The Role of Nollywood in Social Security and Stability in Nigeria

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Abstract

The Nigerian Nollywood industry is the third most striving movie industry in the world which brings in a whooping sum of economic resource to the Nigerian state and entertainment to Nigerians and the global world. The world since after the II World War has continued to advance to a soft power society in which the power of social influence through advertisement, social media and movie production is the order of the day. This work through critical analysis of some Nigerian movies discusses the Nigerian Nollywood industry and how it can become an instrument for nation building in the area of social security and socio-political stability. The study recommends that director, script writers and Nollywood actors must not see their jobs and profession as avenue for money making only, they must for national interest also direct and produce movies that can influence the Nigerian populace towards appreciating their national heritage, socio-cultural diversity and building of a socially stable and secured Nigerian society.

Keywords: Nollywood, Nigeria, Social Media, Social security and Stability.

Introduction

There is no arguing the fact that Nollywood has come to define the totality of activities taking place in the Nigerian film industry, be it in English, Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Edo, Itsekiri, Ijaw, or any of the many other Nigerian languages. The production of Nigerian films began a while back where the likes of Late Hubert Ogunde, Late Duro Ladipo, Late Pa Afolayan, Chief Amata, Lere Paimo, etc entertained and educated people through the use of stage performances and cinematic efforts. Several years later, series like Cock Crow at Dawn (early 1980s), Icheoku (80s), Ripples (1988-1993), Mirror in The Sun (1984-1986), Koto Orun (90s), Things Fall Apart (1987), Check Mates (1991-1994), Village Headmaster (1968-1988), Agbara Nla/Ultimate Power (1992/1994), Tales By Moonlight (1984), Basi and Company (1986-1990), I Need to Know (1997-2002), Palace (1998), New Masquerade (the mid-80s - mid-90s) and Fuji House of Commotion (2000s) hit the airwaves (Ayomide, 2018). The first blockbuster television series was produced from the stable of Wale Adenuga Productions. A very notable and remarkable film that heralded the advent of Nollywood was 'Living in Bondage', Kenneth Okonkwo played the lead role, the film was written by Kenneth Nnebue, directed by Chris Obirapu and produced by Kenneth Nnebue and Okey Ogunjiofor. This film was produced in VHS and gained national approval and commendation. These individual efforts, at different locations and times, have laid a solid foundation for the Nigerian film industry, popularly called, Nollywood. According to one Arisi, as quoted by Abah (2009) one of the latest crazes in Nigeria's social and economic life is the invasion of our homes by home video, a form of social entertainment with its attendant educational effects.

Nollywood is a thriving space that not only provides an avenue for entertainment but also generates a sizeable amount of revenue for the Nigerian economy. In 2018, the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry represented 0.21% of Nigeria's GDP at a value of nearly ₦270 billion. In the first quarter of 2019, the industry garnered approximately ₦87 billion which accounted for 0.27%

of the country's GDP (The Guardian, 2019). The Nigerian box office also contributes significant value; in 2017, ₦4.3 billion was realized and is expected to grow to an estimated ₦6.4 billion by 2022 (The Guardian, 2019). The relevance of the entertainment industry, of which movie production is a subset, cannot be ignored. As part of the country's radical measures to wean itself off over-reliance on oil earnings, successive governments continue to invest in the sector to boost the economy. For instance, in 2015, then President Goodluck Jonathan government signed a memorandum with the Bank of Industry (BoI) to develop a special product called "BoI NollyFund" under which Nigeria's movie producers who provide a qualitative proposal, commercially viable scripts and demonstrate a track record of successful movie productions are given financial support. An initial amount of $200 million was committed to that effect (News Deck, 2021).

Today, the Nigerian movie industry, commonly known as Nollywood, produces about 50 movies per week (Bakare, Isijola, & Bakare, 2020). This feat is more than US's Hollywood and second only to India's Bollywood! A study by BBC indicates that Nollywood creates one (1) million jobs annually, with an impressive, estimated revenue of $590 million (News Deck, 2021). Irrespective of the global performance of the industry and revenue generated from movie production in Nigeria, the income earned by the average Nollywood actor/actress is relatively low, ranging from ₦199,000 to ₦597,000 per film (The Guardian, 2019). Nevertheless, some of the industry's players continue to thrive, with the recognition and appreciation of Nigerian movies worldwide.

The term social stability as one of the three dimensions of sustainable development began to receive attention in the early years of the 21st century to improve living conditions in the society (Nastaran *et al,* 2013). Social stability serves as a link among different dimensions of sustainable development (Colantanio, 2009) and is the ultimate objective of sustainable development. Economic and environmental developments are also part of the objectives of sustainable development and are the means to achieve social stability (Assefa & Frostell, 2007). In 2000, the European Union in Lisbon initially defined social stability as an integral part of development models, and social stability received special attention (Dixon *et al,* 2007; Samuelsson *et al,* 2004).

Social stability is a difficult concept to implement, and instability in human societies generally refers to stability over time. Therefore, this concept is not easy to measure (Jomehpoor *et al,* 2013). If social stability is to turn from a general description into an ultimate goal, it is necessary to define it in a clear, distinguishable, controllable, and measurable way. Hence, it is essential to design social stability indicators. The main indicators for measuring social stability include population dynamism, empowerment, social cohesion and unity, health and social security, quality of employment and income, quality of education, services, housing, and environment, quality of information accessibility, community involvement, quality of institutional-national structures, optimism about the future, satisfaction with the place of living and place attachment, rates of crime and divorce, equality, compatibility, co-existence, social accountability, hope for the future, sense of happiness, extroversion and social interaction, social trust, fear of prevalence of social abnormalities, sense of deprivation, satisfaction with the performance of institutions, satisfaction with the quantity of service accessibility, satisfaction with the quality of service accessibility, place attachment, exhilaration in life, participation in cultural and recreational activities, participation in religious activities, participation in local activities, interpersonal trust, civil or institutional trust; and social justice (Nastaran *et al*, 2013; Teimouri *et al*, 2012; Salemi *et al*, 2011; Hartmut, 1999).

This paper seeks to discuss by way of analysis the role the Nollywood industry can play in the promotion of social security of lives and properties and also social stability in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Nollywood

It is a common belief and presumption amongst most Nigerians that the Nollywood industry compasses of all home movies produced in Nigeria (Haynes, 2016). The concept Nollywood was coined by Norimitsu Onishi in 2002 (Onishi, 2002) to refer only to all English-language films that were produced in Lagos, Onitsha, Asaba, Enugu and Aba. At this stage, the home movie industry in Nigeria was dominated by one ethnic group- the Igbos. This is no longer the case today. There are many other home movie and film producers in Nigeria coming from other regions and ethnic groups and some of these home movie makers had existed even before the Nollywood industry. There are basically three major film industries in Nigeria namely the Hausa film industry mainly producing films in the Hausa language showcasing the Hausa culture and Islamic faith as its major content. The Yoruba film industry on the other hand produces films mainly in Yoruba language and the Nollywood industry which is considered the giant and face of the Nigerian film industry (Haynes, 2016). Amidst these differences, these movie industries have been brought together to represent one big film and movie industry in Nigeria called Nollywood (Haynes, 2016; Krings & Okome, 2013). Nollywood therefore can be described as the totality of all films and movies produced in Nigeria or sanctioned by the Nigerian film industry. According to Krings *et al* (2013), Nollywood has become the most visible form of cultural machine on the African continent, and it has become truly a pan-African affair. This is because it travels the entire African continent connecting Nigerians/Africans both at home and abroad to their rich socio-cultural heritage (Krings *et al*, 2013). Nollywood stirs the imagination, provoking the viewers to compare their own daily lives with what is presented on-screen as they explore the similarities and dissimilarities of the pro-filmic and filmic world. The Nollywood therefore is the recording and interpretation of the contemporary Nigerian social and emotional history. Its characteristic themes and distinctive style arise from the Nigerian society and addresses the Nigerian values, tensions and historical experience (Haynes, 2016).

The Nollywood business however is modeled to produce movies cheaply, quickly and recoup the investment within the shortest time possible. This has orchestrated a high level of individualization of movies, a tsunami of mass- produced movies that were poorly directed with low quality content.

Social Security

Since the September 11th attack on the Twin Tower in New York city, discussions on security have been heightened and have made a major item in most political and social discourses of the modern time (Heatley & Heatley, 2010). Security can simply be defined as the state of being free from danger or threats (Stevenso, 2010). It could also mean the state of feeling safe and stable. Social on the other hand have to do with the community, society, and its interactive nature (McCormack, Anderson, Jamie & David, 2018). Is it possible to live in the contemporary society free from threats or danger? Beck (1992) and Giddens (2013) thinks that it's not possible because the modern society is a society full of risks and uncertainties. Social security therefore can best be described as a situation in which both institutional and individual efforts are put in place to secure a deviant free society or a society where people go about doing their legitimate business and associations without fear of social threats or danger (Cohen, Kennedy & Perrier, 2013, Harf, Harf & Lombardi, 2019). These threats could come in form of crime, violence, terrorism, unjust treatment and unlawful arrest or it could be in from of cybercrime or global terror networks (Ditch, 1999). Social

security as used in this work could also be described as human security which suggests that the effectiveness and legitimacy of security policy, must focus on the wellbeing and safety of the individual (Newman, 2010). This is because human beings are also social animals who can individually and collectively be involved in the security architecture of themselves and their society. In broad terms human security or social security is the freedom to live comfortable lives with no threats or fear (Newman, 2010).

Social Stability

Social stability refers to the range of life structure and reliable routine that is protective against further situational hazards and helps maintain connections with social resources and societal expectations. One of the main prerequisites for social stability is a stable environment in which people can live together in peace. Social stability is the degree to which a society and its institutions remain predictable and reliable (Social-stability.com, 2022) This is important because it allows participants in society such as individuals and groups to plan and conduct their affairs without disruption. Social stability is characterized by goal maintenance and goal shielding, thereby preventing interference from distractors (Dreisbach & Fröber, 2019). To maintain a society and its social goals for the wellbeing of its members, there is always the need to maintain a level of stability in the society. This level of stability entails a stable political system, stable economic system and an averagely stable population that can serve as the work force of the society.

Nollywood as a Medium for Propagating Security and Stability through Cultural Instrument

A video film is not produced in a vacuum. It tells a story of a personality, a society, or an environment. Such a story, whether real or fiction, is aimed at either taking corrective measures on cultural, religious, social, political, or economic phenomena, promoting given core values or purely for leisure and entertainment. Thus, Nollywood is not alienated from its socio-political and cultural environment, as it portrays phenomena such as myths, beliefs, and human practices, which are in the domain of culture. According to Ayakoroma (2011), video films act as a very potent socialization medium that shapes ideas, styles, attitudes, and cultures of nations, in the sense that it is a giant mirror which reflects the values and ideals of a given society. Put succinctly, Nollywood is an avenue for cultural promotion because movies mirror the society that creates them and sends a picture of the aspirations of that society.

Paradoxically, Nollywood, as a cultural instrument, has been under-utilized. This is in the sense that it has not been appropriately used in addressing the country's security challenges. More emphasis has been on the "hard-power" commando-style, which requires militarization and prompt deployment of troops to hot spots. While not condemning this methodology, it is noble thinking that the "soft power" approach needs to compliment the hard-power strategy. Even on the international scale, emphasis is now shifting to the use of cultural diplomacy to promote national interests and international cooperation. Okunmalenide as cited in Ayakoroma (2017) observes, rightly, that a nation's movie industry serves as one of the artistic avenues to showcase her culture and that Nollywood is like a mirror reflecting existing cultures in Nigeria. To him, culture is multi-dimensional, including established systems in social orders, like corporate, social, political, legal, religious, and spiritual ways of life. However, his grouse is that Nollywood has persistently misrepresented the legal system particularly in areas of "arrests" in criminal procedures before the course of evidence in a trial. His advice to producers, scriptwriters, and actors, is for them to subject their works for assessment by those familiar with such areas of focus, like legal

practitioners. Mbah as cited in Ayakoroma (2017) also decries the undue emphasis on ethnic differences, instead of unity, which has perverted the minds of the people and made them turn against each other, as evidenced in some regional killings such as in Jos, Plateau State, and Southern Kaduna. He also condemns the sponsorship of insurgency groups by faceless politicians, who have profited greatly from this disintegration campaign. The question then is: How can Nollywood arrest these conflicts and institutionalize the culture of peace and security of life and property in Nigeria? A former US Ambassador to Nigeria, Terrence McCulley, at a closing ceremony of a 10-day film directing workshop for moviemakers, held in Lagos, urged Nigerian filmmakers to use movies as a means of promoting the unity of the country (Famutimi, 2012). Nollywood has in the past tried to address these peace and security challenges, but the socio-cultural dimensions have not been fully harnessed. The prominent role of culture in films is aptly described by Ekwuazi (1991) when he states that films are made from a conditional imagination and for a conditional market; and that the conditioning index is culture. He argues that the producer, the director, and the audience all relate to the film as the proverbial "Blindness of Hindustan to the Elephant" and that the blindness stems from cultural reality. Ekwuazi opines that the prism through which reality is apprehended is culture. Conteh-Morgan (2005) postulates that human sanity is a situation free of injury or threats to an individual's, group's, or community's well-being, including freedom from threats and or direct attacks on physical and psychological integrity. He also identifies three sources of human security: personal sources – harmful actions directed against people or property with visible consequences (banditry, kidnapping, lootings, and strife); Institutional sources – harmful actions and neglect of institutions that undermine human rights and human security (oppression, corruption, and torture); and structural and cultural sources – harmful actions and results linked to the new modes of thinking and cognition in the society at large, globalization which has led to national and local disintegration in some case.

The portrayal of Security of life and Property Issues in Nollywood

It is necessary at this juncture to identify a few films that focus on the security situation in the country and the society at large.

a) Lost Kingdom (Okoh, 1999) tells the story of a young man, who makes his money through armed robbery, becomes a philanthropist, and is later crowned as the Igwe, only to unleash terror on the people.

b) Issakaba (Imasuen, 1999), a movie that went up to four parts, is based on the atrocious activities of the Bakassi Boys that terrorized the eastern part of the country in the late 90s. To contain the spate of armed robberies in the community, well-meaning persons decide to form a group to counter the activities of the robbers. They started by cutting off the hands and legs of robbers, or even beheading culprits until the Issakaba boys became a tool in the hands of some unscrupulous persons and derailed in its initial security functions.

c) State of Emergency (Benson/Thompson, 2000/2002), a terrorist gang holds some minister hostage in a conference, asking the government to do their biddings before they could all be released.

d) X-Gang (Thompson, 2005) deals with some condemned criminals that get out of jail to continue their evil deeds, robbing banks and causing panic in the country.

e) New Jerusalem (Onyeabor, 2005), on the other hand, is a story of an armed gang run by a woman (played by Patience Uzokwor) that specializes in robbing banks and prominent citizens of the country.

   f) October 1 (Kunle, 2014), as Nigeria prepares for independence from the British in 1960, a seasoned police detective rushes to find the serial killer slaughtering its native young women.

   g) Gbomo Gbomo Express (Walter, 2015), A criminal intent of inexperienced kidnappers doesn't go according to plan after they decide to hold a wealthy victim for ransom.

   h) 76 (Izu, 2016), the story is told from two points of view: that of a young pregnant woman, and that of her husband, a soldier accused of being involved in the 1976 military coup and assassination of General Murtala Mohammed, the Head-of-State of Nigeria

In addition to the above, films like Living in Bondage, Baka Boys, Burial Business, Church Business, The Senator, Domitilla, Explosion, The Stubborn Grasshopper, and Orija Shrine, just to mention a few, have been attempts to focus on burning security issues in Nigeria. The bottom line in most of the films is that they were produced for commercial gains. They did not aim at examining the given situation(s) to find a lasting solution(s) to the national security challenges. Furthermore, most of the films do not jolt viewers into rethinking the realities on the ground and exploring avenues of ameliorating the ills so portrayed, as it is to be expected, if the productions were to duly promote patriotism.

Maximizing the Potentials of Nollywood in Propagating Security and Stability

One laudable soft power avenue to curbing the debilitating threats of insecurity is harnessing Nollywood potentials because of its unique qualities. It is pertinent to delineate some of the avenues, through which this could be implemented.

Nollywood: A Veritable Platform for Role Modelling and Mentoring

Since the coverage of Nollywood is enormous, almost without borders, reaching several million in the comfort of their rooms, it is at a vantage position to sway the views and opinions of the common man. Nigerians have come to accept these stars and celebrities as heroes and people they can look up to. The citizens believe these stars must have been specially favored by God. But beyond this, they see them as specially gifted and hard-working and secretly long to be like them. So, whatever they say, do, or wear, becomes a contemporary issue of interest. It explains the massive involvement of Nollywood celebrities in the advertisement of products and services, believing that their endorsement will result in large-scale patronage by the consumers. The telecom, fashion, and cosmetics are among the many industries that readily come to mind. In recent times, our political gladiators have keyed into the visibility of Nollywood stars in their electioneering campaigns. It will also be recalled that Nollywood stars played a prominent role, either for or against, in the fuel subsidy removal crisis in January 2012. Also, veteran Nollywood actor, Richard Mofe-Damijo (RMD), was appointed as Special Adviser to the Governor on Entertainment and Talent Development in Delta State, before being elevated to the position of Honourable Commissioner for Culture and Tourism. Dr. Sam Dede (SD) was the Director-General, Rivers State Carnival and Tourism Development Agency. Desmond Elliot, a current member, Lagos House of Assembly, Ejike Asiegbu, Okey MacAnthony (Okey Bakassi), Rita Dominic, Nkiru Sylvanus, and Hilda Dokubo, have served, at one time or the other, as Special Assistants to their governors, on Arts and Entertainment Matters. Bob Manuel Udokwu has taken up various appointments in Anambra State. These are all positions, which could be used to mentor the younger ones and turn them away from certain social deviant behaviors.

Nollywood: A Means of Checking Political Thuggery

The recent spates of armed robbery, banditry, and kidnapping for ransom, in the country, have been attributed to the do-or-die style of politics by present-day politicians. It could be argued that the Boko Haram insurgents, the Bandits, like the Niger Delta militants, were thugs, who were armed by politicians to realize their selfish ambitions. As usual, these young men were abandoned after the elections, with no visible means of survival. Since they were not "settled," they used the arms that had been acquired for them to engage in criminal activities, thus, constituting a threat to the nation's peace and security (Ayakoroma, 2011, Boroism, 2010). Nollywood can correct this ugly trend by undertaking productions that condemn political thuggery and ballot box snatching and stuffing, and promote the enthronement of sound democratic culture, as exemplified in the "One Man One Vote" doctrine, where the voters determine the results of elections.

Nollywood: A Medium for Curbing Societal Vices

It is also true that some storylines emanating from Nollywood have hit against inequality and social injustices, campaigning for the addressing of such ills and in-balances. It is so obvious, that part of the reason why there has been so much heat and insecurity in the country can be attributed to this. For instance, the Niger Delta Militants were up in arms against their own country because of the cry of marginalization and injustice. The Egbesu Boys of Africa was at the forefront of the mobilization of the Ijaws of the Niger Delta in the mid-1990s. Despite providing a greater percentage of the nation's wealth, many Ijaw youths are unemployed; and violence became gainful employment and a veritable survival strategy for them (Ayakoroma, 2011, Boroism, 2010).

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is an established fact that, since Nollywood came into the limelight, it has become a formidable medium for the utilization of cultural resources towards the emphasis of security of life and property as an indicator of social security and stability. It has served as a veritable platform to inform its viewers, both knowledgeable and narrow-minded, on the peculiarities of other sections of society. It is a platform for the presentation of our culture for the common good and development of the country as well as employment and revenue generation. But then, for Nollywood to be effective, as a medium for propagating social security and stability, there has to be intervention on the part of the government to ensure that it projects the ideology of our shared values of peace, mutual coexistence, and employment opportunity. While previous Intervention fund toward capacity building for Nollywood is a commendable effort, stakeholders must ensure that Nollywood is effectively used as a medium for promoting social security and stability in Nigeria.

Recommendations

i. The Nollywood actors and directors should strategically through various film production present to the wider world the current peace and security challenges, occasioned by the nefarious activities of the Boko Haram sect, kidnappers, banditry, and armed herdsmen. This could serve as an implicit invitation to the international community to stand in solidarity with Nigeria.

ii. The Nollywood should serve as a platform that provides an avenue to share perspectives, social integrations, inter-group understanding, as well as a binding force for breaking

barriers between communities. Hausa Movie industry should showcase an appreciation of the Igbo or Yoruba culture and vice-versa.

iii. The Nigerian society is going through a crisis of stigmatization at the international level because of the activities of internet fraudsters generally known as Yahoo boys. The Nollywood must play a leading role in showcasing other Nigerians who act with integrity and truth.

iv. The Nollywood industry should channel more resources in acting and promoting movies that appreciates our socio-cultural and religious diversity as a gift and not a colonial mistake. also promote the Nigerian economy by using mostly made in Nigeria products in her film production. This could promote the nation's spirit of patriotism

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