

NOLLYWOOD AS AN ELIXIR FOR DRUG MISUSE AMONG STUDENTS OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

*The Nigerian entertainment industry tagged Nollywood, which began on a staggering note, has evolved to only trail behind Hollywood and Bollywood that started many years before its advent. This medium has equally mainstreamed itself into competing favourably with other media struggling for human attention. Therefore, even in an era when the youths have found fun with internet services, this medium is equally compliant with social media. It is on this locus standi that this article investigates *The Lost Soul* in an attempt to scale down the misuse of drugs by students of tertiary institutions, which truncates their educational pursuits, rendering them redundant and their families and by extension Nigeria sorrier for it. Armed with this report, this discourse adopts an analysis and deduction approach by way of qualitative research of the movie under study with the view to stampeding the spread of this anathema on our campuses. Consequently, this article recommends the mass production of movies with this thematic relevance, among others, by the various Theatre Arts Departments in Nigerian universities where students themselves account for the largest part of the cast and crew members. This will definitely command more youth viewership and hence, scale down to some reasonable extent the vices threatening to militate against their educational development since they will become or are the fulcra of any labour force and the leaders of tomorrow.*

Keywords: Nollywood, Drug misuse, Students, Tertiary institutions, Skills.

Introduction

The vibrancy of any viable economy rests squarely on the launch pad of how much the labour force has acquired the necessary skills enough to position it for maximum delivery at the work place. The acquisition of the required skills to perform maximally to a reasonable extent is

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equally predicated on the wellbeing of its labour force, a work force that is ordinarily responsible for driving other factors of production. Until the labour force is in a stable frame of mind and physical wellness, it may not be positioned for proper acquisition of expertise. As well, the acquired proficiency could be of no consequence, if the work force at the point of production is not in a good frame of mind and physical wellness. Therefore, there is a correlation between wellness of a work force even in the course of acquiring required proficiency and after to perform proficiently at work. Incidentally, the Nigerian tertiary institutions are mandated by its educational policies, among other variables, to provide the middle man power for the economic development of the country.

The age bracket of 18-35, with the necessary acquired skills and in the good state of health, of any population is said to be that labour force taxed with the responsibility of transforming the economy of its nation. Buttressing the importance of this age to the grooming of the Nigerian economy, Abamara, Eze and Dike postulate that: the youths are the most energetic and viable group of population of any nation. The youths are leaders of tomorrow, and they constitute the major work force of any nation driven by formal and informal education and formal education being the bed rock and the catalyst for any meaningful development and nation building (227). Ogbonna agrees that: the youth occupy a prominent place in the Nigerian society. They are the leaders of tomorrow, and they outnumber the middle-aged and the aged. If their energies and ideas are allowed to spring up, they remain society's greatest potentials (49). From the foregoing, the stratum of the Nigerian population, who are dynamic and full of energy to engage maximally in the overall scheme of economic development, falls within the age bracket commonly referred to as youth, and because they occupy a salient place in the economy of any nation, they are better positioned to mount the saddle of leadership by virtue of the so much energy at their disposal and the skills they have been able to acquire either from the formal and informal educational settings.

At present, Nigeria is a state that its skills acquisition curriculum tilts heavenly toward the formal educational sector. That means there is the dire need to jealously protect this sector of its population health wise, for maximum delivery of its developmental stride most especially at this time when its economy is experiencing a serious contraction because of the Covid-19 pandemic and poor governance. For a citizen to be able to contribute meaningfully to the development of his community; he must be of good sound health. A healthy individual is one who is physically fit and psychologically ready and able to render useful services to his society (Abiodun 200-201). From Abiodun's point of view, one can assertively claim that until the human factor that drives

other factors of production is in good frame of mind, full of energy and physical wellness, only then will it be equipped and available to render reasonable services to its community. It is also equally true that before human factor is ready to deliver at work place, the work force needs to be in a good state of health to stand the rigour of acquiring the necessary skills that will prepare it for the task of national development. Unfortunately, recent survey shows that a good number of this class of the Nigerian population in our various tertiary institutions of learning are abusing drugs, a social vice, that is inimical to the realization of the goal mentioned. For this singular course, Kayode, Samuel cries out saying; “the rate of chemical abuse and substance dependency is becoming increasingly prevalent among the Nigeria. In-school youth of this generation” *www.freedomfoundationng.org...*) owing to its devastating effects on the psychological, emotional and physical well beings of its victims, and by extension the nation at large. In the same stratum, Kaura, who equally upholds the preponderance of this horrible trend and its deadly blow, argues that:

The scourge among youth in schools leads to truancy, absenteeism, cheating, pilfering, armed robbery, cultism, prostitution and other forms of delinquent behavior which culminate into dropping out of school. Drug abusers in the society could become criminals as drugs affect their reasoning, giving them courage to do things they would not ordinarily have done. (238)

Standing on the premise established by Kaura above, the acquisition of the necessary skills that will prepare the students for the labour market after graduation cannot thrive on faulty foundation of absenteeism, exam malpractice and other antisocial behaviour. The training for the acquisition of skills in any field of endeavours needs the total engagement of the psychomotor, affective and cognitive domains of the trainees, and not to talk of when the trainees are either physically absent or present and yet under the influence of chemical substances that sedate or make them hallucinate. Given the situation, some far-reaching measures need to be urgently put in place because “the higher institution...is a hallowed department which has a very high reverence for moral sanctity and sanity” (Akowe, 75). It should not be left to be overtaken by this dreadful repugnance.

Nollywood and Drug Misuse

“Nollywood, a Nigerian entertainment industry, which outlet of propagation is through movies, films and provider of capable services is another genre of the theatre (Ugiri and Akowe 223). “Today, the Nigerian film industry is the pride of Nigeria, second only to Bollywood, in terms of numbers of films produced” (Asigbo and Nwosu 31). “Thus, from its humble beginning, Nollywood has grown to become a large oak tree, with teeming local and international audience” (Ayakoroma 289). Ampe has this to say in celebrating the global viewership of Nollywood: the Nigerian movie industry is highly acclaimed and watched by millions of people all over the world. They see and enjoy it in theatres, halls, auditoriums, on television, in airplanes, ships, trains, at home, and several other places. The ‘craze’ for the movie is primarily as a result of its remarkable ability to hold, transport, amuse, move, and delight an audience (5). Therefore, the “video drama because of its mobility, proximity, convenience and rich visual effects even have more potentials for mass mobilization and enlightenment” (Nwosu 229), and because of its alluring qualities, it wields a tremendous influence over its audience, since “the audience also has moral, emotional, and cultural involvement in the course of events and the roles of various characters, their language and style of speaking inevitably leave an impression on the audience” (Owoh and Uto-Ezeajugh 18).

Given that “filmmaking is an audio/visual art that captures human and animal characters through the electromagnetic medium using story telling techniques” (Nwazue 73), it “is fast generating an alternative component of reconstructive communication, and leveraging on its pictorials to augment verbal allusion gives it wider audience” (Ugiri and Akowe 223). Nwazue equally expressively supports that: film has grown to be one of the dynamic, popular cultures since it combines other forms of arts like singing, dancing, painting and so on, to achieve its purpose. As a tool of change, film has been used to educate and re-orientate a people by championing new ideologies (73). Thus film remains one of the formidable communication channels to reaching out to a large spectrum of Nigerian populace and tertiary students, because of its attractive peculiarities of its visual and audio and social media compliance, and most especially in this era of film proliferation even among institutions of higher learning. Therein lies its ability not only to entertain but to combine its entertainment value with pedagogical messages that could trigger critical thinking to interrogate the images presented, leading to taking collective or individual decision that could also bring about desired change of status. Agunloye corroborates that: the media remains a potential, force and agent of ideological representation in the society capable of reshaping popular

belief and perceptions. Through representations, with the media as a catalyst for socialization, mass mobilization and advocacy has the power to influence attitudes either positively... (41).

The film media remains an undeniable force to consider in attitudinal change, as it could be used if properly harnessed, to propagate an ideology within a community and within a given period of time either to construct and re-construct or to deconstruct a social order of a non existing or an existing status quo that could be inimical or progressive to the overall development of even a state. This is so, as "film medium whether on celluloid or video format like every other mass medium of communication does not exist outside the social, political or economic milieu of the state in which it is made" (Kwaghkondo 77-78). Substantially, "one common characteristic of all arts is the power to arrest and sustain the attention and interest of its audience" (Ezenwanebe 17). Hence, film "deploys the best in each subunit of humanities in its attempt to make the society a better place to live in...films holds a mirror up to the society to see itself" (Ekwuazi in Anyawu 95). Therefore, if the society does not like what it sees only because its conscience is pricked by what is represented in words, music and pictures, then such representation is said to be good enough to provoke critical thinking and reflections on the thematic concerns thrust to the fore, thereby making audience to take action either solely or (preferably) collectively to reconsider an existing social vice that hinder development. Herein lays the rationale for the interrogation of *The Lost Soul* (a movie) by the students of the Department of Theatre Arts, Alex Ekweme Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State, Nigeria, whose thematic concern revolves around the abuse of drugs by students of tertiary institutions across Nigeria.

Drug Abuse among Nigerian Youth

Drug abuse as a phenomenon has posed a serious problem globally. The domain of this concern rests heavily on the consumption of illegal drugs which has now become a common practice among males and females, young and old and across class board. "Perhaps outside suicide, the consumption of illicit drug is one of the most dangerous voluntary activities in the world. Sadly, their use is one that has risen across the country" (www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/07/08/the-menace-drug...). For instance, in the opinion of Kaura, "drug is abused when it is used in a manner that deviates from medically approved or socially accepted pattern within a given culture" (238). "The commonest of them all in Nigeria and indeed globally is cannabis (marijuana). It is cultivated across the country...But tramadol, a synthetic opioid analgesic used to treat moderate to severe pain is said to be the most

abused” (www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/07/08/the-menace-drug...). Furthermore, “report recently released by United Nations Office for Drug Control and Prevention says 5.2 percent of people, between the ages of 15 years and above worldwide consume drugs illegally” (Kaura 238). In Nigeria, for example, Kazeem reports that: over the past year alone, nearly five percent of the adult population (around 14.3 million) reported a ‘considerable’ level of psychoactive drug substances- it is a rate much higher than the 2016 global average of 5.6 percent among adults (<http://qz.com/africa/1538843/nigeria-drug-abuse-14-million...>).

Recent data “according to statistics by the country Representative United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Oliver Stolpe, over 20 million from the age of 15 and above admitted to having used drugs at least once between 2018 and 2019” (thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/07/08/the-menace-drug...). This “period which coincides with the school going ages is particularly noteworthy as the future of the youngsters can be made or marred at this crucial stage” (Aliyu 202). “Yes the youth are the leaders of tomorrow, but a future threatened by drug abuse is gloomy. Youths are vulnerable to vices that may make them miscreants of tomorrow” (<https://business.ng/editorial/article/saving-nigerian-youths...>). It “is unfortunate that drug abuse has become a common phenomenon, particularly among Nigerian youths, despite efforts by government and agencies to check the unwholesome practice” (Adelaja 212). This is how Adelaja succinctly paints this ugly scenario claiming:

...Efforts to rid the society of the menace of hard drug and save Nigerian citizens the disdain, with which they were being treated at the various border posts across globe, prompted the government to establish the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA). The agency was empowered to arrest and prosecute drug traffickers and those dealing on hard drug. (212)

The persistence of this unwholesome social vice among Nigerians and its ugly poor image representation of the country and its citizens both at home and abroad are highly worrisome. That’s why, Nigeria has not left any stone unturned, in order to rescue or redeem the image of Nigeria and Nigerians at every entry point into foreign countries. A case in point is the report by *This Day Live* editor emphasizing that: the Gombe state Command of NDLEA arrested 87 person and seized about 89,559 kilograms of illegal drug between January and June 2020. The seized drugs comprised 51 kg of

Cannabis, 34kg of psychotropic substance and 37 litres of dangerous chemical called “suck and die” (www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/07/08/the-menace-drug...). Thus, setting up of NDLEA, as an agency, was not only to fight the consumption of this chemical substance, but to equally check its sales. Yet, with its successes in the arrest of suspects, prosecution and the hundreds of persons jailed, the fight against this repulsive trend remains unabated. “While the Covid-19 pandemic has remained at the forefront of discussions,... substance abuse is still a significant adversary in the health and empowerment of youths and the fight against illicit drug use, is equally necessary, and just as urgent” (<https://business.ng/editorial/article/saving-nigerian-youths...>).

Theoretical Premise

The Bullet Magic (Hypodermic Needle) Theory which tries to explain the phenomenon behind the Powerful Effect Model is a common knowledge among many scholars of communication that media has an overwhelming effect on the way people think and how they do things. “They are even credited with incredible persuasive ability to change attitudes and behaviour. It was feared that people did exactly what they saw in the media” (Ojobor 18). For instance, the media (magic gun) fired the message directly into the audience head without their own knowledge. The message that causes the instant reaction from the audience without any hesitation is called “Magic Bullet Theory”. The media (needle) injects the message into audience mind and it causes changes in the audience behaviour and psyche towards the message. (www.com.communicationtheory.org/magic-bullet-needle...). The implication is such that the media can be harnessed to mould behaviour according to the whims and caprices of those who control the airwaves and the contents. This is borne out of the confidence among the proponents of this theory that the media has a huge powerful impact if wielded in the world of human right activists, revolutionaries, despotic governments, and advertisers and as it was recorded during the World Wars 1 and 2. Historically speaking;

[I]n the mid 1930s media scholars found the first theory on Media Effect and the Media Behaviours. During second world wars media plays a vital role in both United State and Germany to made influence in the people’s mind. The German Hithler’s Nazi used film industry for propaganda and they produced lots movies about their achievement which made a great impact in German’s mind.

Later the United States also used its own Hollywood... to portrait Germany as evil force which also made impact in Americans minds. Here media audience accepts the messages directly without rejection. (www.communicationtheory.org/magic-bullet-needle...).

The theory has been found by many scholars to be faulty because for these groups of critics especially Klapper and Bittner in Ojobor, "several other mediating factors exert considerable influence too...the presence of sub groups or "a mass within a mass" (19). Another example is a study by Lazarsfield in an election campaign in the United States of America (USA) in the 1940s and its effects of media messages. "Through this study Lazarsfield disproved the magic bullet theory and added that audience are more influential in interpersonal than a media messages" (www.com.communicationtheory.org/magic-bullet-needle...). Similarly, Social Control Theory is a mass media communication theory that is similar in its tenets to Bullet Theory; that is of the opinion that the media audience is at the mercy of the mass media for direction and sway. "It sees the media as powerful and persuasive while the audience is weak and in danger of having their values and behaviour tempered with" (Okunna in Ojobor 19).

"Through external means of control, individuals conform because an authority figure threatens sanctions if the individual disobeys" "this stands in contrast to external means of control, in which individuals conform because an authority figure (such as the state) threatens sanctions should the individuals disobey" ([https://socialsci.librtexts.org/bookshelves/sociology/Books%3ASociology.\(Boundless\)/07%3A-Device-Social-control-and-Crime/7...](https://socialsci.librtexts.org/bookshelves/sociology/Books%3ASociology.(Boundless)/07%3A-Device-Social-control-and-Crime/7...)). Hence, this theory tries to find out ways to reduce deviance. Eventually, social control theory "is Hobbseian as it presupposes that all choices are constrained by social relations and contracts between parties." For Hobbe, "adherence to social control suggests that morality is created within a social order by assigning cost and consequences to certain actions that are marked as evil, wrong, illegal or deviant" ([https://socialsci.librtexts.org/bookshelves/sociology/Books%3ASociology.\(Boundless\)/07%3A-Device-Social-control-and-Crime/7...](https://socialsci.librtexts.org/bookshelves/sociology/Books%3ASociology.(Boundless)/07%3A-Device-Social-control-and-Crime/7...)).

The Lost Soul

The Lost Soul, as a movie, is a narrative of boy called Chimdi (Destiny Igwe) from a poor family background of Mr & Mrs Ogidi (Akoh Ameh Denis and Joyce Kalu), who incidentally gets admission to read Theatre Arts at Alex-Ekweme Federal University, Ndufu Alike (AE-FUNAI), Ebonyi State Nigeria. It is a joyous moment for the entire family, as the

night before his departure from home is well savoured by every member of the family. Money and foodstuff are made available, the father advises his son to be of good conduct, keep only good friends and to shun every vice that could bring shame to him and the entire family so that after a successful graduation, he will get a good job to help change the social status of the family. He promises to be of good behaviour while in school.

While in school he is pampered with the hospitality from old students like Ade (Chika Okafor), Kofi (Ebuka Chinwetalu) and Oche (Victory Ferdinard), who coincidentally are his roommates, and the ambience of the coziness of the environment of an average Nigerian public university. In the hostel he meets with a friend (Oche), 'who tries to help him remain focused on why he is in school amidst distractions from other roommates who mount pressures on him to join cult activities and take drugs. He is able to remain focused as commented by his lecturer Spider Osuji until it is time for his practical classes which he finds difficult to cope with. Musa (Chinonso Ejike), a departmental course mate, lures him into taking a substance called Tramadol (TMD). In the course of dress and technical rehearsal of a command performance for the Vice-Chancellor of the University, he collapses on stage and his course mates rush him to the university hospital and he is diagnosed to have taken some chemical substances. After he is discharged from the hospital and is rusticated from school, he returns home, frustrated, he indulges in other social vices like rape, stealing, and fomenting trouble in his precinct. He becomes delirious as he wanders way from home.

Experiential Look at *The Lost Soul* in Bullet Magic and Social Control Theory

The Lost Soul is a movie produced by the students of Theatre Arts in conjunction with the Entrepreneurial and Employment Unit of AE-FUNAI). In the project is the reality that the media especially film has a large audience appeal and, hence, any concern thrown up on this medium will definitely have a persuasive impact on its audience. This is because "one factor that has continued to sustain the Nigerian video film industry is that it has an audience so thirsty for self and indigenous representation on screen almost to the point of fanaticism" (Asigbo and Ihentuge 263). This crave for identification with the screen among students of the above institution would have informed the reason why they decided to pass their message via video drama because according to Panofsky in Okwuowulu: whether we like it or not, it is the movie that mould more than any single force, the opinions, the tastes, the language, the dress, the behaviour and even the physical appearances of a public compromising more than 60 percent of the population of the earth (148).

From above, there is no gainsaying that thence, *The Lost Soul* “can sway our collective imagination and influence our perceptions on crucial issues as audience” (Agunloye 41). This claim is found in the movie under review, basically on the abuse of drugs most especially “when it is used in manner that deviates from medically approved or socially accepted pattern within a given time or culture” (Kaura 238). The use of tramadol (TMD) by the major character to boost/enhance his performance on set without a doctor’s prescription is why he becomes dizzy and eventually slumps on set at the peak of the performance. Other salient narrative thrusts of this discourse zero in on the aftermath effect of drug misuse. Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* argues that “the eighteenth century introduced a new form of power. Deviants were controlled by the threat and frequent use of the death penalty or indefinite incarceration”. Furthermore, discipline as a power relation mechanism wields a strong influence on a culprit of a questionable character. From the same source “rather than the state only regulating bodies, the state began to achieve social control by molding the minds of the subject such that individuals were educated to conform even when out of direct gaze of the punishing authority”. ([https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/sociology/Book%3Asociology \(Boundless\)/07%3A-Deviance-Social-Control- and –Crime/7.02%3A-Social-Control-Theory](https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/sociology/Book%3Asociology%20(Boundless)/07%3A-Deviance-Social-Control-and-Crime/7.02%3A-Social-Control-Theory)).

The crux of this argument rests squarely on the claim that youth obviously could be tamed of their excesses through imposing on them some level of limitation mechanism and disapproval either by parents, guardians, teachers, school authority, law enforcement agencies, etc. For a school of thought, punishment goes a long way to reducing the indulgence of youths in any social vice inimical to their well being. This is what informs the Department of Theatre Arts of AE-FUNAI, to front the argument projecting how Chidi is thrown out of school frolicking with his future as he indulges in consuming chemical substance that “can slow... breathing and can also cause brain seizure...blurred vision,...convulsion, fainting...” (Kayode www.freedomfoundationng.org/drugabuse). Chidi’s withdrawal from school is against his will; he was to read Theatre Arts and become a celebrity and elevate his family. As he leaves the school untimely, he cries for not meeting his desired goal and that of the parents who pray day and night and spend their meagre earning from petty carpentry and trading on him to ensure he becomes a graduate. This scenario is well captured in the movie through songs, dialogue and pictures capable of eliciting emotional feeling, strong enough to leave an average audience sensitized, because “of all the media of communication, film has a compelling power and force” (Asigbo and Ihentuge 259). This is on purpose as it was expected to get the audience behave exactly as the message

wants (Priyanka www.biyana.com/bullet-theory-mass-communication/). The discipline mete out on the major character should be the magic wand that warns every future dreaming and aspiring youth to dread courting the destructive tendency.

Conclusion

The Nigerian ivory tower is a citadel of learning saddled with the responsibility of grooming the labour force to help sustain the productive sector of its economy. Unfortunately, this sector is currently being threatened by social misnomer as a good number of the students indulge in abusing chemical substances indiscriminately. This has left an indelible scar of educational, social and overall miscarriage of their aspirations, which by extension creates a chasm on the economic launch pad of Nigeria. Armed with this common knowledge, this treatise engages Nollywood and specifically Uniwood (an appendage of Nollywood which actors are domiciled in or are of an extraction of (an) institution(s) of the university with the view to stampeding the ravenous impact of drug abuse on the very fibre upon which the Nigerian educational system is anchored. The choice of this movie as the medium to circumventing the recklessness with which this social vice, among others, cut short dreams and aspirations of the leaders of tomorrow is borne out of the special distinctive outlook of the medium. It is most appealing to its audience because of its visual, audio, social media and convenient dispositions. *The Lost Soul* brings to the public domain the vexatious issue of drug abuse and the place of discipline in enforcing social order over delinquency. Finally, from our scholarly drive, so far the students of the institution under exploration feel the sanctity needed to reposition the ivory tower for the production of the labour force needed to drive other factors of production in Nigerian is achievable, if there is proper exploration of the movie medium where its cast and crew members are mostly domiciled in the community where its thematic relevance has direct bearing on them.

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