

CULTURAL VIOLENCE PRACTICES AGAINST FEMALES IN YUNGUR ETHNIC GROUP OF SONG LGA, ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Studies on women right in Africa have advanced but little has been done on the negative impact of culture and tradition of the people in promoting abuse of the women human right, thus this necessitates study on cultural violence practices against female in some selected ethnic groups in Adamawa State. The study research design was quantitative data analysis which was generated through survey by the use of 120 questionnaires administered to females from the Song Local Government Area of Adamawa State. The quantitative data were analysed using 5 Likert-type scales and Mean Scores Rating. The results from this research showed that various incidences of cultural violence practices against females (CVPAFs) were documented from the Yungur ethnic group. On the nature of CVPAFs, the culture beliefs that women must be responsible for some of the household responsibilities (such as feeding, payment of children school fees and medical bills) had the highest mean score rating. The agreed factors responsible for CVPAFs are Illiteracy or low level of education, using of culture to discriminate against female and using cultural beliefs to justify gender-based violence. The exclusion from decision making process had the highest rating on the experience and consequences of females that were affected by CVPAFs. Based on the findings from this study, it is recommended that CVPAFs that are criminal in nature can be referred to the law enforcement agencies for prosecuted as a legal mitigating measure. Culturally, there is a need for traditional ruler to enlighten and encourage the community to accord respect to female gender, embrace culture of peace based on non-violence, be tolerance, allow dialogue, mutual understanding and justice. The organization of seminar to create awareness on the effect of violence against female was agreed as part of the medical remedies for mitigating CVPAFs and there should be advocacy to abolish CVPAFs that are harmful to women.

Keywords: Cultural Violence, Women, Nature, Mitigation, Yungur, Adamawa State

Introduction

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with a population of 234,192,588 million people (UN, 2025) of which male population is about 118,589,884 which is 50.6% and female constitutes 115,602,711 which is 49.4%. According to United Nation (2025), despite the fact that we are in the twenty-first century and having higher population of male than female, tradition, culture, religion, and other factors have continued to widen the gender gap as women are kept in a subordinate position to men. The larger society and the male subculture still see women and their aspirations as subordinate, resulting in a situation in which the marginalization, trivialization, and stereotyping of women are glaring aspects of Nigerian life (Okunna, 2002). Globally, women are the major victims of cultural violence in many societies due to the low status often attached to them across the world. Hence, cultural violence against women is often perpetuated by people on the basis of tradition, culture, religion, or superstition, as evident in the issues of female genital mutilation and early marriage (Gennari *et al.* 2014).

Cultural Violence Practices against Females (CVPAFs) is a global phenomenon that is entrenched in many cultures which include honor killing, forced feeding, Dowry custom, breast ironing, etc. In some cultures, females have been victims of honor killing. Furthermore, in Nigeria, several instances of CVAF have been recorded, which showed that 25% of women aged between 15 and 49 years have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), while 48 percent of women aged between 20 and 49 years were married before the age of 18 in the northern part of the country (Gennari *et al.*, 2014; Garcia-Morena *et al.*, 2015). In Adamawa State, the issue of CVPAFs is also common in many traditional contexts, as reported by Dimas and Benjamin (2014). The Lala, Yungur, Honna, and Ga'anda, culturally believe that a girl must perform her cultural ritual or initiation before she can be admitted into adulthood. The ritual entails the inscription of special design marks on their body, private part, forehead, arms, and thighs to indicate that she is mature enough to get marry (Dimas & Benjamin, 2014).

Extant studies on GBV have mostly focused on domestic violence against women at their place of work, including on issues of rape of women and other discrimination against women. However, there is still little literature on cultural violence against women, especially in the northern part of Nigeria, where culture is mostly entrenched and patterns the way of life of the people. To address this gap in literature, this study examined harmful cultural violence practices against women in Kamwe ethnic group in Adamawa State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In conservative Northern Nigeria (strong religious/cultural influence), culture determines and abuses women's rights, seen as inferior (Action Aid, 2011). Women are denied legal property/inheritance rights.

In North-East Nigeria, women own only 4% of land (vs. ~10% in South-East/South-South); female children often have no inheritance rights (Obiageli 2020). Illiteracy and early marriage are documented CVAF; education is required for human capital/sustainable development (Chinwudu *et al.*, 2016), yet early marriage disrupts girls' education.

UNICEF (2013) estimated Nigeria's out-of-school girls rose from 10.5 to 13.2 million (2010-2015), 60% from the North. The situation is worse in Northern Nigeria, where nearly two-thirds of students cannot read/write English and about 70% of young women (15-24) in Northwest Nigeria have not completed primary school (UNESCO, 2014). The early or forced marriage is a Northern cultural norm due to fears of premarital pregnancy. Girl-children (~12 or younger) are given in marriage to family friends, benefactors, strangers, visitors, elders, or clerics, often against their wishes—sometimes to much older men (Alabi *et al.*, 2014). Parents profit from bride payments. Though the Federal Child Rights Act (2003) prohibits marriage, under 18, not all Northern states, including Adamawa, have domesticated it. In 2008, 28% of young women (15-19) were married vs. 1% of males; 12% married by 15, and 26% were in polygamous unions (NPC, 2009). This is the reality; cultural practices enhance this flagrant rights abuse.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine cultural violence practices against female in Yungur ethnic group in Adamawa State.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- (1) identify the nature of CVPAF among the Yungur ethnic group in Adamawa State.
- (2) identify the factors responsible for CVPAF among the Yungur ethnic group in Adamawa State.
- (3) evaluate the various mechanisms used for mitigation CVPAF among the Yungur ethnic group in Adamawa State.

Research Questions

- (1) What is the nature of CVPAF among the Yungur ethnic group in Adamawa State?
- (2) What are the factors responsible for CVPAF among the Yungur ethnic group in Adamawa State?
- (3) What are the various mechanisms used for mitigating CVPAF among the Yungur ethnic group in Adamawa State?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical framework

Feminist theory addresses issues like discrimination, stereotyping, objectification (especially sexual), oppression, and patriarchy. Literary critic Elaine Showalter (1989) identifies three phases in feminist

ideology: “feminist critique,” which analyzes texts through a feminist lens; “gynocriticism,” in which women create textual meaning; and “gender theory,” which explores how ideology and literature shape the sex/gender system. Over time, diverse feminist movements and theories have emerged. The traditional “Big Three” models; liberal, radical, and socialist/Marxist feminism have expanded into newer forms (Maynard, 1995). Some feminisms align with wider political ideologies, while others focus on specific issues like the environment.

Liberal feminism originates from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century political theorists like Locke and Rousseau, who emphasized equality and natural rights. Since Wollstonecraft (1795), liberal feminists have argued for equal legal rights, full citizenship, and access to education and employment. Modern liberal feminists reject some classical ideas like rigid individualism and the public-private divide (Okin, 1989), while advocating for legal and social reforms to ensure women’s equality. Liberal feminists have worked with groups like the National Organization for Women to address sexism and educational gender bias.

Marxist theory appeals to feminists for its emphasis on power, oppression, and historical context. It promotes revolutionary change and links theory to political practice. Marxist ideas also stress the necessity of historical and comparative analyses, internally inconsistent social formations, and dialectical as opposed to linear causality. Marxists have also consistently emphasized the significance of dramatic social change and the link between theory and political practice. Socialist feminists have drawn on these perspectives while updating Marxist traditions to make women's subordination and gender relations more central. Most prefer this word to acknowledge a tradition far wider than Karl Marx's works.

Conceptual framework

UNICEF (2019) notes that girls aged 9–13 should consume 1,600–2,000 calories daily, yet 60% of those in fattening camps suffer beatings, with over a quarter having fingers broken (Sydney, 2020). Mauritania a patriarchal West African nation teaches girls that pleasing men is central to fulfillment. Obesity is seen as a marker of wealth and desirability, pushing families to force-feed daughters as young as five (Sydney, 2020). Slender girls are stigmatized, considered poor, and less likely to attract wealthy suitors unless they weigh at least 220 pounds (Osby, 2022).

Cultural, economic, social, political, and religious influences all contribute to violence (Sanjel, 2013). Locally gathered reports suggest causes range from trivial issues like meal delays to serious concerns like infertility or lack of male children. A review of GBV in South Asia identifies key drivers as women's

cultural, educational, and economic marginalization, family size, the number of male children, internalized acceptance of violence, and marital conflict (Babu & Kar, 2009).

Empirical studies

Cultural conflict occurs when differing cultural values and beliefs clash and people often link it to violence and crime. Okon and Odey (2024) conducted a study on the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study emphasizes the importance of protecting women's rights, particularly within a patriarchal society. GBV remains a critical and pervasive issue in Nigeria, disproportionately affecting women, who are often vulnerable due to entrenched male dominance. The study set out to assess the prevalence of sexual, physical, and emotional violence against women and girls in the State.

Using a descriptive research design, the study targeted women and girls with documented cases of GBV in Akwa Ibom South. A combination of simple random and snowball sampling techniques was applied to select 150 respondents. The study collected data through structured questionnaires, while the study analysed the data via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) using descriptive statistics. The findings indicated a high prevalence of both sexual and physical violence against women and girls in Akwa Ibom. The study observed that nearly all women and girls experienced emotional violence at some point in their lives. Additionally, there was a low rate of reporting sexual and physical violence, while the community ignores or considers emotional abuse as insignificant.

The study offered several recommendations. It urged the government, NGOs, and civil society organizations to engage local communities in active dialogue and actions against harmful cultural practices that undermine women's rights. It also called for continuous public awareness campaigns on the impact of GBV, enhancement of legal frameworks to ensure enforceability, and the provision of accessible and comprehensive support services for GBV survivors.

The relevance of the study to the present is that they have the same focus; cultural violence against women in Nigeria. Both the current and previous studies address central concerns surrounding violence against women and girls. The gap the present study aims to fill is geographical: while the prior study focused on Akwa Ibom State, the present study examines GBV on a national scale. Alternatively, while the earlier study covered GBV nationally, the present study narrows its scope to Akwa Ibom State.

Methodology

Adamawa State is located in the Northeast geo-political zone of Nigeria. The State was created in August 1991 from the defunct Gongola State and occupies about 38,000 square kilometres with a population of

4,902,100 . The state capital is Yola and there are 21 LGAs in the State. Adamawa State is bordered by Borno to the northwest, Gombe to the west and Taraba to the southwest. Song – 301,000; (Population City Population, 2022). Yungur people are ethnic group located in the northeastern part of Nigeria particularly in Adamawa and other states in the north. The language with traditional practices and customs unique to this ethnic group. The major occupation of the people is farming.

Research Design

This study adopted quantitative data collection method of research design through a survey for the overall framework and collecting data (MacMillan and Schumacher, 2001). Durrheim (2004) reported that research method is a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution, or implementation of the research strategy, the use of this design becomes pertinent because an in-depth description and interpretation of cultural violence practices especially against female was generated. Structured questionnaires was used to determine the opinion of respondents.

Population of the Study

The population of this study were male and females, 120 structural questionnaires were administered. Song Local Government Area with the population of 301,000; three communities (Dirma, Koti and Dumne) were selected from Song Local Government Area where 40 questionnaires were administered to the females in each of the communities, making a total of One hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires.



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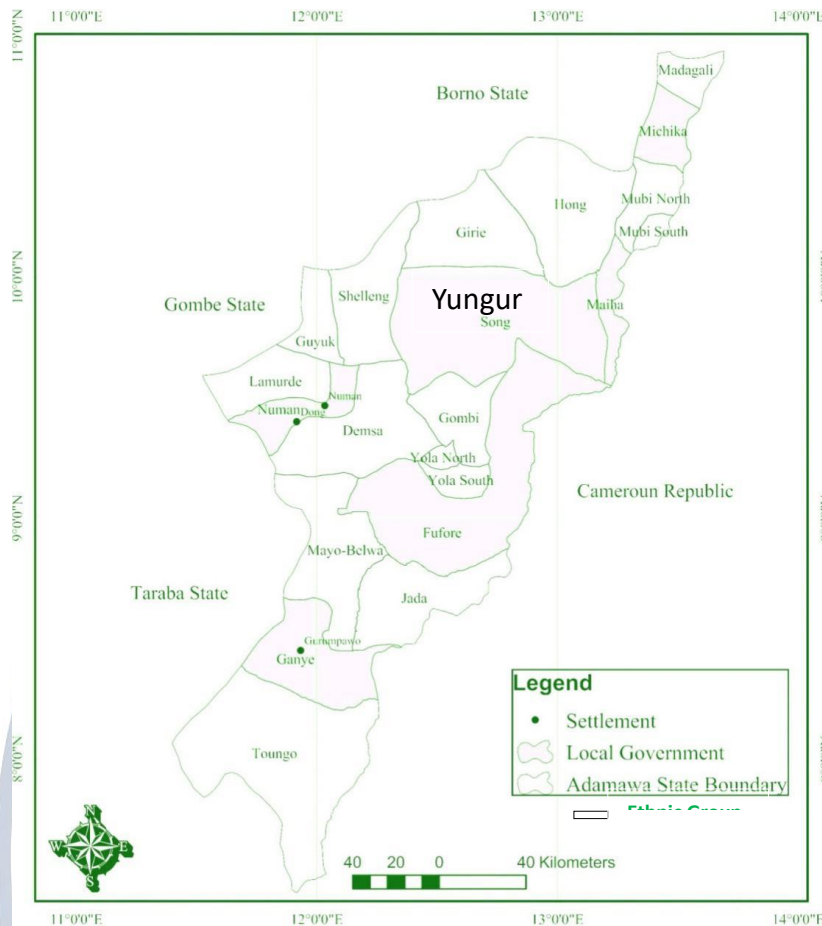


Figure 1: Map of Adamawa State showing the study Area

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study focused on Yungur Ethnic group in Song LGA of Adamawa State. Random sampling technique was used for this study. The research areas and respondents were randomly selected to have a total sample of 120 persons for quantitative administration of questionnaires.

Three communities were selected and at each of the communities 40 questionnaires were administered making a total of 120 questionnaires for each of the participants' consent was sought before administering the questionnaire for ethical purpose.

Instrument for Data Collection

The only instrument for data collection for this study was structured questionnaire (SQ). The questionnaire was divided into five sections.

The respondent's opinions were expressed on 5 point Likert type scale using: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D). The respondents indicated their respond to each of the items by ticking one option of their choice. The concepts of the study were explained to the respondents and those that could read and write were assisted with interpretation in their local languages and filling of the questionnaires.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The validity of the questionnaire that was used in gathering data for this study were assessed and ascertained by some of lecturers from the Centre for Peace and Security Studies and a lecturer from the Department of Technology Education. The reliability of each of the items and subjective options were necessary and subjected to reliability test in other to ensure the possibility of achieving the objectives of this research. This was done by experts in the Department of Statistics and Operational Research, Modibbo Adama University, Yola using Cronbach Alpha, $\alpha = 0.965$.

Method of Data Collection

After securing the consent of the authority of each community the researcher explained the importance of the research and the need for their cooperation in assisting to administer the questionnaires to the respondents. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents using kobo collect for filling the questionnaires and were assisted to fill theirs after interviewing them.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected through questionnaires were sorted using Kobo Collect Data Analysis package and Microsoft Excel Package. Data representation was done with Tables and Mean Score values were also used to inference the decision of the respondents on each of the questions.

Calculation of Mean Score Values:

Using the midpoint of Strongly Agree 5+Agree 4+ Undecided 3+ Disagree 2+Strongly Disagree 1/5 = 3 Using three as midpoint for Agree and Disagree. Any point below 3 is disagree and any point above 3 is agree.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The nature of Cultural violence against female among the Yungur ethnic group considered were seven (7) items and four (4) of them were accepted while three (3) were rejected by the respondents. The highest ranked accepted nature of cultural violence against female had MSV of 4.58, which was that: 'The woman that gave birth to only female children faced humiliation and their husbands are at the

liberty of marrying additional wife (ves). While the lowest of MSV of 1.11 was recorded for the nature that culture force widows to marry the brother of their late husbands and this was rejected (Table 1a).

Table 1a. Nature of Cultural Violence Practices Against Females in Yungur Ethnic Group

S/N	QUESTION	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Remark
1	Yungur females are not allowed to be involved in decision-making process either within their families or other places	90	20	1	3	6	4.51	Agree
2	The culture beliefs that women must shoulder the family responsibilities (such as feeding, payment of children school fees and medical bills)	50	24	0	13	29	3.34	Agree
3	The culture beliefs that women must shoulder the family responsibilities (such as feeding, payment of children school fees and medical bills)	100	6	3	6	5	4.58	Agree
4	Yungur culture disqualified female from inheriting their deceased husband properties.	98	6	4	6	6	4.53	Agree
5	The culture forced female into undergoing genital mutilation/ Inscription on the body	10	3	7	12	88	1.625	Disagree
6	The culture force widows to marry the brother of their late husbands	3	2	1	3	101	1.11	Disagree
7	The men possess the right of inheriting their wife's property	2	4	4	0	110	1.27	Disagree

Other cultural nature rejected were culture forced female to undergo genital mutilation /inscription on the body and those men possesses the right to inherit their wives' property. The information on table 1b. shows that sexual harassment/rape had the highest percentage of 36.36% among other 10 suggested cultural violence female in Yungur ethnic group by the respondents. While seeking divorce, sexual slavery among the married and murder were also ranked very high.

Table 1b. Other cultural violence against female among the Yungur ethnic groups

S/No	Cultural Violence	Frequency	Percentage
1	Female genital mutilation	8	5.59
2	Seeking for divorce	31	21.68
3	Sexual slavery among the married	28	19.58
4	Sexual harassment/Rape	52	36.36
5	Economic violence	1	0.70
6	Intra family clashes	1	0.70
7	Illiteracy	2	1.40
8	Hate speech by families	1	0.70
9	Murder	18	12.59
10	Banishing	1	0.70

The nine (9) identified factors responsible for CVAF among the selected ethnic groups in Adamawa State on (Table 2) were all accepted by the respondents. This is because their MSV were greater than 3.0. Illiteracy or low level of education of some the people that use culture to discriminate against women was rated with the highest MSV of 4.24, which is followed by MSV 4.19 for the culture of men superiority over women and the lowest MSV of 3.97 showed that women are being manipulation by men.

Table 2. Identify the Factors Responsible for CVPAF among the Yungur Ethnic Groups in Adamawa State

S/N	QUESTIONS	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Remark
1	Economic benefits associated to cultural practices that discriminates against women	59	39	8	10	4	4.15	Agree
2	The culture of superiority of men over women	57	45	7	6	5	4.19	Agree
3	Stigmatization of the female gender	57	38	8	12	5	4.07	Agree
4	Cultural believe systems of the people	54	42	8	11	5	4.07	Agree
5	Manipulation of culture against the female gender	55	37	6	14	8	3.97	Agree
6	Illiteracy or low level of education of some of the people that use culture to discriminate against women	64	39	5	6	6	4.24	Agree
7	Abuse of culture as a tool of discrimination	54	39	9	12	6	4.04	Agree
8	The accepted use of culture as a strategy of revenge for settling scores	58	41	6	8	7	4.13	Agree
9	Culture is also used as a tool of bargaining	60	40	7	8	5	4.11	Agree

The need to provide quality education to the community so as to reduce risk of CVPAFs had the highest MSV of 4.34 closely followed by the need to embrace culture of peace based on nonviolence, tolerance, dialogue, mutual understanding and justice and that the traditional rulers have roles to play in enlighten and encouraging the community to respect female gender (MSV=4.33) and least values of MSV = 3.93 which calls for repudiation and punishment of perpetrators of CVPAFs (Table 5)

Table 5. Remedies for mitigating CAVFs among the ethnic groups in Adamawa State

S/N	Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Remark
1	Culture-based violations against female that are criminal in nature can be referred to the law enforcement agencies for prosecution.	61	39	7	5	8	4.17	Agree
2	Legal punishments may be given to perpetrators of cultural-based violence against female victims.	47	48	1	5	7	4.03	Agree
3	Perpetuators of cultural-based violence can be arrested and if guilty forced to pay compensation to the female victims.	50	41	1	7	8	3.98	Agree
4	We should embrace culture of peace based on nonviolence, tolerance, dialogue, mutual understanding and justice.	64	45	2	4	5	4.33	Agree
5	The traditional rulers have roles to play in enlighten and encouraging the community to respect female gender.	68	38	4	5	5	4.33	Agree
6	Creating awareness by organizing seminar to reduce the level of violence against women.	63	44	4	5	4	4.31	Agree
7	Psycho-social/Counselling support service to assist female victims of cultural violence.	61	45	5	5	4	4.28	Agree
8	Ministry of women affairs in collaboration with British Council and United women to help the survivor of CVPAFs economic empowerment opportunities (Skills acquisition or financial interventions)	60	47	4	4	5	4.28	Agree
9	Compensation for survivors of CVPAFs	51	45	1	5	6	4.08	Agree
10	Repudiation and punishment of perpetrators of CVPAFs	40	49	2	4	7	3.93	Agree
11	Create protective community healthy physical and social environment to reduce CVPAFs	58	50	3	4	5	4.27	Agree
12	Provide quality education to the community so as to reduce risk of CVPAFs	64	45	2	4	4	4.34	Agree

Discussion

The nature of cultural violence among the Yungur ethnic group narrowing towards the denial of this gender despite its special relationship with other cultural institutions, ideas, and aspirations, gender is a significant factor in determining social stratification and inequality (Ofogebu, 2015) although the female gender has been denied. This subordinate position of women among the Yungur is an act of violence since the United Nations General Assembly (1979) stated that violence is also used to maintain and enforce the subordinate position of women. The United Nations and its member nations condemn domestic abuse as one of the "crucial social mechanisms by which women are driven into subordinate positions compared with males" in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. No

matter how young a male child is, he is superior to female children in this regard no matter how old the female may be. However, it is not impossible for female children to inherit their father's property, but this is not always the case for married women because of the belief that their entirety belongs to their husbands (Ofoegbu, 2015).

The factors responsible for CVAF according to Adebisi (2009) showed that in the past, some parents felt that if girls should acquire some formal education and were privileged to work, they would surrender their pay packets to their husbands and not their parents while some felt it is an act of prostitution (Alabi *et al.*, 2014). Alabi *et al.* (2014) report corroborate with the fact that the illiteracy is a very strong factor for CVPAFs as also documented by this study. African woman is not encouraged to avail herself of educational opportunities; rather they are encouraged to go into such an institution where functional education is acquired to prepare her for motherhood.

The report on consequences of CVPAFs agreed with all these which include Smoking, drug abuse, anger, agitation, hostility, distrust, violent acts, theft to mention a few and implication of CVPAFs is that the violence acts will lead to social vice that will have long term effect on both the immediate community and global (UN Women 2025)

Various mechanism in mitigating cultural violence against female there is no simple or single solution to the problem; rather, violence must be addressed on multiple levels and in multiple sectors of society simultaneously (WHO, 2002). All the legal, cultural, medical and socio-economic remedies will proffer solution as adequate measures to combat CVPAFs in the communities and ethnic groups studied. One could see that there is a need to investigate allegations of GBV thoroughly and effectively, prosecute and punish those responsible, and provide adequate protection, care, treatment and support to victims/survivors, including access to legal counselling, health care, psycho-social support, rehabilitation and compensation for the harm suffered. There is a need to take measure to eliminate all beliefs and practices that discriminate against women or sanction violence and abuse, including any cultural, social, religious, economic and legal practices. Action must be taken to action empower women and strengthen their personal, legal, social and economic independence (Protection of internally displaced person, 2021).

Conclusion

Base on the findings from this study, woman has been presented as an irrelevant gender despite her importance and the fact that she cannot be ignored in all aspects of life. Thus, if a man is indispensable, the woman should also be recognized as such and value must be placed on this gender and not intimacy alone or intimidation. The study recommends that cultural practices that are harmful to women should

be discarded. If culture is a way of life and it is dynamic, one does not expect it to be destructive. Naturally, it is an ethical responsibility of men to provide protection, education, shelter to women and no other way round as documented in Fulani ethnic group. Women should not be seen as inferior in the society or be regarded as inconsequential as a result of the traditional norms which were against them.

Recommendations

1. The nature of CVPAF identified the culture beliefs that women must shoulder the family responsibilities (such as feeding, payment of children school fees and medical bills)
2. Traditional and religious leaders should educate the public through sermons and town hall meetings to de-emphasize these practices.
3. Policies and programs should be designed to raise awareness, engage leaders, and empower girls through education and employment.
4. Urgent need for creating awareness through different advocacy programme by governmental and non-governmental agencies so that the findings from this study can be given a good thought among the Yungur ethnic group.



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