Television and Video Films and the Rhythm of Violence: Assessing the Negative Effect of Youths' Exposure to Violent Television and Video Films Content

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Abstract
The invaluable place of the youths in any given society cannot be overemphasised. As future generations of the society and leaders of tomorrow, what concerns the youths should be a matter of utmost concern to every well meaning citizen, and thus must be given adequate attention. This explains why many studies have tried to probe the negative effects of television and video films on viewers, especially the youths. In Nigeria, as in most developing and developed societies world over, apart from parental influence, television has become perhaps the most potent influence on the beliefs, values and behaviours of youths. In recent times, there are too many foreign and homemade violent programmes which are mixed bag of crime, sex, horror and violence. The video medium too is not excluded in this pervasion of vices and violence. The fact that the class of people mostly attracted to and influenced by these antisocial activities are the youths, calls for serious concern; more so, since violence has come to assume a serious global concern in today's world. In the light of the above, the study adopts the qualitative research approach and the interplay of the Cultivation Analysis and the Social Cognitive Theories to critically examine the negative effects of youths' exposure to violent television and video film contents and their ramifying implications on our socio-cultural wellbeing as a people, as well as proffer valuable recommendations geared towards possible solution to this worrisome trend.
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Preamble
Mary A. Hepburn, Professor of Social Science Education and the Head, Citizen Education Division at the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia, Athens, using the American landscape, carefully paints a graphic portrait of the overwhelming ubiquitous rhythm of violence that is prevalent in modern day television screens among other visual platforms all over the globe. As Hepburn posits:

... the prevalence of violence in broadcasts is a serious concern. Television programming in the United States is considered the most violent in advanced industrialized nations. Violence is common in TV entertainment – the dramas that portray stories about crime, psychotic murderers, police cases, emergency services, international terrorism, and war. The dramas are played out in highly realistic scenes of violent attacks accompanied by music and other sounds that churn up emotions. As the realism and gore in the screen images of TV entertainment have intensified, local news cameras have also increasingly focused directly on the bloody violence done to individuals in drive-by shootings, gang attacks, and domestic beatings. Why must these visual details be presented in the news? Why does a typical television evening include so many beatings, shootings, stabbings, and rapes in dramas designed for "entertainment"?

Hepburn, perhaps, in an attempt to, possibly justify the reality of this rhythm of violence contends that producers of programming ascertain that scenes of violent action with accompanying fear-striking music can be counted on to hold viewers' attention, keep them awake and watching, and make them less likely to switch channels. This is all in an attempt by the producers to gain and maintain a large number of viewers; since a programme has more commercial value if it can hold more viewers, and programmers attempt to ensure high viewer attention with these doses of violent action in the program. However, the sober and perhaps highly thought-provoking pertinent question which this study joins Hepburn to raise on a rather universal scale is: "How does all of this violence affect young people?"

Introduction
In modern society, the persuasive power of the media cannot be overemphasised. Since the advent of television, there have been spirited efforts from various concerned quarters including parents, teachers, legislators and other professionals alike to probe the impact of television programmes, especially the negative impact, particularly on youths; as television seem to have played major role in this regard more than any other media. Vasan (2010) also reinforces the above concern. This study is anchored on the Cultivation Analysis and Social Cognitive Theories. The Cultivation Analysis Theory, otherwise known as Cultivation Analysis, as Mabelle (2016) highlights, is a

social theory which was developed on the basis of examining the long-term effects of television on American audiences of all ages. Developed by George Gerbner and Larry Gross of the University of Pennsylvania, cultivation theory derived from several large-scale research projects as part of an overall research project titled "Cultural Indicators", which purpose was to identify and track the "cultivated" effects of television on viewers. Here, Gerbner and Gross were rather concerned with the effects of television programming (particularly violent programming) on the attitudes and behaviour of the American public (Miller, 2005); perhaps, just as concerned as Hepburn in the earlier citation above. According to Cultivation Analysis Theory, heavy exposure to media cultivates an illusory perception of reality, causing individuals to develop or cultivate an illusory perception of reality based on the most repetitive and consistent messages of a particular medium. Cultivation theory in its most basic form, then, suggests that exposure to television, over time, subtly "cultivates" viewers perceptions of reality. The implication is that there is a strong tendency for heavy television viewers to take the social reality portrayed by television as the same in real life. Hence, the basic postulation of the Cultivation Analysis Theory is that the more time people spend watching movies, the more their world view will be shaped in line with those portrayed by the media.

Similarly, Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which evolved from his earlier Social Learning Theory in the 1960s and later developed into the Social Cognitive Theory in 1986, is a theoretical perspective which focuses on learning by observing others (Hurst, n/d; LaMorte, 2019). The Social Cognitive Theory is grounded by several basic assumptions; one of which as central as it is to this study, is that people can learn by observing others. Hence, learners can acquire new behaviours and knowledge by simply observing a model – someone who demonstrates behaviour for them. The reason for the idea of a model here is because of the critical role models play in the learning process. It is instructive, therefore, to note that whereas most models people commonly learn from in life are live models (*individuals whose behaviours are observable in real life*), the concern of this study, however, is the symbolic type of model. The symbolic model represents *real or fictional characters that influence an observer's behaviour*. These types of models could be real or fictional characters portrayed in books, movies, and other media (Hurst, n/d). The Social Cognitive Theory is germane in the context of this study because of its implications to the ways the characters young people watch on prevailing televised violence and their anti-social activities shape their own characters and behaviours in the society.

Therefore, television, as a typical example of the media, in its uniqueness, is unarguably the most popular and effective medium of communication that is an inescapable part of modern culture. As the most important feature of contemporary society, television penetrates into almost every home in contemporary society and provides information, entertainment and role models of great influence to the young generation. It is a potent medium for mass dissemination of information like news telecast, special sports, announcements, advertisements and press releases among others. Besides the vital role of conveying information, television programmes are also designed to entertain and appeal to the emotion of the viewers, and perhaps inadvertently sometimes, through the characters portrayed in them. The foregoing simply explains why the Cultivation Analysis and the Social Cognitive Theories most commonly apply to analyses of television and video because of its unique pervasive nature. The Cultivation Analysis Theory, for instance, emphasises that someone who watches a great deal of television or video may form a picture of reality that does not correspond to actual life. Hence, televised violent acts, especially those portrayed on films, as well as those reported on news programmes, appear to greatly outnumber violent acts that most people encounter in everyday life. Thus, an individual who is so exposed to such violent acts and their characters (the vehicles by which those acts are perpetuated), especially the youth, has a high degree of tendency of his or her consciousness being saturated and influenced by them.

Unarguably, the films youths watch directly affect their behaviours and this helps to form thoughts that they associate with real life. Hence, as youths watch television and video films and see what their counterparts do elsewhere like in dressings, speaking, dancing, and how they behave in their different homes, schools, etc., they tend to imitate and even improve on what they already know. In Africa as in other developing worlds, over the years, Western films (movies) shown on television have been blamed for encouraging or causing various unseeming habits among many young people. This fall out of the influx of foreign motion pictures might not be unconnected to the need for revenue maximisation to the West from the international market as Ravid & Basuroy (2004) suggest. The scholars, while analysing project choice in the motion picture industry in US, found that movies that are very violent or feature sex and violence bring increase in revenue especially from the international market. In the light of the above, Uwaoma's (2012) observation that foreign culture, *perhaps the prevailing culture of violence,* has penetrated every aspect of our lives, and will be difficult to be extinguished is a food for thought, considering the fact that the major inroad to such penetration is the television, the contents of which are largely patterned on western models. The fact, therefore, that the nature and content of violent films shown on television and video, and the sheer exposure of the youths to these violent films and their possible consequences is of great public concern; and invariably portends great danger to the society at large, cannot be overemphasised.

The Problem in Context: Reality of Media Effect

The reality of media effect on society, though a contentious subject of discourse, cannot be overemphasised. On one hand, there is the strong contention that if the media have no influence on the society, there is no realistic justification for their continued existence. However, there is also the contention on the other hand, that the concession to the influence of media on the thought process and attitude of mankind does not attribute them the responsibility for the emergent foibles and discomfitures of man in the society (Okeoma, 2011). In the light of these debates on the degree to which film and other audio-visual forms of media production affect attitudes and behaviours, especially of young people "there is a consensus that a certain pattern of behaviour in young people can be traced back to the kind of programmes which they see on television and films" (cited in Omoera *et al.*, 2017, p.361). Going by the above submission, the media are no doubt attributed considerable power to shape people's opinion and belief, change their habits and of course actively mould their behaviour. As Okeoma avers, research shows that there exists an irrefutable relationship between the mass media and societal ills as well as other behavioural and attitudinal change experienced in the society. Unfortunately, it is the young generation that are mostly caught up in this web, a view which James and Abiodun (2014) also corroborate; and this is certainly because of the highly impressionistic disposition of these young minds. Okunna (1999) stresses that because of their special power to affect the way people think, feel and behave, the mass media have been credited with incredible persuasive ability to change attitude and behaviour. The fact that several researches have hitherto tried to investigate how the impact of media's portrayal of violence could weigh on audience, especially youths, cannot be gainsaid, therefore. Livingstone (1996) has somewhat ascribed media effect as exposure to the media and how it changes people's behaviour or beliefs. The Communication for Governance and Accountability Program of the World Bank has defined media effects as the "many ways individuals and society may be influenced by both news and entertainment mass media, including film, television, radio, newspapers, books, magazines, websites, video games and music" (p. 1). Media effect, therefore, refers to the influence which the media, either broadcast or print as the case may be, exert on its viewers; as could be reflected in the 'special power' they possess to affect the way they think, feel and behave. This simply explains the consequent effect of mass media content on the audience.

It is only apparent that television has become so much part of our ordinary life and a powerful agent of socialisation which invariably affects the youths in several possible ways. The fact that almost every household in Nigeria as elsewhere has a television set which the youths devote most of their times to watch is a clear pointer in the above direction. Therefore, too much viewing of television especially violence can lead to anti-social behaviours in youths, academic troubles, promiscuity and health problems, among others. In fact, Anaeto *et al*. (2008) affirm that heavy television viewing, no doubt, distorts our perception of the world we live in, making it seem more like an utopian world. In another cross-sectional survey on tobacco use among pre-university students in Bangalore city, Elegbe *et al.* (2014, p.200), cite Bhojani (2009) who discovered that nearly one out of every five male students and about one out of every 20 female students reported their desire to use tobacco after watching movie/TV stars using it on screen. Although there are differing views on the reality of media effect, especially with regard to violent television films, Murray (1994, p.824) cites Leonard Erons's strong summary in a Congressional testimony on the subject:

There can no longer be any doubt that heavy exposure to televised violence is one of the causes of aggressive behavior, crime and violence in society. The evidence comes from both the laboratory and real-life studies. Television violence affects youngsters of all ages, of both genders, at all socio-economic levels and all levels of intelligence. The effect is not limited to children who are already disposed to being aggressive and is not restricted to this country. The fact that we get this same finding of a relationship between television violence and aggression in children in study after study, in one country after another, cannot be ignored. The causal effect of television violence on aggression, even though it is not very large, exists. It cannot be denied or explained away. We have demonstrated this causal effect outside the laboratory, in real-life, among many different children. We have come to believe that a vicious cycle exists in which television violence makes children more aggressive and these aggressive children turn to watching more violence to justify their own behavior.

However, the reality of media effect on youths cannot be entirely disassociated from how the individual youth uses the media as part of his or her daily activity. Also, due to the changing nature of our society, youths especially now turn to television as source of learning because of its ability to disseminate information to a very large audience; hence their attachment to it. This explains why Uwaoma (2012), affirms that the media trigger audience attention to specific issue, reaches the greatest number of people, and reaches special interest, as televisions through the help of technology, develop their content as to how the fun seeking public will be better satisfied. In all, it is only apparent to note that the media invariably wield tremendous influence on the teeming audience, among whom majority are the youths. Hence, "one must not dismiss the extensive, cumulative evidence of potential harmful effect associated with viewing violence in film, video, and television" (Murray, 1994, p.825).

Manifestations of Negative Effect of Youths' Exposure to Violent Television and Video Films Content

Over the time in the television industry in Nigeria, for instance, foreign and homemade films have emerged as dominant media of entertainment both in private and public television programming. These films, which are seriously threatening television programming, have virtually displaced the television industry's major role of promoting socio-cultural identity of the society. They appear in the form of drama, action, horror, pornography, thriller, detective, mafia, war, cult, etc., and contain heavy presence of violence and crime. These film species have literally thrown the Nigeria youths and audience alike, nay the entire society into frenzy; and like fire burning through the harmattan bush, the whole county has been consumed by it. Media analysts and critics have criticised television for single-handedly inciting riots, promoting alcohol and drug abuse and the rest especially in the youths. In fact, the negative aspects of television are numerous. Stanley (2002) affirms that violent movies are harmful to youths and their education, and can also negatively affect their brain development, grades, mental and physical health as well as social behaviour. More so, since youths spend more time in watching television especially negative and violent ones, they are less likely to be creative thinkers. Reissler (2006) seems to affirm the above assertion by subtly submitting that violent media content may kill an urge for creativity and imagination and bar the capacity for constructive, problem solving.

It is instructive to note here that the reference to youths in the context of this study takes consideration of the wider generation of young audiences, whether they are "children", "adolescents", "teens" or even "tweens", as long as they are impressionable enough to be negatively influenced by exposure to violent television and video film contents irrespective of setting and their distinct interests, levels of personalities' development and, perhaps, presumed tolerance to violent contents. The issue of media influence, as a matter of fact, has been an agelong phenomenon. This is evident from a very old account of renowned psychologist, Herbert Blumer's examination of somewhat diaries of some adolescent students' record of how they thought they had been influenced by their exposure to movies (Mead Project Source, 2007). He disclosed that participant youths reported that they imitated the behaviours they saw in movies and copied the actions of their favourite stars in their play. It is only imaginable how much negatively influenced they would become when such behaviours and actions are saturated with violence and other anti-social activities. Vasan (2010) also reinforces the link between media violence and subsequent aggressive behaviour by presenting *The Tribune*, 18 March 2003 report of a study conducted in ten government schools by the Department of Pediatrics, PGI Medical College, Chandigarh, India. The study revealed that perpetrators of violence among 15,000 students studied were the ones who enjoyed seeing more action and violence-oriented programmes on the television and in movies and for a longer duration of time too. In examining predictors of various types of self-reported use of violent media content by 8th graders numbering 3,127 from 20 schools around the US, Slater (2003) has noted that the use of violent media content by adolescents has long been a matter of public concern and debate, a concern that was heightened by the reported use of violent computer games and websites by the killers at Columbine High School in 1999. The killers, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, twelfth grade (senior) students, had murdered 12 students and one teacher among several injured others before they eventually committed suicide. Igreja's (2015) study on "Media and legacies of war: responses to global film violence in conflict zones", also has significant implications for understanding the reception of mass media violence among young people in conflict zones.

One cannot discountenance also the rate of indiscriminate introduction of modern means of communication as a vehicle for the propagation of 'western culture'. More instructive in the above regard is the fact that we now live in a world so closely knit with a wide network of different types of mass media, as facilitated by advance in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). As such, youths do not need to look out too far to access most of these anti-social information and activities, but only to click the handy burtons of their Smartphones and other electronic gadgets. Hence, a considerable number of youths "who (or who their parents) have the means can also download from the internet and watch cable satellite channels such as African Magic, Iroko TV, and Nollywood Plus while their parents are away in search of livelihoods" (Omoera *et al.*, p.368). The implication is that there is no measure of control about how these media interfere with other people's established cultures, besides individual interests; hence, majority of our youths have been caught up in the web of the influence of this development. In essence, most scholars see television particularly as a vehicle for cultural imperialism as well as responsible for violence and deviant behaviour in our society, with our youths mostly affected. Odinaka (2001, Nov, p.13) in corroborating the above influence points out that:

Playwrights and film directors in attempt to capture the psychology of the target audience, over use the negative sides of the programme as its high point. Unfortunately, young viewers learn the negative faster than they appreciate the positive aspect of television programmes.

He further stated that the common vehicles of rendition of television programmes are violence, crime, horror, magic, sex, etc., and that often this affects viewers' behaviours. However, there are still those who believe that television audiences are active audience who deliberately expose themselves to a given media content to satisfy their needs. This implies that the audience expose themselves to media content for various reasons including to be educated, informed or attain-emotional release among others. In other words, television programmes have effect

on those who want them to affect them. It is also believed that television does not single-handedly affect or change its viewers, which means that there are other factors that interact with the media to induce change on its viewers. Shearon and Melvin (1995) clearly confirmed and signified the media as only one of the many factors in the generation of youths' violence in combination with other social and psychological factors. This simply means that social class and gender among other factors are variables that could condition the youths in the way television content affects their behaviour individually. Hence, as Shearon and Melvin (1995) highlighted, media depiction of violence does not affect all persons in the same way. This means that people get influenced by television films/movies because they want to.

Ugwulebo (1999) explained that people respond to media messages according to their idiosyncrasies, fancies, interests and exceptions. In order words, audiences choose the type of program they watch as well as what they get out of it. Shearon and Melvin revealed that television was likely to cause aggressive behaviours. According to Zanden (1990), those from "high aggression environments (crime and war) and who are in problematic emotional state were much attracted by aggressive violence than others" (p.11). The American Academy of Child and Adolescence Psychiatry also believes that children with emotional, behavioural, learning or impulse control problems may be more easily influenced by TV violence; though at the same time acceding to the fact that the impact of such TV violence may generally either show immediately in a child's behaviour or surface many years later. It may not be surprising, therefore, for heavy viewers of television violence to demonstrate greater aggressive attitude and behaviour than their other counterparts who are not, which corroborates the American Academy of Child and Adolescence Psychiatry's opinion that "extensive viewing of television violence by children causes greater aggressiveness" (American Academy of Child and Adolescence Psychiatry, 2014, p.1). Lending support to the above view, Thomas (2000) reveals that youths who always watch violent films and aggressive movies exhibit more hostile behaviour in school than first grader who watch natural programmes or football game, because the impact is greater, and that the more realistic the violent scenes are, the more realistic human characters in today's film may have an even greater influence on youths. The reality of the foregoing is the unfortunate fact that children who view shows in which violence is very realistic, frequently repeated or unpunished, are only more likely to imitate what they see. In summary, evidence abounds that watching television violent films, among other effects, causes significant increase in aggressive behaviours (especially physically aggressive behaviours intended to injure or irritate others, which include shoving, fighting, serious assaults as well as homicide), especially among youths, since they are as Young (2003) observes, the ones who not only enjoy the greatest consumption of violent media content, but are also most liable to its influence. From a cognitive priming approach, Berkowitz (1984) highlights that the aggressive ideas in violent films can activate other aggressive thoughts in viewers through their association in memory pathways The implication of the foregoing is that at the activation of one single, perhaps aggressive thought, others that are strongly connected to it are equally activated; and the cycle of aggression continues like that, "violence viewing, and fantasizing about aggression mutually facilitating each other" (Huesmann, 1986, p. 137). Hence, immediately after a violent film, the viewer is prepared to respond aggressively because a network of memories involving aggression is retrieved (Felson, 1996). It is pertinent to note, therefore, that exposure to excessive violent television content does not only engender anti-social behaviour among the youths, but appears to be one of the major contributors and thus one serious problem that we need necessarily tackle. Similarly, to draw from Kenyon's perspective, while televised violence may not be the only factor leading to behaviours such as aggression, among the youths, it is certainly a significant one (Kenyon, 2002, p. 52).

The Imperative to Safeguard Youths against Negative Influence from Television and Video Films
It is quite evident as already highlighted that media's inclination for agenda setting cannot be overemphasised; hence they are deciding for us more and more about what we think, talk about, and actually care about today. However, since children and youths are the guarantee and assurance of our future, it is only logical to affirm that media and childhood are connected. The plans and the choices we make today will obviously have a great deal of impact on the future we build for our youths. There is no doubt that film programmes containing violence and crime have gained popularity and acceptance in our society, especially among youths, as such televised violence is greatly enjoyed by them. They are glued to the television watching depictions of death and destruction, which are very much alien to our culture. Some of these categories of violence on our screens include armed robbery, burglary, arson, suicide, rapes, gangsterism, thuggery, murder, martial arts, shoot-out in gun duel and various other aggressive behaviours. In the light of the foregoing, do we just fold our arms and pretend as if all is well? Of course, no!

The film medium is no doubt one of the fascinating and easiest means of communication (Ajiwe and Chukwu-Okoronkwo, 2015). This perhaps accounts for why the Nigeria National Film Policy defines it as a unique means of communication whose usual bias gives it the most universal appeal and impact (cited in Abone, 2008, p.22). Films as a matter of fact are tools for development. Film plays an important role in the development of basic physical, intellectual and social capabilities of people and this has made the medium a sure instrument for Cultural Revolution and social advancements. The capability of film to play an important role in youth's life cannot be

overemphasised. It obviously opens up for the youth manifold windows of a better world than he or she currently experiences and provides him/her the opportunity to experience different parts of the world he/she may never ordinarily be able to experience in a life time. The film medium is also capable of affording the youth opportunity to explore genuine situations of life that may be proactively applicable to his/her particular situations and environment for better living. Despite these manifold values, it is unfortunate to observe that there has been this predominant culture of 'celebration' of violence and anti-social activities in most television and video films which are capable of effecting the youths negatively. Hence, the negative tendencies easily seen or noticed in the life style of our youths (which also cuts across national boundaries, as they are not exclusive to youths in a particular environment) are usually acquired from the films they watch. To buttress the universality of these negative effects or influences, example of such films like *Higher Learning*; a 1995 American film that was set on a university community with cult fights, rapes, racism, etc, becomes a reference point. Janet Maslin, in a review of the film in *The New York Times* aptly reports that the film includes profanity, sexual situations and violence. It is only imaginable how someone, especially a youth, who is exposed to such voluminous amount of vices in the film would likewise be influenced by them. Other examples of this category of violent films are: *Bone Collector* (1999), *Vampire Dairies* (2009), *A Man Called God* (2010), and *The Master* (2012), to mention but few. About *The Vampire Diaries* in particular, here are a few selected parental reviews that are culled from Common Sense Media, as edited where necessary, that are relevant to the discussion in this study:

#1 review by Nancy, who says, "This is not a show for teens".
I am a little shocked that other parents think this show is good for teens and tweens. The show is pretty bloody, has a lot of sex, forced sexual situations, sacrifices, and even underage drinking. The only reason why I find it entertaining is because the people on the show don't seem like they are in high school at all. I work in the adult market and I can tell you that many of the adult places won't even let us talk about 1/4 of the content that is on this show and that isn't even the sex part of it. I'm all for freedom of speech, but parents, you really need to take a good look at what your kids are watching because this isn't a 13+ show nor a 15+ show. If I had a daughter I probably wouldn't let her watch it until she was at least 17 and that is even pushing it. I enjoy watching the show, but that is because I am an adult. NOT for kids!

#2 review by Sali, who says, "Parents, don't be fooled, this is an ADULT show!"
I am totally obsessed with this show, but would only consider it safe as I am in my 30's and able to judge right from wrong and make wise choices. For anyone still in the vulnerable stage of life where actions are heavily influenced by raging hormones, STAY AWAY!!! This show definitely makes it seem quite normal for teens to be sexually active, drink alcohol, smoke and do drugs. Drinking is actually encouraged by older characters. As much as I love it, every time I look at it, I feel guilty, as this goes against all of my religious beliefs. The heavy occult aspect is what really made it iffy for me. To help clear my conscience I usually mute my tv when the witches chant all of their mumbo jumbo. Don't wanna be inviting any demonic elements into my home. Just realised I did not even mention the violence, but hey, that's obvious as it's vampires and werewolves we're talking about. The worst part though for me is that human life is repeatedly treated and clearly expressed as meaningless and without value. Humans are killed for no reason at all and with no remorse. Repeated "dying" and returning to life of humans protected from supernatural death will definitely cause kids to lose value for life and feel that death is not serious. No matter how liberal you are, think twice before allowing your kids under at least 16 to watch this and when they do, be prepared for the consequences. Oh and BTW, this review is based on having watched up to half of season 3, so I do know what I am talking about.

#3 review by Susan, who says, "Not a good show for teens".
This is a very gruesome show and should never have even hit tv screens. First it has very bad role models and makes violence and drinking and sex and drugs seem like just another part of a normal day. It is super violent and can give teens nightmares including things like: Hanging people from bear traps, cutting people so they lose blood, starving people until the very last second and pulling out parts of eyes. Did I mention the whole show is about killing and drinking blood?

The foregoing parental reviews only reinforce the agelong concern over the pervading rhythm of violent media contents or what Bleakley *et al.* (2014) might have dubbed "on-screen cluster of violence" in the contemporary society and the negative influence they portend to the generality of young audiences who might be unguardedly exposed to them; as well as the imperative to safeguard them against such negative influences.

Further perspective on Nollywood (the Nigerian film industry) reveals that it is also replete with films in this category of depiction of violence, besides others that would pass for X-rated category that project all sorts of immoral activities. Unfortunately, these are the kind of films youths usually love to watch which tend to influence them negatively. Omoera (2011) reinforces the reality of the above assertion by linking violence in its varied forms in the larger Nigerian society to Nollywood films. It might not be far-fetched, therefore, to note that youths'

involvement in very serious crimes like armed robbery, burglary, rape, murder, cultism, etc., is mostly as a result of the kind of violent films they are exposed to through television and video. This no doubt accounts for why the industry (Nollywwod) has received the hard knock of critics for its overemphasis on negative themes that invariably promote all sorts of violence and anti-social behaviours. The National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), the industry's regulatory body, set up by Act No.85 of 1993 to regulate films and video industry in Nigeria, fully appreciative of the necessity to stem this unhealthy trend, in its guidelines for motion picture producers, called for productions to be above board in portrayal of violence, crimes, sex and pornography, vulgarity, obscenity, religion and other sensitive subjects (NFVCB 2000, pp. 107 – 111). Hence, the board's full wrath was not restrained in imposing ban on a number of films like *I hate my village*, for promoting cannibalism and failing to uphold Nigeria's cultural values, *Shattered Home*, *Outcast 1&2*, *Night Out* [Girls for Sale], *Omo Empire*, *Issakaba 4*, *Terrorist Attack*, and *Unseen Forces*, due to lawlessness and the promotion of immorality and cannibalism (Akpabio, 2007, pp. 91 – 92; Nnabuko & Anatsui, 2012, p.215). According to these scholars, an analysis of these movies reveal that issues highlighted in them include violent robbery, ritual performances, rivalry, conflicts, sexual violence, organised crime, prostitution, murder, greed, avarice, impatience, jealously, envy, pride, arrogance, infidelity, treachery, occultism, among others. Mgbejume (2001) and Ndibe (2004) have further reinforced the reality of the depiction of negative themes in Nollywood films with heavy dose of bloodletting, murder, suggestive sex scenes, pornography, witchcraft, voodoo and occultism, armed robbery, and ritual killing, among others, which are dished out without regard to the sensitivities and sensibilities of their viewers, *majority of whom incidentally are youths*. Drawing, therefore, from the above scholars' perspectives, Omoera *et al.* (2017, p.360), perhaps conveniently conclude that:

it could be more morally damaging, culturally destructive, socially uninspiring and developmentally problematic to continually allow Nigerian children (and of course, youths; emphasis mine) to be exposed to the kind of low-level, intellectually suspect and ethically suicidal images/gazes which are conspicuously evident in Nigerian videos such as BEYOND SIN, AKI AND POPO, ISSAKABA, THE DESTROYER, SCHOOL DROPOUT, THE RETURN OF THE PROFESSOR, BOYS COT, RUSH HOUR, UKWA, MR. IBU, NEW JERUSALEM, FORBIDDEN FRUIT, THE BILLIONAIRE'S CLUB, BLOOD MONEY, CAIN AND ABEL 1&2, CRAZY TWINS 1, YAHOO BOYS, etc.

This category of films, regardless of their entertainment imports, Omoera *et al.,* argue*,* tend to turn the cherished (Nigerian) African cultural ethos on its head; perhaps, "in a bid to ape pseudo-western behaviours and tendencies such as the use of vulgar words like "fuck you", "bitch," etc., "low-waist dressing, aka, sagging", indiscriminate use of guns and other lethal weapons, etc." (p.360), which (citing Brown & Witherspoon, 2002) are even now causes of grave concern in western countries like England, Canada, the United States of America, etc., where relevant agencies are seeking ways of preventing children from viewing films with such representations because of the potentially disturbing sounds and distorted images they contain.

In another study on the "Impact of Nollywood films on children's behaviour in Ekpoma, Nigeria", in which children of primary and secondary schools between the age brackets of 7–11 and 12–17 in Ekpoma locality who watch Nollywood movies (particularly *Ultimate Warrior, Ukwa, The Destroyer, Beyond Sin, Issakaba, Aki and Popo,Cain and Abel 1&2, Crazy Twins 1,Yahoo Boys*) via television/video sets, and with or without parental supervision, constitute the focal group, Omoera *et al.* (2017) decried the morally and ethically questionable contents of the movies some of which also misrepresent children. These morally and ethically questionable contents are usually themed on gratuitous violence, obscenities, and exaggerated cultism which are very distasteful to Nigeria's cultural orientation and as a result capable of turning counterproductive when children and youths are exposed to them indiscriminately. Hence:

many young boys and girls engage in substance abuse, illicit sex, ostentatious living, etc., as a result of the movies they are exposed to. The heavy viewing of movies has direct implications for the get-rich-quick syndrome, upsurge in the spate of youth violence, kidnapping, the common use of vulgar words such as 'fuck you' among Nigerian (African) children, especially the adolescents in the Ekpoma locality. (Omoera *et al.,* 2017, p.369 – 370)

In their conclusion, the researchers urged film content creators, adult consumers (especially parents) of Nollywood films, the National Film and Video Censors' Board (NFVCB), and other stakeholders to be alive to their responsibilities if Nigeria is to avoid the pitfall of breeding morally, culturally and behaviourally deranged children and youths who might put the great collective destiny of the country in jeopardy.

From the foregoing, therefore, there is no longer doubt that enough evidence abound about the heavy presence of violence in television and video films from which the Nigerian youths and their peers in other climes could learn from what they see; especially the negative tendencies of the characters. They could imitate the negative tendencies of the characters in the films, and copy their favourite characters and role models in such films, including the good, the bad, the ugly, and even the beasts among them. In the light of the above, considering the enormity of the negative implications of youths' exposure to violent television and video films, it is absolutely imperative that necessary steps need be urgently taken to safeguard the future of our youths, and our socio-cultural wellbeing as a nation. This is very much in view of the fact that we cannot overemphasise the significance of their status as leaders of tomorrow and future generations of our society.

Conclusion

On a summary note, this study has critically examined the reality of the enormity of the negative implications of youths' exposure to violent television and video films anchoring on qualitative research approach and the explication of the interplay of the Cultivation Analysis and Social Cognitive Theories and how they provide possible explanations to these negative implications. However, it is quite instructive to note the fact that a lot of other social, economic, cultural and psychological variables also interact with the media, television and video films in particular, to impact negatively on viewers, especially the youths. What this means is that the media remain only part of the many catalytic factors in the generation of youths' violence and as such contribute to violence in combination with other social and psychological factors. Nevertheless, we do not need to fold our arms and leave our youths at the mercy of their fate in the face of the barrages of violence from television and video films that threaten them and the society at large.

Recommendations

There is need for our television stations to rise to the occasion and show more of our indigenous films that reflect good moral values and the cultural relevance of the country, as studies reveal that majority of the anti-social behaviours are infiltrations from foreign films. When it becomes necessary to show foreign films, they should be those that modify and encourage good moral standards and social consciences. Furthermore, instead of the prevalent tendency of predisposing young audiences to negative influences from screen contents, more importantly Nollywood films, there is need for creators to consciously provide the enabling environment for positive impact by laying more emphasis on how they could ideally employ some of film's fundamental roles of:

- Education
- Creative thinking
- Healthy social behaviours
- Creativity and imagination and the enhancement of capacity for constructive problem solving skills, among others.

The government on their part through the film censorship board, the agency responsible for regulating and monitoring activities in the industry, should step up on the good work they are already doing to check the rate of portrayal of violence and anti-social activities like (robbery, drug addiction, kidnapping, sex, etc.) in television and video film contents. Such 'outrageous violent and anti-social activities' need to be completely barred from featuring in our screens since they portend great negative influence to our children and youths and the nation at large. Hence, any violation in the above regard should attract severe punishment from the agency as a deterrent measure for further defaults. Video shops where films are sold and rented out should also be banned from selling of such films and appropriate punishments mated out to violators. The parents are not left out in all these efforts, as they have the great responsibility to monitor what their children and wards watch and as such dissuade them from unnecessary attachment and influence to these negative activities and their influences. To further draw from American Academy of Child and Adolescence Psychiatry in these recommendations, parents can also provide solution to youths' exposure to excessive television violence by:

- Setting limits on the amount of time they spend with the television as well as consider removing the TV set from the child's bedroom;
- Making them understand that although the film characters they watch might not actually have been hurt or killed after all, that such violence in real life, however, actually results in pain or death;
- Refusing to let the youths see shows known to be violent, and change the channel or turn off the TV set when offensive material comes on, with an explanation of what is wrong with it;
- Disapproving of the violent episodes in front of the children, stressing the belief that such behaviour is not the best way to handle a problem; as well as,
- Helping them handle peer pressure among friends and mates by reaching out to other parents and convincing them to also enforce similar rules about the length of time and type of programme their children may watch, among others.

In clear perception of the harmful effect of youths' exposure to prevailing televised violence around us, there is need for parents/teachers to also adopt a level of media literacy as a form of enlightenment for the younger ones in a media-dominated age like ours, in order to instigate appropriate critical thinking among them. This is because teachers' and parental involvement in instilling those internal capabilities among Nigerian youth in achieving learning outcomes with creativity, imagination and inspiration from the films they watch is very essential. According to Thoman (1999, p. 50):

Media literacy is the ability to create personal meaning (out of the) verbal and visual symbols we take in every day through television ... the ability to chose and select, the ability to challenge and question, the ability to be conscious about what's going on around us - and not to be passive and vulnerable.

Felson (1996, p.103) further explains that, "Media literacy education teaches ways to analyze the carefully

constructed codes and conventions of media and how it affects one's understanding of his or her world". Therefore, as can be rightly observed, because of the critical nature of the subject matter, the fight against the prevailing trend of violent and anti-social activities in our television/video films is a fight for all of us; more so considering the fact that the sheer exposure of youths to these violent films and their possible consequences portends great danger not only to them but the society at large.

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