



THE PLACE OF INU ENI IN MARRIAGE STABILITY IN AWGU

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Abstract: *This work studies the place of Inu Eni in the marriage stability in Awgu. Inu Eni is a rite of passage for girls of marriageable age in Awgu whereby young girls were trained on code of conduct in marriage. In Igbo land, Nigeria and the world at large, broken marriages abound. This affects the society negatively as many vices and bizarre behavior became the order of the day for majority of the children from broken homes. Prior to Afro-Western relations, girls were trained on marital etiquette, as regards respect to husbands and the general public during In uEni ceremony. Today, the family and the society are too busy to prepare girls for marriage, and the society is paying the huge price for it. This study is a survey research and it was carried out in Awgu. The population of the study consists of elderly women who participated in this rite and elderly men who saw it all when it was still in vogue in Awgu. Data were collected through oral interviews and scholarly library material relating to the topic. The data collected were analyzed using functionalist theory to highlight the functions of Inu Eni in helping to stabilize marriage as well as reducing the incidence of divorce and separation. The study found out that most broken marriages were caused by absence of patience and endurance between husband and wife. The work also discovered that many of the social vices perpetrated in this generation are mainly from children and or adults from broken homes. The research therefore recommends that girls' training in the culture of their various communities before venturing into marriage is necessary as many of these girls today are ignorant of dos and don'ts in marriage. This will, to a great extent, help in curbing this social trend of broken marriages.*

Introduction

Igbo people have various rites of passages that help them to attain various goals in their lives. These rites of passage span from childhood through puberty to adulthood. They are observed for the fulfilment of various purposes in the lives of the Igbo people. Rites of passage for children are: burial of umbilical cord and placenta – *ili otubo na odogwu*, cutting of natal hair - *ikpu isi mburuputauswa*, circumcision – *ibi ugwu*, naming ceremony- *igu nwa aha* and cutting of the first teeth – *ihu nwata*



eze. The puberty rites of passage are initiation into masquerade cult, - *Iba mmanw/ikpu ani*, scarification – *igbu ichi*, tying of wrapper – *Iwa akwa*, in some parts of Igbo culture for boys. Seclusion of young girls before marriage – *Iru mgbede*, *Ine ezi*, *Iso ebe* or *Inu Eni* rites of passage for girls. It is the *Inu Eni* rite of passage for girls that this paper addresses. Adulthood rites of passage are marriage rite – *alum di na nwaanyi*, title taking – *ichi echichi*, pregnancy rites and birth rites.

Inu Eni, in the olden days, is a rite of passage for Awgu young girls who have entered puberty. Unlike *Iru Mgbede*, *Inu Eni* comprises two major events, *Iru Mgbede* and *Ima Akwa*. The girls in the olden days are confined to a room for four lunar months. They are trained on marital issues, bedroom ethics, childbirth, preparing various local delicacies, cleanliness, child-care and how to respect their husbands and the general public. This training helps greatly to curtail separation and divorce prevalent in our society today. Nowadays, many of our girls do not care about learning marital issue before plunging into it. They are ignorant of the custom of the communities where they are married to, and they do not understand the etiquette required in marriage before moving into it. This has been creating ill-behaviours in the society because as girls marry and divorce, their children mostly constitutes major menace by perpetrating various social ills in the society like armed robbery, cultism, drug addiction, prostitution and even gay practice. The effect of broken homes on the society is so glaring that it has become source of worries to the church, educational institution and the society at large. Chidume, (2017: 24) says that “to change the society in a silent revolution, one needs only to change the family and the values it stands for and communicates. By this way, one ensures that a new generation comes on stage with different sets of codes and values, seeing and acting differently from their forebears”. Therefore, for our society to minimize these crimes, young girls are to be taught marital roles, family values and the effects of broken homes in the lives of children, their parents and the society at large. Stability in marriage is very important to the society because the family is the first socialization agent of every child. Therefore, if a society is devoid of stability in marriage there will be chaos and the society is doomed.

Literature Review

The review of relevant work already written in the past is very necessary in the course of research in order to do justice to this work. This is because it sharpens the wits of the researcher and prepares the minds of the audience before the data.



The key concept in this study is *Inu Eni*. *Inu Eni* is an Awgu term for training of prospective bride before marriage. It derives its name from the special type of wrapper worn by young Awgu maidens before marriage in the olden days. In Awgu *inu eni* means tying of wrapper. *Inu* means tying while *Eni* means wrapper. It consists of two rites; training of girls and clothing them at the end of the training so that they will be qualified to tie wrapper whenever they are going out from their homes. Training of young nubile girls who are between the ages of fourteen to seventeen years before marriage was prevalent in most towns in the Igbo culture areas but with different names like *iba nhiha*, *iso ebe*, *ine ezi*, *iru mgbede na ikpu n'utu*.

Writing about this culture, Ubesie (1987) explains *Iru Mgbede* as a tradition in many parts of Igbo land that is performed before a girl can live with her husband. He further listed the towns that perform this rite; Aro, Orumba, Umuahia, Orlu, Ohafia and environs. He says that every town has a name for this rite. The Idemili people call it *Iba n' ulo nhihia*, Orumba call it *Iru Mgbede*, Ohafia call it *Iba nhihia*, Orlu call it *Ikpu n'utu*. Adazi people call it *Iso Ebe*. This is called *Inu Eni* in Awgu. It comprises two things: training the young nubile girl in marital issues, and clothing her at the end of the seclusion rite. Corroborating Ubesie, Anedo and Anedo, (2007:69) made us to understand that "Among the Omabala Igbo, the rite for female is called *ine ezi* while other parts of Igbo land especially; the Imo and Abia areas know it as *iru mgbede*". Still on training of girls in Igboland before marriage as it was observed by Adazi people. Ogbukagu (1988:215) explains *Iso Ebe* as an important social institution from which girls were prepared for effective participation in matters concerning marital life, management of homes, good citizenship and neighbourliness. Other training provided includes moral instruction, aesthetics, singing, music etc.

Still on how girls were trained in order to maintain marriage stability, Ogbalu, (1979) explains *iru mgbede* as a rite of passage which parents in Igbo culture areas performs for their girl child before she will live with her husband. He says that it is because Igbo people cherish their daughter that made them to include this rite in their culture. When a girl attains the age of marriage, it is always unpleasant if she is not married. The Igbo people tried as much as possible to stop having unmarried maiden through *iru mgbede* rite. He says that the Igbo people seclusion rite was to make the young maidens to add some weight and becomes more attractive to suitors. This helped to reduce cases of unmarried women in the olden days.



Corroborating the above statement by Ogbalu, Anedo and Anedo, (2007:69) opine that “This is for grown up girls and it is a rite which a mother performs for her daughter to appreciate her for keeping her virginity till the time her age mates are ripe for marriage. It is a ceremony whereby the girls are prepared for marriage. It is therefore a ceremony after which suitors start to come for the girl of their choices. Orji, (1999:106) says that generally, fattening of girls starts in the month of June each year. Grown girls who were to perform the marriage ceremonies, were confined to the house and were not allowed any work including domestic chores. A girl of about thirteen years was provided to her as maid servant. Ezenweke, (2012:133) opines that during the seclusion period, the girls are given separate huts where they are restricted from going out during the day except at night when they go to the village square to learn some dances, songs, folktales and orientations on women status and roles. During the day, they beautify themselves with cam-wood dye, plaiting their hair and lavishly feed themselves. This practice mentioned by Ezenweke is equally practiced in Awgu in the olden days. The difference is that Awgu people conclude theirs with clothing rite of passage.

Onyemaechi (2015:11) avers that “the women are separated from the usual household or abode. This shows the change of a woman’s status from a single, virginal individual to someone looking forward to moral sex, pregnancy, and childbearing”. He further says that the songs during this ritual convey maturation to womanhood. The *Iru Mgbede* culture is a rite of passage only for women. The culture feels that healthy offspring, physically fit enough to cope with life, can be born only to healthy, physically fit mother. This is a time to prepare intellectually, emotionally, physically in readiness for the status of married women. Nwasike (2014:5) states that “young girls were kept pure before marriage by keeping young men away from their seclusion hut; they were decorated with dye called *uli* and *uhie* (camwood paste). These dyes were used in drawing beautiful body paintings/arts to attract attention and suitors”.

Writing on seclusion and fattening period in Efik culture Chukwu (2015:7) observes that besides fattening her up for her would be husband’s pleasure, the bride is taught other cultural traditions of her people by minders, who are usually elderly women. These include traditional wifely duties and expectation like how to cook some native dishes and properly care for her new family. She may be tutored in traditional arts and crafts, how to manage funds and ultimately please her husband. Needham (2004: 6) confirms that “among the Africans, wedding rituals in some cultures require the bride-



to-be to be kept in fattening rooms where they “plump up” before they are sent off to their husband’s home”.

Smith (2009:8) says that young virgin girls, who are as young as five years are taken for Lebloah at special “fattening farms” where they were overfed, massaged and made to sleep for longer periods to become the perfect, robust bride. The older women, aunts or grandmother of these young girls will administer pounded millet, camel’s milk and water in large quantity that makes the girls ill. Waterlow (2013: 6) notes that in Mauritania that lies between the Western Sahara and Senegal, women are encouraged to gain weight as much as possible from childhood in order to be considered attractive. Having a fat wife is desirable and is a sign of wealth and prestige in the country where food is in short supply. In their quest to find a husband, many of the women are pushed in to dangerous lengths to gain weight from being force fed to taking pills that are not fit for human consumption. This practice is very bad because it can lead to obesity or even death from the wrong pills they take in the process of fattening up. Awgu people helped their daughters to gain weight but they do not force them to eat, overfeed or give them pills or herbs to help in fattening them.

From what have been reviewed, it is clear that in many parts of Igbo land where this culture takes place, it is only the seclusion rite of passage that is observed. In other parts of Africa like Mauritania, young girls are force fed to plump up to get a husband. There is no mentioning of tying of wrapper rite of passage as part of this rite in any Igbo town. This work want to fill this gap and let the world know how Awgu people of the olden days used their rich cultural heritage in sustaining their marriage and training their children through *inueni* rite.

This study makes use of the functionalist theory propounded by Emile Durkheim in 1893 to highlight the functional relevance of this observance, by the Awgu people in maintaining marriage stability in the olden days (i.e *Inu Eni* rite of passage). Prominent proponents of Emile Durkheim theory were Auguste Comte, Talcott Parsons, Davis and Moore, Herbert Spencer, Almond and Powell, Jonathan, H, and Maryanskis, A. Z.

Many scholars have written about functionalist theory, one of them is Coser (1977:140), and he observes that “When the explanation of a social phenomenon is undertaken, we must seek separately the efficient cause which produces it and the functions it fulfils”. Another person is



Parsons (1977:27), he believes that order, stability and cooperation in society are based on value consensus, and that is a general agreement by members of society concerning what is good and worthwhile. This work agrees with Parsons because in the olden days the Awgu people believe that *Inu Eni* is very necessary because it helped them in maintaining marriage stability. The family as an institution in the social strata of the society has the function of transferring its culture from the older generation to the younger one. On the other hand, Tuner and Maryanski (1988:8), sees functionalist theory as an approach that is based on seeing society as analogous to a biological organism and attempts to explain social structures in terms of the needs of the society as a whole.

Another person that has works on functionalist theory is Akhter (2016:3). He opines that all social system share certain functional prerequisites which must be met if the system is to survive and operate efficiently. One of such prerequisites, he says, is role allocation and performance. This means that all roles must be filled. They will be filled by those that perform them best. The functionalist perspective attempts to explain social institutions as a collective means to meet individual and social needs. In the functionalist perspective, societies are thought to function like organisms, with various social institutions working together like organs to maintain and reproduce societies. Institutions come about and persist because they play a function in society, promoting stability and integration. The researcher agrees with Akhter. There are role allocations in Igbo land: fathers have their role as the head of the family, and they provide food, shelter, clothing and protection of the family; whereas the wives perform the role of bearing and training the children. It is said that training a woman is like training a nation. This is so because it is the function of the mother to train her children. A mother knows the behaviour of her children perfectly well than the father.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using functionalist theory to show the functions of the family, in training young girls before marriage, as this helps in maintaining stability of marriage to avoid separation or divorce.

What is *Inu Eni*?

Inu Eni according to Agbidi Okeke a female respondent is the preparation of young girls for marriage. It consists of two things in Awgu: the first is the training of the girls in family chores like cooking, washing, child care, family values, pregnancy and



labor sign, dos and don'ts of society and bedroom ethics. Secondly, is the tying wrapper by the young girl after the training which is where the name of this rite was derived from- *Inu Eni*. According to Nwuko Mgbekeocha one of the respondents, *Inu Eni* means clothing *Eni* means ancient clothes that are wrapped around the body by grown up women in Awgu in the olden days. He said that in the olden days, little girls wore scanty dresses. But at puberty before any girl can get married properly in Awgu, *Inu Eni* rite would be conducted for her in order that she may be well informed about marital issues and child care before delving into marriage. A girl that failed to observe this rite in the olden days is said to be naked in marriage - *O gba ọtọ lụọ di*. This is a derogatory statement for insulting both the parents of the girl and the girl herself. This shows how important *Inu Eni* rite of passage was in the olden days at Awgu.

This rite, according to Ulaogu Onwu, was performed in order that the girl would learn the ups and downs in marital issues; it was not done for the pleasure of doing it. Rather, it was designed specifically to train young girls in marriage obligations before the girls will join their husbands if they were betrothed or were being given out to marriage. He further stated that it was meant for would-be wife to get some rest from farming activities and look refreshing before moving to her husband's house. *Inu Eni* in Awgu performed the function of instructing young girls on how to leave peacefully with their husbands to avoid separation or divorce. This helped in many ways to stabilize marriage and contributed in no small measure to curbing many of today's social problems like armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, prostitution and drug peddling.

Stages of *Inu Eni*

There are five stages of *Inu Eni* rite for young girls in Awgu before they get married. These are passing the of virginity test, seclusion of the girl in an outhouse, educating the girl about marital issue, clothing ceremony and market outing to mark the end of the *Inu Eni*.

Virginity Test

Inu Eni rite of passage in Awgu was usually heralded by the young girls passing the virginity test. According to Eke Nweeku, a female respondent, at the end of June of every three years –*ngwucha ọnwa asaa*- all the girls intending to undergo this rite will gather at the village square on the last *Afọ* market day in June. The chief priest of *Ani* from another village in Awgu will be invited to examine the girls. The priest of *Ani* is



invited because it is believe that *Ani* is the earth goddess in charge of morality and any girl that lost her virginity has questionable moral. This corroborates with Iluogu (1985:11) who avers that “*Ala*, the earth deity, guards the morality of any given place in a number of ways. What she condemns is tabooed”. This may be the reason Awgu people valued virginity of their young maidens.

Affirming this, Agbidi Okeke said that these girls will line up in a single file. The chief priest will be seated at the center of the village square and the girls will be coming one after the other to see the chief priest in the full view of the spectators that gather to know who is still a virgin and who is not. The chief priest will raise his staff any time any of these girls comes: if she is a virgin, the staff will be raised up, if not, the staff will fall from the priest’s hand. She added that the chief priest of *Ani* from another village in Awgu is invited to avoid victimization of girls whose parents are not in good terms with the chief priest of their village. She further states that it is a thing of joy for one’s daughter to pass this test and equally a big embarrassment to parents and relatives whose daughters fail this test. Any girl that fails this test cannot perform the *Inu Eni* rite and she is mandated to marry an old man especially widower. Those who pass the test will proceed to the seclusion rite. Ogbukagu (1988:216) says that potential *Ebe* participants were expected to be virgins and ended up their session remaining virgins until they got married; to ensure that this was maintained, parents, especially mothers did all they could in pursuit of this objective. *Inu Eni* rite according to Nwuko Mgbekocha has helped in great measure to curb promiscuity among young girls and equally made their parents and relative to be on their toes in watching the movements as well as whereabouts of their children. He explained that marriage in those days were stable because if a man marries a virgin and make her a woman it is very difficult for that woman to leave her husband.

As regards this, the functions of the family and society are show cased as they strive to curb young girls from promiscuity, which is the bone of contention in marriage instability. The mother of any girl is always at alert about her girl child, because she cannot bear the shame and embarrassment about her daughter failing virginity test at the village square.

Seclusion of the Girl

After the virginity test comes the seclusion. Nwokolo Nwavo, a male respondent said that this seclusion was made so that the girls will be left alone to relax, eat sumptuous meals with assorted fish and meat and sleep often. He said that if the parent of a girl is



wealthy, they will slaughter a goat, and dry the meat and use it in bit in cooking meals for the girl. Cocks are slaughtered occasionally for variation of the meat in her food. If the girl is betrothed or has been engaged, the suitor will help in her feeding. He has to bring meat and food and even firewood to his in-laws to augment the one the parents are providing.

Seclusion is moving the girl out from the main building in the compound. A small hut is constructed beside her mother's hut. This is where the girl stays for the four lunar months *Izu asaa na anọ* that is one hundred and sixteen days. Little girls are sent to sing for her and make her happy. She is debarred from performing any task. Male visitors are banned from visiting her, including her suitor, if she has one. Nwasike (2014:5) states that "young girls were kept pure before marriage by keeping young men away from their seclusion hut". Gladly, a family performs this function for its daughter, a show of their love and cherish of her. This makes the daughter feel accepted by her parent and therefore she strives to demonstrate love and care as well in her husband's house and extended family. This sustains stability in her marriage.

Educating the Young Girl

The mother of the girl after the day's work goes to see her daughter in the night. According to Nwiino Nwuzo, during this time, she teaches her daughter many things concerning marital issue, ranging from bedroom ethics, child bearing, early pregnancy signs, labour signs, breastfeeding, taboos and abomination, as well as respect to husband, and his relatives on one hand and the general public on the other hand.

Bedroom ethics: The mother is expected to explain to her daughter how to sleep with her husband, how to reject sexual overtures from male in-laws, relatives, friends of her husband and the general public. How she is expected to behave in bedroom affairs, about what to do and what not to do.

Childbearing: She is taught the early signs of pregnancy, food to avoid and the ones to eat during pregnancy, labour signs, breast feeding, child nurture and how to behave towards her husband during breast feeding for proper child spacing.

Taboos and Abomination: Ugwoevi Eku, a female respondent said that the girl in seclusion is given lesson on such taboos and abomination as sleeping with another man other than her husband, uprooting her mother in-law's farm crops or those of any other person in annoyance throwing her husband down during a fight or breaking /



cutting her husband's climbing rope - *ete*. She is made to understand that any day she commits any of the above offences, the marriage is severed and therefore a show of shame to the family. Okafor (1992:45) made us to understand "that certain offences are regarded as against the *ana* or *ala*, the earth and the perpetrators of such offences are said to have polluted the earth – *meruru ala*." He explained that, that is why a purification ritual must be performed after each breach of taboo in order to restore the natural order that has been upset. A family demonstrates its function by inculcating in its young girl the mores stabilizing marriage unlike today where many girls that go into marriage are ignorant about what constitute taboos or abomination. This continues to make many marriages hit the rock within four or five months. To avoid this, girls should be taught how to behave in their husband's house before marriage.

Clothing the Young Girl –*Inu Eni*

This stage is where this practice gets its name. *Eni* in Awgu means small pieces of cloth worn by girls before they are married. *Inu* in Awgu means 'tying' which is *Ima Akwa* in standard Igbo. According to Eji Nwukamma, *Inu Eni* usually takes place at the middle of the night of Eke that precedes an Orie day. The parents of the young girl will invite their relations and well-wishers to celebrate the end of the seclusion period of their daughter. The mother would have bought *Eni* in the previous Orie day. The family cooks various foods like *abacha*, fufu and soup, yam porridge and procures palm wine. Invitees eat and make merry from about 11pm till 12 midnight. Then, the girl's mother with the help of her close friends enters the girl's seclusion house and performs the "*ashị ọcha*" ceremony. This is the most important aspect of *Inu Eni* ceremony. Mgbavo Oge said that the young maiden is made to lie down face upwards. The women use the *ashị ọcha* bead to touch her stomach seven times as they pray for children for her in her future husband's house. After this ritual, she gets up and ties her *Eni*.

From inside of the hut, the women will let out a cry of joy which will be echoed by those outside. The girl accompanying the women will come out to dance for her guests. During the course of the dance, the guests will give her various gifts such as money, clothing, farm tools, crops, and domestic animals. All these gifts are kept separately by her mother who afterwards adds other things which she hands over to her daughter during her marriage. After the dance, everybody will retire for the night. From that day she has to tie up wrapper. The parents, relatives and well-wishers of the girl in seclusion help in stabilizing her marriage through their gifts. These gifts help



the young maiden to settle down quickly in her new home. They have performed the function of alleviating poverty from the young couple.

Outing Ceremony Rite

According to Nwaoshi Aja, early in the morning of Orie day, the girl will rise up, take her bath, tie her wrapper and head to the village square where she will meet other girls who have performed the seclusion rite also. They will line up and dance for the spectators at the village square. When they are dancing, the spectators file out to give them gift of money alone. Legible suitors will be searching to see whether they will find a bride. All the girls that have suitors before performing the *Inu Eni* rite will wear *ashi ocha* bead on their neck to show that they already have suitors. Those who have no suitors will not wear *ashi ocha* bead. Any suitor that spots a girl he admires will show his father and mother or relative the girl. They will make enquiry there to know the background of the parents of the girl.

James Okolie, said that as noon approaches, when the market is in full brim, these girls will head to the Orie market with their music. People will be giving them money as they dance and praising them and their parents for performing this rite. At Orie they will meet other celebrants from other villages of Awgu town. All of them will come together to dance, wrestle and do tug of war. All these are done to entertain the spectators and for suitors to know who to choose. It is not heard of that a girl fails to have a suitor after performing, *Inu Eni* ceremony.

This rite of passage helps immensely in sustaining marriage in Awgu in the olden days because a husband that finds her wife a virgin will value her throughout his life. He is obliged to give her mother-in-law a she goat as a reward for training her daughter well. A mother is always proud to showcase the gifts that accompany the she-goat her son-in-law gave her as a reward for her daughter keeping her virginity. All these stages of the ceremony helped in stabilizing marriage and the upbringing of children.

Significance of *Inu Eni*

Inu Eni is very important to the lives of the Awgu people of the old. It has the following significance, social, religious, economic and cultural.

Social Significance: Peter Chukwuoshi, a male respondent said that social significance of *Inu Eni* in Awgu was that marriages were contracted and consummated after this rite. Hardly could a girl remain unmarried after, for brides were chosen



during the occasion. Equally, it made many of the villagers to gather at the village square. This made many friends who had not seen one another for a long time to run into themselves. At Orie market, girls from different villages came together exchanged warm greetings and engaged in social activities like dancing, wrestling and tug of war. These girls met their friends, cousins and relatives from other villages and exchanged pleasantries with them. So, *Inu Eni* helps in bringing people together and making them happy.

Religious Significance: *Inu Eni* has religious values. On the very first day of the rite, which is examining the virgins, the chief priest of *Ani* comes from another village armed with his staff of office to know who are still virgin and those who are not. After the examination, a she-goat is slaughtered by the chief priest and the meat used in cooking for girls who have passed the virginity test. Alibisi Oko said that that food is called *Nni Ani*, food of the Earth goddess. By those girls eating that food they have taken an oath of chastity to whoever will be their husbands. That is why it is very important in the olden days in Awgu that a girl's parents strive to perform *Inu Eni* for their girl child in order to let her future husband know that her daughter is ready to live chaste live in her husband's home.

Cultural significance: Chihanwa Okonwuche, a respondent, stated that the culture of Awgu people was transmitted from generation to generation through the rite of *Inu Eni*. During the seclusion period, the girl's mother and her relatives usually taught the girl many things concerning the culture of Awgu people: the dos and don'ts of the society, the functions of a wife, how to observe various religious days and other things. By doing this, the culture of the town was learned and preserved from generation to generation.

Economic significance: On the last night of the girl's seclusion, she is clothed and many people invited. When she comes out to dance, she is offered many gifts by her guest. The gifts range from goat, fowl, food crops, farm tools, cooking utensils and clothing materials and accessories, Ekemma Utamdi said that these gifts would help the girl immensely in settling down at her husband's house. The crops and domestic animals helped her in making money. She is expected to cultivate those crops and rear the domestic animals in her new home. This would help her to earn some money and support her husband.



Findings

Many marital problems experienced these days were caused by non-observance of *Inu Eni*, *iru mgbede* or *ikū ebe* which is training of young girls before marriage. This work found out that most broken marriages were due to lack of patience and endurance between husband and wife. Many social vices perpetrated by this generation are mainly from broken homes. Unlike these days, there was hardly an unmarried girl in those days because, after *Inu Eni* those who performed the ceremony successfully are married off. Girls who were found virgins by their husbands are trusted and cherished. Because of this ceremony mothers were more careful in training the girls of the olden days to avoid public shame.

There were low crime rates then because every mother tried to raise her children well, both male and female, because parents and siblings' behaviour affected the marriage of their daughters. Suitors made better choice of wives then than now because they married whom they knew. Any young woman who was found not to be a virgin was made to marry an old man. This served as a punishment and deterred young girls from leading promiscuous life. Any young man found to have defiled a virgin was made to pay her bride price and he forfeits marrying her as his punishment.

Recommendations

Our society today is passing through a lot of anti-social acts as a result of marriage instability. The multiplicity of crimes and vices rampant in our society today is engendered by marriage breakdown. The society especially the Igbo people should have recourse to their old method of training their girls before marriage. This can be done by including marriage counseling in primary and secondary school curricula. The state government should as a matter of urgency include marriage rites of various communities in the curricula to be taught at primary school level in various communities. The taboos and abomination rupturing marriages should be included to avoid marrying today and divorcing tomorrow. The Federal Government through the Ministry of Woman Affairs should organize seminars for mothers especially during August meetings, on how to train their children. This will help to a great measure in saving the society of this barrage of ill behaviour of their children. The chief priest should be substituted with pastor so that Christians will equally participate in this rite. Equally the number of days and time of the year should be amended to accommodate school children.



Conclusion

It is no longer news that many girls go into marriage because all their mates are married. Many go into marriage without knowing fully well what is involved. A Latin proverb says that “Nemodat quod non habet” meaning “no one gives what he does not have”. If a mother does not know what she is supposed to teach her young daughter, what will her daughter learn from her? Nothing. So mothers should try as much as possible to teach their daughters the dos and don’ts of marriage, what to expect and how to avoid instability in their marriage. Even the male folks are not left out. Fathers should teach their sons that women are not pieces of wood or other acquired property they can be disposed of when they are no longer needed.

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