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AUDIENCE RESPONSE TO PORTRAYAL OF MENTAL HEALTH IN NOLLYWOOD FILMS

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Abstract

The impact of film on audience perception and social change, particularly concerning mental health, is profound. Nollywood, the world's second-largest film industry, has produced numerous films on mental health, yet these portrayals often fall short of accuracy. Negative depictions foster harmful stereotypes and stigma, leading individuals with mental health issues to isolate themselves or remain silent. This study employs a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analysis to determine the influence of Nollywood's portrayal of mental health on audience perceptions, beliefs, and actions. The findings reveal a concerning trend: a significant portion of respondents fail to perceive mental health as a serious issue after watching Nollywood films on the topic. Moreover, the majority of respondent's express skepticism regarding the accuracy and realism of these portrayals. This disparity between cinematic representation and real-life experiences underscores the need for more responsible and nuanced depictions of mental health in film. Overall, the study sheds light on the potentially harmful effects of inaccurate portrayals of mental health in Nollywood films. It calls for greater sensitivity and accuracy in cinematic representations to combat harmful stereotypes and stigma, ultimately fostering a more empathetic and informed societal discourse on mental health.

Keywords: Mental Health, Film, Social Changes & Stereotypes

Introduction

Reoccurring content and theme in relation to mental health portrayed in Nollywood films are unfortunately not the true representation of mental health, thus, revealing a dearth of knowledge about mental health in its entirety (Arinze-Umobi & Oduah, 2022). According to Nnabuife (2021), film is an art form or an instrument for persuasion, instruction and entertainment like a bullet, with force to conquer or at least leave a mark for the record. Mead (cited in Nnabuife, 2021) describes film as a documentary of the culture, galvanizing, or fusing all forces into a concrete charger that reconstructs the mind of the people. Film has been used as a means of communication to pass various information, views, perceptions, beliefs, objective, moral thought in the mind of its viewer. According to World Health Organization (cited in Wada et al., 2021) mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stress of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. Bhugra, Till & Sartlorius (2013), mental health is an integral and essential part of our overall health, which can be defined in at least three ways - as the absence of disease, as a state of the organism that allows the full performance of all its functions or as a state of balance within oneself and one's physical and social environment. The quality of a person's mental health is measured by how adaptively they can cope with everyday stress or allows people to use their abilities, be productive, makes decisions, and play a vital role in their communities (Holmes, 2023).

Films are especially important in influencing the public perception of mental illness because many people are relatively uninformed about the problems of people with mental disorder, and the media tend to be especially effective in shaping opinions in those situations in which strong opinions are not already held (Weddlig & Niemiec, 2014). Middleton (2013), stated that fictional films and programs that perpetuate myths and stereotypes about mental illness are overwhelmingly negative. "Two potential outcomes of these negative stereotypes are, firstly, people experiencing symptoms associated with mental illness are likely to seek appropriate help, and secondly negative and inaccurate portrayals contribute to the stigmatization". He also further argued that portraying characters with mental illness has been different and dangerous and can serve a psychological self-protective function. James argument can be backed up by carefully acknowledging the several complicating admittances surrounding mental health in Nigerian movies such as the fear of stigmatization, dehumanization, exorcism and also financial constraints etc. It is very important to understand that there is a clear difference between mental health and mental illness. Mental health and mental illness can be perceived as two separate, yet related issues. According to The American Psychiatric Association (cited in Morin, 2023), mental illness is defined as a health condition that involves "changes in emotion, thinking or behavior or a combination of these." Mental illness is a health problem that significantly affects how a person feels, thinks, behaves and interact with other people. Mental illnesses are mental health diagnosed conditions that requires professional intervention. Most recurring content in relation to mental health portrayed in Nollywood film are, unfortunately not the true representation of what mental health is. Thus,

revealing a dearth of knowledge about mental health in its entirety (Arinze-Umobi & Oduah, 2022). These reoccurring events are evident in case of Nollywood film portraying witchcraft, spiritual exorcism, and evil spirits as mental health issues. Hence, this study delves into the general portrayal and depiction of mental health in Nollywood films as an influential factor in shaping audience perception, beliefs, and actions on this global issue.

Study Objectives

- To ascertain the extent of audience exposure to mental health themes in Nollywood films and its impacts on their perceptions, beliefs and actions
- To ascertain Nollywood's portrayal of mental health in films and the resulting impact on audience, emotions and behaviors.

Research Question

- What level of exposure does audience have about Nollywood films portraying mental health and how does it impact their perception, beliefs and actions?
- To what extent does Nollywood portray mental health in films and how does its result impact on audience emotions and behaviors?

Literature Review

Mental Health and Mental Health Disorder

Mental health affects our physical health, daily living, and relationships. It is all about how individuals behave, feel and think. World Health Organization (WHO) sees mental health as integral components of health and wellbeing that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in (WHO, 2022). Giving a more in-depth definition, according to Galderisi et al (2015), mental health is a dynamic state of internal stability which enables individuals to use their abilities in harmony with universal values of society. Basic cognitive and social skills; ability to recognize, express and modulate one's own emotions, as well as empathize with others; flexibility and ability to cope with adverse life events and function in social roles; and harmonious relationship between body and mind represent important components of mental health which contribute, to varying degrees, to the state of internal equilibrium. According to Murphey, Barry & Vaughan (2013), mental disorder are diagnosable conditions characterized by changes in thinking mood or behavior or some combination of this that can cause a person to feel stress out and impair his ability to function. In 2019 one in every 8 people, 970 million people around the world are living with a mental health disorder with anxiety and depression disorder the most common (WHO, 2022). Many people have mental health concerns from time to time but a mental health concern becomes a mental illness when ongoing signs and symptoms causes frequent stress and affect your ability to function. Anyone of any age, sex, background or ethnicity can get a mental health disorder.

Sociological Concept of Mental Health

Sociological concept focus on social structure, cultural system, societal roles towards the meaning of mental health and how it affects the state of the mind Horwitz (2013) explains that one type of sociological study examines the source of social condition such as negative life events, ongoing stressful circumstances, demanding social roles, level of social support, strength of cultural system or meaning that affects levels of mental health and illness. It is also worthy to note that the concept of mental health can also vary according to cultural values and beliefs. Other attribute such as age and gender can affect the health of an individual. According to Aneshensel & Phelen (cited in Demir, 2023) explained that in the discussing conceptualization on the sociology of mental health, social scientists touch upon issues such as structure of the mind, the form of the disease, the condition of the patient, psychiatric and medical treatment, and studied the social, political, economic and cultural aspect of mental health as well as biological aspects. Link & phelan (cited in Demir, 2023) stated that elements that defines class states that the poorer an individual is, the higher chances they are to have mental health issues than a rich person. This is as a result of the chronic stress poor people experience on daily basis. Individuals who live below daily income experience stressful life event than individuals of moderate life income.

Cultural Factors:

Gurang (cited in Ogundare, 2019) stated that culture influence how individuals manifest symptoms, communicate their symptoms, cope with psychological challenges and their willingness to seek treatment. Culture is all around us and influences in various ways. According to Taylor (cited in Causadias, 2020 defines culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, moral, customs and any other habits acquired by man as a member of a society". For UNESCO (cited in Brinkman, 2017) sees cultures as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyle, ways of living together, value system, traditions and beliefs. Religion is also a major characteristic under culture. Geertz (cited in Causadias, 2020) defines religion as a cultural system of symbols that informs actions, social order and world views. Mental health is perceived differently by people across cultural backgrounds. Napiet et al (cited in Ogundare, 2019) opined that although culture in itself is neither good nor bad, ignoring the influence of culture on mental health and wellbeing can allow negative influence to go unchecked. Marcella and Yamada (cited in Ogundare, 2019) further explained how culture influence psychopathology (scientific exploration of abnormal mental state) which are;

- The pattern of physical and psychosocial stressors
- The type and parameters of coping mechanism and resources used to mediate stressors
- Basic personality pattern, including but not limited to self-structure self-concept and need motivational system

Mental Health in South Eastern Nigeria

Nigeria is divided into six geographical zones the south east, south west, south South, north east, North West and North Central. The southeast is referred to as the Igbo land of Nigeria comprising of five States Abia, Anambra, Enugu and Imo. The Igbo tribe is mostly Christians with some Muslims and traditional religious believers as well as atheist and the major occupation is trading business and civil service. Agbodike (cited in Ikuka, Galbraith & Nyantanga (2013) explains that the Igbos have strong normative beliefs in Chi Ukwu (almighty God) who is also worshiped and revered as the supreme being but also believe in cults or lesser gods, deities and guardian such as chi (personal gods) and ala (the earth goddess) who enforces and punishes taboo with affliction (mental health disorder). Ikuka, Galbraith & Nyantanga (2016) in their research investigated the attitude of a cross-section of Igbo people in South Eastern Nigeria towards mental illness and found passive negative attitude with more than half of all the demographic group demonstrating authoritarian attitude and primary social distance. Apart from nurses about a third of each group student, teachers, students and the general public also endorsed social restrictions, anti-community care and secondary social distance. These attitudes influence individual behavior and if and if negative give birth to stigma. Stigma is defined as the occurrence of labeling stereotyping separation status loss and discrimination in a context of powerful differential Link & Phelan (cited in Peterson et al, 2020). According to Defreitas et al., (cited in Pederson et Al, 2020), mental health stigma refers to having negative attitudes towards individuals in mental illness or those receiving mental health services.

Film a Model for Influencing Audience Perception

Communication is the mainstream of existence in the human society. According to Baran & Davis cited in Adesemoye (2023) the mass media serves as a dominant conveyor belt for packaging and distributing messages of cultural, social and economic importance to the masses. Nollywood has become an international movie making culture, making it one of the determinants of Nigerian perception formation on media and educational behaviors. According to Iteji, Danjuma & Agir (2021), Nollywood's productions reflects the living situation of Nigerians and represent many issues that both Nigerians and Africans can relate with. Whether achieved directly or indirectly mass media, messages influence changes, reinforces existing beliefs and can influence people to behave in a certain manner (Ukozor & Obioha, 2018). According to McQuail cited in Ukozor & Obioha (2018) states that “There are vast evidence that the media are widely regarded as their own audience as potentially influential for good and evil and does in need of direction on the controlled by the society”. Audience perception is a function of feedback (Agba & Ineji, 2011). Claims, arguments, counter arguments have maintained the media programs have effect on its audience. This effect can either be negative or positive.

Jamaluddin, Normah & Norhayah cited in Badru, Hashim & Adisa (2022) opined that communication technology, mainly digital technology, has positioned storytelling in a way that sparks new critical debates within cultural industries. There are several factors influencing audience perception. Badre, Hashim & Adisa (2022) in their research highlighted various factors influencing audience perception. Cooper & Hang (2009), in this study categorize media usage into two elements which are instrumental and ritualistic. While the instrumental element is when the audience use media content, select information in the way they want passively the later (ritualistic) is when audience use media to receive information themselves and to get rid of boredom.

Theories

Social Reception Theory: The word perception comes from the Latin word "percipio" or "perceptio" meaning receiving, collecting, and apprehension with the mind of sense. According to Qiong (2017) perception is the process of attaining awareness or understanding of sensory information. Santrock cited in Amodu (2006) define perception as a process of organizing and interpreting sensory information to give meaning. You went for that to explain that perception functions as a means of representing information from the outside world internally. It is a personal creation of a particular individual who is involved in the process. Process of perception theory is grouped into two "bottom up theory and top-down theory". In a research by the Demuth (2013) bottom down process starts at the lowest sensory level then gradually lead to a more complicated and complex process. The quality and content of sensory input play a determinative role in influencing the final percept. While the top- down prefers direct perception without participation of knowledge and previous experience.

Social perception is the process in which individual interpret the information about things persons and situation. People learn about other feelings and emotion by picking up information they gather from physical appearance, verbal and nonverbal communication, facial expression, tone of voice, hand gesture, and body position or movement (Ansari, 2020). Individuals have different views and opinion depending on the particular situation. Parkinson (2007) opined that people do not simply put together bits of information they will receive about a target or rather actively construct meaning based on their ideas about how different personalities characteristic tends to come together. Perception depends on various factors such as previous experience, social relation, and psychological disposition. To explain this study, the phase of perception will be used.

AUDIENCE RECEPTION THEORY:

In Robert C. Holub book " Reception Theory " cited in Kinoshita (2004) characterized reception theory as a general shift in concern from the author and the work to the text and the leader. Reception Theory in mass communication plays an important role in understanding how audiences interact with media messages. This theory emerged in the 20th century. Reception Theory explores how audiences interacts and derive meaning for media messages. A text movie or creative work is not passively accepted by audience but instead interprets meaning based on cultural/historical background and life experiences. Wolfgang Iser & Staurt Hall propounded on reception Theory. Wolfgang Iser work was determined by mainly cultural factors. According to shi (2013) there are three main domains in exploration of reception theory according to Wolfgang Iser. The first involves the text in its potential to allow and manipulate the production of meaning. Secondly he investigated the process of text in reading.

Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, seamlessly integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon. The quantitative component of the study utilized a descriptive survey research design, targeting a population of 36,650 students, faculty, and staff at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. To ensure accurate representation, a sample size of 399 was calculated using a 5% error margin. For mathematical convenience, the sample size was approximated to 400. Stratified random sampling was employed to select participants from diverse faculties and departments, ensuring a representative cross-section of the population. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to participants, yielding valuable quantitative data.

Complementing the quantitative approach, focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to gather rich, qualitative insights. 10 participants were purposively selected, representing various faculties and departments. A semi-structured FGD guide was developed to explore participants' perceptions and experiences. Audio recordings of the discussions were transcribed verbatim, providing a detailed account of the qualitative data.

Results

Table 1: Respondents Age Distribution

Variables under consideration	**Respondents in this Study, N= 399**	
	Frequency (f)	**Percentage (%)**
Age in Group		
16 – 20	120	32.35
21 – 25	185	49.86
	66	17.78

25 and above		
Gender	160	43.1
Male	211	56.9
Female		
Level of Study	74	19.95
100	80	21.55
200	102	27.49
300	115	31.0
400		
Marital Status	338	91.11
Single	33	8.88
Married	0	0.0
Divorced		

As can be seen from the above table, 120 respondents, or 32.35% of the total, were between the ages of 16 and 20, 185 respondents, or 49.86%, were between the ages of 21 and 25, and 66 students, or 17.78% of the total, were 21 years of age or older. According to the preceding statistics, 211 (56.88%) of the respondents were female, and 160 (43.10%) were male. This suggests that there are more women than men among the responses. According to the table, 80 respondents, or 21.55% of the total, are 200 level students, whereas 74 respondents, or 19.95 percent, are 100 level students. Of the responders, 102 (27.49%) are students at the 300 level, and 115 (31.0%) are students at the 400 level. According to the results, there were more 400 level respondents than other respondents and 33 respondents (8.88%) were married, while 338 respondents (91.11%) were single. Not a single respondent had a divorce.

How knowledgeable do you feel about mental health after watching Nollywood films that portray mental health?

Table 2a: Respondents Knowledge on Mental health Portrayal in Film

Response Category	**Respondents in this study, N=371**	
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Very knowledgeable	82	22.11
Moderately knowledgeable	106	26.6
Barely knowledgeable	143	38.51

Not knowledgeable	40	10.78

Table 2b: Respondents Knowledge on Mental health Portrayal in Film

Variables under consideration	Respondents in this study, N=371				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Do you think Nollywood films Portrayal of mental health are accurate and realistic?	43 (11.59%)	47 (12.67%)	68 (18.32%)	130 (35.02%)	83 (23.37%)
Do you think Nollywood films portraying mental health can influence audience beliefs, Perception and action about mental health?	130 (35.05%)	99 (26.7%)	57 (15.36%)	46 (12.40%)	39 (10.51%)
Do you think Nollywood films that portrays mental health will make people more likely to talk about mental health?	30 (8.09%)	41 (11.05%)	83 (22.36%)	116 (31.27%)	101 (27.23%)
Do you think Nollywood films that portrays mental health can help to reduce the stigma around mental health?	36 (9.71%)	43 (11.60%)	54 (14.56%)	150 (40.43%)	88 (23.21%)

According to the above table, 40 respondents, or 10.78% of the sample, do not feel knowledgeable about mental health issues after watching Nollywood films depicting mental health, while 143 respondents, or 38.51% of the sample, feel barely knowledgeable about mental health after watching these films. Additionally, 106 respondents, or 26.60% of the sample, feel moderately knowledgeable about mental health after watching these films. This suggests that after viewing Nollywood films that depict mental health, respondents knew very little about mental health issues.

According to the above table, 130 respondents (35.02%) disagree that Nollywood films portray mental health in a realistic and accurate manner, 83 respondents (22.37%) strongly disagree, 68 respondents (18.32%) identify as neutral, 47 respondents (12.67%) agree, and 43 respondents (11.59%) strongly agree. The majority of respondents strongly disagree that Nollywood films accurately and realistically depict mental health, according to the data gathered. According to the above data, 130 respondents, or 35.05%, strongly agree that Nollywood films that depict mental health might affect viewers' perceptions. Regarding mental health, 26.70% of respondents, or 99

people, concur that Nollywood movies that depict mental health can affect viewers' opinions. Of those who feel neutral about mental health, 15.36%, or 46 people, agree, 12.40%, or 46 people, diagnose, and 10.51%, or 39 people, strongly disagree.

According to the majority of respondents, Nollywood films' depictions of mental health have the power to affect viewers' perceptions, opinions, and behavior. 31.27% of respondents, or 116 people, disagree that Nollywood films that depict mental health will encourage more conversation about it, 27.23% of respondents, or 101 people, strongly disagree, 22.36% feel neutral, 11.05% of respondents, or 41 people, agree, and 8.09% of respondents, or 30 people, strongly agree, according to the above table.

This suggests that the majority of respondents don't believe that seeing Nollywood movies about mental health will encourage more people to discuss mental health issues. According to the information in the above table, 40.43% of 150 respondents disagree that Nollywood films that depict mental health can help lessen the stigma associated with mental health, 23.21% of 88 respondents strongly disagree, 14.56% of 54 respondents feel neutral about this, 11.60% of 43 respondents agree, and 9.71% of 36 respondents agree. The majority of respondents believe that Nollywood films that depict mental health cannot lessen the stigma associated with it, according to the data analyzed in the above table.

Table 3: Nollywood films portray of mental health impact among the respondents

Variables under consideration	**Respondents in this study, N=371**				
	Extremely	**Very**	**Moderately**	**Slightly**	**Not at all**
After watching Nollywood films portraying mental health, how much do you believe that mental health issues are a serious problem?	36 (9.71%)	52 (14.02%)	60 (16.18%)	88 (23.71%)	135 (36.38%)
After watching Nollywood films about mental health, how emotionally impacted are you?	31 (8.36%)	44 (11.86%)	64 (17.25%)	92 (24.80%)	140 (37.75%)
After watching Nollywood films portraying mental health, how likely are you to take actions related to mental health issues?	38 (10.24%)	57 (15.36%)	68 (18.33%)	99 (26.68%)	109 (29.39%)
Overall do you think Nollywood films portraying mental health impact the Society?	158 (42.57%)	102 (27.52%)	55 (14.81%)	31 (8.35%)	25 (6.74%)

According to the data in table 3, 36.38% of respondents, or 135 people, do not think that mental health is a serious issue after watching Nollywood films that depict mental health; 23.71% of respondents, or 88 people, think that mental health is a serious problem to a slight extent; 16.18% of 60 people, or 60 respondents, think that mental health is a serious problem to a moderate extent; 14.02% of 52 people, or 52 people, think that mental health is a serious problem after viewing Nollywood films that depict mental health; and 9.71% of respondents, or 36 people, strongly believe that mental health is a serious issue. After seeing Nollywood films, the majority of respondents do not think that mental health is a severe problem, according to the table's examined results. Thus, 140 respondents (37.75%) report that they are not emotionally affected by Nollywood films that depict mental health, 92 respondents (24.8%) report that they are slightly affected, 64 respondents (17.25%) report that they are moderately affected, 44 respondents (11.86%) report that they are very affected, and 31 respondents (8.36%) report that they are extremely affected. After viewing Nollywood films that depict mental health, the majority of respondents do not report feeling emotionally affected, according to the results of this table.

Table 3 indicates that 109 respondents (29.39%) are unlikely to take any mental health-related actions after viewing Nollywood films that depict mental health, 99 respondents (26.68%) will take some minor mental health-related actions after viewing these films, 68 respondents (18.33%) will take moderate mental health-related actions after viewing these films, 57 respondents (15.36%) are very likely to take mental health-related actions after viewing these films, and 38 respondents (10.24%) will take extreme mental health-related actions after viewing these films.

The research result indicates that after viewing Nollywood films that depict mental health, the majority of respondents are unlikely to take any action pertaining to mental health issues. Additionally, 158 respondents (42.57%) think that Nollywood movies that depict mental health have a significant influence on society. According to 102 respondents (27.52%), Nollywood movies that depict mental health have a significant influence on society. 55 respondents, or 14.81 percent, believe that Nollywood movies that deal with mental health have a moderate effect on society. Of those who responded, 31 (8.35%) think that Nollywood movies that depict mental health have a minor effect on mental health, while 25 (6.25%) think that these movies have no effect on society. Based on the facts presented above, the majority of viewers believe that Nollywood films that depict mental health have a significant influence on society, whether in a positive or negative way.

Focus Group Discuss Analysis

According to the two films watched, do you think Nollywood films have similar experience to the mental health challenges deposited? According to the analysis on answers from the respondents, 100% of the participants said yes, they feel Nollywood films have similar experiences to mental health challenges deposited, though participant number three feels it’s not completely accurate.

Respondents 1: Yes but not totally accurate

Respondents 2: Yes, also noticed similar happenings in the movie and real life events.

From the two movies her perfect life and Iyawo Mi can you point out certain differences in the depiction of the two films that relates to real life.

According to the analysis of the respondent's response from the focus group discussion shows that the two films showed people of various economic backgrounds, it also included the two types of treatment Nigerian mental health patients would rather receive, therapy or spiritual healing. A respondent also noted that intimate families played a role in their mental health of cast (Respondent 1 & 2)

One thing I noticed from the movie that relates to real life is that individuals from poor background are not given a fair chance in healing. That is why majority of the people roaming the streets and mentally unstable are mainly from poor to average homes. A rich family can afford psychiatric drugs and treatment but the same can't be said for poor families so the chances of recovering are usually slim (Respondent 3)

Kunle case scenario is very well common in Nigerian societies. People prefer to visit the churches and shrines for healing to mental health problems than Hospitals and clinic. They are brainwashed and manipulated. Just like Eniola's case, a lot of real-life victims are diagnosed with demonic possession by these healing centers (Respondents 4)

How do you think Nollywood films can improve Portrayal of mental health?

According to the responses of respondents, 100% of the respondents are of the opinion that it solely lies on the director, producer and script writer to be more learned about metal health, employ research and as much as possible cut off scenes that promote stigmatization and stereotypes. 30% of respondents are of the thoughts that movie makers should lay minimal emphasis on profit taking and more emphasis on promoting knowledge about mental health conditions (Respondent 3)

Letting go of some certain beliefs; Nigerian communities have various beliefs especially about mental health. These film producers need to put aside those beliefs and focus more on passing proper information. Human life's are at stake, so it's urgently needed (Respondent 4)

By trying to lay more emphasis on the importance of educating the public about certain practices that can be dangerous to human health and try to effectively communicate treatments to the public (Respondents 5)

Discussion

The results of the survey shows that most respondents are female and in the 18–25 age range. Most of those surveyed were 400-level unmarried students. The majority of respondents had seen several Nollywood films addressing mental health, and the majority had seen these films online, according to the study, which is consistent with research by Olayinka and Fumilayo (2011). This study demonstrates that Nigerians enjoy viewing Nigerian films and frequently watch scenes that show mental illness. According to the report, the majority of respondents are female and between the

ages of 18 and 25. The majority of those surveyed were unmarried 400-level students. According to the study, the vast majority of respondents had seen a lot of Nollywood films about mental health, and the majority of them have accessed these films online, which is consistent with research from (Olayinka, Fumilayo, 2011). This study offers proof that Nigerians frequently watch sequences showing mental illness and that Nigerian films are well-liked by the country's community members.

The results of this study also showed that Nollywood films that depict mental health have an impact on viewers' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors. They also determine the likelihood that respondents will discuss mental health after viewing these films. Additionally, this study found that most respondents believe most depictions are wrong and unrealistic. The study examined "She Is Perfect" and "Iyawo Mi," two Nollywood films that deal with mental health. Mental health was shown from two angles in these two movies. Additionally, the study found that more than 70% of viewers think that Nollywood movies that depict mental health have an effect and can affect viewers' attitudes and actions around mental health. This is consistent with the study's findings (Godwin et al., 2021), which claim that film-based therapies can improve MHL, attitudes toward getting help, and the stigma associated with mental illness among teenagers. Despite their potential and usefulness, these teaching methods have not received enough attention, and movies are still largely unexplored as a vital tool for addressing the mental health needs of teenagers. Because 63% of audience respondents said that the representation of mental health themes in Nollywood films is unlikely to assist avoid the stigma surrounding mental health, it was determined that these films also act as a means of preventing stigma around stereotypes around mental health.

Additionally, the study found that the majority of viewers (60%) of the 200 respondents who watched Nollywood films depicting mental health were more inclined to pursue traditional or spiritual healing than science-based therapy and treatment. It's unclear how these representations might affect Nigerians' beliefs about mental health. Nonetheless, it is conceivable that the persistent notion that mental disease can arise due to or be treated by a supernatural effect produced by certain gods, devils, or magicians (Bieńkowska, 2009) may influence how people view mental health services. Because of the film's inadequate references to psychiatry, the narratives consequently portray psychiatry or science-based mental health care as either nonexistent or as a less successful option (Khadijah, 2019). The study's findings, which support the idea that media representations of mental health reflect producers' perceptions of mental health, showed that Nollywood films depicting mental health can have a significant impact on viewers and have a positive or negative impact on society (Khadijah, 2019). In contrast to the preferred references producers make to magic and supernaturalism, there are other approaches to depict mental health difficulties. Hence, magical themes may remain predominant in media representations of madness until content producers willingly adopt alternative themes in narrative plots.

Conclusion

According to the study's findings, a lot of Nollywood productions spread false information and unfavorable preconceptions about mental health, which causes stigma and misunderstandings. The majority of participants believed that these films did not accurately depict mental health and were unlikely to encourage dialogue or behavior related to seeking treatment. The study suggests that before beginning a film project, directors, producers, and screenwriters should take the time to learn more about mental health. We suggest that regulating organizations like the National Film and Video Censor Board establish guidelines for truthful depictions of mental health and educate industry personnel. In order to promote truthful representations of mental diseases and educate viewers, it is also critical that the film industry and mental health organizations continue their relationship.

Recommendations

- Scriptwriters, producers and directors should carry out proper research about mental health before developing a script and putting them into action. This will help in curving the false misconceptions around mental health.
- The National Film and Video Censor Board (NFVCD), Association Of Nigerian Film Directors (ANMD), Association of Movie Directors (AMD) should educate directors and producers on the need to portray a realistic and accurate depiction of mental health in Nollywood films. They can create a regulation that controls mental health movies that go into the Market as film companies are more concerned about making profits.
- There should be a balanced mixture of entertainment, education and information in Nollywood films portraying mental health. The movie can entertain and at the same time educate the audience by passing the accurate information about mental health issues in the Society.
- Film industries should partner with organizations that are concerned about mental health, to find the best way to best communicate to the audience about mental health issues and also crowd fund for producers who wants to use Nollywood as a medium on educating the Society and mental health

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