

# PORTRAYAL OF WIDOWHOOD PRACTICES AND FEMALE GENITAL CUTTING IN NIGERIAN VIDEO FILMS: A CRITICAL READING OF SELECT FILMS

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## **Abstract**

*Widowhood Practices and Female Genital Cutting (FGC) are issues that have attracted the attention of scholars and even casual observers from around the globe in recent years. Although such practices are gradually being modified, abandoned and outlawed as the case may be, they are still being practiced in some communities with grave consequences for the victims. This study critically examines the portrayal of these practices in Nigerian films using Emem Isong's Uyai, Kalu Anya's Make me a Widow and Emeka Nwabueze's the Grave Consequences to expose the associated ills of such practices. Data sourcing and analysis employed the content analysis approach of the qualitative methodology. The Findings of the study show that these practices are a threat to life and the well-being of the victims and society. The researchers therefore recommended the production of more films with themes of obnoxious cultural practices as a means of creating awareness and discouraging further perpetration.*

*Key Words: Genital Cutting, Obnoxious, Cultural Practices, Films, Widowhood Practices.*

## **Introduction**

A number of conceptions have arisen on the issue of Widowhood Practices and Female Genital Cutting. Studies have been carried out by scholars who have expressed varied opinions on

the matter. The first category of scholars are engulfed with the search of likely reasons for the prevalence of Widowhood Practices. Clifford Odimegwu states that, “the gender ideology of sex differences and sex role expectations impact on widowhood.” (52) Odimegwu is of the opinion that rites are tied to traditional beliefs about death, feminine roles, family structure, inheritance and family relationship in Igboland. Similarly, other scholars in this category believe that this practice is an opportunity to get even and settle scores, where they felt they might have been wronged by the widow. Chidili supports this by opining that, “widowhood rite is an unbridled desire in the married daughters of the land to insist on avenging their brother’s maltreatment on the widow, or actuate a vendetta on the widow, so as to get even from the hurt they incurred from their own part of the world.” (15)

The second category of scholars believe that widowhood practices are for the overall good of the widow. That the practice in Africa were not primarily designed to de-womanize African womanhood or impoverish and oppress women. George, T argues that, “African widowhood rites are the products of the instincts of self-preservation which society has created to protect and safeguard the widow against the vengeful ghost spirit of her deceased husband.” (156). The third category, firmly holds unto civilization and Christianity and term Widowhood Practices, barbaric and uncivilized. Chidili suggests that such practices should be, “nuanced and updated with biblical passages.” (16)

Conceptions have been built, similarly, on Female Genital Cutting. Reasons for FGC, include, sexuality, religion, social pressure, mysticism and magic, femininity and perception of beauty. Alo and Gbadebo, for instance writes that, “the external genital is unclean and if uncut, will become unsightly.” (1659) It is considered ugly and bulky and can grow to become wild, therefore, the need for Female Genital Cutting to beautify it. Many other opinions have reported FGC as a violation of human right and

health risk to any woman on which it is performed on, hence, the need to stop it.

This paper aims at providing a perspective in which Widowhood Practices and Female Genital Cutting can be viewed. This aim is to be achieved by analysing the films- *Uyai, Make me a Widow* and *The Grave Consequences*. These are products of the Nigerian film industry, Nollywood and they have themes of Widowhood Practices and Female Genital Cutting. Nollywood Films have become popular for their ability to connect to their audiences, and as such, they remain apt instruments for accessing Widowhood Practices and Female Genital Cutting in Nigeria.

### **Widowhood Practices**

The World Population Ageing estimates that “37% of the world’s populations over age 60 is not married. The majority of these individuals are widowed. Older women are far likely to be unmarried than their male counterparts. In the least-developed countries, this disparity is even greater, with 59% of women and 16% of men being unmarried.”(3) From the above estimate, widows constitute a uniquely vulnerable segment of the population. The fact that every enduring marriage ultimately ends with the death of either man, woman or both of them cannot be over emphasized. The death of one’s spouse however may be in itself, one of life’s most extreme crises. The reason being, it severs one of the deepest emotional bonds established in a lifetime naturally. It is speculated that, the impact of the death of a husband tends to be more overwhelming on the woman than the man when he loses his wife. This results invariably from the enormous psychological trauma of such tragic development on account of the harrowing experiences that awaits her as couched in widowhood rites.

Widowhood Practices which encapsulate the rites performed for a woman after the death of her husband as enshrined in our different cultures in African are among the prevailing prejudices that have consistently impinged on the dignity and rights of women

folk. Whereas the concept of “widowhood” essentially emphasizes the state of being a widow or widower in most cultures in Africa, widowhood practices have become the exclusive preserve of widows, with associated elaborate and often gruesome guiding regulations, and not for widowers for whom little or no mourning rites are prescribed. Olujobi opined that:

In some of our cultures, the equality of men and women is heavily compromised in the matter of celebrating death in the family. The widow who is a woman bereaved of her spouse even in her grief and lamentation is traditionally presumed guilty of death of the husband until proven otherwise, even in situations where deceased has been protractedly ill for a long time, and death, was expected at any time. (9)

Obianyo noted that,

The heart rendering grief associated with widowhood has become a well-recognized phenomena which has refused to be dealt with, in spite of effort at national, local and international conferences, seminars and workshops on the plight of widows and how best to redress the situation. (91)

In most Africa societies such as Nigeria Ghana and Cameroon, the bereavement process is accompanied by several accusations and cultural practices, some of which are rituals harmful to the widow. As Chukwu-Okoronkwo notes:

One of the horrendous nightmares that may confront a woman at the death of her husband in various African cultures is the often times scandalous accusation from the deceased husband’s relations of having a hand in the man’s death irrespective of how peaceful they might

have lived, especially when the woman had not been in good relationship with them (72).

Madu identifies some harmful rituals thus;

In some communities in Aninri Local Government Area of Enugu State where it is the practice to take a widow to a shrine (by the brother-in-law) at night, naked, where she is forced to have sexual relationship with him in front of the shrine. This shameful act is performed while the deceased is still lying in state. According to the traditional belief, it is assumed that the widow is under bond to have any intimate relationship with any other man or else she will die if she dare try it. Also, during the mourning period, the widow is not supposed to bathe for about eight days.

However, mourning rituals are not applicable to widow in Africa alone. In India for instance, widows were burnt alive at the cremation ceremony of their deceased husbands, although this practice held many years ago. In Pakistan also, the widow is believed to epitomize bad luck. The widow is subjected to a chain of torments, punishments and abasement aimed at proving to her that all is gone for her.

Widowhood practices vary from one community to another, but all widowhood practices endanger the lives and wellbeing of the widow. These practices place them in vulnerable positions as inhuman conditions coupled with barrage of accusations levelled against them often times metamorphous into varied traumatic situations; which could include compulsorily asking the widow to drink water used for bathing the corpse of her deceased husband; sitting and sleeping on the bare floor without cleaning of self and environment; eating food with her bare hands; Shaving of hair with blunt razor blades/broken bottles; and so on. In some communities of Amaigbo in Nwangele Local Government Area of Imo State,

Odumegwu recalls that, "...the widow is expected to cry three times daily, first at 5:30am, 12noon and just before bedtime. This emotional reaction depends on her age, the status of the deceased, how intimate the widow was with the deceased and the nature of death" (12). He also observed that there is usually extensive reduction in status and social opportunities for the widow, which leaves her in a lonely and devastating condition. Her personal habits and activities that had shaped her daily life for years are shattered by the death of her husband. After the discomforts of the first few weeks, she is sentenced to wearing rags or one set of mourning dress, which in the case of very poor widows become faded and torn on their bodies. Consequently, if any widow fails to carry out these rites, she is victimized, penalized or ostracized. He goes further to explain that it is the reason widows in Igbo land are not expected to do the following during their period of confinement and mourning- defy the traditional mourning rites, attend markets and festivals, change their mourning clothes without due process before the expiration of the mourning period, or abscond with her children. These practices give no thought to the children of the deceased. Kisija also notes that:

As the widow is subjected to all the do's and don'ts of widowhood rites, scarcely any thought and consideration is given to her children who are automatically forced into denials such as good feeding, schooling, better clothing and other sundry demands. The absence of a father figure/role model may have adverse effect on children's discipline and morality. The social environment is less enriched because of the absence of a role model. The health and general wellbeing of the widow especially where she could not enforce discipline on the children, she may also develop hypertension and other health conditions associated with raised blood pressure. (31)

Ultimately, widowhood practices take a toll on the widow as well as her children.

## **Widowhood Practices in *Make me a Widow and Uyai***

### **Synopsis of *Make me a Widow***

In the land of Ukwaja, every young widow is accused of killing her husband and as such, serious punishments are meted on widows including shaving their hair, depriving them of their husband's wealth and sending them away. This has been the standard widowhood practice which Anita (Angela Okorie), a young single lady, is displeased with. As a child, she watched her mother suffer the same fate when their father died. This prompted her resolve to ensure that no other woman suffers the same widowhood fate as her mother. She champions various crusades against maltreatment of widows. She eventually marries and two weeks into her marriage, she begins sex strike along with all other women in the village, including prostitutes. There is uproar in the village because the men do not appreciate this.

The prince of Ukwaja who just arrived from the United States of America, meets the women protesting. The prince is interested in the affairs of the widows, much to the displeasure of his father. The prince insists that there is an inner circle in the king's chamber that is responsible for the plight of the widows. The prince defies his father, and on his birthday, chooses to celebrate it with the widows. It is where he discloses his collaboration with other young men to form an organization for widows, "Wipe Our Tears Foundation." The foundation's goal is to give all widows in Ukwaja a monetary award of three hundred thousand Naira (300,000) as well as to provide scholarships for all their children. Some of the Prince's friends keyed into the scheme and offered to give N50, 000 and two bags of rice to each widow as well as sponsoring skills acquisitions programmes. This turned around the status of the widows in the community, making widowhood a privileged condition.

This began the problems in the village. Women whose husbands were not doing well would tell their husbands that they

would have been better off as widows. This created fear in the men of these communities as they felt that their wives would start killing them off so that they could enjoy the benefits of widowhood. Their fears began coming to realization. Soon, the men started dying and a younger group of widows, headed by Ruth (Ebube Nwagbo), Anita's friend and co-champion of crusades against maltreatment of widows emerged. This group is named "Stainless Widows." They met with the friends of the Prince, (unknown to him) and made an alliance different from "Wipe Our Tears Foundation" called "Friends of Widows, International." Here, the men were to be supplied with young widows and the widows were to be given money in return. This became a glaring problem in the village as more men died mysteriously and young widows were getting richer, much more than the first set of widows in "Wipe Our Tears Foundation." The king got interested and realized for the first time that there was an inner circle in his cabinet, including the Chief Priest. He decided to send for the *Black Stone*, which is the symbol of justice. The village drunk is sent on the mission to procure the stone which is in the forest, in the custody of a forgotten priestess.

The Drunk finds the stone and returns with it. Every widow is to be tried, along with the suspected people in the king's cabinet and Anita, who just recently lost her husband. They all swear and Anita, who is innocent, is vindicated while all others perish.

### **Synopsis of *Uyai***

Ukeme (Moses Armstrong) has just been conferred with a chieftaincy title. He returns home with his wife, hoping to travel the next day for business. *Uyai* (Ini Edo), his wife dreams of how he dies in a motor accident and pleads with him not to travel, a plea he waves off only to return a few minutes after, to the surprise of his wife, claiming he changed his mind on the way. *Uyai* goes to the kitchen to get drinking water for her husband and freezes in her tracks as there is breaking news on the television reporting an accident and showing very graphic pictures of the accident victims,



one of which happens to be her husband (who she just left in the room few seconds ago). She is alarmed and walks stealthily to the room and does not see the husband on the bed. She is very alarmed! Her husband taps on her shoulder from behind, a move she doesn't take lightly, as she takes to her heels. Ukeme's body is deposited in the mortuary and his sister, Uduak, along with her friend, Idara (who had eyes on Ukeme long before he got married, making Uyai her archenemy) start accusing Uyai of having a hand in her husband's death and are bent on proving it.

Meanwhile, Ukeme's 'spirit' is roaming without rest, visiting his parent's home and even his burial. Everyone is worried that his spirit cannot rest, giving ample opportunity for Uduak and Idara who never liked Uyai to accuse her of the death of her husband. They claim that once the person who killed him had been exposed, his spirit would finally find peace and rest. The parents of Ukeme do not consent to having Uyai suffer. They initiate other methods to bind his spirit and send it off, all of which prove futile. The whole village of Amari is thrown into confusion and all agree that the first suspect (Uyai) be dealt with so that his spirit can rest. So they gather women with the help of the women leader of Amari, Ntiero (Obey Etuk) and march to her friend's house, Emem, who she has been staying with since the death of her husband. At this point, his parent's hands are tied, so they watch with pain as Uyai, a good daughter – in –law is being tortured for something they know she is apparently innocent of.

One day, a lady, Linda Umoren comes to Ukeme's parent's house. His father does not recognise her any longer, but his wife does. She informs them that the death of her son brings her. Apparently, thirty years ago, she had a set of identical twins at a very tender age and she could not afford to take care of them. Ukeme's parents who had been childless for a while and were her neighbours got wind of her delivery and offered her money to get the child and never show up again. Unknown to them, she had twins

and put up only one for adoption. Now, it is the son she kept behind that has just died and she has come to retrieve his body for burial.

Ukeme, who has been captured and tortured in the bid of being “bound and sent to the other side” is eventually released and his wife, who has passed out as a result of being tortured and being given the bath water of the corpse is hospitalized where it is noticed that she was three months pregnant and at great risk of losing the baby. Finally, all is resolved as everyone gets home and Uyai subsequently gives birth to a son.

### **Analysis of the Two Films**

*Uyai* tells a story of an unfortunate woman who has the trouble of facing the very traumatizing process of Widowhood Practice. As previously discussed, there are various reasons that propel the perpetuation of this practice. All of which are unjustifiable. In Uyai’s case, she had people who did not like her and who never wanted the marriage to take place. She is seen as the reason for Idara’s disappointment. When Ukeme dies, Idara finds an ample opportunity for Uyai to pay for standing in the way of her happiness. This links up with one if the reasons Widowhood Practice prevails (to get even and settle scores). The women of the village feel justified by their act, as only the punishment of Ukeme’s killer would give him peace and rest.

The women all march to Emem’s house chanting, “the wife who kills the husband to take his inheritance, come and see what is happening.” They arrive at her house, booing, shouting and calling her names, calling Uyai to come out. When she eventually comes out, the following conversation ensues:

Uyai:       What do you want from me?  
Ntiero:     We want to know, as you tell everyone, if  
              you killed your husband or not!  
Uyai:       I don’t know what you are talking about.  
Idara:      You don’t know what we are talking about?  
              Okay, by the time you drink the water used in

washing your husband's corpse, you will know what we are talking about!

After taking Uyai hostage, the women torment her and end up forcing her to drink the water used in bathing her husband's corpse. After Uyai drinks the water and passes out, the women leave her. Idara, Ntiero and another woman come in and see her in the same position they left her.

Idara:           What is this? Please, is this sleep or death?  
Ntiero:          It's like she is dead!  
Idara:           I said it! I said that she killed her husband!  
                    Now, she drank the water used in washing  
                    her husband's corpse and died.  
Woman:         This is good! Now, justice is served!

They are not remorseful in any way. Idara even suggests that Uyai's body be thrown into the ocean and leaves saying that that is her punishment for wanting to marry Ukeme. In the end, they realize that she was being tortured to near death for the wrong reason, as the man in the mortuary is not her husband but his twin who was not known.

This revelation goes a long way to tell that the process of Widowhood Practice is based on unfounded and unscrupulous reasons irrespective of where it is practiced and irrespective of the intended result. The death of one's husband is tormenting enough that there should be no reason whatsoever to increase one's pain and grief. Unfortunately, as seen in the film, women in the Nigerian society go through this very traumatizing process continuously. This film takes time to expose the evils of widowhood practices even with the twist added to it in the end, where it turns out that Ukeme's twin brother died instead of Ukeme. *Uyai* is one of the films that are relevant in giving a new look to obnoxious Widowhood Practice.

The film *Make Me a Widow* handles the theme of Widowhood Practice. The maltreatment of the widows led to the crusade championed by Anita to stop it. Although this crusade got necessary attention from the prince, bigger problems began to sprout. The men of the village began to have issues and it led to the following conversation:

Husband 1: My Prince, your gifts to the widows are having a very big negative effect on our wives.

Prince: How do you mean?

Husband 1: My Prince, can you imagine that my wife, this morning, was praying for me to die, so that she can join the widows to enjoy.

Husband 2: My wife said I should die so that money will come her way.

Prince: (laughs)

Husband 1: My Prince, are you laughing?

Prince: What do you expect me to do, cry? Go and pour your grievances to the King!

This conversation did not in any way solve the perceived problems the men of Ukwaja foresaw as this perceived problem began to materialize and the young men of Ukwaja began to die in mysterious manners. The blame fell on Anita who advocated for the widows in the first place. She complains to Ruth, her friend, thus:

Anita: My dear, I don't know why people are like this, because I fought for the widows I am now being accused of encouraging women to kill their husbands. I did not tell any woman to kill her husband.

As the deaths became unbearable and accusing fingers continued to point at her to the point that her life was at risk, she runs to the king with a disclaimer:

Anita: My King, my husband still lives, I am not a widow yet, please hear me out. My King, whatever is happening around the widows is not my idea of freedom for the widows. I am here to disassociate myself from the so called “Modern Widows.” My King, I will fight for them no more, until I know who they really are. They might have been proven to be innocent by the Chief Priest, but, I do not know... “Wipe Our Tears Foundation,” I know, “Friends of Widows International,” I don’t know.

The king and the prince have to look for alternative means of proving the innocence of these increasing numbers of widows, especially now that Anita’s husband has just died. They believe that if she is to take the oath that is being thought to be rigged, she would be found to be guilty and would die. It is resolved that someone must go to *Isigodo Shrine* at the heart of *Amoda Forest* to procure the *Black Stone of Justice*. The stone is used to identify the wicked widows who die along with the chiefs and chief priests that secretly supported them, the King declares:

King: I declare in my capacity as the Igwe of Ukwaga and as the custodian of the costumes and traditions of our great land, that henceforth, all the laws working against the widows of our land are hereby abolished.

At the dénouement of the film, poetic justice was achieved. This, however, did not erase the fact that young promising men had died before justice was realized. This film gives a look at a possible outcome of obnoxious Widowhood Practice. Frustration of widows during mourning could herald the beginning of catastrophic. Analysing *Uyai* and *Make me a widow*, show the dangers associated

with this practice. Anyone under as much pressure as the widows can do anything to survive. These things can have tremendous ripple effects, as seen in the movie.

### **Female Genital Cutting (FGC)**

WHO defines Female General Cutting as, “all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.” (241) Although many organizations and governments at both local and international levels have worked to reduce the prevalence for Female Genital Cutting, the practice is still common in many countries. “It is estimated that between 100 and 140 million girls and women worldwide have been victims of female genital mutilation. Each year, three million are subjected to the practice in Africa.” (WHO, 24)

Female Genital Cutting is a practice embraced, practiced and institutionalized in many societies of the world; deeply rooted in their traditions and carried out for several reasons. It is an age-old practice which is perpetuated in many communities around the world simply because it is customary. Some say it forms an important part of the roles of the female child. It is erroneous to believe that FGC is only practiced in Africa. Ras-Work insinuates that, “Female Genital Mutilation or female circumcision is sometimes erroneously referred to as one of the harmful traditional practices associated with many cultural groups in Africa.”(21) FGC is practiced in many societies across the world.

The origin of FGC has not yet been established but records show that the practice predates Christianity and Islam in practicing communities of today. FGC could be regarded as the equivalent of the male circumcision referred to in the Holy Bible Genesis 17:10-10 where the male foreskin is removed without any damage done to the male organ. In female circumcision, part of an organ (the clitoris) is chopped off. FGC has no biblical backing. Obianyo described FGC as, “...one of the most degrading brutality meted on

women, which was originally embodied in patriarchal power structures rooted in desire to control women's lives." (74)

The United Nations (UN) report shows that, "in Africa and especially in many parts of developing countries, Nigerian inclusive, the age at which FGC is carried out varies from area to area." For instance, among Akwa Ibom and Efik people of cross River State, girls are circumcised before they join the fattening room confinement, "Mbopo or Nkuho." This happened when they were of age to marry and when they have completed their confinement, after which, they would be released for marriage. Akina reveals that, "the Owu's in Abeokuta circumcise their girls within 7 or 8 days. The Binis do theirs before the third month of the birth of the child, the Ijaws, just before marriage." (61) He noted also that for the Ijaws, FGC is mandatory, even when she escapes it in life, she must undergo it when she dies.

There are various reasons given by different people for performing FGC. Some of these reasons are more universal than others. Two of the more universal ones are that: FGC helps to check female promiscuity and that FGC is an early initiation rite into womanhood. Other less universal reasons are that: FGC is believed to enhance fertility and FGC is also believed by some people that when an uncircumcised woman gives birth and the baby's head touches the clitoris, the baby would die.

It is worthy of note that all these claims have neither scientific proof nor backing. FGC has raised concerns over the girl child not reaching her full potentials. Bogunjoko states that: "As a matter of fact, FGM being an initiation rite onto womanhood in most African societies, keep such girls in bondage, as they will no longer be sent to school because they are supposed to remain at home until they are married." (84) In such a situation, nobody would contest the fact that there will be an increase in the already existing number of illiterate girls/woman floating around. Increase number of illiterate girls means huge liability to a developing nation

like Nigeria presently and in the future if nothing is done before they attain adulthood.

## **A Critical Reading of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) In *The Grave Consequences***

### **Synopsis of *the Grave Consequences***

Chimdi (Rose Ofozim) is friends with Miss Chalk (Daniella Allien) in London. Miss Chalk is fascinated by African culture and decides to carry out a research on the intricacies of African culture. Chimdi's younger sister, Tessy (Chioma Akpotha), has gone ahead of them to Nigeria. Miss Chalk and Chimdi decide to make a trip to Ukene Land in the Eastern part of Nigeria, where Chimdi is from. Upon arrival, they make known their intentions to the elders, who agree because there is money involved. The land is filled with many cultural and spiritual practices and at the moment, there is a big tussle between Christians and traditionalists. Chimdi's father is somewhere in between. That is the reason he agrees that his young daughter be initiated into the *Iru Agbede* rite of passage. *Iru Agbede* is a ceremony where a girl is secluded for a period of time. The matriarchs in charge of the girl decide where she sleeps, what she does, wears, eats and bathes and most importantly, check if she is a virgin. If she is found not to be, she is circumcised, because she is promiscuous and circumcision is believed to curb promiscuity. During this process, it is a taboo for the girl in question to be pregnant, as she and her family will be treated as outcasts and banished from the community. Young Tessy is to go through this process. For a child who has just returned from London, who has no idea of these cultures and so, does not give it as much reverence as it deserves, she puts up a fight. This continuous fight puts her into trouble, as one of the days she tries to escape bathing dirty water, she runs to a masquerade house unknowingly and is raped.

When the women discover she is not a virgin, they decide to do the needful, which is circumcision. Tessy and her sister are totally against this but their will alone cannot undo a lifelong



tradition. The procedure is carried out. She loses too much blood and slips into haemorrhagic shock. She is hospitalized and when released, has to complete the rite. She is discovered to be pregnant and all hell is let loose, as the implication of this development is made known to them.

Miss Chalk on the other hand is facing challenges because her enthusiasm is getting her more trouble than rewards. The elders are at all not cooperative, but one, Jaka. They say some things are too sacred for a woman to see and also record. Abumuna, the village witch is up to no good at all. She turns to a rat and destroys their return papers at night. Pastor Nicholas is one of the few support she has. He restores her camera when the chief priest destroys it using diabolical means. There is much power tussle between Christians and traditionalist, all to Miss Chalk's delight. This is because she has what to record for her research. At one of her night recording outings, she witnesses the sacrifice of two of Pastor Nicholas' church members. This she cannot contain. She is frightened to the bone and she runs to Pastor Nicholas, who makes this a police case. This singular act is their undoing. The traditionalist arrange for them all to be killed. Jaka alerts them of this development and they flee. Their only way out is Abumuna, who recalls as she was once saved by Miss Chalk and so, supernaturally teleports them back to London.

### ***An Analysis of the Grave Consequences***

*The Grave Consequences* interrogates the practice of Female Genital Cutting (FGC) also known as Female Circumcision. Tessy has just had one terrible experience and she is yet to recover from it. The women arrive at her house right after she has been discharged. One would have imagined that it made sense to allow her to at least heal. The incessantness of this procedure is portrayed in the film. The following dialogues take place:

Chimdi: See what they have turned her to? What kind of tradition is this?

- Father: That's our culture and our tradition, we must do it.
- Woman 1: Nna eh, she should get dressed so that she can dip her feet into "Ogbana River."
- Chimdi: Why are you people not worried about her condition? She is in pains.
- Woman 2: What pains? Today is her 47<sup>th</sup> day of "*Iru Agbede*." She has to go to "Ogbana River!" That is the tradition!
- Chimdi: That place is far, she can't trek down there.
- Woman 1: She has to trek! She must trek!

The film exposed that those who practice FGC are rather desperate to keep the cultures of land, than care for the members of the land. Cultures and traditions were made for people. If it is discovered that the said culture is endangering the lives of those who are supposed to be practicing it, it is expedient that it be changed.

The film also revealed an important angle of flaw in these cultures. A girl going through these rites of passage must remain a virgin, at least, to the end of the procedures. If it was discovered that the girl was not a virgin, she would be circumcised. This is in a bid to prevent subsequent display of promiscuity. In Tessa's case, she was not promiscuous, she was raped. A very traumatizing experience, yet, she was still being circumcised. This is a clear account of adding salt to injury. This act is a perfect example of misplaced priority, where trivial issues are being made important and vice versa. The community would have found out the perpetrator of this heinous act and punished him accordingly. That would have been a clear warning to other boys in the village contemplating on doing the same as him. Instead, the woman was punished for his misdeed. The community, as seen in the film had failed in their duty to its citizens.

## **Conclusion**

Films proffer immense entertaining, educational, mental, cultural and spiritual benefits to its viewers. That is why filmmakers incorporate relevant contents and themes in their production as a means of passing messages to their audiences. The films *Uyai* and *Make me a Widow* have the theme of Widowhood Practices. The turnout of events in these films give a new look to this practice. It makes obnoxious Widowhood Practices not just questionable, but dangerous for the widows and the community, in general. *The Grave Consequences* handles Female Genital Cutting (FGC). Whereas a number of people and scholars believe FGC to be of benefit to the woman and community, *the Grave Consequences* shows it as unnecessary, a threat to life and an ill representation of African Culture.

Films may or may not change the attitude of people, but it can, in the least, show them the dangers associated with the practice of these acts, hoping for a change. The study recommends that; films with valid cultural themes should be encouraged to thrive and the production of indigenous films should also be encouraged, so that they will become instruments of awareness at the grassroots level. It is equally recommended that NGO's and the government should support the spread of information against Obnoxious Widowhood Practices and Female Genital Cutting, using the film medium as well as other media sources.

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