

The Effects of Television and Video Filmson the Moral Lives of Youths in South-East of Nigeria

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Abstract

Assessing the multivocality of television media on the moral lives of youths in South-East of Nigeria, it becomes apparent that they are catalysts to the vices perpetrated by the youths. Thus one is struck by the rife presence of sex, violence and occultism shown on televisions which have affected the youths adversely. This paper is set to appraise the positive and negative effects of television and video films on the moral lives of youths in South-East of Nigeria. The roles of the government, parents and guardians as regards guarding and guiding electronic media are highlighted so that possible solutions to the problems would be proffered. Literature review, questionnaires as well as observation methods were used in the collection of data. The significance of the study is geared towards helping the youths to cultivate good living habits. Parents, government, religious bodies and education sector would equally benefit from the study as each would see areas of dereliction and be able to come up with corrective measures.

Key words: Television, video, moral and youths

Introduction

Television is one of the beautiful things invented by man that is supposed to serve them purposefully if well managed. This scientific device is a welcome development in society hence Nwosu (2003) defines television as:

An electronic device which combines both sound and vision hence, audio-visual. It stimulates both auditory and visual sense... It is a medium which uses electricity for its effective functioning. It utilizes the recording potentials of the videocassette recorder (p. 313).

In, all television is one of the gadgets that is supposed to be used to educate, inform and entertain the masses including the youths in South-East Zone of Nigeria and beyond.

It has been observed that youths in the South-East of Nigeria watch all manner of films via the instrumentality of the television. Some of these films are horrible and have influenced them negatively. The issue of watching international club side footballers like Chelsea, Arsenal and the rest of them amongst the said youths is a thing of note. Football as a game in itself is good. It has brought fame to many individuals and nations but where youths especially students devote most of their evenings to watch these club sides play football for hours on daily basis becomes another thing to be worried about. This is so because some of these football clubs play late into the night.

This means that some youths that are supposed to be engaged in their academics or other useful personal or family chores are left outside wasting ‘precious time’ as it has become habitual for some of them. This also from observation has brought a lot of challenges into the society.

Also, the issue of drug observed among youths is worthy of mentioning as one of the ripples emanating from watching the Nigerian television. Considering the beautiful advertisement on cigarettes and some alcoholic drinks, some youths who are mainly adolescents are being influenced to the extent that many of them smoke marijuana, drink all manner of strong drinks as evidenced in their behavior in schools, motor parks, markets, even among some commercial drivers, their ages and dispositions notwithstanding.

Talking about the adverse effect of television on Nigeria youths, a concerned parent, Otolorin (2006) cried out to the editor of Guardian Newspaper in the following:

Sir, I would like to bring to your notice the rate at which pornography has taken our major roads and every corner of our streets. It is becoming very unbearable the rate at which those who sell pirated pornography video cassettes and CDs display their wares in public. Primary school children within the ages of seven and fourteen gathering around these streets hawkers/mobile stand patronizing them. This is an eye sore I must say. (p. 10).

The aftermath of this is that most of our youths from observation decide to go naked on the streets and even on our university campuses. This is common among the females who dress to show all sensitive parts of their bodies. This in turn has culminated into chain reactions of prostitution, violence, degradation of culture (Igbo), distribution of deadly diseases and other vices.

Considering the adverse effects of television on youths of South-East geographical zone of Nigeria who are to be the leaders of tomorrow, and the long term effect they will have on the nation, it becomes reasonable to seek for ways to redress these issues, hence the prompting of this research work by the researchers.

Key Conceptual Issues

There are some words that needed to be explained in this work for clarity of purpose. They are television, video moral and youths.

Television:

Walker (2004) defines television as:

The exact and continuous transmission of visual images, still or in motion but without permanent recording, for instantaneous viewing at a distance: effected by a combined optical and electrical impulse which are converted into their visual form in a receiving set. (p. 290).

Television is therefore an electronic gadget that has both audio and visual aids that help us to see images as well as hear and articulate sounds. It has many connecting valves through which video machines or the internet can be connected for the watching of video films and other internet connected programmes.

Video:

According to the New International Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary of the English language (2004), video is: (1) of or, pertaining to television picture portion of a program (2) Producing a signal convertible into a television picture: a video cassette – A television image of

electric signal corresponding to it (p. 1400). Video films are therefore pictures or programmes recorded in video cassettes that can be used via the television.

Moral:

New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language (2004) holds thus (1) Pertaining to character and behavior from the point of view of right or wrong, and obligation of duty; pertaining to rightness and duty in conduct. (2) Confirming to right conduct; actuated by a sense of the good, true and right; good; righteous, virtuous, (3) concerned with the principles of right and wrong; ethical: moral philosophy; moral values. (p. 826).

Youths:

Walker (2004) defines a youth as:

1. the condition or quality of being young
2. the time of life between children and adulthood
3. an early period in the development or existence of anything, as a nation or organization.
4. Young people collectively. (p. 1392).

Sociologically, young people in most societies are between a state of dependence on their parents and the achievement of the related economic and social independence characteristics of adults. For this work therefore, the youths so referred to are those young people between the ages of twelve and twenty-five (12-25yrs).

Functions of the Television:

Television has gone a long way and as an aspect of mass media has the following functions to fulfill according to Wikipedia March (2007):

- (a) Advocacy, both for business and social concerns. This includes advertising, marketing, propaganda, public relations and political communication.
- (b) Enrichment and education
- (c) Entertainment, traditionally through performances of acting, music and sports, along with light reading; since the late 20th century also through video and computer games.
- (d) Journalism
- (e) Public service announcements.

Looking at the functions of the television, one would see that they are for growth and development of the society if properly managed. For example, the Nigerian television carried a lot of educational programmes that are instructive like the teachings on the different aspects of health up-keep like dieting, causes of various diseases and their remedies, various types of religious programmes that has good moral implications as well as music that are soul enriching and many more. All these are good and help a lot in educating the masses but the worry of many people is that some of these programmes that are meant to teach good ethical issues are clothed with immoral garbs.

Consider the beautiful advertisement on the use of cigarettes and the counter instruction that follows at the end. This in turn may bring confusion to the youths whose minds are still feeble. Again, consider the advertisement on how to play safe sexual intercourse for the avoidance of HIV/AIDs using condoms while it has been proved that most of these condoms being factory produced can have perforations as factory defects and can cause harm to the user without knowing it.

Also, the issue of various films that are horrible like the 'Yori-Yori', 'Church on Fire', 'Throne of Obstacles', 'The 5 Apostles', and a lot of others that are pushed into the market and freely bought and watched by children and adults are worthy of note. These films that are full of violence, hatred, magic and the like affect the viewers especially the youths adversely with the effect that some may want to practice what they watch from the films via the television. At this point, a look at television programmes and video films is important.

Television Programmes and Video Films

History has it that the vision of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) is to be a world class television network. The mission also is to provide excellent television service worldwide, projecting the true African perspective. It is important to point out here that the true African perspective which the television is set to project can be properly visualized from the African value system of which Nigeria and South-East states are inclusive. The African value system can be appreciated from her religion. To throw more light on this;

Ezenweke (2008) submits in the following:

For Africa, the role of traditional religion in determining their *modus Vivendi* has been vital. African cultures are known for their religious orientations. In fact, African cultures are religious cultures. It is not possible to study African culture in isolation from religion. Religion permeates the ideal of Africans from cradle to grave. Ideals, words and deeds are weighed in view of the supernatural beings. Thus, values are determined by religious precepts. In other words, African traditional religion therefore comes into play in the shaping of the African's future. (p. 7).

Appraisals of some of the video films watched by youths in the South-East of Nigeria and even beyond have come dents on the Africanness, hence many dissenting voices have spoken on the negative influences of these films.

Commenting on the occultism icons in Nigerian home video while discussing the Nigerian film invasion in Ghana, Gyasi (2004) noted the following:

Our general complaint against Nigerian films is the overwhelming presence of the use of occultism. Whether a Nigeria film is set in a pre-colonial era or post-independence era, the actors will go to a fetish shrine.

The consultation is either to enable the Actor to better his economic and financial circumstances or to kill or spiritually destroy a perceived rival. In ninety-nine percent (99%) of these cases, the actor gets what he wishes and spreads death and destruction Around... from time to time (electronic version).

It is important to state here that what was observed in 2004 is still on happening today. The viewers of these films which are mostly youths are worst affected.

Also, commenting on the depravity of some of these films stuffed into the market for all and Sundry including the youths to watch, Coma off and Coma off (1993), and Meyer (1998) hold that any foreigner who watches many Nigerian and Ghanaian films may think that Nigeria and Ghana are lands of witches, native doctors, ritual killers and a host of other paranormal powers entrenched in their films. Even when the producers aim at teaching the lesson that does not pay to indulge in occultism or embark on a life of crime, the lesson may get lost in the pervasiveness of the Juju practice.

Discussing the nature of video films in Nigeria, Wikipedia (2008) lamented that some worry that the prevalence of witchcraft and violence in the movies may encourage the worst stereotypes about Africans. To buttress this further, Osofisan (2006) opined thus:

Unceasing preoccupation within juju, black magic, the relentless celebration of dark rituals and diabolical cults while those who chose to be different wants to demonstrate the ineffectual power of juju rituals... our films parade a number of serious deficiencies, viewed from the cultural ideological perspective. The promotion of superstitious habits, belief in miracles and witchcraft are over portrayed rather than, in concrete, empirical extrapolations and direct physical participation in social struggle (p. 5).

Suffice it to say that the Nigerian culture as well as the south- East of Nigeria which are predominantly Igbo, are not well portrayed by dramatists in some of the films that are watched by our people. The rich cultural heritage of peace, respect for elders and spiritual beings plus work are being replaced with cheating, maneuvering, violence, prostitution and other vices. These have left negative marks on the lives of the audience especially the youths who are prone to watching them.

Conclusion

From the study made so far, it is discovered that some youths in the South-East are influenced positively by the television programmes especially in the area of carrying out research work, improving their songs from the video films and introducing more youths into the music industry, listening to network news and other health and sports programmes that are highly educative. To this group, as observed, the behavioural pattern is good.

On the other hand, we observed that some of these youths in the South-East of Nigeria who are addicted to watching television programmes and video films, waste a lot of time watching these films and are violent and erratic among other vices. Some of these youths do not dress properly. They like to expose their bodies contrary to the culture of the land while boys plait their hairs and wear earrings as they would want to look like their sport's mentors they see in the television.

Also it is observed among children and youths in schools that some of them would like to cheat in examinations. They have never perceived the act of cheating as immoral. Also, the watching of pornographic films among these youths has led some of them into prostitution, lesbianism and homosexuality. Time and space will not permit us to talk about substance abuse among some of these youths which has led to violence, robbery, kidnapping and the like.

Also, from our study, we found out that most parents derelict in their duties. The act of proper supervision among the parents has eluded them with the effect that the children in the house are abused. The abused children later become the delinquent youths.

Religious bodies are found to be also deficient in their approach to issues concerning the youths. Thus some of the youths interviewed complained that some of the religious leaders are hypocrites who even lure them to sin? They fail to live to their creed as they would say one thing and do the other. These things influence the youths adversely that they look at the adults as hypocrites whose words never marched their actions.

Again we discovered that Nigerian government has established National film and video Censors Board that is supposed to censor these films before they are thrown into the market with age graduations as touching who watches what. This again was found not working well; for if they are working as supposed, some of the horrible films in the market that does not encourage or boost the Africanness in our lives would not be there.

Recommendations

We deemed the following recommendations vital for all and sundry seeing that the topic under deliberation touches lives and has some connections with the youths of today(South-East) which are the cream of the society.

1. Renewed intensive and parental care and supervision:

We have observed that most of the abused children are those whose parents derelict in their supervisory roles. To this effect therefore, priority should be given to parental care and supervision in a bid to create a healthy atmosphere inside and outside the family. Parents should monitor their children and wards very well. They should be able to supervise the films that enter their houses and be able to know who the friends of their children are.

2. Religious Organization:

Abuse notwithstanding, the influence of religious organizations cannot be played down in the character formation of youths. For example, it is the key duties of the church to provide sound ethical education which direct human consciences towards doing good and avoiding evil; towards a wholesome love of God and neighbor as well as persuading individuals and social groups to embrace and fill their minds with the following: ... whatever things are true, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of a good report... (Philippians 4:8).

Youths in the South-East of Nigeria and even beyond should be encouraged by their parents, teachers and authorities to join religious organizations like those found in Christian Churches. The activities in these organizations will keep them busy and draw their minds to God rather than the mundane things that affect their psyche and moral lives adversely.

3. Attention to be given to Audio and video materials that enter the Nigerian market:

An urgent attention to address the dangers of the occultism icons in Nigerian home video on the rich culture of the nation is due. Unless this is rightly addressed, the seeming loss of Nigeria and African values will be irretrievably consumed by the forces of modernism.

Again, there is need for the National films and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) to check-met the production of these films not only in principles but also in actual sense to ensure that they are well focused. They should make the film designers focus on the moral right attitudes such as fairness, justice, kindness, humility, the welfare of others and so on. They should de-emphasize violence, magic, corruption, nudity and the rest of them.

Thus, the specific norms and values of a given culture should be borne in mind with sufficient emphasis. The N.F.V.C.B should mount up programmes for proper supervision of firms industry and adequately see that offenders are duly punished. They should also mount up programmes whereby parents would be made to understand their roles as supervisors to their children and wards as regards guiding and guarding what their children read, hear and watch.

The South-East Government:

Since an idle mind is the devil's workshop, the government of all the states in the South-East – Anambra, Imo, Abia, Enugu and Ebonyi is called upon to create reasonable outlets where youths can be gainfully employed. This will curtail their free time and make them more useful and reasonable to themselves and the society at large. Submitting in the same, vein, Adebambo (2017)

speaking in Guardian Newspaper under the caption “Youths As Agents of Peace or Weapon of Mass Destruction” submitted thus:

Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace. If, however, they are left on society's margins, all of us will be impoverished. Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies. (p. 30).

The government should equally stop street and motor park hawking by adolescents and punish all cases of child labour adequately. With all these put in proper place, the moral lives of some youths that are low would be beefed up and these will equally help to check further moral degradation among the youths in South-East who are given to watching of television and video films.

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