

SOCIO- CULTURAL MEANING AND PARENTAL ROLE IN CHILD RIGHT PROTECTION IN NIGERIA: THE TIV EXPERIENCE.

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Abstract

The paper discusses socio-cultural meaning of a child and parental roles in child rights protection in Nigeria; the Tiv experience. The objective is to examine the socio-cultural interpretation, meaning and perception of a child, and the influence on parental roles in child rights protection in pre-colonial and post-colonial Nigeria societies from the Tiv experience. The Functionalist theoretical perspective was used to anchor study discourse. The paper utilized qualitative research method. Data were collected using primary and secondary sources. Under the primary source oral interview was conducted and interviewees provided varied views on Tiv world view of a child and parental roles in child right protection in Tiv society; Nigeria. Secondary source of data collection was also used and data were collected from textbooks, journals, internet sources and other library materials. The data were carefully transcribed and analyzed using both descriptive and content analytical approaches. It was found out that the Tiv people's view of a child portray the child as a lovely, close companion and, future leader, in Tiv society and the perception influenced parental roles/ responsibilities on the protection of rights of the child from the day a child is conceived, to the day a child is born; up to adolescent stage.

Key words: Socio- cultural, meaning of a child, parental role(s), child rights.

Introduction

There is no human society-civilized and or uncivilized that exist without a culture. Indeed, the two (society and culture) are inseparable terms with diverse meanings, which function collectively to provide and give meaning for the collective existence of humans, the understanding of human behaviour, interaction, their reactions to social situations and daily activities that affect them, and the relationships which exist between them in society. According to Adelakun, "society and culture functions together to provide and give direction on the way group's life of people in society is organized, coordinated, structured and governed to chart a course for the continued existence of human society".¹ Adelakun states further that, "...because society must exist functionally, there are culturally and societally approved ways of ensuring the course of its existence, continuity, change and advancement". One of which is through procreation and proper child upbringing (that is positive socialization of children) which scholars; such as Akume² and Alubo³ explained; vary from society to society, and across cultures.

It has also been observed that, societies across cultures have varied culturally approved roles and parental responsibilities which are carried out and must be performed by parents to ensure good parental care, guidance and proper child upbringing (positive socialization of children) to foster and enhance good character formation in children.⁴ These parental responsibilities ranged/or are spanned from child birth (procreation of children), positive socialization of children, adequate parental care for the children, proper child guidance and protection, proper child placement in society and so on. The parental roles and responsibilities to children mentioned

above, according to Alubo, “have been abandoned by most parents nowadays, and the children raised in dysfunctional families, societies and communities in contemporary times lack basic moral values; discipline, and have no regard and respect for elders; the children can be easily influenced by the peer groups they identify themselves with”.⁵ This also explains why it has become pertinent to interrogate issues of parental roles in child rights protection. Nevertheless, Tyav opines that, “parental roles in child rights protection could be affected and influenced by the socio- cultural perception and world view of parents on children in contemporary societies”.⁶

A close look at some traditional societies of Africa, especially among the Maguzawa in northern Kaduna, the Tiv and Eggon traditional societies both in the Middle Belt (present day Nigeria); revealed that the socio-cultural meaning and perception of a child/children as reputable asset(s), love one(s) and helper(s) to the family and community members also influence individual family decision on increase in the number of wives and children a particular household or individual family should have at a time.⁷ The believe system and practice perceived in the realm of increase in the number of wives and children in a family was viewed in the perspective of having more hands on the farm for increase agricultural production, and corresponding wealth creation for a particular family. This paper discusses socio-cultural meaning, perception and parental roles in child rights protection in Nigeria; the Tiv experience.

The paper is structured as follows; introduction, conceptual clarification, theoretical frame work of analysis, socio-cultural meaning and perception of a child, parental roles in child rights protection in Tiv society, conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Clarification

Certain concepts and terms are clarified in this section as used in the study. This is basically to make the understanding of the issues under discourse easier.

The concept of 'socio-cultural', according to Wegh, refers to "a wide array of societal and cultural influences that impart on thoughts, feelings, behaviours and related factors that affect individuals and groups' behaviour in society".⁸ He further states that; socio cultural practices "are the distinctive, spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterized a society or a social group".⁹ Similarly, socio-cultural factors may refer to the influence of religious, family, educational, and social systems on people; how and the way they interact, live together, and the choices they make at a given point in time. The totality of the above stated factors constitutes the culture of a group of people in society. The term, 'culture', simply put, refers to "the total way of life of a people". Nevertheless, in the ordinary everyday usage, the concept of 'culture' is used to refer to the "finer things of life", to denote such things as "good taste", a 'refined manner, appreciation of fine art, music or literature'. In a word, culture is meant to indicate the level of sophistication of an individual, group and society. In this sense, a person who does the right things in the right (perfect) ways is referred to as a "cultured man". Conversely, someone whose behaviour is in the opposite and is deemed to be at a level of crudity is regarded as unrefined, "uncultured" and so on.¹⁰ The definition of culture in this sense is however very narrow and inappropriate. Culture cannot be defined in terms of one person possessing it and another lacking it. It is in fact, inconceivable to have a human being who lacks culture. According to Adelakun, cited in Tyav and Torbunde, the anthropological and sociological definition of culture is more appropriate and relevant.¹¹ The term 'culture' in the twirl of both anthropology and sociology refers to; "all

things which human beings do but have no biological basis. That is all non- biological actions and behaviours of man are products of man's culture". For example, the functioning of the eyes in winking to communicate appreciation or social disapproval is socially, as well as culturally determined and learned. Such behaviours like greetings, shaking of hands and interacting are all learnt by human beings who need to learn and invent new ways of adapting to various social situations. Such learned ways of doing things, which are modified from time to time and passed from generation to generation constitute the culture of the people. The concept; culture from the above description is therefore, defined by Tylor cited in Wegh define culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society".¹² From this definition, it is important to know that not only is culture an all embracing phenomenon of human social life, it is learned and acquired. It includes any piece or pattern of human behaviour, attitudes habits, norms, values, objects, skills, belief systems, and world view or out- look and/or perception which human beings learn and adopt as members of a given human group or society. Relatedly therefore, this study aims at ascertaining socio-cultural meaning, perception and world view of a child, and the influence of this on parental roles on child rights protection from Tiv experience. For the purpose of this discussion, the definition of culture by Tylor is adopted for the study.

The concept of 'Meaning', according to Roosens as cited in Wegh, can be defined as "a word or phrase used to describe a thing or express a concept, especially a particular kind of language, or a branch of study".¹³ This implies that the term 'meaning' has to do with 'the world view of an individual or group of people on another thing'. Again, Wegh defines the term 'meaning', as "something which has to do with beliefs

and aspirations of ...a people on something, this could be on another person, group of people, individuals, and other things in society'.¹⁴ In this paper, the concept of 'meaning' of a child' simply refers to "the 'world view' or 'outlook' of a group of people (in this case the world view of Tiv people in Middle Belt of Nigeria) on a child. Meanwhile, the phrase or concept of 'a child' has different interdisciplinary connotations. The English word/phrase, 'a child', may simply implies; "someone who is below the age of eighteen (18) years. In both the sociological and anthropological view points, a child is perceived in the realm of "ones level of reasoning, conduct, character, and from the point of view of ones behaviour in relationship to cultural norms and values of a society".¹⁵ The implication of the foregoing statement is that, when a child is below the age of eighteen 18 years, and sometimes within the age bracket; 18 years (adolescent age) and the child however, behaves very maturely, and has good character and better conduct, the child may be viewed and treated as someone who is matured and responsible. Furthermore, the legal connotation of a child; according to Ikwe may again, implies, "a young person (within the meaning of the children and young person's/people's laws), that is a person who has not attained the age of seventeen (17) years".¹⁶ Similarly, article one (1) of the convention on the right of the child defined 'a child' as "every human being that is below the age of 18 years, unless under the law applicable to the child; majority is attained earlier". More so, a child from the African perception may be viewed as "someone who is still dependent on his or her parents and is not self- reliant even when the person is well above 18 years".¹⁷ This implies also that when someone has attain the age of 18 and above years, and is very matured, and may have a job, and even get married with children, but the person is still dependent on his parents, relatives and guardians, the person is still viewed as a child. In summary

therefore, 'a child' from the point of view of Africans, may be someone who "is not yet matured in character, behaviour moral conduct, and is still dependent and very reliant on his parents or guardians". The definition of a child as defined by article (1) of the convention on the right a child above is here by adopted in this work.

The Concept of 'parental roles': To offer explanation on the concept; parental roles, it will be pertinent to first define the term; 'parental', which is a derivative of the word 'parent' which means 'parenthood' or parenting'. According to Tyav parenthood is "the state of being a parent".¹⁸ The implication is that, it involves the responsibilities or roles and functions of parents in carrying out as well as playing the functional roles of a parent to a child or children. In this way, parental roles may be used in this paper to refer to the responsibilities and functions, as well as roles parents play as caregivers and guardians to a child or children. 'Roles' as used here in this context refers to the functional responsibilities parents and guardians give, carryout and as well discharge in giving care and training a child/children.¹⁹

The Concept of 'Child Right Protection': To offer explanation on the phrase/concept, 'child right protection', it will be plausible to first define the term, 'right' which according to Hornby refers to "That which is true or correct as a fact, in one's opinion or judgment and can be seen as what is morally good, and correct".²⁰ According to Tyav and Torbunde the term 'right' can be defined as "that which is true or correct and is morally right in one's opinion or judgment and can be seen as good, and correct according to law or parent's duty".²¹ In this paper, the concept of 'right' will be defined as what is morally good and correct in one's opinion or judgment, and can be seen in the light according to law. Again, efforts shall be made to define the term 'right' with regards to 'protection of right of child/children'. Furthermore, United Nation's

International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) defined child right as "survival, development and participation".²²

It may be important to note that child right protection and its implementation dates back to the Geneva Convention on the rights of the child which over 100 countries signed in 1990. The convention consists of 54 articles. Some 40 articles concern substantive rights while the rest concern mainly procedural matters to facilitate monitoring of the substantive right of the child. These are minimum rights which state parties undertake to guarantee for children without discrimination, and that; for all purposes the best interests of the child are to be recognized as a primary consideration. The rights enumerated cover a wide range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural issues. This interdisciplinary perspective is the most comprehensive of its kind in international law.²³ From the Geneva Convention and Protocols, there are several principles expressed as the protection of a child in armed conflict via crisis situations. Already, the four general conventions of 1949 and their additional protocols of 1977 contain many children specific provisions as illustrated below: One general principle has been laid in article (6) and it states that;

1. State parties (including Nigeria) should recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.
2. State parties should ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child. Also, two general principles are laid down in article (77) in protocol (1) and in article (4) protocol (4). They state that:
 - i. Children shall be object of special respect and be protected against any form of indecent assault.
 - ii. Children shall be provided with case and aid they require
 - iii. Children must be evacuated from besieged (or conflict and crises engulfed) areas;

- iv. Children have a right to receive care and aid by the dispatched of medicine
- v. Children have a right to the maintenance of their cultural environment to education and preservation of family unit and so forth.²⁴

Furthermore, experience has shown that in African societies, the desire and concern for proper child upbringing, attention, welfare, care, protection and guidance of children generally have mostly been the concern of Africans even before the arrival of the colonial masters on the continent of Africa. In contemporary Africa therefore, the consciousness for the growing concern for proper child upbringing, care and protection has been perceived in the realm of the fact that the African child owns the future of Africa in his hand as future leaders of the black continent. This perception therefore, places the African child at the centre stage of Africa's development in all aspects of human endeavor. According to Osuntogun, "it is in the light of the indispensable position of a child/ children as tomorrow's leaders in the development process that African leaders; including Nigeria signed the 1979 organization of African Unity (OAU), new African Union (AU) charter on rights of the African child". He further states that, "every child has an inherent right to life and this shall be protected (and respected) by law, a child has right to be protected, right to be honoured, right to identity, right to name, right to parents, home and so on".²⁵

Similar experience has also been demonstrated in Nigeria. Akume observes that the Nigerian government enacted the domesticated Child Rights Act in 2003, which was adopted from the United Nations (UN) charter.²⁶ Again, UNICEF presented the abridged version of Nigeria's Child Rights Act in 24 parts itemized as follows:

- Part I: Best interest of child to be of paramount consideration in all actions.
- Part II: Rights and responsibilities of a child.
- Part III: Protection of the rights of the child
- Part IV: Protection of children
- Part V: Children in need of care and protection
- Part VI: Care and supervision
- Part VII: Provisions for use of scientific tests in determining maternity or mortality.
- Part VIII: Possession and custody of children
- Part IX: Guardianship
- Part X: Wardship
- Part XI: Fostering
- Part XII: Adoption
- Part XIII: The family court
- Part XIV: Child minding and day care of a young child
- Part XV: State government's supports for children and families
- Part XVI: Community homes
- Part XVII: Voluntary homes and voluntary organizations
- Part XVIII: Registered children's homes
- Part XIX: Supervisory functions and responsibilities of minister
- Part XX: Child justice administration
- Part XXI: Supervision
- Part XXII: Approval institutions and post-released supervision
- Part XXIII: The national state and local government child rights implementation committees
- Part XXIV: Miscellaneous

Sadly enough, this national and continental concern and consciousness about child welfare and care for Nigerian and African children has been rather illusive in contemporary times. The reality of the matter is, the African/Nigerian child often suffers neglect, parental roles to children in most

dysfunctional homes for having been neglected and abandoned, and children raised in such homes have no or lack discipline, basic moral values and so on. This paper discusses cultural meaning, perception and parental roles in child right protection in Nigeria from the Tiv experience.

Tiv Origin and Migration: A Historical Overview

The origin of Tiv people like many other ethnic groups in Nigeria is obscured. The obscurity explains why there are so many theories that have substance, and why some theories seen to have no substance, but have been caused by the nature of source of materials available in Tiv studies. According to Idyorough:

The Tiv are classified by anthropologists and linguists as a semi Bantu ethnic group. They presently inhabit Benue Nasarawa, Taraba, Plateau and Cross River States. The Tiv are mostly found on both sides of the River Benue about 240 kilometers up the confluence of River Niger and Benue in Nigeria. This area is known as the Benue valley... The area is situated between the high plateau and the Cameroon Mountains. Tiv are largely peasant farmers and they produce yams, millet, sorghum, cassava, maize, and other produce. In addition to farming; pottery weaving and brewing of local beer (Burukutu) have been the preoccupation of Tiv, especially their children and women. Prior to colonialism, the Tiv economy was a subsistence economy.²⁷

Furthermore, Gbor cited in Tyav and Torbunde, suggested that the Tiv could have originated from Congo (Zaire). The suggestion invariably linked Tiv past with that of Bantu.²⁸ Other scholars such as Gundu, cited in Gbor, dispute Tiv origin from the 'Bantu world', and based their premise on certain important traits like the slow advances in Tiv linguistics and other cultural traits.²⁹

From the available evidence, Idyorough and Wuam however, noted that the Tiv probably are of Bantu origin and migrated from Congo (Zaire) as a result of factors associated to marriage, conflict, famine, population increase and several other problems with their neighbouring bush tribes of central or southern part of Africa, to the Benue valley or Middle Belt in the late 18th and 19 centuries through the Nigeria Cameroon boundaries.³⁰

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Structural Functionalist theory

The functionalist theoretical perspective has been employed in the study of socio-cultural meaning and parental role in child rights protection in Nigeria; the Tiv experience. The functionalist theory also refers to as structural functionalism is a theory propounded by the founding fathers of sociology; August Comte (1776-1857), Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and others as cited in Idyorough.³¹ One way to introduce functionalism is to look at the words: Functions, roles, contributions and so on; of a particular thing to society. For instance, what is the function of school to society? What is the function of hospital to society? What role do parents play in child rights protection to ensure and promote proper child-training (child up bringing), socialization and welfare of children in society? Biologically and socially, the theory assumes that human society may be viewed as an organism, a complex whole and a social system. According to Idyorough, functionalism holds that:

Society has a structure, and within the structure, there are differentiated parts which perform different functions; even as they perform different (roles or functions) all parts are interrelated. The parts are also interdependent such that whatever affects one part, affects the entire organism, whole

and social system, the different parts work together to maintain equilibrium or a good (work relationship and form). Furthermore, the theory suggests that society has already existing inbuilt corrections (which may be likened to some stabilizers and is called homeostasis). The idea is when one part is in trouble, the others rally round both to take on extra responsibility and put it out of trouble.³²

As part of social system of society; a child and or children are viewed as integral members of the family which wholistically forms part of society. The child ought to be properly socialized and inculcated into the dominant norms and values of society. The rationale behind the existing analysis is that children are viewed as important components of society. The children own the future of our societies in their hands as future leaders, and from the functionalist perspective children are perceived as very active ingredients in the wheel of societal progression. In this way, parental care, children's welfare and proper socialization, training and child right protection become very imperative.

Children were socialized into the basic norms and values of the society in order to imbibe the virtues of discipline, respect for elders, hard work and love for one's family, community and the nation (patriotism), for the overall development of the society. The children were shown love, and were also given parental care, protection and socialization as future leaders who would someday take over family responsibilities from their parents for continuity and progress of the society generally.³³ Agogo had earlier espoused the foregoing idea, when observation was made that in traditional African societies, children were seen as valuable assets.³⁴

Agogo further states that when children are given proper socialization into the norms and values of society and the children are capable of imbibing these cultures and demonstrate good behaviour and attitudes by living functional

lives in the communities and families they come from, their families and community members feel proud and have confidence in them. The functionalist perspective views the child as an integral part of society and parental role in child right protection as a functional responsibility of parents to children in human societies.³⁵

The Meaning of a Child in Tiv Society; Nigeria.

On a peripheral level, the Tiv people were known to have value for a child. To an average Tiv man, a child is seen as a valuable asset, a lovely companion, and is viewed as someone who holds the future of Tiv nation into his hands- especially the male children. In this way, a Tiv man holds the belief that when you do not have a child, especially a male child, even when he (the Tiv man) is well to do (wealthy and rich) the wealth and riches do not really matter to him. One's wealth and riches without a male child has no meaning to the beholder- even when one is blessed with ten (10) female children. The reality of the matter is that life without a male child in traditional Tiv society means there will be no one to continue with the family line when the father is no more.³⁶ This is even more so, because the traditional- cultural practices of Tiv people only permit that descent should be traced to the father side and not the mother side, hence the practice of patriarchal and patrilineage-system. The male children in this way have inheritance rights, and the male children and male folk perceived to be dominating over the female children and women. The female children who would someday be given out in marriage as the tradition and Tiv culture dictates are treated as second class persons. A successful Tiv man with ten (10) female children is still not happy without a male child in traditional Tiv society. Female children are only given inheritance rights and are recognized in societies that practice matriarchal and matrilineage system; where descent is traced

to mother side and the female folk are seen dominating over the male/men.³⁷

An extrapolation from the foregoing analysis shows that the perception of male children in traditional Tiv society has the tendency to influence parental role in child rights protection, care, welfare and socialization of children. According to Usue and Andiir, the positive evaluation of male children over the female children in traditional Tiv society placed the female children in subordinate position in several significant societal, community and family functions. This behaviour trait is anchored on patriarchal ideology which the Tiv society is firmly predicated on.³⁸ Ityavyar, cited in Usue and Andiir, defines patriarchal to mean "a set of social relations, common to members of a community who have lived together for a long time sharing and learning from each other's customs and traditions, and who have a material based that enables men to dominate the women folk".³⁹ In a patriarchal society therefore, women and men are both conditioned to a pattern and piece of behaviour, which underrates the female folk. The practice of patriarchal is the opposite of matriarchal system. This socio- cultural practice influenced parental role in the socialization of children and parental role in child right protection in traditional Tiv society in diverse ways. First and foremost, in traditional Tiv society, women or female children are ranked lower than the male children or men in several significant societal functions. The future of a female child in this regard was limited to house- keeping, home making and attendance to kitchen functions, whereas; the male children were socialized into performing leadership roles. The male children were socialized into acquiring skills in the spheres of farming-making heaps, ridges, hunting, and accompanying the father to attend such social functions that pertain to leadership, settlement of disagreements and conflicting issues,

attending meetings at the levels of the family, community and the entire Tiv nation. The male children in doing so looked down upon the female children. While the female children would accompany their mothers to carry out home chores of cooking, washing plates and so on. The rights of the female children as functional members of the family which equals that of male children were therefore, neglected.

This subordinate position accorded to the girl child or women, according to Wegh, is assumed to be normal and natural, and it is still reinforced in Tiv society in contemporary times in the area of education, politics, social, cultural issues of life and so on.⁴⁰

The data collected through oral interview revealed the foregoing assertion in the affirmative order. The girl child was hurriedly given out in marriage (early marriage) in traditional Tiv society. The proceeds and resources obtained in doing so, were applied in training the male children in an average traditional Tiv family. The female children were not given attention in the sphere of educational attainment, unlike the male children. This is not an understatement to the fact that the female children were not shown love by their parents in traditional Tiv society. Female children were equally loved by their biological parents; however, the right of female children to education, political participation and so on, were infringed upon on grounds that the cultural practice in traditional Tiv society dictated in that direction.⁴¹

Similarly, it has also been observed that the place of the girl children and as matured women ends in carrying out domestic activities at home and specifically in the kitchen. The social activities of the girl children and women as the Tiv culture and tradition dictate do not go beyond home keeping and attendance to domestic activities. The girl children are not socialized into acquiring leadership skills and displaying same as it is done to the male children. Tiv cultural practices

and their traditions recognize the male children as those holding the future of Tiv society in their hands, and as such, the male children are viewed and perceived in that regard. The reality of the matter is that Tiv society is rooted in the leadership system of gerontocracy, where Tiv elders are seen as an embodiment of the supreme authorities of various genealogical unites.⁴² In this regard, parental role in the protection of child rights in traditional Tiv society, was also influenced in favour of the male children. The interest of the girl children and protection of right of female children with regards to socialization into, and acquisition of leadership skills, up to the level of performance of such skills is discriminated against the girl child in favour of the male children who are recognized as future leaders in traditional Tiv society. The data obtained through oral interview showed that, the female children in traditional Tiv society were not given proper leadership training and socialized into acquiring leadership skills as future leaders. The female children are prepared for home making and would in future be given out in marriage.⁴³

However, with the advent of Western education and Christian religion in Tiv society Tyav and Torbunde, observed there were some significant changes in the meaning, perception and parented role in child right protection among Tiv Christian families in Tiv society.⁴⁴ According to Tyav, Tiv Christian families were significantly perceived to have shown love to their children, and to also have value for them without discrimination on the bases of sex, skill acquisition, and so on. They accepted and socialized the children along Christian values which foster and promote the fear of God, discipline, respect for elders and others. Tiv Christian families were not seen discriminating against the female children in favour of their male counterparts. Both male and female children were

given equal rights to education and socialization into the acquisition of basic skills in the sphere of farming, home making, and other household activities. Nevertheless, to some extent the Tiv Christian families too observed strict division of labour based on sex as in other culture (traditional Tiv). This is so because the Tiv believed that there was men's work different from that of women. The women viewed fragile compare to the men. Hardwork and labour for the Tiv is not for female children or women but male children or men. As such, male children were not expected to do girls/female children's work seen generally as immodest for male children.⁴⁵ Equally, women/girl children assigned male children's work was considered to be some form of maltreatment, done against the female children.

The data obtained through oral interview showed that children were not discriminated upon among Tiv Christian families. A child is valued and cherished among Tiv Christian family members, especially the educated parents. Children in a Tiv Christian family were seen as having equal rights to education. Female children were not sent out in marriage to obtained proceeds for the education of male children among Tiv Christian families.⁴⁶ Although, the male children are given inheritance right over the female children as it is equally accepted among Tiv Christian families and even among other cultures and groups that embraced Christian values, parental roles in child rights protection was not influenced in favour of male children against the female children. This is not however strictly observed. Moreover, there are Tiv Christian families especially the educated family members who accorded female children inheritance rights equal to that of their male children.⁴⁷

Parental Role in Child Right Protection in Tiv society; Nigeria

Discussion of parental role in child right protection in Tiv society; Nigeria, is pursued from the point of view of the fact that children in Tiv cultural settings connotes persons who are viewed as valuable assets, loved ones who may be tender, young and weak, but still hold the future of Tiv society into their hands, and must have to be given protection. According to Tyav, Buter and Utor, both the children and mothers were viewed as performing very significant roles in traditional Tiv society.⁴⁸ The reality of the matter is that pre-colonial Tiv society for all intents and purposes was communal, and agrarian in nature. Tiv economy was largely based on subsistence agriculture, which was stable and allowed for enough food production, to feed all household members and even reserve some for periods of bad weather and other calamities. The women and children in a household were fundamentally the forces that propelled production activities in traditional Tiv society. So the need to protect the children and their mothers became germane, paramount and exigent.

In traditional Tiv society, there is a cultural belief which according to Denga, places premium on both the (Ityo) and the (Igba). The 'ityo' is a patrilineage system which dictates that a Tiv man would only traced his descent for the father or male side; whereas, the 'igba' is a matrilineage system which is not only the opposite of patrilineage, but describes a situation where descent is traced to the mother side.⁴⁹ This practice is not so much celebrated and uphold among the Tiv people. Nevertheless, Tiv tradition still considers it and maintains the practice. This is because, a Tiv man believes one's 'igba' plays very significant role in protecting their brothers and sisters given birth to in other Tiv regions and societis, and those regions outside the Tiv society generally (that is among cultural groups that inter marry with Tiv men and women). According to Bohannan, cited in Idyorough, the

'igba' matrilineage system is "a term which plays the role of offering material and spiritual protection to a Tiv person, especially when the need arises".⁵⁰ This is based on the assumption that the life of a Tiv person hangs between the 'ityo' and 'igba'. Denga supports this idea above and states further that a traditional Tiv person holds the belief that a Tiv man's death could be traced to either his 'ityo' or 'igba'. In this way, parental role in child right protection in traditional Tiv society begins with ensuring there is cordial relationship between a child and his 'ityo' and the 'igba'. This protection starts as soon as a woman is conceived. Whatever happens to the pregnant women in conception is traced on both sides of the 'ityo' and 'igba'. As a child is born both the 'ityo' and 'igba' are informed for prayers and well wishes for the new born. This protection covers both the children and their mothers and it is very significant because, it brings about spiritual wellbeing of children, harmony, good tidings and cordial relationship between parents and couples or spouses on one hand, their children and relations of women, and those of the men and women playing the role of parents to children in a matrimonial home on the other hand.⁵¹

With the advent of Christian religious teachings and western education in Tiv society, significant changes in parental role in child right protection became very noticeable. Tiv families that embraced Christian religious values, especially the educated families jettisoned Tiv traditional practices in the socialization of children and parental role in child right protection. Data collected revealed also that, Tiv Christian families socialized the children and taught them to have the fear of God, imbibed Western- religious values such as; love for one another, self discipline, control, respect, especially, for the elders without discrimination. Above all, Tiv Christian families taught the children to understand and realized that death comes from God who is the author of life and death,

and there is no other power above God that has the right to take and eliminate human life.

Tiv Christian families were also known for socializing their children by teaching them to understand the fact that it was morally wrong and evil to discriminate against the children and to deny the children of their basic rights to live and survive, to have good health, food, clothing, shelter, good education on the bases of sex, status, ethnicity, religious and racial backgrounds.⁵²

Similarly, it was discovered from the data collected through oral interview that the interest and dignity of children was considered first in child right protection among the learned (educated) Tiv Christian families. Akume amplifies this discovery and states that some members of Tiv Christian families lay emphasis on this to ensure that, "the physical, spiritual, moral, mental growth and development of children was not tempered with and or thwarted".⁵³ This was given premium to improve the quality of life of children among educated Tiv Christian families. Moreover, as future leaders in Tiv society regardless of religious inclinations, it was the responsibility of Tiv parents to socialize the children into imbibing the virtues of honesty, contentment and selflessness, so much that when the children grow into adulthood, they should be courteous, sincere and live responsible lifestyles worthy of providing purposeful leadership in Tiv society.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The paper discussed socio-cultural meaning and parental role in child right protection in Nigeria with emphasis on Tiv society in the traditional pre-colonial society as well as the post-colonial era, which was also marked by the advent of Western Education and Christian religious teachings. The functionalist theory was preferred to anchor the study discourse. The objective was to examine the socio-cultural

meaning of a child, and the influence on parental role in child right protection in Nigeria-from the Tiv experience. The paper utilized qualitative research method. Data were collected using both primary and secondary sources. Under the primary source, oral interview was conducted and interviewees provided varied views on Tiv world view of a child, and the influence of this on parental role in child right protection. Secondary source of data was also used and data were collected from textbooks, journals, and other library materials. The data were transcribed and analyzed using both descriptive and content analytical approaches. The paper demonstrated that children especially the male were viewed as valuable assets, lovely companions and future leaders in traditional Tiv society. This world view of children in Tiv society influence parental role in child right protection as the female children were discriminated against in favour of male children in traditional Tiv society. The paper however, elucidated that the post-colonial Tiv society, which was marked by Western Education and Christian Religious values jettisoned Tiv traditional values which upholds Tiv preference of male children over their female counterparts, even though some members of Tiv society were still into the traditional practices. The paper concluded that the socialization of children and parental role in child right protection should be done in the best interest of children to ensure that the dignity of children is protected, and the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of children was not affected so as to guarantee the survival, development and participation of children in all spheres of societal development. This will encourage the children both female and male to realize their potentials and become functional members of Tiv society and Nigeria in particular.

Recommendation

Having examined the issues in this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There should be socio-cultural reorientation in Tiv society and other groups in Nigeria with the aim of upholding and treating the children as equals and as persons with dignity without discrimination on the basis of sex of children.
2. Children should be given wholistic socialization to imbibe the basic norms and values of society and Christian religious values which ensures continuity, stability of society, fear of God, respect for one another- especially elders and others in Tiv society and Nigeria in particular.
3. The need for awareness creation in the process of carrying out parental roles in child right protection becomes imperative moreso, that children, irrespective of sex are viewed as valuable assets, close companions and future leaders in Tiv society and Nigeria in particular.
4. The need to give both the girl child and male children the orientation that all children are born equals and there should be no discrimination between female and male children whatsoever becomes very paramount.

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