AN INTERROGATION OF SPINSTER'S NIGHT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN WUKARI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF TARABA STATE

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines spinster's night and its implications in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State. It discussesthe implications of spinster's night in the area. Theorigin and developmentof spinster's night in Wukarialso came into focus. It analyzes the organization and challengesof spinster's night in the area. It concludes and made recommendations. The study relied on both primary sources like oral interviews and archival materials and secondary sources like books, theses, articles, newspapers, journals, etc. The study finds out that spinster's night is part and parcel of most marriagesin Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State. The study demonstrates that spinster's night is an important component of Wukari socio-economic sphere as it provides employment to many people in the area and doubled as a veritable tool for social interaction, cross-fertilization of ideas, celebration, and commemoration.In conclusion, the data synthesize from our sources support the claims that spinster's night, for all intents and purposes, is an important component of Wukari socio-economic sphere.

Introduction

Spinster's night is a typical bachelorette party held for a lady who is shortly about to enter the marriage institution. Simply put, it is a bachelorette party held for a woman (the bride-to-be) who is about to get married. The main difference between bachelorette party and spinster's night is that while bachelorette party is oftenheld on the night before the bride's wedding and is attended only by women, spinster's night is oftenheld some weeks or months before the bride'swedding and is attended by all and sundry. Spinster's night is modeled after the centuries-old bachelor's party, which is historically is a dinner given by the bridegroom to his friends shortly before his wedding. Although the practice of giving a party to honour the bride-to-be goes back for centuries, the term spinster'snight itself did not begin until the 1980s [1][2][3]. Initially, spinster's night was seen as a weekend away or a night out that is planned by the bride's close friends, and, typically, her maid of honour. However, nowadays the term is used for a wide variety of parties mainly celebrating the bride-to-be new journey into marriage and avenue for soliciting funds or fundraising for buying items (usually cooking utensils, Jewries, clothes etc.) required by the bride for the marriage. Some brides from some Christian denominations like Christian Reformed Church Nigeria (CRC-N), Living Faith Church, Omega Fire Ministry, and The Praise Church among otherswill choose to have this party before the big day whilst others from church like Evangelical Church Wining All (ECWA) question the importance of having one in the first place, and instead have a send-forthparty in the church premises, one or two Sundays to the D-day. This paper deals with spinster's night andits implications in Wukari Local Government Area, to assessits origin and development, organization, and implications.

Indeed, the significance of the spinster's night becomes obvious from the following facts. Each week, Mondaythrough Sundayduring the peak period from October to April, spinster's night parties are held at various locations in the study area. The numbers and regularity of the spinster's night parties agitate the mind, as the following questions beg for answers: When and how did this spinster's night develop in the area? Why are some denominations in support and some against it? What are the purpose and significance of this spinster's night? How is the spinster's night organized? What is the impact of spinster's night in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State? In the sections following, attempts are made to answer these and other related questions.

An Overview of the Study Area

The area which forms the subject matter of this paper is Wukari Local Government Area which lies within latitude latitude 7° 52' N and longitude 9° 46' Eand is located in the Southern part of the State. It is bounded by Gassol Local Government to the North and Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State to the South. In the east, it shares boundary with Ibi Local Government Area of Taraba State. While it's Western boundaries are shared by Takum and Donga Local Government Areas of Taraba State. It also shares a little portion of its boundary around Abako along Takum road, with Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State [4][5]. Wukari Local Government Area was created in 1976 and has a total land area of 4,308 km² and the National Population Figure of 2006 put the state population at 241,546. The Local Government experiences a tropical climate while the local vegetation is the guinea savannah type. It is marked by dry and rain seasons. The rainy season commences in April and lasts till October. While the dry season lasts from November to March. The average rainfall is 1.350mm. The harmattan; dry, cold and dusty wind is the driest period and occurs from the months of December to February with humidity put at 13% [4][5][6]. The area is good for the cultivation of roots and grains crops like yam, cassava, corn, rice, soya beans, and millets serving as both food and cash crops – a practice that has considerably changed the luxuriant vegetation of the area remote past. The people are also involved in other vocations; as in white-collar jobs, art, and crafts. The administrative status of the local government headquarters has generated jobs and attracted more from other areas for civil purposes, trading, and farming [4][5][6]. The area is endowed with a very rich cultural heritage. This could be seen in the system of traditional marriage, cultural dances, masquerades, festivals, age groupings, chieftaincy institutions, arts, and the religions of the people.

The Origin and Development ofSpinster's Night in Wukari Local Government Area

It is not possible to point with certainty to the exact date of the commencement of spinster's night in Wukari Local Government Area. Its emergence and development span through 20th and 21st centuries. Informants observed thatspinster's nightis modeled after the centuries-old bachelor party, which is historically is a dinner given by the bridegroom to his friends shortly before his wedding. Although the practice of giving a party to honor the bride-to-be goes back for centuries, the term spinster'snight itself did not begin until the 1980s [1][2][3]. Initially, spinster's night was seen as a weekend away or a night out that is planned by the bride's close friends, and, typically, her maid of honor. However, nowadays the term is used for a wide variety of parties mainly celebrating the bride-to-be new journey into marriage and avenue for soliciting funds or fundraising for buying items (cooking utensils, Jewries, clothes etc.) required by the bride for the marriage. This is a sort of fundraising achieved through organizing a party in honour of the bride-to-be by thelady who is shortly to enter marriage and her friends. As part of an effort to raise funds and facilitate their weddings, some brides-to-be organized a bachelorette party known as *spinster'snight* [1][2][3]. The practice is thatspinster's nightis always organized within individual bride-to-be financial strength and ability. This notwithstanding, it is not compulsory for every bride-to-be to organize a spinster's night [1][2][3]. At the same time, a bride-to-becould organize a send-forth party andspinster's night.

The Organization and Challenges of Spinster's Night in Wukari Local Government Area

It is a very hectic process to plan an amazing spinspinster's night party in Wukari, but it is not impossible. It begins with making up a complete spinster's night party planning list, which will help you to accomplish all the tasks that are needed on time for a spinster's night party. The organization

of the spinspinster's night is based on individual bride-to-be financial strength and ability. Thespinster's night party is typically hosted by the bride-to-be, although it is possible for a friend(s) to host a spinster's night party in honour of the bride-to-be. While it is normally the duty of a hostess to pay for the entertainment she gives her guests, it is common for participants to share the costs of this event. Whether the bride-to-be bears the cost/pays her share, or whether her share is divided between other participants, is determined by the organizers and the bride-to-be during the early stages of the planning process. Participating in a spinster's night party is always optional, and some brides decline these parties altogether. Spinster's night is a party that remains ingrained in the mind of the bride-to-be and everyone involved. There are several considerations to take into account when planning a spinster's night party. Therefore, the first step in planning a spinster's night party is considering the basic requirements and cost involvements in executing the party putting the individual bride-to-be's financial strength and ability into consideration. This is followed by choosing a date, time, and venue for the event and printing and sending out the invitations.

A spinster's night party is typically held in the evening, usually about a month (or at least a few weeks) before the wedding, depending on whichever thebride-to-be's financial strength and ability, and what she and her friend had agreed to do away with or perform. A spinster's night party is aimed at celebrating the bride-to-be new journey into marriage and soliciting funds or fundraising for buying items (cooking utensils, Jewries, clothes etc.) required by the bride for the marriage. This is a sort of fundraising achieved through organizing a party in honour of the bride-to-be by thelady who is shortly to enter marriage institution and her friends. The event often proves to be elaborate and cost-intensive. These include venue, decoration of the venue, disc jockey (DJ), and a Master of Ceremony (MC) which must be provided no matter their cost and the number of invited guests. On the other hand, the cost of things such as soft drinks, alcohols, wineand small chops catering can vary depending on the number of invited, and uninvited (but present) guests [7][8][9].

The choice of venue also matters. Event centres/venues are costly. Venues are charged on an average ₦10, 000.00 to over ₦40, 000.00 for events such as spinster's night partiesand other ceremonies in the area. The event centres/venues take on characters of their own for each occasion through decorations done by officially designated interior decorators that are also paid for (differentiated from the fees paid for the event centres/venues). So, it is required of the celebrants to adorn chairs, tables, and the walls (the whole hall) with tapestries and other forms of beautification. However, this does not come cheap as it goes from a modest ₦5, 000.00 to above ₦20, 000.00 depending on the spending power of the celebrants [1][2][8]. Aspinster's night party is not complete without photo-shoots. In the days gone by, the 'ordinary' and economical photographer comes around and takes his shots on the special days. After the events, he comes back with an album of pictures and everybody is happy. These days the photographer is more of a theatre director, an image enabler of sorts.

The caterers' role in making the spinster's night plan a reality cannot be ignored. They ensure that the bride-to-be's day is fulfilled by taking care of the guests' appetite. Catering is usually a benchmark for measuring a bride-to-be's financial capacity or that of the celebrants' families. So, it is not out of place to have a big budget for catering activities [1][3]. Making food and drinks available on a bride-to-be's day is important, but ensuring that the food and drinks are served with little or no wastage and that everyone is equally taken care of becomes more important. These are the added responsibilities of the chief caterer who oversees a sizeable catering crew with the duty of serving food, drinks, and other related activities.

The joy of every bride-to-be hosting a spinster's night party in Wukari is to see that her plans came to fusion and everyone in attendance of her spinster's night party goes back happier than they came. However, unforeseen circumstances can impede having a perfect spinster's night party, and here are five (5) of the many challenges that could be faced by a typical bride-to-be organizinga spinster's night party in Wukari.Cost of hosting or organizinga spinster's night party [1][2][7][8]. Spinster's night parties in Wukari have become very big events with deep economic implications. They have evolved into expensive projects, no matter how modest the average hosts intend them to be. We cannot take away the fact that this new trend has helped in driving and expanding the economy over the past twenty years. Many businesses have grown and thrived on the backdrop of the contemporary spinster's night party. Almost every vendor today gets paid

upfront before work is done. Most of them demand more than half of their money upfront. This is because most of them end up being owed so much money after the party is over because clients refuse to pay on time or at all.

Additionally, weatheralso militates against the organization of an amazing and successful spinster's night party. Having bad weather on your spinster's night party day is a complete nightmare and more so to the event planner (if any) who perhaps has to make quick changes in a short time [2][10]. Open door spinster's night parties are mostly affected by rain or thunderstormand a very windy day could ruin it all. Spinster's night parties held in event centres/venues are not totally immune to these challenges as they often lead to low attendance and late commencement of their parties and thereby defeating the aim of organizing the party which is to celebrate the bride-to-be new journey into marriage and solicit for funds or fundraising for buying items required by the bride for the marriage.

Besides the above, choosing a date is another problem in planning aspinster'snight party in Wukari.There are several considerations to take into account when planning the date of the party. While it is tempting to just choose a date, especially during the peak period from October to April, of organizing spinster's night party when the entirewhole town is engulfed in the ceremonies, this is not an appropriate choice [11][12]. The bride-to-be needs to choose wisely and ensure that her date is not clashing with that of her close friends which she intends to invite to her party asa plannedspinster's party by any of her friends on the same night, would conflict with her party. So, in choosing a date for the party, it is good to choose wisely and in a consultant with friends and family to avoid clashes [3][7][12]. Furthermore, the attitude of vendors (disc jockeys, master of ceremonies(MCs), interior decorators, and caterers) is also a problem. The attitude of vendors isa major problem in organizing an amazing and successful spinster's night party. They are hardly certain about the demand and supply process, so you have to make sure you are on their necks to make sure the party goes as planned. The hosts have to communicate with vendors always towards the party and make sure they are on time with their supplies [10][11].

Finally, insecurity, with its resultant splitting of the economic and social life of the people, posed a challenge to the organization of an amazing and successful spinster's night party. For instance, the various feuds between the Christians and Muslims between 2013 – 2015 and the recent Tiv-Jukun Crises between 2019 and 2020affected the organization of an amazing and successful spinster's night party [1][3][8][11][12]. There were ill-feelings and apathy between the Christians and Muslims andTiv-Jukun and, this really had an adverse impact on the organization of an amazing and successful spinster's night party in the area and retards the socio-economic development of the Local Government. Spinster's night party could not hold as regular as used to for fear of insecurity any time a dispute occurred or curfewimposedin the area during crises to curtail the crisis on ground [1][7][11].

The Implications of Spinster's night in Wukari Local Government Area

Spinster's night parties in Wukari have become very big events with deep economic implications. They have evolved into expensive projects, no matter how modest the average bride-to-be/host intends them to be. We cannot take away the fact that this new trend has helped in driving and expanding the economy over the past twenty years. Many businesses have grown and thrived on the backdrop of the contemporary spinster's night. The occasions are usually much more than events for raising funds to facilitate their weddings; they are meeting points for the continuation of lineage rites and socio-political regrouping of people that have previously dispersed [1][10][11]. They are usually clearly designed to honour the brides-to-be, functioned not merely as a means of raising funds to facilitate weddingsbut doubled as veritable tools for social interaction, cross-fertilization of ideas, celebration, and commemoration.

Over the past two decades, the combination of the above spinster's nightprocesses has given birth to the emergence of a reasonably sized economy which has had positive effects on the Wukari economy. The spinster's night is the end result of a number of economic activities, without which the event may not turn out as anticipated. Spinster's night, in contemporary Wukari, is big business aided by the financial concept of its importance. In the past, medium or large scale spinster's night; used to be the preserve of the middle class and the affluent. They usually took place then in church premises or open fields with modest emphasis on funfair, extraneous

additions, and financial outlays. There was a level of conservatism to the way spinster's night parties were approached and organized [2][3][7][8]. But now with the present level of celebration, there are implications for the society and those involved or planning to be involved.

It is also necessary to know that spinster'snight has contributed immensely to the socio-economic development of the area in diverse ways through revenue mobilization, the attraction of additional functions due to the concentration of activities, support in the sustainability of the society, and livelihood within and outside the area. It stimulates thedevelopment of auxiliary interior decorators, disc jockeys, master of ceremonies (MCs) and caterers. It is not clear when these auxiliary creative artists/vendors developed in the process, but the significance of such a development is that it creates jobs for disc jockeys, master of ceremonies (MCs), interior decorators, and caterers; it also shows the innovative capacity of Nigerians creative artists/vendors as those who respond to changing circumstances [10][11][12].

Expenses incurred on spinster's night process within the Wukari environments are on the high side and they continue to climb. Most brides-to-be who go through the process do so not from the ease of their pockets. They only want to satisfy their immediate families and the public. Some do it to tell the world that they can measure up with others so that they are not underrated, jettisoned, or deprived of their rights in society. It has rippling effects on the preparation for marriage. One of the effects that the bride-to-be or host may face is a lack of finance tobuy items required by the bride for the marriage and contribute meaningfully to the success of the wedding. This is partly due to low attendance and partly due to the financial capacity of the attendee. In a few times, the bride-to-be would have gone for a loan to prosecute the party process. Repayment for this would usually start the month after the party and can last for six months or a few years [1][10]. Throughout this period, the bride-to-be or host must learn and practice financial management to a great extent. If this is not well done and managed with a lot of understanding and patience, moredifficulties can occur.

This implies that brides-to-be must exercise caution and look before leaping. They must be well prepared not only for the spinster's night process but also for the marriage and married life. No matter what is spent during the process, some funds must be kept aside for the latter. As much as possible, brides-to-be should not be enticed by families and friends to overspend. They must have a spinster's night budget that fits and suits their pocket for the present and the near future. This they must stick to. They must not spend to meet up with any Jones. They must remember it is their lives and the consequences are theirs to carry.

Conclusion

It is clear from the foregoing that spinster's night is part and parcel of most marriages in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State. It is an important component of Wukari socio-economic sphere as it provides employment to many people such as interior decorators, disc jockeys, master of ceremonies (MCs), and caterers in the area and doubled as a veritable tool for social interaction, cross-fertilization of ideas, celebration and commemoration. The occasions are usually much more than events for raising funds to facilitate their weddings; they are meeting points for the continuation of lineage rites and socio-political regrouping of people that have previously dispersed. Intensive field studies of economic and social implications of spinster's night in various communities of Taraba State are necessary; however, if we are to understand fully the implications of spinster's night in the State, the need for comparative research requires particular emphasis. Such research is vital to a deeper knowledge of the spinster's night and its implications for developmental processes. Only then can we appreciate the real contribution of spinster's night to development in the area.

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