

# **FILM AND MARITAL CRISES RESOLUTION: AN EVALUATION OF *MARRIED BUT LIVING SINGLE***

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## **Abstract**

Film as a veritable medium of sensitization and changer of the human psyche has not been fully aligned and used as a counselling intervention model to curb marital crises in the Nigerian space. Marital crises stem from incompatibility of couples, intolerance, early marriage, infidelity, lack of courtship before marriage, sexual dissatisfaction, impatience and external influence. Nigeria has recorded a large number of marital conflicts, broken homes and deaths of couples as a result of these factors. This study explores the potential of film as a viable instrument of conflict management in marriages, and how to fully adopt it to sensitize couples and those on the verge of getting married. The study also investigates the filmmakers' use of movies in their peace advocacy regarding marriages analysing Femi Brainerd's *Married but Living Single* (2012) as a case study that exposes some of the harrowing experiences and their causes in marriages. The researcher adopted the mixed method of research which employs various approaches such as interviews, content analysis, and primary and secondary data collection. Hence, the research found out that tolerance, patience, prayers, forgiveness and understanding are key vehicles that can drive marriages without havoc. Therefore, the paper recommends that there should be a culture of the annual cinema-going season in all states, specifically for the viewing of films that their thematic preoccupations centre on marital-related issues. Also, filmmakers, marriage counsellors and related professionals should work together to enlighten the targeted couples and

intending couples about the power of film in changing the human psyche and exposing the danger of marital conflicts and how it can educate them on most of these critical issues concerning marriage. This study is hinged on Media Dependency Theory.

**Keywords:** Film, Marriage, Conflict, Resolution.

## **Introduction**

Marital conflicts appear to be on the increase in Nigeria. If not properly handled, it can lead to divorce, fighting, and sadly the sudden death of spouses. However, efforts are being made by scholars, filmmakers, churches, professional organisations, etc, to curb this menace. Yet, the incidence of marital conflict and disharmony appears endemic as the stabilising of the personality role of marriage and the family wanes at alarming rates. Scholars, teachers, churches, filmmakers and so on are at a loss for the options available for identifying the causes of this situation in their attempt to proffer solutions. Otuji, Michael feels that;

Marriages, especially among the literate class have been under serious threat of disintegration. This situation is said to be caused partly by age at marriage, childlessness or barrenness and extended family interference. This situation has serious implications for the stability of the family with consequences on children's personality, growth and adjustments (21)

Marital conflicts affect society, as is evident when one looks at the high rate of divorce and the direct negative impact on some children who in some cases grow up to be social misfits and nuisances in any environment they find themselves.

However, conflict on a general note is ubiquitous. It is without doubt a part of human life which emanates when two or more people disagree or engage in a struggle over certain issues. It is a social phenomenon in human societies which comes in the form of crisis, dispute, struggle, clash, misunderstanding, quarrel, opposition and disagreement with one another. Meanwhile, in any

identified or given conflict situation like marital conflict, there is a need for conflict analysis which will include case studies, fact findings and analysis meetings. The underlying preoccupation of conflict analysis is not only to identify the various components of the conflict but to explain it to achieve a positive transformation or ways of resolving the crisis. Gaya Best Sheldrake opines that:

Since conflicts are about individuals, groups and society, the goal of conflict analysis is to positively transform their relationships by bringing about a change in their attitudes, perceptions and behaviours, thereby achieving sustainable peace. (97)

Therefore, the concept of conflict, its analysis, management and resolution have led to the existence of jargon like peacemaking, conflict prevention, mediation, preventive diplomacy, peace enforcement, peacebuilding, therapy, counselling and so on. It is obvious that proper management of conflict usually results in peace but when resolution and reconciliation fail, conflict degenerates into chaos, crisis and violence. Conflict and its management exist in politics, religion, places of work and families especially among husband and wife.

This research explores the use of film as a veritable tool for the resolution of marital conflict in Nigeria. There is no doubt that film mirrors societal issues, tensions and crises. It involves the process of resolving issues on events drawn from the immediate environment and subjecting them to literary investigation and analysis for readjustment. Film has a universal power of communication, sensitization and purgation of emotion which are made possible through its creation of aura of reality. It performs a functional role in affecting man's emotions. Awaeze, C. and Nworgu, K. see the film as "a tool that takes its viewers to the realm of reality and believability. Film as an art form is an instrument of persuasion, instruction and entertainment, just like a bullet, with force, it conquers or at least leaves a mark for the record". (26). This presentation entails that careful treatment of marital conflicts

in film can go a long way in affecting the viewer's psyche in understanding the consequential effects of such activities and proffer solutions towards the right path. It will provoke the spouses to ask critical questions about pressing issues and think of a way forward. Marital conflict is related to human love and film deals with human feelings, behaviour, love and romance. It is in light of the foregoing that this research presents film as a veritable medium for resolution of marital conflict. Hence, *Married but Living Single* by Femi Brainard is a filmic exposition aimed at addressing marital conflicts. The film selected captures differences in marriage breakdown, the grieving process experienced by each of the spouses, children, family members, friends, and professional counsellors, and the subtle threat of such marital breakdown to the societal space. The filmmakers make strong artistic statements about burning issues which continue to disintegrate marriages thereby creatively exposing possible causes of marital conflicts and ways to resolve them for peaceful marital experiences and sustainable happiness in marriages.

### **Media System Dependency: Towards a Theoretical Framework**

Media System Dependency theory was propounded by Sandra Ball-Rockeach and Melvin Defleur. The theory states that "the more dependent an individual is on the media for having his or her needs fulfilled, the more important the media will be to that person thereby explaining individual and societal level conditions that influence the degree of importance of media in the individual's everyday lives". (223). Ball-Rockeach and Defleur explain further that society, media and audience influence each other, and through their interactions, society and media in conjunction create cognitive, affective, and behavioural effects on the audience. However, regarding the focus of this research work on the influence of film on marital conflicts, the media refers to film and the audience is the couples in marriage. Film is an audio-visual

medium of communication, it can serve different purposes to audience (couples), thereby creating a media effect on them by satisfying their urge. The relevance of this theory to the study is that it projects the importance and power of film as one of the strong media channels through which people in marriage can accept film fully to satisfy their needs to be educated on how best to manage marital conflicts.

### **The General Concept of Marriage and Marital Conflicts**

The institution of marriage is as old as the creation of man. It is the coming together of two persons in love with consent of parents, guardians and witnesses for procreation and companionship. In the context of this work, it is the heterosexual relationship of consenting adults who maintain some form of socially approved sexual relationship, sharing a common residence, engaging in economic cooperation and procreation. According to Dadi Nweze:

Marriage is expected to be an affair of intimacy and compromise, where spouses complement each other. It is also expected to be “for better and for worse” but the current trend in the marriage dyad departs from these traditional assertions, as the marital union is today a mere association where rancour, conflict, and savage mutual attacks have come to stay. (19)

Nweze captures the factual situation facing marriage in our current society, although conflict is highly inevitable in marriage the increase rate is alarming. Today, couples tend to dwell together only when things are rosy and prefer to leave or separate when misunderstandings occur or even when little issue arises, despite the threats of disintegration in marriages, there are still model marriages whose dispositions give hope for badly managed ones, conflict is said to be good, especially when the tension so generated leads to positive change, which may be thought aggressive, yet ultimately ends in convincingly peaceful resolution. Thus, though

conflict is disruptive, it helps to create awareness among different people, groups and societies concerning the existence of boundaries of common interest. Any attempt by any group to step beyond the bounds generates conflicts, which may be capable of disrupting the entire system. Conflict here is seen as being positive and negative. Essuman John maintains:

It is positive when the persons involved are agitating for positive changes in their relationship, and it is negative when conflict is due to their selfish aims. Oftentimes, this assessment of marriage occurs unknown to the couples themselves courtesy of the society and the people therein. The challenges accruing from these conflicts are expected to assist couples move forward in their experience as companions. Conflict creates cohesion and strengthens group solidarity; it binds people with common interests together and restores integrative care. (112)

Meanwhile, despite the integrative role conflict is expected to play, it leads too frequently to a breakup of marriages these days. Mezieobi Kenneth asserts that “marriage is a legal union between a physically mature man and a physically mature woman within a cultural setting and the prescribed norms of such a society”. (72). The concepts of marriage and family vary from culture to culture, and society to society. The concept attracts many experts from all walks of life. Glaser Wilson views marriage as a “cohabitation union of man and woman.” (np), and it appears he views marriage as a social system which operates under one roof. In the same vein, Blatner Adam sees marriage as a “statutory expectation of a young man and woman who are supposed to pledge their love for each other to live as husband and wife under marriage ordinance.” (52). Marriage is something deeper than the mere union of a man and a woman under the same roof. In an African context, marriage is one of the most important occasions in one’s life. The other occasions are one’s birthday and one’s day of demise, but one the most exciting days in the African context is the very day one marries.

Marriage, therefore, is not a private affair. It involves the families, the kin of the intending couples, including the community at large. Jude Okpara points out that “marriage is so exciting that the road cannot be all roses just as a coin has two phases. In the garden of love, as one adage describes the situation of the newly married couples, the other side of the coin is not envisaged.” (9). He goes further to observe that there are so many youths illegitimately living together and that the mere living together of young people under the same roof may not be strictly accepted as marriage; rather it could be co-habiting since certain rites or ceremonies that legitimise marriage are absent. This is to say that not all unions are marriages. Without a doubt, such marriages are not uncommon and are often caused by pregnancy as young people get themselves involved in love relationships. This situation has serious implications for the adolescent parents whose education is often truncated, especially the girl who would have to remain at home to give birth and take care of the child in most cases. Some marriages are therefore not properly constituted and may not be considered marriage in its strictest sense. Marriage is supposed to be in existence till death separates the spouses and not a game of trial or temporary situations, especially in the African and Christian traditions. Ogburn opines that

Marriage is a compromising union of man and woman which poses developmental life cycle tasks that require individuals to address issues of intimacy and reciprocity. One may share the idea of compromise as they continue to reciprocate each other in cohabitation. (53).

### **The Role and Power of Film in the Resolution of Marital Conflicts**

Film is concerned, to a large extent, with the resolution of conflicts in different units and organisations of society including family. As an important medium of societal transformation, film always presents itself as a platform for the investigation and

projection of human conflicts that are paramount in various societies. Without a doubt, Nigerian filmmakers have seriously worked to adjust certain social lifestyles through their portrayal in video films of the social, marital, religious, political, economic and cultural specifics that define the Nigerian people's existence. Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh and Ekene Euphemia posit that:

Nigerian filmmakers often make movies, with themes that are very educative and entertaining bearing in mind that films are essential means of societal transformation; the film medium readily volunteers itself as a platform for the investigation of human conflicts that recur in various societies. (3)

From the foregoing, it is clear that conflict is inevitable in our society today and for a long time, Nigerian people have been exposed to a lot of conflicting situations most especially in marriages. It is assumed therefore that to correct this, an effective tool of communication must be adopted and utilized, and that medium or tool is film. Film has been viewed as a potent medium of communication through which messages ranging from indoctrination, education, entertainment, integrations, information, mobilization and so on, can be relayed to people to achieve certain objectives. Regarding the power and influence of film on its viewers, Alan, Rosenthal affirms that:

The importance of any organ of mass media in society cannot be underestimated as it stands as a medium of communication. Film is perhaps the most universally appealing and effective. A well-planned film rises above certain barriers through its use of pictures, music and sound, conveying messages to people or audiences of different backgrounds. (76)

This means that, what people may fail to understand through other communication media, they understand clearly through film. Film has an inextricable bond between itself and the audiences willing to suspend disbelief when viewing it. This bond and influence of

film on its audience makes it a viable tool for the resolution of conflicts in marriages. Scholars have presented film as an effective tool that can redirect and reposition the psyche of an average man in society. That is why filmmakers should require the sensitivity of their society. A filmmaker needs to identify his film with the experience of his audience including marital issues since psychologists have stated that the activities happening within a family circle in the long run affect the society at large, either positively or negatively. Moreover, Nigerian filmmakers have to a reasonable extent produced movies whose thematic focus is on marital conflicts and their possible resolutions but most Nigerian couples have not taken into cognisance the role film can play in this regard. Films with such themes are these but not the least; *Mr and Mrs* (2011), *Married but Living Single* (2012), *Just Married* (2013), *Damage* (2015), *Finally in Love* (2013), *Failed Love* (2018), *The Game of Loving* (2013), *Background Check* (2018) and many others.

These movies, however, project most of the familiar issues that cause marital conflicts. Issues like infidelity, lies, verbal aggression, domestic violence, lack of communication, subjugation, power tussle, marriage without courtship, inability to balance career with marriage, sex denial and so on. The good thing is that these movies equally present suggestive solutions to any conflict being presented, thus, a medium of sensitization and conscientization. The foregoing does not only project the social impact of the film medium but also reinforces the fact that the Nigerian video film has proven very influential on its people towards propagating social change. Ayakoroma Barclays posits that:

Film is a powerful man-made instrument used for shaping and reshaping individuals and the society at large leading to what has become the “Nigerian popular culture” of today. It has grown very influential. Being a visual medium, the audience’s interest is primarily sustained by what they

see in the film and not necessarily the story; film makes us desire things that we may not ordinarily like, but with the appropriate application of visual elements and components by the disparate artists for a film production, the audience is enticed and wilfully involved in the film as they watch it unfold. (13)

In this light, the audience identifies itself with the visual images as codes assembled by the filmmaker, he or she perceives it based on his or her understanding of cultural codes. Therefore, film is a creative medium that exposes extracts of the human endeavour and its environs which uses visual elements to initiate social.

### **Synopsis of *Married but Living Single***

*Married but Living Single* by Femi Brainard revolves around the lives of two distinct couples who have challenges in their relationships. The movie presents the first family where a career woman Kate (Funke Akindele) is at loggerheads with her husband Mike (Benjamin Joseph). Mike finds it difficult to control his wife's obsession with her career which makes her show zero concern about family responsibilities. She is deluded into believing that a career is everything as she tries to impress her zealous Boss (Joke Silva). Things take a turn for the worse when her husband suddenly falls terminally ill with cancer of the lungs. Kate has to choose to either take a break from work to be with her husband while he recuperates from surgery or stay dedicated to her company which at the same time stands a chance of winning an important contract with a Telecommunication company. The other juxtaposed family is that of Patrick (Paul Adeboye) and his wife Lola (Kaybe Emokpaire). Patrick is a jealous and physically abusive partner whose primary aim is to dominate the wife, he makes her feel inferior in their relationship. Despite his abusive experience, Lola tries to hide the bruises and scars from friends and family members just to save her marriage to Patrick which eventually leads to her death.

## **Marital Conflicts and Management in *Married but Living Single***

The film starts with the establishment of a poolside, where Steven and his wife Tracy are having a time out. Almost immediately, a young beautiful lady walks around the poolside half baked, Steven's attention is captured which makes him absent-minded as he loses focus on the discussion he is having with his wife. Tracy flares up and begins to accuse the husband of looking at the young lady seductively as well as rushes verbal abuse on him. They engage in serious arguments which leads to the level of threatening each other. Here, Femi Brainard dramatizes the theme of abusive and aggressive verbalisation in marriage, lack of self-control or lust and the theme of distrust in one's spouse. The issues that play out here are seen in today's marriages where the husband or wife derives pleasure from looking outside their marriage. Even though it is not fully established in the opening scene that Steven approaches the young lady to declare his interest, his lustful look could be seen as a signifier. On the other hand, the wife impatiently picks at him harshly, thus;

**Steven:** Can't you see what she's wearing?

**Tracy:** Is that why you are getting at her? You shameless man, woman wrapper!

**Steven:** Me, woman wrapper? My mother is a woman, my sisters are women and you my only wife are a woman... My one and only wife, and you called me a woman wrapper. I'll not take you out again and we will never go out together again no matter the event!

The above argument and use of words show how some couples fight in their marriages irrespective of the environment they find themselves. Such arguments can generate serious heat lead to physical fights at home and bring disharmony among couples. The theme of choosing a career over family responsibilities is well-represented in the film. This at first is captured subtly when Mike

and his wife Kate are having a good time at the restaurant. Mike expresses happiness over the holiday given to his wife, at least she will spend some time with the family. There and then, Kate objects that she will not have the time her husband is suggesting, she wants to engage in seminars and meetings to acquire more skills. Even when her husband tries to tell her the implications of her long absence from home especially on the children, she tries to justify her actions by making a defence, thus:

**Mike:** it has been a while since we had time like this together...

**Kate:** yes, a lot of work darling. A lot of works always await me in the office.

**Mike:** This work, hmmm... It takes too much of your time, you know.

**Kate:** Yes, that's the only way we can make our mark on the wall.

**Mike:** But not at the expense of more important things in our lives like family.

**Kate:** But then, you know that our jobs have allowed us to live an above-average lifestyle and it has enabled us to give our daughter the best. Besides, the world needs more hardworking people.

In Nigerian society today, many couples find it difficult to strike a balance between their different careers and families, and the outcome in the long run is not always advantageous. It is either one of the couples seeking attention outside their marriage, the children lacking proper and expected nurturing from parents or a fight comes up as one spouse tries to subjugate the other. From the above conversation between Mike and Kate, it's obvious that she has made up her mind to push her family aside for a job. However, the husband tries to encourage her but dies silently. Of course, he

attends award-giving ceremonies with his wife always which confirms his support for her.

In this film, Femi Brainard carefully juxtaposes another family with that of Mike and Kate. He presents the themes of jealousy, insecurity, domestic violence and aggressiveness that led to the death of a spouse. This is seen in the family of Patrick who is too aggressive on his wife, he beats her without hesitation and disgraces her in public places because of his insecurity mindset. For instance, Patrick and his wife (Lola) are seen in attendance at one party/award-giving ceremony of the wife's company. During a short break for interactions, Patrick sights his wife interacting with a male colleague, he (Patrick) becomes uncomfortable with their discussion and approaches them with bitterness, commanding his wife with a harsh and loud tone in public, thus;

**Patrick:** (Shouts) Woman, can we go home?

Woman, I say can we go home?

**Lola:** (Politely) Patrick, but the party is not yet over...

**Patrick:** (Shouts and drags her) Let's go home! (she follows him in shame)

The above scenario is enough for a strong-minded and stubborn woman to seek a divorce in marriage. A public disgrace from one's supposed husband or wife denies the existence of love and care amongst couples in their marriages. Patrick is later seen in the movie where he questions the wife aggressively at home without respect or love; he accuses her of lusting over another man at the party right before him;

**Patrick:** Why are you always disrespecting me, tell me, why are you always disrespecting me?

**Lola:** How do you mean I'm disrespecting you? Just because you saw me with a man, you are making all sorts of insinuations.

**Patrick:** did you just hear yourself? Talking to another man, my wife... how does that make me feel in public?

**Lola:** All you care about is your ego, Patrick. Anyway, that man is my colleague. He was only sharing something with me.

**Patrick:** (With anger) And you were smiling at him that way. Imagine! If you can do that in my presence at your workplace, what will you be doing at my back?

Here, it is clearly shown how some men make assumptions about the activities of their wives. They accuse their wives wrongly because of insecurity. This attitude has destroyed a lot of marriages in the Nigerian society today. However, when accusations are thrown wrongly, the spouse on the defensive side might not take it lightly, some will go for divorce when the issue is uncontrollable or keep fighting for their marriage, while others might begin to engage themselves in such activities they are being accused of, hence, destruction hits the family. However, Lola on her side in the movie tries to defend herself by voicing out but it doesn't end well with her because her husband is violent. Lola, thus flares up to defend herself in their argument:

**Lola:** Is that it? Mr. Man, what is your problem?

**Patrick:** You called me "Mr. Man"?

**Lola:** Yes, I did!

**Patrick:** OK, I'll show you the man I am made of right now! (He picks a belt from the wardrobe and begins to flog the wife like a baby)

This scenario is an archetype of a broken home, a situation where husband and wife who are supposed to be living in harmony and love fight and argue over little issues, sleep over and most times unnecessarily involve third parties devoid of professional counsellors. Sometimes, these victims in marriages hardly open up to people or seek professional advice, they rather die in silence. This is exactly seen in Lola's case, she keeps hiding the abuses and

beatings she gets from her husband, and even when the bruises are evidently on her face, she still pretends to be strong. This is captured when Mike (Kate's husband) and Lola coincidentally meet while on school runs, Mike notices bruises all over her face. This is the response he gets from her to her inquiries;

**Mike:** (Surprise) Lola, what happened to you?

**Lola:** I fell in the kitchen two days ago and injured myself.

**Mike:** Are you sure Patrick has nothing to do with this?

**Lola:** No, not at all. Like I told you, I fell in the kitchen and injured myself.

As the movie progresses, the themes of sex denial and lack of attention are captured. Kate with her love for career growth hardly gives the husband attention at home because she even works more from home due to the nature of her work. Mike, unlike Patrick, is not a violent type, he will calmly complain to his wife but she doesn't heed that. Kate's lack of attention on her husband is seen when Mike approaches her in the middle of the night, and caresses her at her working table, Kate responds negatively by saying:

**Kate:** Ehmm... Sweetheart, I have this assignment I must finish before I get to work tomorrow. I'll soon be through, OK? (Blows kiss, Mike leaves without argument).

However, when such rebuff above happens in marriage, it doesn't strengthen the marriage but rather weakens it. Mike becomes more furious and demands that his wife get a leave which her company has not given her in the past six years. Nevertheless, Kate managed to get a one-week leave. Just immediately, Mike arranges a love hangout with her, invites some musical artists and prepares some special delicacies. At the peak of their enjoyment, Kate's phone rings, Mike cautions her by reminding her that:

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**Mike:** You're on leave, you have every right to abandon anything relating to work.

Later on, Kate goes outside to take her calls in the middle of the dance she is having with her husband. While on call, Mike comes out to confirm and he finds out that she's answering a business call from her company:

**Kate:** (On-call)... Have you booked the musician? No? Why? Please, do that immediately, call him right away... Jeez! I can't wait to come back to work! (Mike leaves immediately with anger as he hears her).

No husband or wife will be happy with the above situation. Too much obsession with work is not healthy for the family. Peeping into the other juxtaposed family, Lola continues suffering in her marriage. The beating from the husband gains momentum, she leaves the house, and runs to her colleague's house, it is discovered here that she has been advised to leave Patrick:

**Kate:** ...but you have been advised to leave this man from the beginning you noticed his violent attitude but you insisted on staying with him. Now see what you have gotten yourself into.

**Lola:** it wasn't this bad then, I don't know, he always had this mood swing and turned violent. God! I have suffered, I have endured enough from him. This time, I'm leaving him for good.

The theme of misunderstanding and intolerance is also captured which is seen clearly when Lola gives out her husband's phone number to a psychiatrist without his consent. Patrick didn't take it likely, he assumes the wife sees him as a madman. Thus, he queries and complains:

**Patrick:** Who is Dr. Smith?

**Lola:** Oh! Dr. Smith, remember you told me you would like to work on your temper. So, I called him

up and gave him your number. Maybe, you should book an appointment with him.

**Patrick:** are you crazy? You gave my number to a psychiatrist, do I look like a madman?

**Lola:** You are acting like one Patrick (Patrick rushes her with anger and begins to beat her up)

Eventually, the beating leads to Lola's death. Patrick faces the consequential effect of losing his job and people disassociate themselves from him. This incident results in the daughter's psychological trauma and leaves Patrick to live with the stigma throughout the film.

Femi Brainard carefully captures the challenge of a total lack of care from a spouse. This is seen when Mike is diagnosed with cancer of the lungs and needs a close loved one to travel with him, to India for surgical operations. His wife declines by giving him the excuse:

**Kate:** ...I'm sorry dear, there is a lot to be done in the office. I can't bear to be away for even a day. I really wish I could go with you but God knows the circumstances couldn't allow me.

As the story unfolds, the theme of infidelity is also presented in the movie. When Mike didn't get the love, affection and care he needed from his wife. He begins to get them from outside his marriage, especially after meeting with T. T. Hasatrup in Mumbai (India) during his surgical operation. Mike feels more connected to her gradually, they begin to create time for each other by visiting and hanging out at close intervals. Mike eventually makes love with Hasatrup, and he enjoys every moment he shares with her. Consequently, Mike begins to lose interest in the wife, he gets irritated over her actions and words to the extent of leaving their matrimonial room for the guest room. This is evident in one of the scenes where Kate questions her husband over his recent attitude since he came back from Mumbai, thus:

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**Kate:** You are avoiding me, Mike! What is the matter?

**Mike:** You! You! How can I ever get some sleep here without you bothering me?

**Kate:** Me bothering you? I was just asking a question...

**Mike:** OK then, since you are insistent, I guess I will go to the guest room to find some sleep (He leaves with anger).

Mike's marriage gradually breaks apart, and he now strongly professes his love for T. T. Hasatrup.

The theme of lack of trust equally sets in. Kate hires a spy to monitor the husband, the spy follows him and captures every good moment he enjoys with T. T. Hasatrup. Kate becomes disappointed and approaches the husband in his office, she laments:

**Kate:** How could you do this to me (shows him the pictures)

**Mike:** So you know (confidently)

**Kate:** Is that all you can say?

**Mike:** What else do you want me to say? When you abandoned me to follow your career and expect me to lay and wait like a sick dog? No! For God's sake, I have feelings... Feelings you never bothered about. Please allow me (He leaves)

At this point in the movie, Kate becomes psychologically drained which makes her lose concentration at work, she seeks counselling from her pastor (Tina Mba) and receives constructive advice from her, thus says her pastor:

**Pastor:** Do not despair, I know a lot of damage has been done to your marriage but have you thought of the role you played in all these? (silence)... As women, we must rely on God's guidance in striking a balance between work and home. I have nothing against your career, there is nothing wrong with

aiming high. Even I have scaled down in my preaching commitment when it was taking me away from my family. Kate, you must fight for your marriage... don't lose hope... Mike might be talking about divorce, but you as a woman must be determined to be a better wife today by spending more time with him and less time at work.

However, it is obvious from the advice above that some women are single today in Nigerian society because they don't want to take on the responsibilities that come with home management. Many got divorced, left their husbands and began to regret it afterwards. Kate's pastor finalises her advice by saying:

**Pastor:** Kate, a lot of women who chose careers over their marriages are regretting it now. Kate, do not be among those statistics, don't allow the devil to break into your home.

Towards the end of the movie, Kate goes to the hotel where her husband and T. T. Hasatrup are having a good moment to apologise to him. After a long hesitation, Mike forgives her afterwards. On the other hand, Brainard shows the agony Patrick is passing through by presenting him tattered and unkempt, the use of flashback is applied to show the moments Patrick and Lola were having good moments together, their fights and how he strangled her, this leaves Patrick in deep depression. However, Kate with the help of her husband opens her own advertising company and they live in peace as a family.

Concerning the focus of this research work and the theoretical framework (Media System Dependency Theory), Film is an audio-visual medium of communication, it can serve different purposes to the audience (couples), thereby creating a media effect on them by satisfying their urge. The relevance of this theory to the study is that it projects the importance and power of film as one of the strong media channels through which the psyche of people in

marriage can be changed, as they accept film fully to satisfy their needs of being educated on how best to manage marital conflicts.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Marital conflict breeds unhealthy relationships in the couples themselves, the children and dependants. However, films capture many tips on how couples can interact and understand each other against marital conflicts that will always crop up. That is why this research work is hinged on the Media System Dependency Theory which states that “the more dependent an individual is on the media for having his or her needs fulfilled, the more important the media will be to that person thereby explaining individual and societal level conditions that influence the degree of importance of media in the individual’s everyday lives”. (223). Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the resolution of conflict in marriages can be accomplished by systematic use of film tools, when the attention of the couples has been fully called to how film can help them manage conflicts, thus adopting it as a counselling intervention model will be highly effective. The research therefore gives the following recommendations;

1. There should be set a culture of annual encouragement on cinema-going season in all states, specifically paying attention to films their thematic preoccupations centre on marital-related issues, this could be started by filmmakers while calling for possible assistance from the government
2. Filmmakers, marriage counsellors and related professionals should work together to enlighten the targeted couples and intending ones about the power of film in changing the human psyche.
3. Couples should not allow trouble to persist or linger and learn how to forgive one another in totality.

4. Couples should constantly endeavour to look out for films that treat marital challenges to maintain steady sensitisation over the danger of uncontrollable conflicts in marriages.

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