

American Journal of Communication (AJC)



**Audience Perception of Pornographic Elements in Nigeria's
Indigenous Film Industry, Nollywood: A Study of Young
Viewers in Two Tertiary Institutions in Imo State.**

Victor O. Alozie



Audience Perception of Pornographic Elements in Nigeria's Indigenous Film Industry, Nollywood: A Study of Young Viewers in Two Tertiary Institutions in Imo State.

Victor O. Alozie (PhD)

Department of Mass Communication, Federal Polytechnic, Nekede Owerri, Imo State.

Abstract

Purpose: The research work was carried out to ascertain the views of young audience of our home videos on the pornographic elements in some of the movies they watch.

Methodology: The study which was anchored on the perception theory employed the survey research technique and drew its population from young viewers in Imo State University and Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, both in Owerri. Of the target population of 5000 students from the two institutions, 350 students were randomly selected for the exercise, out of which 302 respondents completed and returned their questionnaire.

Findings: The result shows that many of our youngsters copy the scandalous elements they view on our home videos, resulting in their pornographic appearances in public, and display of lack of respect for cultural norms and values.

Recommendations: It is therefore recommended the producers of home videos should de-emphasize the inclusion of pornographic materials in their videos. It is also recommended that our youngsters should reject the scandalous and pornographic elements in Nollywood videos and accept the good lessons which the home videos also teach their audience.

Keywords: *Audience, Perception, Elements, Nollywood.*

Introduction

The Nigeria film industry is a fast growing and vibrant sector of the economy. It is a money yielding sector and one of the highest employers of labour in the country. The industry has gone a long way in making movies which are released almost on daily basis. Most Nollywood films are shot with digital video camera. But a lot of people feel that Nollywood has promoted the rising growth of pornography in Nigeria. Therefore, the perception of Nollywood audience on Nigerian movies or what is regarded as home video is of great importance to the overall growth, security, peace and development of the nation. This is because the movies have great impact on their audience. How these home movies influence the thoughts, behaviour and other actions of young Nigerians and the choices they make is of interest to the government and institutions which are stakeholders in the common good of the society. This work is set to ascertain the perception of audience of home videos on the pornographic elements in our Nollywood films as it is hoped that this will serve as feedback in the process of growth, both for the industry and the society at large.

Problem Statement

Nigeria's Nollywood films appear to be gaining ascending prominence among the viewers, especially the young people who often watch the movies from different perceptive or sources. However, the increase of access to home videos, interpretation and use of contents has raised issues of concern and debate among scholars. The contentions impinge on the probable negative influence of these home movies on the lives of young people in Nigeria. Their increased involvement in crimes like murder, kidnapping, rape, armed robbery, cultism, thuggery, teenage pregnancy, nudity, immodest dressing and language, and the inordinate drive for fame and wealth have been blamed on the movies.

The movies viewing habit of the heterogeneous Nigerian household audience is unregulated as it involves adults and children. The educated and the illiterate view pornographic and other materials packaged by the producers of our home videos. This creates the problem of ascertaining what patronizers of Nollywood perceive as the pornographic/ scandalous contents of their videos and how solutions to the problems could be found. This research is therefore set to ascertain the perception of the audience on the impact of these pornographic movies and their consequences on the lifestyle of young people in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This research is premised on the need to know the views/perceptions of the Nigerian audience on how the home movies impact on the lifestyle of young people who have habitually become regular friends and adherents to the movies. Its specific objectives include:

- ❖ Identifying the pornographic contents of the movies which have been copied by young Nigerians
- ❖ Identifying audience general assessment of the effect of the movies on the lifestyle of young viewers.
- ❖ Identifying the various ways in which these home movies have impacted on the behaviour of young people.
- ❖ Ascertaining whether Nollywood audience see these home videos as a medium for promoting sound morals, socio-cultural, and artistic excellence and

- ❖ Making recommendations on how the youths can acquire good moral behaviour through home videos.

Significance of the Study

The outcome of the work will be beneficial to the following stakeholders:

(a) **Our Youthful Audience**

It will enable them know what the society is thinking and saying about the contents of the films they view and copy.

(b) **Movie Producers**

It will enable them know the consequences of what they dish out to the audience and see the need for a review of the scandalous contents of their films.

(c) **The Society**

It will enable the general audience including parents/guardians of young viewers monitor the life style of their wards including their way or dressing.

Research Questions

1. Do our home videos contain pornographic materials dangerous to youthful viewers?
2. What pornographic contents of the films do you think are often copied by young viewers?
3. Would you say the pornographic movies are impacting on the present lifestyle of our youngsters negatively or positively?
4. How can our young viewers acquire good moral behaviour through movies?

Scope of the Study

The study focused its attention on the pornographic contents of Nigeria's indigenous film industry, Nollywood.

Definition of Concepts

Movies

Films produced by professional film makers and aired at cinema houses, television and the internet.

Pornographic Materials

The films' contents which portray indecent dressing, rape and other forms of indecent behaviour.

Young Movie Audience

The youthful or adolescent viewers of the movies whose ages range from 13-30 years

Review of Literature

Nigeria's film or movie industry, Nollywood has come on stream, though unarguably a developing one, Nollywood has been very active and productive in recent years. Although some kinds of activity have been going on in the industry since after political independence, the debut of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has offered greater impetus to the industry.

The film industry in Nigeria has offered tremendous relief to Nigerians and Africans in the area of telling their stories their own way. This has provoked various reactions from both critics and admirers within the country. The critics easily make references from flawed plot lines to boring stereotypes which give the erroneous impression of celebrating violence. To the admirers, this impressive employment industry in Africa's biggest nation has reduced unemployment rate and has created a better life for the people, having brought special attention to the country in favour of the nation.

Various scholars have studied the phenomenon which has come to be designated as "Nollywood" using varied approaches and providing varied frameworks for further researches. Even those studies have to build their own studies on the existing body of materials from the western world where film studies have long been a major preoccupation. In their *theory of specific influence*, Shutterworth and May (1993:167) postulated that when the movies consistently present patterns of conduct and personality, they carry over to all individual's child behaviour. They concluded that films exert influence but that the influence is specific for a given child and a given movie.

Nwuneli (1979:11) in a study of film audience in Lagos found that more than half of the sampled population (53%) would prefer locally produced Nigerian films and films from other African countries to imported foreign and non-African films. In another study by Opubor and Nwuneli (1979:5) the import of films was stressed especially as their report referred to the earlier Russian revolution during which the then Soviet Union leader, Lenin saw film as "the most important of all the arts for the construction of socialism" Igbiniedion (1985:18) studied audience attitude towards films on Nigerian television and found that nearly three quarters of the sampled population (70%) would prefer Nigerian films to foreign films. But he also found that these films spread a lot of pornographic messages to their viewers. Moreover, the researcher revealed that Nigerian film audience tends to perceive films with violent content as having harmful effect on viewers. His finding revealed that 80% of his respondents believe that such violent scenes on television contribute to armed robbery and other vices in the society.

Huesman and Eron (1986:34) established a relationship between viewing films, pornography and violence. In their study, they found that in all countries where a relationship between viewing films on television and violence was found, the relationship was relatively weak and pornography among youths also increase. In relation to youths' behaviour, they held that viewing television earlier results to later aggression. Ali (2010:28) studied Nigerian movies in relation to violence and pornographic elements. In his work, *Violence and pornography in Nigerian Movies*, Ali found that:

- ❖ Violence and pornography were beginning to find expression in movies in more ways than were seen or known before in Nigeria as our actors and actresses were beginning to be more sexually frank than in the preceding years.
- ❖ More films contained violence than explicit pornography.
- ❖ Some of the violent and pornographic scenes are not integral to the internal coherence of the story lines suggesting that some of our film producers were beginning to introduce such scenes merely for audience gratification

Nwankwo (2006:35) described the Nigerian film industry, Nollywood as a veritable evidence of post-colonial struggle by Nigerians to tell their stories in their own way despite the overriding influence, popularity and implicit dictatorial size of the western media and film industry.

According to him, Nollywood is a peripheral film making tradition that seeks to assert its relevance among the hegemony of mainstream cinema” His reference to the movie of all times, “Living in Bondage” is a quashi admission that the real history of modern video-making in Nigeria should begin with it. Anulike (2007.42) in his work, *Media Drama* devoted an entire chapter to Nollywood in which he traced the historical foundation of the concept to the first appearance of motion pictures in Lagos in 1903. Then the cinemas were introduced and run by people from other nations like Lebanon, India, Greece and Britain. The cinemas were built in Lagos, Enugu, Aba, Ibadan and Kaduna. These centres increased with the creation of 19 states. Glowing tributes were paid to Sanga Dosunmu’s *Startling films*, Ola Balogun’s *Afroculc films*, Adamu Hatitu’s *Haske films*, etc.

However, other scholars have held certain opinions and positions on the state, nature, impact, failures and successes of Nollywood since its inception. Nwankwo (2006:58) argued that with the success story of Nigerian home movies, the consequent experimentations with digital film episode being witnessed in Hollywood may not have been stepped up as has been noticed in recent times by Hollywood film makers. Nigerian video films are not only commercial and social, they have also passed a challenge which has ignited western interest in video film technology. Anyaebgu (2017.52). Nigerian actors and actresses are gradually becoming celebrities the world over and Nigerian culture is being celebrated in countries which before now could not identify Nigeria on the world map.

A study carried out at the University of Ibadan to appraise the vintage use of Nollywood for development communication revealed that Nollywood has not been used for development programmes. Ekwuazu (2008:190). Omatsola (2008.44) used the structuralist paradigm to analyze the Nollywood films, *God is great* and *Time to Kill*. Two reasons for choosing these movies were their availability and topicality. Then came to the fore were the “Valence of Cruel Anachronistic Practices” and “The Battered Image of the Menfolk”.

Theoretical Framework

To explore the relationship between the topic of this study and the views of experts in the area, this work was anchored on the perception theory, one of the psychological theories postulated by W. Wundit and H. Von Helmholtz. Perception theory which is widely applicable to communication posits that people determine their attitudes and preferences by interpreting the meaning of behavior. It is related to this study which hinges on what the people see, observe and perceive about the pornographic contents of Nollywood videos.

Summary of Literature

In the course of gathering knowledge for this study, many related previous works of scholars were visited and reviewed. In providing a theoretical backbone for it, the perception theory formed the theoretical framework as it was found to be most related to the study.

Methodology

Research Design

This work adopted the survey research design that entailed the use of questionnaire to elicit responses from the audience of Nollywood on their observation of the pornographic elements contained in Nigeria’s home movies. Survey is a good research technique which Mertens (2005) supported “because it allows collection of data from a large number of people”

Area of study

The study area is Imo state, Nigeria precisely, Owerri the state capital where two tertiary institutions were selected for the pilot study. The institutions are Federal Polytechnic, Nekede Owerri and Imo State University, Owerri. Both institutions have large number of students who constitute a sizeable audience of Nollywood.

Population of study

A total of 5000 students of both tertiary institutions constituted the target population, out of which 350 samples were randomly selected for the study.

Sampling

As indicated above, the random sampling technique was employed in selecting the 350 samples whom the questionnaires were administered to for the purpose of gathering information related to the study. On the other hand, the purposive sampling technique was used in the choice of the two tertiary institutions where the questionnaires were distributed. The basic assumption behind purposive sampling is that with a good judgment and an appropriate strategy, one can hand pick the cases to be included in the sample and this develops samples that are satisfactory Alozie, (2010.40). This is applicable here only in the selection of the tertiary institutions for study.

Instrument of Data collection

Structured questionnaire was the tool or instrument for collecting data used in the study. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents in the two higher institutions.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The questionnaire was validated through a very thorough vetting by a team of researchers/scholars. Through the outcome of a pretext carried out with few copies in the two institutions, the consistency of the instrument was established and this gave it reliability.

Method of Data Analysis

Information/data collected were analyzed using tables, figures and percentages to establish the views of the respondents on the subject matter.

Findings

A total of 350 students were given questionnaire in the two institutions. Out of this figure, 48 did not return the questionnaire. In the end, only 302 students responded. Their ages ranged from 16-30 years and they comprised of both sexes. Result of the study shows that the pornographic contents of our home videos are truly copied by many Nigerian youths whom the films now influence their ways of life. For instance, 275 (91%) out of 302 respondents identified the offensive elements in Nollywood videos to include the actors'/ actresses' sexual attires, their sexual behaviour, display of rape and uncontrolled display of nudity. The remaining 27 respondents, (9%) however thought differently.

The findings also showed that 35 respondents were not worried about the contents of the films but majority of the respondents 267 or (88.4%) strongly believe that the negative aspects of the videos, the half-naked dressings, regular display of rape and marriage breakups make the contents of Nollywood films offensive and scandalous. Again, 262 respondents constituting 86.7% of the

total attributed the sexy breast styles and half naked public appearances of female youths, their sexy eyelids and the sagging dress style of adolescent males to the influence of the pornography they copy from videos as shown in table 1.

From the table, it is clear that majority of the respondents (92%) agreed that the movies viewed by our youngsters make them behave without much regard to sexual norms and dress code.

Table 1: Negative effects of home videos on young viewers

	Positive	Negative	Total
Pornographic contents of home videos are copied by young Nigerians	91%	9%	100%
Actors'/Actresses' attire and display of nudity are truly copied by young viewers	86.7%	13.3%	100%
Movies make young viewers behave without regard to sexual norms and dress code	92%	8%	100%

Table 1 shows how home videos negatively influence the behaviour of young viewers in the society. A total of 279 (92.3%) respondents went ahead to say that Nollywood videos have negatively impacted on our young ones by making them have little regard for religious teachings on sexual behaviour while 23 others representing 7.7 percent of the total thought differently. Also 91% of the respondents agreed that Nollywood pornographic videos are encouraging youths to enter into wrong sexual relationship early in life as shown in table 2.

A total of 285 respondents 94.4% however disagreed that all Nollywood films are pornographic in nature as can also be seen on the table 2 below.

Table 2: Other effects of home videos on young Nigerians

	Positive	Negative	Total
Nollywood videos have negatively impacted on young viewers	92.3%	7.7%	100%
All Nollywood films contain pornographic materials	5.6%	94.4%	100%
Increase in rape, immodest dressing is due to what young people watch on films	87.7%	23.3%	100%
Adolescents and youths should shun home videos	23.3%	86.7%	100%
Pornographic videos encourage youths to indulge into wrong early sex relationship.	91.9%	9%	100%
Movies can be used to promote sound morals & artistic excellence	92%	8%	100%

Table 2 highlights more negative effects of home videos on young people. Also the findings show that 265% respondents (87.7%) attributed increase in rape, armed robbery, murder, use of foul language, immodest dressing to Nollywood's and similar films' influence. Similarly, the same number of respondents attributed increase in cultism, teenage pregnancy and inordinate drive for fame and wealth among young Nigerians to the influence of films watched by our youths from Nollywood and other film organizations.

The majority of the respondents 262 or (86.7%) however refused to recommend that adolescent youths should shun Nollywood videos because of its scandalous influence on their lives. But 40

respondents representing 23.3% thought otherwise. Finally, 92% of the respondents agreed that Nollywood movies can be used to promote sound morals as well as cultural and artistic excellence.

Summary of Findings

Results of the exercise as analyzed above have shown that the increasing nature of pornographic and delinquent behaviour of varied dimensions are attributed to the influence of the films they view on Nollywood. In other words, the findings are summarized thus:

- * Many of our young viewers now copy the scandalous elements they view on our home videos such as half-nakedness, sexy eyelids and long artificial finger nails.
- * Many of them now put up seductive appearances in public places.
- * They also display lack of respect for cultural norms and values.
- * Incidents of constant cases of rape and uncontrolled sagging of clothes by adolescent youths in our society are also attributed to the influence of Nollywood films they have embraced.

Corroboration with Literature

These findings corroborate Igbinedion's (1985) study of audience attitude towards film where he found that "these films spread a lot of pornographic messages to their viewers". They also find solace with Ali's (2010) study of Nigerian movies in relation to violence and pornography in which he found among other things that "violence and pornography were beginning to find expression in movies in more ways than were seen or known before in Nigeria".

Conclusion

The study has proved that Nollywood films negatively influence many of the young people in our society who now publicly behave with little or no regard to sexual norms and dress code. This has led to increase in vices such as rape, use of foul language, sexual adventurism, cultism and even armed robbery.

Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study, it is recommended that producers of our home video (Nollywood) should carefully de-emphasize the inclusion of pornographic materials in their videos. They should make Nollywood a veritable medium for promoting sound morals as well as socio-cultural and artistic excellence. To the youths, it is recommended that they can acquire good moral behaviour through home videos by (a) accepting the good lessons which many of the home videos teach their audience and (b) rejecting the bad and scandalous elements contained in the films they watch.

References

- Ali O. (2010). *Violence and pornography in Nigerian movies*. Unpublished PG Diploma work; NAU, Akwa.
- Alozie V.O (2010). *Mass Communication Research and Data Analysis*, Owerri Pilvic Communication.
- Anulike O.W (2007). *Media Drama*. Enugu Cecta Publishers

- Bereitrose, H.S (1973).“Film as communication”. In W. Frederick, E. Frey (eds) *Handbook of communication*. Chicago; Rand McNally
- Bittner J.R (1991).*Mass Communication*, Ibadan: Heineman Publishers
- Byran, L (2003).“Nigerian Home Movies”, Champion Newspaper; August 7 (p11-12)
- Davis T. (1989).*The man of Lawlessness; The effect of the media on violence*. London; Hodder and Stoughton
- Ekwuazu H. (2008).“Nollywood History;- as Economic Determinism or as an Accident” in evolutionary trends/process. In O. Onookome (ed) *International journal of multi-disciplinary scholarship* 3 (5), 98-11
- Ekwuazu H. (2008).“Development Communication; Towards an assessment of the Nollywood” practice. In O. Onookome (ed) *International journal of multi-disciplinary scholarship* 3 (5)
- Emesealu, E.C (2008).“The audience factor in Nollywood”, in Onookome (ed) *International journal of multi-disciplinary scholarship* P3 (5), 71-76
- Huesman R and Eron, L. (1986).*Television and the aggressive child across national comparison*; Hillsdale New Jersey; Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers
- Igbinedion, J. (1985). “Audience attitude towards film on Nigerian television”. In O. Nwuneli; (ed) *Mass Communication in Nigeria: A book of Reading*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers
- Klapper J. (1960).*The Effect of Mass Communication*. Illinois: The free press
- Kwanghondo, A. (2008). Directing the Nigerian video films. *International Journal of multi-disciplinary scholarship* P.3 (5), 17- 19
- Lykidis, A. (2005) *Film studies*, Georgia: Spark Education Publishers
- Mertens, D.M (2005).*Research Evaluation and Psychology*. California: Sage publishers
- Nwankwo I.E (2006). “The Nigerian Video Film”: A post-colonial Reading. In C. Abone, T. Utoh-Ezeajugh and A. Asigbo (eds). *The creative artist, a journal of theatre and media studies* P1 (1), 24-29
- Nwuneli, O. (1979). Movies going habits of Lagosians; in A. Opubor and O. Nwuneli (eds) *The Development and growth of the film and industry in Nigeria*. Lagos: Third Press International.
- Okunna, Chinyere C. (1993) *Theory and Practice of Mass Communication*. Enugu: Abic Publishers.
- Omatsola, D. (2008). “The Structuralist Paradigm of the criticism of Nollywood films”. In *international journal of multi-disciplinary scholarship* P 3(5), 77-80
- Osofisan, F. (2008).“Theatrical Life after generals”. In O. Duro and Yerima (eds). *Trends in Theory and Practice of Theatre Arts*. Lagos, Society of Nigerian theatre artists
- Ozumba G.O (2004).*A Concise Introduction to Epistemology*. Calabar: Ebenezer services

-
- Shutterworth, E.K and May, M.A (1933). *The social conduct and attitude of movies fans*. New York: Macmilian
- Uzezi, P. (2004). *The Nigerian Film industry*. Tell Magazine (July 10) 5 (8), 15-16
- Wundit W. and Helmholtz H. Von (1972. 126) in Okunna C.S. et al (1993). *Theory and Practice of Mass Communication*. Enugu: Abic Publishers.