COMBATING JUVENILE DELINQUENCY THROUGH THEATRE AND FILM AND NEGATIVE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN DIGITAL SPACE

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Abstract

Despite its numerous advantages in global marketing of culture and information dissemination using theatre and film industries, digital space has exposed juvenile to fraud, violence, illicit drugs and moral decadence through social media. The artists as members of the society use their creativity as social commentary on their immediate society. Over emphasizing crimes and immoralities in creative contents corrupts the youth's minds. Culture is an agent of development in the society. Sadly, the societal cultures are becoming relics of deleted past to most youth due to globalization. Exemplary theatrical works and films that promote cultures, moral need to be projected and more encouraged. This article is modeled on social representational theory and adopted content analysis as a research tool. The paper sees corruption, bad parenting and violent religious preaching as other factors affecting the youth. Parents and religious leaders have significant roles to play in molding children and youth's behaviour. The article concludes that as product of the society we may have unique characteristics but shaped by cultural ideology. The paper recommends among others, that parents should be mindful of the kind of gifts and affluence they exposed their children to. Artists should reduce emphasis on sexuality, celebrity affluence and violence as such exposure pose danger to youth psyche and prioritize morality and cultural values. Government, cooperate organizations and influential citizens need to invest in educational system. There should be restriction in the use of social media especially for juveniles, banning of contents capable of compromising cultural and moral values.

Introduction

Juveniles are the most vulnerable group exposed to digital technologies because of it highly inquisitive and experimental behavioural tendencies. Despite being the fastest means of information dissemination and marketing ideas, digital technology exposes the contemporary youth to high rate of moral decadence and crime such as ritual killings, assassination, fraud, illicit drugs, kidnapping, terrorism, banditry and sexual immorality amongst others. This is a serious peril to the society in general and an issue of great concern to the artists. It is note worthy that the artist who is a product of the society, source for raw materials in the society, re-creates it to educate, entertain, conscientize and inform the society.

Theatre performances and films from antiquity have being effect channels of information dissemination to the society. The thematic preoccupations of the artists centre on the happenings and cultural ideology of their immediate environment. Though majority of artists rely on social values of their society; some go out of it to present their arts. Social media is a viable channel of promoting the digital content of theatre and film of artists in the contemporary society. A lot of contents found in some production and the Internet space promote promiscuity, hate speech, fake news, the aforesaid crimes and many more. These acts portray a negative image of arts, especially theatre and film industry.

Performances have the capacity to influence positively or negatively depending on the contents unleashed and the kind of audiences. For over a decade, some African countries especially Nigeria have been experiencing constant crisis as regards to incessant killing by bandits, herdsmen, terrorists and ritual killers etc. Government, in her effort to curb the spread of this menace, blames the film and theatre industry. This prompted the Nigerian Senate to proscribe Nollywood from acting ritual scenes in films. But the question remains: What is the cause of the recent tragedies experienced in the country? What is the contribution of film and theatre in curbing the incessant killings in the society? What is the social and moral obligation of the artists and his art to the society? Can art restore the cultural value and moral

decadence in the contemporary society? This paper attempts to provide answers to the questions here

Social Environmental Determinism in Art Performances and Film

Sociologists and Psychologists researchers alike assume that the society influences the attitude, identity, behaviour and personality of the inhabitants. Some argue that beside internal factors, there are external determinants that form an individual such as agents of socialization as family, peer group, mass media and school, etc. These agents of socialization are part and parcel of the society. Social representation originates from the work of Sociologist Emile Durkheim and taken up by Serge Moscovici. Nicky Hayes submits that the theorist Moscovici argues that:

> The shared social representations held by a group or society are what allow people to communicate effectively, and to come to an agreed view about reality. They create a base of shared knowledge which allows us to communicate effectively with one another. But they are closely linked to membership of social groups, and society itself consists of many different groups, culture and subculture. As a result, there can be many different social representations in any given society (376).

Groups and individual do not live in isolation, but constant interaction with their environment, nuclear and extended family transmitting culture of the society to them, different clubs, media, religious institutions, schools and peer groups. Consequently, at the community is the larger and dominant culture of the society, there are the cultures within cultures at the group levels which account for the reason why a specific group behave differently or may have unique characteristics from the larger society. The characteristics arising from different social group could have positive or negative repercussions however, for the group that exhibits that and the society generally. Majority of the work of an artist reflects more specifically to reasoning and a reflection of his environment. To validate this, 'Individual identities... no matter how idiosyncratic or unique they may appear, are invariably social, the product of the diverse and overlapping communal sphere in which individual live their lives' (Dillon, 220).

Since it has been is established that the behaviour of people and their lives are determined by the environment they relate mostly with, consequently, it may affect their work positively or negatively because the environment provides them the raw material for evaluation. The society may react positively or otherwise to the content of the artists. Art works of any form be it theatre performances, films, poetry and prose are reflections of the society that produce them. The artists as members of the society see their work as commentary and ways of suggesting remedies and correcting the crises in the society. The question of the relevance of arts and the social obligation of the artist has continued to linger in the minds on scholars for long. For instance, L. O Bamidele evaluates the role the artist conceived of the work vis-à-vis their outlook in the society and notes that the artist proclaimed a lofty role for themselves such as teacher's mission of enlightening the world, vanguards in revolution, etc. He argues that:

> The task of art and the artist towards achieving a sense of harmony and stability is an accepted function and model for all literary creativity. But as there are social and intellectual changes in the society, the artist may become unsure of his function. But it is an established fact that the function of the artist is consequent upon the type of society he finds himself; so the question of uncertainty of function is and should be out of it. (33-34).

As society changes so also the contending issues of creative writers. The contemporary society gave birth to crisis demanding urgent attention from all facets of life. It is not surprising to see theatre productions and films projecting the issues of ritual killing, fraud, corruption, drugs, human trafficking, rape, banditry, religious crisis, depression, domestic violence, divorce, separation, homosexuality, lesbianism and sexuality among others. This is a challenge not just to family, but schools, society, religious body and the government.

William Downs, Lou Wright and Erik Ramsey reinstate that, 'Artists commonly view their art as their own interpretation or judgment of existence, rather than simply as an act of skill or a work of beauty. When the word art is used in this way, the implicit meaning is "this is life as I, the artist, see it."' (5). The society creates man, as arts and films are products of the society. Arts and films emulate the life of the society. As a product of the society, the artist carefully selects the aspects that he considers relevant to project or recreate to the society as his social commentary. He does not copy, but creatively modifies or drops certain aspects to suit his point of view. His world view can either be rejected or accepted by the society.

Armed with the poetic license to create his work, the artist owes the society a social responsibility and moral obligation to point the ills of society aimed at educating, entertaining, informing and generating positive response from the spectators objectively. This clarion call is indispensable bearing in mind the period of national mourning we are now confronted with in recent time. Art should not just be art for art sake or exacerbate the current national tragedy but should purge the nation and cleanse it from the blood birth of innocent souls and corruption denting the image of the nation and threatening its peace and survival. The contemporary arts are consumed with the recent happening in the society while ignoring the cultural values of the people. Cultural values are rapidly going into extinction because of modernization, while others become relics of the deleted past in the memory of the present generation. Cultural values such as festival, folklores, initiation, marriage ceremonies and funerals. That form the basis of our theatre and films with positive influence in the society are near extinct to most juveniles and forgotten by most of the youth, parents and elders.

Societal Cultural Belief System, Values and Norms

Culture is simply a way of life a people in a given society. It is the belief system and pattern of behaviour exhibited in material form such as cloths, artifacts, architectures and non-material form as marriages, rituals, mode of worships, dances, songs, values, knowledge, attitude, funerals and festivals etc. They are nurtured and learned behaviour which make them transferable. Ezenwanebe Osita defines culture as:

> ...a collective treasure of a people, their shared life, fears, aspiration and their collective struggle to preserve and redefine the past in order to make sense of the present and chart the way to a brighter future. Riddled, dances, songs, proverbs, chants, incantations, idioms etc. are among the shared knowledge of a people which are aspects of their culture (202).

This suggests that culture evolves with the development of human society. They are not biologically configured or natural features of human society but a teachable and nurtured lifestyle being taught from generation to generation. This means that it can also be altered if not properly understood and transmitted. Culture can be seen in our mode of buildings, artifacts, cloths, foods, festivals, rituals, marriages and burial rites, etc. In the contemporary society, aspects of culture are packaged in form of films, arts, and dramas for entertainment, education and information propagation. In an article titled *The Educational Values of African Traditional Practices,* Chris Omotosho aligns with Fafunwa that the oldest educational system in history has two common characteristics of teaching religion and promoting tradition of the people. He maintains that:

> The realistic nature of this system is contained in its advocacy for the acquisition of the right type of values, attitudes and morals in order for the society to be tranquil and peaceful for all to enjoy living in. Every responsible member of the community serves as a transmitter-a teacher and trainer of societal norms and skills to the younger generations. Children learned the history of great men and women from folklores and stories narrated by the elderly members of the society. Good virtues such as valour, honesty, wisdom, respect for elders and oratory are either directly or indirectly impacted from such stories (50-51).

Culture is educative, and transmitting it and belief system of a community is a duty of mature and responsible elders and community members to guide the ignorant and younger generation. Teachers need to be grounded in what they impact to the innocent and younger ones if not they will misrepresent the ideas. Since culture is teachable, this means, it was and is still a valid tool for learning in the society. The younger generation needs to understand their past in order to know, the present and the direction of their future.

Each society has its ways of thinking or belief systems which they hold in high esteem. These thinking patterns become their philosophy and guiding principles in life. The philosophy, therefore, manifests in the way they react to things and work around them in the society. The philosophy of a society in turn affects their aesthetics of creativity as a society and also as individual. For example, the Greek's philosophy on the gods' dominance power over man plays dominant role in the philosophy of their playwrights. What is dominant in our society would directly or indirectly affect the writers. The Western culture is also in vogue. All over the world, cultures and ideologies of societies are packaged in music videos, films and other medium of entertainment and sold in the media. Edward Ossai notes in his work *Nigerian Home Videos and Ethnic Identities* that:

> One common trend among all European, American, Asian and some African film industries is the fact that they all project their various national ideals. But Nigeria seems to be an exception. Unless film in Nigerian is taken seriously, both as a cultural product and a craft with the potentials of boosting entertainment and education, thereby increasing the economic activities in the Nigerian economy, the industry will not go beyond its present form as Home Video phenomena. This phenomenon is usually considered in reference to the tendency by which Nigerian filmmakers portray the ideological worldview of only one ethic group, religion or region (1).

Nigeria is blessed with rich and diverse cultures. Most playwrights, artists and film makers researched based on the culture they are familiar with. Others may attempt research beyond their communities and may not be fully grounded in the culture or belief system of a people; rather, they are in a hurry to produce and sale their content; which may not be a true representation of the belief system or reflection of that culture. Such art works are dominantly presented from one cultural, religious and ethnic perspective as seen above with consideration also for the dominant audience. To make it saleable to targeted audience, there may be infusion of other ideas that may end up discrediting the content. That could be misinterpreted by other society. It is unarguable to state from the above discourse that beside the diverse culture of the people paraded in arts, the author is advocating the need for a national ideology to improve the quality of Nigerians' creative contents.

As noted earlier the ideology and philosophy of a society plays significant role in the life and arts of the society. Thus, what society set as ideology, standard value and measurement for success would surely affect them positively or negatively. For instance, if a society values education and honesty it would be easy to assess by the significance placed on their educational sectors and value of scholars likely to be produced. But when emphasis is made on sexuality, deceit and immoral acts, it would reflect high cases of rapes, commercial sexual workers, single parenting and high rate of divorce would be recorded in such society. A majority of parents and the society in placed high value on wealth and materialism. This is undeniably one of the crises that beset the nation. Values are elements of non-material culture that are learned and transmitted through ages from the older to the younger generation. Zerihum Doda substantiates this with his submission that values are:

> ...General, abstract guidelines for our live, decisions, goals, choices, and actions. They are shared ideas of a groups or a society as to what is right or wrong, correct or incorrect, desirable or undesirable, acceptable or unacceptable, ethical or unethical, etc., regarding something. They are the general road maps for our lives. Values are shared and are learned in group... They can be positive or negative (78).

To ensure peace, stability and a working system, a society needs rules and regulations to guide the conduct of her members. John Macionis posits that 'Norms are rules and expectations by which a society guides the behavior of its members' (149). They are the principles of human survival stipulating what needs to be done or shunned as a social being. The behaviour of each member of the society is rewarded if they adhered or punished if deviated from the stipulated norms. The punishment could be mild or strenuous depending on the gravity of the offence. Africa frowned at ritual killing, kidnapping, stealing, homosexuality, lesbianism, incest and corruption etc. Good behaviours as respect for elders, hard work, morality, faithfulness, honesty etc. are rewarded. If healthy cultural values and norms are understood, adhered and transmitted religiously, it means that culture is capable of promoting peace and tranquility as well as guarding a nation to sustainable growth and development. The conduct of community members can ensure speedy development or total collapse of the system.

Youth and Social Media in Digital Era

Technological advancement is one of the greatest achievements of this era. The society is rapidly growing from analog to highly digitalized age. Analog information and data can be collated, transferred to digital format, stored to access and download at will with little price tag or free. For instance, an analog letter which could take a week or a day be sent to a designated address through post office or waybill could be sent to the same location in a digital format within seconds through e-mail, fax and WhatsApp, etc. Physical meeting are now reduced to Online through zoom and other platform to minimize the risk of physical journey which could result to accident. Everything is happening so fast.

However, the technology and digital growth has exposed the world to different cultural shocks and experiences. Cultures around the globe are digitally packaged, commodified and sold with the help of technology at a very intriguing speed. Despite the fascinating growth in cultural promotion and marketing of product, it has negative consequence when misused. Such effect of this is seen in the high rate of moral decadence and social vices in our contemporary society exhibited by the youth. Homosexuality and lesbianism are not longer hidden in Africa. They are gaining promotion in the media from the likes of Bob Risky the celebrated cross gender dresser and his business rivals, James Brown, Brayan Nwakoro etc. who are always seen in the media for negativity. This is the result of youth over exposure to Western cultures

The growth and advancement of Internet, Instagram, YouTube, Tik-Tok, Twitter and Facebook make foreign cultures adulterate the African cultures because of wrong usage and attitude of youth toward social media. Some instrument of transportation and sales of culture include theatre productions, movies, music, television and mass media, etc. Very high percentage of youth spend more time Online seeking for pleasurable and hookup or dating sites with unlimited restrictions, they come across contents that can either build or corrupt them in form of films and theatre entertainment. For instances an aspect of production that interest viewers can be cut and posted as meme to be viewed through Youtube WhatsApp status, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram most of which are negative scenes. Wrong values are rapidly promoted through these means. These are platforms to meet and connect with people globally to exchange ideas. Most victims of ritual killing were incited through various social media platforms. This is not to discredit the role of social media in culture globalization and term it completely bad or evil, but a firm level of control is required to recuperate sanity in African societies.

Globalization Effect on Culture and Adolescent

Globalization is a phenomenon which entails:

> People around the globe are more connected to one another now. Information and money flows quickly from one place to another more than ever before. Goods and services produced in one part of the world are increasingly available in all parts of the world. International travels are more frequent. International communication is

> commonplace... Globalization is the term some use to describe the growing worldwide interdependence of peoples and country (Enojo, 47).

Android phones, iPads, iPhones, and laptops are not longer luxurious items to children at within the age range of three to ten years talk less of those above that age. These are common gifts parents give their children to celebrate special days like birthday, graduations and some other social achievement. What and how the children use such devices is not a thing of concern to most of the parents. The world is now a global village and connected through these devices. It is worth noting that children are good imitators. They are gifted with the intelligence to observes and impersonate adults in the society. Therefore, the values and ideals a society project is what they would equally project in their lives of imitation and subsequently grow with it as lifestyle.

The social media is flooded with lots of artistic contents that mostly promote wealth, beauty and sex. The contents are uploaded by youth who ironically are now parents and never saw anything wrong in such. Most of what is obtained as Theatre productions and films on the net are highly packaged with vulgarity, highly erotic contents and easily downloaded through various download sites. More emphasis is given to such ideas than morality. The minds of the juvenile audience are easily captured and corrupted by such ideas than the morality of the production because their quest for pleasure at that level is high. They become glue to them as acceptable ways of life and standards of living in the modern society. Little wonder the mass media is littered with news like abortions and murder by teenage lovers, leakage of sex tapes of under age children like the Chrisland School and celebrities who should serve as models to youth in the country. Strong et al observe that:

> SEXUALITY WAS ONCE HIDDEN from view in our culture: Fig leaves covered the "private parts" of nudes; poultry breasts were renamed "white meat"... and homosexuality was called "the love that dares not speak its name." but over the past few generations, sexuality has become more open. In recent years, popular culture and the media have transformed what we "know" about sexuality. Not only is sexuality *not* hidden from view; it is often seems to surround us (3).

In Nigeria it is now becoming a normal thing to celebrate abnormality such as gay, cross gender dressing, going for cosmetic surgeries to alter one's gender. Being gay or lesbian might be accepted in other Western culture but frowns at and considered taboo in some parts of Africa like Nigeria. The cultural cords and values that bind African traditions are gradually becoming obsolete due to digital age and globalization.

Corruption, Greed and their Effects on Society

Beyond sexuality, the country is bedeviled by incessant murder of innocent people occasioned by greed and corruption. Greed and corruption is gradually replacing our traditional cultural values. They are becoming national culture, gaining acceptance by elites, politicians and celebrities down to the common masses. Monetary values are placed higher regardless of the humanitarian consequences as witnessed in the 2022 primary elections of the various political parties. The delegates voted flag bearers of different positions not based on capabilities and capacities of the candidates but on highest bidders. The country is richly blessed with natural resources, governed by few who impoverished majority of the society. The gap between the have and have not is too wide. Nigerian politicians live extravagant lifestyle to the detriment of the struggling class craving to be like them. Positions are not sort for the betterment of the country but for selfish and personal improvement. Hence, the country remains backward and highly indebted without plans to improve the economy and advance local industries despite gifts of talents and human resources in the country. The major ideas of position occupants are just to loot the national treasury.

Citizenry are forced to find ways to compliment the little resources if at all they have to appear ostentatious and prosperous. The negative consequence of this expedition for possessions is the mass recruitment of youth and teenagers into ritual killings, fraud, kidnapping, robbery, drug trafficking, human trafficking, banditry and terrorism. The societal pressure and class distinction is forcefully pushing the youth especially to crime to feel accepted and celebrated by their society. They are not ignorant of the fact that the punishments for such crimes are heinous. To ensure norms and laws are adhered to; different law enforcement agencies are instituted to maintain order in the society at different levels from Local government, state and Federal. To be invisible to law enforcement agencies, they fortify themselves which charms that mostly required human blood sacrifices. There is no free gift from evil. The evils or witches in the society sign pacts to give lives to sustain their powers. Hence, they use their victims as sacrifice to ensure their well-being and survival. The desire to be moneyed has brought us to the current tragedies bedeviling the entire nation. The country is thrown constantly into national mourning.

The polity of the nation has climaxed to the point of using the masses lives for campaign and tickets to win elections. It is not surprising for people to conclude that terrorism and banditry might just be diversion and cover up by dirty citizens and politician to milk the country of its natural resources in places like Zamfara state where it is alleged that is blessed with gold. The country is polarized by ethnic and religious, political, social and economic divides. These are the current trends that dominant the society of the artists and creative content creators both the amateur and the professionals. While some of the artists approach the fight positively, others are negative about it; however, this is a collective struggle that must be fought to a logical conclusion by the society at large.

Obligation of Parents and Religious Leaders in Youth Development

To combat the moral decadence in the society is also a fight that must be championed by parents. Bad parenting is one of the major crises the youth are battling with. Parents have the obligations to teach the children good virtues, obedience because they are the first contact of learning in a child's life. Parents must be mindful of the kind of people their children socialize with and places they visit. Again, if a family is constantly in crisis and disunity, it psychologically affects a child's love life. When children grow in a stable, peaceful and lovely home, they would replicate same in the larger society than those from hostile environment and broken home full of domestic violence.

Furthermore, religious leaders equally have significant roles to play. Some religious preaching disregard unity, peace, promotes violence and partisan politics in the pretext of protecting religion. Violent religious ideologies lead to regular religious attacks and retaliation, with steady increase in death records, destruction of properties, farms, businesses and social amenities. Since there is no monopoly of violence in any group or religion, the Traditionalist, Christians and Muslims leaders and their congregation must acknowledge peace as a way forward to sustainable development in the society. A lot depends on the kind of psychic they instilled in the minds of their followers. Instead of the constant antagonizing of each other's faith, and tilting the minds of the youth on prosperity and materialism, such efforts should be invested in restoration of peace and the lost moral values of the society.

Conclusion

It is established that society greatly influences the growth and development of individual and the group. As product of the society, though we may have different and unique characteristics, we are shaped by our cultural ideological system as a group or individual. Technological advancements are breaking the cord of moral and unity that binds the society. The 21st Century youth are completely alienated and disintegrated from the cultural values of their society. Moral values are hardly projected in most of the art performances and films; however, there are good and creative works that still emphasize the good virtues and morals of African culture. We appeal to the conscious of the artists to digitally promote

morality and African cultural values as amplified in works of great scholars such as Victor Duga's *Gidan Juju*, Amirikpa Oyigbenu's *Town Hall Whispers*. Quality works of Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, Tess Osonye Onwueme, J. P. Clark, Ahmed Yerima, Tor Iorapuu's *Had I Known*, Barclays Ayakoroma's works and other reputable writers are theatrical masterpieces that need to be acted and filmed, promoted to be used as model for acting and filmmaking Online. Restoring peace and morals in the contemporary society is not just the artists' warfare but equally parents, religious leaders and the government.

Recommendations

Parents should be mindful of the kind of gifts and affluence they exposed their children to. Parental control should be activated in satellites cables, electronics and sophisticated phones given to children. Parents should be mindful of the kind of friends and group their children fraternize with and places they visits. They should also avoid early exposure of children to luxurious lifestyle as such corrupts their mindsets and kill the zeal of hard work in them, knowing that whatever they demand can be gotten, while others are aware of where they parents keep money.

Contemporary artists should adopt works of reputable theatre and film scholars as model to their work. They should reduce emphasis on sexuality, celebrity affluence and violence as such exposure poses danger to the youth psychic. As in the works of most aforementioned reputable scholars morality and cultural values should be highly propagated as priority in the contemporary artists' thematic preoccupations. The culture of rushing to produce and marking production of art works should be discouraged. There should be proper research and understanding of the work and its impact to the society before unleashing it to the audience. The various associations saddled with the responsibility of scrutinizing contents should ensure they do not sleep on this and ensure both professional and amateur artists and content creators are dully registered. This would restore value to creativity and boost the national income from the registration charged.

Government, cooperate organizations and citizens need to invest on educational system of the country. Government needs to desist from politicizing education at all levels and inject more resources in it to expand opportunities for the youth who seem to have lost hope in education and consistently chanting the slogan 'School or education *na* scam'. Cooperate organizations and influential citizens should also take cue from the good gesture of the likes of Ordinary President (Ahmed Isa) in his effort to support education to encourage patronage of foreign students and lecturers. A compromised educational sector of a nation means the nation is equally compromised. There should be constituted law banning children from primary to secondary from using phones in schools. Parents should be meant to face the law stipulated in the constitution if their wards are caught with phones in school without approval from the school authorities

Furthermore, government most reclaims her lost glory from the masses by shunning corruption, fighting dirty and bloody politics, tackling the root cause of banditry, terrorism while being sincere in handling issues regarding masses' welfare. The Security architectures of the nation on the other hand must take advantage of the technological advancement in combating crimes in the society.

Finally, there should be restriction in the use of social media especially for juveniles and banning of contents capable of compromising cultural and moral values of the society and nation. Instead of giving likes to abusive and immoral juvenile contents in the social media, performances and films such should be promptly reported by the audience to the media platform administrator or the sanction body concerned. The post must be stepped down immediately and appropriate sanction should be applied to the perpetrator.

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