

## **Cultural beliefs/practices and community development in North Central Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Different cultures and practices impact either positively or negatively on the developmental aspirations of societies globally and locally. The activities of individuals and groups in these societies have been recognised as affecting the changes occurring within the society. It was recognising this that the study was undertaken to explore the role of cultural practices and belief in the development of the North central Nigeria. These included widowhood practices, witchcraft among others. Results indicated that all these practices were endemic in the region and they impinge on the development of the society as many young people abandon their communities for fear of these beliefs hence leaving the place empty of development. Following from here, it was suggested that cultural practices that are inimical to development should be jettison in order to achieve the desired development.

### **Croyances/pratiques culturelles et développement communautaire dans le centre-nord du Nigeria**

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### **Abstrait**

Différentes cultures et pratiques ont un impact positif ou négatif sur les aspirations de développement des sociétés à l'échelle mondiale et locale. Les activités des individus et des groupes dans ces sociétés ont été reconnues comme affectant les changements qui se produisent au sein de la société. C'est en reconnaissant cela que l'étude a été entreprise pour explorer le rôle des pratiques culturelles et des croyances dans le développement du centre-nord du Nigeria. Celles-ci comprenaient les pratiques de veuvage, la sorcellerie entre autres. Les résultats ont indiqué que toutes ces pratiques étaient endémiques dans la région et qu'elles empiètent sur le développement de la société car de nombreux jeunes abandonnent leurs communautés par peur de ces croyances, laissant ainsi la place vide de développement. Suite à cela, il a été suggéré

que les pratiques culturelles qui sont hostiles au développement devraient être abandonnées afin d'atteindre le développement souhaité.

## Background to the Study

The phenomenon culture is inherent in every human society. Sociologically culture issued to denote that body of historically developed, shared, learned behavior of the members of the society. As a concept, it encapsulates such common group behaviors as dressing, eating, dancing and as in context, burial forms and types. Culture goes with a set standard or code of behavior which is embedded in the customs, traditions, values and norms of the society. This is what one finds in the characteristic of African societies, and a much cherished characteristic; because of its prominent roles in the upliftment of the individuals and the communities. The prerequisite in the traditional societies is a conduct that promotes the growth and development of the society, as exemplified and interpreted to mean that there is an acceptable code of behavior every member of the society is expected (Adekola & Nwoye, 2016).

Thompson 1991 viewed culture as a society's total way or pattern of life. The Ministry of Information and Culture of Nigeria, (1988) defined culture as the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempt to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization thus distinguishing a people from their neighbors.

As noted by Taylor, (1971), culture is that complex whole which includes the knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society. Culture is what man interposes between himself and his environment in order to ensure his security and survival (Ayandele, 1981). Duro(2001) states that the word culture is the embodiments of the attitudes of a people to their traditional values which are essential for factors of development and progress.

According to UduYakubu (2002) for human beings to build houses, cultivate farms, construct bridges, dams, electricity generating plants, provide qualitative education, manage successful businesses or organizations, control population growth, prevent or cure sicknesses and diseases, ensure social trust, good governance and law and order and so on, they need an established critically receptive body of ideas and beliefs, designs, techniques and methodologies rules and regulations. In other words, they need culture. Tunde and Babawale (2007) culture entails all that people have learned and preserved from past collective experience and transmitted into the future by learning. Culture is the primary means of survival and adapt. It is worthy of note that some of these traditions and customs, especially those practiced by the people of Alago, Kanuri, Aho, Eggon, and Koro in Lafia metropolis have enhanced and in some cases create a restricted access in the development of their communities.

Culture and development has a strong potential for modulating and accelerating socio-economic development. Nigeria has an enviable culture, full of aspiration and vitality. Despite this, the Nigerian culture and traditional lifestyle is discarding in favor of foreign ones (Adekola & Nwoye, 2016). Cultural beliefs are manifestation of

a culture or subculture, especially in regard to the traditional and customary practices of a particular ethnic or other cultural group. If an ethnic group retains its formal ethnic identity but loses its core cultural practices or the knowledge, resources, or ability to continue them, questions arise as to whether the culture is able to actually survive at all (Williams, 2004). Community development is a process where community members are supported by agencies to identify and take collective action on issues which are important to them.

Community development empowers community members and creates stronger and more connected communities. Community development is a holistic approach grounded in principles of empowerment, human rights, inclusion, social justice, self-determination and collective action (Kenny, 2007 cited in Smart, 2019). Community development considers community members to be experts in their lives and communities, and values community knowledge and wisdom. Community development projects include those aimed at improving the safety of its members, and enhancing social and cultural performance in the region. Financing community development projects, foundations, and local organizations can motivate the community cities and villages for the purpose of future growth and development. The cultural component of a community is vital to its stable growth. By encouraging a local cultural life, a village, town or city can help enhance its reputation as a comfortable, enjoyable place to live. Creating a local chorus, city orchestra is an example of the cultural based community development programs. The main goal of the community development programs is to improve quality of life, mutual benefit and increased responsibility among community members.

Community development programs are led by community members at every stage - from deciding on issues to selecting and implementing actions, and evaluation. Community development has an explicit focus on the redistribution of power to address the causes of inequality and disadvantage (Jessica, 2019). Community development is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, equality, economic opportunity and social justice, through the organization, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings (National Association Community Extension Professionals, 2021).

Similar to culture, development can be described in various ways. However, development is said to be an upward movement of the entire social system. This social system encloses, besides the economic factors, all noneconomic factors such as education, health care, distribution of power, institutions, and attitudes are all part of development that societies need to improve on. It would be a mistake to solely look at development from economic factors; rather, we have to consider it from a holistic perspective. Thus it is difficult to establish a causal relationship between cultural beliefs and community development because the former is fluid and the latter takes multi-dimensional forms. Therefore, it would be inconclusive to argue that African cultural practices hamper development or not (Chang-Dae, 2019).

Nigeria's rich cultural heritage is substituted for alien socio-economic structures. The Nigeria's cultural diversity remains a treasure largely unexplored in her quest for socio-economic development. Since these traditions are perceived to be unalterable, development efforts that do not conform to them are resisted vehemently even when

such development are for the common good of all. Traditions and customs in African societies are orally handed down from one generation to another as such each group of people has customs that are unique to them. For instance, it is common to find among the people of Alago, Kanuri, Aho, Eggon, and Koro of Nasarawa State. The traditions and customs of a people encompass their belief system, settlement pattern, greetings, language, artistic heritage and behavior pattern. One notable aspect of Alago, Kanuri, Aho, Eggon, Koro and indeed most communities in Nigeria and indeed Africa is the belief that the community is basically sacred, rather than secular and surrounded by several religious forms and symbols (Lustig, 2013). This accounts for why most Nigerians irrespective of where they reside, whether in urban cities or in the diasporas return home to identify with their communities, especially in times of traditional festivals. It is important to know that community development is all about people's mobilization for action, but people are naturally resistant to change because of the uncertainty of the consequence of such change on them. The situation becomes worse when such change or community development effort does not conform to the people's age long traditions and customs, making people oppose such change and never wanted to be part of such programmes even when these programmes are imposed on them, they end up abandoning them (Lustig, 2013).

For instance, the situating of a community development project in a land regarded as forbidden by the people, or the introduction of birth control programmes in a community where children are culturally and traditionally perceived to be gifts from the gods (Adekola, 2013). Be it that as it may, there are elements of cultural beliefs activities like polygamy, witchcraft, magic and traditional medicine, syncretism and a host of others whose impact affects community development Alago, Kanuri, Aho, Eggon, and Koros people of Nasarawa state are not of an exemption. In as much as culture is seeing as a total way of life of the people its relationship it's with developments cannot be overemphasized. The relationship between culture and development started to be defended by different experts in the 1970s although it was not until the 1980s or even the 1990s when the international bodies and development cooperation agencies started to promote studies and work to analyze how cultural factors could have an impact on the development processes. Furthermore, without doubt lack of conceptual definition of the term culture in our society, may have also had an impact on its late inclusion within the development policies. Culture, has always being seen as a complex issue and socially and politically highly sensitive (Radcliffe, 2006).

However, Eluyemi (2002) believes that the current status of Nigerian indigenous cultural beliefs is best described as endangered and they are arguably almost at the verge of extinction. Nalah, (2013) believes that tradition and culture are important aspects of any society in helping to mold the views and behavioral patterns of the society but some traditions and cultural beliefs and practices like FGM are harmful both human, social and economic development and as such must be abolished.

It is against this background that the study is therefore designed to identify the effects of cultural beliefs on community development in Lafia Metropolis.

Nigerian is a country endowed with a lot of cultural beliefs sourced from its multicultural communities. Contemporary status of most Nigerian cultural beliefs both material and non-material is best described as endangered. Nigeria is an example of a

nation born out of a cultural womb foreign to it. However, cultural belief is one of the major factors that affects community development and results in difference in levels of practices behaviour and activities among countries, states and ethnic groups. For instance, the City of Medellin is noted for greater industry than Bogata, the capital of Columbia, even though it has no apparent geographical advantages to favour it (Ottih, 2014). Socio-cultural practices as factors that determine development or activities of any nation are critical to be examined at this point when countries of the world have realized the role of various ethnic groups in economic growth and development.

In Eggon, Koro and Mada the modern culture of spending so much on funeral and marriage ceremonies has led to the underdevelopment among them since most people prefer to spend more of their resources for entertaining guests during funeral and marriage events while a few people look at it as an opportunity to initiate business ideas and invest in buying and selling of items in order to make profit. Also, social life aspect such as values to business and peer group influence seems to have affected negatively majority of Eggon people in investing their resources in business, as family believes to business and entrepreneurship orientation to young ones is seems to have given less attention.

Consequently, development fails to reconcile with the present and the demands of the challenges of the future. Rather than making use of Nigeria's culture for national building, Nigerian has discarded her rich and enviable cultural heritage for an alien one (Mercy, 2015). Nigeria is yet to fully acknowledge the cultural dimension of development. Because of this there has not been adequate sensitization of her policy makers and the public as a whole to the cultural component of development. An understanding of the cultural aspect of a society is crucial to adapting development approaches to local context and ensuring successful outcomes.

Development is not only about economic or material growth or social progress. The culture of the people must be recognized, sustained and preserved in order to give them a sense of belonging in any development agenda. The development process must be viewed from a wider perspective whereby issues of the whole human person, rather than the essentially economic man are incorporated. Although there is no systematic historical study of the peoples of Lafia, there are isolated publications on the Alago, Kanuri, Aho, Eggon, and Koro people. Over the years many African communities beliefs system has done more good to community development. Illah (2015) asserts that there are different cultural beliefs in Nigerian society such as female genital mutilation (FGM), Child hawking, Widowhood Practice, open defecation child marriage, funeral rites, witchcraft, gender based discrimination and traditional health Practices. Culture is an essential dimension of development because when development is not tailored towards the local relevant traditions and institutions, it becomes meaningless in the face of the people.

Thus, this study examines cultural beliefs of Alago, Kanuri, Aho, Eggon, and Koro people such as child marriage, widowhood practice, witchcraft, funeral rites and so on and their effect on community development among the people of Lafia and so as to bridge the gap in the literature. It is against this background that this study is therefore designed to investigate the extent to which cultural beliefs affects community development in Lafia metropolis.

The objectives of the study include to- examine the effects of funeral rites on community development, assess the effect of child marriage on community development, investigate the effects of widowhood practices on community development and examine the effects of witchcraft on community development in Lafia Metropolis.

## **Literature review and theoretical framework**

### **The Concept of Cultural Beliefs**

Cultural beliefs are the ideas and thoughts common to several individuals that govern interaction between people, their gods, and other groups and differ from knowledge in that they are not empirically discovered or analytically proved. In general, cultural beliefs become identical and commonly known through the socialization process by which culture is unified, maintained, and communicated. The word culture came from a Latin word *cerele* meaning to cultivate or to tend. It means to take active care of something. Piddington, (1950) defined culture as the sum total of the material and intellectual equipment wherewith a people satisfy or meet their biological or social needs and adapt themselves to their environment. Thompson 1991 viewed culture as a society's total way or pattern of life. The Ministry of Information and Culture of Nigeria, (1988) defined culture as the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempt to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization thus distinguishing a people from their neighbors. As noted by Taylor, (1971), culture is that complex whole which includes the knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society. Culture is what man interposes between himself and his environment in order to ensure his security and survival (Ayandele, 1981). To Duro (2001), the word culture is the embodiments of the attitudes of a people to their traditional values which are essential for factors of development and progress.

According to Udu(2002) for human beings to build houses, cultivate farms, construct bridges, dams, electricity generating plants, provide qualitative education, manage successful businesses or organizations, control population growth, prevent or cure sicknesses and diseases, ensure social trust, good governance and law among others, they need an established critically receptive body of ideas and beliefs, designs, techniques and methodologies rules and regulations. In other words, they need culture. As noted by Tundeand Babawale (2007) culture entails all that people have learned and preserved from past collective experience and transmitted into the future by learning.

Culture is the primary means of survival and adaptation of man, offering a summation and distillation of the past that provides sound basis for living in the present and marching into the future. Bates et al (1975) are of the view that in the absence of culture man is prone to losing all knowledge of even the basic means of survival and that it will be catastrophic for the prevailing culture of mankind to be wiped out.

Culture performs a significant role in the development of every individual member of the society. No individual develops outside the culture. The cultural background in which an individual person is brought up affects the totality of his life's activities. It is the culture of the people that creates the folk that stipulates reasons for action. Notions

already established by an individual as a result of these formation processes are difficult to change. The formed behavior is a symbol of identity and could also be an obstacle to adaptation. It is, however necessary to ascertain those cultural make-ups that could bring differences in character that marks off an individual from the rest of the same kind; and however a barrier or an advantage to human development. Culture is the quality in a person or society that arises from a concern for what is exceptionally good in arts, human development, other expositions of human achievements, ideas, customs, social behavior of a society regarded collectively. Li and Karakowsky (2011) "culture is a way of life of a group of people, the behaviors, beliefs, values and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next." Culture is the totality of people's behavior which has been learnt over time and handed over from generation to generation.

It is the sum total of their experiences, values, language, belief system, arts and crafts, attitude, training and education, etc attained by a group of people over years and handed over to the younger generation. One is however identified by his culture. It is culture that spells out the reason and manner in which things are done.

There are many cultural beliefs in Nigeria. Even if Nigeria is a part of the civilized world with modern economy and society, some tribes still prefer to live according to the ancient customs. Still, these traditions can be violent and unethical for the modern world.

Cultural beliefs are generally norms and values in behaviors and standard that developed in ethnic groups and communities in ancient times which help in transforming or influencing people's behavior and serve as identity of people to connect them with others. Such may be marriage, burial ceremonies, language, dress codes, values, behavior, and religion and so on.

Hofstede (1991) cultural beliefs refer to "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another". Hofstede further stresses that, the mental programming consists of shared values, beliefs and norms. These mental construct influence how people socialized within a particular culture perceive events. They also determine what behavior is considered appropriate or inappropriate in various social situations.

Baughn and Neupert (2003) Cultural beliefs as mental programming of ideas which are attached with the societal behavior, norms and values which are passed from generation to generation, such practices include rituals, symbols, peer groups, values and traditions. The notion that cultural belief influence economic outcomes are intuitive, but formal examination of the relations between cultural beliefs and community development is subtle. If we arbitrarily define cultural beliefs, a variety of phenomena can be generated. . Di- verse cultural beliefs can lead to differential economic behavior to- ward individuals with diverse social characteristics such as wealth or "membership" in a specific social group.

When people are living together and making choices based on the needs of the community is said to be community development. Community development means the ability of community to identify a problem or need and implementing change to solve the problem or meet the needs of its members. Anyanwu (1999) maintains that community development is the process of helping a community to strengthen itself and develop towards its full potential. Community development occurs best when the people of the

community are involved throughout the development from deciding what they need and how they want to achieve it. There are fundamental values and needs which bind people together in a community, value such as need for friendship, security, employment, spiritual and cultural values and needs. These valued aspects of community may be challenged by community development which is a process of change. Alozie (2012) sees "community development as a structured intervention that gives communities control over the conditions that affect their lives. Community Development is a process of social action in which the people of a community organized themselves for planning and actions, define their common and individual needs and solve their problems, execute the plans with a maximum of reliance upon community resources, and supplement these resources when necessary with services and materials from government and non-government agencies outside the community and to help people to develop economically and socially viable communities which can assist, strengthen and adequately support individual and family growth and enhance the quality of life.

Onyeozu (2007) defined community development as a process of social action in which the people of a community organize themselves for planning and action, define their common and individual needs and problems, make group and individual plans to meet these needs and solve their problems, execute these plans with maximum reliance upon community resources and materials resources from government and non-governmental agencies outside the community. Implied in this definition is the fact that community development unlike the conventional development process practiced in Nigeria places emphasis on the people as agents of their own development.

They must be involved in the identification of their needs, the planning process, and implementation and monitoring of development programmes/projects that affect them. Adekola (2013) the term community development is a relatively new term in the social sciences and also a relatively new art of practice in the western world. This is because the concept was only introduced in 1948 at the Cambridge summer conference. However, this concept has enjoyed a wide range of definitions ever since. Furthermore, Frank and Smith (2013) view community development as a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. It ranges from small initiatives within a small group to large initiatives that involve the broader community. They maintained that effective community development should be a long term endeavor, well planned, Inclusive and equitable, holistic and integrated to bigger picture, initiated and supported by community members. Oyebamiji and Adekola (2008) defined community development as a process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities, to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of community, to integrate those communities into the life of the nation and to enable them contribute fully to national progress.

Community development projects include those aimed at improving the safety of its members, and enhancing social and cultural performance in the region. Financing community development projects, foundations, and local organizations can motivate the community cities and villages for the purpose of future growth and development. The cultural component of a community is vital to its stable growth. By encouraging a local cultural life, a village, town or city can help enhance its reputation as a comfortable,



enjoyable place to live. The main goal of the community development programs is to improve quality of life, mutual benefit and increased responsibility among community members.

### **The Concept of Ethnicity**

Generally, ethnicity is understood as a common consciousness of shared origin or traditions. Ethnicity is not the same as nationalism, neither is it the same with race. At one level, nationalism can be seen as the continuation of ethnicity at the national scale. Banks (1996) defined ethnicity as a collection of rather simplistic and obvious statements about boundaries, otherness, goals and achievements, being and identity, descent and classification, that has been constructed as much by the anthropologist as by the subject.' Banks arrived at this definition after outlining several definitions by other writers in order to demonstrate, and justify, the futility in attempting to define ethnicity. The term 'ethnicity' refers to strife between ethnic groups, in the course of which people stress their identity and exclusiveness (Cohen 1969). Fundamentally, we can describe ethnicity as a product of nationalism that is intended to create homogenous or a 'we' consciousness.

Ethnicity' is a term derived from the Greek word "ethnos" which means "people" or "tribe", and has a related English meaning of "pagan/heathen". It refers to a race or the nation of a group of people having common racial, cultural, religious, or linguistic characteristics. The term is also used to allocate a racial or other group within a larger system.

The Oxford English Dictionary (2008-Online) defines ethnicity / ethnic group as: Ethnicity means a group of people differentiated from the rest of the community by racial origins or cultural background, and usually claiming or enjoying official recognition of their group identity (The Oxford English Dictionary, 2021).

Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia (2006) maintains that ethnicity is a group of human beings whose members identify with each other, usually on the basis of preferential endogamy and/or a presumed or real recognition of common ancestry. Ethnic identity which upholds ethnicity is usually marked by the recognition from others of a group's distinctiveness, and the recognition of common cultural, linguistic, religious, behavioral or biological traits which are distinct from others, but clearly identifiable by others.

Weber (1992) defines an ethnic group as those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of custom or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration, this belief must be important for group formation. Ethnically, Nasarawa State is extremely diverse state with different tribes which include Hausa, Kanuri, Fulani, Alago, Koro, Mada, Eggon, Rindre, Gwandara, Gade, Gbagyi, Mama, Toni, Yaskuwa, Bassa, Kwatto, Afo, Kwara, and many more.

### **Effects of Funeral rites on Community Development**

It is in the manifold customs of a people, precisely as the mirror of accepted usages, that their beliefs and worldview are screwed. Abstracted in symbols, a people's

culture is preserved as long as it continues to be of value and thereafter for historical purposes. Notwithstanding that customs are largely unwritten; the norms they prescribe are codified, as it were, in symbols as statute books. These symbols reveal unique rights for the people's entitlement. Among the rights to which an African is entitled is the right to befitting burial/funerals. This right comes with it, certain duties and/or obligations. It is easy to locate Burial Ceremonies within the domain of customs, in this case, a group's response to their experience, nay, and beliefs about Death. This typical folkway of passage, being cast in symbolism, is thus sustained through traditions and praxis in diverse cultures. Social groups are differentiated from each other by their different attitudes, beliefs, language, dress, manners, tastes in food, music and a host of other features which comprise a way of life.

Funeral celebrations also known as burial ceremonies is viewed as a traditional rites accorded to the deceased as a last respect to mark the end of their lives on earth. A funeral ceremony is an act of honoring, respecting, sanctifying or remembering the life of a person who is dead. It is also, the ritual act of placing a dead person into the ground. The funeral, burial or interment ceremonies can be celebrated in a low key or in a prestigious way using financial and material resources. In any case, it is celebrated credent to the culture of the people and financial position of the deceased's family (Koudou, 2014). Those who embark on prestigious and ostentatious funeral celebrations land to extravagant spending and inefficient management of resources as seems to be done by different ethnic groups in Nigeria today (Umogbai, Joseph, & Adudu, 2017).

Psychology has long recognized the emotional value and structuring role of rites and rituals in different societies and cultures. Rites comprise a broader category, including rites of passage or healing, while a ritual is a set of gestures and actions that make up the rites. Human rituals are common to all peoples and are symbolic actions, repetitive, standardized, and highly valued behaviors that help individuals to channel emotions, and share beliefs and transmit values. Marking the transience of life, funeral rituals have always been present in history to demarcate a state of mourning, acknowledging the value and importance of those who have passed away, favoring change of roles and allowing the transition of the cycle of life. One should also consider the role funeral rituals play in psychological maturation, as they help individuals to face concrete loss and trigger a grieving process, allowing people to publicly manifest their grief. Celebration of burial and lavish spending was found common among the Igbos, Yorubas and Cross Riverians Azende (2007).

Azende (2007), examine burial ceremonies in Tivland and its effect on financial investment and commitment to community development, he find out that, the way of life of people can be affect their health, finance, political inclination and other areas of life. Cultural practices such as funeral rites have significant effect on community development behavior among the Tiv, Igbo, Yoruba, Alago, Koro, Mada, Eggon, Rindre, Gwandara, Gade, Gbagyi, Mama, Toni, Yaskuwa among others. This is because newly widowed individuals' economic wellbeing may decline for several reasons. When an employed spouse dies, the surviving partner loses the spouse's labor earnings. If a retired spouse dies, the surviving partner may lose the spouse's private pension income (depending on how the couple elected to take the pension benefits), and if the couple

was drawing on Social Security at the time of the death, these benefits will also be reduced.

Furthermore, if the couple has had to draw down on assets and/or go into debt to finance rising health care costs and funeral/burial expenses, then this also may contribute to the surviving spouse's decline in economic wellbeing. Some or all of these factors likely contribute to the post widowhood decline in economic wellbeing which renders the person with little or none participation in the community development. From the foregoing, it is easy to locate burial ceremonies within the domain of customs, in this case, a group's response to their experience, nay, and beliefs about death. This typical folkway of passage, being cast in symbolism, is thus sustained through traditions and praxis in diverse cultures. Social groups are differentiated from each other by their different attitudes, beliefs, language, dress, manners, tastes in food, music and a host of other features which comprise a way of life. Among the Eggon, Alago, Kanuri, Aho and Koro people of Lafia women are subjected to overt public display of emotions when death occurs. Males on other hand are completely discouraged from showing their emotional expression of grief in public even if they feel they need to do so. Speaking mocking words and other unhealthy actions during the funeral dance, inheritance of widows from the perspective of Eggon traditional and cultural practices, they claim that the idea of widow inheritance is to protect the widow's vulnerability in terms of food security and other needs as a result of the death of her husband This has resulted in cases of complicated grief among many men among the Eggon indigenous people (Monday, 2015). It is believes that during the death of someone in Eggon community there will be minimal or lack of control in the community's participation during bereavement management Everyone has the liberty to discuss and talk with the mourners during the grieving period with the aim of helping to provide coping mechanisms. The potential weakness in this kind of approach is that sometimes a person, consciously or unconsciously, says or expresses certain words that may end up aggravating the grieving person either during one on one conversations with the mourners or through wailing in public (Monday, 2015). More importantly, if the widow does not consent to the idea to be inherited, as she often stands the chance of losing grief within a cultural context virtually everything belonging to her late husband.

### **Effect of Child Marriage on Community Development**

Child marriage is an issue that is pervasive still across many countries due to economic, social and cultural norms. Today such customs are widespread in parts of Oceania and South America, Asia, Africa and Nigeria. The reasons behind these marriages are varied, often parents arrange the marriage unbeknownst to the child and many are arranged for economic purposes as it can mean one less person to feed. However in an attempt to escape poverty, many are only perpetuating poverty. Married girls or boys more often than not drop out of school, so they then lack the skills to lift their families out of poverty and as well contribute meaningful to community development. Early marriage is defined as any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically, physiologically and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing. Erulkar and Bello (2007) opined that the basis for acceptance of early marriages among Northern region is to preserve the value of virginity, fears about marital sexual activity, to reduce promiscuity of the girl

child, and other socio-cultural and religious norms. Fayokun(2015) maintains that child marriage could be seen as being a complex issue in Nigeria context, such as cultural and religious differences, regional and ethnic disparities, among others ignite early child marriage. According to Forward (2014) level of poverty being experienced in most rural areas in Nigeria, could often explain why child marriage predominates in such cultures.

Nour (2006) stated that poverty, religion, tradition, and conflict appear to make the rates of child marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa similar to that of South Asia. Tayo-Olajubutu (2014) explain that, despite the fact that many countries enact marriageable laws to limit marriage between 16 to 18 years, traditional marriages of girls of younger ages are still widespread. In parts of Ethiopia and Nigeria, many girls get married before the age of 15, some as young as the age of 13(Nour, 2006). Furthermore, in Mali 39% of girls get married before the age of 15, also in Niger and Chad, over 70% of girls get married before the age of 18 (Nour, 2006). According to the United Nations Population Fund Campaign to end fistula (2006), girls aged 15-19 are twice more likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth than women aged 20-24. ). According to (United Nations Convention on the rights of children, 2018) child marriage is defined as any marriage in which either of the partners is under 18 years of age, with or without consent. In the same vein (UNICEF, 2015) defined child marriage as marriage before the age of 18 years.

It also posited that marriage at an early age will have an impact to the females concerned, the child born, and also the community. UNICEF (2007) viewed it as a practice to protect unwelcome sexual advances and to gain economic security. Gynecol (2009) asserts that child marriage generally occurs below the age of 18 years. He also stated that marriages in which a child under the age of 18 years is involved occur nationwide, but with prevalence in south Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In Northern Nigeria where the practice is prevalent, the impact is more on girls as many of them marry early in their large numbers and with more intensity. However, due to the ignorance and selfish nature, more often than not they forget the effect it has on the girl child as well as their community development. The effect of early marriage on the girl child that affects her wellbeing and that of the society include education, lack of economic empowerment and lack of knowledge on reproductive health services which will enable them take informed decisions, enhance their ability to leverage resources and participate in community decision making (Gimba, and Joseph, 2014).

This practice is against the United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) recommendations on the rights of the children which include right to free and full consent to a marriage as recognized in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), education, empowerment, health determination. Most societies like Nigeria has domesticated these international agreements and enacted Acts that will further enhance the rights of the children. But implementing the Acts in most Northern states has been controversial as some of the states are also being guided by Islamic laws that have a soft landing on early marriage by considering age as not a very significant factor in marriage (Gimba, and Joseph, 2014). Bayisenga (2012) examined the issue of early marriage in sub-Saharan Africa. It sheds light specifically on reason behind its perpetuation, its harmful consequences which include barrier to education, enjoyment of girl's human rights and how it further threatened the development of countries. He observed that early marriage is due to various factors including among others, the

search for economic survival, protection of young girls, peer group and family pressure, controlling female behavior and sexuality, wars and civil conflicts and socio-cultural and religious values.

Besides having a negative impact on girls themselves, the practice of early marriage also has negative consequences on their children, families, and society as a whole (Adedokun, Tochukwu, & Adedeji, 2012). In Nigeria, which is currently facing economic difficulties and political instability, age at marriage has barely risen, and in the north of the country the average age has fallen since 1990. In West Africa as a whole, a recent UNICEF study shows that economic hardship is encouraging a rise in early marriage, even among some population groups that do not normally practice it.

Many Men are postponing marriage because of lack of resources, and parents have become anxious about the danger of their daughters becoming pregnant outside marriage. Thus any early opportunity for marriage may be seized upon (Adedokun, et al., 2012).

Child marriage is another serious problem which some girls, as opposed to boys, must face. The practice of giving away girls for marriage at the age of 11, 12 or 13, after which they must start producing children, is prevalent among certain ethnic groups in Asia, Africa and Nigeria by extension (Wodon, Savadogo, & Kes, 2017). Child marriage robs a girl of her childhood time necessary to develop physically, emotionally and psychologically imbalanced. In some countries, girls as young as a few months old are promised to male suitors for marriage. Girls are fattened up, groomed, adorned with jewels and kept in seclusion to make them attractive so that they can be married off to the highest bidder (Wodon, et al., 2017).

Health complications that result from early marriage in the Middle East and North Africa, for example, include the risk of operative delivery, low weight and malnutrition resulting from frequent pregnancies and lactation in the period of life when the young mothers are themselves still growing. According to UNICEF, no girl should become pregnant before the age of 18 because she is not yet physically ready to bear children. Babies of mothers younger than 18 tend to be born premature and have low body weight; such babies are more like to die in the first year of life. The risk to the young mother's own health is also greater. Now the question is if one is not healthy how he/she can participate actively toward community development. The relationship between child marriage and labor force participation in community development is complex. On the one hand, lower educational attainment among women who marry as children may reduce their likelihood of entering the labor market and adversely affect the type of jobs they engage in.

This may be the case in contexts where higher levels of educational attainment are associated with increased likelihood of active participation in community development project due to the high opportunity cost of not working. Although child marriage need not necessarily have a direct impact on women's labor force participation, higher fertility associated with child marriage may influence women's roles in the labor market and the number of hours they are able to work (Wodon, et al., 2017). Frequent interruptions to employment due to childbirth and the time burden of care responsibilities can also affect the types of jobs that women can engage in, forcing them into lower paying jobs and more unstable work situations. Child marriage is a major social concern and a violation of children's rights whether it happens to a girl or a

boy as it is the human basic rights to health, nutrition, and education, freedom from violence, abuse and exploitation and deprives the child of his/her childhood (UNICEF, 2011).

### **Effects of Widowhood Practice on Community Development**

Nigeria being a multi tribal society, the customs of its people are as varied as the number of ethnic societies. In other words, there is no single customary law for Nigerians. The various ethnic communities have their different customs as they relate to marriage. Widowhood refers to a state or condition of being a widow/widower. It is a state of loss of a marital partner either a wife, or husband. The patriarchal nature of African society generally lays emphasis on the superiority of men over women in every sphere of life. When a woman dies, in most African societies, her legacy is usually inherited by the husband, children, and her family. But if a man dies, the widow, usually experiences false accusations of killing her husband to deny her share of her husband's properties (Popoola & Agbabiaka-mustapha, 2017).

Apart from the fact that the widow is usually disadvantaged in the distribution of the late husband's property, she is also subjected to some unpleasant widowhood practices. Such practices include shaving of hairs, wearing of black/white clothes, sleeping and sitting on the floor or mat, being refrained from bathing for a number of days, seclusion and being made to swear with husband's corpse, among many others (Akinbi, 2015). Once upon the death of a husband, irrespective of the age of the wife, she descends into widowhood and depending on the cultural background of the marriage; the widow's conduct and activities are henceforth regulated by customary practices and norms. Nwosu (2007) maintains that when one's marriage partner dies, the surviving partner, if a woman, becomes a widow, if a man, a widower. Ogundipe (2001) postulated that a widow under customary law is not entirely without rights in her husband's estate, she has a legal right to retain the use and possession of the matrimonial home subject to the good behavior of the widow. Among the Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria, widowhood practices are generally characterized by human greed, superstitious beliefs and religion (Afolayan, 2011).

In many traditional African communities, widows are generally the poorest of the poor and least protected by the law because their lives are determined by local, patriarchal interpretations of tradition, custom and religion (Cooper, 2011). Eweluka (2002) also noted that the customary law permits and perpetuates discrimination on the basis of gender especially in family relations. Women experience and suffer marital frustrations and depression than men and these continue even at the demise of the husband, where a woman will have to face series of dehumanizing treatments from the in-laws, with the claim that, she killed her husband. Onyeabo (2015) argued that in Igboland in Nigeria the eldest son inherits the entire father's real assets; while in the Benin culture, only the eldest son inherits the father's assets. Okorafor (2011) opined that the problems associated with widowhood and inheritance right of women in Igbo land depicting that they wear a toga of economic, social, and psychological dimensions.

He reveals that within their lineage they are deemed to have no right because they are expected to marry and benefit from their husband's property. As married women they are considered to be strangers who have no part in inheritance. Tesneem

(2017) argued that the crimes and violence against women are not limited to any society but cross across cultures and religious communities and considered it as a universal ill.

Charles (2010) maintains that widows were labeled as husband killers, husband snatchers, adulteress, problematic, destitute, and women with ill luck. Majority of women in Nigeria suffer one form of violence or another which may take place in physical or psychological forms. Certain cultures in Nigeria are repugnant to natural justice. For instance, Arisi and Oromareghake (2011) submits that in Ikwerre culture of Rivers state requires that if a woman must inherit her father's property she has to remain single (unmarried) and at the very moment an Ikwerre woman marries, she fortifies her right to any right to inheritance. Onyeabo notes that in the Northern part of Nigeria, the indigenous custom dictates that only the male child can inherit the land either owned by the father or the mother. According to Nwanegbo (1996) in some places the widow will be taken to an isolated place where she will have her food in broken earthen pot, while her hair will either be left unkempt or be completely shaven off; while in some other places, ten men will have to lie with the widow after her husband's death and she has to cry very early each morning and call her husband by his name, this she will do for one month. Edward and Radall (2012) reveal that in the Ghanaian customs, inheritance is either through a patrilineal custom where a man's lineage is caring for his widow and children or matrilineal custom which places this burden on the widow's lineage.

However, since the United Nations declaration on the elimination of violence against women, attempts have been made by government, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders in Nigeria to address the powerful cultural, traditional, and religious forces that have hitherto hindered elimination of domestic abuse on women but could not achieve considerable results because of the understanding of people (Arisi and Oromareghake, 2011). Olakitike (2009) expressed that these widowhood practices vary from one place to another and many of these practices violate a woman's human right. In traditional African society, death does not end a marriage, as a widow is expected to move into a levirate arrangement with her brother-in-law or other male relative or heir. The children conceived are born within the union belonged to the dead man. In some ethnic groups widows are inherited by the heir and integrated into the extended family (Bernard, Phillips, Machine & Davis, 2000).

According to Aransiola and Ige (2010) widowhood practices is observed among the Yoruba to protect the woman from being harmed by the spirit of the husband; for the woman to prove innocence of the death of her husband and for the husband family to ascertain if the woman had been pregnant as at the time the husband died so that they can claim responsibility and care for the woman among other reasons. Fasoranti and Arunah (2007) noted that after the wailing periods, widows experienced several degradations and deprivation. Among the Hausa-Fulani community and tainted with an Islamic religious element, mourning and purification rites are also imposed and adhered to. Nzewi (1981) found that among the Igbo people of Nigeria, the relatives demand for document relating to the deceased properties including lands, investment and bank account and the widows were required to take oaths as proof that the knowledge of relevant land and personal property of the deceased were not concealed.

Afterward, the widows were required to provide expensive items like a white goat and two jars of palm wine for purification purpose to the female members of their

husband's lineage who made and implemented decision on every matter concerning widows. Widowhood is an unpleasant experience. It is degrading when widows are subjected to untold hardship and maltreatment by their in-laws and by the society. The devastating effects of widowhood practices in many Nigerian societies are so disturbing to the extent that fear and stigmatization associated with being a widow create some sort of emptiness in the widows, which sometimes, leaves them perpetually wounded. The ridicule, accusations, deprivation, sexual harassment and defacement continually have psychological and economical consequences on them.

As such, many widows face extreme poverty, discrimination and dehumanizing treatments. In some instance when the widow refuses to cooperate, miserably she will be deprived of her social security and family support. Her children too are isolated, often in unhealthy condition, physically abused and at times without inheriting any property. In as much as widowhood practice differs from one Nigerian community to another, however the general patterns involved in the practices are displayed. Many of these ethnic groups such as Yoruba, Mama, Igbo, Eggon, Tiv, Alago, Koro, Mada, Eggon, Rindre, Gwandara, Gade, Gbagyi, Toni, Idoma and Urhobo observe a mourning period that differ only in degree. This may range from a few days to a year depending on the ethnic group in question. Despite various changes in the modern Nigerian society, many other traditional practices, widowhood practices have continued to exist silently in spite of modernization

### **Effect of Witchcraft on Community Development**

Most Africans believe that witchcraft cause unusual phenomenon like accidents, conflicts, death, domestic and public aggression, and loss of poverty, sickness and failure. The mystical powers are controlled by witches who possess powers which stop or influence the aforementioned phenomena. Witchcraft is the belief that there were vital forces or supernatural powers that could be tapped by those who acquired such powers to reshape the behavior of man. Brantely (1978) and Green (2000) assert that witchcraft is one of the most potent and dreaded superstitions in Africa. Most Africans as these scholars argue believe witches can act to influence, intervene and alter the course of human life for good or ill. Africans accept witchcraft as a mode of explanation, of perception and interpretation of their problems, events, nature and reality even when reason and common sense suggest otherwise. They believe witches can cause poverty, diseases, accidents, business failures, famine, earthquake, infertility and childbirth difficulties. Holmes (1974) maintains that the existence of beliefs and practices of witchcraft and sorcery were witnessed in Britain a thousand years after the birth of Christ.

For Augé (1974) witchcraft is "a set of beliefs, structured and shared by a given population that address the origin of misfortune, illness and death, and the set of practices for detection, treatment and punishment that corresponds to these beliefs". Akama and Kadenyi (2006) observe that belief and practice of witchcraft has significantly affected social, economic, political and spiritual developments of the Africans. In Nigeria today magic and witchcraft is seen as having effects on farming, poverty, diseases, accidents and other unfortunate events in life which Eggon, Alago, Kanuri, Aho and Koro people of Lafia are not an exemption. Sorcery is the answer to



anything unexplainable such as accident or destruction that falls out of an ordinary realm of explainable truths.

Lawrence (2007), Shaw (2008) argued that that almost all African societies believe in witchcraft in one form or another. In explaining the ultimate cause of any evil, misfortune or death in the African cultural context is viewed that a barren women, people whose children die at birth, women with irregular menstrual flow, accident victims, traders who suffer losses, office workers who fail to get promotion, a political candidate who fails to get elected, a student who fails examinations, a person who notices scratches on his or her baby, a hunter or fisherman who fails to bring home meat, a farmer with bad crop yields, a football team that consistently loses matches all suspect witches as the cause of their misfortune (Kunhiyop, 2008).

It is agreed with the above assertion due to the type of belief that is held by an Alago, Kanuri, Aho, Eggon, and Koro people of Lafia with regards to the issue of witchcraft. In Koro and Eggon land, the people do not believe on Gods supremacy on things that happen to one. According to them, anything negative or bad such as poverty, famine, sickness, barrenness or any misfortune that occurred to one, it is traced down to witchcraft befalling such a person. Africans believe that all ills, misfortunes, sicknesses, accidents, tragedies, sorrows, dangers, unhappy mysteries, and son are caused by mystical powers employed by sorcerers, witches or wizards. Abbas (2006) opines that witchcraft is the ability of people or a person who uses magic means and bewitch others to make things happen to convince people of his powers which is unnatural to make things happen unnatural, and make it look like supernatural so that people will trust, fear and believe in him. Mbula (1975) asserts that in some cultures in Nigeria confession by a witch is seen to be therapeutic while among the Okpameri people of Southern Nigeria witch confession is believed to be curative. Furthermore, in Pentecostal churches witch confession is perceived as a process of spiritual rebirth and recreation. David (2012) observes that most Alago, Kanuri and Eggon people are facing the challenge of totally pulling off from witchcrafts because of lack of trust in the Supreme God. The views of the above scholars on witchcraft in an Alago, Kanuri, Aho, Eggon, and Koro land and almost the entire Africa seem similar. However, hardly do you enter an Eggon, Alago or Kanuri house without hearing of cases of witchcrafts and that many of their prominent sons and daughters have been frustrated and some even died as a result of this which has negatively affected community development. Since those who died as a result of witchcraft can no longer contribute to community development and those who are frustrated cannot properly focused on what is right anymore.

However, it is believed that witches and wizards can hinder the socio-economic or the socio-political progress of their victims or community. There are many cases of where witchcraft members, while dying, confessed to being responsible for the social or political failure of some other people, sometimes, their own blood relations. If such confessions are to be taken seriously, it means, therefore, that these witches and wizards can actually affect the social living of people and their developmental progress.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The use of theories in social sciences research is one vital aspect that cannot be overemphasized. This is due to the fact that theories generally beam light on a research, thereby assisting the researcher to clearly focus on the research. This study adopts historical particularism theory by Franz Boaz in 1968. The theory believes that each culture has its own particular and unique features which is being studied and treated distinctively.

The theory argued that each society is a collective representation of its unique historical past. Historical particularism showed that societies could reach the same level of cultural development through different paths. Boaz suggested that diffusion, trade, corresponding environment, and historical accident may create similar cultural traits. This theory is unique and relevant in this study because the theory helps in given a clear picture of the practices of a particular tribe, for instance the Alago, Kanuri, Aho, Eggon, and Koro, cultural elements through their customs, norms, artifacts and a host of others. The theory aids one to determine the degree of influence that culture may have on community development and the way they relate with other people around them who are not of the same nor share similar cultural qualities

## Methods

The study employed survey research design method. Survey design affords the researcher the opportunity to select respondents from the population. This is a process of selecting a sample from the population using some techniques of sampling. It is interested in some characteristics of the population, but relied on carefully selected sample from the population for intensive study of the characteristics of the population.

The estimated population of the area 3, 330,712 according to the National population commission of Nigeria and National Bureau of Statistics 2016 population projection. The targeted population of the study area made up of traditional rulers, civil servants, male and female and people from the age of 15-18, 19-21, 22-25, and 26 above from the selected wards of Lafia Metropolis. This is because they were in a better position to provide the information needed for the study area.

This study adopted Yamane (1967) formula to determine the sample size of the study. The formula is adopted for this study because it is reliable and effective way of calculating sample size determination in research and it is also a generally accepted method in sample size determination. It states that for a population greater than 100,000, a sample size of 204 and above should be selected at 0.05% or 0.07% level of significance.

Where;

n= Sample size

N= Total number of population of the study area

1= Constant

$e^2$ = the coefficient of degree of error (0.05)

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{330,712}{1 + 330,712 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{330,712}{1 + 330,712 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{330,712}{827.78 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{330,712}{827.78}$$

$$n = 399.51$$

Approximately n=400

A multi-stage sampling technique was applied involving the clusters and simple random sampling. The reason for this adoption is because of the study area which is relatively large and cannot be totally studied by the researcher given the time frame. In the first stage; Lafia Local Government Area was divided into thirteen clusters using the available numbers of council wards namely; Adogi, AgyaragunTofa, Arikyia, Ashigie, Assakio, BakinRijiyia/akurba/sarkinPada, Chiroma, Gayam, Keffin/wambai, Makama, Shabu/kwandere and Wakwaand Zanwa. In the second stage, simple random sampling procedures were applied to select 48 respondents from 8 wards.

By using simple random sampling, the researcher applied fish bowl method in the sample selection where by a slip of papers were written Yes or No options, squeezed and dropped into the container and shuffled where respondents in the various clusters were asked to pick. Those who picked option "Yes" were selected for the study and constitute the respondents of this study. This was done to give an equal opportunity to everybody in the study area to participate in the study. Thus 400 respondents were selected and these include; traditional rulers, male, female and civil servants.

Data were generated through questionnaire. Questionnaire is a list of questions administered on the respondent on the phenomenon of interest. Questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. The questionnaire for this study comprises both open and close ended questions seeking information on the effects of cultural beliefs and community development. Thus, questionnaires were administered to respondents by the researcher in the study area comprising of farmers, youths and traditional rulers. The questionnaires for this study were divided into different sections.

The first section focused on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, while the second section was designed to cover all the objectives of the study. The questionnaire is adopted for this study because it has the capacity of covering a wide geographical area. Questionnaire conceals the identity of the respondents.

Data were collected by the researchers. The questionnaires were administered to respondents in the evening after they were back from their places of economic engagements. The questionnaires were close-ended, and contain questions with options for each section. Secondary source of data collected were textbooks, and journal articles, and government gazettes both from the internet and hard copies. These materials help to draw relevant information on the research topic which formed the basis for the design and formulation of the conceptual framework and theoretical framework.

The data collected in this study were analyzed quantitatively. Quantitative data were analyzed using the statistic package for social sciences (SPSS version 23). The results were presented in the form of tables, Simple percentage and explanation were

presented at the end of each table for easy understanding. In further analysis, the assumption for the study was reviewed. Content analysis was done through sorting, classifying, categorizing and organization of the data into meaningful and manageable units in relation to research questions and objectives. Effects of cultural beliefs as the independent variable, while community development as dependent variable

### Results

A total number of 400 questionnaires was administered to 400 respondents in the study area, but only 387 questionnaires were returned and found valid, 13 questionnaires were not retrieved. Thus, data was collected from 387 respondents in this study.

### Socio-Demographic Data of the Respondents

This section covered the data collected on the socio-demographic information of the respondents, these include; sex, age, occupation, educational attainment and marital status

**Table1: Socio-Demographic Data of the Respondents**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	209	54.0
Female	178	46.0
<b>Occupation</b>		
Civil servants	115	29.7
Student	58	15.0
Traditional rulers	89	23.0
Farmers	125	32.3
<b>Age</b>		
15-18	159	41.1
19-21	75	19.4
22-25	53	13.7
26 and above	100	25.8
<b>Educational background</b>		
Primary	112	28.9
Secondary	175	45.2
Tertiary	100	25.8
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	261	67.4
Single	126	32.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** field survey, 2021

**Table 1** above presented data collected on the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. In terms of sex, the data presented indicates that 209 (54.0%) of the respondents were males, while 46.0% (178) of the respondents were females. In view of occupation, the data presented shown that 29.7% (115) of the respondents were civil servants, 58 (15.0%) of the respondents were students, 89 (23.0%) of the respondents were traditional rulers, 32.0% (125) of the respondents were farmers.

In view of age, the available data reveals that 41.1% (159) of the respondents were between the ages of (15-18) years, 19.4% (75) of the respondents were within the age brackets of (19-21) years, 53 (13.7%) of the respondents of between the age range of (22-25) years, while 25.8% (100) of the respondents 26 years and above

Regards to educational attainment, the data presented indicates that 28.9% (112) of the respondents were holders of First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC), 175 (45.2%) of the respondents were holders of Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE), while 25.8% (100) of the respondents were holders of Ordinary National Diploma (OND), National Certificate in Education (NCE), Higher National Diploma (HND), and Bachelors of Science and Arts (B.sc and B.A) degree. In respect of marital status, the data collected shown that 67.4% (261) of the respondents were married, while 126 (32.6) of the respondents were single.

### Effects of Cultural Beliefs on Community Development

**Table 2. Responses on the practice of funeral rite in Lafia Metropolis**

<b>Funeral rites?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	372	96.1
No	15	3.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Funeral rite affect community development? How?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Casket	87	22.5
Decoration	80	20.7
Foods stuff	65	16.8
Mortuary bills	95	24.5
Music entertainment	60	15.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

The result showed that, 387 respondents were sampled to know if funeral rites are practice in Lafia metropolis 372 respondents which represent 96.1% of the total population were positive while 15 of the respondents which represent 3.9% of the population were negative. This table reveals that, practice of funeral rite is prevalence in the study area.

The table above reveals that, 387 respondents were sampled to know the effects of funeral rite on community development out of which 87 responses which represent 22.5% of the population holds to the fact that it affects development in the aspect of casket, 80 respondents which represent 20.7% of the population affirmed to decoration, 65 respondents which represent 16.8% of the population affirmed to food stuff, 95 respondents which represent 24.5% of the population affirmed to mortuary bills while 60 respondents which represent 15.5% of the population affirmed to music entertainment. This entails that mortuary will go a long way in facilitating development in the study area.

**Table 3**  
**Responses of the practice of child marriage in Lafia Metropolis**

Categories	Frequency	percent
<b>Practice child marriage?</b>		
Yes	369	95.3
No	18	4.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>At what age?</b>		
7-9yrs	17	4.4
10-12yrs	25	6.5
13-15yrs	156	40.3
16-18yrs	189	48.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Psychological effects</b>		
Depression	158	40.8
Anxiety	101	26.1
Inferiority complex	48	12.4
Trauma	80	20.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field survey, 2021

The table above indicate that 387 of the respondents were sample to know whether child marriage is practice in Lafia Metropolis, 369 respondents which represent 95.3% of the total population were positive while 4.7 % of the respondent which represent 18 respondents of the population were negative. This table therefore, indicates that the practice of child marriage in Lafia Metropolis is prevalence.

The table above reveals that 387 of the respondents were sample to know the age a child is given out for marriage in Lafia Metropolis, 17 (4.4%) of the respondents accepts that children of 7-9 years of age were given out for marriage, while 6.5% (25) of the respondents agree that children between the age brackets of 13-15 years were given out for marriage, also between the age brackets of 16-18 years, 189 respondents which represent 48. 8% of the total population werepositive that child marriage in Lafia metropolis is dominant. Thus, the table above reveals that child marriage at 16-18 years is prevalence in Lafia Metropolis. The table above shows that 387 of the respondents were sample to know the Psychological effects of child marriage on community development in Lafia Metropolis, 158 (40.8%) of the respondents agreed that child marriage causes depression on the child, 26.1% (101) of the respondents view anxiety as one of the psychological effects of child marriage, 48 (12.4%) respondents of the total population also reveals that child marriage causes inferiority on

the child, while, 20.7% respondents which represent (80) of the total population indicate that psychological trauma also affect child marriage in Lafia metropolis. Therefore, the table above shows that child marriage has a psychological effect on the child which in turn affects community development in Lafia Metropolis.

**Table 4: Responses on the Practice of widowhood**

<b>Practice widowhood?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	382	98.7
No	5	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Forms of widowhood practices</b>		
Wife inheritance	81	20.9
Wearing of black cloths	149	38.5
Seizure of property	133	34.4
Drinking of deceased bath water	24	6.2
<b>Effects of widowhood</b>		
<b>Practice on community development</b>		
Sickness	159	41.1
Inability to train children	149	38.5
Stigmatization	52	13.4
Marginalization	27	17.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field Survey 2021

The table above indicates that, 387 respondents were sampled to know if widowhood is practice in Lafia metropolis 382 respondents which represent 98.7% of the total population were positive while 5 of the respondents which represent 1.3% of the population were negative. This table reveals that, practice of widowhood is prevalence in the study area.

The table above reveals that, 387 respondents were sampled to know the form of widowhood practice in the study area out of which 81 responses which represent 20.9% of the population confirmed to wife inheritance, 149 respondents which represent 38.5% of the population confirmed to wearing of black clothes, 133 respondents which represent 34.4% confirmed to seizure of property while 24 respondents which represent

6.2% of the population confirmed to drinking of deceased bath water. This entails that, wearing of black clothes is common form of widowhood practice prevalence in the study area.

The table above indicates that, 387 respondents were sampled to know the effects of widowhood practice on community development in the study area out of which 159 respondents which represent 41.1% confirmed that, the aftermath often is sickness, 149 respondents which represent 38.5% of the population confirmed to inability to train children, 52 respondents which represent 13.4% confirmed to stigmatization while 27 respondents which represent 7.0% of the population confirmed to marginalisation. This therefore means that, outbreak of sickness is the resultant effects of widowhood practice in the study area

**Table 5: Responses on the Practice of witchcraft in LafiaMetropoli**

<b>Witchcraft practices in your community?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	379	97.9
No	8	2.1
<b>Does Witchcraft affect development?</b>		
Yes	382	98.7
No	5	1.3
<b>How?</b>		
Loss of lives	205	53.0
Destruction of farm produce	58	15.0
Hindrance to business activities	75	19.4
Prevention from educational attainment	49	12.7

**Source:** Field Survey, 2021

The result shows that, 387 respondents were sampled to know the cases of witchcraft in the study area 379 respondents which represent 97.9% of the total population were positive while 8 of the respondents which represent 2.1% of the population were negative. This means that, practice of witchcraft is prevalence in Lafia metropolis.

The result shows that, 387 respondents were sampled to know the effects of witchcraft in the study area 382 respondents which represent 98.7% of the total population were positive while 5 of the respondents which represent 1.3% of the population were negative. This means that, practice of witchcraft is prevalence in Lafia metropolis

The table above indicates that, 387 respondents were sampled to know the effects of witchcraft practice on community development in the study area out of which 205 respondents which represent 53.0% confirmed that, the aftermath often is loss of lives 58 respondents which represent 15.0% of the population confirmed to destruction of farm produces 75 respondents which represent 19.4% confirmed to hindrances to business activities while 49 respondents which represent 12.7% of the population confirmed to prevention from educational attainment Therefore it can be deduce that, loss of lives as a result of witchcraft practices affect community development in Lafia Metropolis.



## Discussion of findings

Based on the analysis in 4.1 the following findings were revealed: Table 4.1.1 revealed that, majority of the respondents are male (54.0%), aged between 15-18 years (41.1%), married (67.4%) and have at least attended secondary education level. The findings also revealed that, (32.0%) of the respondents in the study area are farmers. More so, table 2.1 depicted that (22.5%), (20.7%), (16.8%), (24.5%), and (15.5%) of the respondents agreed that casket, decoration, food stuff, mortuary bills and music entertainment are often the effect of funeral rites on community development in the study area. It also revealed that, (14.2%), (17.6%), (40.1%), (19.4%) and (8.8%) of the respondents affirmed that high cost of funeral rite affects development in the community.

Furthermore, in table 2.2 revealed that (48.8%) of the respondents affirmed that children are given out for marriage at a tender age and in turn affects community development. Also, the respondents (40.8%) of them believed that depression is the resultant effect of early marriage on child which has a negative effect on community development.

Moreover, table 2.3 revealed that respondents (38.5%), (34.4%) ascertained that wearing of black cloths and seizure of property are the form of widowhood practice prevalence in the study area. Furthermore, (41.1%), and (38.5%) of the respondents affirmed that sickness and inability to train children were the aftermath of widowhood in the study area.

Finally, table 2.4 indicates that (53.0%), (19.4%), (15.0%), and (12.7%) of the respondents reveals that loss of lives, hindrances to business activities, destruction of farm produces and prevention from educational attainment are the major effects of witchcraft practices on community development in the study area.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings it could be concluded that cultural beliefs has negative impact on community development in Lafia metropolis.

More so, it can be deduced that cultural beliefs such as funeral rite, child marriage, widowhood practice and witchcraft affects community development in different aspect in areas like Security, healthcare provision, and construction of schools, construction of public toilets and construction of bridges. Furthermore, that seizure of property, loss of lives, destructions of farm produces, expensive nature of funeral ceremonies and inability to train ones children has impacted negatively on community development in Lafia Metropolis.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is important to make the following recommendations;

- Traditional and religious institutions should roll out policies and sensitization programs that will help discourage cultural practices that are capable of retarding community development as spending lavishly on funeral ceremonies, rather encouraging the culture of investing such funds in small businesses to make life more meaningful to families, and contribute to economic growth of Lafia metropolis and Nigeria at large.

- There is need to confront the traditions that surround and support early marriage, by mounting a massive campaign and education of the society, parents, community members, and youths about the negative consequences of early marriage. Also, government should ensure this is included in School curricula for the knowledge of students in school, and creating a supportive network of leaders and teachers who can help girls negotiate with their parents.
- Policy makers should ensure that extant laws reflect radical modifications of such that tend to exact unacceptable pattern of behaviour by modern standard on the women. More so, Laws against dispossessing the widows of their inheritance should be enacted and effectively enforced throughout the country.
- It is important that communities and its peoples should not base their lives on what the unseen powers of the universe have for them, rather they should promote scientific break-through industry and technology to develop their communities.

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