

The Depiction of Women in Bongowood and Ghallywood Video Films

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Abstract

This study examines the representation of women in video films in Tanzania and Ghana. Nollywood's impact on the film industries in Ghana and Tanzania has resulted in the emergence of various film traditions – Ghallywood in Ghana and Bongowood in Tanzania. Women are often portrayed as cunning, materialistic and immoral in Nollywood films. It is evident that Bongowood and Ghallywood movies have adopted these portrayals in terms of plot, characterisation, theme and technique. In this paper, we contend that the influence of Nollywood contributes to these negative depictions. Furthermore, we argue that the influence of culture, religion, colonialism and literature are possible sources of these adverse, prejudiced, and discriminatory portrayals of women in Tanzanian and Ghanaian local video movies through characterisation. In a comparative study of two films, *Shakira (Face of Deceit)* (Amanfo, 2009) from Ghallywood and *Family Disaster* (Kigosi, 2010) from Bongowood, the paper illustrates the various ways in which women are portrayed. Thus, representations are influenced by perceptions of society, which historically stem from African cultural and religious stereotyping, among others.

Key Words: *negative depiction, women, Bongowood, Ghallywood, Nollywood, comparative analysis*

Introduction

Although African Cinema emerged at the turn of the 20th century, the films were produced mainly by the colonialists. Pfaff (2004) and Saul & Austen (2010) thus regard cinema amongst the recent African art forms. Indeed, it was not until the post-independence era that films produced by Africans emerged, and this became one of the noticeable popular culture genres in many Anglophone and Francophone African countries. These African films were relatively few due to the high cost and technical requirements of producing on celluloid.

However, in the 1980s, the film industry in Nigeria collapsed, partially due to an upsurge of crime against movie theatre-goers and the economic downturn. Nevertheless, in the early 1990s, technological development in the form of the video camera revolutionised the local film industry in Nigeria. According to Harding (2003), "No significant advance in the production of the moving picture entertainment would have been made without the video-camera and its partner-in-playback, the video recorder" (p.81). This technology made possible the production of video films known as 'home movies' which, were often low budget films. In a discussion on how Nollywood developed, Ebewo (2007) states that "Although many productions preceded it, Nnebue's successful *Living in Bondage* (1993) is credited with "jumpstarting" the video film industry" (p.46). With Nigeria taking the lead, the stem '-wood' taken from the -wood in Hollywood has been adopted in several African countries to represent local film industries. According to Haynes (2011), there is Nollywood in Nigeria, Ghallywood and more recently, Kumawood in Ghana, Bongowood in Tanzania and Riverwood in Kenya. Not to be left out, Johannesburg now has "Jollywood", too.

Nollywood films are watched, not only in Africa but in Europe, the US and the Caribbean, where according to Haynes (2011), the movies are "wildly popular" (p. 72). It is not surprising then that Nollywood has profoundly influenced the film industries in countries like Ghana in West Africa (Ghallywood) and Tanzania in East Africa (Bongowood), and as far away as Jamaica and Haiti in the Caribbean. In terms of themes and characterisation, it is clear that video film producers in these countries often pattern their productions after the Nollywood examples. There are also frequent collaborations in film productions especially, between Ghanaian and Nigerian producers and actors, and to a lesser extent, Tanzanian and Nigerian producers. According to Krings and Okome, this is

clear evidence that "Nollywood's popularity has begun to have visible effects on many cultures as far away as South Africa" and beyond (cited. in Haynes, 2011, p.72).

Since the early 1990's, Nollywood has produced thousands of films, and its influence on the film industries in other countries has been the subject of several studies (Krings, 2010; Saul and Austen, 2010). The industry is also a big money-maker for producers, actors and Nigeria as a whole. According to Vasagar (2006), Nollywood grosses around 200 million dollars a year. *The Economist* (2006) also observes that Nollywood employs about one million people.

The focus of this study is the representation of women in video films in Ghana and Tanzania. Nollywood has been accused of portraying women negatively in its films through their objectification in various ways. Ogunbiyi (2010) writes that the industry creates negative depictions of women, presenting them as prostitutes, home breakers and greedy, selfish individuals with criminal tendencies. Ogunbiyi also points out how these images represent age-old cultural beliefs about women that are upheld by patriarchal interests.

A survey of video films in Tanzania and Ghana often reflect a similar negative portrayal of women. Using our findings on African cultural attitudes to women as possible factors, we examine the prejudicial and other adverse treatments of women in these local video films through their modes of characterisation. Using a film from Ghallywood and Bongowood, the paper analyses and critiques the various negative ways women are portrayed and recommends a reversal of such depictions.

Thematic Concerns and Characterisation: Nollywood's Depiction of Women and its Impact on Others

The paper argues that the representations and characterisation of women in Bongowood and Ghallywood movies are influenced by Nollywood movies and interrogates the possibility that these depictions of women in these movie industries have their roots in our traditions, colonialism, religions and literature. One must add that despite their successes in film production, many critics have had problems with the industries' thematic approaches and characterisation concerning women in their movies. Even though Nollywood sheds light on moral and other problems plaguing society which, resonate with their audiences, it, along with Ghallywood, have been criticised for their "obsession with the occult world, (juju, black magic, sorcery, ritual murder, witchcraft etc.) as well as obscenity, prostitution, "money worship" (Ebewo, 2007, p. 47). According to Ebewo (2007), negative images are apparent in films such as *Living in Bondage* (1993) and *Abuja Connection* (2003). Other films that negatively portray women include *My Private Part* (2019) and *The University Bad Girls 2* (2017). This is a disturbing trend, since according to Osofisan (2006), "the films also have a significant influence on the way others see us, and hence on the way they relate to us. We cannot help but be concerned, therefore, about what they are saying, what attitudes they are promoting" (p. 83). Commenting on such depictions, Harding (2003) makes it clear that this genre "dangerously feeds into gender stereotypes" (p. 83). It is clear that these depictions perpetuate sex role stereotypes, while revealing the patriarchal bent of our African societies in Nigeria, Ghana and Tanzania, among others.

Tracing the Sources of negative depictions of women in Nollywood, Ghallywood and Bongowood

This section discusses the various historical and traditional backgrounds that constitute the sources of the negative depictions of women in Africa.

The Historical Perspective

Whatever is old is new and whatever is new is old. Thus, the representation of women in Nollywood and, by extension, Ghallywood and Bongowood are based on models older than the portrayals these film industries employ. In making these statements, the study wishes to highlight how intricately fused our present is with our past, and how deeply influential our cultural, historical traditions and beliefs are, and the extent to which they impinge on everything we do, including how we form our opinions.

Precolonial Influences

In Precolonial times, there is clear evidence that African women often assumed important roles. This showed that African women could go beyond the confines of the patriarchal space and role for women in Africa (Dzregah, 1996, p.15). The creation myths of the Hausa people in Northern Nigeria, or the Niger or Chad, begin with a woman who finds a kingdom. Queen Amina of Zaria is one example. According to Ajayi & Espie (1965), the building of her kingdom "suggests the uses of mass forced labour, substantial military force, intense political centralisation, and warfare on an imperial scale, slavery, tribute and technological development" (p. 103).

In the Ashanti Kingdom of Ghana, the legendary Queen mother, Yaa Asantewaa led the Ashanti armies against the British in the then Gold Coast to stop the British from taking control of their kingdom. Even though she lost the battle, Yaa Asantewaa has been regarded as a fearless warrior and political leader who stood up to the colonialists.

Some writers also dealing with women's role and stature in Africa, however, reject any suggestion of women's leadership, power and status on the continent (Dzregah, 1996, p.16). Winterbottom (2010), writing about the so-called Native African in Sierra Leone in 1792, states that "the female sex does not hold in Africa, that distinguished rank in society which it happily enjoys in Europe. Women are regarded as beings of an inferior nature and born to be slaves of man. Upon them evolves all the drudgery of the family" (p. 144).

The Traditional Cause: Examples from some African cultures

Writing on African Culture and the status of women, Familusi (2012) states that negative representations and beliefs about women are embedded in proverbs, wise sayings, cultural practices, and the treatment of women among the Yoruba of Nigeria and their related groups in Benin, Togo and Ghana. He states that "in line with the status of women in traditional Yoruba society, women are believed to be agents of moral ineptitude" (p.305). See also (Dzahene-Quarshie and Omari (2021). Furthermore, Familusi, writing about the general perception of women in Ijala poetry of the Yoruba, quotes Olademo's observation of the advice given to men in that poetry: "women are disloyal, deceitful, do not expose your inner thoughts to a woman" (p. 301). Because of this traditional negative perception of women, they are not allowed to get educational opportunities but are rather encouraged to take up vocational training that prepares them for their roles as wives and mothers.

In many parts of Africa, the birth of a male child is welcomed with more joy than that of a female. According to Familusi (2012), a Yoruba proverb states that "A male child populates the family while a female one depopulates it" (p. 302). Also within the Nigerian and Ghanaian cultures, anytime a child is bad or criminal, that child is automatically, the woman's and by implication, having a wayward child is the woman's fault, while a child who does well is referred to as the father's child.

In many African cultures also, women were expected to be chaste, while the culture permitted and sometimes encouraged men to be polygamous and have dalliances with women. In line with the cultural perceptions of women, Odudoye (2001) writes that African culture is replete with language that enables the community to diminish the humanity of women. With this insight into our cultures, it is not difficult to see the link between these beliefs and depictions of women in African films since culture is the sum total of a people's way of life, which includes their beliefs, practices and perceptions.

The Colonial Cause

Writing about the African women in Colonial times, Aniekwu (2006) states that male dominance did exist at many levels, including the domestic (household) level. Aniekwu further adds that "female subordination took intricate forms grounded in traditional culture and implemented through the domestic-public dichotomy" (p. 145).

However, writing from an opposing position, two writers, Conde and McCaffrey state that the African woman's inferior status on the continent was not the result of any cultural restrictions but rather due to "the sexist white values of the colonial invaders which have oppressed African women and wrested from them, the independence and dignity they enjoyed in their traditional village world"

(cited in Frank, 1984, p. 45). Omoyajowo (1982) states that in Colonial times, African women started to experience social inequalities in cultural, political, religious and other realms as the state and society developed (cited in Aniekwu, 2006, p.146).

Religious Causes

Even though some African women had power and authority, the situation was not the same everywhere on the continent. In Islamic areas for instance, women had no political influence or autonomy. Islamic laws confined them to subordinate levels in comparison to males. (Dzregah, 1996, pp15-16).

Christianity was also used as a tool by the missionaries to dictate an ideology of women's subservience to men. This ideology stressed the headship of men over women and blamed women for the world's problems with reference to the Biblical story of Adam and Eve. Shedding more light on Christianity's negative impact on African women's statuses, Smith (1989) stresses that "furthermore, the promulgation of Western patrilineal and patriarchal ideologies by missionaries, as well as the introduction of colonial education, concretised the subordination of women by imposing replicated Western patterns of sexism" (p.13).

One can generally conclude that even though colonialism was a major factor in the lowering of women's position in Africa, African traditions and cultures had already put women into a subordinate state. Colonialism's impact, however, served to worsen an already bad situation for the African woman. (Dzregah, 1996, p.17)

The Influence of African Literature on the depiction of African women in Nollywood, Ghallywood and Bongowood

The field of African literature has, in many ways, replicated and reinforced the sexist and patriarchal representations of women in our societies. The films produced by Nollywood, Ghallywood and by other African film industries look to Nollywood for inspiration. With the introduction of Western education in Africa, men were initially the first to be schooled. A few women were later on allowed to have an education. The result was that in most African nations, more men than women were educated. Because of this, there were fewer female writers than males in the field of African literature. This male dominance in the writing field reflected the trend of male dominance in society. Thus, Ojo-Ade (1983) states that "African Literature is a male-created, male-dominated chauvinistic art" (p. 158).

Frank (1984), in a review of women's images in male-authored African novels, observes that "Women in male-authored African novels tend to fall into a specific category of female stereotypes: girlfriends or good-time girls, workers such as secretaries or clerks, wives and other male appendages or courtesans" (p. 15). Senkoro (2016), affirms that the trend of "intense description of the female body can be seen in many... prose works of Kiswahili literature." (p. 159) which, of course, are written by males. With patriarchal and sexist influences from our history, religion, colonialism, culture and literature, it is not surprising that Nollywood and Ghallywood and Bongowood reflect these trends. These practices in the representation of women will be seen in the analyses of two films, which were produced as a result of collaborations between Nollywood and Ghallywood in the case of *Shakira: Face of Deceit* Amanfo, (2009) and Bongowood, in *Family Disaster* Kigosi (2010)

Analysis of Selected Films

Shakira (Face of Deceit)

Shakira (Face of Deceit) (2009) is a collaboration between Nollywood and Ghallywood, directed by one of Nollywood's best-known directors —Pascal Amanfo. The screenplay for the movie was by Pascal Amanfo and MacDavies Odika. Odika also wrote the story. The actors included Mahjid Michel (Ghana) acting as Richie, the lead character and Mercy Johnson (Nigeria) as Shakira. Kofi Adjorlolo plays Bobby, Shakira's husband. Gavivina Tamakloe acts as Tom, Richie's boss, Biola Ige plays Richie's girlfriend and Prince David Osei and Eddie Nartey play detective officers Dan and Ben, respectively.

Shakira was debuted at the Silverbird Cinema in Accra in a glamorous opening ceremony. However, it sparked controversy and debate among a section of the Ghanaian viewing public. This was because the movie was seen by some religious and traditional types as being too sexually explicit and downright immoral. Reading comments in the entertainment papers, one was struck by the fact that the writers were overwhelmingly male. Their target for condemnation was mainly Mercy Johnson, the female lead who starred in the somewhat explicit sexual scenes in the movie. Mahjid Michel, the male lead in the film, was also strongly condemned and called a disgrace, with one writer even wondering about his commitment to his marriage in real life. Both film stars were assured by some of the writers that they would surely end up in hell because of the parts they played in the movie. Interestingly enough, these controversies helped advertise the film, albeit unwittingly, resulting in a buzz and high patronage.

Shakira, the movie tells the story of a young lawyer, Richie, who is very much in love with his fiancée, Yvonne (Biola Ige). He is, however, betrayed by her and the movie details his descent from a high achiever to a drunk who gets embroiled with a slutty woman. In the opening scene of the film, we meet Richie in the office with his boss. He is on cloud nine as he tells his boss, Tom, about his perfect and fantastic darling. He is preparing to marry her in a few weeks and tells his boss about his plans. Tom scoffs at his enthusiasm and trust and tells Richie quite cynically that no woman is worth the trust of any man. He says that in his experience, women are not trustworthy, faithful or loyal. As far as he is concerned, every woman has a price. He tells Richie that women succumb to him easily and that he has a new conquest with whom he has a rendezvous later that day. Richie, however, assures him that his fiancée is not like other women.

Richie leaves the office to go and visit his fiancée. He has an engagement ring, and he plans to surprise her with a marriage proposal. On the way, he stops by a shop to buy a bouquet of flowers. When he was driving back, his car unexpectedly developed a fault, and he waited by the roadside until a friend brought a mechanic to help him. He then rushes to Yvonne's place only to catch her red-handed in a sexual act, practically naked, with another man. The image of his fiancée with her panties about her ankles is not only shocking but places her in a highly shameful position. Shockingly, Richie discovers that the other man is his boss.

Interestingly, in his reaction of pain and rage, his wrath is toward his fiancée and not his boss. Tom, however, picks up his clothes and leaves Yvonne to face the fire. Yvonne is contrite and asks for forgiveness. Richie walks out and goes to a bar to drown himself in alcohol. This is the beginning of his downward spiral.

The representation of women in these scenes tally with cultural and societal beliefs of men in society that women, especially, educated ones cannot be trusted. Women are devalued here and shown to be greedy because they will sleep with the highest bidder. Again, because Richie makes it clear that he sacrifices everything to give Yvonne all she wants, it makes Yvonne and, by implication women, seem ungrateful and treacherous.

Richie decides to resign from his job even though he is the company's best lawyer, and he is also very successful. Again, he does not fight with his boss. In defending himself, Tom claims that at least he has proven to Richie that women are not to be trusted. Thus, Tom is again portrayed in the film as one who helps Richie find out about the true worth of his fiancée and not as an exploitative and cynical man who does not care who he hurts so long as he gets his pleasure. Here, we see the acceptance of men such as Tom in African societies. There is no condemnation for them because they are, after all, just men doing what men supposedly do best—pursuing women, especially if they are fortunate to be rich.

Before Richie leaves for Accra, Yvonne makes a last-ditch effort to save her relationship. She is seen grovelling on the ground and pleading with Richie to take her back. He kicks her off like a dog. Here again, are scenes of female humiliation that are distasteful and disturbing. Clearly, we see the representation of women as whores who lack self-respect and dignity. In this scene also, Richie's treatment of Yvonne sends out the message that bad women deserve evil/humiliating treatment

because they are the cause of their troubles. In the end, Yvonne's depiction in the film makes it difficult or impossible for the audience to sympathise with her and this will surely translate into how the viewers, going back into their communities, will perceive and treat women.

One evening as Richie is driving home, a woman suddenly pops up in front of his car. He narrowly avoids hitting her. She yanks the door open and orders him to drive. Thinking that she is in danger, he drives her to her home and later finds out that she has left her phone in his car. One later discovers that the woman is Shakira and that she deliberately leaves the phone in Richie's car. Through that, she is able to inveigle her way into his life. Here again, women are represented as deceitful, cunning and erratic and willing to do anything to get what they want, as many African proverbs suggest. Shakira later invites Richie to her party, which she is holding in a club. There, he becomes entranced with her curvaceous body, her skimpy clothes, sinuous movements and seductive attitudes. In the club scenes, Shakira is made to tempt Richie by making him the focus of her actions. Richie ends up taking her home when she pretends to be drunk. All these actions by Shakira reinforce cultural beliefs and stereotypes about women's deceitful, seductive and immoral ways. Since the story is written by a man, one should not be too surprised that the female lead is based on a stereotype of a loose woman.

Shortly after the party, the two have a sexual encounter. It is only after that that Shakira tells Richie that she is a married woman. Shakira's acts again give further proof to the audience that women do not respect socially sanctioned relationships such as marriages or engagements. Thus, Shakira is put in the same boat with Yvonne, but her infraction of social mores is greater because she is a married woman. Shakira tells Richie a story about how she is forced into marriage with an older man she does not love. By this time, Richie is hooked, obsessed and lusting after her body every day. He suddenly stops drinking and his life now has purpose. He wants all of Shakira but she ignores him for some time and then meets up with him in a shop. Here, we see a seductress and a manipulator at work. At a point in the shop, she drops an item, bends over to pick it up, and in the process, shows off her waist beads and butt crack. Again, this character's depiction is synonymous with Cyprian Ekwensi's famous courtesan character, Jaguar Nana who is an accomplished seductress and whose image has influenced Nollywood's depictions of bad girls.



Figure 1: Amanfo (2009)

Even from the cover picture for *Shakira*, (Fig.1), the stereotyping of the main character, Shakira as a loose woman is conveyed to the audience through her exposed midriff, halter top and miniskirt.

Commenting on such representations, Bisi Fayemi Adeleye states there should be a feminist critique of the way, in which theatre and television genres "have been shaped by male-defined values" (qtd in Bryce, 2012: 72) that lead to such depictions of women.

As the film progresses, Shakira asks Richie to kill her husband, Bobby, so they can be together. At first hesitant, Richie capitulates, shoots Bobby and dumps his body in the sea. Shakira warns Richie to cut all contacts with her until the coast is clear. She then forges a new will and makes Richie her administrator. By this time, Bobby's body has been discovered. Here again is the stereotype of a woman as evil and as the cause of men doing evil. This is because in the film, we see how Shakira's influence turns a hard working lawyer into a murderer.

Because Richie cannot stay away from Shakira, he comes looking for her and meets another man in her house. Later on, Richie discovers that that man is Shakira's lover who she has been contracted to murder Richie but the assassin fails and rather dies. Still scheming, Shakira seduces the detective officer, Dan, who has been detailed to investigate Bobby's murder and but for the timely intervention of detective Ben, Richie's brother, Dan would have shot Richie at Shakira's behest. At this point, Shakira is shown as a dangerous schemer who is responsible for the death of three men and who causes Richie to eventually end up in jail for murder. She is the stereotypical femme fatale, dangerous and powerful and responsible for men's destruction— cast in the mold of the Biblical archetypes of destructive females such as Eve, Jezebel, Salome and Delilah.

It is worth noting that Richie is portrayed as a weak character who lacks a moral backbone. From his elevated position as a most successful young lawyer to his degeneration as a drunk and as a murderer, we see the process of his destruction. However, he is portrayed in such a way as to suggest rather strongly that his weakness and downward spiral into moral degeneration and murder is as a result of women's manipulation and evil. The result is that the audience sympathises with him because he is seen as a tragic hero. Thus, we see in this film, the lopsided lenses through which women and men are judged in Ghanaian and Nigerian societies. Commenting on the sympathetic depiction of male characters in Nollywood movies, Bryce (2012: 79) states that "Nollywood films are most frequently, made by men . . . and defined by masculine heteronormative assumptions".

Writing on such issues, Adeleye-Fayemi (1997) says that film and television are ruled by;

the mirror-image paradigm 'which dictates that in order for audience expectations to be fulfilled, women are portrayed as either "powerful and dangerous or long-suffering and in this 'either/or' way of portraying women, women are shown not just as society perceives them but as society expects them to be. (Adeleye-Fayemi, pp. 127-128).

Shakira's portrayal certainly tallies with the mirror image paradigm here because not only is she a seductress but a powerful and dangerous woman who 'fittingly' (from the audience perspective), loses her life because she transgresses the cultural and moral codes of the African society and acts in the role of power and control—a role that African societies reserve for men. Ebewo (2007), assessing the features of African video films, emphasises that "women are portrayed in most films as prostitutes, at best courtesans, wily lovers and witches. They are prone to all imaginable criminality" (p.48). Again, this describes how Shakira and Yvonne, the women in *Shakira*, are portrayed.

Even as the film stereotypes women, this deconstructive element of a strong, albeit dangerous woman speaks of the potential of African women to carve out spaces of agency and power for themselves in positive ways that hopefully challenge the restrictions of their sexist societies. Even though all but two of the actors are Ghanaian, there is no difference in the depiction of men and women characters in *Shakira*, despite its Ghanaian bent. The largely positive reception of the film in Ghana also shows clearly, the similarity of the Ghanaian and Nigerian societies' perceptions of women.

Family Disaster

Family Disaster (Kigosi, 2010) is a Bongowood video film directed by one of Bongowood's young directors, Vincent Kigosi. The screenplay for the movie was by Ally Yakuti and the story was written by Odika. The film stars Vincent Kigosi as Morris, Elizabeth Michael as Juliet and Diana Kimaro as Judy, Morris' nieces and Richard Masinde, who plays the Headteacher.

The film is a story about two promiscuous teenage sisters Juliet and Judith, whose young uncle Morris (Vincent Kigosi), oblivious of their promiscuity, tries to bring them up after the untimely death of their parents from AIDS. The apparent goal of the film seems to be to teach a moral lesson that illustrates the Swahili proverb that says; *asiyefunzwa na mamake hufunzwa na ulimwengu* (the world teaches one who is not taught by their mother). The film opens with a scene in which Morris is seen driving into his nieces' school. He gets out of the car quickly and walks hurriedly into the Head teacher's office, demanding angrily to know why his niece had been spanked in school. The Headteacher looks on quietly as Morris rants on, threatening to beat him up. He goes on to demand a transfer letter as he threatens to withdraw his daughters from the school. Seeing that the Headteacher would not respond to his demands, he storms out of the office angrily. In the next scene, still angry, Morris is seen in his girlfriend's house complaining about how his nieces were being maltreated at the school. When Samantha, his girlfriend, tries to point out that it is the responsibility of the school to discipline its students, Kigosi insists that the school had no business disciplining students and that their duty is only to teach them.

In another scene, while the Headteacher is teaching in class, Juliet, the older of the two sisters and her boyfriend Jerry, are busy exchanging love notes. He sees them and later punishes Jerry to go and weed a patch and suspends Juliet because she started the whole incidence. When Morris asked for the reason why she had been suspended, they tried to tell him that the Headteacher picked on her because she refused to give in when he made advances at her. Morris's attempt to get the girls admitted by other schools failed because they had been heard of in all the schools in the locality, and no school was ready to accept them. Attempts to get them a home teacher also failed because they disrespected her and drove her away.

While he was going about looking for admission for them, Juliet disobeyed Morris' directive that they should not go out. In one of the scenes, she is seen with a man at a hotel, trying to book a room. When the receptionist refuses to give them a room because Juliet was a minor, she tells him that she could handle not only his father but his grandfather as well, without a problem.

Eventually, they pay a bribe, and they are given a room. After having sex with her, the man, gets a call from his office, and gives her a lot of money, and takes his leave. With the pretence that she would go home later, she offers money to the receptionist in exchange for sex. This scene portrays Juliet as sexually insatiable (maniac). Not only does this illustrate cheapness and promiscuity but also a lack of self-respect and dignity. In another scene, after bidding goodnight to their uncle, the girls dress up seductively and sneak out to the nightclub, engage in drinking and smoking and having sex with their lovers in hotels for money. They took advantage of his leniency and managed to live a double life for a long time on his blind side. These sequences epitomise Ukadike's (1994, p 107) assertion that "In many African countries, women remain at best sexual objects enveloped in a culture of chauvinism".

Furthermore, drinking alcohol and smoking reflects the social menace of teenagers or youth endangering their health. This is also a portrayal that is very common in Hollywood films Escamilla et al. (2000). Again, these sequences are typical of Nollywood and Ghallywood movies, substantiating Krings's (2010) claim that Ghanaian and Tanzanian films "often imitate Nigerian models".

These scenes also reflect the unfortunate outcome of parents concentrating too much on themselves, or their marital problems to the neglect and detriment of their children. When this happens, there is very little, or no supervision and children are left to their own devices, good or bad. The sisters were able to live this double life due to the lack of parental guidance and supervision.

On two different occasions, when his friends who were privy to the girls' lifestyle tried to draw his attention to the reality about them, Morris refused to believe them and blamed them for accusing his nieces falsely. This happened when his best friend met one of the girls at a nightclub and reported the matter to him. He even branded his friend a liar and accused him of being jealous of his nieces. Even when his girlfriend Samantha cautioned him about how he over-pampered and shielded the girls, he disagreed. He refused her offer to move in with him and lend a hand in their upbringing since they needed a woman's touch.

When eventually he discovered that all he had been told about his nieces were true, he deals with them harshly and goes back to apologise to their Headteacher and pleads for a second chance for his nieces on the advice of his friend to whom he had been rude. The Headteacher received him graciously and explained the need for the school to support families to bring up responsible children. He raised a critical cultural practice that is gradually being pushed out of African society. In African culture, a child belongs to the community and therefore, not only parents and immediate family are responsible for their proper upbringing but the community as a whole. The Headteacher then probes the girls' background, and eventually, in a flashback, Morris unfolds how this family disaster came about.

It all started when the mother of the sisters, suspecting her husband of engaging in extra-marital affairs (because he started coming home late), accused him in the presence of their daughter, threatening to do the same. She carried out her threat, and in response, her innocent husband decided to carry out what he had been accused of falsely. In the end, they both became very promiscuous, bringing their partners into their marital home and their marital bed indiscriminately, not caring about the negative effect their actions would have on their daughters. In the meantime, they came together to make love whenever it suited them. Here the wife is portrayed as irrational. Eventually, both husband and wife contracted HIV and finally died of AIDS, leaving their daughters in the care of their young uncle, Morris. It became clear that the immoral behaviours of their parents were the cause of the girls' promiscuity and bad behaviour and habits.

When the mother of the girls brings strange men not only into her marital home but her marital bed, it is a display of lack of respect for herself, her husband and daughters. She is portrayed as unfaithful when she decides to go after men upon the unproven suspicion of infidelity on the part of her husband.

Again, the girls' mother is portrayed as a betrayer responsible for her husband's downfall and, ultimately, the family's downfall. This portrayal confirms Ogunbiyi's (2010) claim that Nigerian filmmakers "construct negative and outrageous images of women in conflict with known tenets like home-breakers, prostitutes, gossips, selfish, greedy, criminals, murderers and the like". The message that comes across is that if she had not unjustly suspected her husband of infidelity and if she had not taken the lead in being unfaithful to her husband, there would not have been any disaster at all. Often, women are accused of being their enemies, and this perception is illustrated by the mother's contribution to the promiscuous outturn of her daughters. This negative influence is seen when she acts as a bad example and defends them against their father when he attempts to discipline them. She, therefore, is indirectly portrayed as an enemy who destroys the lives of her daughters.

The Headteacher then proposed that he would take the children back only if they signed an undertaking to abide by the school's regulations and be of good behaviour, and Morris agreed to this. In a later scene, Juliet, still unrepentant, tells off Jerry, her former boyfriend. A teacher sees her and threatens to report her to the Headteacher unless she agrees to visit him. Later, she became sexually involved with the teacher. Morris finally allowed Samantha to move in with them, and she tried to straighten them, but they disrespected her and turned deaf ears to all the advice she gave them.

At the end, when Juliet finds out she is pregnant, she is not sure who the father is. However, the teacher who was likely to be the father can arrange to get the pregnancy terminated by a doctor illegally. This was the fourth pregnancy she was going to terminate.

In the last but one scene of the movie, Juliet is seen dying in a hospital bed. She apologised to her uncle and advised her sister to change for the better and lead an exemplary life. It is only then that Judy, her younger sister learns her lesson and repents. In the final scene, she is seen advising viewers that parents should live up to the responsibility of bringing up their children properly. She also advises children to study hard for a better future and wait for the right time for everything.

In a nutshell, this film, like its Nollywood and Ghallywood counterparts reported by several scholars (Adewoye et al., 2014; Ogunbiyi, 2010), gives a very negative portrayal of females. The characters played by both girls and their mother portray very negative images of African women. The dressing of especially the young ladies is so anti-African. They always wore very revealing dresses, micro miniskirts, skin-tight dresses. The film also portrays the reality in today's Tanzania. About a quarter of a century ago, western culture in terms of dressing had not penetrated Tanzania as it has today. Many women had natural hair and dressed decently, but that cannot be said today, so the film indeed reflects the current moral decadence in the society. In the 1980s and early 1990s, women and ladies' dressing was influenced more by the Islamic culture which, could be said to be one of the dominant religions at the time. It encouraged the complete concealment of the female body by long clothing. Generally, in Africa, due to the patriarchal culture (which was inherited from Islam and Christianity) among many perceptions about women, one of the strongest is the view of women as sex objects.

In *Family Disaster*, the two young ladies are seen by the various men they encounter as sex objects; they all show interest in them, and their ultimate goal is to end up in bed with them. Interestingly, the two young ladies, seeing how they are perceived in the eyes of men, also see themselves as sex objects, and this is illustrated through their dressing; the wearing of short skimpy, tight and revealing dresses showing off their breasts and thighs as portrayed by the cover picture of the video.



Fig. 2: Kigosi (2010)

Senkoro (2016, p 151) refers to this type of image as "male inscription of the female body". He points out that "through these female characters, the female body is reductively and even seductively represented" (Senkoro, 2016, p 162). In the entire film, only two women are portrayed in a positive

way. They are Morris's boss and his girlfriend, Samantha. Even though his girlfriend is portrayed as decent, her decency is only demonstrated in her admonishing of Morris about the need to bring up his nieces properly by desisting from over pampering them and allowing her to have oversight over them.

On the other hand, her dressing throughout the film portrays her as a sex object, with her breasts and thighs exposed most of the time. It is also undeniable that not only is there an imitation of Nollywood in this movie but also the imitation of western popular culture, especially in the area of dressing.

Conclusion

In both *Shakira* and *Family Disaster*, stereotyping of women as sex objects is clearly demonstrated, with the ladies dressed in revealing clothes, giving the impression of their immorality and showing off their thighs in a miniskirt and dresses, respectively, exposing their breasts in the case of *Family Disaster* and mid-riff in the case of *Shakira*.

Although the ultimate goal of these two films is to teach moral lessons to the youth and society, which they do in both films, it takes an overly negative depiction of women to achieve this goal. The question is, 'Is there not another means by which moral lessons can be taught?' The ultimate goal of teaching moral lessons via film is often undermined by excessive show-casing of immoral behaviours such as promiscuity, indecent dressing, and over-indulgence in drinking and smoking. Thus, in the end, society tends to emulate the harmful acts of such films rather than their intended moral lessons. This paper advocates that writers and film producers should revise the negative stereotyping of women and use the medium of cinema to reverse and interrogate these prevailing, totalising and damaging images in film and society, and create new characters who capture an accurate, balanced and positive image of women. We believe this can be achieved through sensitive and nuanced treatments of anti-social issues, so filmmakers do not end up perpetuating the vice but truly represent most women in society. Indeed, as Adewoye et al. (2014) argue, the "unwarranted placement of half-nude and sexually suggestive pictures of women" whether in film, advertisement or music video "are not in any way related to women" (p.103).

It must be noted that stereotyping of women is not limited to Africa alone but is a global challenge. It is evident in films and in adverts and music videos. Thus, in a 2014 UNESCO publication titled *Gender, Equality, Heritage and Creativity*, the Director-General, Irina Bokova, in her foreword, comments on "the need to tackle all forms of discrimination against women and girls, including, through discriminatory laws, social norms, practices and stereotypes" (Bokova et al., 2014, p 3). In the same publication, she goes on to state that "In all development efforts, we must ensure that culture is never invoked to justify the infringement on or limitation of human rights.

Earlier in the paper, we argued that the negative depiction of African women can be traced to Africa's historical, traditional, colonial, and religious experience. This view is shared by Farida Shaheed, a special rapporteur in the field of cultural rights in Bokova et al. (2014). She states that "At present, gender discrimination is so frequently defended by reference to culture, religion and tradition that it seems safe to conclude that no social group has suffered a greater violation of human rights in the name of culture than women." Bokova et al. (2014: 5). This makes the task of offering positive female characters in video films more urgent.

The fact that women are eager to accept roles that perpetuate the stereotyping of females negatively is an issue that gender advocates and civil society groups must analyse and confront through educating women and society about the deleterious effects of buying into these stereotypes. If well targeted, these actions can potentially lead to female actors refusing to be portrayed in these negative ways and help sensitise our communities on the harmful effects of these negative depictions of women, not just on women but also on our societies. We hope that this awareness will encourage video filmmakers to join in this effort by using the powerful medium of film to help effect societal change on this issue.

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