

Nigerian Film Audience's Perception of Homosexuality

Ogboh Mary Nkemdilim

Department of Mass Communication
Dominican University, Ibadan, Nigeria
Email: marynkemdilim89@gmail.com

Abstract

Homosexuality has been regarded as un-African and as an abomination. It is generally regarded as an element of Western culture that has been transported into Africa. The Nigerian constitution prohibits and criminalizes homosexuality in all its forms. However, homosexuality has been infused in films, including children's cartoons. These homosexuality films which challenge societal mores and values have continued to be mainstreamed in the Nigeria media and cyberspace. This article seeks to determine whether these mainstreamed films have the potential to change the people's perception and attitude towards homosexuality. Therefore, it seeks to first, determine the audiences' perception of homosexuality in films; and, second, ascertain the extent these films could change opinions about homosexuality. To do this, two advocacy films – *Hell or High Water* (dir. Asurf Oluseyi Amuwa, 2017) and *We Don't Live Here Anymore* (dir. Tope Oshin, 2018) – were randomly selected for investigation. Two hundred copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents before and after their exposure to the two selected films to garner information about their perception of homosexuality. Findings showed that even though preformed opinions about homosexuality, their exposure to the films under study did not alter their preformed opinions. These findings showed that respondents vehemently condemn and reject the act of homosexuality. The conclusion reached is that although Nigerians are open to Western culture, homosexuality remains an aberration and will for a long time be discriminated against. The article recommends that since homosexuality cannot be eradicated, energy should be expended towards curbing homophobic actions.

Keywords: Homosexuality, un-African, Perception, Preformed, Nigerian film audience, Nollywood.

Introduction

The medium of film, like every other creative art, cannot be considered in isolation from its message. The medium is the message (McLuhan, 1964) and because the medium is the message, there is need to explore the audience's perception of the message. The implication of this is to critically explore the film medium and also explore its audience. People see film with a preformed opinion. The prejudices held by individuals, invariably form their perception of a given film. The interaction and reaction of the audience to the message are influenced by a plurality of factors which include the individual's bias: political, technological, social and religious; their diverse experience and psychological make-up. The foremost concern of this study is to examine film experience and the audience's reaction to the homosexuality content in film. Film is an aesthetic medium that appeals to the viewer's senses and judgment. We spend a reasonable amount of time watching film. We do this, most times in the comfort of the home. This implies we experience film in time and space. The manner every member of the film audience relates to a film is different from the way the other member does. This could also hinge on the philosophy of their world. That is, their reservations on a particular subject.

Film is a powerful vehicle for culture, education, entertainment and propaganda. Filmmakers are known to tell the story of the happenings in society, including the controversial ones. Thus, film is a reflection of the society. It is unarguable that film draws its contents from the society and the society in turn learns from the medium – they are symbiotic in nature. This confirms John Culkin's quote – an idea he got from McLuhan's teachings – that "we become what we behold. We shape our tools and then our tools shape us" (1967). However, as cognitive beings, we do not just sit in front of the screen as the images are revealed to us, we go to film full of expectations – expectations created by publicity, reviews, genre and previously viewed films from same filmmaker. More so, the experiences of the film do not end when the film ends. This owes its possibility to selective retention of the perception process. Folarin (1998) argues that we may not have total recall of our film experience but we definitely recall the ones favourable to us. It is on this premise that we tend to relive these experiences in daily activities. This experience reflects in actions and vocabulary. These activities are at once "spontaneous, reflective and vicarious"

(Ekwuazi, 2018, p.20), resulting from a variety of perceptible and imperceptible experiences while watching a film. As he puts it, for many: the cinema experience is a waking dream, an aspiration, and an avenue of entertainment, and pleasure. It is an escape, as well as an awakening to life's crude realities. The point being made is this: audiences' experiences of film have, to a large extent, been redefined by Nollywood (Ekwuazi, 2018).

So much emotion is expended while seeing a film. Preconceived opinions and ideologies formed over time based on religious, political and cultural biases contribute to the stance of every individual on any topic/film. There has been an argument that the exposure to film tends to shape people's opinion about issues. In other words, film experience is not at all a static affair but a constantly transforming one (Hanich, 2018). According to Bauman (1993) "a tremendous amount of moral thinking and feeling is espoused when seeing a film" (p.2). It is, therefore, safe to opine that to a large extent, for a good number of people, film has the potential to shape and influence their ethical attitudes, especially in contemporary culture (Bauman, 1993). For the duration of the film when audiences sit to watch a film there is some sort of encounter that either opens the audience to a new discovery or validates its held opinion: this serious change is what results in both the sense of time and the sense of place (Ekwuazi, 2018). In a society noted for poor reading culture and increasingly saturated with images, the visual rather than the written word becomes a privileged locus not just for entertainment but also a vehicle for education, socialization, values and morals. These functions allot film the potential of influencing and shaping the behavioural pattern of a person (Downing & Saxton, 2010).

For Nigerians, what is regarded as moral and ethical are mostly derived from religion, political laws and culture. These institutions help to shape our beings. Anything short of the norms and mores of our religion and culture is regarded immoral and unacceptable. It is through these structures that individuals view the world. In Nigeria, the provisions of these structures –culture, political laws and religion – condemn same sex relationship. The Nigerian constitution condemns homosexuality and its appearances. To the religious person, homosexuality is against the ordinances of God. A Christian believes: God created man as male and female and commanded him to go and multiply (Gen 1:26). Therefore, it is

understandable that a religious person sees a homosexual as a 'child of the devil.' Religious houses also preach against this 'sinful act'. They refer to it as demonic; an anomaly and an aberration to God's will for humans. To the traditionalist, it is regarded as a sacrilege for a man to have carnal knowledge of a fellow man. In fact, it is an anathema. They regard it as disrupting social order and associate it with the idea of cutting off lineages.

Countries, especially in Africa, have enacted laws that prohibit same sex relationships. The summation of their reactions boils down to the fact that homosexuality is alien to Africans and, therefore, it is un-African. These African countries believe it is a Western culture that has found its 'footing' in the continent. Lyonga (2014) cites Reddy: "in 1995, the Zimbabwean President, Robert Mugabe stood out as the reference point for African homophobia when he proclaimed that 'homosexuals were worse than pigs and dogs' and deserve no right whatsoever" (p. 97). In 1997, the Namibian President, Sam Nujoma, toeing same route as his Zimbabwean counterpart, described homosexuality as a "gruesome inhuman perversion which should be uprooted totally from society" (Phillips, 2004, p. 157). In light of this, recently, in 2009, a Malawian court sentenced a gay couple to fourteen years imprisonment for what it referred to as "lewd sexual behaviour." In Uganda, same year, anti-gay activists presented a bill before parliament proposing the death penalty for anyone convicted of homosexuality. In November 2011, there was a conviction of and a five years jail sentence given to three men convicted of homosexuality. Also, Ghana's President, John Mills reiterated that homosexuality was against Ghanaian values and he would never initiate or support any attempt to legalise it. In 2020, two Ugandan gay couples were jailed; President Museveni announced that until one of them gets pregnant they will not be released. These homophobic responses and reactions are characterized with the perception that homosexuality is alien to Africans and should not be condoned.

Prior to the emergence of advocacy films, issues of homosexuality were talked about in hushed tones and shrouded in secrecy in Nigeria. Nigeria, like many other African countries, is not receptive to homosexuality. The country has a law that provides for the punishment of anyone who engages in such criminal act. Notwithstanding, study shows that there are a handful of persons in Nigeria whose sexuality runs counter to cultural and political

mainstream. The implication of this is, for fear of condemnation, people who are attracted to the same sex live a closeted life. Thus, building on society's perception of homosexuality, Nollywood has continued to portray it, and homosexuals, in negative ways. The filmmakers have seized the opportunity of the provisions of the law to concern themselves in (mis)representing homosexual characters. However, in the bid to tell homosexual's story and to question religion and societal constructs, the narrative is changing. Stories, we already know, can be used to malign or empower a cause. Activists have seized the medium of film, which is a powerful tool, to achieve this. They produce films on homosexuality to advocate equal human rights. These films propose a situation where homosexuals and heterosexuals are given same treatment and homophobic actions are discouraged. This act is emerging to champion the art of film as a tool that challenges, questions, deconstructs and subverts normative cultural frameworks that involve homosexuality. The viability of this is the homosexuality content that has found its footing even in cartoons and animations popularly consumed by children.

In Nigeria, *Same Sex Act* provides for the prohibition and sanction of same sex marriage. To further buttress this stance, the government has gone ahead to refuse international aids from the United States of America. In spite of this, an arguable number of homosexuality contents have continued to saturate our cyber space. These contents which aim at challenging societal constructs are mainstreamed into the marketplace; and are at the disposal of the people. This work seeks to determine the extent these films have been able to change people's perception and attitude towards homosexuality. Research has been done on homosexuality and stereotypical framing of homosexual characters but not much study has been done on the audience perception of these films. This study seeks to bridge that knowledge gap. This study aims at determining the film audience's perception of homosexuality; whether or not films could change opinions about homosexuality. The objectives of the study are: (a) to ascertain the perception of homosexuality by the Nigerian audience; (b) to study the audience's perception of the ethical values in the films:- with special reference to the films under study and (c) to determine to what extent film can influence how people view homosexuality. This study will attempt to find answers to the following questions: 1. What is the film audience's

attitude to homosexuality? 2. What is the audiences' perception of homosexuality as portrayed in the films? 3. Do the films under study affect the audience's perception of homosexuals?

Theoretical Perspectives

There are quite a number of relevant theories related to the perception of homosexuality in film but this study chooses to concern itself with a few of these theories. The study adopts the agenda setting theory, cultural norms theory, perception theory and cultivation theory. The agenda setting theory is employed to examine the degree of importance of homosexuality discourse in films and to determine public opinion of homosexuality in general. The cultural norms theory is adopted to examine whether the mores and values of the society have been neglected in making homosexuality films. The perception theory is to examine how Nollywood audience perceives the portrayal of homosexuals in films. Finally, the cultivation theory is to examine whether watching homosexual films influences an individual to develop certain ideas of reality or beliefs and assumption about life. The above theories help to effectively interpret and read meaning to the films and portrayal of homosexuality in films. The researcher, with the theories in mind, will examine film as a socializing agent and investigate how film audiences become influenced by the films. Also, to examine whether there is a connection between reality and the reality created by Nollywood films.

Nigerian Film Audience

The popular saying in performing arts: no audience, no theatre is the basis on which the Nigerian film audience can be fruitfully discussed. The audience is as important as the work of art itself. The reason is not farfetched – art is intended to communicate to an audience. The audience is the consumer. The implication of this is that the audience is never separated from the work of art. It is an integral part of the whole – the film. The relevance of audience cannot be over emphasized. According to Ayakoroma (2008), “what drives and sustains genres within a given film industry is the taste of the audience” (p. 267). To further buttress his argument, he opines that “audience plays a major role in maintaining or extinguishing genres because genre membership possesses a communal identity,

giving the audience the chance to readily identify that product” (p. 269). And there is also a potential for expansion and further refinement of tastes with regard to film audience preferences because of other taste integers in the Nigerian film ecosystem (Omoera, 2019). In addressing the controversies bordering on Nollywood audience, Ekwuazi (2008) affirms that ideally “the audience not the filmmakers determines film taste” (p. 141) although in Nigeria the reverse is the case. Audience subscribes to genres that tickle their fancy. A wealth of attention is most likely paid to the audience when talking about the Nigerian video film industry. Having established the relevance of the audience, it is unarguable that the audience needs to be studied. Existing studies on the Nigerian film audience according to Ekwuazi (2014) falls into 3 groups: 1. conceptual/quasi-empirical works; 2. empirical works based on perception theories; 3 empirical studies based on theories other than perception (pp. 111-112).

The Nigerian audience is made of a plurality of people. They are not a homogenous set of people. They comprise of different ethnic groups – Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Benin, etc., which make up a film audience. Ogunsuyi (2007) in a supportive study states that there are three indigenous schools of films in Nigeria. Omoera (2008; 2014a; 2014b; 2014c) adds the fourth: the Benin film. These schools of film have their different audiences as postulated by some scholars. The Hausa audience subscribes to films with dominant theme of love like that of the Indians. They also subscribe to films that uphold their Islamic worldview (Larkin, 2002; Ekwuazi, 2007; Adamu, 2007; Johnson; 2000). The Igbo film audience subscribes more to American and English movies and the thread of their films make Igbo personalities to be seen as a victim of egotism and crass materialism (Ekwuazi, 2007; Enem, 2008). The Yoruba film audience subscribes more to magic realism and animism. The Yoruba film is influenced by the cosmos of the Yoruba people. This has greatly influenced their kind of films. As regards the Benin video-film, Omoera (2014a; 2020) asserts that it has two characteristics in relation to cultural identity: celebration of royalty, including Obaship, and ancestral rites. This assertion was drawn from an empirical study that affirmed that the Benin audience enjoys watching Benin video-films because they portray these cultural identities.

Ekwuazi (2008) in explaining the audience taste and demographics claims that the Nigerian audience is a scattered one and scattered studies had showed that: 1. this audience does not really care about film genre: it simply wants an interesting story; 2. for this audience, 'an interesting audience' is a story that touches their life space; 3. this audience does not mind sequels – but only in as much as the sequels further the story; and 4. education, income, age and sex are significant in film preferences but increasingly there is a noticeable mixture of the educated with the uneducated; the high income with the low; the young with the old; and the male with the female (p. 141). Emasealu (2008) corroboratively postulates that there are different categories of the Nigerian video film audience. His study attempts a typology of the Nollywood audience. Emasealu's position is that film appeal to audience based on some common characteristics. He grouped these audiences into: local language-based, religious, the literate or semi-literate, the 'sit-at-home, new elite viewership and émigré and non-African audience (pp. 146-147).

The most ambitious empirical study on Nollywood audience based on perception theories is the study by Animasaun (Ekwuazi, 2014, p. 112). Animasaun's study on Nollywood audience is based on the audiences' educational exposure and the sex of the audiences. These two factors form the basis of his argument of audiences' perception of movies. He argues that the academic exposure tends to direct the attention of the audience to either the physical details of the artiste or intellectual attributes of the artiste. Animasaun (2014) has noted that "audience's sex does not determine their perception of the roles of actresses in Nigeria home videos. Rather, their responses have been guided by the way the artistes have deviated from social and cultural norms" (p. 115). Okome's analogy of Nollywood's audience takes a different turn. He employs sites specificity. For him, the sites of consumption of video films produce their kind of audience. He demarcates these sites of consumption and refers it to "where social meaning meets with fictional world of the video" (p. 6). The relationship on the place of the audience in this situation is connected to the social sites where video films are consumed. Two sites are identified – "street sites and video parlour sites." These sites – which are "impromptu" spaces for seeing movies – invariably has its audiences. Okome (2007) opines that each site "presents the presence of an absence." He explains that the absence

of capital deprives consumption n of images in an orthodox space such as the cinema halls (p. 6).

Okome (2007) further asserts that there are two main kinds of “street audiences”: the street corner” and the “video parlour” audiences (p. 7). However, this is not the case, now. Things have taken a new turn. Okome’s position about these sites specific audiences is no longer attainable. Today, the closest to street corner audiences is occasional audiences. Occasional sites specific audiences are likened to situations where an organisation screens a movie to create awareness for a particular audience in a particular place. The football match parlours are the closest to the video-parlour audiences posited by Okome. The implication of all these is that these kinds of audiences have gone into extinction. However, the study revolves around the subject of homosexuality and homosexuals and whether films can change an individual’s attitude to homosexuality. With two advocacy films – *Hell or High Water* (dir. Asurf Oluseyi Amuwa, 2017) and *We Don’t Live Here Anymore* (dir. Tope Oshin, 2018) – it examines the influence and the audience perception of these films.

Data Presentation and Analysis

In order to gather data on the audiences’ perception of homosexuality, two hundred copies of questionnaire were administered. The audience congregated at an agreed venue in batches of 20 persons at a time to watch the films. This made ease for the collection of the copies of the questionnaire. Thus, all copies administered were retrieved. However, any question that was not answered or with double answers was considered invalid. There are two different set of tables representing pre-screening and post-screening response to the questionnaire. These tables are placed side by side for easy reading and comparison. Tables for pre are labeled (a) while tables for post are labeled (b). Tables, labeled (c) and (d) are tables unpacked with demographic variables. In validating the data of study, a simple percentage calculation is employed for the sake of clarity. Tables 1-12 are mainly on the demographics of the sample; it also covers their film watching habits. Tables 13-23 cover items that relate to the research questions.

$$F = \frac{\text{FREQUENCY} \times 100}{\text{TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS}}$$

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1(a): Sex of Respondents

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	Male	120	60%
2.	Female	80	40%
	Total	200	100%

Table 1(b): Sex of Respondents

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	Male	120	60%
2.	Female	80	40%
	Total	200	100%

Table 2(a): Age of Respondents

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	15-20	10	5%
2.	21-25	80	40%
3.	26-30	50	25%
4.	31-35	60	30%
5.	35 and above	-	-
	Total	200	100%

Table 2(b): Age of Respondents

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	15-20	10	5%
2.	21-25	80	40%
3.	26-30	50	25%
4.	31-35	60	30%
5.	35 and above	-	-
	Total	200	100%

Table 3(a): Marital Status

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1	Single	160	80%
2	Married	40	20%
3	Divorced/separated	-	-
	Total	200	100%

Table 3(b): Marital Status

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	Single	160	80%
2.	Married	40	20%
3.	Divorced/separated	-	-
	Total	200	100%

Table 4(a): Educational Qualification

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	O/L	30	15%
2.	Diploma	20	10%
3.	Degree	50	25%
4.	Post Graduate	100	50%
	Total	200	100%

Table 4(b): Educational Qualification

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	O/L	30	15%
2.	Diploma	20	10%
3.	Degree	50	25%
4.	Post Graduate	100	50%
	Total	200	100%

Table 5(a): Religion of Respondents

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	Muslim	50	25%
2.	Christian	150	75%
3.	Traditional	-	-
4.	Others	-	-
	Total	200	100%

Table 5(b): Religion of Respondents

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	Muslim	50	25%
2.	Christian	150	75%
3.	Traditional	-	-
4.	Others	-	-
	Total	200	100%

Table 6(a): Geopolitical Zones of Respondents

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	North Central	10	5%
2.	North East	-	-
3.	North West	-	-
4.	South East	10	5%
5.	South South	50	25%
6.	South West	130	65%
	Total	200	100%

Table 6(b): Geopolitical Zones of Respondents

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	North Central	10	5%
2.	North East	-	-
3.	North West	-	-
4.	South East	10	5%
5.	South South	50	25%
6.	South West	130	65%
	Total	200	100%

Table 7(a): How often do you watch films?

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	Very often	80	40%
2.	Often	100	50%
3.	Rarely	20	10%
	Total	200	100%

Table 7(b): How often do you watch films?

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	Very often	80	40%
2.	Often	100	50%
3.	Rarely	20	10%
	Total	200	100%

Table 8(a): Where do you watch films?

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	Cinema	-	-
2.	Home	70	35%
3.	Both	130	65%
	Total	200	100%

Table 8(b): Where do you watch films?

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	Cinema	-	-
2.	Home	70	35%
3.	Both	130	65%
	Total	200	100%

Table 9(a): Have you seen films that feature homosexuals?

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	YES	190	95%
2.	NO	10	5%
	Total	200	100%

Table 9(b): Have you seen films that feature homosexuals?

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	YES	190	95%
2.	NO	10	5%
	Total	200	100%

Table 10(a): If yes. What images of homosexuals are portrayed in the film?

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	Extremely Negative	30	15.78%
2.	Somewhat Negative	30	15.78%
3.	Neutral	100	52.63%
4.	Very Positive	30	15.78%
5.	Extremely Positive	-	-
	Total	190	84.19%

Table 10(b): If yes. What images of homosexuals are portrayed in the film?

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	Extremely Negative	30	15.78%
2.	Somewhat Negative	30	15.78%
3.	Neutral	100	52.63%
4.	Very Positive	30	15.78%
5.	Extremely Positive	-	-
	Total	190	84.19%

Table 11(a): Do you have a friend or family that is homosexual?

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	YES	80	40%
2.	NO	120	60%
	Total	200	100%

Table 11(b): Do you have a friend or family that is homosexual?

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	YES	80	40%
2.	NO	120	60%
	Total	200	100%

Table 12 (a): Have you any personal contact with homosexuals?

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	YES	90	45%
2.	NO	110	55%
	TOTAL	200	100%

Table 12(b): Have you any personal contact with homosexuals?

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	YES	90	45%
2.	NO	110	55%
	Total	200	100%

Both tables (pre and post) share common demographic characteristics, since they comprise same respondents. Demographically the number of male respondents (120; 60%) surprisingly outnumbers the female respondents (80; 40%). Most of the respondents (80; 40%) fall within the 21-25 age bracket; those within 31-35 (60; 30%) of age are slightly higher than respondents that fall in the age bracket of 26-30 (50; 25%) with the lowest percentage of the respondents being 15-20 (10; 5%). A majority of the population comprise of singles (160; 80%) while a paltry number of them are married (40; 20%). None of the respondents are neither divorced nor separated. With a small sample size, respondents are consciously selected and one of the criteria is to have some level of education. The highest educational qualification is the Post graduate with 50% respondents. The degree holders are 25%; diploma (20; 10%) making them slightly below O/L (30; 15%). There is a wide margin between Christians (150; 75%) and Muslims (50; 25%). The (Others) category is used to capture those whose religions are either that of Christianity and Islam, and who are not traditional worshippers. Unfortunately, no respondents fall into the category of Traditional and Others. Presumably, most of the respondents are from south west (130; 65%) geopolitical zone because of the study area. Leaving out (50;

25%) respondents for south south and a tie for north central (10; 5%) and south east (10; 5%). There is a healthy film culture amongst the respondents. 90% attest to often watch films. 65% of the respondents watch films both in the comfort of their homes and in the cinema while 35% respondents watch films only in the comfort of their homes. Ninety-five percent (95%) of the respondents affirm to have watched films with homosexuality content. A total number of 52.63% says the homosexual characters are portrayed in a neutral manner while 15.78% says homosexuals are portrayed extremely negative, somewhat negative and very positive, respectively. 60% respondents have friend or family that is homosexual while 40% do not have relationship with homosexuals. 45% respondents have had contacts with homosexuals

Analyses of Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the film audience’s attitude to homosexuality?

This research question has been spread through tables 13-17

Table 13(a): Nobody chooses to be a homosexual: homosexuals are born as homosexuals.

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	SA	10	5%
2.	A	20	10%
3.	SD	90	45%
4.	D	80	40%
	Total	200	100%

Table 13(b): Nobody chooses to be a homosexual: homosexuals are born as homosexuals.

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	SA	10	5%
2.	A	50	25%
3.	SD	40	20%
4.	D	100	50%
	Total	200	100%

Table 14(a): People choose to be homosexuals: to be or not to be a homosexual is a matter of choice.

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	SA	80	40%
2.	A	110	55%
3.	SD	-	-
4.	D	10	5%
	Total	200	100%

Table 14(b): People choose to be homosexuals: to be or not to be a homosexual is a matter of choice.

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	SA	60	30%
2.	A	90	45%
3.	SD	20	10%
4.	D	30	15%
	Total	200	100%

Table 15(a): People think that homosexuality is an illness that can be cured.

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	SA	30	15%
2.	A	70	35%
3.	SD	30	15%
4.	D	70	35%
	Total	200	100%

Table 15(b): People think that homosexuality is an illness that can be cured.

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	SA	10	5%
2.	A	120	60%
3.	SD	30	15%
4.	D	40	20%
	Total	200	100%

Table 15(c): (Female respondents) People think that homosexuality is an illness that can be cured.

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	SA	10	12.5%
2.	A	40	50%
3.	SD	20	25%
4.	D	10	12.5%
	Total	80	100%

Table 15(d): (Male respondents) People think that homosexuality is an illness that can be cured.

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	SA	20	16.66%
2.	A	30	25%
3.	SD	20	16.66%
4.	D	50	41.66%
	Total	120	99.86

Table 16(a): Homosexuality is a spiritual illness that can be cured spiritually.

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	SA	-	-
2.	A	20	10%
3.	SD	120	60%
4.	D	60	30%
	Total	200	100%

Table 16(b): Homosexuality is a spiritual illness that can be cured spiritually.

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	SA	-	-
2.	A	20	10%
3.	SD	80	40%
4.	D	100	50%
	Total	200	100%

Table 17(a): Homosexuals can decide to stop being homosexuals.

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	SA	60	30%
2.	A	110	55%
3.	SD	20	10%
4.	D	10	5%
	Total	200	100%

Table 17(b): Homosexuals can decide to stop being homosexuals.

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	SA	40	22.22%
2.	A	100	55.55%
3.	SD	10	5.55%
4.	D	30	16.66%
	Total	180	99.98%

Table 17(c): (Christian respondents)
Homosexuals can decide to stop being homosexuals.

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	SA	60	40%
2.	A	70	46.66%
3.	SD	20	13.33%
4.	D	-	-
	Total	150	99.99%

Table 17(d): (Muslim respondents)
Homosexuals can decide to stop being homosexuals.

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	SA	-	-
2.	A	40	80%
3.	SD	-	-
4.	D	10	20%
	Total	50	100%

The number of those respondents who think that homosexuals are not born as homosexuals (45% SD, 40% D) is more than the number of those who think otherwise (5% SA, 10% A). Interestingly, an overwhelming number of 40% and 55% of the respondents think people choose to be homosexuals while a small fraction of 5% do not subscribe to the notion. The preformed opinion of the respondents that homosexuality is an illness that can be cured (15% SA, 35% A) turns out to be a match to those who oppose to it (15% SD, 35% D). Ironically, an alarming respondent who do not subscribe to homosexuality being an illness believes that homosexuality is a spiritual illness (60% SA and 30% A) and it can be cured spiritually. Only 10% of the respondents refute this claim. The respondents who believe that homosexuals have the will power to stop being homosexuals (30% SA and 55% A) outnumber the respondents who debunk the notion (10% SD and 5% D).

The number of respondents who think that homosexuals are born homosexual (5% SA, 25% A) is less than the respondents who disagree to the notion (20% SD, 50% S). It is significant that as many as (30% SA and 40% A) think that homosexual is a matter of choice. Only (10% SD and 15%) think homosexuals is not a matter of choice. The question whether homosexuality is a spiritual illness that can be cured spiritually has paltry respondents of 10% as opposed to people who vehemently refute the claim (40% SD and 50%). 22.22% and 55.55% insists that homosexuals can decide to stop being homosexuals. 5.55% and 16.66 think it is beyond homosexuals' will power to stop being homosexuals. From the findings above, it is obvious that Nigerians are a bunch of religious fanatics. One may not be able to reconcile the fact that same people who think homosexuality is not an illness turn to say it is a spiritual sickness and should be tackled spiritually. This action and opinion speaks volumes for our faith in religion. For an average Christian in Nigeria every single thing must be tackled spiritually to earn result. Little wonder, miracle centers are in their great number in the society. People had resorted to seeking short cuts to proffering solutions. It is sickening, however, that irrespective of our religious nature; the decadence in our society remains alarming. This is who we are; a bunch of hypocrites. This is Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the audiences' perception of homosexuality as portrayed in the films?

This research question is spread through 18-21

Table 18: Homosexual content in film has the tendency of corrupting individuals

S/N		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1.	SA	50	25%
2.	A	110	55%
3.	SD	20	10%
4.	D	20	10%
	Total	200	100%

Table 19: The audience perceives homosexuality to be:

S/N		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1.	Good	10	5%
2.	Bad	110	55%
3.	Neither good nor bad	30	15%
4.	Who am I to judge	50	25%
	Total	200	100%

Table 20: What image of homosexuals do these films portray?

S/N		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1.	Normal individuals	120	60%
2.	Mentally deranged persons	20	10%
3.	Spiritually possessed persons	10	5%
4.	Undecided	50	25%
	Total	200	100%

Table 21: What message do you decipher from the films?

S/N		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1.	Be tolerant of homosexuals	140	70%
2.	Discriminate against homosexuals	10	5%
3.	Pray for homosexuals	30	15%
4.	Don't know	20	10%
	Total	200	100%

25% of respondents strongly agree, 55% agree, 10% strongly disagree and 10% disagree that homosexual content in film has the tendency of corrupting individuals. Most of the respondents (55%) perceive homosexuality to be bad, 5% perceive it to be good, 15% says it is neither good nor bad and 25% says who 'are they to judge'. Homosexuals in the film are portrayed to be: normal individuals (60%), mentally deranged persons (10%), spiritually possessed persons (5%) and 25% are undecided about the portrayal. 70% Of the respondents decipher from the films to be tolerant of homosexuals, 5% decipher to discriminate against homosexuals, 15% decipher to pray for homosexuals and 10% do not know. The data above shows that 80% of respondents agree that homosexual content in film has the tendency of corrupting an individual. 20% do not think homosexual content in film has the power to corrupt an individual. 55% after watching the film insists that homosexuality is bad. 60% believe that homosexuals are normal individuals while 70% of respondents after watching the films understand that it is best to be tolerant of homosexuals.

Research Question 3: Do the films under study affect the audience's perception of homosexuals?

The research question is spread across tables 22-23

Table22: Do the films move you to:

S/N		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1.	Accept homosexuals irrespective of what religion/society says	90	47.36%
2.	Discriminate against homosexuals	30	15.78%
3.	Don't know/undecided	70	36.84%
	Total	190	99.98%

Table 22(a): (Muslim respondents) Do the films move you to:

	Freq.	Percent
Accept homosexuals irrespective of what religion/society says	20	40%
Discriminate against homosexuals	10	20%
Don't know/undecided	20	40%
Total	50	100%

Table 22(b): (Christian respondents) Do the films move you to:

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	Accept homosexuals irrespective of what religion/society says	70	50%
2.	Discriminate against homosexuals	20	14.28%
3.	Don't know/undecided	50	35.7%
	Total	140	99.99%

Table 23: Do these films show you the consequences of homophobic actions:

S/N		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1.	YES	150	75%
2.	NO	50	25%
	Total	200	100%

Table 23(a): (Male respondents) Do these films show you the consequences of homophobic actions:

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	YES	70	58.33%
2.	NO	50	41.66%
	Total	120	99.99%

Table 23(b): (Female respondents) Do these films show you the consequences of homophobic actions:

S/N		Freq.	Percent
1.	YES	-	-
2.	NO	80	100%
	Total	80	100%

47.36 respond that the films move them to accept homosexuals irrespective of what religion/society says. 15.78% says the film move them to discriminate against homosexuals. 36.84% say they do not know what the film move them to do. 75% of the respondents answer Yes to the fact that the films show the consequences of homophobic actions while 25% say No that the film did not show the consequences of homophobic actions.

Findings and Discussion

From the above data it is evident that the exposure of audience to film allows them absorb the message in the film. The effect this film has on the viewers can be regarded as positive as a good number of them agreed to accept homosexuals irrespective of what religion/society says. This outcome supports the submission of Udomisor and Sonuga (2012) that: the Nollywood films have come to assume an authority over the values of people’s lives such that what people see in them comes to be taken not just as fictional projection of imaginative consciousness but as the true authentic mirror of what the society is: a veritable market of what society represents and much worse of the ideal that it aspires or must aspire towards. Therefore, it is safe to say that this film left an impression in the minds of the audience about the effects of homophobic actions. Hopefully this impression becomes a permanent imprint in their minds.

This is a step forward to curbing homophobic actions in our society. If this is achieved, the society will become a place for all where everyone has a stake and homosexuals will not have to live a make belief life. They will accept themselves first as normal then relate with people same way. More so, the demographical response to the question: what the film moves you to do, signify that although religious ethos differs, there seems to be a consensus on the effect

of the films on the audience. The religious teachings may condemn the act of homosexuality but seem not to condemn homosexuals because they are subjected to love their neighbours irrespective of the circumstances. This underscores the stance of the Pontius on homosexuality. However, some religious fanatics as exemplified in the film *Hell or High Water* do not have an understanding of love. It is preposterous that a near perfect man was condemned by his sexuality. The situation in this film poses a huge question: are other sins less heinous than homosexuality?

It was found that 100% respondents agree that film in the context of other media of socialization has the potential to shape an individual's social and moral values. There is a 5% of increase after watching the film that film has the power to shape an individual's social and moral values. The pretest shows that 95% subscribed to the fact that film can change preformed notion about a subject/topic/matter. 100%, however, after watching the film subscribed to the notion. As well, 70% disagree that homosexuals are born as homosexuals though 85% before watching the film disagree to the notion. It implies that the opinion of 15% was changed by the film. There is a decrease from 95% to 75% of respondents who think that homosexuality is a matter of choice. 62% of female and 41.66% of male respondents think that homosexuality is an illness that can be cured. 86.66% of Christian respondents and 80% of Muslim respondents agree that homosexuals can stop being homosexuals. 80% of respondents think homosexual content in films has the tendency of corrupting individuals. 55% of respondents perceive homosexuality to be bad. 60% of respondents agree that the films portray homosexuals as normal individuals. 70% of respondents decipher from the films that people should be tolerant of homosexuals. 55% say that the films arouse empathy in them. 72.22% of respondents believe that homosexual content in film influences viewers. 40% of Muslim respondents and 50% Christian respondents say the films accept homosexuals irrespective of what religion/society says. 100% of female respondents say the films do not show the consequences of homophobic actions.

Conclusion

This study has affirmed that film is a viable vehicle for culture, education, entertainment and socialization. The new turn of events

has recently changed the narrative of homosexuality contents in films. Ayakoroma (2008) posits that “the ability to create our own images and capture our own stories has given us a voice and power to change perceptions of ourselves, our surroundings, and our cultures, both locally and internationally.” This ability has given producers of the selected films of study the opportunity to tell a homosexuality story variant from the stereotypical stories dominant in Nollywood movies. Different assumptions, opinions and revelations have been made about homosexuality. These preformed opinions somewhat appear stereotypical and have put homosexuals in bad light. Recently films produced are changing this stereotypical narrative portrayed in films. This study posits that homosexual discrimination and oppression is accomplished in part through stereotypical representations in films. It also posits that although film has the potential of changing people’s opinion, the films under study did not change the perception of audience of homosexuality. The research, however, suggests that films with similar storyline of the films under study be produced to at least curb homophobic actions in our society.

To determine the extent film has the potential to change the perception of audience, this work examined the perception of audiences noting that there is a limit to the influence film has on individuals. The study shows that the people of Nigeria are religious and compassionate but will stop at nothing to see that homosexuality remains unacceptable in the country. The work submits that the interplay between law, religion and culture is fascinating. There are indices that bring for divide when it pertains to culture (ethnicity) and religion in Nigeria. Interestingly, this work concludes that diverse culture and religion (especially Christianity and Islam) in Nigeria have a common understanding on the issue of homosexuality. Furthermore, it is interesting that the same sex marriage law has its bearing from religious and cultural ethos. It was gathered that although Nigerians are open to the Western culture, homosexuality remains an aberration and will for a long time be discriminated against. Despite the continual labeling and name calling of homosexuality as alien, un-African and unnatural, there is a general belief that homosexuality exists in the Nigerian society.

In the context of the audience perception of homosexuality and homosexuality contents in films, this article examined the political

and social constructs of homosexuals in the society. It has opened vistas for academic attention; contribute to scholarship in film, queer, gay and lesbian studies all of which intersect in homosexual representations. By focusing on a marginalized group that to date still live a closeted life, this research reveals that it is only recently that films began to portray homosexuals in good light and normal individuals. This study also elicits opinions of the people of the society pertaining to this marginalized group. It is based on this that the following recommendations are made: films that portray homosexuality as normal human beings be produced to change the preformed opinion of the people; people should understand and be accommodating to homosexuals; and an individual's sexuality should not be used to judge them.

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