders get involved voluntarily, it will make all the difference (*Participant 7*).

Data analysis shows that increased gatekeepers' support can be an effective solution in eliminating child marriage in Nigeria, since they have a huge influence and power in the community. For organisations to succeed in their interventions, they need community leaders' endorsement and active involvement for such interventions to thrive, their involvement can bring about compliance, defeat cultural barriers and bring about acceptance of alternative cultural practices. The study shows that sustainability of certain child marriage eradication efforts lies in the hands of community gatekeepers, they can use their position to mobilize members of the community, heads of community organisations, religious leaders, and other community stakeholders to collectively support efforts towards eradicating child marriage.

These gatekeepers can help design culturally sensitive programs that can address the drivers of child marriage without offending their norms and values. This resonates with the findings in a study by the United Nations (2022) which shows how Zambian government worked with gatekeepers like traditional leaders and Civil Society Organisations in their national campaign to eliminate child marriage through various community education among commuters, this underscores the place of community gatekeepers in championing the campaign to end child marriage. Also, the study by Dake et al. (2018) clearly shows how collaborating with traditional and religious leader led to an effective implementation of policies geared towards ending child marriage. Overall, community gatekeepers play a vital role in interventions to end child marriage and participants highly recommends that they should partner more with NGOs and FBOs to ensure a more impactful child marriage intervention.

5.5.4 Social worker's involvement

Active participation of social work professionals in interventions towards eradicating child marriage was recommended by the participants, this is because social workers are not actively involved in the efforts by different organisations towards ending child marriage thereby affecting the effectiveness of such programs. Participants suggested that their interventions could make more impacts if social work practitioners get more involved in such interventions. This is evident from the interview excerpts.

One of the challenges we face is that there is lack of involvement of social workers and other child protection workers who have the formal training to intervene in issues of child marriage and other child right abuse, on this note I am recommending that more social workers get involved in fighting this cause especially as it concerns children in Becheve, their involvement will no doubt make a remarkable impact in the lives of children and their families (*Participant 3*)

In my opinion, social workers should be at the forefront of any intervention that promotes the rights of children, in terms of ending child marriage, there are very few of us who are currently in this journey of ending child marriage, therefore I am of the view that if more social workers get involved, interventions will make the most impact especially because social workers are trained and they are like child protection experts (*Participant 8*)

From the analysis of data, social workers as human rights professionals with skills and training in the child protection system should increase their involvement in the protection of children from child rights abuses such as child marriage. However, because of their training and expertise, participants recognised the crucial roles of social workers in interventions efforts to end such practice. Social work practitioners can leverage on their training to advocate for change of policies, provide counselling and psychotherapy and increase awareness of issues associated with child marriage such as traditional norms, poverty, gender inequality and lack of education. Through a multidisciplinary approach, social workers can collaborate with NGOs, communities, and the government to empower girls, uphold their rights, and foster a society in which child marriage is no longer accepted. United Nations (2022) also cited the all-important role and involvement of social workers in providing support for child brides or girls at risk of being married. This is in line with Namwiinga (2017) on empowering girls to prevent and end child marriage, who acknowledged the significant roles of social work practitioners

and recommended that they should get involved in promoting empowerment of the girl child to protect them from all form of child or forced marriage.

5.6 Synergising study findings with theoretical framework and existing literature

This section of the analysis will establish and discuss the connection between the study findings, theoretical framework, and already existing literatures around child marriage. The study conceptualised the empowerment theory and CRBA in relation to child marriage interventions and this section will efficiently link these frameworks to the study findings as well as relate it with existing literatures. This will be presented in the same order with the objectives of the study.

5.6.1 Child marriage as an inhibiting factor for childhood in Nigeria

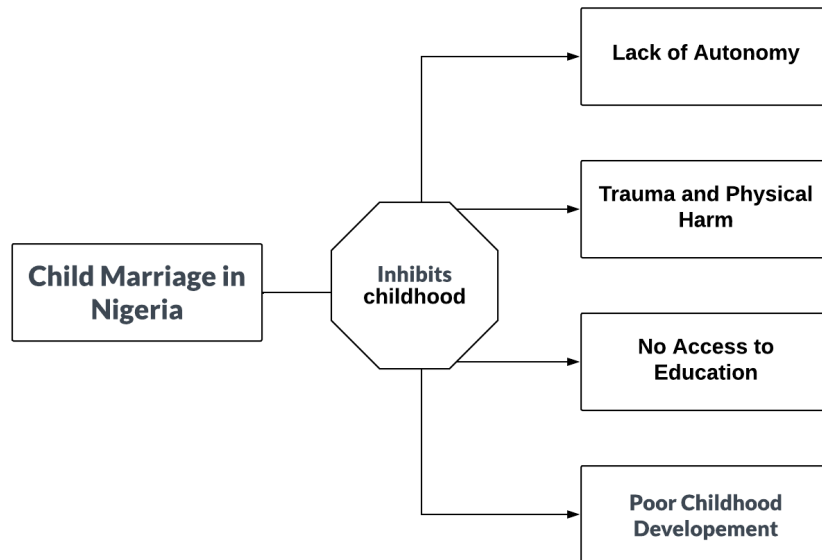
Result shows that child marriage acts as inhibiting factor to childhood in Nigeria in the following ways: lack of autonomy, source of trauma and physical harm, denial of access to education and hinders childhood development.

First, the lack of autonomy and exclusion from decision-making processes results in limited agency and this points to the negative effect of child marriage on a child's ability to exercise control over their own life, participate in important decisions that shape their own future. Departing from the CRBA, child marriage depicts a complete deviation from the from the fundamental principles of the Child Rights Based Approach, which is deeply rooted children's rights and advocating for the protection of both girls and boys from abuse of this kind. The CRBA prioritizes the best interests of the child and supports their rights to information, expression, and involvement in decisions that affect their lives, when children are forced into early marriages, they face conditions such as sexual slavery, child servitude, child trafficking, and forced labour (Bošnjak, 2013; Raj, 2010). However, when marriages are imposed without the child's consent and occur due to physical or emotional coercion, they constitute a form of violence against children that disproportionately exposes girls to physical, sexual, and emotional harm and this clearly goes against the CRBA and other international laws protecting children (Girls Not Brides, 2018; Sabbe et al., 2015; Svanemyr et. al, 2015).

Child marriage not only violates children's rights but also deprives them of the opportunity to have a healthy, secure, and fulfilling childhood. The concept of adult roles or burdening children with parental responsibilities goes against child protection principles, which view childhood as a time of innocence free from the concerns and responsibilities typically associated with adulthood (Cohen, et al., 1999). This aligns with existing literature that

suggests child marriage disrupts the notion of childhood as a unique life stage characterized by innocence (Raj, 2010; Woodhead, 2006).

Figure 2: Effects of child marriage on childhood in Nigeria



Again, the result also shows how the practice denies survivors of child marriage their fundamental right, which is access to basic education due to poor socio-economic situation in various families. Some of them who are already enrolled in school are forced to drop out to face their marital responsibilities fully because of child marriage. Hence, this serves as a clear demonstration of how child marriage contradicts the principles of the Child Rights-Based Approach, which advocates for children's right to receive fundamental education. The evidence strongly suggests that child marriage is closely linked to a lack of or limited education for girls. Numerous studies support this conclusion, consistently highlighting that child marriage is connected to lower educational attainment among girls in Nigeria. Moreover, these studies demonstrate that child marriage significantly diminishes the chances of girls completing their secondary education (Aminu, 2019; Jahan & Islam, 2016; Male & Wodon, 2014; Nguyen & Wodon, 2012; Sanni, Thompson & Daniel, 2016).

5.6.2 The focus of child marriage interventions in Nigeria

The study findings shows that NGOs and FBOs in Cross River State, Nigeria, primarily concentrate their child marriage interventions on vocational and skills acquisition programs, the provision of food and relief supplies, health intervention programs, support for parents and caregivers, and education-based initiatives aimed at ending child marriage.

NGOs and FBOs dedicated to eradicating child marriage undertook initiatives to empower young girls and teenagers who had already been married off as child brides, as well as those at risk of child marriage in the community. They achieved this by offering skill acquisition programs. This initiative played a crucial role in fostering their empowerment, enabling them to become productive and self-reliant individuals. Additionally, it provided the beneficiaries with marketable skills, opening doors to employment opportunities and financial independence.

Many studies indicate that various child marriage interventions are focused on economic empowerment of girls and their families, a significant illustration is the Apni Beti Apna Dhan program implemented by the government of Haryana state in India. This program offers monetary incentives to girls and their families, contingent upon the condition that the daughters remain unmarried until they reach the age of 18 (Sinha & Young, 2009). These findings have been supported by multiple studies, which highlight that many initiatives primarily concentrate on empowering girls through the provision of educational and skill-building opportunities. Additional notable intervention strategies include offering direct financial support to families and guardians, as well as providing economic incentives to parents, all aimed at promoting education, good health behaviours, and positive attitudes as effective measures to prevent child marriage (Lee-Rife et al. 2012; Malhotra et al. 2011; Namwiinga, 2017; UN 2022).

The findings also indicate that in Nigeria, organizations dedicated to ending child marriage address its health consequences. They collaborate with the community, child brides, and their families to prevent the negative health effects associated with child marriage. This aspect of child marriage interventions is crucial because of the significant impact it has on the health of young girls and the potential complications related to childbirth. (Adeyemo, 2013; Ahinkora et al., 2022; Ahmed et al., 2014; Akpan, 2003). This aligns with previous research that suggests interventions against child marriage employ access to health services and information to empower young girls and ultimately prevent and eliminate child marriage (CEDPA, 2006; Duflo et al., 2015; Rahman, & Daniel, 2010; Wilder et al., 2005)

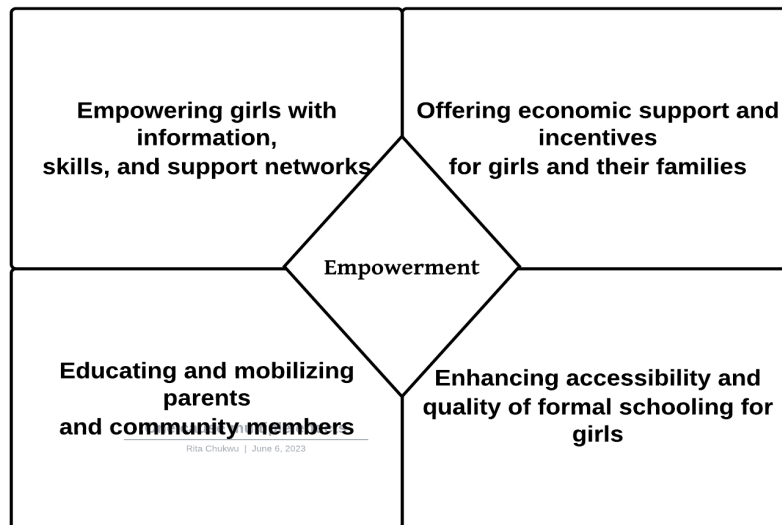
In addition to the outcomes observed in child marriage interventions in Nigeria, organizations also prioritize the education of girls. This includes both girls who have been rescued from child marriage and those whose parents are unable to support their education. However, this intervention centered around education serves as a potent tool for empowering girls, as education is widely recognized as a powerful means to combat child marriage. Thus, education emerges as a highly impactful approach to empower girls and reduce the prevalence of child marriage. When girls receive an education, they are more inclined to delay marriage, have

fewer children, and experience improved health outcomes. Similar findings were demonstrated in a study conducted in West and Central Africa, which revealed that one of the most effective ways to postpone marriage is by ensuring girls' access to education (Male & Wodon, 2018). Other studies support these findings, highlighting that educated girls are more likely to delay marriage, have lower fertility rates, and enjoy overall improved well-being (Girls Not Bride, 2018; Jahan & Islam, 2019; Sanni, Thompson & Daniel, 2016; Wodon, Nguyen & Tsimpo, 2016).

The focus of child marriage interventions deployed by various NGOs and FBOs in Nigerian aligns with the empowerment theory in social work. In social work, empowerment highlights the significance giving individuals and community the enabling environment and resources to take control of their lives, address social issues affecting them and make informed decisions about their lives. The empowerment theory validates the notion that providing a girl child with education, economic resources, and access to healthcare enhances her personal and interpersonal power (Gutierrez, 1991; Zimmerman, 1995). This empowerment enables her to expand her capabilities, exercise her rights, actively participate in decision-making processes, and ultimately gain control over the issue of child marriage.

Our study findings shows that child marriage interventions primarily concentrate on vocational and skills acquisition programs, the provision of food and relief supplies, health intervention programs, support for parents and caregivers, and education-based initiatives aimed at ending child marriage and from the analysis above, the central focus of child marriage interventions by these organisation is on empowerment, all their efforts is to empower young girls and their families to take actions to challenge child marriage. The organizations directed their efforts towards empowering young girls and their families through a range of interventions, including education, healthcare, economic opportunities, skills acquisition, and vocational training initiatives. By implementing this strategy, they effectively equipped young girls with the necessary skills and knowledge to withstand societal pressures for early marriage. Additionally, these interventions enabled the girls to make informed decisions about their own futures, fostering greater agency and autonomy in their lives.

Figure 3: Empowerment theory and child marriage



Practically, the intervention by these organisations reflects the major thrust of empowerment in social work, self-determination, skills development, capacity building, information access, community participation and engagement are the key elements of empowerment that resonates with the study results. the key elements of empowerment which relates to the study (Adams, 2002; Parsloe, 1996). These organisations were committed to empowering young girls, their families and community members by providing access to quality information and creating awareness such that their beneficiaries can make informed decisions about their lives and resist child marriage.

Therefore, through their education programs, health education and community sensitization programs, this organisation contributed towards promoting the rights of children; their rights to participation, restored their agency and their rights to decision making especially in matters concerning marriage. Furthermore, education-based empowerment initiative was implemented to empower out of school kids and ensure that they harness their potentials, and the skills acquisition programs was also there to promote skill acquisition. Overall, these programs were designed to create awareness about the rights of children, foster financial independence, create employment opportunities for young girls and their families and ensure that all children gain equal access to education, this is ultimately to tackle child marriage by addressing its root causes such as poverty, gender inequality and challenge discriminatory cultural norms that fuels child marriage in the community.

Departing from the empowerment theory, these types of intervention empower young girls to be more aware of their fundamental rights and restore their agency to decide whether to give in to child marriage or not. Namwiinga (2017) demonstrated the appropriateness of the empowerment in child marriage interventions, it was indicated in the study that empowerment plays a key role in harnessing the potentials of young girls at risk of child marriage and improving their wellbeing. Furthermore, it was found that education empowers her more significantly than ever before. Additionally, the research demonstrated that education fosters awareness of a girl child's rights and facilitates her active participation in decisions that impact her life, this underscores the appropriateness of the empowerment theory for the study.

5.6.3 Region-specific proposals for advancing effective solutions in eliminating child marriage in Nigeria.

The study proposes that to enhance the effectiveness of efforts aimed at combating child marriage, there is a need to foster greater collaboration among stakeholders, the implementation of relevant policies, a firm commitment from gatekeepers, and increased engagement of social workers. These proposals were giving following the basic principles of empowerment theory in social work, since the theory has to do with enhancing individuals and communities to gain control of their lives, make informed decisions and defend their rights. First, the suggestion for stakeholders' collaboration is in line with one of the empowerment principles of promoting partnership. The study recognises the importance of the collaborative efforts of NGOs, FBOs, community leaders and all the relevant stakeholders in effectively addressing the issue of child marriage. This approach recognises that a collective effort can result in a more thorough and lasting solution, granting communities more say in decision-making and encouraging shared ownership of activities.

Moreover, child protection measure can be put in place through an efficient policy implementation, giving children their rights to assert their rights and enduring that perpetrators of child marriage are held accountable. Also, through adequate child protection policy implementation, NGOs and FBOs can contribute to the creation of favourable frameworks that empower communities to challenge harmful traditional practices and norms. In addition, the suggestion to increase involvement of social workers is in line with empowerment, with the specialised training of social work practitioners, they are committed to empowering young girls

at the risk of child marriage and their families by leading interventions to challenge cultural norms that propels child marriage.

The study findings reveals that the strategies adopted by these organisations to combat child marriage has yielded a positive outcome; these strategies promote access to education, empowers girls and their families, mobilises the community, offers economic incentives, and promotes policy change and development. This simply denotes that child marriage interventions facilitated by NGOs and FBOs have contributed to a reduction in the prevalence rate of child marriages in Nigeria. These findings align with previous research by Malhotra et al. (2011), which also reported a decrease in child marriage prevalence through changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. The study emphasizes that child marriage prevention efforts in Nigeria were interconnected with broader objectives related to education, reproductive health, livelihoods, and empowerment. The evaluation of the impact of these interventions focused on measuring changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to child marriage among at-risk girls, parents, and community members. The success indicators included increased awareness, enhanced agency for children, improved access to education, ultimately resulting in a decrease in child marriage rates in Nigeria.

...I can tell you that the prevalence rate of child marriage in this community has reduced to the barest minimum, although I don't have the number to prove what I am saying but I can tell you from my experience of working in this community for the past eleven years. I have been fully involved in the fight to end child marriage and I can tell you that our intervention combined with others have been helpful in creating more awareness and empowering girls and the community. I work and live in this community as a missionary because of this child marriage practice, unlike the very

beginning, members of the community are now more informed and the urge to carelessly sell the girl children has almost gone extinct (*Participant 1*).

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction

This section covers the conclusion of the thesis, a study done with eight professionals working with NGOs and FBOs to eliminate child marriage in Nigeria. The chapter begins with the summary of research findings, highlights the study limitations, implications to social work and policy, and the recommendations from the research.

6.1 Summary of Findings

This is qualitative research that will add to the body academic literatures on issues related to child marriages in Nigeria and intervention efforts geared towards eliminating the practice in Nigeria, most importantly the study will be a good reference documents regarding money marriage in Cross River Nigeria since there is dearth of literature addressing that specific type of child/forced marriage called “money marriage.” In this study, I explored the impact of interventions towards eliminating child marriage in Nigeria, focusing on how child marriage inhibits childhood, finding out the focus of their interventions and the region-specific proposals for accelerating effective solutions towards child marriage in Nigeria. In the end, the study arrived at two major conclusions as regards child marriage interventions and how it has impacted the lives of the beneficiaries.

First, findings shows that empowerment is at the core of child marriage interventions in Nigeria, different organisations channel their efforts towards eliminating child marriage and organises a range of empowerment programs for children, families, and communities. These programs range from vocational and skills acquisition programs for children and families, services that ensures that children at risk of child marriage are offered scholarships and enrolled in school, financial support provided to parents and guardians to support them and ensure that poor socio-economic conditions does not push them into forcing their children into marriage, routine community based and support group awareness and workshops for girls and members of the community ensure they are sensitized enough about children’s rights and the debilitating impact of child marriage.

In addition, interventions were channelled towards addressing the impact of child marriage on health of children through routine medical checks on pregnant teens, access to primary health care and most importantly, health talks organised for girls about safe sex, use of contraceptives and other health related tips needed to forestall child marriage and its impacts on health. Overall, the major focus and aims of these interventions is to empower girls and mobilise the community to take actions to improve their situation and put an end to child marriage. The

empowerment theory suggests that these types of interventions can help girls and their families to become more aware of their rights, increase their self-esteem, and gain the skills and resources needed to make informed decisions about their lives. Also, interventions from these organisations are channelled only at the individual level (micro level) which was meant to empower girls and their families, strengthened their agency to have control of their lives and make informed decisions to be able to resist child marriage. Their intervention at the micro level also includes interventions at the community level geared towards challenging their cultural norms that encourages child marriage as well as empowering them to create economic opportunities to be able to shun child marriage.

Secondly, the study's findings suggest that community interventions targeting child marriage have resulted to a reduction in its prevalence rate. Although statistical evidence is lacking, all study participants reported a significant decrease in the prevalence rate, supported by increased awareness and a shift in attitudes. The impact of these interventions is evident in the empowerment of community members, parents, and young girls, who have gained knowledge about their rights and the importance of taking a stand against child marriage. Prior to these interventions, the community lived in ignorance and considered child marriage as a normal cultural practice inherited from previous generations. They failed to recognize the need to address poverty, the major factor promoting of child marriage, and instead, the act of marrying off their daughters for financial gain were nearly accepted as the norm. The interventions resulted in increased awareness and a notable shift in attitudes towards child marriage within the community. During the implementation of these interventions, instances were reported where specific families had already taken loans and were awaiting the specified time to exploit their daughters as a means of repaying their debts. In these situations, these families sought assistance from organizations to enable them to repay the debts using their own resources rather than resorting to the exploitation of their daughters as collateral facilities. Therefore, the interventions by the NGOs and FBOs working to eliminate child marriage is leaning towards a positive outcome as it has significantly empowered young girls, their families, and the community.

6.2 Study Limitations

The initial plans for this thesis were to conduct a study focusing on the narratives of survivors affected by child marriage in Nigeria, aiming to understand their experiences and the effects of interventions aimed at ending child marriage. Initially, I had planned to gather data in-person by being present in Nigeria. However, due to time constraints and primarily due to concerns

regarding security and election-related violence during the data collection period, I had to change my plans. Conducting virtual interviews with children posed a significant challenge for several reasons, firstly, the lack of access to computers, mobile devices, and the internet made it nearly impossible to carry out interviews virtually.

Due to the prevailing circumstances during that period, it posed a significant safety risk for me to travel to Nigeria. The risk involved potential threats from kidnappers or being exposed to street violence associated with the Nigerian general election. As a result, I opted for virtual research methods using Zoom meetings. However, this approach might have impacted the data quality, particularly because I couldn't observe non-verbal communication cues from participants who chose not to enable their cameras. The study period was marked by a constrained timeframe and the aftermath of the election, which had an impact on my mental well-being. Despite receiving support from supervisors, instructors, colleagues, and family, the concerns about the safety of my loved ones and the overall state of the country during data collection and analysis could have potentially influenced the research process and outcomes.

6.3 Implications to Social Work and Policy

This study has significant implications for social work practice in Nigeria, particularly regarding one of the identified themes: advocating for increased involvement of social workers in intervention efforts to combat child marriage. Despite being an emerging profession in Nigeria, it is crucial for social workers to embrace their role as human rights practitioners and actively protect children from the harm of child marriage.

Given the nature of their profession, social workers have an inherent duty to tackle the issues of child abuse and neglect. This includes understanding negative consequences of the abuse of child rights on the children and their families. It is crucial for social workers to take a prominent stance in interventions aimed at eliminating child marriage in Nigeria. They can accomplish this by engaging actively as members of multidisciplinary teams, advocating for the implementation of policies, backing the formulation of child protection laws, and guaranteeing that the rights of every child in Nigeria are safeguarded and respected, without any form of discrimination.

The findings of this study will serve as a valuable resource for Nigerian policy makers as they work towards achieving multiple goals. These goals include the country's aim of ending child marriage, the regional goal of ending child marriage by 2030 as part of the AU goals, and the broader objective of aligning with one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). An important finding from this study that policy makers should consider is the significance of

policy implementation in addition to policy formulation. It underscores that policies and laws, when formulated without proper implementation, fail to achieve their intended goals. Our study underscores the importance of effectively implementing policies and conventions aimed at safeguarding children from all types of abuse, including child marriage. Finally, most of the studies on child money marriage and NGOs interventions were developed in North Nigeria, predominantly Muslim, and few in the South, predominantly Christian, on whom there is a knowledge gap, which this study contributes to fill in.

6.4 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and considering its limitations, the following recommendations are put forth by the research:

- Further research should be done with the survivors of child marriage, it will be important to understand the impact of child marriage interventions from the perspectives of children who have been given out early in marriage.
- It will be research worthy to conduct case study research on the experiences of child brides and how interventions have impacted their lives, this will provide an opportunity to closely study the impact of child marriage following closely the lives of child brides before, after and during marriage.
- It is recommended that the Nigerian government centralizes child welfare responses within the country and enhances efforts to address child marriage. To ensure consistency and effectiveness, the Child's Right Act should be adopted nationwide, and the provision of basic education for children should not solely rely on non-governmental and international organizations.
- It is crucial for social workers in Nigeria to champion the development of a comprehensive child welfare system, aiming to safeguard children from various forms of abuse.
- Greater emphasis should be given to addressing child marriage at a macro level, with the government taking proactive measures to expedite economic development, enhance educational opportunities for girls, and reinforce legal structures aimed at safeguarding them from the practice of child marriage.

References

- Addaney, M., & Azubike, O. (2017). Education as contrivance to ending child marriage in Africa: perspective from Nigeria and Uganda. *Amsterdam Law Forum*, 9(2), 110-130.
- Adebambo, A. V. (2010). *Cultural Influence on Child Marriage; Focus on Northern Nigerians Resident in Ogun State, Nigeria*. [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of Agriculture, Abeokuta.
- Adebambo, A.V. (2010). Cultural influence on child marriage; Focus on northern Nigerians resident in Ogun state, Nigeria. Thesis submitted at Home Science and Management College of Food Science & Human Ecology, University of Agriculture, Abeokuta.
- Adebowale, S. (2018). Dynamics of child marriage and marital timing in Nigeria: A retrogression or progression?, *Health Care for Women International*, (39)9, 975-993.
- Adebowale, S. A. (2018). Dynamics of child marriage and marital timing in Nigeria: A retrogression or progression? *Health Care Women Int*, 39(9), 975–93.
- Adediran, O. A. (2021). *Abolition of child marriage practice in Nigeria: A case study of girl bride in the Northern part of Nigeria*. Thesis submitted to the Department of Global Political Studies, Malmö University Sweden. <https://www.divaportal.org/smash/get/diva2:1562366/FULLTEXT02.pdf>
- Adedokun, O., Adeyemi, O., & Dauda, C. (2017). Child marriage and maternal health risks among young mothers in Gombi, Adamawa State, Nigeria: Implications for mortality, entitlements and freedoms. *African Health Sciences*, 16(4), 986–999.
- Adekola, O., Akanbi, M.O. & Olawole-Isaac, M.(2016). A Qualitative assessment of the effects of child marriage on female education and entrepreneurship in Northeastern Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Multidisciplinary Studies* , 2(1), 7-15.
- Adeyemo, O.O. (2013). Early and forced marriages in African system: An appraisal of the right of the child in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal Family Practice*, 4 (2), 27-33
- Adolescent Health and Information Projects. (2021). *Our Programs*. Retrieved from <https://www.ahipnigeria.org/our-programs/>

- African Union. (1990). *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*.
<https://au.int/en/treaties/african-charter-rights-and-welfare-child>
- Ahinkorah, B. O., Budu, E., & Seidu, A. A. (2022). Girl child marriage and its association with maternal healthcare services utilization in sub-Saharan Africa. *BMC Health Serv Res*, 22, 777. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-022-08117-9>
- Ahmed, et al., (2013). Psychological impact evaluation of early marriages. *Int. j. endorsing health sci. res.* 1(2).
- Ahonsi, B. A., Fuseini, K., Nai, D., Goldson, E., Owusu, S., Ndifuna, I., Humes, I., & Tapsoba, P. (2019). Child marriage in Ghana: evidence from a multi-method study. *BMC Women's Health*, 19.
- Akinwunmi, O.S. (2010). Legal impediments on the practical implementation of the Child Right Act 2003. *International Journal of Legal Information*, 37(3), 386-396.
- Akonam, C. (2019). Social analysis of the impact of money marriage on psycho-emotional state of female children in Becheve, Obanliku Local Government Area, Cross River state Nigeria. *Journal of Social and Political Sciences*, 2(4), 997-1008.
- Akpan, E. O. (2003). Early Marriage in Eastern Nigeria and the Health Consequences of Vesico-Vaginal Fistulae (VVF) among Young Mothers. *Gender and Development* 11(2),70-76.
- Alabi, T. M., & Alabi, S. O. (2014). The girl-child: A sociological view on the problems of girl-child education in Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal* 10(2), 207.
- Alemika, E. E., Chukwuma, I., Lafratta, D., Messerli, D., & Souckova, J. (2005). Rights of the Child in Nigeria: Report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by Nigeria', CLEEN Foundation and World Organisation Against Torture 2005, p. 6.
- Aminu, A. (2019). Early marriage and education in Nigeria: An analysis of the socio-cultural and economic factors. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 104, 104-396.
- Aminu, A. (2019). Early marriage and education in Nigeria: An analysis of the socio-cultural and economic factors. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 104(10), 43-96.

- Anyanwu, C., & Onuora-Oguno, A. C. (2013). *Ten Years of the AU Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa: An Overview of the girl child access to basic education in Africa*. www.equalitynow.org/sites/MaputoProtocol_journeytoEquality.pdf
- Audi, J.A.M. (2006). Child Custody (Hadanah) under Islamic law in Nigeria: Looking at the best interest of the child. *Journal of Private and Comparative Law*, 1(1), 216-232
- Babatunde, R. O., Omoniwa, A. E. & Ukemenam, M. (2018). Gender inequality in schooling among children and the implications for livelihood of farming households in Kwara State, Nigeria. *Sarhad Journal of Agriculture*, 34(3).
- Bartels, S. A., Michael, S., Roupetz, S., Garbern, S., Kilzar, L., & Bergquist, H. (2018). Making sense of child, early and forced marriage among Syrian refugee girls: a mixed methods study in Lebanon. *BMJ global health*, 3(1), 509.
- Bell, N. M. (2008). Ethics in child research: rights, reason and responsibilities. *Children's Geographies*, 6, 20 - 7.
- Berg, I. K., & Kelly, S. (2000). *Building Solutions in Child Protective Services*. Norton.
- Bicchieri, C., Jiang, T., & Lindemans, J. W. (2014). *A social norms perspective on child marriage*. The General Framework.
- Bob-Manuel, B. & Azuonwu, G. (2022). The causes of early marriage in the different states of the Niger-Delta region. *Glob Acad J Humanit Soc Sci*, 4(3), 109-117
- Bolarinwa, et al., (2022). Spatial distribution and factors associated with adolescent pregnancy in Nigeria: A multi-level analysis. *Arch Public Health*, 80, 1-13.
- Bošnjak, B., & Acton, T. (2013). Virginitiy and early marriage customs in relation to children's rights among Chergashe Roma from Serbia and Bosnia. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 17(5-6), 46-67.
- Braimah, T. S. (2014). Child marriage in Northern Nigeria: Section 61 of Part I of the 1999 Constitution and the protection of children against child marriage. *Afr Human Rights Law J*, 14(2):474–88.

- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2),77-101.
- Broberg, M. P., & Sano, H. O. (2017). Strengths and weaknesses in a human rights-based approach to international development – an analysis of a rights-based approach to development assistance based on practical experiences. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 22, 664 - 680.
- Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods* (5th ed.). London: Oxford University Press.
- Buzome, C., Ugwu, H. N., & Momoh, A. R. (2018). Early child marriage in Nigeria causes, effects and remedies. *social Science Research*, 4(1).
- CEDAW. (1991). *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women*. <https://www.unicef.org/wca/media/2596/file>
- CEDPA. (2006)a. *Empowering Adolescents in India: The Better Life Options Program*. Washington, DC: CEDPA
- Chavis, D. M., Hogge, J. H., McMillan, D. W., & Wandersman, A. (2001). Sense of community through Brunswick's lens: A first look. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 29(1), 24-30.
- Child Right Act, (2003). *The Child's Right Act: Provisions, application, and you*. <http://www.hdinigeria.org/CRA%20Provisions20%Application%20%20YouPrinted%20Version.pdf>
- Clark, S. (2004). Early Marriage and HIV Risks in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Studies in Family Planning* 35(3): 149-160.
- Clark, S., Bruce, J., & Dude, A. (2006). Protecting young women from HIV/AIDS: The case against child and adolescent marriage. *International Family Planning Perspectives*, 44, 79-88.
- Cresswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

- Curtice, M., & Exworthy, T. (2010). FREDA: a human rights-based approach to healthcare. *The Psychiatrist*, 34, 150-156.
- Deane, K. & Stevano, S. (2016.) Towards a political economy of the use of research assistants: Reflections from fieldwork in Tanzania and Mozambique. *Qualitative Research*, 16(2), 213-228.
- Dhital, R. (2007). *Child Marriage in Nepal*. [http://www.win.Org.np/resources/issues/child marriage](http://www.win.Org.np/resources/issues/child_marriage)
- Duflo, E., Dupas, P. & Kremer, M. (2015). Education, HIV, and early fertility: Experimental evidence from Kenya. *Am Econ Rev*, 105(9), 57–97.
- Envuladu et al., (2016). Determinants and effect of girl child marriage: A cross sectional study of school girls in Plateau State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Medicine and Biomedical Research*, 5(3), 122–129.
- Envuladu, E. (2016). Determinants and effect of girl child marriage: a cross sectional study of school girls in Plateau State, Nigeria. *Int J Med Biomed Res*, 5(3), 122-129.
- Erulkar, A. (2013). Early marriage, marital relations and intimate partner violence in Ethiopia. *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 39(1), 6–13.
- Fayokun, K. O. (2015). Legality of child marriage in Nigeria and inhibitions against realisation of education rights. *US-China L. Rev.*, 12, 812.
- Federal Ministry of Education. (2020). *Education Sector Plan 2018-2022*. <https://education.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/education-sector-plan-2018-2022.pdf>
- Federal Ministry of Women Affairs. (2021). *Empowerment*. <http://www.womenaffairs.gov.ng/empowerment/>
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2003). *Child Rights Act*. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/1546/file/Child%20Rights%20Act%202003.pdf>
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2006). *National Gender Policy*. <https://ngwomenadvocacyproject.org/wp>

- Foster-Fishman, P. G., Berkowitz, S. L., Lounsbury, D. W., Jacobson, S., & Allen, N. A. (2001). Building collaborative capacity in community coalitions: A review and integrative framework. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 29(2), 241-261.
- Fraser, M., Galinsky, M., & Richman, J. (1999). Risk, protection, and resilience: Toward a conceptual framework for social work practice. *Social Work Research*, 23(3), 131-143.
- Friedma, S. (2012). Girls: A key to the future. *People Planet* 7: 6-9
- Gemignani, R., & Wodon, Q. (2015). Child marriage and faith affiliation in Sub-Saharan Africa: Stylized facts and heterogeneity. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 13, 14-47.
- Gillingham, P. (2015). Social work and child protection in Australia: Whose job is it anyway? *Social Work in Action*, doi 10.1080/09503153.2015.1074670
- Girls Not Brides (2020). Child marriage in humanitarian contexts. Girls Not Brides www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Child-marriage-in-humanitarian-contexts.pdf
- Girls Not Brides Nigeria. (2018). *Child Marriage in Nigeria: A Situation Analysis*. <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Child-Marriage-in-Nigeria-A-Situation-Analysis.pdf>
- Girls Not Brides (2013). Myanmar: child marriage rates. Girls Not Brides. www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/myanmar
- Girls Not Brides. (2014). *Theory of change on child marriage*. <https://ams3.digitaloceanspaces.com/girlsnotbrides-org/www/documents/Girls-Not-Brides-Theory-of-Change-on-Child-Marriage.pdf>
- Girls Not Brides. (2019). *Nigeria-Child Marriage Around The World*. <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/nigeria/#stats-references>
- Girls Not Brides. (2021). *Nigeria: Child Marriage*. <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/nigeria/>

- Girls Not Brides., & ICRW. (2015). *The Child Marriage Project Lifecycle*.
<https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/resource-centre/presentation-child-marriage-project-lifecycle/>
- Gobena, E. B. (2018). The experience of incarcerated mothers living in prison with their children in Ethiopia. University of Stavanger Master's Dissertation.
https://repositorio.iscte-iul.pt/bitstream/10071/18050/1/master_edem_gobena.pdf
- Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (3rd ed.). London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.
- Healy, K. (2014). *Social Work Theories in Context: Creating Frameworks for Practice*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- ICRW. (2021). Development initiative on supporting health adolescents (DISHA). *Information Bulletin*. Washington, DC: ICRW.
- Ife, J. W. (2016). Human Rights and Social Work: Beyond Conservative Law. *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work*, 1, 3-8.
- Igwe, C. (2016). *The plight of early marriage: The Nigerian tide*.
<http://www.thetidenewsonline.com/>
- International Council on Human Rights Policy. (2006). *Human Rights and Development: Towards Mutual Reinforcement*. Zed Books.
- International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), (2012). Displaced Persons.
<https://www.ifsw.org/displaced-persons/>
- Isiugo-Abanihe, et al., (2022). Differentials in girl-child marriage and high fertility in Nigeria
African Journal of Reproductive Health September 26 (9),103-117
- Itebiye, B. O. (2016). Forced and early marriages: Moral failures Vs religious nuances.
European Scientific Journal, 12(17). <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2016.v12n17p305>
- Jain, K., & Kurz, K. C. (2007). 'New insights on preventing child marriage: A global analysis of factors and programs', *International Centre for Research on Women*, 1-60.
- James, A., & James, A. L. (2012). *Constructing Childhood: Theory, Policy and Social Practice* (2nd ed.). Macmillan.

- John, N. A., Edmeades, J., & Murithi, L. (2019). Child marriage and psychological well-being in Niger and Ethiopia. *BMC Public Health*, *19*(1), 10-29.
- Joseph, R. (2020). The theory of empowerment: A critical analysis with the theory evaluation scale. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, *30*(2), 138-157.
- Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. *Development and change*, *30*(3), 435-464.
- Kamerman, S. B., & Gatenio-Gabel, S. (2014). Social Work and Child Well-Being. In A. Ben-Arieh., F. Cansas., I. Frønes., & J. E. Korbin (eds.). *Handbook of Child Well-Being*, Dordrecht. Springer.
- Kidman, R. (2017). Child marriage and intimate partner violence: A comparative study of 34 countries. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, *46*(2), 662–75.
- Lee-Rife, et al., (2012). What works to prevent child marriage: A review of the evidence. *Studies in Family Planning*, *43*(4), 287–303.
- Male, C. & Wodon, Q. (2016). Basic profile of child marriage in Nigeria. *Child Marriage Series with Education Global Practice*, World Bank Group <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/24547/Basic0profile000marriage0in0Nigeria.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Malé, C., & Wodon, Q. (2018). Girls' Education and Child Marriage in West and Central Africa: Trends, Impacts, Costs, and Solutions*. *Forum for Social Economics*, *47*, 262 - 274.
- Malhotra & Elnakib (2021). Evolution in the evidence base on child marriage 2000-2019.
- Malhotra, A., Warner, A., McGonagle, A., & Lee-Rife, S. (2011). *Solutions to End Child Marriage | What the Evidence Shows*. International Center for Research on Women. <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Solutions-to-End-Child-Marriage.pdf>

- Martínez Herrero, M.I., & Charnley, H. (2018). Human rights and social justice in social work education: a critical realist comparative study of England and Spain. *European Journal of Social Work*, 22, 225 - 237.
- Meyer, L., Ascher-Walsh, C. J., Norman, R., Idrissa, A., Herbert, H., Kimso, O., Wilkinson, J. (2007). Commonalities among women who experienced visco vaginal fistulae as a result of obstetric trauma in Niger: results from a survey given at the National Hospital Fistula Center, Niamey, Niger. *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, 197(1), 90.
- Mobolaji, J.W., Fatusi, A.O. & Adedini, S.A. (2020). Ethnicity, religious affiliation and girl-child marriage: A cross-sectional study of nationally representative sample of female adolescents in Nigeria. *BMC Public Health*, 20, 1-10.
- Mourtada, R., Schlecht, J., & DeJong, J. (2017). A qualitative study exploring child marriage practices among Syrian conflict-affected populations in Lebanon. *Conflict and Health*, 11(1), 27.
- Mudiaga, A. (2018). Agony of Cross River community girls married off at infancy by indebted parents. *Punch Publication*.
- Munro, E. (2008). *Effective child protection*. Sage.
- Munro, E. (2011). *The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report. A Child-centred System*.https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175391/MunroReview.pdf
- Muthengi, E. N., Olum, R., & Chandra-Mouli, V. (2021). Context Matters-One Size Does Not Fit All When Designing Interventions to Prevent Child Marriage. *The Journal of adolescent health : official publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine*, 69 6S, S1-S3 .
- Namwiinga, C. (2017). *Girls empowerment and child marriage: Empowering girls to prevent child marriage in Zambia*. <https://gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/57187>

- Nasir, J. (2013). Shari'a implementation and female Muslims in Nigeria's Shari'a states, in P. Badru & B. Sackey (eds), *Islam in Africa south of Sahara: Essays in gender relations and political reform*.
- National Association of Social Workers. (2008). *Code Of Ethics*. NASW Press.
- National Population Commission. (2019). *Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey*. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR359/FR359.pdf>
- Naylor, B., Debeljak, J., & Mackay, A. (2015). A Strategic Framework for Implementing Human Rights in Closed Environments. *Monash University Law Review*, 41, 218-270.
- Nguyen, M. C., & Wodon, Q. (2012). Measuring child marriage. *Economics Bulletin* 32(1), 398-411.
- Nguyen, M. C., & Wodon, Q. (2012). Measuring Child Marriage. *Economics Bulletin*, 32(1), 398-411.
- Noh, J. (2021). Review of human rights-based approaches to development: Empirical evidence from developing countries. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 26, 883 - 901.
- Nour, N. M. (2006). Health consequences of child marriage in Africa. Emerging infectious diseases. *Australian Social Work*, 12(11), 47.
- Nwonu, C. O., & Oyakhiromen, I. (2014). Nigeria and child marriage: Legal issues, complications, implications, prospects, and solutions. *Journal of Law, Policy, and Globalization*, 29, 120-126.
- Ochen, E. (2020). *Issues, beliefs, and experiences of child marriage and gender-based violence in Uganda: A qualitative study*. *Uganda NONE in Three*. https://www.noneinthree.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Ni3-Uganda_Executive-summary_final.pdf
- Odey, M. & Sanya, R.(2018). Becheve: Where girls are sold into marriage for debts settlement. *Arise Live TV*. <https://www.channelstv.com/2018/05/04/money-marriage-an-ancient-obanliku-culture-where-girls-are-sold-for-money-food/>
- Ogban, I. U. (2014). Bridewealth and the Empowerment of Women in Becheve, Cross River State, Nigeria. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 7(2), 103-120.

- Okpalaobi, B. N., and Ekwueme, C. O. (2015). United Nations convention on the rights of a child: Implementation of legal and administrative measures in Nigeria. *Nnamdi Azikiwe University Journal of International Law and Jurisprudence*, 6, 120-127.
- Onuora-Oguno, A. C. (2015). 'Enhancing and eliminating discrimination: Girl child empowerment and access to quality basic education in Nigeria', *Tonsei Law Journal*, 75.
- Orjiako, C. (2018). Child Marriage: An unending Abomination in Nigeria. *Association of Representative and family health*.
- Otoo-Oyortey, N. & Pobi, S. (2003). Early marriage and poverty: Exploring links and key policy issues. *Gender and Development* 11(2), 42-51.
- Pankhurst, A. (2014). Child Marriage and Female Circumcision: Evidence from Ethiopia. Young Lives Policy Brief 21, Oxford: Young Lives.
- Pittaway, E., Bartolomei, L. & Hugman, R. (2010). Stop stealing our stories: The ethics of research with vulnerable groups. *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 2(2), 229-251
- Plan International. (2013). Empowering Girls: what the Commonwealth can do to end early and forced marriage. *Briefing Paper*, pp. 4.
- Population Council. (2019). *Child marriage and education in Nigeria*. https://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/2019PGY_Nigeria_ChildMarriageandEducation.pdf
- Raj, A. (2010). When the mother is a child: The impact of child marriage on the health and human rights of girls. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, 95(11)
- Rappaport, J. (1981). In praise of paradox: A social policy of empowerment over prevention. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 9(1), 1-25.
- Sabbe, A., Oulami, H., Hamzali, S., Oulami, N., Le Hjr, F. Z., & Abdallaoui, M., (2015). Women's perspectives on marriage and rights in Morocco: risk factors for forced and early marriage in the Marrakech region. *Culture, health & sexuality*, 17(2), 135 – 49.

- Sanni, T., Thompson, F., & Daniel, M. (2016). Early marriage and education in Nigeria: exploring the impact on girls' education. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(7), 73-82.
- Save the Children. (2018). *Child marriage in Nigeria: The tip of the iceberg*. https://nigeria.savethechildren.net/sites/nigeria.savethechildren.net/files/library/Child_Marriage_Report_Final.pdf
- Sekine, K., & Carter, D. J. (2019). The effect of child marriage on the utilization of maternal health care in Nepal: A cross-sectional analysis of Demographic and Health Survey. *PLoS ONE* 14(9), 222. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0222643>
- Shakya, H. B., Weeks, J. R., Challa, S., Fleming, P. J., Cislighi, B., McDougal, L., Boyce, S. C., Raj, A., & Silverman, J. G. (2020). Spatial analysis of individual- and village-level sociodemographic characteristics associated with age at marriage among married adolescents in rural Niger. *BMC Public Health*, 20.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63-75.
- Sinha, N., & Yoong, J. (2009). *Long-Term Financial Incentives and Investment in Daughters: Evidence from Conditional Cash Transfers in North India* (Rep. No. 4860). The World Bank: Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network, Gender and Development Group.
- Suyanto et al., (2023). The causes and impacts of early marriage: The ordeal of girls in East Java, Indonesia. *Sociologia, Problemas e Practicas*, 101, 71-94
- Svanemyr, J. et al. (2015). Creating an enabling environment for adolescent sexual and reproductive health: A framework and promising approach. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 56(1), 7-14
- Thompson, F.T. & Daniel, M. (2016). Early marriage and education in Nigeria: Exploring the impact on girls' education. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(7), 73-82.
- Toyo, N. (2006). Revisiting Equality as a Right: The Minimum Age of Marriage Clause in the Nigerian Child Rights Act, 2003. *Third World Quarterly*, 27(7), 1299-1312.

- UN Women. (2021). *Girls can still fulfill their dreams through second chance education*.
<https://africa.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2021/06/fatima--second-chance-education>
- UN Women. (2021a). *Working with male allies: He for She in Cross River, Nigeria*.
<https://africa.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2021/05/he-for-she-edo-state>
- UNFPA. (2013). *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Programming in UNFPA*.
<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/human-rights-based-approach-programming>
- UNFPA. (2021). *Child marriage*. <https://www.unfpa.org/child-marriage>
- UNHCR (2019.) 2009 ‘Kampala Convention on IDPs’, *Fact Sheet*,
<https://www.unhcr.org/5cd569877.pdf>
- UNICEF. (2018). *Child Marriage in West and Central Africa At a Glance*.
<https://www.unicef.org/wca/media/2596/file>
- UNICEF. (2018a). *Child marriage*. <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage>
- UNICEF. (2019). *A Profile of Child Marriage in Africa*. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/a-profile-of-child-marriage-in-africa/>.
- UNICEF. (2019a). *Ending Child Marriage: progress and prospects*. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/ending-child-marriage-progress-and-prospects/>
- UNICEF. (2020). *Child marriage in Nigeria*. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/stories/child-marriage-nigeria>
- UNICEF. (2020a). *Child Marriage*. <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage>
- UNICEF. (2021). *Child Marriage*. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/child-protection/child-marriage>
- UNICEF. (2021). *Child marriage*. <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage>
- United Nations Children Fund. (2012). *Early Marriage: Child Spouses, Florence: Innocenti Research Center*. <http://www.uniceficdc.org/publications/pdf/digest7e.pdf>

- United Nations Children's Fund. (2018). *Ending child marriage: Progress and prospects*.
<https://data.unicef.org/resources/ending-child-marriage-progress-prospects/>
- United Nations Children's Fund. (2023). *Evidence review: Child marriage interventions and research from 2020 to 2022*. <https://www.unicef.org/media/136646/file/CRANK-Evidence-Review-Child-Marriage-2023.pdf>
- United Nations Development Programme. (2003). *Human Development Report 2003: Millennium Development Goals: A Compact Among Nations to End Human Poverty*. Oxford University Press.
- United Nations International Children's Education Funds. (2017). *25 Million child marriages prevented in last decade due to accelerated progress*. <https://www.unicef.org/eca/press-releases/25-million-child-marriages-prevented>
- United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. (2016). *Human Rights Based Approach to Programming*
https://www.unicef.org/policyanalysis/rights/index_62012.html
- Voloshenyuk, O. (2022). Theoretical characteristics of the category "fundamental human rights". *Analytical and Comparative Jurisprudence*.
- Wahhaj, Z. (2015). *A Theory of Child Marriage*. School of Economics, University of Kent.
<https://ideas.repec.org/p/ukc/ukcedp/1520.html>
- Welbourne, P. (2012). *Social Work with Children and Families: Developing Advanced Practice*. Routledge.
- Wodon, Q. (2015). *Child Marriage and Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*. World
- Wodon, Q., Nguyen, M.C. & Tsimpo, C. (2016). Child marriage, education, and agency in Uganda. *Feminist Economics*, 22(1), 54-79.
- Wodon, Quentin et al. "Educating Girls and Ending Child marriage: A Priority for Africa - Summary Brief." (2018).

- Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative [WRAPA]. (2021). *What We Do*. Retrieved from <http://wrapanigeria.org/what-we-do/>
- Woodhead, M. (2006). *In search of the rainbow: Pathways to quality in large-scale programmes for young, disadvantaged children*. Young Lives.
- World Bank. (2022). *Nigeria - Youth Employment and Social Support Operation (YESSO)*. <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P155240>
- Zimmerman, M. A. (1995). Psychological empowerment: Issues and illustrations. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 23(5), 581-599.
- Zimmerman, M. A. (2000). Empowerment theory: Psychological, organizational and community levels of analysis. In J. Rappaport & E. Seidman (Eds.). *Handbook of community psychology* (pp. 43-63). Springer.

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

A. Demographic Information of participants

- ❖ Name
- ❖ Gender
- ❖ Education level
- ❖ Profession
- ❖ Name of Organisation

B. Close-ended questions

- ❖ Is your organisation's intervention still ongoing or its ended?
- ❖ How long did your organisation work in the community?
- ❖ What kind of organization do you work with? (Faith-based or nongovernmental organisation)

C. Open-ended questions

- ❖ How can you describe money marriage practice in Becheve community?
- ❖ What are the major challenges faced by the survivors of money marriage in the community?
- ❖ From your experience of working in the community, how does the money marriage practice affect childhood?
- ❖ Can you tell me about your intervention towards money marriage?
 - What kind of intervention does the organization do?
 - How often does the organization intervene (once a month? more? less?)
 - Is it only one person of the organization that does the intervention or more?
- ❖ What roles do you play in the organisation?
- ❖ Who are the major beneficiaries of your intervention?
- ❖ What do you think about money marriage, based on the convention on the rights of the child and the principles and values of social work?
- ❖ Can you recall any case during your intervention that you consider a success? What do you think made the difference?
- ❖ In what ways did your intervention make an impact on your beneficiaries?
- ❖ What has changed about the money marriage practice following your intervention?
- ❖ What are the major challenges or setbacks you faced?
- ❖ What do you think can be done differently in the short and long term to address this practice?
- ❖ What are your recommendations for the government to ending child marriage?

- ❖ What are your recommendations for the local municipality to ending child marriage?
- ❖ Would you like to talk about anything else with regards to work with Becheve community on money marriage issues?

Appendix 2: Consent Form

Project title: The impact of child marriage interventions: The case of “money marriage”
among the Becheve community of southern Nigeria

Name of Researcher: Uche Louisa Nwatu

Supervisors: Cláudia Pereira and Jorge Ferreira

Institution/Address: ISCTE, Av. das Forças Armadas, 1649-026 Lisboa, Portugal

Contact Details: +351 210 464 262 email: ulnua@iscte-iul.pt

I give my permission for the information I am about to give/have given to be used for research purposes only (including research publications and reports) with strict preservation of anonymity.

I give my permission for the images collected during fieldwork to be used for research purposes only (including research publications and reports) with strict preservation of anonymity.

Signed respondent.....Date.....

Address.....

Signed Researcher..... Date.....

Appendix 3: Codebook

Name	Description	Files	References
Challenges- Stakeholders' Resistance	Lack of support from community leaders and relevant stakeholders	3	3
Funds	Financing the project was of the challenges that their intervention faced	1	1
Negligence by the police	The police display a lackadaisical attitude towards offenders	1	1
Others-Why Success Interventions- Collaboration and networking	Networking and collaboration with other organizations contributed to a successful intervention	1	1
Contravenes Child Protection Principles	Child Marriage Contravenes Child protection and social work principles	1	1
Multidisciplinary	People from various profession come together to help	1	1
Use of Scriptural teachings	Intervention with a reference to the Christian bible seem more effective and made all the difference	2	2
Motivated by God's teaching	Helping vulnerable children because it is in line with what God wants	1	1
Threats and lack of support from local authorities	Local government authorities issue threats to organizations especially against creating wider/media awareness	3	3
Focus of Intervention- Mentorship	Mentorship and support to teen mums through their girl-up programs	1	3
Education based Empowerment	The Campus Babes Initiative focuses on sending teen mums and children back to school	2	2
Community-based sensitization	Some of the interventions focused on a wider community education and sensitization.	1	2
Health-based Programs	Provision of accessible healthcare services to children who have been married or teen mums	2	4
Palliative, Food and Relief Materials	Provision of material relief like food to feed teen mums and their children	1	1
Support to parents	Financial supports are rendered to parents as a way of addressing poverty which is at the core of child marriage	1	1
Vocational Training	Empowering teen mums through skills acquisition and vocational training	3	4

Name	Description	Files	References
	Empowerment theory or theory of change		
Impacts of Interventions- Increased access to education	Teen mums were given access to education on scholarships	3	3
Increased awareness	Community members became more informed on the rights of children and what constitutes its violation	2	4
Strong agency	Beneficiaries became more self-aware and had more control over their lives and decisions	1	1
Inhibiting factor to childhood- Denial to Education	Child marriage deprives children of their right to education and breeds a huge number of out-of-school Children	3	3
Deprives Childhood	Child marriage imposes adult responsibilities and stripes children off their childhood	3	4
Lack of agency or exclusion from decision making	Children are deprived their voices and right to consent to marriage and are excluded from the decision processes involved in the marriage	3	4
Source of trauma and physical harm	Child marriage inhibits childhood by putting children through so much trauma	2	3
Teenage Pregnancy	Child marriage is a factor that contributes to teenage pregnancy	1	1
Proposed Solutions- Increased Stakeholders Collaboration	Increased collaboration of all relevant stakeholders will effectively eliminate child marriage	2	2
Community Policing	Setting up local community task force could help address child marriage	1	1
More Gatekeepers commitment	The local community gatekeepers and stakeholders need to get more committed in fighting this cause	1	2
Policy Implementation	Government should fill in the gap in the efforts towards eliminating child marriage in Nigeria. Punitive Measures Government Embrace their responsibility	2	4