

Nollywood Films Representation of Cultism and Ritual Murder in Nigeria, Real or Imagined? An Audience Assessment

¹Cornelius A. Ukwueze Ph.D, ²Uche Patricia Ekwugha, ³Chinwe Elizabeth Uzochukwu Ph.D
^{1,2}Lecturer, ³Senior Lecturer, Department of Mass Communication
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Abstract

It has always been in doubt whether nollywood film's representations of cultism and ritual murder is a true reflection of what actually obtains in African or Nigerian societies among various audience segments or are by product of the creative or imaginative thoughts of the film makers. This study investigates the views of Awka people of Anambra state on the reality or otherwise of these representations. Mixed methodology of Survey and Content Review was adopted. In the survey, a sample size of 400 respondents made up film viewers were randomly selected through multi-stage sampling from the 33 villages that make up Awka town, the capital city of Anambra State. Content Review was carried out on Simeon and Chioma Chime's film, My Mother's Head. Findings indicate that nollywood movies' stories apart from lacking credibility among the Awka audiences are not true reflection of what actually goes on Nigerian societies in particular and Africa in general. A brief critic and content review of the movie, My Mother' Head pointed at those imaginative acts, scenes, costumes and aesthetics that show "unAfricanness" in the representations of cultism and ritual murder. The study recommended proper study of story lines, dedication of script writers to their job, and emphasis at portraying the good image of the country especially to International audiences who may assimilate these stories at their face value.

Keywords: Audience, Cultism, Nollywood, Representations, Ritual Murder

I. INTRODUCTION

The mass media especially television and films have evolved overtime bringing along with them emerging features that sustain the interest of their audience, create mood for them or lure them into taking certain actions. Among the mass media of communication, television and films are adjudged the most influential; this is because of their combination of both pictures and sound; and their ability to convey messages that may seem impossible for radio and print (Akpan & Anyianuka, 2012 [1]). Improvement in Technology has further made it possible to watch and download films online through the use of cell phones, IPAD, laptops, PC's etc. Nollywood films in

trying to portray social realities produce films on cultism and ritual murder. Naturally, there should be diverse views of the audience towards the representation of the African or Nigerian men and women in this act by our indigenous home movies known as Nollywood. While some see it as imagined or exaggerated reality, others see it as the real nature of the average Nigerian and by extension African. Are these Nollywood films' representations of cultism and ritual murder in African context real or imagined? This study articulates the views of Awka People in Anambra of Nigeria on this.

The Nigeria movie industry under the belt of Nollywood produces more films a year than any other country except India. A report of the last comprehensive data as released in 2006, state that Bollywood releases 1,091 major feature films, Nollywood 872, and Hollywood with 485. This figure shows a growing popularity of Nollywood movies around the world (The Economist, 2006 [2]).

The appeal stretches far beyond Nigeria. Nollywood films are proving popular all over English-speaking Africa and have become a staple on M-NET, the South African based satellite television network. Nigerian stars have become household names from Ghana to Zambia and beyond. The last few years have seen the growing popularity of Nollywood films among African Diaspora in both Europe and America. Ritual killing has not become a general phenomenon and is not restricted to one part nor is it the purview of any ethnic group or indeed peculiar to traditional religion adherents (Ayoola, 2014 [3]). Ritual murder implies the practice or clandestine religious acts of killing the victim with intent to make money appease their deities which is illegal and morally wrong.

One of the big challenges facing Nigeria as a nation is the rise of various cults in our institutions of learning. This has led to different chaos on our campuses including murders, riots, untimely death of young and innocent students, and infiltration of weapons into our school, rape, academic failure and termination of academic pursuits (Ajibade, 2011[4]). The killing of a living creature as a ritual to a god or spirit used to be termed a blood sacrifice or ritual

murder is an old-fashioned term that focuses attention on the spilling of blood by cultists and ritualists with the belief that this act usually follows with a return of good fortune. Blood sacrifice might also be used to cleanse sufferers from sin, prevent misfortune or failure and avert evil (OAC Press, 2011 [5]).

Cultism in Nigeria started as a pressure group where students came together to help themselves solicit for textbook and other amenities that could be of benefit to them. People like Professor Wole Soyinka who started the Pyrate Confraternity had a vision like this. But today, according to Ajibade, (2011 [4]), “the vision and mission has changed to a demonic one as their activities today involve the carrying of guns, Indian hemsps, machetes, dagger and other deadly weapons around to perpetrate their evil act”. Nollywood films in depicting acts of cultism and ritual murder try to portray realities of the Nigerian society, where most beliefs are informed by unreason, dogmas, myth making and magical thinking, ghost, juju, charms and witchcraft as being prevalent and widespread (Igwe, 2004 [6]).

This act of ritual killing is performed mostly for money making purposes as shown most often in Nollywood movies. Cultism is also reflected in these films, depicting what happens among students in tertiary institutions. The aim of these movies on cultism and ritual murder is to showcase social realities with the aim of narrating the evil involved and outcome of such practices as a move towards eliciting possible attitude and behavior change among viewers.

II. STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Film has been recognized as a popular culture which not only mirrorizes and tells stories which it subsists; but depict the lifestyles, attitudes, environment and activities within a given society (Alawode & Uduakobong, 2013 [7]). Nollywood movies in trying to captivate audiences’ imagination and curiosity use themes and images that tell stories (Kumwenda, 2008 [8]). Films on cultism and ritual murder are among the widely used themes in Nollywood movies to showcase African content and cultural pattern. Against this backdrop, the question is how do the audiences who expose themselves to Nollywood films, perceive the representations of cultism and ritual murder? Does it agree or in contradiction with their pre-existing beliefs on the issue? Are they real or imagined? These, the study want to ascertain among Awka audiences of Anambra State, Nigeria.

III. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general purpose of this study is to establish from the Nollywood audiences’ perspective whether the representations of cultism and ritual

murder in these films are real or imagined. However the specific objectives are:

To establish the extent of Nollywood access and exposure among Awka Community.

To establish if they watch acts and scenes of ritual murder and cultism in Nollywood movies.

To determine their perception of the credibility of Nollywood films’ stories.

To ascertain if the Awka audiences’ pre-existing beliefs about ritual murder and cultism has relationship with their perception of cultism and ritual murder in Nollywood films.

To establish audiences’ perception about acts and scenes of ritual murder and cultism in Nollywood films.

To establish if these acts and scenes of ritual murder and cultism is a true reflection of what goes on in our society.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were posed for the study:

To what extent do Awka audiences have access and are exposed to Nollywood films?

Do Awka audiences watch acts and scenes of cultism and ritual murder in Nollywood movies?

How credible do they perceive Nollywood films’ stories?

Do their pre-existing beliefs about cultism and ritual murder have relationship with their perceptions of cultism and ritual murder in Nollywood films?

How do they perceive the acts and scenes of cultism and ritual murder in Nollywood films?

Are these acts and scenes of ritual murder and cultism a true reflection of what goes on in our society?

V. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The genre of cultism and ritual murder is among a wide variety of locally-made African movies consumed by Africans locally and internationally.

This study sought to determine if Nollywood films on cultism and ritual is real or imagined, based on an Awka audience assessment.

The audience mentioned here are audiences from four villages selected from the 33 villages in Awka the capital of Anambra state. The study was an attempt to use their views to generalize those of local audiences of Nollywood movies in Nigeria.

VI. LITERATURE REVIEW

A brief literature review is presented here under the sub-headings below:

A. *History of the Nollywood Industry*

The first Nigeria films were made by film makers such as Ola Balogun and Hubert Ogunde in the 1960s, but they were frustrated by the high cost of film production. Nigeria film industry had been making films on celluloid and films were screened in

cinema houses across the country; however the release of the straight-to-video movie “Living in Bondage” in 1992 by NEK video Links owned by Kenneth Nnebue launched the Home video market in Nigeria (The Economist, 2006). Nollywood industry exploded into a booming industry in the late 90s and pushed foreign media off the shelves. It is now an industry marketed all over Africa and the rest of the world (Onyishi, 2002).

B. Nollywood and Her Audience

In the production of films, audiences play significant role as they determine the content of most Nollywood movies. Some 60 percent of Nigeria’s 160 million populations is Nollywood latent audience (Ekwuazi, 2009.[17]). The audience factor remains a crucial part of the business in the film industry because audience action, custom and preference patterns, loyalty and good will, determine commercial success (Esan, 2008 [9]).

Nollywood is a new player that has crept into the market unannounced. The Nigeria movie industry was initially restricted to Nigerian and African audiences, but is progressively making in-roads on the global scene. Nollywood is regularly featured via satellite or cable (Multichoice Nigeria, BEN TV-Sky channel 194). Since 2008, Nollywood has a dedicated channel offering 24 hour movies service on Sky digital platform to audiences in UK and Ireland; there are also ranges of websites which support the circulation of Nollywood (Esan, 2008 [9]).

C. An Overview of Cultism and Ritual Murder in Nigeria

The Oxford Advance Learner’s Dictionary defined cult as a small group of people who have extreme religious beliefs and who are not part of any established religion. Cultism is one of the greatest social crimes committed in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria today. It is a social crime which is rampant in Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics. It is a social menace which is not restricted to only the institutions of higher learning but that which is a common phenomenon that characterizes the society, including secondary schools (Ajibade, 2012 [4]).

There are different types of cults in Nigerian tertiary institutions today. From the University of Benin, there emerged in the 80’s the Black Axe Movement, the Maphites from the University of Ife, Vikings from the University of Jos. New cults have also emerged over the years which include: the Eye, Family Mafia, the Dragon etc. These cults groups are always in conflict with rival groups and they always strive to undo each other (Ogunade, 2002 [10]). Ritual murder is a religious performance, which is the slaying of a human as a propitiatory offering to a deity. Its aim is to benefit those for whom it is

performed. Ritual concerns the sacred and it is a truism of anthropology that it also invokes the highest cultural legitimacy, activating spiritual powers, whether they be of gods, spirits, or ancestors, in order to achieve a beneficent result (Carrasco, 2000 [11]).

Most often, Nigerians engage in ritual killing for money-making purposes’. Among Nigerians, there is a popular belief in a special kind of ritual, performed with human blood or body parts that can bring money or wealth, even though such a belief lack any basis in reason, science or common sense. For example, there has never been a single proven instance of any Nigerian who became rich through a money-making ritual and still; the beliefs in “ritual wealth” or “blood money” remains strong among the people and features prominently in the nation’s media and film industry (Igwe, 2004 [6]).

The colonization of Africa may have suppressed human sacrifice but it allowed for the development in Europe of the myth of ritual murder in another direction. The former existence of human sacrifice in West Africa encouraged the most sinister beliefs about African culture. Events in Africa seem to confirm these as realistic portrayals. From the killings in different parts of Africa that local people claimed were the work of human beings who had transformed themselves into animal usually leopards or lion. Some of our indigenous home movies tend to give credence to these thinking (Ugor, 2009 [12]).

D. Cultism and Ritual Murder in Nollywood Movies

Nollywood’s didactic and melodrama films on cultism and ritual murder criticize desires that drive men to put the attainment of wealth before human life and to consume selfishly and excessively on luxury of life. These movies set within the everyday life of the urban Africa, where people’s life experiences of scarcity collide with fantasies of affluence (Mbembe, 2002 [13]). Movies on ritual murder address anxieties about wealth’s mysterious sources in a global context where affluence seems disconnected from work and production.

In ways similar to many Hollywood movies, Nollywood movies on cultism and ritual murder involve conflict surrounded by death and violence brought about by the protagonists’ immoral accumulation, and plots revolve in strong assertion, of moral instruction. The protagonists often die painful and gruesome deaths or are redeemed by prayer, though sometimes the state intervenes to arrest the murdering ritualist (Meyer, 1986 [14]).

VII. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The basis of this study is the Reception Theory, which is a theory traced backed to the work of a British Sociologist Stuart Hall and his

communication model first reviewed in an essay titled “Encoding/Decoding” (Hall, 1980 [15]). Reception media theory takes closer look at what is actually going on when an audience encounter media text. It provides an analysis of how audiences perceive a certain media message, what meanings do they drive, how do they associate to it, and what effect does that message or text has on their psychological, personal and social make-up (Jones, 2013 [16]).

In line with this, Awka audiences who expose themselves to Nollywood films on Cultism and Ritual Murder may do this by ascribing meanings and having their own perspectives from the content they are viewing. It is in this light that this study therefore contributes to existing literature on audience perception of Nollywood films on Cultism and Ritual Murder as it sought to establish if Nollywood audiences perceive these portrayals and representations in nollywood films as real or imagined.

VIII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of survey and Content Review. The survey questions measured variables like: respondents access and exposure to Nollywood films, if respondents watch acts and scenes of cultism and ritual murder in Nollywood films, credibility of stories watched in Nollywood films, perception of acts and scenes of cultism and ritual murder in Nollywood films, if pre-existing beliefs about cultism and ritual murder among audiences relate to their perception of cultism and ritual murder in Nollywood films, if these acts and scenes of cultism and ritual murder reflect the reality of what obtains in our society.

In the Review section, the content of a purposively selected film with Cultism and Ritual Murder as the major theme, My Mother’s Head was critically reviewed. The population is made up of all the residents of Awka which according to 2006 census is 189,645 people. The population is spread in 33 villages that make up the town.

The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane formula thus: (1)

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + N(e)^2)}$$

Where

n = Sample size

N = Population

e = Margin of error = 0.05 in social science research

$$\begin{aligned} \therefore n &= \frac{189654}{(1 + 189654(0.05)^2)} \\ &= \frac{189654}{(1 + 189654 \times 0.0025)} \\ &= \frac{189654}{1 + 474.135} = \frac{189654}{475.135} = 399.158 \end{aligned}$$

A round number of 400 became the sample size for this study.

The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the study. At the first stage, 4 villages were chosen from the 33 villages that make up Awka through simple random procedure. The second stage involved

the selection of 50 households from each of the 4 villages while the third stage involved selecting 2 adult respondents from each of the households selected.

Table 1:

Stage	Selection	Total
1 st stage	4 villages from 33 villages in Awka	4 x 1 = 4
2 nd stage	50 households from each of the 4 villages	50 x 4 = 200
3 rd stage	2 persons from each of the 200 households selected in Awka	2 x 200 = 400

The data collection instrument was the questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire centered on the demographics of the respondents while the rest of the questions are framed such that

they provided answers to the research questions. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 16 and presented in tables, figures and percentages.

IX. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

A total of 400 copies of questionnaire were administered and a total of 392 were returned giving 98% return rate due to the researchers’ personal contact with the respondents during administration

whereby the questionnaire was as much as possible retrieved from them at the spot. Those who could not easily understand the questions were guided accordingly which also contributed to the high return rate.

Figure 1:

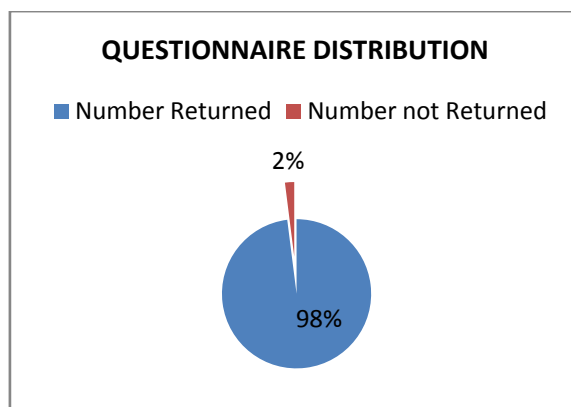


Fig. 1 above shows the number of copies of questionnaire distributed, 400 (100%), the number returned, 392 (98%) and the number of questionnaire that were not returned, 8 (2%).

Table 2

Village	Questionnaire no	Number returned	Percentage
Amudo	100	100	25%
Umubele	100	97	24.25%
Umuoramma	100	98	24.5%
Umuzocha	100	97	24.25%
Total	400	392	98%

Table 2 shows the number of questionnaire distributed to each of the villages selected and the number returned. Only Amudo village recorded complete return rate.

A. Demographic Information

The respondents’ demographic information was measured using question item 1-3 in the questionnaire (see appendix). Data generated from the responses were presented in the following tables and figures.

Figure 2:

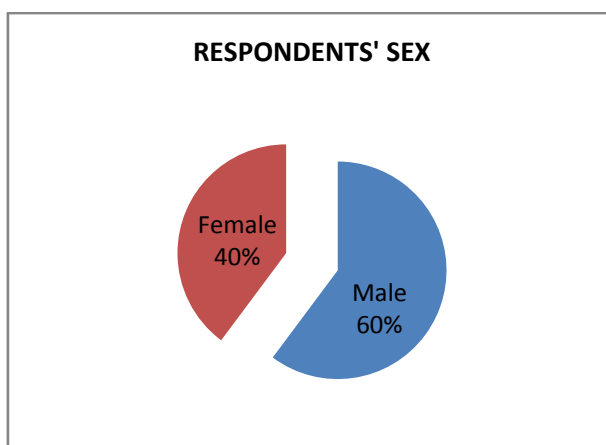


Fig. 2 above shows that a greater percentage of the respondents were males 236(60%) and the smaller percentage were females 156(40%)

Table 3: Respondents Age Range

Variable category	Age range	Frequency	Percentage
Respondents age range	16-21	92	23.47%
	22-27	97	24.75%
	28-33	98	25%
	34 and above	105	26.78%
Total		392	100%

From table 3 above, it shows that 92(23.47%) were in the age range of 16-21; 97(24.75%) were in the age range of 22-27; 98(25%) were in the age range of 28-33 and 105(26.78%) were in the age range of 34 and

above. This shows that the age range of 16-21 had the lowest number of respondents and 34 and above had the highest number of respondents and form the greatest segment of movie audience.

Table 4: Respondents occupation

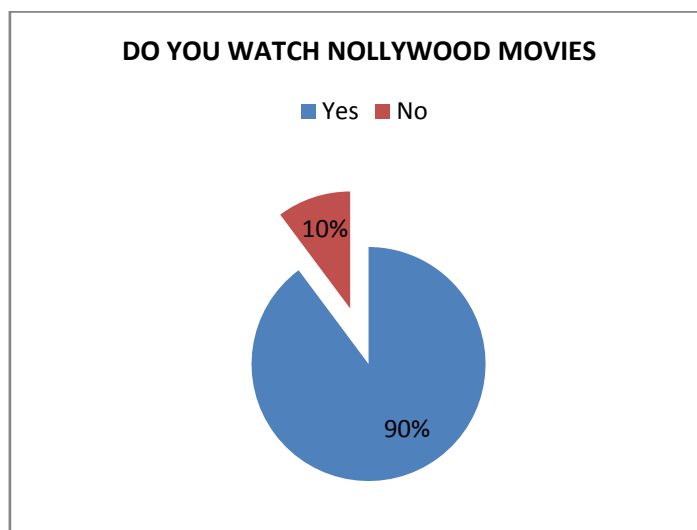
Variable category	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Respondents occupation	Traders	100	25.51%
	Professionals	88	22.44%
	Civil servants	69	17.60%
	Students	45	11.47%
	Others	90	22.95%
Total		400	100%

From table 4 above, it shows that the greatest number of respondents were traders 100(25.51%) while the smallest number of respondents 45(11.47%) were students and the others are professionals 88(22.44%), civil servants 69(17.60%) and others 90(22.95%).

This section analyzed the access and exposure to Nollywood films among the respondents. Questions on this were measured using question items 4-6 in the questionnaire. The data generated are as presented below:

B. Access and Exposure to Nollywood Films

Figure 3:



From Fig. 3 above it shows that a greater number of the respondents 352(90%) are exposed to Nollywood films by watching them while a smaller percentage 40(10%) are not exposed to or watch Nollywood films.

Table 7: Mode of access to Nollywood Films

Variable category		Frequency	Percentage
How do you gain access to watch nollywood films?	Rent/cable subscription	102	25.5%
	Internet	30	7.5%
	buy	70	17.5%
	All of the above	190	47.5%
Total		392	100%

From table 7 above it shows that a large number of Awka residents access movies through rent/cable subscription, the Internet or buying movies i.e. 190(47.5%). The smallest number of people 30(7.5%) get movies from the Internet alone while

70(17.5%) buy movies and as many as 102(25.5%) gain access through renting of movies or subscription to cable television.

Figure 4:

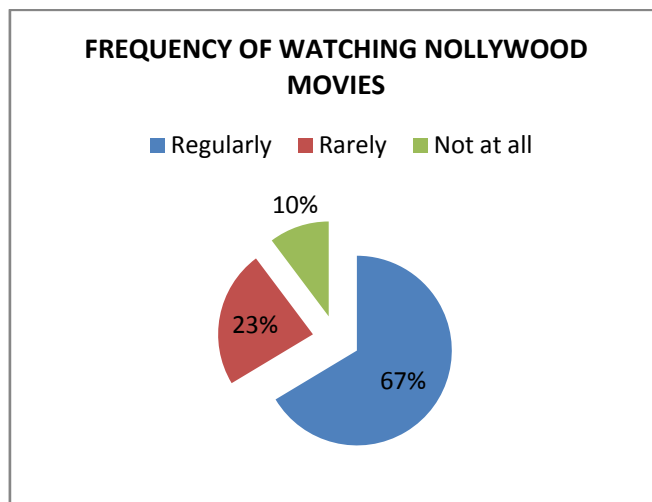


Fig. 4 above shows that 259(67%) of Awka residents watch nollywood films regularly, 93(23%) rarely watch Nollywood films and 40(10%) don't watch at

all. The implication is that majority of the residents make movie viewing their regular media diet.

C. Knowledge of Acts and Scenes of Cultism and Ritual Murder in Nollywood Films

Table 8: Knowledge of cultism and ritual murder

Variable category		Frequency	Percentage
Do you know what is ritual murder and cultism?	No	2	0.5%
	Yes	390	99.5%
Total		392	100%

From table 8 above, it shows that majority of the respondents 390(99.5%) know what is cultism and ritual murder and a small percentage 2(0.5%) don't know what it is.

Table 9: Knowledge of Acts and Scenes of Cultism and Ritual Murder in Nollywood Films

Variable category		Frequency	Percentage
Are you aware of acts and scenes of cultism and ritual murder in Nollywood films?	No	2	0.5%
	Yes	390	99.5%
Total		392	100%

From table 9 above, it shows almost all the respondents, 390(99.5%) claiming they are aware of acts and scenes of cultism and ritual murder in Nollywood films while only 2(0.5%) are unaware.

Table 10: Frequency of Watching Nollywood Films on Cultism and Ritual Murder

Variable category		Frequency	Percentage
How often do you watch Nollywood films	Very often	250	63.78%

on cultism and ritual murder?	Often	90	22.96%
	Less often	50	12.75%
	Not at all	2	0.51%
Total		392	100%

Table 10 above indicates that as many as 250(63.78%) watch acts and scenes of cultism and ritual murder very often, 90(22.96%) watch often, 50(12.75%) watch less often and 2(0.51%) don't

watch at all. From the above exposure, many of the residents claim to watch films on cultism and ritual murder very often.

D. Credibility of Nollywood Film Stories Watched

Table 11: Credibility of Nollywood stories

Variable category		Frequency	Percentage
Do you think that Nollywood film stories are credible enough?	No	389	99.23%
	Yes	3	0.77%
Total		392	100%

From 11 table above majority of the respondents 389(99.23%) claim that Nollywood films' stories are not credible enough while 3(0.77%) believe that

Nollywood films' stories are credible enough. This implies that they perceive the nollywood films' stories as fictitious or make-believe.

Table 12: Improvement in the credibility of Nollywood film stories

Variable category		Frequency	Percentage
Do you think there should be an improvement in the credibility of Nollywood film stories?	No	3	0.77%
	Yes	389	99.23%
Total		392	100%

In accordance with the previous table this table indicates that 3(0.77%) don't think there should be an improvement in the credibility of Nollywood films while 389(99.23%) believe there is need for an improvement.

E. Relationship Between Audiences' Pre-existing Beliefs and Perception of Nollywood Films on Cultism and Ritual Murder

Table 13: Relationship between respondents' pre-existing beliefs and perception on cultism and ritual murder in Nollywood films

Variable category		Frequency	Percentage
Do you think there is a prevalence of cultism and ritual murder in our society?	No	0	0%
	Yes	392	100%
Total		392	100%

Data presented in table 13 above show that all the respondents 392 (100%) know about the prevalence of cultism and ritual murder in our society.

Table 14: Connection between pre-existing beliefs on cultism and ritual murder and perception of it by the respondents in Nollywood films

Variable category		Frequency	Percentage
Relationship between respondents pre-existing beliefs on cultism and ritual murder and their perception of cultism and ritual murder in Nollywood films	No	252	64.29%
	Yes	140	35.71%
Total		392	100%

From table 14 above 140(35.71%) believe that cultism and ritual murder in Nollywood films are the same with their previous perception about cultism and ritual murder while 252(64.29%) believe otherwise. This implies that majority of the

respondents are of the opinion that the way and manner of representations of cultism and ritual murder in nollywood films contradict their previously held beliefs about the issue and that a negative correlation exists.

F. Perception of Acts and Scenes of Cultism and Ritual Murder in nollywood Films

Table 15: Respondents Perception on Acts and Scenes

Variable category		Frequency	Percentage
Respondents' perception of nollywood films' acts and scenes as real or imagined.	Real	101	25.77%
	Imagined	289	73.72%
	No idea	2	0.51%
Total		392	100%

From the above table, only 101(25.77%) believe Nollywood stories are real while 289(73.72%) perceive it as imagined while 2(0.51%) have no idea. This implies that majority of the respondents view these acts and scenes of cultism and ritual murder as

imaginary or full of tricks and deception, exaggerated and fictitious than real.

9.7 Perception of Portrayal of Nollywood films on cultism and Ritual murder as a True Reflection of What Goes On in the Society

Table 16: Perception of Nollywood Films Portrayal of Cultism and Ritual murder as a True Reflection of What Goes On in our Society.

Variable category		Frequency	Percentage
Perception of portrayal as reflection of the reality of what obtains in our society	No	390	99.5%
	Yes	2	0.5%
	Total	392	100%

From table 16 above, it shows that almost all the respondents 390(99.5) believe that Nollywood scripts are not real and they don't portray the reality of what goes on in our society while 2(0.5%) believe it is just real.

The movie produced in 2013 is one of Nollywood films that dwell on ritual murder and cultism as the dominant theme.

X. QUALITATIVE METHOD: MOVIE REVIEW (MY MOTHER'S HEAD)

The 90 minute Nollywood film Produced by Simeon Chime and Chioma chime, with the tall, dark Bob Manuel Anosike, the anchor of the television Reality Show- Gulder Ultimate Search, as Director.

The movie- *My Mother's Head* has a total of 66 casts with popular Nollywood actors and actresses like Patience Ozokwor, Kenneth Okonkwo and Queen Nwokoye making the screen. The central theme focuses on the evil of Cultism and Ritual Murder. Other subthemes include, the result of envy, and bad friends etc. The setting of the movie is the eastern part of Nigeria which Awka in Anambra

forms part of, as the costume of the Igwe, the traditional monarch and his Queen speaks of the culture of the Eastern people. It is worthy to note that 98% of the settings were inside towns.

There was good use of light by the producers and the picture quality of the movie was above average. Lighting effect was used in the movie to create disappearance act. A good example was when the Messenger of death that was sent to kill Loveth's unborn child during her labour disappeared after being instructed from the labour room and back again to the coven. Another example was when the Grand Witch the head of an occult group which Maltida belongs, disappeared from her coven to the village shrine to influence the decision of the village Oracle in Maltida's favour.

The plot of the movie is arranged in chronological order- one scene led to another. The film which centres on the evil of cultism and ritual murder revolves around two women- Maltida who belongs to an occult group (Witches of the East) and Jenny who belongs to a school cult (The White Bra). The destiny of these two women crosses part when Jenny killed her friend Sophia to marry Johnson, Maltida's son.

The evil of cultism was shown in the movie when Jenny planned secretly with her two friends who belong to the same cult group-The White Bra, to kill her friend Sophia who was a princess and engaged to Johnson. But Jenny was obsessed with her friend's fiance and planned to eliminate her in order to marry Johnson. In the supposed plan, Jenny would be shot in her arm, while Sophia would be shot dead with Jenny's friends wearing the costume of another cult group, the Red Pant. This action resulted to war between two cult groups in the university- the White Bra and the Red panties that led to the death of many people.

Ritual Murder was portrayed in the movie when Maltida sacrificed her unborn children to her occult group in order to marry Daniel because destiny did not plan them to be together. She was further enraged when Daniel brought a second wife home and promised to show Loveth, the second wife "hell". Her plan to eliminate Loveth was unsuccessful and she planned to kill her unborn child during labour. She was unsuccessful again as The Messenger of Death sent by the Grand witch to kill the unborn child came back with her face burnt, she reported that the Cross stopped her. The hate for Loveth grew as Maltida sold the fortune of her son to her occult group which was a "perfect plan" to finally have Loveth's head, but nemesis has a way of catching up with its victim.

My Mother's Head, in trying to portray the evil of cultism and ritual murder in our society, failed in promoting moral values of the African people. Ear rings on the eyes and nose with Tattoos were seen in the hands of the female children of both Maltida and Loveth. Loveth's sons except the Priest had ear rings on their ears and one wonders what message the Directors and Producers were trying to send to the audience through such costumes.

The last scene portrayed the result of evil deeds, as both Maltida and Jenny her daughter in-law were killed by assassins hired by Johnson, Maltida's son to kill and behead Loveth for sacrifice to regain his fortune. The reverse was the case as the film came to an end with Johnson holding the head of his mother hence the title *My Mother's Head*.

A cursory look at the film from both aesthetic and philosophical dimension reveal a lot of packaging and actions that are alien and having no empirical bases to African culture characterized by sacredness of blood and brotherhood. They can therefore be best described as media construction or framing of reality and "unAfrican".

XI. CONCLUSION

Data obtained from 392 respondents selected from 4 villages in Awka, the capital city of Anambra state, Nigeria show that majority of the respondents are aware of cultism and ritual murder and are also aware of acts and scenes of cultism and ritual murder in Nollywood films and exposed to them. About 99.5% of the respondents believe that Nollywood films' stories on cultism and ritual murder are not credible enough but exaggerated, deceptive, fictitious and not a true reflection of what goes on in the society. This therefore leads to the conclusion by this audience segment that acts and scenes of cultism and ritual murder as represented in Nollywood films are mostly imagined than being real.

The findings from qualitative method of content review agrees with that of survey as the film reviewed showed acts and scenes that are alien to Nigerian cultural values of brotherhood, sacredness of a relation's blood and moral conscience and negates the reality of what predominantly goes on in the society. The storyline and use of costumes and some aesthetic devices in the film also attested to this imagination and alienation.

Recommendations

Based on this study conducted and analyzed, the following recommendations were made to proffer possible solutions:

- Nollywood producers should go into proper research and study of story lines before dishing out unreal or absurd stories to the public.

- Nollywood script writers should take their jobs with all seriousness and put more effort in getting real story lines and apply costumes and aesthetic devices that should as much as possible depict reality.
- The reflection of cultism and ritual murder in Nollywood films is giving foreign audiences in other countries that watch them a negative thought and image of Nigerian and African societies and this shouldn't be so. Nollywood should portray the real Nigeria/Africa and not an imagination just to sell and make profit.
- The film producers and directors should go deeper into cultural studies with a view to unraveling empirical and philosophical dimensions of some weighty cultural issues like cultism and ritual murder before going into imaginative stories.
- Audience activism especially at this Internet age should be encouraged among local audiences so as to give immediate feedback that can send corrective signals to the International audiences who mostly fall prey to the deceptions and "unAfricanness" in most nollywood films' representations.

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APPENDIX

SECTION A: Demographic Information

- What is your sex? 1) male 2) female
- What is your occupation? 1) Trader 2) Professional
- What is age range? 1) 16-21 2) 22-27 3) 28-38 4) 34 & Above
- 3) Civil Servant 4) Student 5) Others

Section B: Access and Exposure to Nollywood Films

- Do you watch Nollywood films? 1) Yes 2) No
- How do you get access and exposure to Nollywood films? 1) Rent/Subscription to cable
- 2) Internet 3) Buy 4) All of the above
- How often do you watch Nollywood films?

1) Regularly 2) Rarely 3) Not at all

Section C: Knowledge of Acts and Scenes in Nollywood Films

Do you know what is ritual murder and cultism? 1) Yes 2) No

Are you aware of act and scenes of ritual murder and cultism in Nollywood films?

1) Yes 2) No

How often do you watch Nollywood films on cultism and ritual murder?

Very often 2) Often 3) Less often 4) Not at all

Section D: Credibility of Nollywood Films

Do you think that Nollywood film's stories are credible enough? 1) Yes 2) No

Do you think there should be an improvement in the credibility of Nollywood film's stories? 1) Yes
2) No

Section E: Relationship between Audiences' pre-existing beliefs in cultism and ritual murder and their perception of the representations in Nollywood Films

Do you think there is a prevalence of ritual murder and cultism in our society?

1) Yes 2) No

Are your pre-existing beliefs about cultism and ritual murder related to your perception of their representations in Nollywood Films? 1) Yes 2) No

Section F: Perception of Acts and Scenes of Cultism and Ritual Murder in Nollywood Films as React.

What is your perception of acts and scenes of cultism and ritual murder in Nollywood Films?

1) real 2) Imagined 3) No idea

Do you believe they portray the reality of what goes on in our society?

1) Yes 2) No