

**IMPLICATIONS OF HARMFUL CULTURAL
PRACTICES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RIGHT TO
HEALTH: THE CASE OF CHILD SORCERY
ACCUSATIONS IN SOUTHERN NIGERIA**

BY

ELEANOR ANN NWADINOBI

SUPERVISED

BY DR. ANDY STOREY

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN

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ABSTRACT

Chapter one opens with a recent documentary that exposed the issue of child sorcery accusations and inflicted harm to the eyes of the world, and enumerates similar reports in other parts of the world. The chapter elucidates where the practices derive from and the trigger that incentivises perpetrators.

Chapter two takes an in-depth look at colonial influence on customary laws and how the State is adhering to International, regional and domestic norms

Chapter three provides in-depth interviews with thirteen children. Images of maimed children provide supporting evidence on the type of harm that the children have undergone and the consequences.

Chapter 4 discusses the findings and links the right to health discourse along side the religious and cultural discourse as means test. It x-rays the actors using the analogy of the onion peel.

Chapter 5 in positing solutions for the way forward emphasises the core positioning of the State in complying with the right to children of the highest attainable standard of health .The need to identify a critical mass of drivers of change and galvanise the support of mainstream churches.

Concluding that going against the moral fibre of a society is anathema, be it culture, religion or rights.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to children all over the world who have suffered untold abuse due to accusation of child sorcery and witchcraft.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACRH	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AKS	Akwa Ibom State
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CRA	Child rights Act
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CRARN	Child Rights and Rehabilitation Network
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HIV	Human Immuno- Deficiency Virus
HLTF	High level task force
HTP	Harmful Traditional Practices
IRCT	International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims
NAPTIP	National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other related matters
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation

DEFINITIONS

These definitions have been extracted from a variety of sources and are intended to serve as a guide for the reader in the context of the subject matter being discussed in this thesis.

Witchcraft and Sorcery

The words witchcraft and sorcery will be used interchangeably in this thesis.

The witch in traditional African belief is the nearest thing to the Christian personification of evil in the devil.

Witchcraft beliefs vary in detail from one African society to the other, and the variations reflect the different types of social tension and social structure. A witch is a human being who possesses a mysterious and inherent power to harm others by secret means. Usually it is inherent i.e. inherited mostly through female line and may enter from another witch.

“In many African societies, sorcerers are thought to be witches as well, or people refer to both by a single term.

In many African societies it is felt that only a witch would use destructive magic without social approval (i.e. be a sorcerer). There is therefore a practical equation between witch and sorcerer. Very often no distinction is made between the lethal and physical properties of poison and its evil symbolism s bad medicine (sorcery). Poisoning is an activity attributed to witches because it is secret and anonymous, like witchcraft. Sorcery therefore (especially in the form of poisoning) tends to be attributed to witches “¹

Macfarlane distinguishes Witchcraft and sorcery as having different means with the same end, to injure people. According to him” Witchcraft is an inherent quality, whereas sorcerers act in a certain way..... Although both are driven by antisocial feelings, the witch is permanently malicious, having inherited her power or been taught it very early in life, while the sorcerer is only dangerous at specific times and acquires the power of evil later in life by a more self-conscious transmission”²

1 Shorter, 1973 , Pg 139

2 Macfarlane.1982, Pg 44

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