



## UNICEF Efforts to End Child Marriage in Nigeria 2020-2022

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study described the efforts made by UNICEF in addressing child marriage in Nigeria in 2020-2022. Nigeria is the fourth country with the most child marriages in West Africa in 2022. This study was written descriptively. The source of data used as material for analysis was taken from 2020-2022 and came from literature reviews in the form of reports official UNICEF documents and journal articles. The method used in this study was a qualitative method that was descriptive and analytical. The results of this study indicated that UNICEF's efforts to address child marriage in Nigeria had not fully addressed the practice of child marriage in Nigeria due to various factors and challenges such as traditions and culture in Nigeria and the time required to resolve the problem are not a few that hinder efforts being made.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Child marriage is an act that is included in human rights violations (HAM) (Opesemowo & Odumosu, 2023). The ban on the practice of child marriage is contained in the National Human Rights Commission Part III Child Rights related to the protection of children's rights (Child Rights Act, 2003). That includes human rights violations because the practice is considered an act of violation of the child's right to survive and develop (Fatunnisa & Sholeh, 2021). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), explains that the practice of child marriage is prohibited because the minimum age for marriage set by UNICEF is over 18 years old (UNICEF, 2023b).

The description of a person who is still under the age of 18, according to UNICEF is still categorized as a child (UNICEF, 2023b). Similarly, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defines a child as any human being under the age of eighteen (Akinola, 2019). Then according to Cornell Law School Under 18 years old are called children because someone under that age is considered still not able to control their actions and affairs properly and cannot be responsible for the decisions they make (Cornell Law School, 2020).

Therefore, child marriage is something that is prohibited and the practice can have psychological, social, and health impacts. Examples of psychological impacts are domestic violence to the high risk of divorce, then social impacts such as educational rights not being met, lack of access to job opportunities, as well as health impacts such as pregnancy complications and susceptibility to sexually

transmitted diseases (Umana & Onwubuche, 2021). Then the health impact that often threatens girls in Nigeria is the interruption of labour due to obstetric fistula which results in miscarriage to an increase in infant and neonatal mortality (Husna & Herdayati, 2023). UNICEF and the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) also provide a statement that pregnancy at the age of less than 17 years increases the risk of medical complications, both for the mother and the baby (UNICEF & Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020).

One of the efforts to prevent child marriage is by empowering girls with information and support networks and providing economic support to families (Alfred, Stephen, Philip, & State, 2020). Other efforts that can be made to prevent child marriage are interventions from the Nigerian government and other governmental and non-governmental organizations to strengthen policies and programs such as compulsory basic education, poverty alleviation increased access to media aimed at reducing child marriage in high areas of child marriage in Nigeria (Bolarinwa et al., 2023).

UNICEF Data shows more than 650 million women in various countries are currently married under age (UNICEF, 2023a). This is influenced by factors such as poverty, religious beliefs, traditional culture, education, and claims to morality (Josephine & Goodluck, 2022). The phenomenon of child marriage often occurs in the West and Central African continent, UNICEF even issued a statistical diagram of countries with a fairly high practice of child marriage calculated based on the age of marriage before 18 years in the country: Niger, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Nigeria, Mauritania, Benin, Senegal, Cameroon, and others. (Philipose, Toure, & Verhulst, 2022).

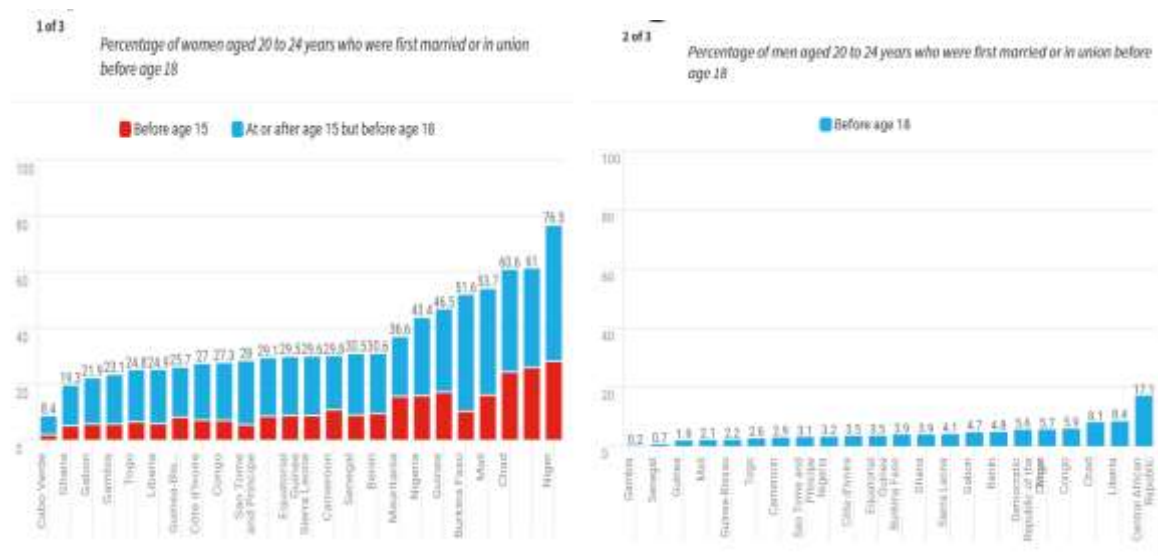


Fig. 1 Percentage of women who first married before age 15 and 18

Source: UNICEF, Child marriage in West and Central Africa: A statistical overview and reflections on ending the practice, 2022

The Diagram above shows that Nigeria ranks as the sixth country with the highest percentage of child marriage at 46.6% in 2022 with details of 27.7% of girls married under the age of 18, 15.7% of girls married under the age of 15, and 3.2% of boys married under the age of 18 (Philipose et al., 2022). Nigeria passed the Child Rights Act in 2003 banning marriage under the age of 18. If there are no countermeasures, it is feared that the child bride population in Nigeria will double by 2050 (Sitompul, 2020).

This study wanted to see further how UNICEF or the United Nations Children's Fund as a non-governmental international institution helped the Nigerian government in overcoming the problem of child marriage (Sitompul, 2020). UNICEF is an international organization that was originally formed on humanitarian grounds, namely to protect the children of victims of World War II. On its journey, UNICEF has a greater mission, namely as a humanitarian aid channel to help children who have difficulties and who need help in many countries, especially in fighting for children's rights (Gandana, 2023).

For UNICEF, such assistance is not the first time. Since 1952, UNICEF has opened an office in Nigeria which at that time prioritized assisting the Nigerian community in dealing with endemic diseases of leprosy and malaria. In addition, UNICEF also supports the development of maternal and child welfare services through pilot project strategies and Training (Magazine, 2014).

The child marriage controversy in Nigeria came to the fore when former Zamfara State Governor Ahmed Sanni Yerima married a 13-year-old girl, sparking intense protests from gender rights activists who petitioned the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to sanction Yerima. This is further complicated by the interpretation of Article 29 (4) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which defines "full age" (just age) as the age of 18 and above but there is an exception for married women as they are considered to have reached full age. The controversy also involves the Islamic view regarding child marriage which suggests that Islam does not set a specific age limit for marriage with children so Islam is considered to support the practice (Sulaiman, 2016).

The Nigerian government has made several efforts to address the problem of child marriage, among others, by providing punishment in the form of imprisonment for parents who marry their children under the age of 18 years. It has also been regulated under the UNICEF and Child Rights Act regulations on the rights of the child and the Prohibition of child marriage which Nigeria ratified in 2003 (Raghavan, 2012). In addition, there is also the rule of Child and Youth Protection Foundation established by Nigeria in 2008 to cooperate with international organizations such as UNICEF (CYFP, 2008).

In reality, the settlement of child marriage is not easy because until now religious and cultural factors still strongly influence the rise of child marriage in Nigeria. In this case, the religious and cultural factors are based on the belief in the honor of their daughters which must be maintained until marriage so many parents think that getting married at a young age is a solution. Such thinking is also based on the majority of adherents of Islam based on their belief that the Qur'an allows the marriage of girls at any age for example even the Prophet married Aisha at the age of 9 years and there is also a belief that sex outside of marriage is fornication and forbidden in the Qur'an. Therefore, especially in the northern states of Nigeria, which have a majority Muslim community, the law applied is Sharia law and refused to adopt the Child Rights Act (Mobolaji, Fatusi, & Adedini, 2020).

Nigeria's policy towards child marriage has involved a variety of national and international commitments under which Nigeria has ratified several international conventions establishing a minimum age of marriage and ensuring full and free consent to marriage, including: Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) which requires states to ensure full and free consent to marriage (ratified in 1985); The Marriage Act 1990 established a minimum age of marriage of 21 for both men and women, although they could marry before that age with the written consent of a parent or guardian; The convention on the rights of the child (CRC) sets the minimum age for marriage at 18 (ratified in 1991); African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child prohibiting child marriage (ratified in 2001); The children's Rights Act of 2003 sets the minimum age for marriage at 18; The African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples' Rights sets the minimum age for marriage at 18 (ratified in 2004) (End Child Marriage Now, 2023).

In addition, Nigeria till now still cannot address the issue of child marriage to the fullest extent because even though according to Nigerian law even though the legal age for marriage in law is 21 years and anyone under that age is considered a minor, such minor marriages can be performed provided they have parental permission before legally marrying in Nigeria (Adedokun, Adeyemi, & Dauda, 2017).

In addition, of the 36 states in Nigeria, there are still 11 northern states of Nigeria that have not adopted the Child Rights Act 2003 so the applicable law is the local law that considers child marriage legal to do. In 2019 UNICEF stated that around 10 million girls are at risk of child marriage due to the impact of COVID-19 and to overcome this, UNICEF is empowering children and young women with life skills training, school entry support and comprehensive sexuality education. These programs have been pursued by UNICEF and reach more than 21 million children and adolescent girls (UNICEF, 2022b). In addition, in tackling COVID-19, UNICEF supported the delivery of more than 90 million COVID-19 vaccines, conducted integrated routine and COVID-19 vaccination campaigns and expanded cold chain capacity to ensure vaccine availability at all levels (UNICEF, 2022a).

In addition, in 2019 and before, Nigeria has been beset by armed clashes between the National Army and armed insurgent groups such as Al Qaeda-linked Boko Haram which have resulted in hostile conditions for the population, especially girls. In these situations, the main tactic of the rebellion against the girls is to kidnap, rape, and defame them by marrying them to the rebels to weaken the community and the parents.

The high level of child marriage practices in Nigeria has led UNICEF to take up its role in helping to address the problem of child marriage practices in Nigeria through their global program to end child marriage which is still being carried out. Currently, the elimination of child marriage is the main development priority and target in realizing sustainable development (SGDs) for UNICEF, namely by trying to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment by eliminating child marriage by 2030 (Oktaviani & Aryani, 2021).

The role of UNICEF as an international organization according to Clive Archer has three important roles, namely as an instrument, an independent actor, and an arena (Archer, 2002). The role of UNICEF, among others, as an arena or gathering place for various parties who want to help overcome child marriage in Nigeria, then conduct research related to the problem of child marriage in the African continent including Nigeria to identify the factors behind child marriage including the impact and obstacles in efforts to overcome existing child marriage and facilitate the development of skills of women and children to various campaigns related to sexual education which includes education about the reproductive system so that people can know what the risks of practising child marriage are.

Then, child marriage is a concept that describes a union of two people, whether official or unofficial and in that union at least one of them is still under 18 years old and is a practice that violates the human rights and rights of children (Umana & Onwubuche, 2021). This is in line with UNICEF's statement which stipulates that the definition of a child is a person under 18 years of age (UNICEF, 2023b). In fact, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child which was established in 1989, it is written that a person under the age of 18 falls into the category of children and all marriage practices carried out by underage couples are called child marriages which are prohibited by national and international law (Hodgkinson, Koster, & Miedema, 2016). This study is study that analyzes the efforts of UNICEF as an international organization in carrying out its role as an instrument, independent actor, and arena in overcoming child marriage in Nigeria which until now has not been significantly overcome due to several obstacles faced such as traditions and cultures that are still prioritized in society.

## METHOD

This study used qualitative descriptive methods, namely an approach or search to explore understand and even describe a meaning derived from social or humanitarian problems in applying descriptive methods. The source of data obtained to prove the concept analysis is qualitative secondary data and comes from a literature review from various sources that explore the issue of child marriage, especially UNICEF's efforts in addressing the issue of child marriage in Nigeria. Data collection techniques used in this study were the study of literature (Library Research) by using primary and secondary data sources (Creswell, 2017). The primary data used in this study was UNICEF documents related to programs aimed at eliminating child marriage, and these programs had been signed by 93 countries and 43 countries had or were working on national plans to end child marriage (UNFPA & UNICEF, 2023). Following the process in the analytical descriptive method, after the data was collected, data analysis was then carried out where the results of the data that had been collected were analyzed in more detail which aimed to understand how UNICEF's efforts to overcome child marriage in Nigeria through existing data. After analysis, conclusions were drawn.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### UNICEF's efforts to tackle child marriage

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is an international organization formed on December 11, 1946, in New York, United States and under the auspices of the United Nations. At that time, UNICEF had the abbreviation 'United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund' which means United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund and at that time was aimed at helping children in Europe, China, and the Middle East region that was chaotic due to war (UNICEF, 2016). UNICEF has a mandate to uphold the rights of all children and strive to ensure that every child in the world is protected, healthy, and educated, especially those children who are left behind by broader social and economic progress. In addition, UNICEF's mandate remains defined by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by leaders in the world and force in every country in 2015 (UNICEF, n.d.-a).

UNICEF in 2003 focused on addressing HIV/AIDS. Then it was found that child marriage is one of the factors causing HIV/AIDS so UNICEF began to think about efforts to address the factors that cause HIV / AIDS by targeting the issue of child marriage (UNICEF & WHO, 2003). Globally, UNICEF has made several efforts to address child marriage such as increasing capacity for advocacy, changing social norms, supporting recovery and protection, raising global awareness and advocacy, to education and economic opportunities (UNFPA & UNICEF, 2023).

Furthermore, in 1953 UNICEF expanded its mandate to meet the needs of children in developing countries so that the words 'international' and 'emergency' were removed from the UNICEF abbreviation so that the official name changed to 'United Nations Children's Fund' (UNICEF, 2016). UNICEF as an organization mandated by the UN General Assembly has a vision to create a world where every child in the world can grow up healthy, educated, and protected. UNICEF as an international organization that works in the field of humanitarian, especially children's rights, has the following functions: providing direction and alternative problem-solving solutions for countries that have and face child-related problems, providing advice and assistance in planning and implementing related efforts to fight for child welfare, supporting existing training for UNICEF social workers throughout the country, coordinating small-scale assistance programs to, organize programs to spread awareness, and work with international partners to provide external assistance to countries in need of UNICEF assistance.

UNICEF's main goal is to provide health care and adequate food for the world's children and women. In addition, UNICEF also aims to maintain the survival of children and help them to grow and develop so that they can realize their potential (UNICEF, n.d.-b). UNICEF therefore strongly supports efforts

to address child marriage practices that threaten the rights of children and are in various parts of the world especially those with a high percentage of child marriage such as Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana India, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen, and Zambia which are the main focus of UNICEF (UNFPA & UNICEF, 2023). Based on the results stated in the annual report of UNICEF's program to end child marriage, the things that have been done and pursued by UNICEF through its programs include: reaching the most marginalized young women through empowerment programs, this is done by empowering young women through life skills, comprehensive sexuality education, and asset development programs. UNICEF aims to ensure that all girls acquire the skills knowledge and assets necessary to achieve self-governing freedom, the right and power to make decisions, and the assurance of a safe transition to adulthood, and strengthen inter-sectoral links to end child marriage, the effectiveness of interventions to end child marriage can be strengthened through the relationships between the various sectors and actors participating in the program. Then, in this case, some countries are developing new ways to strengthen the relationship. For example, Ghana seeks to strengthen referral pathways between the health and education sectors through increased interoperability between education, health and protection information management systems (UNFPA & UNICEF, 2023).

In UNICEF's global program to end child marriage, there are several types and areas of intervention to overcome child marriage, among others, such as income and economic strengthening which includes financial assistance and vocational training and child talent development, then the field of education delivered through schools and includes cash assistance for schools, then the field of sexual and reproductive rights and Health which includes sexual and reproductive health services that are responsive to adolescents, there are gender changes and social norms, strengthening multisectoral systems and approaches, then there are interventions focused on girls that provide a safe space to delay marriage and also to prevent violence for women and girls as well as interventions in the formulation of applicable laws and policies such as setting the minimum age of marriage according to the marriage law (UNFPA & UNICEF, 2023).

### Child Marriage in Nigeria

Nigeria is a country of about 23.6 million perpetrators of child marriage also known as child brides according to UNICEF data calculated from 2010-2021. The Nigerian government has set a minimum age of marriage of 21 years and a special exception of 18 years, there are 10.3 million children married before the age of 15 years out of a total of 23.6 million children married before the age of 18 years (Philipose et al., 2022). However, poverty and socioeconomic backwardness are among the factors that influence the occurrence of child marriage practices and rural areas in Nigeria have the vulnerability of child marriage occurrence twice as bad and three times worse for areas with the poorest demographics (Syafira, 2020).

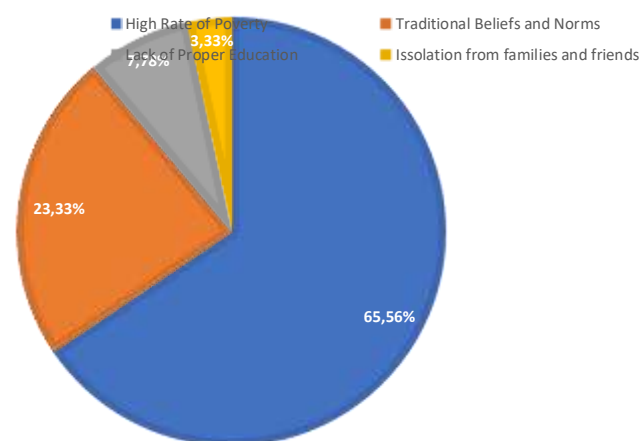


Fig. 2 Number of child marriages in Nigeria

Source: Child Marriage in West and Central Africa (UNICEF 2022)

In Nigeria, the practice of child marriage is considered commonplace because many consider it a tradition and culture that has occurred for generations, especially for people with a majority of the Islamic religion. In Northern Nigeria, where conservative Islamic groups are fiercely opposed to national and international efforts to criminalize child marriage. In addition, although the federal Government of Nigeria has strictly banned child marriage, there are still many areas in the northern part of Nigeria that do not ratify it so the practice of child marriage is still rife. This also happens because the principle of regional autonomy in Nigeria is very independent (VOA, 2018).

The high rate of marriages in Nigeria is largely due to poverty, poor education, conflict and security threats, to religious traditions and beliefs. Therefore, due to the high rate of low poverty in Nigeria led to high rates of child marriage there (Alfred et al., 2020). The reason poverty in Nigeria is a major cause of child marriage for girls is because many parents there view girls as a commodity that can be sold to provide financial and material benefits for them. Daughters are also considered to be debt payers by giving their daughters to someone or a family that gives them a debt. For the majority of parents in Nigeria, girls are a financial burden because taking care of and educating girls requires a considerable amount of money so by marrying their daughters as soon as possible, the burden on their dependents can be reduced even more (Josephine & Goodluck, 2022).



**Fig. 3** Percentage of the causes of child marriage among 180 samples

**Source:** The Issue of Child Marriage: An Assessment of the Global Practices and the Implications as Perceived by Akwa Ibom People (Umana & Onwubuche, 2021)

High poverty certainly has a cause-and-effect relationship with low education in Nigeria, because low education can lead to narrow employment that makes someone poor and if someone is poor then their chances of getting a decent education are small. Factors of low education led to high levels of illiteracy that resulted in children, especially women not getting the opportunity to realize their ideals so they inevitably had to get married because their families were not able to send them to school and bear the cost of their lives further. Then another factor that encourages child marriage is when conflicts occur that can be life-threatening and provide prolonged insecurity for families living in areas that are classified as unsafe. This is done because many parents consider that marrying their daughters who are likely to be minors to a figure who has authority in a conflict that occurs in the area they live in will protect them from dangers and threatening bad things (Alfred et al., 2020).

Religious traditions and beliefs have a significant independent influence on the practice of child marriage in Nigeria, in traditional beliefs cultural values relate to child marriage traditionally and religiously Nigerian society has a strong belief that the practice of child marriage can prevent adolescent girls from having sex before marriage. For Nigerian society, the virginity of girls before

marriage is of great value for family honour in traditional society and also for certain religious beliefs such as Islam which consider that sex and getting pregnant outside of marriage is adultery and a great sin (Mobolaji et al., 2020).

Although the reasons for child marriage practices such as maintaining honour may be acceptable, still the impact that will be felt by child brides, especially for girls is very large even the worst can cause death. The effects of child marriage can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1  
Frequency of the implication of child marriage as perceived by the Nigeria people

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Types of Impact</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Implication</b>
Psychological Impact	Divorce	11	Domestic violence to divorce can occur due to marriage at an early age which causes some unstable household conditions and can trigger domestic violence because the emotional condition of children may still be immature and stable so from the violence arises a lawsuit for divorce from couples who practice child marriage.
	Lack of access to job opportunities	19	
Social Impact	The child bride discontinuity in education	38	The break in education that child brides are undergoing. If a child has been married by their parents then the children should stop their education and should think about the household they will live in. Furthermore, it causes less opportunity for these children to get a good job opportunity because their education level is relatively low.
	Girl giving birth at a young age and bearing a child uninterrupted throughout reproductive age	22	
Health Impact	High risk of pregnancy-related injuries faced by Girls under 18 <sup>th</sup> (such as fistula obstetric)	48	The condition of pregnancy at a young age because the body of a girl who is not ready to conceive a child results in disruption of the process of childbirth which causes high rates of miscarriage and infant mortality. In addition, there is a high risk for Girls related to pregnancy complications because their bodies are not ready to give birth to babies. After all, they experience fistula-like injuries commonly faced by girls under 18 years of age. Underage girls are also vulnerable to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases due to a lack of knowledge about sex that is not taught by their parents.
	Pregnancy complications	25	
	Higher risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted disease.	17	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>180</b>	

**Source:** The Issue of Child Marriage: An Assessment of the Global Practices and the Implications as Perceived by Akwa Ibom People (Umana & Onwubuche, 2021)

### **UNICEF's efforts to tackle Child Marriage in Nigeria**

UNICEF's efforts to address child marriage in Nigeria are primarily in collaboration with UNFPA. UNICEF's efforts can be classified according to its role as an international organization i.e. as an instrument, an independent actor, and an arena. As an independent actor, UNICEF is directly involved in the implementation of programs on the ground to address child marriage and in this case, UNICEF chose to work with UNFPA with the main strategy to facilitate laws and policies that support the 'National Strategic Action Plan To End Child Marriage for 2019-2021' which is evaluated into the report in 2022 which includes the participation of all stakeholders. The evaluation produces recommendations that in the future will be used to plan and develop new strategies. In addition, in the economic and Social Development Plan for 2022-2026, child marriage has been determined as its main focus. The form of intervention carried out is to facilitate the mobilization of resources to finance the new strategic plan and it is also in line with the Presidential Decree of 2019 which aims to contribute to the elimination of child marriage in Nigeria by establishing the National Committee for the protection of children (UNFPA & UNICEF, 2023).

UNICEF as an arena has made several initiatives to address child marriage in Nigeria such as working with communities, families, governments, and partners. This is done by organizing a donation project involving various parties to help overcome child marriage in Nigeria. Then, create a global program with UNFPA. UNICEF's UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage highlights the importance for girls to maintain their education or engage in vocational training that can naturally delay child marriage. The Program has formed innovative partnerships with the private sector to serve as intermediaries connecting and recommending young women for Economic Empowerment Support and training. In addition, the UNFPA-UNICEF global program has also succeeded in mobilizing communities to work together to overcome gender norms that harm many people, especially women, and also seeks to prevent child marriage through the 'Community Approach to Child Protection' (PDAC) (UNFPA & UNICEF, 2023).

Furthermore, UNICEF is an instrument to conduct research and analysis related to child marriage problems in the African continent including Nigeria to identify the factors behind the occurrence of child marriage, the impacts obtained, to the challenges and obstacles faced in efforts to overcome child marriage. Then, facilitate the development of skills. UNICEF and UNFPA help and encourage children to be able to get their rights in education, health, and skills for work. In addition, they also conduct campaigns related to sexual education. This includes education related to the reproductive system so that people can know what kinds of dangers will be faced from the practice of child marriage, and then how the readiness of girls' bodies to conceive and have children so that it is hoped that this reproduction-related education can open people's minds that the practice of child marriage has a bad impact on girls' bodies because they have to conceive even though the body is still not ready (UNICEF, 2023b).

In the annual report of the global program to end child marriage UNICEF conducted a pilot application of the Gender Transformative Accelerator (GTA) tool developed to identify and encourage public awareness to understand the importance of gender equality and can be used to improve the position of adolescent girls in families, communities, and in society. In Nigeria, the process of implementing the GTA removed societal stigma regarding the division of power for women and adolescent girls in the family and society by way of clarifying gender norms and values among decision-makers as well as those who have power in society. In addition, the program expands economic and health opportunities for children and young women by providing vocational training, recruitment and training of public health workers, to develop their skills which can expand the reach of programs and sustain changes in existing social norms in Nigeria (UNFPA & UNICEF, 2023).

The practice of child marriage remains a significant problem in Nigeria despite the various efforts already made by UNICEF as an International Organization. This is because Nigeria still often

practices child marriage, namely marriage under the age of 18, which is written according to the concept of child marriage according to UNICEF.

Some obstacles hinder the sustainability of the program carried out by UNICEF, among others, such as the worsening humanitarian situation that continues in several countries that are the main focus of the global program in ending child marriage, making UNICEF's focus diverted due to other urgent needs that require practical solutions due to lack of integration and coordination between humanitarian and development approaches related to gender-based violence and Child Protection. In addition, in terms of Child marriage Prevention, a good strategy needs to be developed to ensure the continuity of existing child marriage prevention programs. Then the culture of the people still considers that the practice of child marriage is legal to do because Nigeria adheres to a mixed legal system, namely civil law, Islamic law, and customary law (UNFPA; UNICEF, 2020). In addition, in the application of the law, Nigeria is known to provide full authority for leaders in each region so that in certain areas the practice of child marriage can be said to be quite high, especially in poor areas that do not apply minimum limits for marriage. Then, the majority of Nigerians who are Muslims consider that there is nothing wrong with implementing the practice (Josephine & Goodluck, 2022).

## CONCLUSIONS

The traditions and cultures that hinder the completion of child marriage in Nigeria include deep cultural values and religious beliefs associated with the practice of child marriage. In Nigeria, religious traditions and beliefs have a significant independent influence on the practice of child marriage. In traditional beliefs, cultural values are closely related to child marriage. Nigerians, especially those of the Muslim faith, have a strong belief that child marriage can prevent adolescent girls from having sex before marriage, which is considered important for maintaining family honour in traditional societies. Sex and pregnancy outside of marriage are considered adultery and a great sin, so child marriage is considered a way to avoid it. In addition, the mixed legal system in Nigeria, which includes civil law, Islamic law, and customary law, as well as the full authority given to leaders in each region, makes the practice of child marriage in some areas, especially in poor areas, considered legitimate and quite high. Islamic religious belief in this case is not in line with the concept of child marriage for UNICEF because Islamic religious belief does not determine the minimum age limit for a person to marry.

Overcoming child marriage takes a long time for several main reasons. First, high poverty in Nigeria contributes directly to the practice of child marriage, where poor families tend to marry off their daughters to reduce the economic burden. Second, low levels of education and limited employment opportunities increase the risk of child marriage because girls who are not in school or whose families cannot afford to send them to school are more likely to be married off. Third, prolonged conflict and insecurity in some areas increase the practice of child marriage as a survival strategy. Fourth, the mixed legal system in Nigeria that includes civil law, Islamic law, and customary law, as well as the full authority given to leaders in each region, makes the application of the minimum age limit to marry inconsistently. Fifth, cultures and traditions that support child marriage are still strong, and the majority of Muslim communities consider the practice legitimate. Sixth, the challenges in the implementation of prevention programs, such as the lack of integration and coordination between humanitarian and development approaches, and the worsening humanitarian situation that shifts the focus from preventing child marriage. It shows that tackling child marriage is not just a matter of changing one aspect but requires comprehensive and sustained social, economic, and legal change.

Implications of the results of the study on UNICEF's efforts to address child marriage in Nigeria for the Indonesian population include increasing access to education where Indonesia needs to improve access to education to prevent child marriage practices and provide better opportunities for the younger generation, and women's empowerment that can help reduce stigma and discrimination against women who marry young, and finally, Data Analysis for policy, namely the use of in-depth data to understand the factors that drive child marriage in Nigeria can be a model for Indonesia. By

conducting a similar analysis, Indonesia can formulate more targeted policies to address this problem. By understanding these implications, Indonesia can develop more effective strategies for addressing the problem of child marriage.

The limitation of this study is that there is no significant solution that is expected to eliminate the practice of child marriage which is still often done in Nigeria, because Unicef's Sustainable Development Program (SDGs) related to the elimination of child marriage is expected to be achieved in 2030, in fact it is still uncertain of its success. Therefore, in the issue of child marriage in Nigeria, more proactive measures involving government agencies, civil society, and non-governmental organizations are still needed to prevent people from practising child marriage.

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