



Volume 4 Number 1 (2014) pp. 44-56

ISSN 2045-8398 (Print)

ISSN 2045-8517 (Online)

Publishers: Sacha & Diamond, England

www.sachajournals.com

Current Cumulative Impact Factor: 30.7



THE EFFECTS OF NATIVE CULTURES, MYTHS, MYSTERIES AND MONSTROSITIES
ON THE REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on cultural inhibiting factors to the enjoyment reproductive health rights within the context of the Nigerian society. The critical issue of substantive and formal equality presupposes a dichotomy between the existence of reproductive rights and their full enjoyment. Freedom of information as a prerequisite for making informed choices in the exercise and the enjoyment of reproductive rights, is without much argument steeped in controversy as regards the peculiarities of the Nigerian situation. It is against this background that this paper examines the nature and scope of reproductive rights in Nigeria. We argue that Nigerian native cultures inhibit the exercise of reproductive rights. However, we focused our discourse mainly on women and the girl child arising from their peculiar vulnerability, while conceding that reproductive rights are applicable to all human beings. We further argue that the potency of legal protection of the reproductive rights of women in Nigeria is watered down by cultural beliefs and inhibitions. While an elimination of the cultural practices may not be a realistic approach to the enjoyment of reproductive rights, this paper advocates that legislative intervention may not sufficiently establish the freedom to enjoy the reproductive rights arising from the bottlenecks of culture. We therefore emphasised that the rights based approach to the implementation of reproductive health rights may not always be practicable as socio-cultural barriers imposed by the Nigerian society.

Keywords: Culture, Reproductive rights, Myths, Monstrosities, Mysteries.