

## Conceptual Discourse of Child Abuse in Selected Nollywood Film and the Nigerian Experience in the 21st Century

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### Abstract

Children by adults has positioned as one of the greatest problems that has ironically affected Nigerian space in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This notion is fathomed through acts of rape, bullying, child trafficking, early marriage, child labour, total negligence on children, and other forms of violence against children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as portrayed in Emeka Bishop Nwabunze's *Child Not Bride*. This issue has affected the psychological development of the affected children, thereby making them engage in malicious activities, which ranges from drug abuse, cultism, prostitution, and other heinous acts. The gargantuan effects of this menace are envisaged through the increase of suffering, death, disease of the people and underdevelopment to the society. This menace has generated lot of creative punches in argumentative and dramatic portraiture by film cineaste and critics; yet, this malicious phenomenon is unequivocally increasing by the day. The study therefore aims at interrogating the cause and effect of child abuse in selected Nigerian film. With content analysis method, therefore, this work investigates Emeka Bishop Nwabunze's approach and attempt to establish the cause and effects of child abuse in Nigeria space using film as an instrument. The effect of it will create positive change amongst Nigerians, thereby effectuating change around societies. The study therefore recommends that law against child abuse be established and implemented, as that would create sanity around the Nigerian society.

**Keywords:** *Conceptual, Analysis, Child Abuse, Nollywood Film, Nigerian experience*

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## **Background to the Study**

Child abuse, positioned as the greatest menace against the child has pragmatically, for a long time been recorded in literature, art and science in many parts of the world and menacingly visible in all African societies. Child abuse and neglect coupled with its adverse effects on the individual have been revealed to be a major problem (Norman et al. 2012). On a general note, reports of infanticide, mutilation, abandonment and other forms of violence against children according to Ten, et al (1997) date back to ancient civilizations. The historical record is also filled with reports of unkempt, weak and malnourished children cast out by families to fend for themselves and of children who have been sexually abused. The tragedy of child abuses and neglect is in the forefront of public attention, yet, without a conceptual framework, research in this area has been highly fragmented. However, research on parent-child relationships in families where domestic violence occurs is rare and mostly limited to clinical observations. Thus, it is important to emphasize that children are the victims and are never to blame for maltreatment (Maryam, et al., 2015).

By definition, Different jurisdictions have developed their own definitions of what constitutes child abuse for the purposes of removing children from their families or prosecuting a criminal charge (Wikipedia, 2019). Extensively, Child abuse and neglect are defined by Federal and State laws. At the State level, child abuse and neglect may be defined in both civil and criminal statutes. This publication presents civil definitions that determine the grounds for intervention by State child protective agencies (Wikipedia, 2019). At the Federal level, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) has defined child abuse and neglect as any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caregiver that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation, or an act or failure to act that presents an imminent risk of serious harm (Wikipedia, 2019).

Often, violence against children occurs in the form of corporal punishment - a highly controversial issue, particularly with the growing interest in children's rights (Montgomery, 2008; Salazar et al., 2014) On a plain note, one can decently state that Child abuse, also known as child maltreatment is psychological maltreatment, physical molestation, sexual abuse or involvement, or neglect of a child or children, especially by a parent or a caregiver. Child abuse may include any act or failure to act by a parent or a caregiver that results in actual or potential harm to a child, and can occur in a child's home, or in the organizations, schools or communities the child interacts with. The terms child abuse and child maltreatment are often used interchangeably, although some researchers make a distinction between them, treating child maltreatment as an umbrella term to cover neglect, exploitation, and trafficking (Young, 2012), While child abuse is strictly on child sexual abuse. Each can be used in place of the other inasmuch as it deals with the wrong doing against the child.

Most significantly, children from all walks of life suffer abuse, intentionally or unintentionally; however, some children are more at risk than others. These include children who are living away from home with other family members or strangers, children with disability as well as orphans who are living on the streets. African children can suffer additional risk because of many cultural, and traditional practices which are harmful, thus, the African government is yet

to propound laws that would guild the children against such cultures or tradition, as the case may be. Examples of such cultural practices include Female Genital Mutilation, using children as Domestic Servants, Widowhood and Inheritance rights, Child Marriages, reliance on extreme forms of Physical Punishments as ways of disciplining children as well as the belief in and practice of Witchcraft and the accompanying branding of children as witches or as possessed by evil spirits (Noh, 1994; Coons, 1994).

Furthermore, Neha & Aggarwal (2012) note that “Child abuse is doing something or failing to do something that results in harm to a child or puts a child at risk of harm”. Child abuse can be physical, sexual or emotional neglect, or not providing for a child's needs, is also a form of abuse. Emotional child abuse is any attitude, behavior, or failure to act that interferes with a child's mental health or social development. This form distinctly affects the child in all ramifications. Emotional abuse is almost always present when another form of abuse is found. It can have more long-lasting negative psychiatric effects than either physical abuse or sexual abuse. Next, Neha & Aggarwal writes that “child abuse is doing something or failing to do something that results in harm to a child or puts a child at risk of harm”. To this, they acclaimed that child abuse can be physical, sexual or emotional. Neglect, or not providing for a child's needs, is also a form of abuse. Child abuse has serious physical and psychological consequences which adversely affect the health and overall well-being of a child. Most abused children suffer greater emotional than physical damage. An abused child may become depressed. He or she may withdraw, think of suicide or become violent. An older child may use drugs or alcohol, try to run away or abuse others.

In a nutshell, Child abuse in Africa according to Eben (2017), is a major threat to the achievement of the sustainable development goals on the continent and has become increasingly topical with a dramatic increase in recognition and an appreciation of the long term harmful effects on the affected population. The aim of this review was to outline current management of child abuse (especially sexual abuse) and highlight current preventive practice that could be beneficial in a resource-limited environment. Eben went further to state that “child abuse is a serious and devastating problem not just in Africa, but the world over; however, the number of children on the continent who are abused has always been underestimated”. Next, Eben (2017) asserted that Child abuse research in Africa is still in its infancy and there is a paucity of data from most African countries. Yet, globally an estimated 95 million children experience abuse annually, with the highest rates reported in the World Health Organization (WHO) African region.

Notably, however, child maltreatment in Ghana is also pervasive and has been well-documented. Data gathered by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) show that Ghana's statistics with regard to rape and defilement are so high that they rank in certain instances alongside countries that have a recent history of violent conflict like Sierra Leone or the Democratic Republic of Congo. Child marriage is common in West Africa and in some countries in East and Southern Africa, especially Mozambique, Uganda and Ethiopia. There is a significant amount of violence experienced in these early marriages and a study in Zambia from a Demographic and Health Survey showed a 33.3% level of spousal violence (Eben, 2017).

Child abuse in Nigeria negatively affects the future of children and destroys the image of the country. In Nigerian society, children suffer from various forms of abuse such as child marriages, which is most visible in the north region of the country; molestation, child labour, kidnapping, and neglect, among other forms. Many laws and policies were put into place with the purpose of protecting children from abuse. However, they have not been effective for many reasons including poor enforcement mechanisms, poverty, corruption, lack of rehabilitation of sexual offenders, negative attitude of parents, and inefficient judicial processes (Olaitan & Amos, 2016). In Nigeria, abuse against children is rampant although it is largely under-reported. Olaitan and Amos (2016) further write that “under-reporting stems from cultural justification of certain forms of abuse associated with cultural practices and the reluctance of children to speak about prior abusive experiences”.

They also noted that “fear of their assailants' threats or their parent's reaction may be the cause of this reluctance. Also, some children may be either too young to understand their experience or unable to speak for themselves”. This is prevalent in the Nigerian society because of the nonchalant attitude towards proffering palpable solution to this problem. This is unequivocally against the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child of 1999, provides that children must be protected from all forms of torture, inhuman, or degrading treatment, physical, mental or sexual abuse, and neglect or maltreatment (Olaitan and Amos, 2016).

Drawing a critical discourse of the method, effect, forms, and factors responsible for child abuse as portrayed in Emeka Bishop Nwabunze's film, titled “Child Not Bride” form the thrust of this study.

### **Forms of Child Abuse**

The Four forms of child abuse include the following:

1. Physical abuse
2. Sexual child abuse (e.g. Rape, molestation, child pornography production and possession)
3. Neglect (e.g. Physical neglect, educational neglect, and emotional neglect)
4. Emotional abuse (e.g. Verbal, Mental, or Psychological abuse)

### **Causes of Child Abuse in Nigeria**

Many factors are responsible for child abuse in Nigeria. Abruptly, Child abuse is a complex phenomenon with multiple causes. No single factor can be identified as to why some adults behave abusively or neglectfully toward children (Wikipedia, 2019). The World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) identify multiple factors at the level of the individual, their relationships, their local community, and their society at large, which combine to influence the occurrence of child maltreatment. At the individual level, such factors include age, sex, and personal history, while at the level of society; factors contributing to child maltreatment include cultural norms encouraging harsh physical punishment of children, economic inequality, and the lack of social safety nets. Furthermore, World Health Organization and ISPCAN state

that understanding the complex interplay of various risk factors is vital for dealing with the problem of child maltreatment (Wikipedia, 2019). One can arguably state that ignorance and illiteracy, poverty and vulnerability, cultural and religious practices, weakness and personal gain, and I don't care attitude are key causes of child abuse.

**On the other hand, Neha, (2012), insisted that** “In the family, marital discord, domestic violence, unemployment and poverty, and social isolation are all factors that can precipitate abuse. Lying, disrespect, disobedience, low performance in school and destroying property are the main reasons for punishment”.

### **Effects of Child Abuse**

The clinical literature on child abuse contains many assumptions about the consequences of child abuse for the victim, his or her family, and society. For example, Eli, et al, (1983) quoting Schmitt and Kempe (1975), assert that “the dangers of child abuse extend beyond harm to the victim”. If the child who has been physically abused is returned to his/her parents without intervention, 5% are killed and 35% are seriously reinjured. Moreover, the untreated families tend to produce children who grow up to be juvenile delinquents and murders, as well as the batterers of the next generation". On a general note, child abuse can result in immediate adverse physical effects but it is also strongly associated with developmental problems and with many chronic physical and psychological effects, including subsequent ill-health, including higher rates of chronic conditions, high-risk health behaviors and shortened lifespan. Maltreated children may grow up to be maltreating adults (Wikipedia, 2019). A 1991 source reported that studies indicate that 90 percent of maltreating adults were maltreated as children. Almost 7 million American infants receive child care services, such as day care, and much of that care is poor (Wikipedia, 2019). Child abuse can distinctly affect the child Psychologically, Physically, Emotionally, and mentally. Thus, it can as well affect the development of nation where it is perpetrated.

### **Cognitive Psychology Theory**

The theory of *Cognitive Psychology* by Ulrich Neisser (1967), which interest is targeted at what is happening within our minds that links stimulus (input) and response (output), forms the hybrid enquiry that provides the mould with which this paper is shaped. When encapsulated, this theory outlines how we process information we receive and how the treatment of this information leads to our responses regarding the effects of child abuse on the children and the Nigerian society. When mastered and applied, the theory of Cognitive Psychology becomes a kind of emancipating communication in the form of discourse required to change the mentality of people regarding the effects of child abuse in the Nigerian space.

By definition, American Psychological Association (2013) avers that “cognitive psychology is the scientific study of mental processes such as attention, language use, memory, perception, problem solving, creativity, and thinking”. Much of the work derived from cognitive psychology has been integrated into various other modern disciplines such as cognitive science and of psychological study, including educational psychology, social psychology, personality

psychology, abnormal psychology, developmental psychology, linguistics, and economics. Cognitive Psychology is simply the study of thinking and the processes underlying mental events. Notably, Mark (2013) writes that “cognition is the collection of mental processes and activities used in perceiving, learning, remembering, thinking, understanding, and the act of using those processes.

### **Methodology**

Method of data collection here describes the plans employed in carrying out this study. The nature of a subject matter often determines the kind of approach adopted for researching relevant materials, thus, this research work employed the content analytical survey study. The methodological approach utilizes primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include the researcher's personal experiences and observations in the course of carrying out this research, regarding the significance of film in interrogating the cause and effect of child abuse in Nigeria, while the secondary sources include written materials relevant to the topic from internet, researched projects, articles, text books, scholarly journals, conversations, interviews etc.

### **Synopsis of the film *Child Not Bride* by Emeke Bishop Nwabunze**

The film *Child not Bride* by Emeke Bishop Nwabunze tells a story of Damilola, a fourteen year old promising child whose parents (Mama Damilola and Papa Damilola) callously gave out as wife to Alhaji Yakubu, an old man in his late seventies. As a way of actualizing his ambitious acrimony on the aspect of having ridiculous canal knowledge with the tender Damilola, Alhaji meticulously indicated interest marrying Damilola with Mama Damilola while his real family is sent abroad on vacation. Against this backdrop, Alhaji subsequently molest, abuse, and often times rape the tender Damilola, thereby inflicting pain, anguish, and suffering on her.

The major action in the film started when Damilola ran home reporting how Alhaji molested and attempted raping her as she went to assist him with house chores as ordered by her mother. In anger, Mama Damilola, though ironically pacified by Papa Damilola into interrogating Alhaji amicably and politely, considering the fact that his job is the mercy of Alhaji decided to confront Alhaji. While embittered, raging furiously, Alhaji cordially explained his ridiculous intention of having the tender Damilola as wife, which defines his recent magnanimity to the family. To season his dubious intention, he gave Mama Damilola a whole sum of one million naira so she could pacify Papa Damilola into approving his marrying his small daughter. To further buttress his intention, he also handed the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand naira to Mama Damilola for Damilola's upkeep. Alhaji also promised to take care of the family if he is allowed to marry Damilola.

Mama Damilola being intrigued with Alhaji's flamboyant intentions towards her family, thus creating a long lasting relationship which would off course increase her family's wealth, painstakingly talked Papa Damilola into accepting Alhaji's offer and intention of marrying Damilola. Damilola on receiving the news plainly declined and reminded her mother of her intention of becoming a medical doctor. She distinctly pointed out to her parent that she is a child and not a bride. Thus, her school fees should be paid and not her bride price.

Later on, an indoor traditional marriage rite between Damilola and Alhaji was secretly carried out without Damilola's knowledge. Damilola was told of her secret marriage with Alhaji, quickly ran out to her favourite aunt's house, but was later withdrawn and parceled to Alhaji. While in Alhaji's house, Damilola was on so many occasions raped, maltreated, abused, and beaten by Alhaji. She was also made to pretend as if she was treated well by Alhaji anytime her parents come visiting or she goes visiting them. Secretly, Damilola discloses her trauma in Alhaji's house and how her dream of becoming a medical doctor which Alhaji earlier agreed to foot was hampered; believing her mother would understand and keep her complaint secret, thus carry out necessary action to save her dilemma from Alhaji's web, yet, Damilola's Mother seizes the opportunity to pacify Alhaji in making her daughter happy. This instead metamorphosed or diffused into pervasive and pervasive issues that later increased Damilola's pain, suffering, anguish, and penury.

In order to convince Damilola's parents of his good intention for Damilola, Alhaji decided to buy a new car for Damilola's parents. With this, they supported his malicious maltreatment and consistent rape which later resulted to Damilola's early pregnancy. The persistent maltreatment during her pregnancy staged to her collapsing. In the hospital, Damilola was diagnosed of preeclampsia and Anemia which explains that her haemoglobin is below 8%. This ultimately explains that her early marriage and pre-adolescent pregnancy are contributing factors responsible for her pre-natal and maternal morbidity and mortality, that ultimately led to her death which ended the film as Damilola's mother begs for Damilola's forgiveness.

#### **Character Analysis of *Child Not Bride***

The film has six main characters and other minor characters. The delineation of the main characters is discussed as thus:

**Damilola:** She is a fourteen-year-old innocent Junior Secondary Schoolgirl that the action of the film revolves around. Damilola is tender, beautiful, intelligent, serious, modest, and hopeful. Her ambition of becoming a medical doctor was hampered because her parents (Mama Damilola and Papa Damilola) out of greed and ambition callously gave her out to Alhaji, an old egocentric man in his late 70s, who is passed to be her grandfather, as wife. Due to her inability of succumbing to the persistent whim of offering her virginity to Alhaji resulted to her consistent rape, maltreatment and abuse. The consistent rape resulted to her early pregnancy that later led to her death. Damilola represents the girl child in the Nigerian society, mostly in the Northern region who is forcefully and convincingly given out for marriage to men old enough to be their father and grandfather. These girls are daily abused, maltreated, raped, and most of them die due to some diseases which results due to early engagement in extra marital activities.

**Mama Damilola:** She is Damilola's mother whose delineation includes ambitious, greedy, egocentric, jealous, wickedness, stubbornness, and anxious. She decided to give Damilola, her only daughter out for marriage to Alhaji due to the benefits she receives from Alhaji even when she knew the glaring dream of her daughter wanting to be a medical doctor. She also wanted

Damilola to get married to Alhaji because she thinks it is ideal according to their custom and tradition for Damilola to get married at a very tender age. Mama Damilola represents the greedy and traditional fanatic women in the Nigerian society who due to their greed gives their daughters out to old rich men, as wives or concubines.

**Papa Damilola:** He is Damilola's father. Like his wife, Papa Damilola is greedy, ambitious, stubborn, tricky, and anxious. He connived with Mama Damilola and gave Damilola out as wife to Alhaji because he wanted to retain his job that was given to him by Alhaji. Like Mama Damilola, Papa Damilola represents all the greedy fathers, uncles, and men in the Nigerian society, most especially in the Northern region who till date gives out their daughters as wife or concubine to men who are far older than them due to what they gain at return.

**Alhaji:** He is Damilola's very old husband. He is rich, ambitious, wicked, and stubborn. Due to his malicious ambition of having carnal knowledge of Damilola, a girl that could pass as his granddaughter, he decided to lavish his wealth on Mama Damilola and Papa Damilola. When he observed that his ridiculous act of molesting and attempting rape on Damilola was to create a problem for him, he decided to propose to marry Damilola which Damilola's parents could not resist. He finally got Damilola pregnant after consistently raping, abusing, and maltreating her, which resulted to Damilola's sudden death. Alhaji represents all the men in the Nigerian society who find it interesting by marrying and lavishing their wealth on young girls that are old enough to be their daughter, granddaughter or great-grand daughter.

**Aunty Tope:** She is Mama Damilola's elder sister and Damilola's favourite aunt. She is matured, intelligent, loving, compassionate, bold, and reasonable. She decided that her children will not end up the way she ended, so she painstakingly saw all her children through university education. It is due to this that Damilola sees her as her role model. It was in her house that Damilola found refuge when her parents decided to callously perform her traditional marriage rite without her consent. Aunty Tope was severely angry with Damilola's parents because they egocentrically gave their only daughter out to Alhaji, who is old enough to pass as Damilola's grandfather. She sworn never to step her feet in Mama Damilola's house after she was severely abused by Mama Damilola who reminded her that her daughters are year to have suitors even with their university certificates.

**Doctor:** She is the doctor in-charge of the hospital that Damilola was administered before her death. She painstakingly educated Mama Damilola, Papa Damilola, and Alhaji regarding the negative effect of early child marriage on the girl child. She represents all the girl child activists who till date are agitating against early child marriage and child abuse of any such in the Nigerian society. Most of them even lose their life for this solemn and patriotic services of saving the girl child.

### ***Child Not Bride and theme of Child Abuse in Nigeria***

It is pertinent that the thematic thrust, subject matter, character and characterization, and settings in the film are composite microcosm of the Nigerian macrocosm in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It has subsequently posed as major menace plaguing the nation from ancient till present, though tagged as social condition which defines the laxity towards proffering lasting solution of the issue.



On the thematic thrust, *Child Not Bride* interrogates the negative experiences of the girl child, presenting early marriage on the girl child as a clandestine. It is worthy to note that this oblivious act, mostly early marriage is presently prevalent in the Northern region of Nigerian but minimal in other regions, while other forms of brutality against children, is visible in all the regions. In the Northern region, the girl child is given out at very tender age to men old enough to be their father or grandfather. In the film, Mama Damilola and Papa Damilola decided to callously give their daughter Damilola of fourteen out for marriage to Alhaji, an old man in his late seventies.

The nature of such agreement between the suitors and the girls parent with considering the feeling and future of the girl child, endangers the girl child, thereby turning them slave in their supposed husband's house. Evidence of this is equally seen in the play where Damilola was on so many occasions raped, maltreated, abused, and rudely impregnated by Alhaji Yakubu. She eventually developed preeclampsia and Anemia in her womb due to her early pregnancy. This unequivocally explains that her placenta was not functioning properly that resulted to her haemoglobin been lower than 8%; caused due to the reduction of blood flow into her placenta. As generally noted, when the blood flow reduces, the baby does not receive enough oxygenor required nutrient which made the baby not to grow properly in the womb. This later resulted to her early death.

In the Nigerian society, more than 90% of girl child given out for marriage in their tender age, experiences the same dichotomy such as Damilola. More than 60% of them die during child delivery, 30% of them incurred serious disease that affect their womb and body that most may not really be fathomed at earlier stage; while below 15% paves successively. Child marriage in some regions in Nigeria is so glamorous due to its association with the culture, tradition, norm, and way of life of the region where it is practiced that as soon as the girl child is born, she will be betrothed to an old man who may be old enough to be her father or grandfather. Its association with culture, tradition, norm, values, and way of life of the people in the regions where it is practiced, defines its complexity, thus hinders its abolishment in the past decades.

Evidence of this is seen in the film when Mama Damilola Fervently explains by reminding Aunty Tope how their parents deprived them of formal education, instead gave them out to their respective husbands at tender age far younger than Damilola, which she explains was according to the tradition of their people. Thus, Mama Damilola also noted that the aftermath of the decision of their parents gave them the good husbands they now have. Mama Damilola also reminded Doctor how early marriages has been the tradition in their society and how their girls/women have being successful during child delivering, but was later reminded by Doctor that six (6) out of ten (10) of the girls/women die during child delivery.

Extensively, the character and character delineation in the film are carefully built in a way that they are used to depict the key characters in the Nigerian society. For instance, character of Mama Damilola and Papa Damilola represents those parents in the Nigeria society who callously gives their girl child out to men old enough to be their father because of what they stand to gain. While character of Alhaji Yakubu represent those corrupt men in the Nigerian

society who daily molest, abuse, and rape little girls. They even go to the extent of marrying these little girls for their sexual bigotry. The character of Damilola also represents the girl child in the Nigerian society who is victim of child abuse, maltreatment, sexual assault, and pain. They are often used as bait and sold in form of marriage to old men by their parents for their malicious purposes. While characters of Doctor and Aunty Tope represents those girl child activist in the Nigerian society who are busy educating the Nigeria public on the negative effect of child abuse, early child marriage, girl child rape and every other forms of maltreatment that causes pain, suffering, fear, sickness and death of the children.

In conclusion, the setting of the occurrence of incidents in the film also depicts that of the Nigerian society. For instance, the elaborate and sophisticated wealth, cars, houses and interior decoration of Alhaji's house is used to show the difference between the have and they have not in the film. It is due to the exorbitant wealth and physical properties, owned by Alhaji that Mama Damilola and Papa Damilola affirms positively that Alhaji is the best choice of husband for Damilola. This nuance is also the same dichotomy which also attracts parents in the Nigerian space into given out their girl child to old men, believing they are already made. Evidence of this is seen in the film when Mama Danilola queries Aunty Tope if she should rather allow small boys with little or nothing to show, take advantage of Dami to the extent of taken her virginity? This therefore explains that she rather allows Alhaji, an old man in his late 70s to have her only daughter because of what she stands to gain.

### **Conclusion/Recommendation**

From the study, it is pertinent to deduce categorically that the issue of child abuse, early child marriage, rape, and other forms of maltreatments are alarming, such as it poses as major threat on the girl child. Its traumatic nature ultimately in all ramifications affected the girl child - emotionally, psychologically, physically, mentally, and otherwise. This has therefore increased the issue of fear, suffering, pain, agony, sickness, and death of the girl child in the Nigerian society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Evidence of this is seen in the Nigerian society as most of these girls' ends up becoming slut and hawkers, thereby increasing the issue of HIV and AIDS and other related viruses as rapidly prevalent in the Nigerian society today.

The issue is presently alarming and visible in the Nigerian regions, most especially in the Northern region due to some heinous laws that are constituted in the tradition, culture, norms, facts and values, and way of life of the people in the region where the act is perpetually practiced. In some parts in the Northern society, girls in the age bracket of nine, ten, and eleven, are married out to men of 40 and above and are expected to carry out some marital duties which includes satisfying their husbands sexually, bearing children for their husbands, and other household chores. The girl child is automatically treated as a matured woman as her complaint to her family members, well-wishers, neighbours, and friends alike is disregarded. Instead, she is made to bear all pain, suffering, and anguish from her husband or her husband's relatives, even if it leads to their death. The cry and anguish of the girl child becomes a melodic song to the law makers because most of them are victims as such.

Hopefully, the issue of child abuse that has brought pain, suffering and death of the girl child can be curbed if the law against child abuse is amended so as to contain parts which would dissolve the traditional and cultural obligations that encourages its practices in Nigeria and higher punishment be made against offenders. Furthermore, awareness programmes should be occasionally organized across the nation to educate Nigerians on the negative effect of child abuse on the girl child and the country in general.

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