

NIGERIAN WOMEN'S PERCEPTION AND RESPONSES TO GENDER BASED NOLLYWOOD MOVIES: A STUDY OF WOMEN IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

From few recent reception studies, female audiences of Nollywood movies differently receive their portrayals therein, some defining them as stereotypic and unrealistic, thereby under representing and misrepresenting the female gender. Reception studies conducted within the western Nigeria, weighed so heavily on literate receivers such as lecturers, students and Nollywood stars but considering also the effect the patriarchal Igbo customs could have on how women receive their identities, this work is a more broadened reception study of the entire women from different socio cultural backgrounds in south eastern Nigeria and sought to determine how and in what ways, these greater number of women, especially those in rural communities, negotiate or perhaps either reject or accept their identities as given in Nollywood. A mixed method of 'Survey' and 'Focus Group Discussion', were employed whereas the 'Cultivation' and 'Deconstruction' theories served as the reception frameworks to couch these reception. While 'Cultivation' determines the women's cultivation and acceptance of their portrayals as reality, 'Deconstruction' looks at their possible rejection and dissidence of same. Findings demonstrate that the women aside being widely exposed to the movies identified the negative female stereotypes and though accepted being 'entertained' and influenced by looks of most female characters, upheld that their attitudes, beliefs, goals, ideologies and relations towards other women were not influenced. What came out quite distinct is the women's perception of these films as media constructions and not realities and their distancing themselves

from such portrayals, even in their relationships with one other thereby calling to question the assumed powerful and uniform effects of media messages and validates the notion of the active audience.

Keywords: Nollywood movies; Nigerian women; Perception; Responses; Gender; Sex; Stereotype

INTRODUCTION

Although media messages are imbedded with a 'preferred reading' audience interpretations of the texts are dependent upon individual assumptions and social contexts (Hall, 1980). Hall further outlined three dominant types of media reception as "the dominant or hegemonic reading; negotiated or partial; and the oppositional reading". Hall in McQuails (2010) further accepted that intended meaning is built into (encoded) symbolic content in both open and concealed ways that are hard to resist, but recognized the possibilities for rejecting or re-interpreting the intended message. In line with this, the possibility exist of Nigerian women, having multiple and ambivalent readings of their identities.

Sequel to Hall's conception, Azeez (2010)'s reception study, found striking disparities on ways men and women internalize women's portrayals in the movies; while men tend to see nothing wrong with the representations of women in films and wish such to continue unmodified for the reinforcement of Nigerian culture; women, contrarily perceive the portrayals in negative lights. While men adopt dominant or preferred readings of women's portrayals and accept the representations in the films as reality, women felt otherwise. Similarly, in Amobi (2013)'s study of how female Nollywood actors, students and lecturers of the university of lagos and Ibadan, make sense of the sexist and stereotypical representations of women in Nollywood films and whether and how their social contexts shape their interpretations, found Nigerian female audiences oppositionally receiving and interpreting their representations in Nigerian home videos.

Since these two reception studies are heavily weighed on the literate receivers, this present study encompasses all Nigerian women from different backgrounds and from a different geo-political zone, South East, in order to have a more comprehensive result of how women negotiate their identities in Nollywood films. These existing gaps in the literature is what this study intends to

fill in order to either refute or corroborate existing studies as well as the interpretations of these films as popular culture by the women. For, as Lewis (1990) and Van Zoonen (1994), observe, if we are concerned with the meaning and significance of popular culture in our contemporary society, with how culture or media work ideologically, we need to understand not only media texts, but also how they are received and understood by their audiences. Consequently, beyond the Nigerian women's level of acceptance or otherwise of gender based portrayals in Nollywood, this present work goes deeper to couch the nature and level of effects of these portrayals on women.

It is instructive to also note that since the Nigerian women and children form the majority of the audience of these films, women's negotiation of the meanings inherent in these films would help discover how these films inform their identities and interpretations of who they are and how they relate with one another. Such understanding, as pointed out by Azeez (2010, p. 201) could help in predicting the influence of the images of women in the media, on gender identity and behaviours of female audiences; provide a basis for analysis against theories of media and gender identity formations, particularly as they are related to how Nigerian audiences interpret the images of women in Nigerian home video films. This is because with the popularity of movies laced with reinforcements of women's negative images and limited role in society, the societal gains in the struggle for women's emancipation can be eroded.

Therefore intention of this work is to expand the Nigerian women's perception and responses to gender based Nollywood movies through a study of Women in southern eastern Nigeria. The goal is to contribute to literature in gender identity and reception studies which is still in its embryonic stage in Africa. Much of the literature in this area are predominantly from developed societies causing a gap on alternative responses from other regions, which might throw more insight in cultural differences that intersect and influence women interpretations to media messages. Essentially, the specific objectives include the following:

1. To establish Nigerian women's level of exposure to gender based Nollywood movies.
2. To determine Nigerian women's perceptions and disposition to gendered portrayals in the movies.
3. To explore their responses as well as the extent at which they may have been affected by such portrayals.

REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Over the years, feminist film critics had employed the psychoanalytical, semiotic, textual discourse and post-structural frameworks in analyzing the representations of men and women to broaden the understanding of how their images reflect or distort reality. The earlier focus was to comprehend the representations of women in the media and how images and meanings of femininity and masculinity are socially constructed within the context of patriarchal social relations. These critics, dissatisfied with women's portrayal in movies, argue that these movies instead of portraying aspects of women that would empower audiences convey misogynistic images of women (see Ellmann, 1997 & Okunna, 1996). They further maintain that if films were to foreground the full range of women's contributions to self and society, societal perceptions of women would be enhanced (Ellerson, 2000 & Akashoro, 2010).

Meanwhile, Hall (1980) while expounding on audience reception of media texts, introduced the paired concepts of 'encoding' and 'decoding' where he contends that although media messages are imbedded with a 'preferred reading', audience interpretations of texts are dependent upon individual assumptions and social contexts. Hall in McQuails (2010) further accepted that intended meaning is built into (encoded) symbolic content in both open and concealed ways that are hard to resist, but he recognized the possibility for receivers' rejection or re-interpretation of the intended message. This therefore echoes the semiotic power of subordinates to make their own meanings, equivalent of their ability to evade, oppose or negotiate with this social power (McQuails, 2010, p. 118).

Based on how women in western Nigeria receive their identities as given in the movies, Azeez, (2010)'s study on Audience perception of portrayals of women in Nigerian home video films, found a marked difference in ways women and men interpret the meanings embedded in the representations of women, which she argues is related to the way each group, understands, identifies or dis-identifies with the meanings of women's images in films. She also found that men tend not to see anything significantly wrong with the representations of women in the films but rather adopt dominant or preferred readings of their meanings, accept the representations in the films as the reality of Nigerian women and wish such to continue unmodified for the reinforcement of Nigerian culture. Women, as she also found, contrarily receive these portrayals

as negative, irritating, ideological and derogatory, thereby perceiving the Nigerian films, as a form of culture industry, devoted to women's domination.

One significant point which Azeez (2010)'s findings identify is that, although Nigerian films are ideological apparatuses or devices that perpetuate the images, myths, ideas, concepts or discourses that fix women in negative/lower positions, viewers might actually find pleasure in what comes across to them in a film, but still know that such is a representation and not reality.

Similar with Azeez (2010)'s findings, Amobi (2013) looked at how female Nollywood actors, students and lecturers of the university of lagos and Ibadan, make sense of the sexist representations of women in Nollywood films and if and how their social contexts shape their interpretations. She employed a combination of focus group and in-depth interview but found that Nigerian female audiences aggressively demystify the representations of women in Nigerian home video films. Although the representations of women in these films, appear to exercise discursive power through their propensity to present dominant gender subjectivity and or gender positions with which women are supposed to identify, women audiences have significant power to negotiate with or distance themselves from these readings created in films (Azeez, 2010, p. 201). Perhaps, this is an obvious indication that these women could possibly rework these imbedded meanings, to effect changes in their negative representations.

Meanwhile, Amobi (2013) further argues that the ability of the female audiences to interpret these films may not necessarily translate to changes in neither the continued stereotypical depictions of women nor the society's image of the woman. This therefore points at both the media and the society to objectively address these divergences; especially the Nollywood films at constructing and redesigning the feminine roles in these movies. For instance, building the Nigerian women's capacity via Nollywood movies, on significant themes like 'leadership', 'education' and 'entrepreneurship', could help dilute the belligerence on ways they receive their identities.

Taking into account, the research elements addressed by these reception studies, whereas the two studies were conducted only in Oyo and Lagos states of the Western Nigeria, need for the representation of the south eastern women, becomes necessary for obvious reasons. One of such

is the preponderance of patriarchal cultural ideologies among these Igbo speaking states in Nigeria and the greater number of female audiences domiciled in the region.

Although these reception studies show women's rejection of their portrayals, their perception of partner violence in a rural Igbo community by Ilika (2005) found a contradiction. The sampled women generally condone and are complacent with intimate partner violence, perceiving it as a cultural and religious norm. From his findings, women felt that reprimands, beating and forced sex, which affect their physical, mental and reproductive well-being are normal in marriage. They neither supported divorce nor reporting such cases to the police but rather prefer reporting to family members, with the belief that exposing their marriage is socially undesirable. Women, according to the study are more concerned about their children, societal stigmatization and several others.

Therefore, the rural women who form an integral part of this present study were reported in Ilika (2005)'s study as accepting the partner violence as cultural and should not be discussed outside the home. The need for these rural women who accept their denigration as part of culture is in this present study applauded for more absolute reception of these films by these women.

Similar with Ilika (2005)'s finding, Oyediran & Abanihe (2003)'s study on the perception of Nigerian women on domestic violence, found a large percentage of women approving that a man is justified in beating or hitting his wife. Also in the study, though women suffer untold violence in families, at work, in the wider community and are vulnerable to life threatening conditions, they still consent to wife beating. It is also not odd to find women, within the South eastern Nigeria, never disclosing their marital conflicts, thereby paving the way for the hegemonic-subservient order already thriving in most communities. Given the widespread of Nollywood movies especially within the Igbo speaking states of south eastern Nigeria, where hegemonic cultural ideology could redefine the reception of these stereotypical movies by women, their normalization of wife beating and domestic violence, calls for more inquiry into the very different ways they interpret such movies identifying them.

Although Azeez (2010) argued that female audiences should be empowered not only to reject but to fight against representations in films that naturalize sexist discourses against them, the power of the media at actuating this should not be ignored.

Therefore in this study we argue, since women form a greater part of performers and producers of Nollywood films, there ought to be some of balance in the roles assigned to men and women in the movies.

Given also the existing inconsistency on how these women identify themselves, and with the ever increasing influence of their dynamic characteristics, the environment, socio cultural backgrounds and the media, this study inquires the extent these contributory factors bias their reception of their identities and how.

REVIEW OF OTHER STUDIES

The Nigerian film industry Nollywood, rated as the second world's most productive film industry, after India's Bollywood and ahead of America's Hollywood (UN News Center, 2009), has in recent times become a popular source of entertainment for the Nigerian women. This increasing popularity as argued has to do with the declining popularity of cinemas (Uchegbu, 1992, p. 48), the cheap nature, and the multiple viewing sources of the home videos. Although all media genres are guilty of perpetuating gender disparities, and encouraging the 'male gaze' several studies argue that gender role construction in Nollywood increasingly exalt patriarchy to the detriment of Nigerian women (see Okunna, 1996; Ezeigbo, 1996; Azanu, 2012; Azeez, 2010; Garitano, 2008). As indicated by Media Awareness Network (2008), entertainment media outlets often portray women in negative ways or as having more negative qualities than their male counterparts. Hence, the Nigerian movie industry is seen as not only pandering to stereotypes but also reinforces existing stereotypes, which could possibly affect the women's reception of their identities and ways other groups of people identify women. What these textual and discourse analysis seem to disregard is the receivers' reception of these movies, given also their ability to redefine and negotiate their portrayals, amidst the perceived all powerful effect the movies could have on them. This scenario is aptly captured by McQuails (2010);

Media have marginalized women in the public sphere; Media purvey stereotypes of femininity and masculinity; Production and content of media are gendered; Reception of media is gendered; Female perspective offers alternative criteria of quality; the personal is political and; Media offer positive and supportive as well as negative role models. (P. 123)

This assertion aptly declares that although the media wield such an enormous power as to convey and construct gender stereotypes with both supportive and negative role models, receivers could

decode media portrayals differently based on their individual characteristics, such as level of exposure, gender, social cultural backgrounds. This is premised on the fact that although receivers could actively negotiate the readings imbedded in Nollywood films, audience reception of their identities could be prejudiced, as these portrayals shape public opinion and attitudes towards women; undermines society's confidence in them and limits them to a very narrow place within the society. According to Media Awareness Network (2008) female stereotyping in the media can narrow the perception of what women can do and not do and shape men and children's view of women. It is also instructive to note that Nollywood movies, going by reports from available literature, remain one of the most applauded entertainment media, that encompasses visuals, sound, drama etc, to capture and sustains the audience interests.

However, women within the south eastern Nigeria were chosen because of the preponderance of certain cultural and ideological influences on the identities of women, despite their characteristics and contributions to the family and society in general. Arguably, a typical south eastern woman is hardworking, enduring, dogged, resilient, domestic, and cherishes her children much more than her husband; she is predominantly known for commerce and agriculture, though grossly at subsistence level (Madumer, 2014, p. 3). While the male populace migrate in their numbers to urban cities and towns for education, trade and commerce, women, are predominantly left back home to engage in agriculture. Although these women are largely productive, greater percentage remains poor, with their education considered as wastes (Madumer, 2014, p. 3). The exact identity of a Nigerian woman therefore is one who in spite of other demands of motherhood, builds her home; counsels and supports her household; raises her children and pursues her career.

In spite of these gaps, vast majority of Nigerian agricultural workforce is comprised of women. Although these women mainly engage in agriculture, mechanized facilities for its production are often inaccessible. For instance, A comparison of agricultural census data for land ownership distribution in Nigeria, conducted by 'Core Welfare Indicators Survey' in 2006 shows that only 10.6% of rural women in South Eastern Nigeria have access to land, as against 38.1 for males. Although the Strategic Objective 55 of the Beijing Platform of Action advocates systematic improvement in the productive capacities of women, agitations for women empowerment,

emancipation and its sustainability in Nigeria needs a review of the discriminatory laws of succession and property inheritance (Madumer, 2014, p. 3).

Therefore, the continued existence of cultural practices that inhibit the exercise of Women's rights is not completely the consequence of non availability of statutory provisions to checkmate operations of such but failure of enforcement of available laws, treaties, and lack of proper understanding of the systemic nature of these disparities.... (Madumer, 2014, p. 5). Apart from women constituting between 60 and 79 percent of Nigeria's rural workforce, around 54 million out of the Nigeria's 78 million women population live in the rural areas and depend on farming for survival (Madumer, 2014, p. 4).

It is also worthy of note that societal denials of the women's right of inheritance and means of livelihood had made some women to ultimately rely on male members of the family for survival. Even, despite societal comparative measure of the men and women's achievements, it is often disregarded that these women's careers are sacrificed for domesticity. For instance, most educated women abandon their paid jobs to join their husbands to become mere housewives and babysitters, and when the desired male children seem not to be forth coming, bulks of the blame fall on the woman. Presently in most south eastern communities, many titled men, marry several wives who endanger their lives having many births, while seeking the male children.

THEORIES: THE CULTIVATION AND DECONSTRUCTION

This study subscribes to the Cultivation and the Deconstruction theories. The Cultivation is basically employed to determine how and whether the women accept their identities as given in Nollywood videos. Since 'cultivation' explains that the more time a person spends watching television, (of all kinds) the more he or she will adopt the predominant outlook of the world, expressed on the medium (McQuail, 2010, p. 496), Nigerian women, exposed to gender based Nollywood movies, could cultivate or show increasing favourable divergence of perceptions of reality towards the themes and concepts in those films. Therefore with repeated negative representation of women in Nollywood videos, likelihood exists for a gradual and cumulative attitude formation by these female audiences.

To address the women's possible rejection of their identities, Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction Theory (1930), comes into play. This posits that media texts are subjected to new methods of

analysis which reveal hidden layers of meaning aimed to locate the attribution and construction of meanings derived from media texts. Since media messages generally are always open and 'polysemic' and are interpreted according to the context and culture of receivers, Derrida reconsidered the power of the audience in giving underlying meanings to all forms of media messages and used the term 'deconstruction' to convey his point. To deconstruct a text, according to him, is to consider separately the individual parts which were assembled during the production of texts. Downes & Miller (2000, p. 52) explained that the point of creating a film narrative is to offer audiences a piece of work where the 'joins' are invisible and where the methods of making the text do not interfere with the audience reception and enjoyment of the narrative. Hence, to deconstruct a text is to attempt to undo, or see behind the work of media producers. (Downes & Miller; 2005, p. 52). 'Deconstruction', as used in this study, therefore involves the Nigerian women's ability to identify the stereotypes and understand the differences between their portrayals and their true identities.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a mixed research of both quantitative and qualitative designs involving the 'survey', and 'focus group discussion'. Survey was used to gauge the women's readings and definitions of their identities in Nollywood videos, and how and in what ways their socio cultural backgrounds bias their cognitions. Focus Group help gain insights into the women's readings of their acceptance or otherwise of these portrayals and how. The study population is all Nigerian women in south east, comprised of a total of 8,210,604, as at the 2006 Nigerian population census. With survey, multi stage sampling technique was employed, which involves a series of random sampling processes at various levels of the population. For instance, the south east has a total of five states, and three of which were randomly selected - Anambra, Enugu and Imo, with a total of nine (9) local government areas randomly selected, to represent each of the senatorial zones in the selected states. It was afterwards decided that for each of the selected towns, a minimum of five villages is chosen unless the town is not up to five villages. For the purpose of balance, a total of 133 respondents were chosen to represent each of the states with a minimum of 44 women chosen for each town, to invariably represent both the chosen local government areas and the senatorial zones. This decision is illustrated beneath;

Table 1
Selected Sample of communities and respondents

Senatorial Zones	Local government Areas	Communities	No of Respondents	Type of community	Total
Enugu West	Awgu	Ihe	45	Urban	133
Enugu East	Nkanu West	Ozara	44	Rural	
Enugu North	Nsukka	Achalla Nsukka	44	Urban	
Orlu	Njaba	Umuaka	44	Rural	133
Owerri	Ahiazu Mbaise	Amuzi	45	Urban	
Okigwe	Okigwe North	Ihube	44	Rural	
Anambra Central	Awka South	Awka	45	Urban	133
Anambra North	Ayamelum	Umuelum	44	Rural	
Anambra South	Nnewi North	Nnewi	44	Urban	
		Total	399		399

A sample size of 399 was also drawn, looking at different samples prescribed by Meyer (1973) for population that range from 1000 to infinity at 95% confidence level and Taro Yamane’s formula for sample size determination. To further select a subset for the ‘focus group’, given that only a few number of participants are required, six (6) women were selected from each state, for the three sessions of discussions conducted in the three states, making a total of eighteen (18) women for the whole discussion.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

A total of 399 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents with 133 copies estimated for each selected state (Anambra, Enugu and Imo) in southeast. Out of the 133 distributed to respondents in Anambra, only 129 were returned. At Imo State, 130 were returned out of 133 distributed copies, while 131 were returned, out of 133 copies administered in Enugu. Therefore, a total of 390 copies of the questionnaire were returned representing 98% return rate.

**THE QUANTITATIVE DATA: SURVEY
 WOMEN’S LEVEL OF EXPOSURE TO GENDER BASED MOVIES**

Table 2
Exposure and Identifications of Stereotypes

Exposure to gender based Nollywood movies	Identifications of gender stereotypes		TOTAL
	Yes	No	

Yes	94%	6%	100%
No	0%	0%	0%
TOTAL	(N=336)	(N=24)	390

Similar with findings from past reception studies, this study found that despite the women’s wholistic exposure to gender based movies, 94% of them, identified the gendered movies as follows: *The bachelor’s heart; Jealous Husband; Silence of the gods; The king is mine; The missing child; Blackmail; Beloved; The maidens; Sincerity; Sinful game; Deepest of dreams; The celebrity; Silent scandals; The hour of grace* and several others. Nearly two third of the women (59%), further itemized the key stereotypes manifest in the movies as follows; ‘*Women as the males property*’ portrayed in the movie, ‘*Billionaires’ club*’ ‘*Silence of the gods*’, ‘*The hour of grace*’ and ‘*The king is mine*’; ‘*Women as sex objects*’ portrayed in ‘*The maidens*’, ‘*Corporate maid*’, ‘*Caught in the act*’, ‘*Girls cot*’, ‘*the prostitute*’ ‘*the celebrity*’ ‘*the gallant babes*’ ‘*Desperate billionaire*’, ‘*100% secret*’ and ‘*Beyonce, the president’s daughter*’ etc

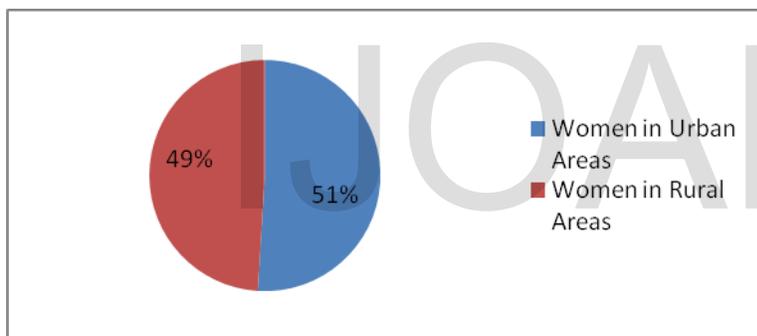


Figure 1: Distribution of women in Urban and Rural Areas

Given the perceived impact the environment and socio cultural backgrounds of these women could have on how they their identities, this study, with an even distribution of women in both the urban and rural communities as illustrated in the above figure, found some of these women who domicile at the urban communities falling within the educated ones more able to identify and debunked the gender stereotypes in the movies. This group offered more active responses challenging the reinforcement of their denigration in the movies, whereas those within the rural communities were more undaunted.

Table 3

Women’s Academic Qualifications and Exposure to the Movies: A Cross Tabulation

	Respondents’ Academic Qualifications	Exposure to Nollywood movies
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FSLC	18%	18%
WASSCE/its equivalent	4%	4%
Diploma/ OND	36%	36%
HND, B.Sc and above	42%	42%
Total	100% (N=390)	100% (N=390)

Apart from the women’s wide exposure to these films, table 3 above presents the variation between their level of exposure and their academic qualifications. It is also found that those with HND, B.Sc and higher qualifications were more exposed to Nollywood movies than those with lower qualifications. This illustrates that majority, representing nearly a half of the women (42%) hold higher degrees and are therefore more likely to decode the effects the predisposed negative stereotypes in Nollywood movies could have on women especially the younger ones. These findings concur with Azeez (2010)’s observation that while men and less educated women interpret the representations in conformist manner, having the preferred meanings of the ideological meanings embedded in the representation, educated women interpret the representations ‘oppositionally’ and ‘agitatively’.

Table 4
Respondents’ Marital Status and Exposure to Gender Based Movies: A Cross Tabulation

	Respondents’ marital status	Exposure to Nollywood movies
Single	28%	18%
Married	72%	96%
TOTAL	100% (N=390)	100% (N=390)

The variation between the women’s marital status and exposure to the movies was further presented in the above table, targeted to showcase the difference between the respondents’ marital status and their exposure to Nollywood movies. The table thus demonstrates that married ones, representing more than two thirds of the women (72%), were more exposed to the movies as against the single women, thereby revealing the preponderance of gender based movies among the married respondents who hold higher degrees.

Table 5
Women’s Preferred Period of Watching the Films and Quantities Being Watched Per Week

Total number of movies per week	Morning	Afternoon	Nights	All the times	Total
1-5	0	0	7% (N=8)	100% (N=210)	56% (N=218)
6-10	0	0	83% (N=100)	0	26% (N=100)
11 and Above	0	100% (60)	10% (N=12)	0	18% (N=72)
Total	(N=0)	100% (N=60)	100% (N=120)	100% (N=210)	100% (N=390)

The study also found as demonstrated in the above table, that majority of the women predominantly watch 1-5 movies at all times on daily basis, but mainly at ‘nights’. While the few others watch from 6 films and above, still within similar periods. Since this study also intends to establish the reasons behind the women’s preferred periods of watching the movies, the women via an open ended question identified the reasons as:

- Their nature of work;
- Other daily engagements and
- Constraints of time

An open ended question was further applied to elicit the key factors hampering their rate of exposure to the movies and few of them who answered, identified the factors to include:

- Their choice of movies, judging by the titles and characters in the movies and;
- The affinity for others (Children and male audiences) who watch the movies with them to prefer other contents or considered the movie(s) uninteresting

Table 6
The Women’s Age Group and Academic Qualifications: A Cross Tabulation

	FSLC	WASSCE/ ITS EQUIVALENT	Diploma/ OND	HND, B.Sc And Above	TOTAL
18- 25	100%	100%	14%	0	105
26- 35	0	0	86%	23%	159
36 And Above	0	0	0	77%	126
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	390

	(N=69)	(N=16)	(N=142)	(N=163)	
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Above crosstab of the women’s age with academic qualifications, intends to show the variation between the younger and the older women’s academic qualification, as a factor that could affect their reception. This table shows that the women within the age range 26 years and above mainly hold HND, B.Sc and above while those within the age of 18- 25 possessed lower qualifications. Therefore, those within the age of 26 and more are adjudged more likely to identify their identities as given in the movies.

WOMEN’S PERCEPTION AND DISPOSITIONS

Responses from survey and Focus group show that although Nollywood producers had not been fairly representing women, the female Nollywood performers ought to react against their negative portrayal of their identities in the movies. Among the women’s key argument however is that these debasement could be reduced when societies, inclusive of women, commence to shun these vices against women. Against this backdrop, slightly above one third (42%) of the women, hold the view that Nollywood movies are mainly profit oriented and had overlooked the impact of Nollywood portrayals on children, especially the girl child.

RESPONSES AND WAYS THE WOMEN ARE AFFECTED

Table 7
Impacts of the Portrayals on Women

	Imbibe the portrayed ideals?	Avoid certain positions?	Abandoned certain professions?	Chose certain careers?	Discouraged from certain pursuits?	Affect relations with fellow women?	Affect the views they share about themselves
Yes	0	0	0	0	0	0	8%
No	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	92%
TOTAL	100% (N=390)	100% (N=390)	100% (N=390)	100% (N=390)	100% (N=390)	100% (N=390)	100% (N=390)

This table presents that the women never imbibed ideals, concepts, attitudes or instincts, as portrayed in the movies, which infers that their thoughts, beliefs and dispositions were never influenced by Nollywood portrayals. Although they objected to have avoided certain positions, deserted any career, profession or vocation owing to Nollywood debasement, only 8 percent of them admitted that nollywood portrayals affect the ways they identify themselves and fellow women. It is also worthy of note that such films neither affect their career choices nor their aspired vocations.

Table 8
Rank Order of the Women's Dispositions

	Nollywood movies: gender sensitive?	Nollywood movies: gender based?	Nollywood made me admit certain female stereotypes	Accept the portrayals given to women?	Image of women being damaged?	Could Nollywood be used to salvage the image?
Strongly Agree	0	65%	0	0	55%	62%
Agree	9%	31%	0	0	39%	29%
Strongly disagree	45%	0	70%	71%	4%	7%
Disagree	33%	0	24%	29%	0	0
Undecided	13%	4%	6%	0	2	2
TOTAL	100% (N=390)	100% (N=390)	100% (N=390)	100% (N=390)	100% (N=390)	100% (N=390)

Table 8 above equally presents that only 9 percent of the women agreed that Nollywood movies are gender sensitive, while majority at over 45 and 33 percent respectively, both 'disagreed' and 'strongly disagreed' to it, persisting that Nollywood movies are predominantly gender based. This is evident as majority, at 65 and 31 percents, 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed' to that. As per their affinity to accept and normalize the women stereotypes, 70 percent of them strongly disagreed but rather insisted that Nigerian films had severely damaged the image of Nigerian women.

Table 9
Women's Level of Acceptance or Otherwise

	Nollywood: truly reflecting the women's image?	Negatively Portraying women?	Comfortable with the portrayals?	Rate of the portrayals
Yes	25%	100%	0	Realistic (31%)
No	75%	0	100%	Unrealistic (69%)
TOTAL	100% (N=390)	100% (N=390)	100% (N=390)	100% (N=390)

This table illustrates that while majority of the women at 75 percent hold the view that Nollywood movies do not truly reflect the image of the Nigerian women, only 25 percent of them hold otherwise. The table further exposed that women view their portrayals in the movies as absolutely on the negative sides, which implies that they perceive the portrayals as downgrading their worth as well as their images. The researcher still inquired whether they were comfortable with them but results show they were absolutely not. It was also apparent that the respondents perceive their representations in the movies to be largely on negative sides, and thus

objected to them. Although some agreed that the portrayals were sometimes 'real' because some storylines were true life occurrences, 69 percent of them still insist that gender based portrayals in the movies are mostly unrealistic.

THE QUALITATIVE DATA: FOCUS GROUP

Similar with results from the survey, participants in this discussion are exposed to gender based Nollywood movies but with divergent views as per their rationale and rate of exposure.

***Respondent 3:** Apart from helping me escape boredom, anxiety and worries, I enjoy watching talented female actors like 'Mercy Johnson', 'Ini Edo' 'Tonto Dike' and 'Patience Ozokwor'.*

***Respondent 6:** I watch the ones I consider exceedingly educating, laden with lessons to be imparted on people of which I recommend for my children and friends. Sometimes these movies do remind of the past. I could recall in one of the films where a princess was not permitted to marry the man of her dream and I remember then when suitors would come, and as a princess, my parents would rather be susceptible to know who the person is, his parents and explains why you are either permitted to be with him or not....*

***Respondent 1:** I think I agree with her because there was this film, 'my school mother' where students in secondary school hostel would rather remain unserious with their studies, sneak out of the dormitory to visit their boyfriends and initiated female cultism where they practiced abortion and lesbianism, all under the precincts of 'school mother' and 'daughter'. Then I recalled some of my experiences then in the hostel during my secondary school days. As per when I usually watch the films, it is mainly at leisure because I am a very busy person, working with a private firm where we sometimes even work on weekends.*

***Respondent 2:** Although we have a satellite dish, connected to the 'African Magic' channel, I seldom watch the films because I recognize that some of the movies' storylines are almost very similar; hence repeating issues and themes we already are very familiar with.*

Hence, while some of these participants uphold varied reasons either rousing or dampening their rate of exposure, some insist that the films regularly replicate parallel themes and believed that it offers a platform to inculcate positive morals especially on children and the younger women. Their identification of gender stereotypes in Nollywood portrayals was further disclosed:

***Respondent 3:** I think the movies are basically gender based because hardly will you watch a film without observing certain gender disparities in there which are habitually against women. This does not infer that the movies do not teach good lessons. I believe that viewers are left to either accept or take their own stands.*

Respondent 3: *I could recall in the movie, ‘Beyonce: the president’s daughter’, when Raj met Ciara, the lady who saved his life, when attacked by gunmen, he first asked whether she was ‘a call girl’. ‘Beyonce’ almost lost, admiring Raj at a supermarket, forwardly approached and told him she liked his perfume, introduced herself as president Bill’s daughter, after declaring her interests to become his friend, then offered to pay his bills, before handing over her phone number. Throughout the movie, she always openly expressed her likeness for Raj, describing him as ‘cute’, and ‘handsome’. While Raj preferred the relationship at the surface, ‘Beyonce’ was mean, pushing it, whereas the other girl, Ciara, had already given her consent to Raj’s marriage proposal. Whilst Beyonce was desperate for Raj, he was declaring his love for ‘Ciara’, all the while Raj was juggling the two women. Nollywood movie producers usually assign women the role of desperately chasing the men. Imagine the movie, ‘the king is mine’ where two beautiful and polished ladies struggle over who becomes the king’s wife.*

The excerpt above is analogous to Ewrierhoma (2008)’s finding that most images found in films and videos are masculinist, patriarchal and had presented audiences with objectified images of femininity. Apart from the women’s recognition of Nollywood movies as gender based, the study revealed that they possess the power to decode the portrayals differently and therefore could take distance themselves from the gender based themes and concepts in the movies:

EFFECTS OF THE MOVIES ON WOMEN

Respondent 2: *Sometimes, my mood change especially when I watch tragic and violent scenes like fighting, killing or rape but I do not get deeply affected because I do not accept everything I watch.*

Respondent 4: *certain scenes could be unrealistic. For instance in ‘Money Love’, the central character, a supposed village girl, were not able to deliver the assent of the setting where the film was believed to be cast but was rather so polished and spoke more like a civilized girl.*

Respondent 15: *I was once affected by the movie, ‘silence of the gods’ the king showered more love on ‘Nkoli’, the third wife, merely because she had a male child. Then I recalled my ordeal in my husband’s house when I had three daughters without a son but due to religion, my husband refused another wife, their family arranged for him. It was after watching the movie that I reconsidered adopting a male child but my husband disagreed.*

This excerpt also shows that despite the women’s emotional involvement in the films, they do not lose their abilities to reject or resist their meanings. Hence, with the individual personal ability to re-interpret the meanings in the representation of women in Nigerian films, women are able to take their ideological indoctrination with a “dose of salt” (Azeez, 2010).

RECALL OF GENDER BASED MOVIES

This study further examined the women's recall rate of gender based movies in order to establish the level of their perceived literacy of gender stereotypes portrayed therein. The discussion exposed series of Nollywood movies identified by the women to be gender based, with their themes segmented, as shown underneath.

ASSUMED 'INFERIOR'

Respondent 9: *I have watched 'the Bachelor's heart', where 'Frank' played by Kenneth Okonkwo, had affinity for uncivilized ladies, perceiving them as the 'upright' and 'submissive' as against the educated and exposed city girls. He met Kadeisha (Ejine Okoroafor), an orange seller and fell for her but their affair came to an abrupt halt when she stole from his house despite his generosity. Frank's father asked why he never wanted a professional woman. He replied, "Papa not me I don't want two masters in the house, two captains in a ship, two husbands in a house. I give laws she gives orders. Nooo! I want a wife not an associate."*

It is apparent here that in as much as the female actor in this very movie was previously given as 'uncivilized' 'uneducated', 'poor', anticipated as the 'virtues wife', and neither 'wide' nor 'spoilt', yet she stole from her fiancé. What a contradiction? It is indeed appalling that the educated women are primarily assumed 'unfit' to be married due to their predisposed openness and capability to withstand oppose certain gender subjugations against her. This portrayal erroneously implies that single ladies expecting husbands should rather remain dependent minded, naïve, unspoken, abandon influential posts, even their studies. The negative portrayal of women in this very was more prevalent as 'Kadeisha' the assumed 'worthy bride', stole from the fiancé's house and escaped.

SEX OBJECT

Respondent 12: *I have watched 'The Maidens', where the King played by John Dumelo, with no respect for his wife (Rita Dominic), took to sleeping with the palace maidens. He impregnated one and was pleased that she delivered a baby boy. Of course there was no regard for the wife because she had a daughter and not a son, whose troubles were worsened when the pregnant maiden delivered a baby boy.*

Respondent 11: *It was 'Mercy Johnson', in the movie, 'The Corporate maid' she played Miss Rose, an English maid who had a lesbian affair with the lady of the house (Oge Okoye); slept with the husband (Van Vicker) and topped it off by sleeping with the house cook (Charles Unoji) in her quarters. The film is apparently gender biased and negatively portrayed the female character.*

Respondent 16: *I have watched 'The Jealous Husband' where Debbie (Uche Jombo) and her two friends, Nancy (Uche Nnanna) and Oluchi (Ruby Orjiakor) were prostitutes (runs girls) on campus which they usually arrange through their agents. Debbie's desperation to make money for her sick father's hospital bills also drove her to clubs searching for more clients. Although she settled down with one of them, the man who could not let go of her past, always suspecting her of infidelity, believing she still meets her customers.*

Respondent 17: *I would mention the 'sinful game' where Jeanette's mother treated their home like a whore house as men passed in and out, which led to her death after being infected with deadly diseases, leaving Jeanette 'a poor orphan'. Due to financial challenges, the cycle persisted as Jeanette depended on prostitution, believing she had no other means of survival.*

Respondent 12: *In the movie 'paulicap & perpetual' Mabel had always caught her husband at hotels with different ladies but she was instead embarrassed by her womanizing husband. If it were a woman who was caught, the reverse would have been the case.*

These findings echo the legitimacy within the African cultural contexts for a man to be polygamous and marry as many wives as possible, which terribly adds to women's subjugations. women identities were also given as 'wayward', 'unfaithful' and 'thieves', which undisputedly aligns with the contention that the patriarchal society sets the parameters for women's structurally unequal position by tacitly condoning gender-differential terms in inheritance rights and legal adulthood, condoning domestic and sexual violence and sanctioning differential wages for equal or comparable work. (Makama, 2013, p. 3). Although women had over time been subjugated in both the society and movies, sometimes they partake in their own subjugation which dignifies and eulogizes the male folks. Just as highlighted by participants, women in some of the movies were desperate chase for men believed to be utterly their source of happiness, sequel to the hegemonic traditional African culture were they are also regarded as objects of sex and procreation.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

With an even distribution of women in both the urban and rural communities, and considering effect the environment and socio cultural backgrounds of these women could have on how they receive their identities, this study found some of these women who domicile at the urban communities falling within the educated ones more able to identify and debunk the gender stereotypes in the movies, unlike those within the rural communities, who seem undaunted.

In terms of individual characteristics, It is also interesting to find those with HND, B.Sc and higher qualifications more exposed to Nollywood movies than those with lower qualifications, implying that educational qualifications of these women could affect their level exposure, how they receive their identities and could also determine the nature and level of effects these movies could have on them.

It was found that majority of the women predominantly watch 1-5 movies at all times on daily basis, but mainly at 'nights'. The women via an open ended question identified the reasons as: the women's nature of work; other daily engagements and time constrains. The key factors hampering their rate of exposure to the movies, as couched via an open ended question also include: their choice of movies and affinity for others (Children and male audiences) who watch the movies with them to prefer other contents or perhaps consider the movie(s) uninteresting. It is also significant to find the married ones more exposed to the movies than the single women, thereby validating the preponderance of gender based movies among the married respondents with higher degrees, who represent the majority of south eastern region.

Findings show that the women are exposed to the films, thus demonstrating the prevalence of such movies among them. The films include: *bachelor's heart; Jealous husband; Silence of the gods; The king is mine; The missing child; Blackmail; Beloved; The maidens; Sincerity; Sinful game; Deepest of dreams; The celebrity; Silent scandals; The hour of grace* and several others. Although the women contravened with such portrayals, 94 percent of them identified that the movies project the societal hegemony, enlisting the gender stereotypes to comprise: '**Women as the males property**' portrayed in the movie, *Billionaires' Club*, '*Silence of the gods*', '*The hour of grace*' and '*The king is mine*'; '**Women as sex objects**' portrayed in '*The maidens*', '*Corporate maid*', '*Caught in the act*', '*Girls cot*', '*The prostitute*' '*The celebrity*' and '*The gallant babes*'; etc. It is also interesting that women actively identified the stereotypes but never accepted them as reality.

What remained prevalent in this study is that these south eastern women actively distanced themselves from the portrayals as given in movies. In congruent with results generated via 'survey' and 'focus group', this study concludes that amidst the audience rejection of their identities as given in Nollywood films, the media should truly identify these women and further

examine the effect the messages they produce could have on receivers and then motivate these women through a more balanced representation.

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