

# **HARMFUL CULTURAL PRACTICES AS TERROR INDICATORS: A READING OF SELECT NOLLYWOOD VIDEO FILMS**

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## **Abstract**

Harmful Cultural Practices are unjustifiable acts of violence meted out mostly on women and children. These violate the human rights of the victims and reinforce their lower status. Harmful cultural practices can be seen as acts of terror, because not only are their victims filled with dread and fear, but also their ripple effects can be likened to the effects of any other act of terror. The Nigerian video film industry has been employed in fighting various acts of terror through the portrayal of these dastardly acts in films, but how effective has this been? This study examines the portrayal of harmful cultural practices in selected Nollywood films. It is approached through a critical content analysis of Desmond Elliot's *Edikan* and Stephanie Linus' *Dry* in order to determine their efficacy in handling the subject matter. The qualitative approach of research is employed for data sourcing and analysis. Focus group discussions in two cities, Uyo and Owerri are also utilised. Findings of the study show that some Nigerian video films are effectively indicating issues of harmful cultural practices for purposes of encouraging critical thought and possible redirection while others handle the matter with levity and carelessness, thereby passing the wrong message and unknowingly encouraging these practices. The study concludes that there is need for film makers to reconsider their approaches to the making of such films for purposes of creating awareness and generating interest in culturally oppressive practices capable of triggering off terrorist tendencies in the young.

## **Introduction**

Film could serve as a tool for socialisation, education and national development in general. Film is a significant means of mass communication. It qualifies as mass communication as one or more "machines are used to produce and transmit public messages that are directed at large heterogeneous and scattered audiences" (Dominick

13). The medium is a platform to persuasively engage the people to accept a new idea for change and, to develop a new opinion, attitude or to take a specific course of action on issues. There is no gain saying the tremendous influence that film wields, as film clearly has an advantage over other media as it combines primarily, both audio and video and is thus very appealing to the audience. The audience also has moral, emotional and cultural involvement in the course of events and the roles of various characters, their language and style of speaking inevitably leave an impression on the audience.

Culture is a terminology or concept that plays a significant role in the overall development as well as the transformation process of every society within the globe. Culture is said to be that “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other abilities acquired by man. Culture, accordingly, encompasses those conventional understandings and practices which give a people their uniqueness and thus render such a people distinct from all others” (Biobaku 76). Culture is based on the unique human capacity to classify experiences, encode such clarifications symbolically and teach such abstractions to the others. It is usually acquired through enculturation, the process through which an older generation induces and compels a younger generation to reproduce the established lifestyle.

Culture refers to the holistic way of life of a people that can be used as a pointer to the indices of development or civilisation. This also implies that every culture is subject to the process of change and transformation. In the long process of change and transformation of a community or a nation, there is bound to be cultural confrontations or contacts which could also result in what is called mutual cultural influences. The latter, according to Unoh, could “in turn, result in the assimilation, adaptation and accommodation of aspects of other peoples’ cultures. The end product could be cultural refinement, advancement or development” (3).

In whatever way, there must be a change of attitude through cultural contact because culture is influential. Ciroma corroborates this assertion by noting that “contact between communities of different cultural backgrounds has always been perhaps, the most active agent of change. The change can be peaceful or gradual or upsetting with long term ramifications depending largely on the nature of the contact and the reaction to it” (5). However, cultural contact is necessary for development. History has revealed that changes arising from cultural contacts are not in any way new phenomena as several ancient civilisations influenced and impacted greatly on one another. Ciroma posits that, “Egypt left her mark on Greece, Greece on Rome and Rome on Northern Europe. Similarly, the contact between Europe and African Cultures in more recent times has brought about many changes within Africa” (6).

Nigerian culture is as multi-ethnic as the people in Nigeria. Three major ethnic groups exist in Nigeria, namely; Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. However, there are many other ethnic groups as well, two hundred and fifty (250), precisely. These ethnic groups have cultures that have in one way or another rubbed off on each other, influencing each other positively or negatively. These negative influences stick and are enculturated as they turn out generally to be harmful cultural practices.

Throughout the world, there are many different types of harmful cultural practices that violate the human rights of citizens (mostly women and children). Some

practices are restricted to a particular area of the world, while some others are more widespread. Harmful cultures sometimes seem impossible to change as they are powerful and only careful efforts will alter or eliminate them. Efforts to change harmful cultures are most effective when they originate within the culture that practises them. Neither culture and tradition, nor religion and superstition can be used to justify harmful practices, which constitute rights violations and violence. Harmful cultural practices prevent their victims from enjoying their basic human rights including: the right to life and health, the right to non-discrimination on the basis of sex, the right to liberty and security of the person, which includes the right not to be subjected to violence and recognises the need for children to receive special protection and the right to freedom from inhuman or degrading treatment and recognition of the inherent dignity of the person. Harmful cultural practices cause their victims physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual pain. There are prevailing cultural practices in Nigeria, which can be termed as acts of terror. This is because its victims are filled with intense dread, fear, trauma and pain and may eventually lose their lives.

In this circumstance, need has arisen for these practices to be altered or eradicated. Many media are being employed for this cause, ranging from; documented works, radio, television and films (film, being one of the very effective media). This research is therefore set to study how films are used to handle diverse cultural practices that are an abuse of fundamental human rights of individuals. Two films, *Edikan* and *Dry*, are critically analysed for purposes of interrogating the harmful cultural practices that are exposed in them. This is done to present the view point of these directors and their contribution towards the modification or eradication of these practices. It is on this premise, that this research work is built.

It is pertinent to assess a suitable theory on which this paper is hinged. The theory most befitting for this work is the theory of “*objective reality*,” propounded by André Bazin, a film realism theorist. In his publication, *What is Cinema?*, he insists that,

The guiding myth, then, inspiring the invention of cinema, is the accomplishment of that which dominated in a more or less vague fashion all the techniques of the mechanical reproduction of reality in the nineteenth century from photography to the phonograph, namely and integral realism, on recreation of the world in its own image, unburdened by the freedom of interpretation of the artist or the irreversibility of time.... Every new development added to the cinema must paradoxically, take it nearer and nearer to its origins (21).

This implies that film should be made to express the image of the society which bore it without unnecessary alterations from the director or producer.

The Nigerian video film industry constantly faces accusations of using negative themes that do not send out the right messages about Nigeria, thereby endorsing the freedom of the director to make necessary alterations, as far as it does not pollute the mind of the audience. This topic has brought about debates among scholars who have drawn various lines of thoughts. According to Ekeanyanwu:

...three lines of argument are clearly distinguished.... The first line of argument sees Nollywood as bastardising Nigerian local cultural values, thus impacting negatively on the Nigerian indigenous culture. The argument here is that the Nigerian cultural values are not adequately portrayed in themes of Nollywood movies.... The display of witchcraft, ritual killing, crass immorality, etc. as major and prevailing themes in Nollywood movies is argued as not being representative of the Nigerian indigenous society.... They see the Nigerian society as rich in cultural ethos, hospitable, and have a rich traditional heritage of respect, high moral standards and respect for family values. So overplaying the minority incidences... is not acceptable (76).

He goes ahead to insist that the second major concern of those in this argument is that Nollywood has impacted negatively on Nigerian indigenous cultures in the area of language, which they consider a core component of culture. The third line of argument is that Nollywood has impacted both negatively and positively on the Nigerian indigenous culture.

Other scholars have agreed that negative themes are not ideal for the progress of the industry and nation. Eno Akpabio has listed other “controversial” themes to include, “prostitution, sibling rivalry, wife or husband snatching, philandering, problem of in-laws, house helps, bonding and oath taking, including cultural issues such as, Osu Caste System and incest” (150). Akpabio notes that the negative themes are not only portrayed but celebrated and glorified. To support this postulation, Femi Osofisan posits that film wields tremendous ability to represent a people and their culture and that:

films also have significant influence on the way others see us, hence, on the way they relate to us. We cannot but be concerned therefore about what they are saying, what attitude they are promoting and what image of us they are projecting. Precisely because they have deservedly won ovation everywhere, the Nollywood films have come to assume authority over our values and our lives, such that what people see in them comes to be taken not just as fictional projection of one’s imaginative consciousness, but as the truth, authentic mirror of what we really are, as a veritable market of what our society represents and much worse, of the ideal that we aspire, or must aspire toward (53).

He is concerned that the images projected in film could affect how others see us and relate to us, and suggests that positive images be projected through films. Ojukwu and Ezenandu x-ray “the industry’s poor manner of exposing some African negative traditions and its inability to use some core shared values and norms to enhance, transform and consolidate the emerging African democracy” (25).

Some other scholars believe that this perceived problem is as a result of the make-money-quick syndrome enveloping Nigerian film producers. This syndrome compels them to produce substandard movies, without relevant content or with negative themes. Onuzulike notes that, “the popular quick and cheap productions are likely to lend Nollywood movie makers and stakeholders to distort and romanticise African cultures

and environments, as well as presenting them negatively” (289). In essence, the content of the movies is compromised because the video film might be misconstrued.

While scholars are opining that Nigerian video films promote negativity, which is unhealthy and a betrayal of cultural trust, others, however, agree with André Bazin, emphasising that films are the society’s mirrors. One among them is Onubuogu, who posits that,

an artist must be honest. An artist should not go and tell the story the way it is not.... We are sometimes uncivilised and backward. Our movies show these things.... To begin to paint ourselves in colours that don’t belong to us would not do us any good (30).

In all these, film should not be falsified in a bid to promote a culture that is not at its best. Should this be done, there would have been no progress made at all. It is necessary, therefore, that any film should be true to its time, mirroring the society, with the hope of improvement and subsequent development of such a society. The purpose of adopting Bazin’s theory in this study is to align his assertions with the critical analysis of the selected films in line with the thematic contents of harmful cultural practices.

### **Harmful Cultural Practices in the Nigerian Society**

Traditional/cultural practices reflect values and beliefs held by members of a community or social groupings for periods often spanning generations. The roots of harmful cultural practices are often found in particular cultures and social norms and beliefs, and particular interpretations of religion. Harmful cultural practices against women are manifestations of the historically unequal power relation between men and women which have continued to erode the essence of the society and have led to men’s domination and discrimination against women. Fagbolu noted that, “...women were thought to be mentally, socially and psychologically inferior to men, therefore they had little or nothing to contribute when it came to decision making” (29). To buttress this point, Akubue posits that, “...women subordination knows no boundaries” (3). Although harmful cultural practices can be imposed on both men and women, there is no gainsaying the fact that many of the harmful cultural practices in existence in Nigeria, are directed at women and children. Some of such practices are witch-hunting and child marriage. Witch-hunting is a disturbing harmful cultural practice which is directed mostly at women and children. Studies show that many people in Africa and some other parts of the world often attribute unexplained illness, death and misfortune to witchcraft. Evidence shows that women and children are disproportionately suspected and accused of the practice.

UN ESCAP, has reported that, “...in Nepal, elderly women and women who belong to lower social classes, have been accused of being witches and suffered violence as a result” (21). Nigerians believe that a witch was any person who behaves abnormally outside the expected patterns of societal behaviour. In the same vein, Bastian identifies these distinctions thus:

Among abnormal behaviours likely to earn one the stigma of being a witch were manifestations of antisocial behaviour such as: adultery, exactly too much for sales of anything, committing incest, walking about in the night, crying at night (in the cases of children), not showing adequate “show” at the death of a relative, not taking proper care of one’s parents, children, wife or wives, hard-heartedness... (72).

Similarly, Mgbako asserts that, “...witches were mean-looking, mean-acting or otherwise socially disruptive people whose behaviour deviates significantly from cultural or community norms” (36). In this light, the misfortune of one’s looks, anti-social behaviour or stubbornness is attributed to witchcraft and the victims suffer excruciating hardship and pain as a result. Witch hunting is still on-going in some African countries. Many unions and organisations have made effort at advocating for these victims. They make reports on places where they are practiced and create rules to stop them. In spite of all these meetings and reinforcements of rights, this practice still continues.

In Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, for instance, a child was reportedly found in February 2016 by a Danish aid worker, who had been accused of witchcraft. The two year old boy, who the Danish worker, Anja Ringgren Loven, now calls, Hope, was reportedly living on the streets and survived on scraps from passer-by when she found him. “Thousands of children are being accused of being witches and we’ve both seen torture of children, dead children and frightened children”, she wrote on Facebook, as she appealed for funds to pay for food, medical bills and schooling. Below are pictures of Hope when he was first rescued and a few months after he was properly taken care of.



PLATE 1: *When Hope was first rescued; and a few months after he was properly taken care of*  
Source: [www.facebook.com/Din Noedhjaelp/posts/933521763406203?\\_rd](https://www.facebook.com/DinNoedhjaelp/posts/933521763406203?_rd)

These stories recur in various parts of Nigeria and are reported on daily basis and a lot more are not made public. The victims of this practice are abandoned and allowed to slowly die of hunger and pain.

Child marriage is another ill treatment of children which is oftentimes given cultural or religious backing. Based on social etiquette, it is assumed that marriage should be between two consenting adults, “a man and a woman”, not a man and a child or two children. These two adults have to be aware of the need to unite and procreate, and motivated by this need, they come together of their own free will.

Unfortunately, this is not the case in some cultures. In some cultures, marriage is contracted with or without the consent of the female. Child marriage can be seen as marriage contracted before the full or average development of the economic, social, educational or political potential of any of the parties involved. In other words, couples who engage in such marriages are not groomed in knowledge and are not physically, socially and psychologically mature to assume full responsibilities of maintaining a family that may also be due to prior lack of knowledge about each other. Child marriage is regarded as a violation of human rights.

In spite of Human Rights Laws made against early child marriage, this practice is still on the high side. Parents who practice this act always have reasons to encourage their daughters to go into such marriage. Some of the reasons are so that they can earn respect in the community and also be grandparents early. It could also be because they are poor. Ladman opines that, “parents who are instrumental to the early marriage of their daughters may be to alleviate the economic hardship in their family” (51). Accordingly, Nasara observes that,

in some societies in Africa, early marriage of a girl is encouraged by parents so that their daughter would remain a virgin until marriage to ensure the parents’ dignity and earn respect for parents who would wish to see their children married before old age and also to prevent girls from getting pregnant outside wedlock (24).

These reasons to them seem legitimate enough, regardless of the fact that the girls are meant to be in school instead of being hurried into marriage.

Early marriages are not in any way desirable because, as Davies observes, “teenagers are barely young people who are not physically, mentally and psychologically mature to take responsibilities of marriage and so should never be hurried into it” (149). Child marriage is a common practice in Nigeria among both Christians and Muslims, but notably with higher prevalence among the Hausa Muslims of Northern Nigeria. Among certain ethnic groups in Asia and America, the practice of giving away teenage girls for marriage at the age of 11-13 is very common. In most cases the girls in question are married before they attain puberty: as early as 10 years.

The dangers of early child marriage are insurmountable and innumerable. It is likely that such marriages may end abruptly by the death of the man and as speculated by Boema, “there will be increased likelihood of a woman becoming a widow at a very tender age with nobody to take responsibility of her welfare” (28). Early marriage is associated with early involvement in sexual relationship and the health consequences of early sexual relationship includes; painful intercourse, lacerated hymen, profuse bleeding and severe infection which may delay to heal. Early sexual relationship invariably leads to early motherhood of a girl-child who is not physiologically mature to get married, get pregnant or go into labour. In this wise, Obianyo observes that,

... because of the undeveloped pelvic bones there is usually an obstruction and delay in the descent of the baby through the birth canal leading to prolonged

labour; with excessive pressure of the baby on the mother's bladder which is anatomically in front of the uterus. Prolonged pressure exercised on the bladder, vagina and rectum of the mother may lead to paralysis of the muscles, thus provoking unhealthy conditions such as vesico-vaginal or recto-vaginal fistulae, especially when an untrained traditional birth attendant is conducting the delivery (94).

Vesico-vaginal fistula or recto-vaginal fistula is obstetrical condition where a woman is incontinent of urine or faeces or both. Urine or faeces incontinence is dehumanising because the victim is left with the scar for life. Even where V.V.F. patients have been successfully treated, they often have problems of reproduction later. Other problems that could arise include wound breakdown, recurrent infection and delayed healing wounds. The harmful cultural practices listed are mentioned but a few and saddening so, are still very prevalent in some communities in Nigeria.

### **Nollywood Video Films as Indicators of Harmful Cultural Practices**

Nollywood is the name of Nigeria's film industry. Its existence was heralded by the successful production of Kenneth Nnebue's *Living in Bondage*, a NEK Video Links production. Since its birth, there has been no going back. Nollywood has found its way to the top in ratings. Anunike assert that,

the industry is... rated as the largest home video industry in the world... and rated the third largest film industry in the world after Hollywood... and Bollywood in terms of its mass production of films. About 53 films are released every fourth night in the industry (cited in Umezinwa 14).

Nollywood has revealed the uniqueness of video films as popular culture, which has impacted Nigerian and other African cultures, the viewers and the content. Video film's advantage over other media is that it is more accessible and affordable that any group, individual or society can use it to tell their story. This advantage has been utilised as a tool for indicating harmful cultural practices and portraying them as acts of terror, the films, *Dry* and *Edikan*, being proofs to this. *Dry* and *Edikan* bring to the fore, the terror of Child Marriage and Witch Hunting respectively and the effects they had on their victims.

### **Synopsis and Analysis of *Dry***

Zara (Stephanie Okereke) is a successful Nigerian doctor living in Wales, United Kingdom. She is tormented with memories of her past. This threatens her commitment to marry Alex (Darwin Shaw) – a man she loves. This torment also threatens the whole of her being. Her mother, a missionary to Nigeria, has repeatedly failed in her attempt to convince Zara to join her in one of her medical aid trips to Nigeria. Her mother is about to embark on her regular trip to Nigeria but she falls seriously ill. She is unable to make this very crucial trip to Nigeria. This trip inevitably falls on Zara who also discovers that



there is a strong possibility that her long lost daughter might still be alive. She is steered in a new direction to face and conquer her darkest fears. Her trip to Nigeria becomes mandatory as she is also trying to avoid Alex who just proposed.

Back in Nigeria, thirteen year old Halima (Zubaida Ibrahim) is forced by her parents to marry a sixty (60) year old man, against her wish. She is welcome by her mother-in-law and her other three co-wives (two of which do not like her). With no idea of sex and its intricacies, she goes through the dreadful ordeal as her husband repeatedly rapes her. She is pregnant and has trouble with delivery. She eventually delivers the child, who dies. She develops complications thereafter. Young Halima suffers a condition, known as, Vesico-Vaginal Fistula (VVF). A health nightmare suffered by over 800,000 other women (just like her), she is ostracised and abandoned by her husband, his family and community. It is a period of rejection, isolation and despair for Halima.

Zara is in Nigeria. She is constantly faced with challenges and turmoil. The people of the community are resistant to positive change and they do everything to frustrate her and her hospital. She is also faced with emotional turmoil resulting from the horrors of her childhood, and her experiences and heartaches while working with these suffering women. She is, notwithstanding, undaunted by these challenges and goes out announcing free treatment for all VVF patients. Zara is also seriously looking for her daughter, who she believes may still be alive. She retraces her steps to where her life began but is still unsuccessful even though she meets with the parents who adopted her daughter.

Halima gets wind of these free treatment of VVF and is rushed down there in spite of her initial resistance when her condition gets critical. Finally, Zara meets Halima and marvels at the tie that binds them together. Halima meets her real mother, Zara, as she arrives at the hospital in her critical state, but succumbs to her pains in death. Zara, who is pained and torn by the death of the child she just only met is moved to sensitise and inform as many people as she could reach out to, on the dangers of early child marriage and VVF, to the point that she has a chance at the senate and she talks about her past, as well as the fate of her daughter and urges everybody to join the fight to discourage early child marriage and how to cure VVF.

The film shows that the dream of every child is to be allowed to be a child and grow at his or her God given pace to maturity, rather than being rushed into things meant for adults – like marriage, sex and child bearing. Halima retorts when asked to eat...

**Halima:** I want my childhood back. I want to be a girl again. Play in my father's compound with other children, laughing, clapping, staying by my mother, helping out in the kitchen, listening to folklore under the moon. Can you get that for me? Can you?

Halima's character wears the face of the pain that every child bride wears and her fate in the film is the fate of these brides. Zara's speech after Halima's death is everything...

**Zara:** I'm standing in front of you today not just because I am a woman, but first, I am a human being and as such, my fundamental human rights

need to be protected. The African woman can be described as the most endangered species of our world. Culture conditions have encradled her to a life of submission and subservience against her natural inclination for freedom and self-determination. She is at birth, a child to be loved and cared for, but as she gains age and consciousness of her environment, archaic traditions discard and discount her social value to a mere object to be used and given away to almost anything, to almost anybody.... Today, I stand before you to speak for the rights and welfare of the daughters of Africa, to speak against their abuse and reduction to the status of material gifts, especially at a tender age. The practice of underage marriage, female circumcision, lack of access to medical care and education is a gross abuse of a woman. I insist that a final and more decisive anti-fistula effort should commence now. Time has come for us to put a stop to this menace. Time has come for us to save ourselves from this crippling scourge. We need to enforce the child rights acts. We need to pass the national health bill. 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 is taken away from them, you can never get it back.

This speech summarises the message the makers of the film intend to pass across – every woman irrespective of where they are from should be allowed a chance to live to their fullest without unnecessary infringement on their rights. *Dry* has made these points very clearly. These points have also gone a long way to change some parts of the world. The film, *Dry*, was premiered in Gambia and resultantly, the Gambian government has officially banned early marriages. Report from focus group discussions which were organized by the researchers also have had their participants speak strongly against early marriage as a result of watching the film, *Dry*.

### **Synopsis and Analysis of *Edikan***

Etebom (Moses Armstrong) is fond of molesting Ime (Sophiana Jones), who is his stepdaughter (though he is unaware of this). Ime repeatedly reports this abuse to her mother (Ini Ikpe) who totally disbelieves her, calling her a witch who wants to destroy her marriage. On a certain day, Ime takes a decision and keeps a knife by her bed, awaiting doom. As her step father approaches, she cuts his hand with a knife. He reports this incident to his wife, turning the story in his favour of course and accusing the girl of witchcraft, as that would be the most likely motivating force for such an attack; an accusation his wife takes very seriously. She punishes Ime and asks Cynthia (Nse Ikpe Etim) to be her custodian. Cynthia rejects this request, telling her that her job as an actress is too tedious, leaving her with little or no time to take care of a child. She constantly patronises a prayer house, run by Pastor Zachariah (Ime Bishop Umoh). This prayer house she takes seriously, because, “it gave her the husband she is married to”. Ime’s mother is certain that Ime is a witch who is hell bent on ruining her marriage and promises to take her to Pastor Zachariah for “diagnosis and possible cure” of witchcraft.

She makes good her promise and takes Ime to the Pastor who instantly pronounces her a witch and takes her inside for further diagnosis. There he forces her to admit that she is a witch and for fear of her life, she admits it. She is flogged severely to exorcise her. When she returns home, her mother still finds “traces of witchcraft” in her and drives her out of the house. Here, she is picked by men who run an NGO and help abandoned children. They contact her aunt who picks her and takes custody of her. Cynthia also reports the case of Ime’s molestation to the men who first found her and they reported this to the police and Etebom is arrested as well as Pastor Zachariah who is discovered to be a fraud.

Just when everyone is dealing with Ime’s case, another case is reported as parents abandon a little child accused of witchcraft. She is helped by Cynthia and taken to the hospital as she has bouts of blackouts resulting from what she went through. Her parents are contacted but they refuse to have anything to do with her, claiming her witchcraft killed their only son. She is officially adopted by Cynthia, who sends her to school. In school, she does very well and is to be sent abroad along with her guardian (Cynthia). Her parents hear the news and come for her. Cynthia returns Idara to them, only for them to continue the maltreatment from where they had stopped. Idara runs away with Ime’s help and when they are found, they report her abuse to the police who arrest her parents. Finally, Pastor Zachariah is released, a changed person. He and Cynthia join hands in a bid to eradicate the child witchcraft stigma in the state.

The brutal theme of witch hunting in the film is judiciously dealt with. The film carefully dissuades its audience from this practice, by exposing the dangers associated with it in the characters of Ime and Idara. It also achieves poetic justice with the characters of Cynthia and Pastor Zachariah. Pastor Zachariah learns from his misdeeds and not only promises to be a changed person, but also promises to join in the fight against witch hunting thus:

**Pastor Zachariah:** I want you and I to join hands with the government and fight this witchcraft thing to a standstill. Beating children and claiming they are witches is not right...

The participants in the focused group discussion at Uyo had very personal experiences on this issue. They not only appreciated the input made by the film, but pleaded that more films with such themes, be produced.

## **Conclusion**

Nollywood has been a significant contributor in the fight against Harmful Cultural Practices in the country. The films analysed in this study, *Edikan*, and *Dry*, bear testimony to this fact, as do the discussions from the focus group discussions. The discussants, while saluting the makers of the films studied here, assert that more still needs to be done in the fight to ensure speedy eradication of such practices. The study therefore recommends that more researches be carried out by Nollywood film makers into harmful cultural practices for purpose of giving them exposition. This is important to avoid misrepresentation of the people and presentation of falsehood.

Production of films with such important themes as harmful cultural practices should also be in the languages of the various ethnic groups of the country to avoid the linguistic impediments that may limit the films from reaching all ethnic and language groups in the country. More development communication strategies should likewise be adopted to help take the message to the people. The various NGOs working against harmful cultural practices should consider the options presented by the Theatre for Development (TfD) approach and free film screenings.

This research work, therefore, provides a model, for students of Theatre and Film Studies who are likely to become future film makers, reminding them of the things left undone, the fight left unfinished and the need and plea of the average African woman and child for the freedom to life in safety.

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