Nollywood Violence and Youths in Local Communities in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated media violence and youths in selected local communities in Rivers State, Nigeria. To facilitate the study, two specific objectives and one null hypothesis were put forward. The study adopted the survey research design that involved the combination of questionnaire and focus group discussion as data gathering instruments. The population comprised all youths in nine selected communities in Ogba-Egbema-Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State, which according to 2006 population census report (projected) was 155,155 youths. Proportional stratified sampling method was used to select youth respondents for the study, while Taro Yamane statistical formula was used to arrive at a sample of 399 youths. Data gathered through questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics, while the data gathered through the focus group discussion were analysed qualitatively using the constant comparative techniques. The Chi-square analysis aided by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 23) was used to test the hypothesis. The study revealed among others that youths in selected communities in Rivers State spend many hours watching violent Nollywood movies. It also showed that youths imitate violence and gangsterism they watch in Nollywood movies and then replicate them in the society. It was inferred however, that there is a significant relationship between exposure to gangster Nollywood movies and youths resort to cultism as a way of life. It was recommended among others that government should see the need for media education to be included in the curriculum of secondary schools and tertiary institutions to educate the youths about the harmful consequences of the mass media especially Nollywood movies.

Keywords: Nollywood movies, Imitation, Cultism, Media Violence and Gangsterism

1   Introduction

Newspaper reports of a teenager recently arrested for robbery in a South-Western state of Nigeria caused a considerable trepidation in the minds of many. During interrogation by the Police, the young suspect confessed that he got interested in robbery after watching a Yoruba movie in which the protagonist was a major armed robber. He said the exploits of the criminal (actor) influence him greatly, and he decided to promptly commence a career in banditry (Ihejirika & Amadi, 2017).

Much attention now focused on the potentials of the mass media to encourage, if not cause crime, violence, anti-social and even criminal behaviour including cultism especially, among

youths. The reason for concerns, according to McQuail (2005), lies in the repeated demonstration of the high level of portrayal of crime and violence in popular media of all kinds. A secondary reason is the widespread perception, whether correct or not that the social evils mentioned grew step-by-step with the rise of the mass media during the twentieth century. Each new popular medium has given rise to a new wave of alarm about its possible negative effects. For instance, both television and movies have been linked to random acts of violence perpetrated by young people in particular. McQuail also reported that the potential to see screen of violence has gradually extended to most parts of the world, along with the means of viewing them. In another instance, Groebel (1988) asserted that violence is universal and that there is widespread fascination with aggressive media hero figures, especially among boys. This gives impetus for concern.

According to Berkowitz (1962) and Eron et al (1972) cited in Seema (2014), media violence whether portraying fantasy or reality arouses aggression or increases aggressive behaviour, desensitises audience to human pain and suffering and even accepting violence as a way of life and solution to personal social problems. In the opinion of Huesmann and Taylor (2006), weights of evidence indicate that violent actions seldom results from a single cause; rather, multiple factors converging overtime contributed to such behaviour. Accordingly, the influence of violent mass media on the audience is best viewed as one of the many potential factors that influence the risk of violence.

When it comes to portrayal of gang and gang members, the mass media, especially, movies sometimes go into great details, such as the crimes gang members commit, how drugs are sold, how to "shoot-up" (inject drugs intravenously), how to settle dispute using violence. What this statement means is that gangs sometimes form and operate by following the steps of other through social learning or observational process as watching violent or gangster movies.

Related to the assertions of media scholars, the Nollywood movies industry has been accused of overemphasising negative themes which has become a national concern (Nnabuko and Anatsui, 2012). This spurred the National Film and Video Censor Board (NFVCB), the agency responsible for providing guidelines for motion picture producers based on public interest and national concern in Nigeria to urge video producers to deliberately avoid portrayal of violence, crime, cultism, sex and pornography, vulgarity, obscenity and other sensitive subjects (NFVCB, 2000, cited in Nnabuko and Anatsui, 2012). The guideline of the Censor Board resulted to the ban on some films which include: "I hate my village", for promoting cannibalism, and failing to uphold Nigerian moral cultural values, "Half of a yellow sun" scheduled to hit the Nigerian cinemas. The film which deals with Biafra war was banned because of the negative content which is capable of inciting violence (Chidumga, 2016). Other Nigerian films with negative and gangster themes include: "Shattered Home", "Outcast 1 & 2", "Night Out" (Girls for sale), "Omo Empire", "Isakaba 1 - 4", "Terrorist Attack" and "Unseen Forces". A critical analysis of these movies revealed that issues highlighted in them include violent robber, ritual killings, kidnapping, gangsterism and occultism, among many other vices.

Since the introduction of Home video especially, the availability of Nollywood movies to most homes in Nigeria, crime rates and level of violence in our society have increased (Onyekosor, 2014). Local communities in Rivers State for instance, had experienced relative peace before Nollywood movies became affordable and easily accessible especially, by the youths. Before this time, crimes such as murder, armed robbery, arson, cultism, kidnapping among others were alien to Rivers people and attendant sanctions were attached to such crimes whenever they occur. As a

result, there was moral order in the communities. Youths as part of the larger society, shared in the said moral order (Akasike and Adesomoji, 2015).

However, since Nollywood movies became much popular by the debut of the film-Living in Bondage produced by Kenneth Nnebue in 1992 and the subsequent production of many other gangster and violent films in quick successions, the quietness and peace in Nigerian societies including Rivers State have not remained the same (Ihejirika and Amadi, 2017). Bandura and Walter (1963) cited in Seema (2014) and Anderson et al (2003) assert that people, especially youths and children imitate violence in the media to the extent that they tend to perceive violence and gangsterism to be acceptable ways of life. In consideration of this assertion, it becomes imperative to study youths in selected local communities in Rivers State, especially bearing in mind recent media reports of unabated cult clashes and cult related activities which have claimed many lives and destroyed several property of residents in these communities. The study is to establish if the high rate of violence among these youths are products of exposure to violence and gangsterism in Nollywood movies or off-shoot of latent traits. The concern of this study is therefore preconceived in the foregoing.

2   Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to ascertain the appeal gangster Nollywood movies hold for youths in local communities in Rivers State, and to examine the extent to which youths in Rivers State imitate gangsterism portrayed in Nollywood movies.

3   Research Hypothesis

One null hypothesis was put forward in this study. It states:

H_{01}:   There is no significant relationship between portrayal of gangsterism in Nollywood movies and youths resort to violence as a way of life.

4   Theoretical Framework

A combination of Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Singorielli's cultivation analysis and Anderson, Berkowitz, Donnerstein, Huesmann, Linz, Malamuth and Wartella's desensitisation theories provided the theoretical framework for this study.

According to Gerbner et al (1976), the mass media especially, television "cultivate" or "grow" a reality of the world that though possibly inaccurate, becomes acceptable simply because viewers believe it to be true. This theory of mass media violence therefore, assumes that the more time youths spent in watching entertainment media world, the likely the social realities portrayed on the screen will creep into their real world. Using Nollywood movies to explain cultivation theory, it means that if youths in local communities in Rivers State watch portrayal of violence such as senseless killings, robberies, kidnappings, destruction of property among other criminal behaviours in Nollywood movies repeatedly, they are likely to believe in the social reality that obtain on the screen, internalise them, and replicate them in society.

Another component theory of media aggression is the desensitisation theory. According to Anderson et al (2003), desensitisation occurs when people become less sensitive to human suffering as a result of relentless exposure to sufferings in the media. It means that watching much gangsterism and violence in the media toughens and hardens people emotionally. Which means that, the more youths are exposed to violent Nollywood movies, the move they will likely see violence and gangsterism as a way of life. In order words, every human being has an in-built natural instinct that spurs him or her naturally to respond to help those in distress or in trouble, but the more he or she gets exposed to violence repeatedly in the media, the more this natural

physiological and emotional instincts diminish until such individuals can no longer respond to distress calls.

These theories will guide the study in understanding how youths in Rivers State cultivate violent attitude like: cultism, senseless killing, kidnapping, armed robberies among others simply by exposure to gangsterism in Nollywood movies.

4.1   Conceptual Review
4.1.1   Media Violence and Youths

Exposure to violence in the media such as Nollywood movies has a statistically significant association with aggression and violence among youths (Anderson et al, 2003; Nnaji, 2011). Findings to this assertion are generally consistent across media types and research methodology. Experimental research reports clearly demonstrate that a youth will behave aggressively and have aggressive thoughts in the short run (Anderson et al, 2003). The cross sectional surveys consistently indicate that the more frequently youths are exposed to media violence, the more the likelihood they will behave aggressively and have aggressive thoughts (Anderson et al, 2003). The longitudinal research on effect of media violence on youth aggression consistently shows that exposure to media violence in childhood is a predictor of subsequent aggression in adolescents and young adulthood even when many other possible influences are statistically controlled (Anderson et al, 2003).

Again, available evidence shows that habitual exposure to media violence even in late adolescence and early adulthood produces similar effects in aggression and violence in later years. This will be inform of "carryover" effect because a child today will grow to become an adult years later. Although size of these effects are in the range that statisticians call small to medium, the effects are generally of the same magnitude as many other effects that are considered important public-health threats such as cigarette smoking, exposure to asbestos etc (Bushmann and Huesmann, 2001 cited in Anderson et al, 2003).

This issue has raised much debate and concern among scholars and practitioners. For instance, the catharsis theory believes that viewing violence in the media does not teach viewers to be violent but rather, helps the viewers vicariously to purge the violent tendencies in them (Perry, 2002). Others also believe that the media merely reinforce the learning acquired by the viewers through other change agents as family, church and school (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003). Yet, many believe that viewers imitate what they see in the media especially television and movies (Seema, 2014).

4.1.2   Moderators of media effects on youths

It is true that not all that watched violence on movies or the media generally are affected equally at all times by what they observe. Research has shown that the effects of media violence on children and youths are moderated by situational characteristics of the presentation, including viewers' aggressive predisposition and the characteristics of the physical and human context in which the youths and children are exposed to (Anderson et al, 2003). Indeed, these factors all interact together. For instance, how realistic a violent scene will seem to a youth depends on the form and content of the scene, the youth's previous experiences and propensity to accept what he or she sees and the opinions of other viewers present when the youth observe the scene. These are risk factors. These moderators include: media content characteristics, media forms and content

factors that attract youth's attention are very important in determining the magnitude of effects that presentation will have. This factor, according to Huesmann and Taylor (2006) that can facilitate attention in youths and other young minds may include rapid movement, bright colours and loud noise. These traits often characterise violent scenes in movies. Some of these moderators include: portrayed justification and consequences of the violent act, perception of realism and identification with violent characters viewers characteristics, aggressiveness of viewers, intelligence of viewers, socio-economic status and influence of parents.

Portrayed Justification and Consequences of the Violent Action: According to observational-learning theory, when violence is portrayed as justified in the media, viewers are likely to come to believe that their own aggressive responses to a perceived offense are also appropriate. By this, viewers are more apt to imitate such behaviour and by that will behave aggressively. In most films analysed by Anderson, Berkowitz, Donnerstein, Huesmann, Johnson, Linz, Malamuth and Wartella (2003), 75% of them have no immediate punishment or condemnation for violence. Also, majority of movies feature "bad" characters who are never or rarely punished for their violent and aggressive actions.

Theoretically, when perpetrators in movies are applauded or rewarded instead of being punished for their violent action, it raises the tendency that viewers will model the violent behaviour or crime and for sure, media portrayals in which violence is rewarded have the tendency to increase the risk that viewers will behave aggressively (Laudo and Donnerstein, 1978 cited in Anderson et al., 2003). In most cases, explicit reward is unnecessary to warrant imitation. Just merely seeing unpunished media violence may also enhance learning of aggressive thoughts and behaviours.

Perceptions of Realism and Identification with Violent Characters: Observational-learning theory also suggests that viewers including children and youths who identify strongly with aggressive character or perceive a violent scene as realistic are likely to have violent ideas primed by the observed violence, to imitate the character, or to acquire a variety of violent script and schemas. In this case, age, sex (gender) and race shared between the viewer and protagonists are related identification factors. For instance, if the storyline reflects the viewer's tribe or race, the viewer is more likely to be attracted thus, leading to imitating the actions being played out (Huesmann and Taylor, 2006).

When compared to fantastic description, realistic portrayal may be perceived as more salient or functionally relevant to the viewer and thus, heighten the probability of learning (Atkin, 1982). More fictional presentation of aggression are less imitated by viewers.

Viewers' Characteristics: The age and gender of viewers can influence the extent to which they identify with the depicted violent characters, which might also influence learning and adoption of observed violent behaviour. For instance, boys are more likely to be attracted to and enjoy violent movies than girls, children and young adults are more likely to imitate violent behaviour in the media than adults (Huesmann and Taylor 2006; Anderson et al. 2003; Gentle and Anderson 2003; Griffins1997; Huston and Wright, 1997). According to Anderson et al. (2003), the reason for males being more attracted to violent entertainment may be due to the fact that mass media tend to cater to male audience and often use male characters as protagonists or heroes e.g. x-man, Spiderman, superman etc. Media violence affects both males and females. However, higher number of studies

done in the United States and some studies in other countries found stronger relationship between media-violence viewing and aggression for boys than girls (Huesmann, Eron, and Dubow, 2003).

Aggressiveness of Viewers: Viewers who are aggressive naturally than their peers, are more likely to have multiple risk factors predisposing them towards aggression and violent behaviour. Existing research indicates that one of these risk factors may be a lower threshold for a media-violence-induced activation of violent behaviour. Studies of violent television, film and video games by Anderson and Dill (2000), Bushman (1995) have found that highly aggressive individuals show greater effects of exposure to media violence than their relatively less aggressive peers.

Hence, children and youths at higher risk to become very aggressive are those who both were initially aggressive and watched relatively high amount of violent television and movie films. Finally, works of some research scholars cited earlier in this study have shown that aggressive youths' attraction to violent media cannot explain in totality the effect of media violence on youths. Rather, their attraction is an added risk factor that increases the possibility that they would be affected by the violence they watch.

Intelligence of the Viewers: Huesmann and Taylor (2006) note that children and youths of lower intellectual ability watch more television and movie entertainment than do their peers of higher intelligence. As a result, youths with lower IQ therefore, have the tendency to be exposed to media violence than their counterparts with higher IQ that watch less movies.

Socio-economic Status: Low socio-economic status children and youths watch more television and movies violence than their peers from high socio/economic status family background and disposition (Huesmann and Taylor, 2006). Vander Voort (1986) cited in Anderson et al. (2003) found that children from lower-socio/economic status homes engaged in higher levels of viewing than children from more affluent families. The study further showed that youths and children from low socio/economic status homes enjoyed media violence more, approved of the violence and identified more strongly with the violent characters. Also, research effort of Comstock (1995); Comstock and Paik (1997) and Huston and Wright (1997) found a relationship existing between lower income levels and greater preference for violence particularly among boys.

Influence of Parents: Parents have the potential to be important moderators of the effects of media violence on their children. Children and young adults often form opinion on what they view on television or movies based on the comments and opinion of parents and friends. The way they eventually respond (either negatively or positively) may depend ultimately on this interpersonal interaction. Nathanson (1999) notes that children whose parents discuss with them the inappropriateness of television violence or restrict access to violent entertainment shows in the media, report lower aggressive tendencies than children whose parents do not discuss media violence or restricts access to violent shows.

5   Research Method
5.1   Procedure

The survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of study comprised all youths in Ogba-Egbema-Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State who were aged 15 – 34 years. Total population of these youths was 155,155. It was derived from 2006 National Population Census Report. Sample size of the study stood at 399. It was derived using the Taro Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1976, cited in Okwandu, 2004; p. 130). Taro Yamane's formula is presented as follows

$$n = \frac{N}{I + N\,(e)^2}$$

Where   n   =   Sample size
         N   =   Population
         ℓ =   Level of Significance (0.05)

The proportional stratified sampling technique was used to select nine communities in ONELGA that represented all the local communities in Rivers State and the youths that serve as respondents in this study. This was done according to the population of the selected communities.

Example: $\dfrac{Population\ of\ youths\ in\ community}{Total\ population\ of\ youths\ in\ all\ the\ nine\ selected\ communities} \times sample\ size$

Through this proportional method, the communities and number of respondents in each of the nine selected communities in ONELGA stood as: Omoku 174, Oboburu 49, Erema 40, Okwuzi 37, Aggah 32, Mgbede 30, Ndoni 26, Ase-Azaga 6, and Obiofu 5, totaling 399 respondents. Youths who were willing and available during the exercise were given questionnaire to fill. Also one youth leader was selected from each of the nine selected communities. These nine youth leaders were involved in the focus group discussion moderated by the researcher. Comments of discussants were recorded electronically by the researcher.

Two research instruments were applied in this study. They are: The questionnaire and focus group discussion guide. The questionnaire served as the major data gathering instrument, while the focus group discussion guide served as a supportive instrument to elicit more information that may not be adequately covered by the questionnaire.

Data collected using the questionnaire were analysed using the frequency table, simple percentage and standard mean. The standard mean of 2.5 was established for variables which were on 4-point Likert scale. Chi-square analysis was applied on the null hypothesis in the study. Data generated through focus group discussion guide were analysed qualitatively by the researcher.

5.2   Analysis of Data

Table 1 summarises the responses on appeal Nollywood movies hold for youths in Rivers State. Table 1 showed that respondents agreed on all items on what appeal do gangster and violent movies hold for youths in Rivers State. It can be inferred that Nollywood movies with gangster themes appeal more to youths than adults and children, have more negative consequences for youths, gangster Nollywood movies are harmful to youths.

Table 2 summarises the responses on youths imitating gangsterism portrayed in Nollywood movies. Table 2 shows that to a large extent, youths imitate gangsterism and violent acts portrayed in Nollywood movies. Respondents agreed that these movies desensitise and harden the youths emotionally, youths who watch these movies see violent behaviour as a way of life. They will likely go out and reproduce the acts in real life and will likely settle misunderstanding with friends, colleagues, mates and others by fighting.

Table 3 summarises the Chi-square analysis of relationship between portrayal of gangsterism in Nollywood movies and youths resort to cultism as a way of life. Table 3 shows that calculated Chi-square value (34.16) is greater than the critical value (21.03). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that youths who watch gangster and violent Nollywood movies

see violence and cultism as acceptable ways of life and would likely go out to reproduce the act in real life.

Table 1: Analysis of Responses on Appeal Gangster Nollywood Movies Hold for Youths in Rivers State

S/No	Items	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Ẋ	Decision
1	Nollywood movies with gangster and violent themes appeal more to youths than older adults.	238	133	14	5	390	3.55	Accepted
2	Gangster Nollywood movies hold higher appeal for male youths than children.	222	134	24	10	390	3.46	Accepted
3	Watching violent Nollywood movies have more negative consequences for youths.	210	138	34	8	390	3.41	Accepted
4	Youths are likely to be attracted to portrayal of gangsterism in Nollywood movies.	221	121	33	15	390	3.41	Accepted
5	Gangster Nollywood movies appeal more to youths than reading, learning skills and relating interpersonally with others.	192	135	43	20	390	3.28	Accepted
Grand Mean		**1083**	**661**	**148**	**58**	**1950**	**3.42**	**Accepted**

Table 2: Analysis of Responses on Youths Rivers State Imitating Gangsterism Portrayed in Nollywood Movies

S/No	Items	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Ẋ	Decision
6	Watching gangster Nollywood movies desensitizes and hardens the youths emotionally	172	157	39	22	390	3.23	Accepted
7	Youths who watch gangster Nollywood movies see crime and violent behaviour as acceptable way of life.	179	125	54	32	390	3.16	Accepted

8	Youths who watch much of gangster Nollywood movies see gangsterism as a way of life.	205	134	38	13	390	3.36	Accepted
9	Youths who watch violent and gangster movies will likely go out and reproduce the act in real life.	209	132	32	17	390	3.37	Accepted
10	Youths who are exposed to gangster Nollywood movies will likely settle misunderstanding with friends, colleagues, mates and others by fighting.	216	107	41	26	390	3.32	Accepted
	Grand Mean	**981**	**655**	**204**	**110**	**1950**	**3.29**	**Accepted**

Table 3: Summary of Chi-square Analysis of Relationship between Portrayal of Gangsterism in Nollywood Movies and Youths Resort to Cultism as a Way of Life

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Df	X^2Cal	X^2Crit
Watching gangster Nollywood movies desensitises and hardens the youths emotionally.	172 (196.2)	157 (131)	39 (40.8)	22 (22)	390	12	34.16*	21.03
Youths who watch gangster Nollywood movies see crime and gangsterism as an acceptable way of life.	179 (196.2)	125 (131)	54 (40.8)	32 (22)	390			
Youths who watch much of gangster Nollywood movies see violence and gangsterism as acceptable way of life.	205 (196.2)	134 (131)	38 (40.8)	13 (22)	390			
Youths who watch violent and gangster movies will likely go out and reproduce the act in real life.	209 (196.2)	132 (131)	32 (40.8)	17 (22)	390			
Youths who are exposed to gangster Nollywood movies will likely settle misunderstanding with	216 (196.2)	107 (131)	41 (40.8)	26 (22)	390			

friends, colleagues, mates
and others by fighting.

* = significant at .05 level of significance

6   Findings

The study was carried out to investigate media violence and youths in local communities in Rivers State, Nigeria. To facilitate this study, two specific objectives and one null hypothesis were put forward. Using the survey method with questionnaire and focus group discussion guide as instrument for data collection, the following findings emerged: gangster Nollywood movies appealed more to youths in ONELGA than older adults and children, youths who watch gangster Nollywood movies frequently, see cultism and cult-related criminal behaviours such as killings, kidnappings, robberies, raping women and girls among others as a way of life.

7   Conclusion and Recommendations

From data analysed and the findings of this study, it is concluded that gangster Nollywood movies are harmful to youths in Rivers State. The more youths in Rivers State watch these gangster Nollywood movies the more they tend to see crime and cultism as a way of life. Also, youths who watch gangster movies often experience desensitisation, a state where youths are hardened and toughened emotionally and psychologically to the extent that they can kill, cut off their victims' head and take them away without empathy for their victims.

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made: Nollywood movies producers should engage in production of films that have more pro-social, religious and development-oriented content instead of gangster movies, producers of Nollywood movies should be professional enough in showing characters that perform gangster roles in Nollywood movies being punished for their "Mafia" acts in the movies. This will send message to the youth viewers that imitating violent acts and characters that perform gangster role have unattractive reward.

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