

The Negative Impact of Nollywood Home Movies on The Religious Activities of The Anglican Youth of Nnewi

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Abstract

Nollywood movies, one of the most popular instruments of entertainment, have, over the years, entertained both the young, the old, the believers and nonbelievers of the Christian faith in Nnewi and other parts of Nigeria. In recent times, however, these Nollywood Movies have exposed the youth to various forms of violence such as armed robbery, cultism, kidnapping, ritual killing, nudity, infidelity, disobedience to parents/elders and so forth. They have neglected the biblical admonition "wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Psa.119:9; KJV). Again, these movies have also led to lack of interest in religious activities of Nnewi youth that this worried writer sought to reverse this ugly trend by drawing attention of the Christian and other religious leaders to this menace with a view to proffering solutions. Data for this article was drawn from primary and secondary sources. The primary source was based on survey carried out at St. Stephens Anglican Church, Umudim, Nnewi, Anambra State. The secondary source included newspaper, magazine and journal articles, books and Internet resources. From these sources, the analysis will be based on phenomenological interpretation of data. This refers to qualitative research method that focuses on exploring the subjective experiences of an individual or group of individuals. Based on media influence theory, the article concluded that some actions should be taken urgently to arrest this situation and preserve the Christian faith.

Keywords: *Christian faith, Church, Entertainment, Nnewi, Nollywood Movies Society and Youth.*

Introduction

It is on record that the Christian faith is so dependent on the active participation and activities of the youth of every denomination that their absence will be counterproductive to the growth and expansion of the faith. St. Paul admonished Timothy and every Christian youth thus "let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1. Timothy 4:12; RSV). St. Paul simply means that the youth are the vanguard of the Christian faith and therefore should strive to uphold its teachings at all times.

In the same vein, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon knew the importance of the youth in developing his kingdom that he demanded that youths without blemish, handsome and skilful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to serve in the king's palace, and to teach them the letters and language of the Chaldeans be sought out and prepared (Daniel 1:4; RSV).

In the past, the youth of the St. Stephens Anglican Church, Nnewi were so committed in the things of God that they cleaned the church premises, arranged the church for Sunday and other weekday services and attended fellowship programs. But, unfortunately, the influence of the Nollywood home movies have turned things around for the worse.

The intent of Nollywood films, according to Gonina, Samuel and Pam (2021), has "usually and always been to correct societal ills such as greed, prostitution, ritual killing, ostentatious living, armed robbery, terrorism and criminality, among other forms of corruption" (p.114).

Gonina, Samuel and Pam further notes that:

Nigerian movies as a medium of communication is evidently seen as capable of influencing individual's attitude, character, lifestyle and culture either negatively or positively. Thus it can be seen as one of the agents of socialization among audience members, as the mass media are very powerful socializing agents (p.115).

Unfortunately, the Nollywood home movies have not only vitiated African values and reverence for the supernatural but have also neglected the biblical admonition "So shun youthful passions and aim at righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22; RSV). Again, these home movies have confirmed God's Word "The people will oppress one another, every man his fellow and every man his neighbor; the youth will be insolent to the elder, and the base fellow to the honorable" (Isaiah 3:5; RSV).

This article, therefore, attempts to x-ray the negative effects of the Nollywood home movies on the youth with particular reference to the Christian youth of St. Stevens Anglican Church, Nnewi. It is set to achieve the following objectives:

- i. Describe what Nollywood home movies are;
- ii. How they influence the youth negatively;
- iii. The effects on the Christian faith;
- iv. Possible solutions to stem the tide.

Significance

This article is intended to x-ray the negative impact of Nollywood movies on the religious activities of the Anglican youth of Nnewi. It is hoped that the following will benefit therefrom:

1. It will serve as an eye-opener to the Anglican youth of Nnewi to know the dangers of the Nollywood home movies and to retrace their steps back to the service of God.
2. It will encourage both the clergy and the laity of the Anglican Church to brace for the challenge with a view to helping their youth to become more productive.
3. It will serve as a basis for further studies by students of sociology, religion and other humanities to determine the utility or otherwise of Nollywood home movies.
4. It will also encourage government agencies such as censors' board to increase its censorship activities with a view to curbing the excesses of the movie producers.

The field data collected from the youth of St. Stevens parish of the Anglican Church will be analyzed using phenomenological interpretation of data. It is a qualitative research method that focuses on exploring the subjective experiences of an individual or group of individuals. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the unique perspectives, meanings and interpretations that people give to their experiences. Using this method of analysis, this researcher hopes to pinpoint the impact of the home movies on the youth in relation to attending church and other services and Christian practices in general.

Operational Definitions

To ensure a clearer understanding of the issue raised in this article, it is worthwhile to give some of the operational definitions:

Impact: the Oxford Online English Dictionary (2013) defines impact as "the action of one object coming forcibly into contact with another; have a marked or strong effect on someone or something." Here, it refers to the effect of an action on a specific thing. For instance, the effect of Nollywood movies on the youth.

Nollywood Home Movies: this, according to Gonina, Samuel and Pam (2021), refers to the name attributed to the Nigeria movie industry. Nollywood remains the dominant film industry in Africa that is poised to championing the projection of the Nigerian cum African cultural values through films (p.18).

Religious activities: These are activities of the church which include youth fellowship, weekly Bible studies and prayer meetings, cleaning the church and Sunday services.

The Anglican Youth: This refers to the youth or the younger members of the Anglican Church of Nigeria.

Nnewi: This is a town made up of four communities--Otolo, Uruagu, Umudim and Nnewichi. These communities are closely related. It is bounded in the north by Nnobi, to the south by Utu, east by Amichi and to the west by Ojoto.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework, according to National Open University of Nigeria (2016), is:

A system of related ideas that enable one to generate accurate explanation of and sometimes predict social phenomena. ... It is a set of logically interrelated statements that attempt to describe, explain, and (occasionally) predict social events. Theory involves the construction of abstract interpretations that can be used to explain a wide variety of practical situations (p.207).

Theoretical framework, for the purpose of this article, refers to a set of interconnected concepts, theories, and principles that guide the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon being investigated or studied. This article is based on the media influence theory (MIF). Media Influence Theory is a complex theory which seeks to understand how media affects individuals' perceptions, beliefs and behaviors. It encompasses such concepts as the agenda-setting theory, cultivation theory, and the spiral of silence, among others. It posits that the media plays a significant role in shaping societal norms and individual attitudes. This article is solely hinged on the cultivation theory. Gonina, Samuel and Pam (2021) recalls that:

Cultivation theory was developed in 1976 by George Garbner and Larry Gross, and the basic assumption of the theory is that people's conceptions of social reality are influenced according to exposure to certain sources and agencies such as television and movies. Basically, the major focus or contribution of this theory is cultivation; a cultural process relating to coherent frameworks or knowledge and underlying general concepts cultivated by exposure to individual programs or offerings. Thus, the theory is saying that people, especially the young adults, who watch a great deal of television or movies will come to perceive the real world as being consistent with what they see on the

screen. This is to say that heavy viewers of Nollywood movies come to believe what they watch and apply them to the real world (p.117).

Apuke (2016) has further noted that:

This theory focuses on "heavy viewers". People who watch a lot of movie are likely to be more affected by the ways in which the world is formed by the media than are individuals who watch less, especially regarding topics of which the viewer has little firsthand experience. The theorists see movie as a cultural arm of the established industrial order and as such serves primarily to maintain, stabilize and reinforce rather than to alter or weaken conventional beliefs and behaviors (p.21).

Strengths of Media Influence Theory

Media influence theory, to scholars and social crusaders, has some strengths which deserve a mention:

1. **Comprehensive Framework.** Media Influence Theory provides a broad framework for analyzing the effects of media on the society which helps to understand various factors like culture, politics and social norms. Anunnel and Yan (2018) has observed that:

Nollywood movies have also been used to propagate religious doctrines and views particularly Christianity and Islam, the two dominant religions in Nigeria. Such movies seek to proclaim the authority of God in solving all human and natural problems; that through prayers, everything is possible including becoming rich and receiving supernatural healings (p.19).

2. **Empirical Support.** Numerous studies have validated aspects of the theory by demonstrating how the media can shape public opinion and influence behaviors. Apuke (2016) has noted that:

These movies portray message that have Influence on the viewers, mostly, their mode of dressing. Movies hold a very special place in the culture of a people. Studies show that movies contribute to socialization and the transmission of culture. ... It also plays a role in the daily lives of men and women in the way they perceive and conceived themselves and in the way they conduct their own lives (p.20).

3. **Policy Implications.** Lastly, understanding media influence can inform policymakers about the potential effects of media regulations and the importance of media literacy programs. This led Nza-Ayang and Ngozi (2023) to conclude that:

Government should exercise stringent policy in these indigenous film by way of regulations and at the same time provide good environment for quality production of home movies through incentive and promotion for quality production of indigenous films in the international market and encouragement of sound training for local producers, actors and actresses for improvement (p.691).

Weaknesses

1. **Overemphasis on Media Effects.** Critics of the theory argue that the theory may overstate the media's influence on individuals thereby neglecting personal agency and other social factors.

2. Contextual Limitations. The theory may not adequately account for cultural and contextual differences in media consumption and interpretation.

3. Neglect of Audience Interpretation. Media Influence Theory often underestimates the active role of audiences in interpreting media content which is usually subjective.

This theory is relevant to this article since it effectively demonstrates how the media shapes public opinion, attitudes, and behaviors. Again, it helps to inform policy decisions regarding media regulation, content creation and public awareness campaigns aimed at salvaging the youth from the dangers of the home movies.

Research Data

It is believed that "Nollywood home movies have negative impact on the religious activities of the Anglican youth of Nnewi." To study the veracity or otherwise of this statement, data was collected from a questionnaire containing 6 questions given to 35 members of the youth at St. Stephen Anglican Church, Umudim, Nnewi. The research questions were:

1. Do you know what Nollywood home movies are?
2. How often do you watch Nollywood home movies?
3. Do you believe that Nollywood movies distract the youth from religious commitment?
4. Do you agree that Nollywood movies heightens interest of the youth in diabolism and idolatry?
5. Do you think that Nollywood movies expose the youth to violence and criminality?
6. Do you agree that Nollywood movies promote drug and other substance abuse?

Using simple percentile-based analysis, the findings show that:

1. 90 percent (%) of the respondents know what Nollywood home movies were.
2. 75% of the youth watch Nollywood movies often.
3. 85% believe that Nollywood movies distract the youth from religious commitment.
4. 80% agree that Nollywood movies heightens interest of the youth in diabolism and idolatry.
5. 60% think Nollywood movies expose the youth to violence and criminality.
6. 90% agree that Nollywood movies promote drug and other substance abuse.

Simply put, the results show that 80 percent of the respondents believe that Nollywood home movies have negative influence on the Anglican youth of Nnewi. 20% of the respondents believe that Nollywood movies do not pose much danger to them. This comes from the 25% who do not watch movies often.

Causes of Disinterest in Religious Participation of the Anglican Youth of Nnewi

Data gotten from the research above suggest that Nollywood home movies have, unfortunately led to the depreciation of religious participation of the Anglican youth of Nnewi. These are caused by:

1. Addiction to Nollywood Home Movies. The youths are so addicted to Nollywood movies that they no longer find religious activities interesting. Instead of attending church activities, they prefer to stay at home and watch home movies. Omoera, Edemode and Aihevba (2017) notes that:

A more recent survey on the use of popular media by American children between the ages of 4 to 15 is as revelatory as damning because it states that the impact of movies on children within this age group has taken a depressing toll on their health, social, and

mental well-being. This is probably not also far from what is happening to Nigerian children (p.357).

Omoera, Edemode and Aihevba further notes that:

While watching a film, the mind of the individual is so completely given up to the moving pictures. The ideas in the film are effectively implanted in the viewer's brain without his/her knowing it and such a viewer, a child, is likely to take to some of those ideas that he/she had seen, utilising them in his/her daily real-life activities or situations (p358).

Omoera, Edemode and Aihevba simply means that the youths are so influenced by the home movies that their daily real-life activities or situations such as church attendance are badly affected.

2. Drug and Other Substance Abuse. The enormity of the dangers of drug and other substance abuse cannot be measured. Like wild fire ravaging dry bush, drug abuse has so ravaged the youths that they no longer do anything meaningful to themselves, their families and the church. Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) (2023) states that:

Available figures indicate that 14.4% (14.3 million) Nigerians in the age group 15-64 years abuse drugs. ... Drug abuse exerts the strongest influence on the quality of life and studies have it that regular alcohol and marijuana use are strongly associated with poor quality of life, and substance use disorders impact negatively on quality of life. Drug abuse also puts a heavy financial burden on individuals, families and society (p.2).

3. Overemphasis on Prosperity and Material Acquisition. Lastly, the uncontrolled sermonization of prosperity and material acquisition has, unfortunately, led the youth of Nnewi in particular and Nigeria in general to execrate hardwork and genuine means of getting money in preference to get-rich-quick means which, sadly, depreciates their interest in church and other Christian activities. Nwadiolor and Umeanolue (2013) corroborates this by stating that:

The greatest enemy of the Church, which, incidentally, is also the greatest enemy of all mankind today, is our mindless quest for material things. The massive and uncurtailed growth of materialistic gospel message in the Churches in Nigeria and many parts of Africa today has largely confirmed this view. Materialistic preaching with its unapologetic emphasis on the acquisition of wealth at all cost and the shameful deceptions of the materialistic preachers with their open display of affluence have distorted the value systems of Christianity in Nigeria (p.30).

Effects

From the foregoing pages, it is apparent that Nollywood home movies have adverse effects on the Anglican youth of Nnewi. Some of the effects include but not limited to:

1. Distraction from Religious Commitment. Many factors cause the youth to be distracted from being committed to the things of God. The family, for instance, has failed to raise up God-loving children as admonished in the scripture: "train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6; KJV).

This lack of basic Christian upbringing seriously affect the youth of today.

2. The Insensitivity of the Church. Many have accused the Christian church, whether Catholic or Protestant, of being insensitive to the plight of the youth so much that they do not consider themselves part of the church. Okeke (2012) sadly notes that:

The Africa of today knows so much proliferation of religion and religious bodies than none other in the history of times. The innumerable presence of these ought to gladden one's heart especially when one considers that the bulk of the teachings and or sermons should be focused on morals. Sadly enough a number of these religions spend so much time trying to assert their superiority over others that they hardly have time for the youth of the society. They only think of them in terms of the lost of the world and do not make much visible effort to promote or better still, moderate their interests. The church for instance, really does not have much room for the youth (p.49).

3. Debauchery. The Nollywood home movies have so exposed the youth to immoral acts that their interest in attending or performing religious obligations have been greatly waned. Okeke further notes that:

The swinging hips, the near-nude or skimpy attires, and the generally provoking appearances of the mainly female artistes displayed as sex objects ... usually send very erotic messages to helpless male youths who feel tickled by all the displays and the persuasive power of the images. Some of these youths might be aroused sexually, by the end of the day, and may not resist the temptation to force an opposite sex to bed, especially where the opportunity presents itself (p.51).

4. Neglect of Hardwork and Genuine Engagement. Lastly, the prosperity sermons of the contemporary Christian preachers have, unfortunately, dampened the interest of the youth in hardwork and genuine source of wealth. This led Ukeachusim (2022) to lament that "materialism amongst Nigerian Christian youths is consolidating negative implications to their spiritual lives, families, to the mission mandate of the church and to Nigeria as a nation" (p.1).

The Way Forward

Having looked at the dangers of Nollywood home movies on the youth, it is expedient that the following measures be taken to curb the menace:

1. Christian Religious Education. Religious education helps the youth to have a deep understanding of their faith. It encourages learners to explore their relationship with God, develop moral reasoning, and engage in social justice. Apparently, it involves the study of theological concepts, historical contexts and the importance of community worship.

This, according to St. Paul, will help the Anglican youth of Nnewi to shun youthful passions and aim at righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart (2 Timothy 2:22; KJV).

Again, the leadership of the Anglican church at Nnewi should organize periodic religious education which may take place in Sunday schools, parochial schools, and youth groups. The curriculum should include scripture reading, prayer, discussions about ethical and moral dilemmas, and participation in church activities. This will not only help individuals grow spiritually but also promote a sense of belonging within the Christian community, encouraging active participation in faith-based initiatives and service to others.

2. Stricter Censorship of the Nollywood Movies. Nigeria has some government agencies saddled with the responsibility of censoring the movie production, distribution and broadcast.

Such agencies include National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), the Consumer Protection Council (CPC), National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture.

These agencies should, as a matter of necessity, not only work together to create a framework for the production, distribution, and exhibition of the Nollywood home movies in Nigeria but also ensure that the contents adhere to cultural and societal standards.

Furthermore, Gonina, Samuel and Pam (2021) recommends that:

Greater efforts should be geared by the NFVCB to ensure that video films sold in the country meet the stipulated standards in both quality and content in order to suppress the display of immoral acts in Nollywood movies. Cable television channels such as Africa Magic, Cine Africa as well as other networks should ensure that before any Nollywood movies is shown on their channel, it should meet the stipulated standards that can impact its audience positively (p.120).

3. Employment for the Youth. Although the church can do little or nothing in creating employment for the youth, it has been suggested that, in addition to the dangers of Nollywood movies on the youth, unemployment constitutes a major problem to the youth and it also affects their religious participation. The government, at all levels, should, therefore, create employment to absorb the thousands who graduate from different educational institutions yearly. Samuel (2018) has observed that:

The workplace serves as the source of a social network, identity, and sense of belonging for most people. Many indicators of social exclusion like poverty, illness, homelessness among others are dependent on the money income derived in most cases from work. The unemployed are deprived of normal social life. Unemployment limits social relations and results in the denial of providing equal and living opportunities. The unemployed is unable to participate actively in the basic political, economic and social functioning of society. His or her access to resources is restricted and can lead to deprivation, isolation, shame, and other social insults (p.26).

4. Paradigm Shift in Prosperity Theology. Due to the negative influence of the prosperity theology which has pervaded the Christian space and negated hardwork, there is need to have a paradigm shift. This will involve:

1. Re-evaluation of Wealth. This shift should move the focus from physical wealth to spiritual wealth emphasizing personal growth, community well-being and ethical living over material accumulation.

2. Critique of Materialism. A critical stance toward the excessive emphasis on material wealth and the potential harmful effects of such beliefs should be carried out by Christian preachers in the Anglican and other churches. This should include exploring scriptural foundations that highlight humility, sacrifice and the value of non-material blessings.

3. Holistic Well-Being. Lastly, there should be a broadening of the definition of "prosperity" to cover emotional, spiritual and mental health, rather than solely financial success. This change acknowledges that well-being can come from various sources, including relationships, purpose, and community engagement. Nwadiakor and Umeanolue recalls that:

Jesus' life was lived as a rejection of the merely material perspective. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us that we can become enslaved by the desire for material things

and money (Matthew 8). He pleads with us to go beyond concerns of what we will consume and to seek our creator and His will (p.31).

Preachers in particular and Christians in general, in obedience to Jesus' injunctions, should strive to lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matthew 6:19-21; KJV).

Conclusion

The youth are the pillars that hold the Christian church. In recognition of this, the writer of the Psalms prays thus "may our sons in their youth be like plants full grown, our daughters like corner pillars cut for the structure of a palace" (Psalm 144:12; RSV). The phrase "full grown plants and corner pillars cut for the structure of the palace" is used to explicate the enormity of the services the youth are expected to render in the house of God.

Again, God told prophet Jeremiah "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you you shall go, and whatever I command you you shall speak" (Jeremiah 1:7; RSV).

This means that the youth, no matter the circumstance, are expected to serve God as diligently as possible. All forms of distraction from Nollywood home movies and other worldly things should not be allowed to draw them away from the God-given service.

Furthermore, all forms of materialistic sermons which tend to deceive the youth and vitiate the importance of hardwork should utterly be discouraged. After all, St. Paul says:

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness (1 Timothy 6:9-11; KJV).

This article concludes with the following recommendations:

1. The leaders of the church should, from time to time, organize training for the youth where they will be taught the true Word of God. Psychiatrists and other medical personnel can be brought to teach them the dangers of drug and other substance abuse and alcoholism.
2. The promoters and managers of the Nollywood movie industry should project positive virtues such as love, honesty, unity, respect for elders and hardwork instead of cultism, greediness, robbery, sex, pornography and so forth.
3. Increased Censorship. The government, both federal and state, should establish agencies in addition to the existing ones to help sanitize the deterioration that emanates from the influences the Nollywood home movies exert on the youth in particular and the populace in general.
4. Prosperity theology should be done away with. Nwadior and Umeanolue notes that "materialistic gospel message and its consequent materialism is a vice and should not be encouraged in the Christian Churches" (p.41).

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