

THE ROLE OF NIGERIAN FILM IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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Abstract

This study is designed to assess the performance of the Nigerian film industry in creating awareness on the issue of child sexual abuse. One of the dimensions examined was to identify the category of children who mostly fall victim to sexual abuse. The study revealed that, the problem of child sexual abuse which is mostly targeted at the female girl child has become so endemic in Nigeria, and consequently making the ungodly act become almost uncontrollable. Findings revealed that most of the children who fall victim to the heartless perpetrators of the ungodly act, fall within the promising age-bracket of six and fifteen. Furthermore, the study established that weak legal sanctions for sexual violence is one of the common principal factors that lead to the perpetration of this act. The study therefore, concluded that despite the fact that the rate of child sexual abuse in Nigerian is increasing tremendously, the Nigerian film industry in conjunction with law enforcement agencies are competent enough to fight the ugly situation; bridge the increase or eradicate it entirely from Nigeria. The study also recommended government to support the Nigerian film industry in the campaign against child sexual abuse.

Introduction

Nigeria has lost many of her young and promising citizens especially the female children to the awful act of child sexual abuse (CSA). In Nigeria it has become a topic of prior importance in the media and also in the minds of people. This is because children are of prime importance in the family, and the society at large. Sadly, the rate of sexual violence is alarming in Nigeria, and it is mostly targeted at the young promising innocent children whom by their young age are meant to be ignorant of sexual abuses. Though the trauma is not peculiar in Nigeria; it has become a global cankerworm. Isangedighi (2004) opines that child sexual abuse is a global issue that demands serious concern in order to ameliorate its occurrence and possible effects. This inanity of child sexual abuse is mostly induced on the girl child, and that is the reason each time we talk about child sexual abuse, we mostly focus our mindset to sexual abuse that involves the female child.

In so many places in Nigeria, there is preference for male children over the female children. The social system places the girl child at a disadvantage; hence not much effort is made at educating her even ensuring that she gets the much needed education, care and affection. Many of the Nigerian girls are given in marriage by their parents at the tender age of between twelve and fifteen, when they are too young for their consent to be sought or given. This incongruous cultural practice tends to negatively affect the chances of the girl child in getting good education.

Many children who have experienced the ill-treatment of sexual abuse show behavioral and emotional changes, while many others do not. It is therefore critical to focus not only on detection, but on prevention and communication as well, by educating children about body safety and healthy body boundaries. Whereby, these children lack proper guide, the level of their vulnerability to be caught victim increases. This is why it is expedient to properly protect these children against these offenders so they will not encounter the ugly experience of sexual abuse and end up becoming corrupt. As Adedoyin and Adeyoke in Hodges, 2001

observed that maltreatment of a child also exposes many innocent children especially, the girl child to sexual promiscuity.

Statement of Problem

A good number of Nigerian girl children have been on one occasion or more lured or forced into having sex with the unscrupulous perpetrators of child sexual abuse. This to a large extent is due to ignorance or lack of awareness by the public about the dangers associated with such unwholesome practice.

A sexually abused child encounters so many physical, emotional, psychological and developmental problems and difficulties that could even lead to untimely death. The worst part of it is that many at times the young victimized child may wish to keep the ugly incident to herself not knowing that, she may have sustained internal injury in her body. Sexually abused children are most likely to suffer effects such as sleep disturbance, social misfits, VVF, bedwetting, and etcetera. Again, the sexually abused child is usually seen battling with psychological effects like: anxiety, depression and poor self esteem. In some cases physical effects such as injury, body infections and neurological damage are also involved. Against this background, how has the media in Nigeria contributed to the fight against child sexual abuse?

Purpose of Study

The study is aimed at identifying the role of film in the prevention and reduction of child sexual abuse in Nigeria. The study therefore, will carry out an assessment of the performance of the Nigerian film industry in sensitizing the public, and creating awareness on the issue. And possibly, sort for obtainable means or practice that could help in bridging the increase of the ugly trend in Nigeria.

Research Question

In order to determine the role of Nigerian films in the fight or campaign against child sexual abuse through the eyes of the respondents, they were asked the following questions:

1. Do you patronize Nigerian films?
2. What is the age bracket of children who mostly fall victim to child sexual abuse?
3. How would you rate Nollywood in producing films that kick against child sexual abuse?
4. Considering the increasing growth of the population of Nigeria, would you say the rate of child sexual abuse is increasing or decreasing?
5. Do you agree that Nigerian films by their contents prevent and reduce child sexual abuse in Nigeria?

Scope of the Study

Every event, situation or circumstance occurs within an environment. This is why this study is focused to examine the quota the Nigerian film industry popularly known as Nollywood is contributing in preventing and eradicating child sexual abuse in Owerri metropolis, the capital city of Imo State, Nigeria. Perhaps it is within the scope of study that a particular research becomes meaningful (Owuamalam, 2012).

The Concept of Child Sexual Abuse

Child abuse which gave birth to child sexual abuse has been given different definitions and explanations. Some of these definitions and explanations stem from misconceptions, and this is due to the varieties of child abuse. Hopper (2003) while cautioning about the issue of child

abuse observed that the most controversial issue of child abuse is how to define the concept of child abuse especially sexual abuse; the concept can be defined in some ways. Child abuse according to National Exchange Club Foundation (2004) is any maltreatment or neglect of a child that results in non accidental harm or injury and cannot be reasonably explained.

This foundation identified child abuse to include, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. Mba (2003) defines child abuse as a crime or harming a child in a physical or sexual way. He sees child abuse as lack of care or the exploitation which is not healthy to the proper development of the child, that whatever dehumanization done to an individual child can only be likened to child abuse. Again, Kempe (1962) sees child abuse as the infliction of serious injury upon a child by parents or guardian.

The global prevalence of CSA has been estimated at 19.7% for females and 7.9% for males. Approximately, 30% are relatives of the victim. About 60% of the global cases CSA are found to be carried out by other acquaintances, such as the so-called family friends, babysitters, strangers etc (Wikipedia, 2017).

Child sexual abuse is a form of child abuse or child molestation which includes any sexual activity between an adult and a minor. A child due to his or her low maturity and sense of reasoning cannot wisely consent to any form of sexual activity. To this effect when a perpetrator takes advantage of the low sense maturity of the child, and engages him or her into sex or related event, he is considered to have either deceived or forced the minor into having sexual activity with him. And the calamity associated with the abominable act may have lasting effects on the victim for years if proper care not taken. Child sexual abuse does not imply only to when the perpetrator engages in a physical contact with a child, sometimes it can be in words, signs or even by exposure.

Types of Child Sexual Abuse

The principal and most dominant type of child sexual abuse is having sexual intercourse with a child. Nevertheless, there are other physical and emotional forms of abusing a child sexually; and this includes:

- i. Exhibition of oneself (nakedness) before a child
- ii. Making fondling on a child's body especially, on the private part.
- iii. Masturbating in the presence of a child or forcing the child to masturbate
- iv. Producing, owning and sharing pictures or videos of a child's nudity
- v. Exposing pornographic videos and pictures to a child etc.

Causes of Child Sexual Abuse

The common principal factors that lead to the perpetration of sexual violence against the girl child amongst other factors include: lustful desire, weak legal sanctions for sexual violence, seductive dressing, drug addiction/mental disorder, fetishism, promiscuity and lack of parental care.

Understanding the Concept of Film

Right from the time films began to narrate stories in the early years of the 20th century, their potential influence on its mass audiences or the society had been recognized. The intensity of motion picture emanates from its power to hold the complete attention of the viewer, on whatever bit of reality that is being shown.

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines film or movie thus: A series of moving pictures recorded with sound that tells a story, shown on television or at the cinema/movie

theatre. By this definition, film or movie is undoubtedly a mass medium of information, entertainment and education. It is a remarkably effective medium in conveying drama and especially in the evocation of emotion; motion pictures consist of the projection of luminous moving images on a screen. The art of motion pictures is exceedingly complex, requiring contributions from nearly all other “arts” of music, aesthetic, literature, theatre (drama) and photography as well as technical skills. The production therefore, represents the co-operation of creative artists and technicians.

Film production on the other hand is referred to filmmaking, it is an art fathered by the Theatre Arts. It appropriates the techniques of theatre such as acting, directing, costume, props, etc., and the design elements of the theatre. But in contrary to the theatre, it depends on the technology, specifically made for it to be accomplished. Also, in similarity both the theatre arts and film are enjoyed inside a building. According to Awaeze and Nworgu (2011), it is the same sort of entertainment that the cinema had been providing on the large screens of its theatres that was now available in the home on the small screen of the television sets. One can call it film, cinema, movie or motion picture, they are all referring to the same meaning (Eze, 2011).

When people go to the cinema or sit at home to watch home movies, there is no doubt that they are influenced in one way or the other by what they see and hear. This powerful medium of light and sound takes its viewers to the realm of reality or believability. To produce or make a film is not an easy task; it requires professionalism and good knowledge of the various techniques that are involved. It demands an army of well-trained crew to produce a film. To make a delightful film or movie that will have good features; all the film elements must be arranged in a manner that it will captivate or arrest the full attention of the viewer or audience. Again, members of the crew have to work in complete synergy and in concord with one another. A film with good aesthetic feature can only be achieved when all the film and production elements, which fall under audio and video media, are properly fused to give a pleasant audio-visual (Anunike, 2008).

One outstanding feature of film is its audio-visual nature. Basically, there are three classes of film. These are: documentary films, fiction or feature films and the Avant garde films. In Nigeria the mostly produced film is the fiction or feature film.

Theoretical Framework

This work is anchored on one relevant media effect theory namely: **uses and gratification theory**. The uses and gratification theory developed from the functionalist theory by well known socialist researchers: Jay Blumer and Elihu Katz. The functionalist approach insists on media effects towards people such as the frequently used model of the “Hypodermic needle” or “The Bullet Theory” aimed at a passive audience. This model was used by practitioners from the 1920s to the 1940s, but a shift occurred during the middle of the 20th century, the mass media was used to further develop and understand the notion of uses and gratifications (Kenneth, 2009). The uses and gratification theory deals with what the audiences do with the media, and what gratifications or satisfaction they derive from it. Wogu (2008) reiterates that this theory sees the media audience as actively influencing the effect process, since he purposively chooses the media message.

The Uses and Gratification Theory was first denoted by Elihu Katz in 1959. Thus the uses and gratification approach, within the functionalist theory, shifted the focus from ‘the purpose of communication to the purpose of audience and opened a door to modern understanding of

mass communication. The researcher has applied the uses and gratification approach to this study to examine how the Nigerian television medium audiences have used this medium to gratify their common need of getting adequate awareness on the devastated issue of child sexual abuse in Nigeria.

In another terminology, the uses and gratification theory takes a more humanistic approach in media usage. Folarin (1998) perceives the recipient as actively influencing the effects process, since he selectively chooses, attends to, perceives and retains the media messages on the basis of his or her needs, beliefs etc. Folarin (1998), Wogu (2008) and Kenneth (2009) went further to say that, owing to the idea behind the Uses and Gratification Theory, the question of effect was now rather divergent to the analysis concerned. The scenario is:

1. An individual has some needs related to communication;
2. He/she selects the media that appear likely to satisfy those needs;
3. He/she selectively consumes the content;
4. An effect may or may not occur, Kunczik study (as in Wogu, 2008).

The researchers have applied uses and gratification approach to this study to see how the Nigerian film has been used by the audience to improving mindset towards the issue of child sexual abuse in particular and child abuse in general. Bearing in mind that the audiences are not just passive receptors of the campaign messages but to a very large extent, determine what to watch on television and how to use such media campaigns depending on their individual needs per time.

Methodology

This study made use of the survey research method to examine the role of the Nigerian film industry in alleviating child sexual abuse in Owerri (capital city of Imo State) and the magnitude at which they patronize Nigerian home movies.

Sample Size/Sampling Technique

Owerri metropolis has a total population of 401,873 according to the Nigerian 2006 census data released by the National Population Commission. In order to arrive at the estimated figure of the population after ten years interval, the researcher used the appropriate growth rate percent of 3.2 or 0.032. The estimated population was therefore, given as 530,472. Using the Australian calculator, **384** were sampled out from 530,472 which is the current population of Owerri metropolis.

The researcher purposively chose Owerri metropolis from Imo State of Nigeria after which he used cluster sampling technique to divide the metropolis into four major quarters. After this stage, the simple random sampling technique (probability sampling technique) was applied to select four streets from each of the quarters. And finally, the researcher distributed copies of the questionnaire among males and females between 16 years and above at random.

Data Collection/Analysis

In order to get answers for the research questions, a questionnaire was designed and used for obtaining data for this study. The cluster sampling technique was used in dividing Owerri metropolis into four major quarters namely: Ikenegbu/Aladinma Layout, Trans-Egbu Housing Estate, Works Layout and Owerri Nchi-Ise.

The data collected were analysed using tables and simple percentages to determine the level of response. For open-ended section of the questionnaire, the total number of responses from

each question was calculated using aided and unaided questions on a continuum to measure the intensity of the respondent's option. For the close-ended questions section, a nominal counting of the responses was organised and simple frequency-cum percentage tables were prepared. The researcher adopted a tabular form of data analysis to allow a cross-classification of variables.

Obtained data were presented in simple frequency tables with identification numbers and titles. The items were classified according to table titles, and categorised into groups that were mutually exclusive (Nwodu, 2006). It means that no two items with any difference can be grouped into a particular category. The formula used was as follows:

$$P = \frac{F}{NR} \times \frac{1}{100}$$

- Where P = Calculated Percentage
- F = Frequency of Response
- NR = Total number of Respondents

Each obtained detail was recorded in its appropriate row in the table, showing what is represented.

Table 1: Percentage of distribution of respondents

Sample Area	Number of Distribution	Number Returned	Percentage
Ikenegbu/Aladinma Layout	96	89	24.6
Trans-Egbu Housing Estate	96	92	25.4
Works Layout	96	90	24.9
Owerri Nchi-Ise	96	91	25.1
Total	384	362	100

The above table shows how the 384 copies of questionnaire were distributed among the four major quarters in Owerri metropolis. The researcher also applied the simple random sampling technique (the probability sampling technique) to select four streets from each of the quarters and finally, selected the respondents at random. During collection, 362 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved; 22 copies were not found due to certain reasons ranging from disappearance of respondents, apathy etc.

NOTE: The subsequent data will be analyzed base on the number of the retrieved copies of the questionnaire.

Table 2: Gender distribution of respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	170	46.4
Female	192	53.6
Total	362	100

One of the key variables taken into consideration was sex. Both sexes were issued copies of the questionnaire. The table shows that out of the 362 copies of the questionnaire returned, 170 respondents were males while 192 respondents were females. This clearly established that more females participated in the exercise than males, and this is because females constitute the largest number of victims of child sexual abuse in Nigeria. Therefore, the

researcher considered sharing the larger quantity of the copies of the questionnaire to the female sex.

Table 3: Age distribution of respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
16 – 25	104	28.7
26 – 35	130	35.9
36 – 45	90	24.9
46 and above	38	10.5
Total	362	100

Children of fifteen or below are more liable to become victim of child sexual abuse but however, the researchers did not share the questionnaire among this age category. This was in line to sustaining a high sense of maturity in getting accurate information needed for data presentation/analysis from matured and reliable respondents; in order to achieving accurate result.

Table 4: Patronage of Nigerian films

Question	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Do you patronize Nigerian films?	Yes	348	96.1
	No	14	3.9
	Total	362	100

From the analysis of the above data, majority of the respondents acknowledged that they buy Nigerian films. This implies that Nigerian films are highly patronized by Nigerians, and one can attribute it to the fact that the film industry in Nigeria has achieved greater height in the television medium by adding more excitement in their movies.

Table 5: Measuring the occurrence of child sexual abuse in different age bracket

Question	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
What is the age bracket of the children who mostly fall victim to child sexual abuse?	1 – 5	24	6.6
	6 – 10	188	51.9
	11 – 15	94	26
	16 – 20	56	15.5
	Total	362	100

From the information gathered and as recorded on the above table, it was ascertained that from the age of six up to the age of ten children become more vulnerable to chances of falling victim of child sexual abuse. This could be as a result of inadequate caring and improper sex education by the parents or guardian. Also, over reliability of and trust on the so called uncles.

Table 6: Measuring Nollywood films that fight against child sexual abuse

Question	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
How would you rate Nollywood in producing films that	High	156	43.1
	Fair	182	50.3
	Low	24	6.6

kick against child sexual abuse?	Total	362	100
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From the above it could be seen that 43.1% and 50.3% of the respondents voted for “high” and “fair” respectively, constituting a laudable percentage of 93.4; and being fair in this context implies that they are making effort. Therefore, with regards to this analysis one may give credit to the Nigerian film industry for producing films that make impact in fighting child sexual abuse.

Table 7: Comparing the rate of child sexual abuse, presently and twenty years back

Question	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Considering the increasing growth of the population of Nigeria, would you say the rate of child sexual abuse is increasing or decreasing?	Increasing	134	37
	Decreasing	228	63
	Total	362	100

A larger number of respondents said the rate of child sexual abuse has decreased when compared to its record in two decades ago. That, when put into consideration the population of Nigeria then and the current population there is a decline in the occurrence. That is to say the average number of victim per population was greater then, than now.

One may not need to agree on this because as at two decades ago, the Nigerian film industry was just at its tender age, and like a child that just started growing, it had not started making much impact then. Neither did they start carrying out overwhelming campaign on some of these contemporary societal issues like child sexual abuse in their film productions.

Table 8: Measuring the effect of Nigerian films on child abuse.

Question	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Do you agree that Nigerian films by their contents prevent and reduce child sexual abuse in Nigeria?	Yes	346	95.6
	No	16	4.4
	Total	362	100

The results as indicated in the table above showed that almost all respondents agreed that Nigerian films by their contents prevent and reduce child sexual abuse in Nigeria. In other words, this fact implies that the respondents supported the fact that Nigerian films are playing a crucial and commendable role in the prevention and eradication of child sexual abuse menace in Nigeria. More so, the result has proven that the campaign by the Nigerian film industry popularly known as Nollywood against child sexual abuse has to a large extent created awareness by exposing causes, effects and consequences allied to this inhuman act.

Findings/Summary

1. Based on the results, it was found that most of the girls who are victims of child sexual abuse fall within the promising age range of 6 and 10.
2. The findings also confirmed that indeed Nigerians enjoy and patronize Nigerian films generally, and that Nigerian films especially, those ones that focused on child sexual abuse have done great deal in the campaign against child sexual abuse in Nigeria.

3. It was also discovered that considering the population growth of Nigeria, the rate of child sexual abuse is decreasing in Nigeria when compared with the rate in two decades back.
4. Another finding was that, in spite of other contemporary issues that are challenging the normal growth and development of the Nigerian girl-child; film producers in Nigeria still produce to a reasonable quantity films that have storyline centered on child sexual abuse.

Discussion of Findings

Results obtained indicate that it is young girls at the tender age of six to fifteen that are mostly abused sexually by the perpetrators. This age bracket encompasses children that can easily be lured into doing anything whether good or bad because they are very tender to separate good practices from the bad ones. In other words, at this age, children have not began to receive sex education or sensitization in school, even at home parents or guardians don't find it expedient to educate or discuss such sensitive matter with their children and wards. And this submission goes in line with that of Onwubere who posits that "A good number of children in Nigeria under the age of fifteen are involved in different types of activities that are inimical to their health and growth such as sexual immorality, abortion, child trafficking, drugs, pick pocketing, self medication and prostitution, to mention just a few" (Onwubere, 2012).

These activities for instance; sexual immoralities these children get engaged into could involve one child and another or with an adult and this in most cases results to early child pregnancy. When pregnancy occurs they resort to self medication and abortion that is bedeviled with the dangers of having problem of infertility or death after the long run.

Again, the study revealed that Nigerian films are adequately patronized by Nigerians, and that is to say that the film industry in Nigeria is meeting-up to expectations. More so, results obtained from this study proved that majority of Nigerians patronize Nigerian films generally irrespective of theme or storyline. This finding was similar with that of Kenneth, (2009) who also in a study discovered that Nigerians enjoy and patronize Nigerian films adequately.

In a related vein, results also provided that film producers in Nigeria were not only cheered and acknowledged for producing films that focus on child sexual abuse but also, for the fact that these films play a crucial role by creating awareness, and contribute effectively in preventing and reducing the ungodly practice in our society. In other words, this study and that of Kenneth (2009), established that Nigerian films have done so well in the campaign against girl-child abuse in Nigeria.

Another finding the researchers made in this study is discovering that Nigerians patronage on Nigerian films is not limited only to films on child sexual abuse but also, on other contemporary issues such as drug addiction, idolatry, to mention but a few. This could also mean that films that portray a high sense of violence are as well patronized by Nigerians. In support of this Onwuebere (2012) blames the industry for too much exposure of violent films to Nigerian children, which as a result make this children become troublesome and uncontrollable notwithstanding the positive contribution the Nigerian film industry is making in curbing the menace of child sexual .

Conclusion

The task of making Nigeria a nation that is free from the trauma and awful act of child sexual abuse is not an easy one. It has become daunting due to the overwhelming fact that the perpetrators who lure or force these innocent children into this abominable act increase tremendously in number on a daily basis.

However, the fight can never be impossible, with the efforts of the Nigerian film industry (Nollywood) coupled with that of the law enforcement agencies. It is eminent for one to believe that the high rate of the menace of child sexual abuse in Nigeria will be cut down to the barest minimum if not totally eradicated. Since a good number of children and parents are very good audiences of Nollywood.

Nevertheless, this struggle is ought to be successful if the Nigerian film industry can reduce the amount of violence feature in their film contents and replace it with contents that are capable of educating these young audiences, in a way of pre-cautioning them against child sexual abuse. This will no doubt give Nollywood another credit; and when this motion is conveniently structured into the contents of home videos, then will the Nigerian film industry attain greater heights and recognition. Thereby making the film industry in Nigeria an industry enriched with informative, entertaining and educative contents.

Recommendations

1. Government should support and encourage the Nigerian film industry to keep on producing more films that will have greater impact in the fight against child sexual abuse.
2. Albeit, film is said to be a reflection of the society, but on the other hand films that portray sex violence rapidly influence the society along that line; and this bad influence is felt especially among children. Therefore, film producers should endeavour to direct and portray films in such way that they do not exhibit open sex activity.
3. Since the malady is still within us, a more sustained campaign should be mounted by the film industry in Nigeria with the aim of enlightening parents/guardians and the society at large on the dangers of child sexual abuse.
4. Parents and guardians should try to imbibe the culture of good interactive relationship with their children or wards to enable them create an intimate avenue where they can easily educate them on the concept of sexual abuse, right from their tender age.
5. Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) should be established in communities to teach children preventive measures and also, offer coordinated support and services to victims of child sexual abuse.

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