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Marriage and Motherhood: A Study of the Reproductive Health Status and Needs of Married Adolescent Girls in Nsukka, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT In Nigeria, in spite of the undeniable and impressive changes in educational attainment, large proportions of females continue to marry in adolescence. For example, in the year 2005, about half of all the women aged 15-19 were married by age 18 in the country. Despite this situation, research studies in Nigeria tend to focus disproportionately on the unmarried and on premarital sexual activities. Indeed, married adolescents and young women have received very little attention as a vulnerable group with distinct needs because marriage is assumed to be safe, and because married adolescents are assumed to face none of the stigma that unmarried adolescents experience in accessing contraceptives, pregnancy related and other sexual and reproductive health services. This study investigated the reproductive health status and needs of married adolescents girls in Nsukka, Nigeria. The study was based on 100 randomly selected female adolescents aged 10-24 years in Nsukka local government area. Structured questionnaire and focus group discussion guide (FGD) were the instruments for data the collection. The findings show that married adolescents face a lot of obstacles in making informed sexual reproductive health decision, in accessing services and in exercising agency in their lives more generally.