

**BEYOND ENTERTAINMENT IN NOLLYWOOD, CHARTING A
NEW FRONTIER IN THE PROTECTION OF A GIRL-CHILD: A
CRITICAL EVALUATION OF OKEREKE'S DRY**

By

Nkemakonam Aniukwu (PhD)

Theatre and Film Studies

Nnamdi Azikiwe University,

Awka

nj.aniukwu@unizik.edu.ng

Phone: 08036088275

Abstract

The Nigerian film industry over the years has churn out films geared towards entertainment and one may say that the primary purpose of the industry is to entertain and market its products to numerous fans and supporters scattered across the globe who are becoming more and more interested in understanding the culture, philosophy and norms of Nigerian communities. Many scholars within and outside Nigeria have also interrogated, evaluated and analyzed the third largest film industry in the world. Therefore, Nollywood like other “woods” have become relevant when it comes to entertainment following American Hollywood and Indian Bollywood closely. Nevertheless, there is a gap that needs to be filled, the American government incorporated film studies into its curriculum as far back as 1960s because they understood the importance and relevance of film content in teaching, instructing and educating its populace, some Nigerians are yet to recognize such film relevance. Hence, in most cases, watching films in the comfort of your home or seeing films in the cinema is reserved as a pass time event. There is need to see films beyond entertainment galore and extract from its contents the modules to teach, instruct and educate the Nigerian masses. On the other hand, the practice of child marriage, one may argue is rooted in some religious and traditional practices in Nigeria, this study looking at the prevalent obnoxious practices against the Girl-child in Nigeria evaluates Stephanie Okereke's Dry, underlying the essential benefits of using film to educate, and enlighten the public on certain loathsome practices against the girl-child and why it should be stopped. Qualitative Research Method is adopted in assessing the tenets of girl-child marriage. The research discovered that girl-child in Nigerian society (Especially in the Northern Nigeria) has suffered from neglect, abuse and also from the deprivation of her fundamental human rights. The researcher therefore recommends that the relevant authorities such as Northern Elders Forum, Nigeria legislatures/legislative bodies, AREWA Consultative Forum, and religious leaders from the North, should rise up to the challenges of girl-child marriage and question ill existing culture, traditions, and religious practices that debilitate the position of a girl-child in their geographical enclave.

Keywords: Girl-child Marriage, Nollywood, VVF, Film

1.0 Introduction

A child could be seen as a human being between the ages of birth and puberty. According to the United Nation's *Convention on the Right of the Child* Article 1, a child is a "Person below the age of 18" (1). This study focuses on a girl-child who is below the United Nation's Age recognition of adulthood. Severally in most parts of Nigeria, the rights and privileges of children are denied by some adults. In some instances, children are forced to trade different items for their parents, madams or "ogas" masters. Nkemakonam Aniukwu discussing the dehumanization of a girl-child, opines that:

Some of those children were exposed to dangers of this world without any proper guidance and control. Some of them hawk different items for their Madams, some are knocked down by careless motorists on daily basis, and others become beggars at very tender ages. Some of them are starved for days, others fed left-over foods, some sleep in the toilets, some raped and many others dehumanized in different ways. (130-131)

From the above assertion, one could see that the deprivation, degradation and dehumanization suffered by most less privilege children in the society are inexcusable. To further extricate a girl-child and stop her from having a say in a matter that defines her future, she is married off to a man old enough to be her father. Marriage Formality is regarded in most parts of the world as a moment of celebration and an important event in adults lives, unfortunately, the practice of early children marriages especially with regards to young girls gives no such reason for celebration for the girl-childbride. Therefore, it is expected that a life-changing decision such as marriage should be a consent of an adult and not that of a child who is yet to understand the intricacies of such decisions later in her marriage life.

In recent dispensation, marriage is a matter of choice, which informs individuals involved the right to exercise that choice, but in the case of some children in Nigeria, such right and choice have been compromised even when they are recognized and has long been established in international human rights jurisdiction. Yet, many girls are forced into marriage without any chance of exercising their right to choose. This imposition of marriage on the Girl-Child literally means that her childhood is cut short and her fundamental human rights conceded in defeat. According to Paul Nwachukwu, "Marriage is a Divine Institution... it is a permanent union between one man and one woman. It is designed to bring happiness and not misery" (5)

Most of the girls that are forced into 'Prepubescent' marriage end up living a miserable life and suffer gender-based violence such as domestic abuse. No doubt, child marriage denies many young girls the opportunity to live happily and fulfilling lives, which in turn affects the society negatively. (Human productive organ of the society needs to live a happy life so as to continue its task of procreation) The growth of the society thus lies in empowering the girl-child to live up to her potentials which would benefit the society greatly. Chinyere Nworah posits that "Knowledge helps our preparation in Marriage! Marriage is a life-long journey and therefore needs adequate preparation" (86) Nworah's position buttresses the fact that young girls lack the basic knowledge needed to become an 'adult' through marriage. They are deprived of their childhood

and ushered into taking on marital roles which they are not physically, psychologically or emotionally prepared for. Some are forced into marriage, while others are simply too young and uninformed to make an informed decision. According to UNICEF:

Girls, victims of forced marriages, suffer greater psychological effects than boys in particular for reasons of impairment of their reproductive health. Lack of physical maturity and the unwillingness of the body for pregnancy can lead to death of girls, and according to available data, more than 50,000 girls aged 15-19 die each year during pregnancy or from the effects of pregnancy. (6)

The chief of the various diseases that affect a married girl-child is Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF) which is the focal point of Stephanie Okereke's Film *Dry*. One may therefore, argue that without any shade of doubt, the Girl-Child marriage is an obnoxious practice that should be ended before it escalates to the point that the society no longer see anything wrong in it.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Socialist Feminism which rose in the 1960s and 1970s as an offshoot of the feminist movement that focuses on the interconnectivity of the patriarchy and capitalism. The theory was propounded by Eleanor Marx. Chidimma Ukaolor avers that:

Social Feminism.... evolves from the ideas of Karl Marx and Frederich Engels. It does not think the reforms sought by liberal feminism go far enough for they do not recognize that patriarchy is structural foundation of capitalism. The bourgeois family that limits women's opportunity rest on capitalism and must be replaced. The transformation of society requires that men and women pursue their personal liberation, not individually, as liberal feminism proposes, but collectively as a society". (47,48)

Socialist Feminists argue that liberation can only be achieved by working to end both the economic and cultural sources of women's oppression. They reject radical feminism's main claim that patriarchy is the only or primary source of oppression of women. Rather they assert that women are unable to be free due to their financial dependence on men. Furthermore, Socialist Feminists see women's liberation as a necessary part of larger quest for social, economic and political justice. The theorists attempted to integrate the fight for women's liberation with the struggle against other oppressive systems based on race, class or economic status.

Based on the precepts of the theory, the researcher seeks to make collocation of semantic and latent contents of Stephanie Okereke Linus's *Dry* in order to solve the problem identified in this study. The paper seeks to impart a conscious spirit into the lives of the youths, adults and every member of the society to take action so as to protect and achieve positive changes in the life of girl-child.

2.2 Factors that Contribute to Girl-Child Marriage and theirConsequences

There are many factors that influence girl-child marriage in Nigeria, some of them are mentioned below as well as the consequences of the practice.

Some of the factors that promote Girl-Child Marriage include but are not restricted to Some of the consequences are:

i. Poverty
ii. Economic survival strategies
iii. Cultural traditions
iv. Laws that allow child marriage
v. Religious and social pressures
vi. Gender inequality
vii. Regional customs

i. Health Risks; especially as it relates to pregnancy
ii. Social Isolation
iii. Domestic Violence
iv. Child sexual abuse,
v. Stunt education and
vi. Patriarchal attitude

Catherine Turner’sarticle, entitled “Girls Not Bride”, addressed to the Anti-Slavery International asserts that:

...we rarely think of slavery when it comes to child marriage. It’s striking that child marriage tends to be viewed rather from gender, health, education or other perspectives – all of which are of course critical aspects to this multi-faceted problem. But if you take away the ‘marriage’ label – we believe that the experiences suffered by many of these children, usually girls, clearly amount to slavery too. (np)

From the above account, it can be deduced that Child-Marriage practice could be termed ‘slavery’, and viewed as man’s inhumanity to man.

The aforementioned factors and consequences traceable to Girl-Child Marriage calls for a review of these practices that delineate and marginalize the girl-child. It is also a clarion call to sensitize the society intellectually on the consequential entailment and awaited repercussion of these obnoxious practices that degrade humanity. As such, *Dry* by Stephanie Okerekeis used to appraise and evaluate the morality or laxity behind girl-child marriage.

2.3 Protecting the Girl-Child: Child’s Marriage Trepidations in Nigeria:

Several concerns have been raisedvis-à-vis the status of the girl-child in relation to marriage, nevertheless; the Nigerian Constitution makes no such provision as to the minimum age of marriage. “The Child Rights Act, which was passed in 2003, sets the age of marriage at 18 years-old. However, only 23 of Nigeria’s 36 states have adopted this act”. 1999 Nigerian Constitution stipulates that any female that is married is considered by law an adult because there is no specified minimum age in the

constitution. By interpretation, it means that a 14-year-old girl who is married is considered an adult. Debating on the issue in the National Assembly, senators were given the chance to remove that particular section of the constitution but the majority voted against the removal. 56 years old Senator Sani Yerima spearheaded the campaign to make sure the section was not removed; in 2010, he married a 13-year-old girl. During the debate he quotes; "By Islamic Law, any woman that marry (sic), she's of age. So if you now say she's not of age, then it means that you are going against Islamic law". This situation reflects the relatively strong adherence to religious belief and thus questions the ability of the lawmakers in protecting the girl-child and her fundamental human rights.

The practice of Child Marriage prevails in many communities in Nigeria, especially the communities where customary and traditional practices are prevalent. The dynamics of the practice differ from place to place, however, this is attributable to the diversity of Nigerian cultures and religions. The southerners are predominantly Christians whilst the northerners practice Islamic religion following the precepts of sharia law. Though the country as a whole is 'bound' by the Nigerian Constitution and Federal laws, some northern states in Nigeria subscribe to Sharia law.

In northern Nigeria, it is not uncommon for girls below the age of 12 to get married. The mothers of the young girls have little or no say in the matter. Canice Nwosu writes thus:

The root of male dominance over the female dates back to the traditional man, when the pregnant female, heavy and tired was left in the cave by the male to look after the young ones. The male was usually out to hunt, provide food and needed protection for the woman and her children. (39)

The women are not allowed to work and help in any way they can to provide for their respective families therefore, decisions made in the family rest solely on the man who is the lord and master of the household. In addition to bearing children as some culture demand, Chijioko Agbasiere observes that:

The female gender is marginalized to the point of being inhibited from advancing freely in life like her male counterpart. This situation arises due to some cultural observances fashioned and sustained by male dominated society to perpetually control women and subjugate them to their wishes in the guise of practicing their culture or tradition. (73)

Experiences have also shown that culture is supposed to be an accepted way of life by a group of people living within the same geographical area. However, this has ironically been used as an instrument of inhabitation and oppression against the girl-child in a society that propagate child-marriage. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended states in section 34(1) that: every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of his person and accordingly (a) no person shall be subject to torture or to inhuman degrading treatment". Section 17 (2) (b) further states that "the sanctity of the human person shall be recognized and human dignity shall be maintained and enhanced". Section 17 (3) (f) states that 'children: young persons and the aged are protected against any exploitation whatsoever, and against moral and material neglect". Article 19(1) of the committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

States “Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the Child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the Child” Also, according to the Recognition of Customary Marriage Act 120 of 1998 (RCMA) as cited by MJ Maluleke: “both the bride and the bridegroom must consent to a marriage. The age of consent is 18years of age”.

Against the above assertion, the Girl-child is seen as property in some families (especially to the father) which are meant to be sold off to acquire wealth, her consent and her fundamental human right of dignity of human person are denied. As such, most of the young girls are forced or deceived into marriage. This is portrayed in Toyin Abiodun’s play entitled: *The Marriage of Arike* (2014). Ignorance sometimes is a contributory factor as some parents feel it is better and safer to give away their young daughter in marriage to avoid the shame of their daughter getting pregnant out of wedlock. UNFPA as cited by Molobe Ikenna D, points out that “Some societies believe that early marriage will protect young girls from sexual attacks and violence and see it as a way to protect their daughters” (5). Violence and abuse can lead to post traumatic stress and depression and as a result many have suffered psychosocial trauma and sometimes may attempt to commit suicide. Cases have also revealed serious refusal of the bride to continue with the marriage.

The case of MaimunaAbdulmunini (A 13year old girl) who was arrested for burning her 35year-old husband to death. “The legal battle dragged out over five years. eventually, when she turned 18, Abdulmunini was convicted of murder and sentenced to death. Another case reports that a Kano girl-bride WasilaTasi’u (15years old) who killed her 35year old husband Umar Sani and four others (allegedly poisoned) out of frustration, “Ms. Tasi’u was married out to Mr Sani in 2014 as an underage at 14years. Her case has drawn international attention with calls for her life to be speared”. (Premium Times July 12, 2018).

The Nigerian Investigative Reporting Project, an online article (nirp.icirnigeria.org/the-scourge-of-child-marriage-in-Lagos) writes about the existence of child marriage in the cosmopolitan city of Lagos. The article reports of a family where the daughters are given out at the age of 16 without their consents or approvals. The first daughter was reported to have been lured to a party by her uncle, unknown to her that it was her own wedding party and afterwards she was bundled to Delta State to meet her elderly husband who happens to be a polygamist.

The second daughter immediately she turned 16 was abruptly stopped from going to school one morning and directed to enter a station wagon waiting outside their home and was bundled to Chad; she ran back to Lagos heavy with child when she was unable to handle the tasks of being a wife. The third girl defied all odds and ran out of the house when it was her turn; she ran and reported to the police but was asked to “cooperate” with her family. She was however able to break free from this act and furthered her education and today she is an advocate for literacy in the Shuwa Community Lagos.

Money Marriage Culture of the Obanliku in Becheve Cross River State is a clear case of human slavery in modern times. Channel TV in its 28th June, 2018 programme (*Eye Witness Report*) gave an in-depth account of this money marriage. An Eye witness explains the practice “That a child is given to a man who pays a certain amount of money, this payment could even be made before the child is born, once there is an inkling that it could be a girl, she automatically becomes a wife of the home, if the man who paid the sum dies, she is inherited by his next of kin” having looked at the above antecedents, the question remains, who is protecting the girl-child?

3.0 Data Analysis and Presentation

Here, we are going to use the facts of this study to do the analysis of findings;

3.1 Beyond Entertainment in Nollywood, Charting a New Frontier in the Protection of the Girl-Child: A Critical Evaluation of Okereke's *Dry*

From the above accounts, one may see the precarious situations and vulnerability of the girl-child in Nigeria. However, one unanswered question is, “who should be the voice to defend these defenseless individuals? How many people in Nigeria know the plights of those young girls? The lawmakers could not defend them, now it is time to turn to Nollywood Film Industry and see what it has done so far in that regard. Omoni Oboli's film *Wives on Strike* gained international recognition based on its treatment of the girl-child marriage. Stephanie Okereke Linus came up with her own production entitled *Dry* to support the fight against girl-child marriage in Nigeria.

Stephanie Okereke Linus is one of the leading names in the Nigerian Film Industry (Nollywood). She has been active in the industry close to two decades now. She studied and graduated with a degree in English and Literary Studies from the University of Calabar and later proceeded to New York Film Academy where she did a programme in film making. She has received so many awards both national and international including a national honour as Member of the Order of the Federal Republic (MFR) of Nigeria. She is an award-winning actress and activist, a celebrity, who is known to be passionate about women's rights and health as encapsulated in her fight against **Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF)**; a serious disability that can be experienced by some female children after childbirth. VVF could be likened to a woman having holes resulting from the breakdown in the tissue between the vaginal wall and the bladder or rectum caused by unrelieved obstructed labour. The consequence of such damage is a woman's inability to control the flow of urine or faeces. It occurs more often in young women during childbirth, as their bodies are not yet mature for the process.

Stephanie has been involved in the campaign of raising awareness to fight the disease for years and thus founded the Extended Hands Foundation; a non-profit organization which helps facilitate free treatment for women and girls with Obstetric Fistula. The organization's main goal is to help these women by providing free surgeries to heal their fistula. Stephanie Okereke Linus as cited in Vanguard Newspaper stresses that:

As a student, I heard stories about young girls who had been forced into early marriage and were suffering the negative and embarrassing effects of VVF. The story stayed in my consciousness and drove me, for years, to seek ways to raise awareness on the condition; leading to my work with a team of dedicated doctors to carry out repair surgeries for VVF victims across the country...

These visits, interactions and research conducted over the years provided the blueprint for the script of her self-produced movie entitled “*DRY*”

Dry, a 2014 Cinematic Nollywood film gives account of the painful experiences of a mother and child separated by circumstances. Dr Zara, an abused female child is adopted by a humanitarian medical doctor from Wales who comes to Nigeria from time to time to attend to the medical needs of women and children. Zara grows and becomes a successful medical doctor in Wales. Nevertheless, the traumatic experiences of child abuse she suffered in the past still flashes her memory occasionally. She decides to make peace with her past and travels back to Nigeria to fill in for her adopted mother who at this time is hindered by her frail health that stops her usual visit to Nigeria. Zara arrives Nigeria, she faces the challenges of finding a way of providing surgeries to the female children in the community who have Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF) as a result of girl-child marriage. She also finds it difficult to locate her long lost daughter whom she gave birth to some years ago when circumstances beyond her control forced her to work as a prostitute in Madam Kojo’s sex house.

Halima on the other hand is given out to Alhaji Sani in marriage at the age of thirteen against her will. She gets pregnant but loses her baby and womb to poor delivery procedures in the hands of a local midwife. She finds out that she has lost control of her urinary system and has joined other girls who are suffering from fistula. As a result, she drips on herself unconsciously. She is taunted and persecuted by her mother in-law, some of her co-wives and the society at large. With pressure from her mother in-law and co-wives, Alhaji Sani throws her out of his house. Halima runs to her father who in turn rejects her and throws her out to the streets. Dr Zara finally locates Madam Kojo who reveals to her that Halima is her daughter. Halima is rushed to Dr Zara’s clinic at the brink of death and she eventually dies. Zara revolts for the rights of women and children and succeeds in pressuring the senate to pass a law against underage marriage. She institutes a Fistula Foundation in honour of her daughter, Halima.

Having been preponderantly incarcerated by the issue of girl-child marriage which has become a dominant issue in some regions in Nigeria, a need for a critical analysis arises. There has been a superstitious weltans chauung in some regions in Nigeria, especially in the Northern part, which is treated in Stephanie Linus Okereke’s *Dry* using the character Halima. Halima (a 13year old) is forced to marry Alhaji Sani (60years old) against her will. Her mother goes to encourage and advise her on the necessity, but Halima complains:

Halima: I don’t want to marry now... Why me? ... I don’t want to go with him.

Mother: Halima, you are too young to understand these things, you are young and this is the right time. When you are old and worn out who will marry you? And Sani is so generous; see all the gifts he showers on us every now and then, it seems he is the right man for you Halima your father wants the best for you. Since you are the eldest, he wants you to get married first before your younger one Danny.

Her mother encourages her and explains further “Your friends and their mothers will be so jealous of you” Halima mother’s action proves that girl-child marriage is a

practice that people look forward to in their society. It is seen as an achievement, a good thing that a girl gets married while she is still “young” Halima’s household prepares for her marriage ceremony. She is sweet-talked to and prettied up on the D-day as men and women of the community gather, foods and drinks are served.



Plate 1: Halima’s Marriage Ceremony

The women sing and dance in their own way as Halima is wrapped up like goods about to be sold. Her mother hands her over to her in-laws as her would-be husband’s kinsmen pay the dowry.



Plate 2: The state of the child-bride at her marriage ceremony

In an ideal wedding scenario, the bride is supposed to be happy; it is meant to be one of the best moments in her life accompanied with dancing, and celebrating with her friends. As seen from plate 2, it is not so for Halima as reflected in *Dry*. The girl-child has no voice and no say in a matter that concerns her. She is deprived of her freedom of choice, consent and will.

At the night of the marriage ceremony, Alhaji goes in to his newly married wife Halima but she refuses him. He shouts at her and forces himself on her, amidst the struggle that ensues he points out:

Alhaji: Shut up! I paid a lot of money to have you as my wife. I waited for you all these years but still you want to struggle with me.

After raping Halima, he commands,

Alhaji: Did your mother not prepare you for the role of a wife? Do not be stubborn with me.... When I come here next time I expect complete submission!

The above conversation shows that this obnoxious practice to some degree involves mothers who are supposed to prepare their 'girl' children, teach them at a very tender age, wives' roles to their husbands. One may argue that the girl child has potentials of becoming prominent individual in the society other than being saddled with the responsibility of becoming a wife.

Consequently, Halima gives birth to stillbirth and wakes up in the morning with shock and confusion. Her bed is soaked. What could be the possible explanation? She tries to hid her problem from her fellow wives as she comes out from her hut but Fatima sees her and finds her passing out urine uncontrollably.



Plate 3: Halima in a confused state and dripping urine

From Halima's expression, she is confused at what is going on with her body. She does not understand the reason why she cannot control urine as usual. She retorts: *I don't know what is wrong with me.*

The girl-child in the society is not old enough to understand what it actually means to be pregnant or give birth, talk more of having complications like fistula as a result of early childbirth. Halima is being taunted by her fellow wives. They make mockery of her, spit out in disgust and chase her out whenever she comes close to them. They conclude that: *"She obviously had committed some kind of abomination to have this kind of disease"*. They catcall and laugh at her as she passes.

This proves that some communities in the Nigerian society are not well informed especially on issues that pertain to health of a girl-child especially as it relates to the girl-child pregnancy and fistula complications. They see this disease as a punishment for one's wrong doings which is well deserved.



Plate 4: *Halima is troubled as the villagers mock, taunt, throw things and make fun of her*

As demonstrated in the movie *Dry*, the society laughs, jeers, ridicules and throw things at any girl or woman seen with such disability (VVF). The victims of fistula are being deserted by both their family members and the society at large. They are castigated and taunted and most times disgraced in public. Her mother-in-law who seems to be kind at first; during the marriage ceremony complains to her son Alhaji.

Hajiya: The whole village is talking about Halima and this dreaded disease that she has brought to our household... I even suspect that all this is an evil attack or even witchcraft Sani...they even said she may have committed adultery.

These victims are being accused falsely because they have fistula disease. All manners of allegations are being leveled against them just to isolate them from the society. The society tends to disassociate themselves from the family members of the accused.

Alhaji: Halima, we have to put you in a room where you will stay for a while before I decide on what to do with you! No going out and no cooking.

At some point, AlhajiSani could not bear it any longer and, throws Halima out of her hut with her belongings. He yells,

Alhaji: I am tired of all these problems! ...Go and die there! Not in this house! I'm done with you! Go back to your father! Go and let your family share in this embarrassment! Why should I be the one to suffer! What did I do wrong?! you are one that knows who you slept with that gave you this terrible disease.

Halima: Megida please, I beg you, I didn't sleep with anyone please don't chase me away, my parents won't receive me.

Alhaji: The whole house smells! My friends can no longer come and pay me a visit and to worsen it, you can't bear children anymore. Who wants to sleep with a rotten pig like you!

The above dialogue infers that a victim (Wife) of VVF (The girl-child) is isolated not only by her husband's family but also her father's household. They are not allowed to socialize or move about freely. They are like prisoners in their own society, deprived of their basic human rights. Dr. Zara's efforts to save Halima (Zara's real Daughter) proves abortive as she dies of VVF. Her death motivated Dr. Zara, as she moves to the National Assembly to meet with the senators concerning Girl-child's rights and other ill-treatment meted out on a girl-child. She opines:

Dr. Zara: Today I stand before you, to speak for the rights and welfare of the daughters of Africa. To speak against the above and reduction to the status of material gift especially at tender age. The practice of under aged marriage, female circumcision, lack of access to medical care and education is a gross abuse of womanhood. Insist that our final and most decisive anti fistula effort should commence now. Time has come for us to put a stop to this menace... we need to enforce the child rights act, create an agency for the eradication of fistula in order to achieve our millennium development goals. And in all I beg you please, let these young girls have their childhood, because when it's taken away from them, you can never get it back.

Why are they marrying them off? That's the reason! Marry them off, they get pregnant and then at the end of the day you throw them away like piece of trash! This needs to stop and that's the only thing I want! ...the government has to do something; everyone has to stand up to make sure that we restore our health care system! That is all I ask for, restore our health care system.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study shows that the predicaments of less privilege girls of the modern Nigerian society have been neglected and all manners of abuse are levelled against them, these abuses and negligence if not checked and corrected could spell doom on the development of the girl-child in particular and Nigerian society at large. The girl-child in the society is not old enough to understand what it actually means to be pregnant or give birth, talk more of having complications like fistula as a result of early childbirth. They lack information as regards to health and as such, should not be made to experience such inhuman treatment of child-marriage.

Most of the cultures and traditions, inherent in Nigerian society deprive the girl-child her fundamental human right, her right to choose, her right to be a child, her dignity of human person and so on and so forth, one may argue that the underage marriages happen mostly in the northern part of Nigeria but the truth is that child marriage goes beyond boundaries and should be handled collectively. The problem of girl-child marriage and its consequences highlighted in this study calls for a serious and radical measures from all and sundry. In consonance with the theoretical framework of this study which is Social Feminism, all hands must be on deck to tackle the issue of the girl-child marriage, it is not the responsibility of women alone, it is the responsibility of the society. The society needs to protect the girl-child, shun all acts of abuse, violence, dehumanization, degradation and deprivations against her. The Nollywood film used in this study goes beyond entertainment and treated a serious cankerworm desolating the girl-child in the society, it is left for the government and other well-

meaning individuals to key into the campaign against Child-Marriage and one of its numerous consequences 'VVF' as raised in the film *Dry*.

The researcher therefore recommends that the relevant authorities such as Northern Elders Forum, Nigeria legislatures/legislative bodies, AREWA Consultative Forum, and religious leaders from the North, should rise up to the challenges of girl-child marriage and question ill existing culture, traditions, and religious practices that debilitate the position of a girl-child in their geographical enclave.

The researcher also recommends free education for every girl-child, as this act would detached vicious men under the guise of marriage from taking advantage of the girl-child. Also Nigerian populace should develop interest in the wellbeing of the girl-child and how they are treated in the Nigerian communities, desist from and as well as resist cultures and traditional belief that tend to tyrannize female-children.

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