Exploring Reasons for the Persistence of Girl-Child Marriage in Nigeria

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What is Child Marriage?

- Marriage after the onset of puberty but before age 18
- Adolescent girl
Girl-child marriage (GCM) - persisting problem in Nigeria
• Criminalized by 2003 Child’s Right Act
• Has negative impacts in areas in which it is practiced

The question my research sought to answer is why GCM still persists in Nigeria.
Nigeria

- Population: ~ 178 million
- Major languages: English, Yoruba, Igbo & Hausa.
- Ethnic groups: Over 250, majorly Yoruba, Igbo & Hausa
- Religions: Christianity (50%), Islam (45%), & indigenous religions (5%)

GCM in Nigeria

- Nationwide - 20% at 15, 40% at 18
- Northwest - 54.3% at 15, 81.3% at 18
Impacts of GCM

Health impacts
• Maternal and infant death
• Fistulas - VVF, RVF

Socio-economic impacts
• Stunted education
• Continuous cycle of poverty
Thesis

Poorly, lack of education, unique family and religious practices, and loopholes in social policy have led to the persistence of GCM in Nigeria.
Sociological explanation

• Structural Functional theory – function/dysfunction in societal institutions
  ▪ Economic
  ▪ Educational
  ▪ Family
  ▪ Religious
  ▪ Political
Reasons for persistence

- Economic – poverty
- Educational – lack of education
- Family & religious – unique practices
- Political – loopholes in social policy
  - Civil law
  - Islamic law
  - Customary law
Conclusion

Although poverty, lack of education, unique family and religious practices are all significant contributors to the persistence of GCM, loopholes in social policy, is the leading factor for its persistence.
Suggestions for change

- Reduce isolation and empower girls by increasing educational opportunities
- More importantly, elimination of non-civil laws on marriage to remove loopholes