NIGERIAN THEATRE JOURNAL
A JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY OF NIGERIA THEATRE ARTISTS (SONTA)

Editor
Osakue Stevenson Omoera

2022

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ENTREPRENEURIAL THEATRE IN A PANDEMIC ERA: "THE GRADUATES" EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

The pandemic created by the Covid-19 virus has ushered in a new way of disseminating educational pedagogy. For centuries, coercive attention has been given to certificates which is gradually diminishing and not ameliorating the numerous problems bedevilling the entire world, Nigeria inclusive, hence the need to shift focus from certificates to skill acquisition. New skills are gradually occupying the space and 'entrepreneurial theatre,' where artistes can be empowered and become self-reliant is gradually taking centre stage. Theatre entrepreneurship may have been subsumed in theatre praxis, but its eloquent manifestations are often attributed to contributions from other professions, thereby depriving theatre its pride of place. This research aims at highlighting the conception, processes and experience of actualizing an entrepreneurial theatre in a pandemic era. The researchers adopt a performative and practice-led research, leaning on Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory for the conception and performance of "The Graduate." It was found that Covid-19 as a pandemic could positively challenge and tease out the entrepreneurial capacities of people, including theatre professionals. Hence, the study recommends that if entrepreneurial theatre is embraced, it portends a brighter future for theatre graduates. The paper concludes that a theatrical taxonomy of entrepreneurship can facilitate small scalable start-ups that may snowball into large business companies for theatre graduates.

Keywords: Entrepreneur, Theatrepreneur, Pandemic, Experience and Social Learning.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship education is gradually becoming a vital part of the theatre arts curricular in Nigeria. Though, theatre skills are not altogether new, but its recognition and documentation in the theatre curriculum of the colleges of education in Nigeria is a new development. It is a step in the direction of functional education. Again, it is obvious that entrepreneurial skills are vital to the society and relevant to the sustenance of economic development; hence it is a sub-sector that requires the participation and support of the government. It was therefore applauded when government introduced entrepreneurial

studies in tertiary institutions; though research is yet to prove or validate the learning outcomes from the courses taught and its applicability after school. To further enhance teaching-learning effectiveness and functionality in theatre arts education, the Department of Academic planning of the National Commission for Colleges of Education's introduction of THA 323 titled Entrepreneurship in Theatre, a third year course in the Theatre Arts NCE programme of colleges of education in Nigeria, is a step in the direction of functional education. It brings to the fore, the awareness that Theatre Arts is far beyond acting and dancing as the society views it, but a discipline that enriches the creative industries thereby contributing to the creative economy. The importance of this sub-sector cannot be undermined especially with the challenges of infrastructural decay, stark realities of poverty, unemployment and the increasing cost of living; these are societal challenges that require the dividends of entrepreneurial training for its betterment.

Entrepreneurship as a word is borrowed from the French word *éntreprende*, meaning one who undertakes. Though, it was possibly shaped from *celui qui entreprend* which means 'those who get things done.' However, entrepreneurship may have been fostered by a group of thinkers known as the physiocrats that emerged (In France) within the context of economic theories, they were the first proponents of Laissez-faire as they opposed taxation (government intervention in industry) while they upheld the participation in the economics of a society as guided by the individual (Ross & Ross 576-7). Also, Richard Cantillon advanced entrepreneurship in his book *Essai sur la Nature du Commerce en General* published in 1775 where the concept of entrepreneur was introduced. The book is a result of careful observation of craftsmen, merchants and farmers of his time and the research he conducted between 1730 and 1734. Theorists and economists advanced on their research to understand the interplay of markets and the role of the entrepreneur in the transaction of goods and services in exchange of money.

Entrepreneurship education in Nigerian tertiary institutions is specifically designed to provide the requisite skills, motivation and knowledge in stress/professional areas for the student in other to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of ventures. That is why, various entrepreneurial education/trainings are offered from primary school levels of education to terminal degrees. This is so because it equips the student to become self-reliant and qualified to compete within the knowledge economy. Thus, in the Nigerian Colleges of Education, Department of Theatre Arts, and the course content for THA 323; Entrepreneurship in Theatre is described as follows: basic business guideline, proprietorship, sole proprietorship and partnership, profit and loss, Employment contract, business letter writing. Theatre as business enterprise, economic analysis of labour market,

entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behaviour, entrepreneurial opportunities in theatre, troupe organization and events management, writing of proposals (funding and performance proposals), funding of projects (governmental, NGOs, start-ups and bootstrapping, financial institutions, commissions, associations, advocacy groups), budgeting… (NCCE, Minimum Standards 155).

The above quote enumerates the course content of THA 323 for NCE Theatre Arts students, year III second semester. Although, it is a new course that was designed to expose students to the practical knowledge of theatrepreneur; beyond the doing of acting, how theatre graduates can develop themselves into entrepreneurs and employers of labour. Notably, it is apt and observed that prior to the move to inculcate the spirit of self-reliance and a compelling desire to participate in the crusade and advocacy that fights poverty through enterprise education and entrepreneurial skills, the emphasis has been on basic learning and theories that qualify graduates to be certified for a white collar job. Sunday Ojeifo records that:

> In a study conducted by Mrs. Catherine Abiola Akinbami, Management Consultant (2005), she disclosed that Aladekomo (2004) documented the history of policies that relates to education, industry, employment and labour in Nigeria dating back to the colonial era. In a related vein Akinyemi (1987) reports that our educational institution few as they were remained factories for producing white collar jobbers with no special professional nor was entrepreneurial skill envisaged in the education system. This means that before now, there has been complete absence of enterprise education in the educational system. Pretorius (2008) reports that there are no tools and benchmarks for assessing the quality of entrepreneurship education programmes offered in the tertiary institutions. (3)

Thus, the dynamism of entrepreneurship education centres on action not intention, measure and relevance to both the student and the society. It is inclined to activities and processes that manifest in self-employment and the risk taking factor in a profit oriented venture. The aim of this research is to highlight the conception, processes and experience of actualizing an entrepreneurial theatre in a pandemic era. The paper states that in a social pandemic era, the survival instinct activates/supports entrepreneurial venture, as it argues that that a simple theatrical taxonomy of entrepreneurial activity can facilitate small scalable start-ups that may snowball into large business companies for the theatre graduate.

Theoretical Background

This research adopts social learning theory, propounded by Albert Bandura, the theory emphasizes the importance of observing, modelling, and imitating the behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Social learning theory considers how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behaviour. In social learning theory, Albert Bandura agrees with the behaviourist learning theories of classical conditioning and operant conditioning. However, he adds two important ideas: 1. mediating processes occur between stimuli & responses and 2. behaviour is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning (90).

Observational Learning

Bandura submits that: "Children observe the people around them behaving in various ways. This is illustrated during the famous Bobo doll experiment" (61). Individuals that are observed are called models/teachers. In society, children are surrounded by many influential models, such as parents within the family, characters on children's TV, friends within their peer group and teachers at school. These models/teachers provide examples of behaviour to observe and imitate. "Children pay attention to some of these people (models) and encode their behaviour. At a later time they may imitate (i.e., copy) the behaviour they have observed" (Bandura 61).

Mediational Processes

Social Learning Theory is often described as the 'bridge' between traditional learning theory (i.e., behaviourism) and the cognitive approach. This is because it focuses on how mental (cognitive) factors are involved in learning. Unlike Skinner, Bandura believes that: "humans are active information processors and think about the relationship between their behaviour and its consequences" (56). Observational learning could not occur unless cognitive processes were at work. These mental factors mediate in the learning process to determine whether a new response is acquired. Therefore, individuals do not automatically observe the behaviour of a model and imitate it. There is some thought prior to imitation, and this consideration is called mediational processes. This occurs between observing the behaviour (stimulus) and imitating it or not (response). There are four mediational processes proposed by Bandura thus:

1. **Attention**: The individual needs to pay attention to the behaviour and its consequences and form a mental representation of the behaviour. For a behaviour to be imitated, it has to grab our attention. We observe many behaviours on a daily basis, and

many of these are not noteworthy. Attention is therefore extremely important in whether a behaviour influences others imitating it.

2. **Retention**: How well the behaviour is remembered. The behaviour may be noticed but is it not always remembered which obviously prevents imitation. It is important therefore that a memory of the behaviour is formed to be performed later by the observer. Much of social learning is not immediate, so this process is especially vital in those cases. Even if the behaviour is reproduced shortly after seeing it, there needs to be a memory to refer to.

3. **Reproduction**: This is the ability to perform the behaviour that the model has just demonstrated. We see much behaviour on a daily basis that we would like to be able to imitate but that this not always possible. We are limited by our physical ability and for that reason, even if we wish to reproduce the behaviour, we cannot.

4. **Motivation**: The will to perform the behaviour. The rewards and punishment that follow a behaviour will be considered by the observer. If the perceived rewards outweigh the perceived costs (if there are any), then the behaviour will be more likely to be imitated by the observer. If the vicarious reinforcement is not seen to be important enough to the observer, then they will not imitate the behaviour. (Bandura 68)

These four cardinal processes of Bandura's mediational processes serves as indicator why the theory is suitable for the students in this performance to learn through paying attention to the resources persons, retaining the processes they learnt from the resource persons, reproducing what the resource persons taught them and finally, now some of these students have the motivation to go on with what they have observed from the resource persons and now making their monies from the products thereby, not relenting on white collar job to earn a living.

Theatrepreneurship and Performance
One of the new normal that the world is facing today is the search for functional education and knowledge. Theatre Arts is a functional education and knowledge. This corroborates Kelechi Stellamaris Ogbonna's submission that Theatre Arts is "a performative art that requires collaboration, doing and impacting. It is a field of study that dwells more on the psychomotor development of the artist while training them to use their creativity optimally

in the development and achievement of other feats" (2). Drama and theatre are aged old tools that have been multifunctional. Though theatre predates drama, from its humble origins, drama has come a long way "as an act of necessity utilized in ensuring the steady supply of food, augmenting the spoken word, harmonizing with nature and the elements and relaxing in-between seasons; to put on a garb of professionalism and mercantilism"(Utoh-Ezeajugh 5). Notably, the focus of the performing arts is primarily on dance, music, drama and theatre while overlapping with film and media. Also, the areas of production/design; set and prop design, costume, construction, makeup, lighting and theatre management are skill oriented and inseparable parts of the theatre enterprise.

Thus, the word theatrepreneur is a product of two professional entities; Entrepreneur and Theatre. The merging of the two entities forges a different but unique existence within the world of business enterprise. Thus, "theatrepreneurship is simply how to function as an entrepreneur using theatre business/theatre methods as a process for the achievement of commercial services, products and profits. It harnesses the rich and creative elements of theatre to build a business empire; an enterprise. Invariably, theatrepreneurship harvests theatre business in its dynamic and creative opportuness to impact on the creative industries" (Ogbonna 2). In its commonplace within the classroom and rehearsal venues, theatre engages in the art of doing, making and presentation of situations. It is therefore a platform for teaching, learning and training of creative skills. The skills manifest in the end product of presentation; a forum where the acquired knowledge from the classroom/rehearsals is presented before a viewing audience who pays a token to relish the production (Product). Hence, the relationship between the theatre and its audience is much more than participative experience, but a commercial enterprise of give and take, of profit making and audience satisfaction.

It is this paradigm shift occasioned by so many factors that engineered the atmosphere of enterprise education within departments, schools and colleges as a response to socio-economic challenges within societies. The Covid-19 pandemic which broke out in Wuhan, China on December 8, 2019 was a public health emergency of international concern which surfaced in Nigeria through an imported case from Italy on February 27th 2020. After the index case, Covid-19 spread continued, the lockdown intervention and other governmental responses to it could not wedge its communal transmission. The nature of the pandemic compounded economic issues in Nigeria; through its lockdown and 'Social distancing' which disrupted cultural/social/human interactions, since the virus infection transmits through human contact; it disintegrated the world as it limits movement from place to place. Thus, with

the shutting down of airports, all forms of transportation, businesses, sports, festivals and churches, world economies plunged into a standstill. Hence the measures were in place to stall the global transmission of diseases.

More so, the Covid-19 pandemic did put the Nigerian economy under tremendous strain, it also affected the performing arts adversely. The reasons are not farfetched since the live theatre depends largely on social and human interactions to function; it was difficult to come together for rehearsals much more put together a performance for the audience to watch. Also, while the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) were costly and in short supply within the first six months of the Pandemic, social distancing and stay at home were mandatory without facemasks. Hunger was another aspect of the pandemic; though those with the purchasing power were not able to access food easily, much less the large population whose livelihood depended on their daily income. At this point, it became imperative for theatre Arts lecturers to think outside the box for ways or approaches that could possibly sustain the transactional relationship between theatre and its audiences.

Synopsis of the "The Graduates"

The play treats the importance of skill acquisition. It is an expressive play that tries to make its argument on functional education. It captures the challenges students face after graduation and the need for graduates to become self-reliant. The play's title is a question mark on graduates who boast of certificate that can hardly offer them jobs. Igwe Omekannaya I of Umunjam tries to reason with his elders on the need to start a skill acquisition centre. While some elders disagrees with the Igwe, he is not deterred. The Igwe's determination to ensure that the graduates of his community are gainfully employed, or are self-reliant, takes the matter to the senator representing his zone. The senator offers her support. The project kicks off with a decree from the Igwe; that all youth of Umunjam, both graduates, undergraduates and the unemployed should as a matter of urgency register with the town hall for skill acquisition. The registration is free. Both Igwe and his palace councils attend the training. On the completion of the skill acquisition training, the Senator commissions the project with all participants/groups presenting their products. Gifts, awards and prizes are given to the participants.

Workshop

It was, therefore, fortuitous when the lecturers assigned to teach THA 321- Theatre Workshop III (a 3 credit load course for NCE year 3) 2019/2020 academic year for the Department of Theatre Arts, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, decided to approach the course content differently. The course coordinator; Dr. Kelechi Stellamaris Ogbonna, working

in collaboration with her co-lecturers; Dr. Mohammed-Kabir, Jibril Imam and Lucy Onaivi-Odusina, decided to apply a teaching method which is more learner centred than other formal teaching methods. As a team, we adopted the workshop and role play method using the "Do it yourself ideology" to achieve the required knowledge for both theory and practice as basis for the production of the play for THA 321. In doing so, both the psychomotor and the cognitive learning were achieved. The team of lecturers scheduled a production meeting and addressed the students on the chosen method to teach the course.

Thus, when we addressed the students who before now understood that THA 321 course content centres on play production, they were excited at the new dimension the lecturers proposed. Moreover, we emphasized our desire to re-awaken theatre skills/design that are embedded in the course content, the type of theatre business and technology that in the past had produced props, costume, accessories and scenery materials for productions; the need to make hand posters and costumes for production without extensively buying or hiring. Though, we explained that the method for this project is not to take the students backward, but a desire to impart knowledge and skills unto the students so that they can become entrepreneurs. The response from students assured us that the Workshop was more than needful. Because it offered them the opportunity to narrate their experiences and the effect the lockdown had on them financially. According to the experiences of Pius Chidera, Onyemaobi Sarah, Isaac Okwuokenye and Ekwuchi Daniel, if other courses are taught using similar methods, students' interest in learning will increase, and because cognitive learning is matched with practice, students will benefit from the skills as well as the knowledge. The students spoke enthusiastically mentioning their interest areas: Painting, Fashion and designing, Tailoring, Events Decoration, Lighting, Play writing, Dancing, Bead Making, Choreography, Furniture Making, Wig Making and Makeup. They also desired that Soap Making, making of Hand Sanitizers and Detergents can be included in the skills. It was also agreed that students will contribute money for the purchase of materials for their training. The students were asked to make that decision within their groups.

Practice: For effective training, we divided the class into five (5) groups with group leaders. The groups were created with respect to their chosen areas of interest. The group on scriptwriting was asked to create a full-length play on this process that will harmonize and connect all the skills/groups. The scriptwriting group was made up of students whose interest areas varied from playwriting to directing, dance and acting. They worked closely with each group and with the course lecturers for easy simulation of the groups and the

entire storyline of the play. The practice and training were achieved through the following processes:

Resource persons: From the chosen areas of interest, we agreed on the imperativeness of sourcing for resource persons that are more knowledgeable in the chosen areas. Each group was mandated to source for and provide two resource persons. We interacted with the resource persons and found out that they were knowledgeable in their special areas. The resource persons visited the classroom whereby the lecture was for every member of the class after which each group scheduled a time table to visit the resource person at his/her workplace for group training. Hence, we had the following resource persons:

Group 1: (1) Ogazi Faith- on **Tailoring** (2) Nonye Ihueze- on **Bead Making** (3) Kelechi Ogbonna

Photo Credit: The Researchers (Ogbonna and Mohammed-Kabir)

Group 2: (1) Rachael Amarachi- on **Makeup**. (2) Melody Iyke- on **Wig Making.** (3) Chibuzor Martins.

Photo Credit: The Researchers (Ogbonna and Mohammed-Kabir)

Group 3: (1) The entire class visited Mr Cyracus Ikebudu's Art Gallery where they had lectures on painting, design, and theatre technology. The group continued with their schedule to train at the Art Gallery. (2) Mohammed-Kabir Imam (3) Lucy Onaivi-Odusina

Group 4: (1) Ogazi Michael- on **Dance Choreography**. (2) Mbara Nnamdi- **Dance Choreography** (3) Achor Akowe- **Directing** (4) Isaac Okwuokenye- **Acting** (5) Chukwunenye Eke- **Dance** (6) Kelechi Ogbonna and Mohammed-Kabir on **Scriptwriting.**

Group 5: (1) Nwanoneze Gift- On **Interior Decoration/Event Management** (2) Chinedu Oramah - On **Hand Sanitizer/Soap Making** (3) Kelechi Ogbonna (4) Mohammed-Kabir Imam (5) Chibuzor Martins

Group 6: (1) Mr. Ola- on **Nose mask** (2) Mohammed-Kabir Imam.*This group emerged out of their stubbornness to arrive late or absent from rehearsals. So as fallouts from other groups, they formed   group six and produced Nose masks

Photo Credit: The Researchers (Ogbonna and Mohammed-Kabir)

Training: Each group trained at the workshop/workplace of the resource persons. The group on Tailoring and Bead making attended their training schedule religiously. They trained as a group visiting the resource persons' workplace to practice on their specific areas of interest. The coordinator and co-lecturers of THA 321 visited each group's training center as a way of follow-up and supervision of the assigned tasks.

Rehearsals: After the training at the resource persons' workshops, a rehearsal time table was drawn as follows:

Tuesday   2-4pm
Wednesday   2-4pm
Friday   11 am-1pm
Saturday   3-5pm

The rehearsal was for every group to attend. It was during the rehearsal that the storyline became more concrete. As each group sat in the auditorium practicing what they learnt from their trainings, the lecturers guided and

supervised them while Group six (6) tried to link each group's storyline with the conflict of the play. The play was written by the students and it is titled "The Graduates." The lecturers supervised the rehearsals making sure that each group produced a specified number of the products they trained on.

Conclusion

It is apparently clear to deduce that theatre is an entrepreneurial discipline that, if well explored the graduates from theatre would not have the need to wait for white collar job after graduation. This is because from the follow-up, it is understood that most of the students involved in the aforementioned method and training are now engaged in one way or the other. Thus, they are making money already, when they have not collected their certificates from the school. Obviously, some of them are into making some of the items that were taught and some are hired by some of the companies that produce some of the items they are trained on, in the cause of the training and learning.

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DOCUMENTARY FILM AS AN ALTERNATIVE STORYTELLING FORM IN A PANDEMIC

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Abstract
This article is hinged on the fact that it usually takes a little more time to produce a documentary film, depending on the storyline. One can come up with a good production at the end of the day. Looking at the corona virus pandemic era, the movement of large cast and crew could be inimical to the health of those involved. However, a small cast and crew, as it applies, could equally come up with a good story and message for the viewers. Using the qualitative methods of direct observation and content analysis of three selected documentary films, the researchers situated the essay on the Auteur film theory. The selected films are Ge Yunfei's *The Lockdown: One Month in Wuhan* (2020); Jack O'Donoghue's *Virus* (2020); and Femi Odugbemi and Kadaria Ahmed's *Unmasked* (2021). The researchers found that documentary film producers needed to wield a lot of influence in their productions in order to have full control over the production. Among others, they found that the documentarist must also try as much as possible to reduce the number of the film cast, if necessary, and crew, especially during a pandemic era. The researchers recommended that a documentarist should be very mindful of the protocol for the management of any disease or pandemic and be very cautious in choosing a subject because of the locations that the dictates of the script might take them.

Keywords: Documentary film, Storyteller, Pandemic, Auteur, Nigeria.

Introduction

Storytelling has been an age long tradition in African societies and elsewhere in the world. Everyone loves a good storyline and enjoys an in-depth amazing plot. A story could be an event in pictures and images. This is

called motion picture story. A good motion picture story usually needs little or no words to be able to communicate, inform, entertain and educate. Like it is often said, *a picture is worth a thousand words*. This tells us that pictures can deeply connote several words and phrases in just one glance; pictures can indulge our minds like words; they can engage us intellectually and bring out certain needed facts and answers to various subjects and things in the society.

One outstanding feature about storytelling is that everyone is a storyteller. It is not linked to a particular place, season or time because right from when we could gather our thoughts and mutter something about our day, feelings, likes and dislikes we have told a story. Fundamentally, storytelling in Africa has helped to keep records of information and various activities from time immemorial through the use of word of mouth. Some stories are being twisted to suit stereotypes and favour particular interests, which Chimamanda Adichie in a popular Technology, Entertainment and Design (TED) talk show in 2009 termed *The Danger of a Single Story* (Adichie TED). Spaulding adds succinctly that:

> Storytelling is a form of giving. It can be used to impose ideas, but that is something else. You can preach with a story or sell with a story or teach with a story, but true storytelling should be a gift, with no demands that the story be interpreted in a particular way. (8)

In other words, true storytelling should give information, give morals, give advice, give instructions, give explanations and most importantly comprise all the basic elements that make up storytelling such as the narration of the events. Every story has a narration or narrative attached to it. Beard defines narrative as the showing or telling of these events and the various methods used to do this showing. The idea of knowledge is useful when we look at the way narrative works. The origin of the words 'narrative', 'narrator' and so on comes from the Greek word, gnarus, which means 'knowing'. A narrator, then, is someone who knows, and the process by which that knowledge is communicated is the narrative (33). The narration of events for a story is very important. Stories are narrated and should be narrated out of the immersed knowledge of the storyteller. The storyteller should have the details concerning the story and should be able to give a vivid narration of the story out of a well-defined and crafted true position. The storyteller should have adequate knowledge of the subject being discussed. Like in the case of the corona virus, someone narrating the story on the pandemic should have researched on what a pandemic is; he or she should have first-hand knowledge of the whole pandemic twists and turns as well as the probable aftermaths of its management. Documentary storytelling, as defined by Curran:

Involves a range of creative choices about a film's structure, point of view, balance, style, casting, and more. No matter what your specific role – producer, director, writer, editor, cinematographer, researcher, commissioning editor, or executive producer – decisions about storytelling will confront you throughout your career. Storytelling lies at the heart of most good documentaries: strong characters, compelling tension, a credible resolution. It's a must for many, if not most, programmers and financiers, especially those seeking to reach national or international audiences. (1)

The narrator should try not to assume to be a know it-all person on the topic because other angles might be explored by other people differently. Keeping an open mind and welcoming other perspectives or other views, will make the narration of events all-inclusive in the sense that notables will not be left unturned. These notables cannot be overlooked in a production. Some of these notables include: theme, arc, plot and character, exposition, among others. In writing a story they serve as the elements/condiments that make the story come to life with a sizzling burst. These elements can also be likened to the ingredients that must be added in appropriate proportion in order to bring out the thrills and frills of a perfect story, they include,

a. *The Theme*: Every story should have a theme; what the main discourse or subject is all about. The theme gives every story an angle of focus on the main idea; the theme can *hit the nail on the head*. The theme of a pandemic story will be safety, social distancing, alternative means of survival and other things that pinpoint directly and talk about the pandemic story.

b. *The Arc*: This shows how several events in the story transform the characters in a story, film, or documentary at the end of the day, it showcases the internal change that the hero goes through. This can be negative or positive and it showcases the hero going through a revolutionary change that can affect their lives positively. Take for instance a doctor whose worth has not been appreciated in his hospital as compared to others, then comes the pandemic in which he works to give his best in saving lives of victims he becomes admired and applauded by all, being a laid back piece, he suddenly becomes the cynosure of all eyes.

c. *Plot and Character*: Plot and character complement each other. The plot highlights the character and the character extends the plot that carries the reader or viewer through the events that unfold in the story. The plot gives a description of each scenario and event that takes place in the story. We get to know about the events that

happen in the story and the way each unfolds and leads to another. The exposition and causal relationships are brought to bear; we see the beginning, the middle and finally the end; but each gets synchronised for a harmonious finish. It is a chain that connects; and just like an interlinked chain, when one part is dislocated or cut off; we find a distort connection. Characters, on the other hand, bring the plot to life. The plot is like a bare land that requires the characters to cultivate it and bring the best out of it. The characters make the plot fertile and they cruise through the ideas bringing life and panache to the story and these stories should not be made up or scripted but should have an element of realism in them. Bernard Curran supports this assertion by observing that "documentarians work with fact, not fiction; we are not free to invent plot points or character arcs and instead must find them in the raw material of real life" (2).

d. *The Exposition*. Edger Hunt, Marland John and Rawle Steven define exposition as "the means by which narrative information is relayed to viewers. This can be done visually but is often conveyed in dialogue, an 'information dump' or a super-villain 'monologuing'" (125). The crux of the story/information gets dumped on the listeners and viewers who are consequently led into the information portal which they get serviced and acquainted with the subject matter.

Looking at the Covid-19 pandemic that was witnessed by people all over the world, notable features about it are the twisted narratives and innuendos attached to it. Some persons exaggerated, others downplayed it, while others used the opportunity to profit from the misery attached to it. Furthermore, some individuals, private organisations or government institutions saddled with the onus of meeting the various needs of the masses in cash or relief materials where found wanting, in the administration of the required palliatives that were meant to reach vulnerable people. Evidence abounds of the restraints placed on the distribution of these materials meant to reach the masses the government were supposed to serve. Many Nigerians saw warehouses that were packed full of the Covid-19 relief materials vandalised by angry masses that could not wait for their turn to be supplied the relief items. There were hoarded and later sold medical supplies utilised to create artificial scarcity that led to the automatic hike in prices of consumables and essential medical goods.

Premium Times report by Titilope Fadare on the 1st of September 2021 was captioned "Covid-19 Relief Fund: Nigerian Government pays N57 Billion

to over 1million people." This claim was credited to the Minister of State, Federal Ministry of Trade and Investment, Mariam Katagum. In this instance most people were caught arguing over the failure of government to disburse the aid. Many people affirmed that they did not receive any aid but some claimed that they know someone, who knows someone who received the aid. The challenges surrounding the distribution of relief materials provided by government and donor agencies due to systemic corruption and mischief led to fatal repercussions as was the case of Ebola in 2014. At that time, stories were peddled around Nigeria that alternative means of treatment and prevention using salt was found to be efficacious, the unorthodox prescription of which ended up causing more harm than the virus itself. One would begin to wonder if the Covid-19 pandemic may not suddenly unleash terror on its numerous victims from unguarded prescriptions and failure of governance in managing pandemics

With the different approaches to the stories about diseases and pandemics, and a few likely distortions in the representation of the pandemic story, the place of documentary films becomes pertinent. Over the years, several films have been produced with different inspirations and objectives behind them. The genres of some films are satire, comedy or tragedy; but each has a target audience and need to convey the appropriate message or communicate an idea. According to Rosenthal and Eckhardt, we should write accurately even though void of perfection; but work should be put into a documentary film in order to bring out the appropriateness, accuracy and the intent of the film. Hence, it is important for documentary filmmakers to be aware of the type of audience that will come across the documentary film. It was then adduced from their avowal that some pertinent questions need to be raised and attempts at answering them made (56). Some of these questions are:

1. How does this film inform and enlighten an old African grandmother in the village on the dangers of the pandemic?
2. How do they use more pictures to send home their message thus bridging the communication gap?
3. How do these documentary films allay the fears of the elderly and the most vulnerable in the society, reducing panic and not landing them into a heavier pandemic of heart/panic attack?
4. How does one care for themselves appropriately without going over the board, because we have scenarios where people have taken funny concoctions thus landing them into a messier self-imposed pandemic?

In this place, Rosenthal and Eckhardt outlined various intrinsic ideas to ensure the smooth flow of documentary film (56). They outlined several key

factors that a documentary film should consist of; and they are paraphrased or edited for impact:

i. Accuracy: We are making television programmes and/or documentaries, not writing articles for learned journals, but we still want accuracy.

ii. Audience: We are working for a mass audience that can be composed of the aged and the young, the PhD and the person who left school at age fourteen, the expert and the ignorant.

iii. Attention: We have to grab the audience. If the audience does not like what we show, it will turn elsewhere. Unlike students, the audience is not necessarily predisposed to what we want to show. We want to entertain, but we also want to inform the audience.

iv. Knowledge: We cannot reflect; we cannot go back. We are unsure of the audience's knowledge of the subject: some will know everything; others will know nothing. We have to be clear, concise, and probably limited in our scope.

v. View: Our intent is to present a view of history, not the definitive view of history. (313)

Stories can be made into films and films are divided into several categories. We have narrative, feature, animation, avant-garde and documentary films (Omoera 154; Hjort par. 6). The last mentioned is of interest to this paper. The audience in the society comprise different people from all walks of life. Those from the urban and rural areas are expected to be appropriately considered in the planning and execution of a documentary film. It is important to factor our audience when doing this. Everyone, especially a member of audience may want to relate and be a part of the story being told. When a documentary is centred on prevalent issues in the society, then it speaks and pulls in the audience for which the film or its story is meant. The audience is usually at the mercy of the filmmaker; so, there is the need to give them valid, accurate information whilst putting together any documentary film because there is no telling how far and wide the film will reach, especially with the advent of the modern day technology. The point needs to be buttressed because with digital technology, different stories about the Covid-19 pandemic spread across the world.

In 2021, unlike four decades before, information is readily available at the snap of our fingers, especially when we have varying audience to contend with. This different audience might be armed with information on the subject matter while some might not. Thus, the onus lies on the producer of the documentary film to keep an open but receptive mind undertaking in-depth research on the topic to lead the general populace aright and not astray. A

documentary film is meant to educate and inform; and if at the end of the day, the vast majority of people who are the target audience cannot relate with and benefit from the information given, then the producers and crew must have succeeded in faltering the thoughts of people and feeding them the wrong details which can be very incurable. According to Curran, documentaries:

> Are many things to many people, often simultaneously. They are a form of self-expression, like novels, songs, or paintings. They are a form of journalism, independent and unmediated. They are tools for bridging the divide between cultures or exposing the harsh realities of a volatile world. They inspire, motivate, educate, exacerbate, and entertain. Documentaries reflect all that is great, challenging, disturbing, and humorous about the human condition. But first, they must reach an audience. (xiii)

Going by Curran's assertion, one can vividly see that an audience must be reached when creating any kind of film. Every producer or actor has an audience in mind; and when the film cannot reach the target audience, the producer has succeeded in suppressing communication and feedback. Curran goes further to ask valid questions on how audience reach and impact should be ascertained: who is your intended audience? Many documentaries, whether produced independently or in-house, are created with an audience in mind. It's always possible that the film you thought would only reach your immediate geographic region will be a breakout hit, but in general, you should have some idea whom you want it to reach: age, geographic area, educational level, etc. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't try to also reach a wider audience (40).

Most documentary films produced during the Corona virus pandemic had this breakout. What was done as a simple documentary of thoughts and events with just a recorder saw a lot of viewers scrambling for more information and ways to cope with the pandemic. The French Press Agency documented on 20th February, 2020 via their online newspaper thus "as the world confronts the spread of a deadly new virus, interest in disease themed movies, games and TV series has exploded, with worried viewers turning to documentaries and disaster flicks for answers and ways to cope" (French Press, 2020). Films on diseases, viruses and other related topics that people did not normally care about became films of interest because they were curious and wanted to see the outcomes, learn more, allay their fears or just seek out viable coping mechanisms to survive the pandemic.

An Analysis of Audience Viewership Genre and Statistics during the Pandemic Period

Characteristics	Action/Adventure	Drama	Comedy	Thriller/Mystery	Horror	Sci-fi/Fantasy	Documentary	Reality	Food/Nature	Science/travel
Total	11%	11%	21%	5%	6%	8%	7%	4%	4%	2%
18-29	10%	4%	26%	6%	12%	10%	7%	5%	2%	2%
30-44	10%	9%	24%	4%	6%	9%	10%	3%	2%	2%
45-54	14%	6%	20%	4%	5%	11%	7%	5%	4%	3%
55-64	12%	15%	19%	5%	3%	6%	6%	6%	6%	2%
65+	12%	21%	14%	7%	1%	4%	6%	4%	6%	3%

Source: Culled from *Statista.com, January 13, 2021*

The total percentage of each film genre:
  i.   action and adventure: 69%
  ii.   drama: 66%
  iii. comedy: 124%
  iv.   thriller/mystery: 31%
  v.   horror: 33%
  vi.   sci-fi/fantasy: 48%
  vii. documentary: 43%

viii.	reality:	27%
ix.	food/nature:	24%
x.	science/travel:	14%

The above correlates with what the French News Agency reported on February 20, 2020, that people tilted towards films that helped them know more about pandemics and issues on survival. Reality films, food channels/ nature channels and travel channels which would have witnessed more audience viewership declined immensely due to a shift in the paradigm of individual audience members involved. During a pandemic and in the line of prioritisation, travel, food and reality television will mostly constitute the least on people's minds, as people are less concerned with things that give pleasure, notwithstanding the possibility of people's indulgence in those channels from time to time, maybe with the hope that the future avails to society when everything comes back to normal.

The documentary film also experienced a boost in audience viewership, as people documented their experiences and some people were eager and ready to digest these various pieces of information from around the world as means of learning more about the pandemic. This eagerness stemmed from the knowledge that people and society differ, so one would be curious to see how the pandemic has affected certain regions of the world. The present Corona virus pandemic was first discovered in China, a province called Wuhan. The province is one of the worst-hit by the pandemic, and it had several documentary films put online to inform and enlighten the world on the adverse effects of the pandemic. In Wuhan, the documentary films were mostly centred on several coping mechanisms, preventive measures and the adverse effects Covid-19. Curran states a perspective on the documentary and its timeliness that: these are exciting times for documentary films and filmmakers. Changes in technology and the way media is produced and consumed are creating new opportunities, and documentary stories are finding new audiences both locally and globally. Not just documentary films, documentary stories (1).

One striking feature that cannot be overlooked was the place of comedy. In all the film genres, comedy witnessed the highest number of viewership from all age grades and audience viewership. Comedy as a long age standing art has been in existence as old as a man. Even *The Holy Bible* admonishes that, "a cheerful heart is a good medicine but a crushed spirit dries up the bones" (Proverbs 17:22). People have used laughter as therapy to solve a lot of underlying issues. Little wonder Aristotle studied it and Socrates debated it. Such famous historical figures as Charles Darwin whose work on the *emotions* (1899), Thomas Hobbes on *Laughter, Wit and Power* (par. 1) and

Henri Bergson (2019:4) wrote papers on their humour theories. Adding to this assertion, Mel Helitzer and Mark Shalz posit that:

> Psychologists have always been interested in explaining human behaviour through humour. Humour is an important manifestation of what society really believes, but dares not speak or teach. "We can't confront tragedy directly," suggests Joseph Boskin of Boston University, "so we try to ease ourselves in a humorous way. "Laughing at misfortune frequently replaces negative feelings with positive feelings. This is true whether we're laughing at someone else's misfortune or our own. Sigmund Freud, who studied humour (but not for the fun of it), theorised that jokes allow us to express unconscious aggressive and sexual impulses, to substitute words for what we may not be able to accomplish in deeds. (33-34)

The Auteur Theory in a Documentary Context

One notable feature about the documentary film during the pandemic era was the ability to send a message across even with little or no crew. The way the film was being produced, directed and scripted gives relevance to the *Auteur* theory, which has had a longstanding controversy on whether the director should be attributed the sole authorship of the film. An *Auteur* is a filmmaker whose individual style and complete control over all the elements of production gives the film or documentary that unique touch or feel. Michael Rabiger claims that: this term was coined in the 1950s during the French New Wave and refers to the writer/director wanting to exercise an integrated control across the spectrum of the writing and realization processes. Such control can only be exercised when you have thoroughly internalized how work of depth and resonance is created, how screen works become individual, and how the narrative form itself might be expanded and developed (17).

Usually known as the *auteur* in French, the English translation, author, is comparable to an author of a book. The arguments against this theory are somewhat valid in the sense that no one wants their job or hard work in putting up a film or documentary script usurped or not creditworthy. Nevertheless, a good documentary is expected to have a detailed script of real life or real time events which are taking place or must have taken place. It is most times likened to an unravelling puzzle where no one knows what comes next. Importantly, the process of making a documentary film involves painstaking research and findings to articulate facts to give a verifiable account of an event. No matter the mode of documentary film or method employed by the cinematographer used to deepen storytelling through film, there are six sub-types or sub-genres of the documentary film: poetic, expository, reflexive, observational, performative and participatory (Nichols 1). In Nicholl's opinion: "individual

voices lend themselves to an auteur theory of cinema, while shared voices lend themselves to a genre theory of cinema" (99).

Hence, the role of the Auteur is very important in ensuring the production of authentic account of an event based on facts in the creative process. The scriptwriter writes a script; but the director visualises it and brings out the intricacies that make the film worthwhile whilst avoiding the convoluted aspects of the writer's perspective. This is not to say all scripts written by scriptwriters are usually convoluted; but the director is skilled in the art of minimal rendition of a film. Skilled in the art of directing, he/she envisages what should and what should not find its way into a film. By implication, the director's role becomes that of a gatekeeper who censures the flow of information in a film. This makes the auteur theory of much import and validity. Rabiger affirms that:

> The auteur notion of filmmaking was a useful antidote to industrial filmmaking in the 1950s and '60s but was never a working reality. Fiction films have always been made by creative teams that get behind a script or improvisational scripting process. I am only exaggerating a little if I liken directors to sailing ship figure heads: out front and highly visible, of great symbolism, but wholly dependent on who and what propels them. As a director you have so much to control that you depend on the creative input of others. Directing means giving control of their parts to actors, of the camera to a camera operator, lighting to a DP, sound recording to a recordist, the editing to an editor... and writing to a writer. As a director you coordinate the work of all these people, and you work through them. You need their skills and you need their values. Their separate judgments help you attain some distance on the material so you can retain a sense of how it must strike a first-time audience. (145)

Several critics like Stephanie Zacharek, Pauline Kael and a host of others have continued to argue for and against the auteur theory; but several directors out there have proven that the director owns the creative process. For instance, there are the likes of Kunle Afolayan in Nigeria who have redefined the director's role and carved a niche for themselves. One can tell a Kunle Afolayan film, just at a first glance; because the expertise and the directorial approach have defined artistic blends that transcend film genres. Tunde Onikoyi, Taiwo Afolabi, Ikedi Agube, Canice Nwosu, Cyprian Obadiegwu among other critics have attributed great storylines and scripts to Kunle Afolayan because he brings to life any script and tells the Nigerian story vividly with clear bold pictures that resonate with the viewers' minds. Hence, films like *October 1, The Figurine* (2009)*, Phone Swap* (2012) *and Citation* (2020)

are just few out of many films produced by the auteur director. Observably, the likes of Mahmood-Ali-Balogun, Kemi Adetiba, James Amuta, Tunde Kelani, and a host of others also fit into this category. Alternative story telling through film is therefore paramount in our bid to attain positive humanity and development.

Furthermore, directors like Christopher Norlan, Martin Scorsese, Alfonso Scuaron, Steven Spielberg, Jahman Anikulapo, Femi Odugemi, Tunde Kelani and a host of others have and are continuing to leave an indelible mark on any production they work on. This group of directors have mastered the skill of storytelling with directing; they expatiate and blow out the scripts with empathetic vigour to make meaning. Some of these directors have redefined film production and have also gone ahead to validate several scripts or stories. Some hit films include, *The Dark Knight*, *The Wolf of Wall Street, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, Jurassic Park, Shrek, Ayinla and Dazzling Mirage*. There is no denying the talent that the directors and writers possess; but the effort in every production is mostly overlooked because people crave the finished product for consumption, just as a saying goes, 'no one cares about the baker, just the bread; but without the baker, there will be no bread.' Fabe juxtaposes the difference between the author and the screenwriter thus: traditionally the "author" of the film was thought to be the screenwriter, the author of the script upon which the film was based. The French New Wave theorists disagreed. They believed that the written script of a film is only a blueprint, raw material that achieves meaning or significance only when the words are embodied in images on the screen. As they saw it, since the director is responsible for the images, he oversees the set designs, cinematography, editing, and performances of the actors, and also, in many cases, reworks the screenplay or script. Thus, according to the new wave critics, it is the director and not the screenwriter whose artistic vision is inscribed onto the film (120).

Analyses of Selected Documentary Films during the Covid-19 Pandemic

It is evident that no matter the point of view, a documentary film can help to mitigate socio-political challenges. Ge Yunfei's *The Lockdown: One Month in Wuhan*, produced in 2020 and Jack O'Donoghue's *Virus* produced also in the same year are two foreign documentary films adopted to examine the evolution of the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequent effects in the globe. The third film *Unmasked* produced by Femi Odugbemi and Kadaria Ahmed in 2021 is a four-hour documentary film on the lives of Nigerians affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. A focus on the three films shall further our stance on the alternative storytelling and meaning-making mode of documentary films. Yunfei's *The Lockdown: One Month in Wuhan* (2020), takes us on a journey of the Covid-19 pandemic: where it started and several ways the people especially

the victims were able to cope with it. The 33-minute documentary starts with a thoughtful quote that showcases the depth of the pandemic and finding self-hope in a nearly hopeless situation. The quote goes: "Life is too fragile; I have come to the hospital; I must return home alive." This statement comes with a feeling of hope for the viewers because, in times like this, only hope sustains.

The film explores the lockdown in Wuhan that occurred on 23rd January, 2020. This was in the bid to stop the deadly virus from spreading further across the nation; and this happened one day before the Chinese New Year's Eve. This was met with chaos and mixed reactions as it was a major travel day for people planning to return home to meet with family members and friends for the holidays. Due to the rush, transportation was shut down and a lot of people ended up walking on the streets. Cheng Hugh, a migrant worker in Wuhan, who was affected by the closedown of transportation, could not go back to his family, which is a regrettable scenario amongst many people who could not access transportation back to their families and homes for the celebration of the New Year. Stuck in the city, he walks around looking for homes to seek refuge; but all were occupied at the end of the day the number of those infected with the virus numbered up to 495.

Zhao Zhizang, one of the first medical doctors to come in contact with the virus in Wuhan, said the wild animals were to be blamed and the wet market where the outbreak occurred has been shut down but the virus has long spread. Health workers are seen at the frontline, taking care of ailing patients who have contracted the virus, all geared up in their safety kits yet still at great risk. Unfortunately, Dr. Zhao contracted the virus and other co-workers began to show symptoms. Those who did not contract the virus, like Dr. Tang Shi, were not home for two weeks, working long hours, which had considerable impact on all aspects of society especially the health and health management systems in the city. Since the hospital could not take in more patients, due to limited bed space, the construction of a new hospital to house 1000 patients began. Going into the hospital to capture more scenes of Covid-19 patients was prohibited because they have a protective system that enabled whatever or whoever goes into the hospital to remain in the hospital and stay indoors without going out. Thus, curbing the spread of the virus and its being contracted in the hospital. The documentary film goes further to explain to the audience that courier services were one of the few essential services that were open for business in the country even at that, only three express services agreed to deliver services in town and it must be medical supplies. The documentary ends on a sad note when we learn about the death of one of the doctors who was at the frontline of fighting the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Lockdown: One Month in Wuhan gives us an insight into the numerous challenges that were faced, in disease management and restriction.

It takes us on a thrilling journey, the images and different turn out of the documentary film might not have been depicted vividly by a scriptwriter because the documentary is realism at its best and not some make-believe to entertain an audience. Figures and events were presented the way it is and at the time it was taking place (real time). No writer could have given us the exact feel of the pandemic, some would have downplayed it, while others exaggerated the situation at hand and when these two factors come into play some groups of people become offended by the reportage because various interests are being served. A documentary film is the documentation of reality. Rabiger further analyses the various points of view in the Auteur theory, though he argues that "...the origin of authorial viewpoints remains uncertain" (202). He noted that authorial point-of-view (POV) has two main polarities that often overlap: (a) A personal or auteur POV may be the means by which the film expresses a central personality and attitude toward the characters and their story. (b) Authorial POV may be vested more diffusely in the handling of archetypes and archetypal forms in genres such as the film noir or the Western.

Rabiger's categorisation implies that no film stands on its own; all elements must synchronise to bring out a masterpiece. For *The Lockdown: One month in Wuhan,* is the director's view on the film. Nevertheless, other elements are infused to make a film because the sole production of a film will likely not meet all the criteria that bring out the creative effects and processes of that film. Different works and logistics go into every film production. So, having sole creative ownership of a particular film is almost impossible but a good director should be able to adopt a script like a baby, taking care of, grooming and nurturing the whole idea just as his/hers; afterwards leaving an impression that showcases perfection that can be attributed to only the best hands especially in the directing of the film. For a documentary film, Dean explains that: basically the director's job is to interpret the script, get the best possible performances from the actors, guide the camera people, and oversee it all into a complete cinematographic story, using his or her unique vision. There are a million ways to tell and show anyone tale. The director uses his vision and makes it "his story, even if someone else wrote it (90).

Relatively, Jack O'Donoghue's documentary film *Virus* (2020), takes us on a vivid journey of the outcomes and possibilities of the Covid-19 in Australia. After a devastating bush fire on 24th January 2020, Australia reported its first case of the Covid-19. This caused a strain on the national supply chain, especially production of face masks. This pandemic fundamentally changed the way the people in Australia lived. Two-thirds of businesses were no longer functional and the iconic Sydney harbour, which was usually flooded by tourists, was generally paralysed. This had a

devastating impact especially on the tourism sector and gross domestic product (GDP).

Many hospitality and retail workers lost their jobs and others witnessed a drastic reduction in work hours, while others were forced to go on unpaid leave. On an average, 50,000 people visit Bonday Beach, but at the time of recording the documentary, the beach was empty and abandoned. Business and education could only be accessed online and through various digital platforms. The reliance on the digital technology and internet in the production, distribution and transmission of cultural products engendered new ways of doing things. In response to the pandemic, many stores offer online services with the staff having more time to themselves; individuals focus on other outdoor activities like sports; families and friends spend more time together, learning new skills and connecting via online video chats.

With *Unmasked*, referred to as a feature documentary film, the African, or Nigerian standpoint comes to the fore in the aspects of the management, impact of and responses to the pandemic. Of note are the challenges faced in allaying the challenge of the pandemic in Nigeria like corruption, inadequate health care infrastructure, poor systems governance, poverty, illiteracy and other problems. The core values as seen in the other films also hinge on governance, hope, communal dependency or reliance. The single theme that runs through the three films are handled differently by the filmmakers. The characters in the film are real-life personages from different walks of life who discuss public health management, psychosocial issues and the consequences that erupted from Covid-19. Before its national screening and tour, *Unmasked* had been screened at the iREP International Documentary Film Festival in 2021.

By and large, Yunfei's *The Lockdown...*represents the various challenges of the covid-19 outbreak in Wuhan, China and beyond. The documentary highlights the inhibitions posed to the human race and societies as a result of the measures put in place to curtail the virus. The documentary takes an in-depth foray on the health implication of the virus that affects human relationships top the adverse impact of the pandemic on the economy of China in particular and the world in general. Therefore, the way and manner each society adapted to handling the pandemic formed the diegesis of the documentary film. Similarly, O'Donoghue's *Virus,* captures the influence of the pandemic on the major source of Australia's economy. It evinces the connection between wellness and productivity and profit or economic gains. Unmasked however delves into the problem of maladministration of health systems that often arises from, or leads to breach of trust. From these documentaries, it is evident that the Covid-19 pandemic adversely affected societies, while also threatening the existential essence of various nations.

The reality of the Nigerian situation during the pandemic was not far-fetched, the health sector, economy and the day to day lives of people were adversely affected. Nigeria, an economy not ready for cases of emergencies that deplete the society's infrastructure in one way or the other, was at the receiving end. But this opened an array of new mediated opportunities; the old and young brushed up their boots and harnessed their internet skills, which led to ample diversification of the economy and the society. People developed new skills and found various ways to make money on various social media sites via marketing and selling products using digital humour. The drama skits industry also witnessed a boom because little or no cast was needed in the production/recording of several great drama/comedy skits that went viral, like content by Pastor Nicodemus, Mr. Macaroni, Broda Shaggy, MC Edo Pikin, Brain Jotter, among others. Being in seclusion, people were content-hungry and sought alternative means to be busy, relieve boredom and get entertained as well as engaged.

Conclusion

The researchers in the course of this research, therefore, conclude that the ideal documentary as an objective medium may seem, at first, to be consistent with the 'direct cinema", a style of documentary that minimizes the filmmaker's overt manipulation of materials. Despite this, the documentary film producer needs to wield and not waive a lot of influence in his/her production in order to have complete control of it. A documentary film should be based on facts that do not need unnecessary embellishments and as the name implies is a recording of factual events based on truths that have been documented and kept to inform, enlighten, educate or even entertain as the case maybe. A documentary filmmaker would reduce the number of film cast and crew during a pandemic. This is so, because, there are usually restrictions that are encountered, as seen in the documentary film, *One month in Wuhan*, where the director was not allowed to go in to the ward with any equipment, as the hospital policy was that whatever goes in remains inside, so tentatively the movement of a full cast and crew during restrictions will make the work difficult instead of easier. Again, where cast or crew or both come down with the virus, the aim of filming the documentary is defeated. Therefore, utmost care is needed to ensure the wellness of the technical crew. Due to the fact that many people all over the world raised different conspiracy theories on the virus, it may be difficult for the documentary filmmaker to sift through different views about the Covid-19 pandemic. The documentary film producer should be mindful of his or her cast and should be cautious in choosing a story because of the mandatory location(s) in the story. As such, the story might take them to places of diverse or different cultures and stringent rules of

association. In as much as the film director wants a location that reveals actual occurrences, he/she should put into consideration factors that are likely to allow for the progress of the production, not locations that dispel the actual intent of the director. The story has to be told and the documentary filmmaker should not be hindered.

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EDUCATING THE PUBLIC ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC THROUGH THE THEATRE-IN-EDUCATION APPROACH: THE AWKA EXPERIMENT

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Abstract
Knowledge, which literally means having information about an issue, opinion, concept, data or facts, is power. This is because it places the individual in an advantageous position to take proactive and preventive measures. When people are informed about a phenomenon, they get prepared to tackle any eventuality. This study examines the communication of the Covid-19 pandemic with Demonstration Primary School in Awka. The study is hinged on Paulo Freire's Teaching Theory, otherwise known as Pedagogy of Freedom founded upon an awareness of self and society. Freire believes that knowledge emerges when the populace is made to understand their disadvantaged position. The study which is qualitative in nature adopted the theatre-in-education approach where performances are staged for the audience to watch, using the post-performance discussion to interpret the themes of the performance, clarify and enlighten the audience. The method significantly demystified and streamlined the Covid-19 pandemic and enlightened the participants on how to stay safe. The study recommends the use of theatrical mode to sensitize the populace on major health issues in society.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, Awka, Theatre-in-education, Sensitization, Populace.

Introduction
Theatre not only educates, it informs, entertains, communicates and creates awareness through performances. Theatre uses various methods in achieving its objectives. One of such methods is theatre-in-education, a form of applied theatre. Other forms include theatre-for-development, drama-in-education, creative dramatics, and community theatre. Theatre-in-education is chiefly concerned with the use of scripted or improvised drama by actors (in most cases professional actors) in educating the populace through their performance or interpretation of school texts and curriculum. Scripts are rehearsed by actors and performed by them for public viewing, either in schools, town hall or public theatre with admission fees or on full sponsorship. Other arms of applied theatre need the collaboration and participation of the audience or community members during performances and in most cases,

admission fees are not required. Theatre-in-education is the use of theatrical and dramatic mode in education while entertaining the audience. Iroh affirms that "this is also known as edutainment. Edutainment is coined from two principal words, education and entertainment…it takes performance to the people, creates intimacy and without pressure, passes the information while educating" (82-83).

Theatre-in-education is also an alternative teaching method that uses theatre and drama to teach in informal ways. Here, the child relaxes and watches performance and conceptualizes the facts as they are being dramatized. Obadiegwu agrees that "by using drama in the classroom, we can help children explore and expand knowledge, to help them know themselves and their environment, to produce inquiring mind and develop each child to his or her full potential" ("Active Learning" 77). This is accentuated by Iroh when he submits that "what we teach and how we teach students matter a lot. It is the 'how' that complements the 'what'. The 'how' arouses the interest which gingers concentration on 'what', thereby allowing learning to take place. Therefore, the use of theatre-in-education method which is the 'how' exposes "the benefits derivable from the use of the dramatic and … theatre methods in teaching" (133). The use of the theatre-in-education technique in the interpretation and simplification of school texts has been acknowledged by George Rowel and Anthony Jackson where they reported on the exploits of Everyman Theatre. According to them, the Everyman Theatre which was started as an alternative repertory company designed their programme to suit the youths and students through the presentation of school syllabus play texts for the students. This programme took play texts to local schools, using the theatre-in-education method to practicalize and expose the texts to the students. The youths and students embraced the programme that was very successful because of its attractiveness and simplification of the subject matter.

In late 2019, the world experienced the corona virus pandemic – something that devastate and disrupt the way people live. Most countries were forced to shut their borders and restricted movements within their countries to prevent influx of visitors and curtail the spread of the disease. According to www.worldometer.info, the virus has infected over two hundred and seventeen million, one hundred thousand, one hundred and twenty seven persons (217,100,127), killing over four million, five hundred and thirteen thousand, two hundred and forty nine persons (4,513,249), while one hundred and ninety-four million, five thousand, five hundred and ninety (194,005,590) persons recovered from the infection. The devastating effect of the Covid-19 worldwide has necessitated the need to inform the public on the dangers and preventive measures of the deadly virus. Qiu, Rutherford, Mao and Chu acknowledge that "there have been a number of significant pandemics

recorded in human history where pandemic related crises have caused enormous negative impacts on health, economies, and even national security globally" (np. http://hcs.pitt.edu). Theatre, therefore, comes very handy in the propagation of the gospel on how to stay safe during and after the pandemic. The use of the theatre-in-education approach, where performance is held for the enlightenment of the populace especially school children becomes imperative.

Theoretical Context

This article is based on Paulo Freire's Teaching Theory, also known as Pedagogy of Freedom, founded upon an awareness of self and society as encapsulated in his book titled *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which aims at conscientizing the masses to realize their common problem and take decisive steps to remedy them. Freire stressed the need for literacy teaching based on the concept of conscientization through which humans, not as recipients but as knowing subjects, reach a deeper awareness of the socio-cultural reality on which their lives are built and of their ability to transform that reality. Freire believes that knowledge emerges when the populace are made to understand their disadvantaged position. This will only come when the masses are conscientized towards self-assessment to discover their disadvantaged position and do something about it. According to him, they can only react when they are made aware of the prevailing situations and circumstances around them. What this simply means is the awakening of their consciousness to understand. This is because, knowledge that literally means having information about an issue, opinion, concept, data or facts, is power as it places the individual in an advantageous position to take proactive and preventive measures. When people are informed about a phenomenon, they get prepared to tackle such eventuality. To achieve this, Freire advocates that human beings should be equipped to develop attitudes and skill to overcome challenges.

The choice of the theory and the use of the theatre-in-education approach for the study is further occasioned by the need for a change in the method of teaching the child from the teacher-centred method to a more liberalized method where the child is left to not only be a participant in the learning process but have the freedom to learn at his pace (Obadiegwu "Alternative Media" 243). This is the submission of Frances K. Stage, Jillian Kinzie, Ada B. Simmons when they agreed with Freire that his method is more than a teaching method. According to them:

> Freire's pedagogy necessitates shift towards student centered learning, including a democratic and transformative relationship between students and teacher, students and learning, and students and society. Further, Freire's pedagogy requires challenging traditional   beliefs

about what constitutes knowledge and what it means to know. Freire's pedagogy requires instructors to examine their views regarding learning, the acquisition of knowledge, and the purpose of education; transform relationship between teachers and students and reconsider curricular content. (np. www.reseachgate.net)

What the above quotation is simply saying is that there must be a shift from the traditional or teacher-centred method that inhibits the child from actively participating in the teaching/learning process and that children's interest must be taken into consideration when choosing a teaching method for them. Moreover, the method chosen must be the one that should allow the child to participate in the teaching/learning experience. Expatiating on the ideology behind the theatre of the oppressed, Veror Kachii opines that: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* use theatre as a mirror, thus when people see themselves and are able to identify with it, they become conscious of what they are to do to change the situation around them which they feel is not what they want. When people are aroused consciously, they are moved to change their world since drama in a sense does not only entertain but also sharpens cognitive ability in individuals who engage in it tenaciously (16).

The choice of the theoretical framework is, therefore, very apt because of the prevailing situation occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic that has caused a lot deaths and brought fear and uncertainty into the lives of the populace, thus necessitating for quick information dissemination about the pandemic, its causes, and means of prevention to avoid further spread and curtail infection. In passing this information, the child should have the freedom of total relaxation, uninhibited by rigid classroom rules and strangulating atmosphere to imbibe the lessons for lifelong living. The choice of theatre–in-education is wholeheartedly supported by the ideals enunciated in Freire's theory.

Historical Perspectives of Pandemic
Diseases are as old as humanity. The world has witnessed many outbreaks of pandemic that resulted in the loss of many lives. As far back as 1347, the Bubonic Plague struck Europe and the Mediterranean through 1351. According to Duana Oshiem, "victims of the bubonic plague usually suffer from high fever and swelling under the armpit or in the groin. Though the spread was curtailed, but it lasted till the 16th century" (np). The plague became less common in Europe after the 1530 (16th century). There were no worldwide outbreaks of diseases thereafter, as confirmed by Jenny Tesar when she acknowledged that:

Medical historians know of no clearly identifiable influenza epidemics until large-scale outbreaks occurred in Europe in 1510, 1557, and 1580. The 1580 outbreak also spread into Africa and Asia, making it the first known pandemic. Pandemics have occurred periodically ever since. Major pandemics took place in 1729-1730, 1732-1733, 1781-1782, 1830-1831, 1833, and 1889-1890. The last of these, called the Russian flu because it reached Europe from the east, was the first pandemic for which detailed records are available (www.microsoft.com)

Encarta Encyclopedia reports that the last great pandemic of the 19th century began in China in 1894 and spread to Africa, the Pacific Islands, Australia, and the Americas, reaching San Francisco in 1900. Tesar submits that in the 20th century, major pandemics occurred in 1918-1919, 1957-1958, 1968-1969. According to her, the 1918-1919 was the most destructive recorded pandemic in history. Tracing the origin of the 1918 pandemic, she submits that the pandemic that started at the end of World War 1 in 1918 was first experienced in Spain. Hence, the name Spanish flu. The casualties were mainly young adults of between 20-40 years. The influenza killed more than 20 million people around the world. Encarta Encyclopedia observes that "this number is more than twice the number of deaths that occurred during the World War 1 from 1914 to 1918." Other diseases like acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) were identified at different periods from 1970 to 2000. In 1957, the world witnessed another flu outbreak in Guzhou, Southern China known as Asian flu. Although the overall mortality was low, the spread affected about 10-35 percent of the world population. The 1968 epidemic started in Hong Kong and spread rapidly across the world. This time, the virus affected mostly children under five years and adults of between 45 and 64 years. Encarta Encyclopedia reports that in the 21st century, the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) became the first recorded virus epidemic. It was first discovered towards the end of February 2003 in China and it spread to other countries. The mortality rate was less than 3%.

Synopsis of the Performance

It is break time in school. Children are seen playing outside in the school compound. They are called to order by the bell signifying end of the break period for them to return to their classes. Some of the students rush back into the class without washing their hands at any of the running water taps while others did. Okey and Obiageli went to the toilet to ease themselves but only Obiageli washed her hands afterwards before going back to the classroom. While in the class, Amaka, Ebele, Uche and Ikenna refused to wear

their face mask. They also refused to obey the social distancing rules and were busy whispering and discussing among themselves when suddenly Uche sneezes without covering his mouth, thus spreading the virus to his friends. Shortly Mr. Virus enters and walks around, infecting those who did not wash their hands and those crowded together. Mr. Virus embraced Amaka, Ebele, Uche and Ikenna, because they have already contracted the virus through inhaling the droplets from Uche's sneezing. Soon, the four friends started manifesting serious signs of the corona virus infection such as headache, fever and continuous sneezing. Some other members of the class had minor symptoms. Officials of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) enter and after a routine check, quarantine the infected students while non-infected students were relocated to an empty class. Thereafter, health environmental officers arrive to fumigate the classroom according to the instructions of the NCDC officials.

Analysis of the Performance

The performance took place at the school auditorium. The researcher used twenty final year students, specializing in Applied Theatre for the experiment. The play opens in a typical classroom setting as the students are attentively listening to the leader who was explaining the meaning, causes and effects of diseases, endemic and pandemic. This is followed by the sound of the bell signifying break time. The students are seen playing disregarding the social distancing instructions. Amaka, Ebele, Uche, Nma, Obiageli and Ikenna are sitting close to each other. Nma and Obiageli excuse themselves to go to the school toilet, while Ejike and Okey are playing games opposite them. Okey did not wash her hands after using the toilet as revealed in her discussion with Obigeli as follows:

Obigeli: Did you wash your hands after using the toilet?
Nma: No. My hands are clean (*opens her hands*). I don't have any need to wash my hands
Obigeli: Don't you know you can be infected and even pass the infection to any of us. Please, go and wash your hands before joining us to play. See my hands the water has not even dried
Nma: Me? Go where?
Other Girls: (*Together*) Yes, go and wash your hands.

As the bell for end of break period rings, the students are seen rushing back to the classroom for their lessons. Some stopped to wash their hands at the running water tap while others did not. Inside the classroom, some are seen eating, some drinking, picking their nose and some hugging each other. Again, Amaka, Ebele, Uche and Ikenna are sitting together in total disregard to the

social distancing order. When suddenly Ebele starts sneezing profusely, Uche complains of headache while Ikenna shivers. Nma is completely knocked down by the virus. The class is thrown into confusion as NCDC officials enter and quarantines the infected students, before an environmental officer fumigates the classroom. The themes, causes and means of prevention are embedded in the songs in the opening, middle and end of the performance. To drive home the message, they were rendered in both English and Igbo:

English	Igbo
	Umuaka, anyi abiala
Children we are here	Anyi biara igwa unu na Covid-19,
We are here to inform you that	nke ana akpo Corona, abatala na
Covid-19, also called corona is	obodo anyi
in town	Were ncha saa aka gi miri mgbe nile
Wash your hands regularly	na miri na awupu awupu
with soap and running water	Tee manu negbu nje n'aka nke
Apply sanitizer	n'eku eku
Wear your mask	Yiri ihe eji ekpuchi imi na onu
Avoid crowded place	Anola ebe otutu madu no
Maintain social distance	Nye madu ibe gi ohere

Post-Production Discussion

After the production, the entire school children, teachers and the performers came together to discuss matters arising from the performance. Pertinent questions raised by the children were thrown open by the researcher who acted as a moderator, but rephrased the questions and threw them back to the children. Thus, giving the children opportunity to answer questions. Their answers were fine-tuned by their teachers and the researcher. For example, when they were asked to explain what a disease is? Chigozie, one of the children simply answered that "a disease is an illness". Although the class appreciated his effort with a clap, the answer was further elaborated as explained to them as a condition in humans, plants, or animals that results in pathological symptoms and is not the direct result of physical injury.

A similar answer was received when the students were asked to explain the difference between an epidemic and pandemic. Chioma, answered that an epidemic is a big disease. Though some children laughed at her answer but the researcher intervened, correcting the student and took time to explain the concepts more to the class. The areas covered during the discussion included explanation of the meaning of an epidemic, pandemic disease and corona

virus, symptoms of corona virus as well as measures to prevent the deadly virus and stay healthy. They were made to sing the corona song to drive home the point. Nkechi summarized the performance while Ada outlined the causes and ways of preventing the spread of corona virus. In conclusion, Ada sang the Covid-19 song and other students joined, clapping and dancing happily.

Findings and Conclusion

The *Encarta Dictionary* defines education as "the imparting and acquiring of knowledge through teaching and learning, especially at a school or similar institution; the system of educating people in a community or society; an informative experience" (np). This study adopted the conscientization method advocated by Freire in his teaching theory in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to expose the dangers of not adhering to healthy living. According to Freire, conscientization is the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence"(np). The application of the theory of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which aims at educating the masses to realize their common problem and take decisive steps to remedy them to this study is worthwhile. The theory has further deepened the meaning of education to include empowering the common man to live a "self-managed life" (np). To this end, the students were exposed to the causes, effects and ways of preventing the deadly Covid-19 pandemic. That is what this study has done by taking the campaign to the children using a system or method that the students can easily relate to and gives them freedom to learn while being entertained. As well, they had the opportunity to ask questions and be guided to cheerily answer their questions during the post-production discussion. The point here is that the experiment demonstrated a jettisoning of the old traditional teaching method which is not child-centred but teacher friendly. The study that set out to sensitize the populace on the Covid-19 pandemic was carried out at the Demonstration Primary School, Awka using the theatre-in-education approach. The post-performance discussion with the children enabled the researcher to fully realize the objectives of the research, which explored and exposed the potentials of theatre-in-education approach for the education, entertainment and sensitization of the populace on the Covid-19 pandemic. The study acknowledged these potentialities and recommended the adoption of not only theatre-in-education but other forms of applied theatre for mass sensitization of the populace on issues that require attention in the society.

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POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND INSECURITY AS SOURCE MATERIALS FOR PLAYWRITING IN A PANDEMIC ERA

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Abstract

It is obvious that era of pandemic is normally characterized by avalanches of challenges. Apart from health issues that are particular during the period of any pandemic, the affected society is usually faced with socio-economic and political problems as the people strive to overcome the plague through different means. For instance, since the advent of Covid-19 in Nigeria, the existing wave of socio-economic issues such as poverty, unemployment and insecurity in the country have increased. However, playwright as an artist depends on a number of sources like human experiences amongst other things for the construction of his work. Therefore, this paper investigates the rising cases of poverty, unemployment and insecurity during the time of Covid-19 in Nigeria; on the other hand, the paper interrogates the need for Nigerian playwrights to see the aforementioned problems as source materials for playwriting. In other words, the paper adopts evaluative and descriptive research methodology to examine how the issues of poverty, unemployment and insecurity in Nigeria during Covid-19 can serve as source materials for playwriting. The results show that the socio-economic experiences generated by Covid-19 can bring about emergent themes in playwriting. Amongst other things, the paper concludes and recommends that like other parts of the world, Covid-19 has caused a lot of economic and social issues; thus, the Nigerian playwrights should use these socio-economic realities to expand the size of the Nigerian literary drama and theatre.

Keywords: Poverty, Unemployment, Insecurity, Pandemic, Covid-19, Playwriting.

Introduction

Globally, Covid-19 has generated a number of challenges since its advent in Wuhan, Republic of China in December, 2019. Apart from the high number of deaths that have been recorded as a result of Covid-19, the pandemic has equally affected all activities of man across the globe. Many economic, social, political and religious activities have at one time or the other been shut down due to the fear, anxieties, threat, and health related issues created by the dreaded pandemic. Like other parts of the world, Covid-19 has caused serious damages to the living conditions, and the socioeconomic

activities of Nigerians in the recent years. The first case of Covid-19 in Nigeria was reported on the February, 27, 2020 in Lagos State. Thereafter, more cases were reported in many states across the country including Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. This is because Covid-19 can easily be transmitted through human interactions, droplets and contaminated forties, and it has the potentials to remain in the air for some hours. Considering the rate of the spread of the virus, the Nigerian government adopted some of the global practices for the prevention of Covid-19 which include lockdown among other measures. The principle of lockdown forbids Nigerians from travelling to other countries of the world, and as well prevents people in other countries from coming to Nigeria during the pandemic. This aggravated the socioeconomic condition of the country. For a country that is badly managed and faced with avalanche of socio-economic and political challenges, Covid-19 can be said to have worsen the plight of its citizens as many saw the pandemic as an opportunity to pillage Nigeria's commonwealth. According to Achor and Onaivi:

> ... The Nigerian political gladiators are self-enriching, corrupt and so on, prominence is not given to decision making and the implementation of policies that will bring about the advancement of entire economy that will benefit all… With this in place, the Nigerian economy is bereft tangible growth and development, living the Nigerian socio-economic terrain at the mercy of near absolute infrastructural lack and decay, high unemployment and exchange rate, armed robbery and terrorist attacks, kidnapping, pipeline vandalism, hunger, poverty and the like. (99-100)

Indeed, as a result of poor leadership structures amongst other factors, the Nigerian nation has been faced by so many economic crises which have over the years fuelled a number of social vices such as armed robbery, kidnapping, terrorism and banditry. Unfortunately, these socio-economic realities took a worst dimension in the era of Covid-19. This is because half of Nigeria's population are outfield workers and are not able to work from home. As such, Covid-19 makes a number of Nigerians to lose their jobs and sources of income, thus, making them vulnerable to economic hardship. This situation equally increased the rate of crime waves across the country.

However, it has been acknowledged that, "Arts play significant roles in various forms; arts have been deployed to address traditional and contemporary problems that plagued the society" (Segun 156). The artists usually make use of available socio-economic and political realities of their societies to talk to their people through art forms like plays, dance performance, painting amongst others. Hence, the socio-economic challenges

such as poverty, unemployment and insecurity created by Covid-19 in Nigeria can be seen as source materials for Nigerian playwrights.

Theoretical Framework

The theory that underpins this work is Instrumentalism which was originally introduced by Pierre Duhem in 1906. Since its introduction, the theory has been relevant in a number of fields. In the field of arts, Instrumentalism is basically concerned with the content of an art work rather than the structure and composition. Through the lens of instrumentalism, the best art works are those that convey a message or shape how we see the world. Unlike other art theories, instrumentalism posits that art is good when it functions as a tool to influence or change society. The implication of this theory for our paper is that there is a relationship between the focus of this paper and the major thrust of the theory which says that the best art works are those that portray issues that are confronting man and his world. As a result of Covid-19, the Nigerian nation has been faced with increased rate of poverty, unemployment and insecurities. Applying the principles of Instrumentalism theory closely with playwriting practices in Nigeria will go a long way to solve a number of socio-economic and political issues confronting the nation in the era of Covid-19 and thereafter.

Covid-19 Experiences within the Nigerian Space

According to World Health Organization, Covid-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered Coronavirus. Most people infected with the Covid-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. The first case of Covid-19 was reported in Wuhan, Republic of China in the 2019. The pandemic is highly deadly and it has the capacity to spread very fast among human beings. Thus, since 2019 till date the various has spread across almost all countries of the world including Nigeria. The first case of the pandemic in Nigeria was reported on the 27th, February, 2020. Like other parts of the world with the records of the pandemic, Covid-19 has not only created health related issues in Nigeria, but it has also generated avalanches of socio-economic issues across the country. That is why Madubuike, Festus, Nwobi, Iwu and Oguttu observed that:

> Since Covid-19 spread at a fast rate, individuals from vulnerable health systems and poor socio-economic backgrounds are particularly at risk the majority of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are faced with prolonged health system vulnerabilities due to civil wars, post-military

autocratic delayed reforms, corruption, and the emigration of physicians/health workers and other skilled professionals. Nigeria is a concerning example of a vulnerable health system, and according to the healthcare system corruption rating among Anglophone West African countries by Transparency International, Nigeria ranks the worst. (par. 8)

Indeed, due to leadership failures among others, Covid-19 era can be best described as one of the worst periods in Nigerian history. Nigerians are not only faced with health issues, but they are also faced with high rate of hunger and general hardship. For instance, the lockdown policy which forbids people from going out and carries out their socio-economic activities has impacted negatively on the majority of people in Nigeria who feed and survive only by what they earn daily. The situation becomes worse owing to the fact that social welfare packages or palliative assistance provided by the government for the most vulnerable people in society were not enough and the methods of distribution were faced with corrupt practices. However, Achebe says that,"... economic deprivation and corruption produce and exacerbate financial and social inequities in a population, which in turn fuel instability" (250). That is exactly some of the issues in Nigeria during the pandemic. As a result of economic hardship and loss of job, many issues of insecurity were reported across the country. According to Alfakoro:

It is glaring that the outgrowing rate of insecurity in Nigeria amidst the novel corona virus is so devastating and has also gained bad name to the country.... Robbery and other killings have been carried out within the period. Among them are the attack in Isanlu Yagba East Local Government of Kogi State leaving a DPO and seven other police officers dead. Also the killing of Funke Olakuri, daughter of Afenifere leader, communal crisis in Lamurde Adamawa state which lead to the death of twenty-three people. Another communal crisis in Onisha, Ebonyi were four people lose their life's, sectarian violence on June 4 in Guma, Benue leading to death of five people another in Bali, Taraba state where eleven life's were lost, on the 3rd of June 2020, gunmen killed three people in Kajaru, Kaduna state. ISWA fighters also killed six Nigerian soldiers in Konduga, Borno. Abduction in Shiroro, Niger state by gun men on June1st. (4)

Apart from the above aforementioned insecurity cases, since the advent of Covid-19 in Nigeria, complain about attacks by hoodlums and other criminal elements have been on the increase across the nation. These situations,

like has been acknowledged earlier are due high rate of unemployment, poverty and general economic hardship facing the people during this era.

Issues of Poverty, Unemployment and Insecurity in Nigeria

The term poverty has diverse meanings and has taken different dimensions within the last three decades. Some aspects of the term emanated from social, political, economic, philosophical and religious dimensions that have altered the world history" (Chukwuka 18). However, by a way of a simple definition, poverty can be seen as a state of being poor and deficient of the necessary requirements for living. A society that is plagued by poverty has no basic amenities and resources that can guarantee good quality of life for its citizens. According to Nwagwu, poverty is the inability of someone or group of people to obtain the minimum level of income needed to purchase the basic necessities of life. This makes it difficult to attain the basic standard of living, and subsequently creates low quality of life and lack of control over one's life and future (268).

In the same vein, Olaitan in Nwagwu defines "poverty as the scarcity of human basic needs for existence. Therefore, one is considered poor when the fellow does not possess sufficient materials needed for normal existence" (268). Going by these definitions, Nigeria can be said to be a poverty-free nation considering its numerous material resources needed for normal existence. According to Ationo et al:

> There is no gainsaying that Nigeria is blessed with immense human and natural resources that can make the country one of the most successful countries in the world. Before the oil boom, Nigeria was amongst the world's leading exporters of agricultural products like cocoa, rubber, groundnut, cotton and skin. In 1956 oil was discovered in Oloibiri, modern-day Bayelsa, Nigeria making the nation one of the oil producing countries. Apart from petroleum, Nigeria has other natural resources such as coal, limestone, lead, zinc, iron ore, tin and many others. (1)

As a result of the socio-economic issues facing the country in the midst of its wealth, the authors further lament that, ". . .but the question remains, with all these wealth why is Nigeria still rated amongst the ranges of those with high level of low standard of living, with decaying structures?" Many factors are responsible for issues of poverty in Nigeria; in fact, issues of poverty in Nigeria have a very long history. Nwagwu traced it to the colonial legacy inherited from the British colonial administration (268). It follows that "the Nigerian vicious circle of poverty has its origin from the colonial domination and control of all means of wealth creation. It is noted that virtually all aspects

of economic activities were reserved for the colonial masters, while Nigerian natives had clear restricted roles to play in wealth creation" (Ugwuh cited in Nwagwu 267). Indeed, it is true that the origin of poverty in Nigeria can be traced to colonial exploitation, but what has Nigerian leaders done since independence till date to elevate Nigerians from poverty? Virtually little or nothing has been done to save the people from poverty due to nation's poor leadership structure. The Nigerian nation, According to Nwagwu:

> ...Has been characterised by elements of dictatorship, human rights violations, and corruption. From the early independence days till date, corruption has been embraced by political leaders upon which the present political leaders built their ideologies of absolute monarchy and dictatorship. For instance, the military took over the leadership of the nation because of corruption but alas, the level of corruption witnessed during the military regime cannot be over mentioned. (40)

Chudi affirms that "…the criminalisation of the state and pollution of civil society must be squarely laid at the doorsteps of the political military whose members saw political office as a short route to riches, they set the tone, and the rest of the society followed…" (81). Indeed, corruption in Nigeria has a long history, and it has had disastrous impacts on the nation in a number of ways. Achebe observes that: economic deprivation and corruption produce and exacerbate financial and social inequities in a population, which in turn fuel political instability. Within this environment, extremists of all kinds, particularly religious zealots and other political mischief-makers find a foothold to recruit supporters and sympathisers to help them launch terrorist attacks and wreak havoc in the lives of ordinary citizens (250).

This has been the situations facing Nigeria over the years. As a result of poverty and unemployment, issues of insecurity have been on the increase in the country over the years. Observing the condition of insecurity in Nigeria, Erinoso in Nwoke posits that, "as far as security of life and property is concerned in Nigeria today, neither the individual nor the state appear to be at ease. . . the reason is because of bad and weak governance..."(246). In addition, Idris affirms that "safety and security of lives and property are necessary for the development of the nation. The increasing volume of crime in both rural and urban area has become an issue of great concern in Nigeria. Many factors lead to this condition, including... poverty, unemployment ... and living in squalid conditions in the rapidly growing cities..." (66).

The Artist and his Society
One of the major features of human society is social issue. Thus, there is no society that is free of social issues. A complete society houses a number

of people who in one way or the other interact among themselves and their environment. Often their interactions generates social, political and economic problems. Each of these problems has potentials to cause damages to the living conditions of man and the general wellbeing of the society. Hence, world over, throughout history, man has always been struggling through different means to handle problems in the society. One of the means that has been used to address societal problems over the ages is arts. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica cited in Peter and Omoregie, arts is:

> The use of skill and imagination in the creation of aesthetics objects, environments or experiences that can be shared with others, it may also designates one of a number of modes of expression conventionally categorized by the medium utilized or the form of the product, thus we speak of painting, sculpture, filmmaking, music, dance, literature and many other modes of aesthetics expression as arts and all of them collectively as the arts. (45)

The above definition, among other things, acknowledges the fact that arts is important in the society. Through its different modes listed above, it expresses and addresses several issues in the society. For the society gives birth to the artist who grows to observe the values introduced to him and he has the burden to guide his/her society back to these values. Like other societies across the globe, Nigerian society has been bedevilled with a number of challenges over the years. In other words, Nigeria has been faced with burning social issues such as imperialism, colonial economic exploitation, corruption, nepotism, tribalism, and insecurity amongst others over the years. The efforts Nigerian playwrights and dramatists have made to curtail the aforementioned issues can never be emphasized. Ukperi argues that "Nigerian dramatic literature stands at the forefront of literatures that highlight the nexus that exist between art and society. This interconnection continues to emerge through various styles and modes adapted by playwrights as they address socio-political and socio-economic neo-realities in their environment" (458).

Indeed, Nigerian playwrights like Wole Soyinka, J. P Clark, Zulu Sofola, Ola Rotimi, Esiaba Irobi, Femi Osofisan, John Iwuh, Emmy Idegwu, Charles Nwadigwe, and Ahmed Yerima, among others have over the years used the avalanche of socio-political, cultural and socio-economic events in Nigeria to create plays that address the nation's problems for national peace and development. Their works have lifted their societies and humanity in general. Therefore, for an artist to be effective in the sensitization and conscientization of his society effectively, he/she must produce works that are socially relevant, he has to portray and interpret the historical issues of his time

thereby creating awareness within the society of social, economic, and political issues that needed to be addressed.

However, Nigeria like other countries of the world, in recent time has been faced with a number of problems as the result of Covid-19. These problems ranges from increased in poverty rate, unemployment and loss of jobs and their related consequences like growing rate of insecurity. All these can serve as sources of play creating; that is, the Nigerian playwrights like their counterparts across the globe through their creativity can use the Covid-19 experience in the country to create plays that revolve around the problems, and in a way suggest solutions to the problems. According to Instrumentalism Theory, the values of art, play in this context, is not in the structure of the work, but in the context. For a writer reflects and interprets his society and by extension, provides warnings and guidance that can shape the society. Ahaiwe also affirms that, "the major objective of a writer is to communicate his ideas to the audience. As a creative writer, he creates aesthetics, entertains, informs and also educates the people..." (376). Hence, the Nigerian playwrights writing within the frame of Covid-19 owe the nation duties of producing plays that explore the plight of the people in time of a pandemic.

Conclusion

This paper has reflected the needs for Nigerian playwrights to use the socio-economic issues created by Covid-19 as source materials for playwriting. It equally emphasises on the needs for them to take part in the fight against Covid-19 in the country. Covid-19 has in the recent times increased the existing rate of poverty, unemployment and security in the country. The dramatist as the watchman of the society therefore, must use his/her artistic work to conscientize the people on the dangers of this deadly pandemic for healthy living, socio--economic progress and national development.

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EXAMINING THE ROLE OF FILM IN PREDICTING, REFLECTING AND PROFFERING SOLUTIONS IN COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract
Since its emergence in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, the Covid-19 pandemic has substantially impacted the film industry. Cinemas and movie theatres across the world were closed, festivals cancelled or postponed, and film releases were moved to future dates or delayed indefinitely. After months of ease of lockdown, its effect is still being felt due to the resurging variants in some parts of the world. However, despite its lethal effects on the financial returns and the slow pace of film production, the Covid-19 pandemic could not tame the power of film to predict, reflect, document, and proffer solutions. In this regard, four movies were selected across different genres from the major film industries around the world. Content analysis was deployed in examining Steven Soderbergh's *Contagion* (2011), *Netflix's Pandemic: How to Prevent an Outbreak* (2020), *Emeka Jonathan's Corona Palliative* (2020) and Nanfu Wang's *In The Same Breath* (2021) to ascertain how films predicted, reflected and proffered solutions to the Covid-19 global health crisis. Findings revealed that in the prediction of the Covid-19 pandemic, movies forecasted its origin, mode of transmission and severity; in reflecting, movies went beyond showing the true state of things to investigating the reactions of world leaders, their citizens and how they coped with the scorching effects of the pandemic and in proffering solutions, health workers' health and safety, and adequate funding for scientific research and production of vaccines were emphasised.

Keywords: Covid-19, Film, Lockdown, Corona virus, Global health crises, Health and safety.

Introduction
The emergence of the novel "severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), also known as Covid-19, from the Wuhan City of Hubei province in China on the 31st December 2019, has beaten both science and religion as the world grappled with its ravaging effects (Rao et al. 1; Omoera and Ogoke 147). As a result of its rapid spread across the globe, all significant industries worldwide were impacted. All spheres of human endeavour experienced a total overhaul due to the devastating impact of the virus. Mngomezulu claims that:

Although the first cases were reported in December 2019 (hence the name Covid-19), it was only in January 2020 that WHO set up the Incident Management Support Team (IMST) across all its three levels of operation, that is, headquarters in Geneva, regional headquarters and country level. This action immediately placed WHO on an emergency footing. In no time, the virus had quickly spread across the globe. Countries such as Italy, America and Spain recorded hundreds of infections and fatalities. Even countries like Comoros and Lesotho, which did not have any cases up to March 2020, started reporting their first cases between late April and early May 2020. This sent a clear message that no country and no one is immune to this deadly virus. (116)

The whole world remained clueless regarding the treatment of the virus until April 2021, when the European Medicines Agency (EMA) reported that the national regulatory authority has authorised 15 vaccines for public use. Nevertheless, by 30th September 2021, the figures on the world health organization (WHO) Covid-19 dashboard still indicated 233,136,147 corona virus confirmed cases and 4,771,408 confirmed deaths worldwide. As a remedy, the WHO recommended simple precautionary measures such as social distancing, wearing of face mask, keeping rooms well ventilated, avoiding crowd, washing hands regularly, and coughing into a bent elbow or tissue. Government measures had become stratified as some authorities observed.

Ashraf categorised the government measures to control the outbreak into three broad categories: The first included the measures to ensure social distancing, including the closure of parks, schools, public transportation, encouraging work from home or minimal working staff, and the restrictions for dining in restaurants. In the second, public awareness and containment measures, in which general awareness was given to the public, were regularly followed by abundantly testing for Covid-19 positive individuals and quarantining them accordingly. The third referred to the government institutions' financial support programmes, which included cash transfers to households and needy families, relaxation in the loan and debt payments, and relaxing the utility expenses as well (25). As the world grappled with the pandemic, scientists, medical practitioners, politicians, and religious leaders strove to find lasting solutions, just as journalists tried to keep the world abreast of all the happenings around the globe. However, the virus continued to spring up stunts. The WHO kept tracking the emergence of new variants such as The 501Y.V2 variant, first identified in South Africa, Delta plus variant and "double mutant" first found in India, and B.1.1.7 variant from the UK,

with three different resurgences, which were referred to as the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd waves.

The Impact of the Covid-19 on Film Industries and the Power of Film

The Covid-19 pandemic greatly impacted the film industry in 2020 and 2021. According to Gu et al., unlike any other industry, the entertainment industry has reportedly been more vulnerable and at a higher risk factor during this pandemic (1). Jiachong et al. attributed this to a multitude of reasons, which include: the closure of cinema houses, which are the entering doors of the revenue collection of the released films, stoppage of the production of films, which are expected to be on the floor and the sets, and even the release of the films that are ready to be displayed, as the operations are suspended because of the government initiatives of social distancing (2).

This development significantly affected the global box office that nose-dived by billions of dollars. Film streaming via the internet, on the other hand, witnessed a significant increase. According to Sacks, many blockbusters initially scheduled to be released since mid-March 2020 have been postponed or cancelled worldwide, with film productions also halted. This, in turn, has created openings for independent cinema productions to receive wider exposure. The Chinese film industry, for instance, had lost US$2 billion by March 2020, having closed all its cinemas during the Lunar New Year period that sustains the industry across Asia (Clark 1). North America saw its lowest box office weekend since 1998, between March 13–15 (D'Alessandro, deadline.com). *The Eight Hundred*, the highest-grossing film of 2020, earned $468 million worldwide (Scott, forbes.com).

According to Tartaglione, "it was the first time since 2007 that the top-grossing film of a given year had earned less than $1 billion and the first time a non-American film was the top-grossing film of the year" (deadline.com). Despite the devastating impact of Covid-19 on every sphere of life, it could not tame the powerful medium of film that equally mutates and evolve ways of entrenching itself in any society. Therefore, this article examined Steven Soderbergh's *Contagion* (2011), Netflix's *Pandemic: How to Prevent an Outbreak* (2020), Emeka Jonathan's *Corona Palliative* (2020) and Nanfu Wang's In The Same Breath (2021) to establish film's power to predict, reflect and proffer solutions to global health crises.

Scholars and practitioners alike have observed the workings of this medium (film) and have come up with postulations and positions that attempt to define, describe and explain the 19th-century product of scientific endeavour, which has evolved into a medium of mass communication and entertainment. According to Gunning, "The use of images as a source of communication has pre-historic roots" (30). Camargo concurred with this

position by stating that the relationship between images and its means of transmission, refer back to pre-historic periods and goes further to add that the communication was disseminated by means of paintings made in rocks (11). Vidal et al. further asserted that such paintings can be interpreted as figures evocative of distinct elements of that time, as well as the cinema can be seen as an expression of culture and of human existence in a given period (16). Interpretation becomes a vital part of the movie experience. The filmmaker encodes messages to the viewer, who will subject the visual images to their personal interpretations based on their personal experiences and the knowledge of the phenomena being presented. For effective interpretation to take place, there must be comprehension. This is what Jakobson means when he posited that "the understanding of the meanings present in scenes from a movie depends on the conversion of objects into signs" (155). Oliveira et al. further explained that the objects transformed into signs correspond to specific material of cinema, which brings with them a wide range of phenomena of language that transmit the spectator a relationship among the sequences of images and the representation of reality (62). Filmmakers make movies for various reasons. Gunning asserted that: the films are nothing more than moving images, loading messages that have special purposes, whether in the form of entertainment (such as the cinema), with commercial purposes (such as advertisements of consumer goods), Institutional (such as presentation videos used at events or informative (such as social awareness videos) (qtd. in Gabriel et al. 61).

Furthermore, according to Pawar, "…film making is an advanced and important milestone in the development/progress of human beings. Film is the only area, which depicts the people, though they are of any class (poor, middle and rich) along with the predicament and happiness" (150). This again endears the medium to the heart of the spectators or audience as they stand to benefit a lot from both the intended and unintended messages that the film maker passes across to them. Carmona stated that: first, a film narrative provides the spectator with an experience. It could be an intellectual, emotional, spiritual or other type of experience. Nevertheless, viewing film narrative is always going to be an experience. We may experience a classical love story like Titanic (Cameron,1997) or we could experience the traumatic and confusing feeling of amnesia like in Memento (Nolan, 2000). Regardless of the story or discourse, film narrative always remains an experience through which we communicate and learn. (10)

Another strength of the movie is its ability to go beyond depicting familiar characters to the audience but connecting them to those characters to become one with them, empaticing and being moved to act in a certain manner. In his work, "Photoplay: A Psychological Study", a publication that

marked the beginning of the psychology of the film, Münsterberg posited that "the film creates an imagined world that deviates from real-world scenes as we perceive these in real life. (41). Liberated from real-life perceptual constraints involves the spectator's self in 'shaping reality by the demands of our soul' Carmona maintains that the film's suggestion of "being liberated from real-life constraints" requires personal efforts from within our souls (41).

The audience or the viewers are at the heart of filmmaking. The audience derives pleasure in interpreting the film's narrative, which serves as a basis for comprehension and discussion. That is why Carmona reminded us that: we should not forget that films are made so that others can watch them. Making cinema automatically implies that someone needs to view the narrative. The main objective of filmmaking is to construct a narrative so that an audience may appreciate it. This is why spectators play such a fundamental role in this communication process by undertaking narrative comprehension (10).

Also, when discussing the relevance of interpretation in a movie Gibbs and Pye assert that the "central advantage of rooting interpretation in the detail of the film…is that it provides a material and verifiable basis for discussion. Appealing to what is observably present in the film provides a platform of shareable experience, with ready reference back to the film" (4). Film also gives visual representation to abstract thoughts (Moskovich and Sharf 53). Allen equally explains that examining films can promote social thinking and awareness of social perspectives (61). Movies make more impact than the other art forms such as novels, plays, poetry etc. Keles attributed this to technological opportunities. He posited that:

> Nowadays thanks to technological opportunities, films reach the large masses faster than books and thus they can be more efficient. Adaptation films make more tremendous impact than literary works. For instance, after "Death in Venice" of Thomas Mann was turned into a screenplay by Luchinio Visconti, it aroused considerable interest. And also "Perfume" of Patrick Suskind was adapted by Tom Tykwer and interest in literary works has increased relatively after this film. (653)

But how does film compare side by side with music, theatre and other visual arts? Tom Sherak, President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (best known for their Academy Awards, a.k.a. "Oscars" said in an interview with Vikas Shah Mbe**:**

> Movies inspire, they have a way of setting tones. All elements of art are interconnected; they are very similar. It used to be that you go to a museum and you see an art exhibit and it was someone who was well

known- you had lines to see the exhibit. If someone wasn't well known, it would start small and grow. Movies are like that- but the difference is that movies can both take the lead in creating other arts, and following arts (by which I mean they are able to take a piece of art, and tell the story behind it). When you paint a picture, you just paint that picture! A movie can take that picture to a whole other place… with a story. I think that capability is what separates film, to a degree- from the other arts. (qtd. in Mbe 2)

Fiorelli equally alluded to this reality by stating that: inematic realists propose that films can get at—or show—reality in a way that other art forms can't. The strongest versions of cinematic realism prioritise physical reality by making the bold claim that by virtue of the mechanical, photographic process of their creation, films put us in perceptual contact with things in the world (1). The relevance of movies to both the society and the viewers cannot be overemphasised. According to Sherak: film is a reflection of society, both present and past. The film and its innovations sometimes have to catch up to society but sometimes it leads society too. Movies are stories; movies are people who come out with ideas about something they want to say, something they want to tell someone. Movies are form of communication and those stories, come from the societies- not just where society is presently and what it's doing now- but where society has been. Movies are different things to different people, that's what is so incredible about them (2).

Movies indeed are products of the society; the ideas are generated from the society. The film makers reflect the happenings in the society and also refract back to the society by making comments that would direct the society to a certain direction, thereby impacting and leaving indelible memories on the viewers. Sherak succinctly put it thus: "movies are – magical, fantastical, they take us to places where we have never been to, they make us feel emotions which we haven't felt, and they show us grandeur opulence and beauty that isn't possible in any other medium" (3). Moreso, as a collaborative art form that depends on crews of professionals working together to actualise the film production process, movies equally have economic value, providing job opportunities for the cast and crew of film projects. Moreover, the cinema is unique in that it is a highly accessible social art form, the participation in which generally cuts across economic lines (Uhrig 5).

Another powerful role that the movie plays is bringing about social change by promoting a positive value system, distinguishing right from wrong and pointing at virtues as against vice. Sherak stated that movies can educate too. They tell us things we could never have known. They tell us things we might not know and give us a way to explore the past, the present and the

future (Sherak 2). Movies also have therapeutic value beyond the economic and social values of films. In his article "Cinema is good for you: the effects of cinema attendance on self-reported anxiety or depression and 'happiness'" Uhrig explains that film's narrative and representational aspects make it a wholly unique form of art. Adding that the collective experience of film as art renders it a wholly distinct leisure activity. He analysed the effects of cinema attendance on psychological well-being and happiness. He argued that the visual stimulation of film provokes a therapeutic emotive response and that the collective and controlled experience of this emotive response promotes well-being… In short, the cinema is good for you (4). Sherak opined that movies are about escapism. To him, movies are about sitting in a theatre, watching something- watching a story unfold with people he doesn't know- watching that happen and emoting an emotion knowing that for those two hours when he walks into that theatre, he doesn't have to worry about what is going on outside. He loses himself in what he is watching. Uhrig also asserted that:

> The unique properties of attending the cinema can have decisively positive effects on mental health. Cinema attendance can have independent and robust effects on mental wellbeing because visual stimulation can queue a range of emotions and the collective experience of these emotions through the cinema provides a safe environment in which to experience roles and emotions, we might not otherwise be free to experience. The collective nature of the narrative and visual stimulation makes the experience enjoyable and controlled, thereby offering benefits beyond mere visual stimulation. (5)

Attending cinema is another experience that has proven to not only provide therapy for movie enthusiasts but also prolong life. In a ground-breaking research, Konlaan et al. discovered that cinema attendees have particularly low mortality risks –those who never attended the cinema had mortality rates nearly four times higher than those who visit the cinema at least occasionally (Konlaan et al. 75). Films have succeeded in creeping into not only the fabric of every society but also into the human soul. There is no doubt that film has addressed nearly every human endeavour. Perhaps, this explains why the film medium continues to thrive despite the pandemic as evidence shows that they have predicted, reflected and proffered solutions to the pandemic. Movies as a product of society naturally reflect society and proffer solutions to the issues addressed therein through their resolutions. However, film's ability to project into the future and predict events that are yet to happen continues to earn the craft accolades and at the same time leaves many perplexed about its ability to wield such prophetic powers.

Methodology

Content analysis was deployed in examining Steven Soderbergh's *Contagion* (2011), Netflix's *Pandemic: How to Prevent an Outbreak* (2020), Emeka Jonathan's *Corona Palliative* (2021), and Nanfu Wang's in The Same Breath (2021) to ascertain how films predicted, reflected and proffered solutions to the Covid-19 global health crisis. Nanfu Wang's in The Same Breath (2021) and Emeka Jonathan's *Corona Palliative* (2021) are chosen based on their production locations as they informed the filmmaker's perception and projection of the Covid-19 virus which in turn influence their approaches. For instance, Nanfu Wang, an Asian-American who hails from Wuhan, China, where the virus originated, directed in The Same Breath (2021), which gives us a first-hand account of how China and US handled the virus. Emeka Jonathan's *Corona Palliative* (2021) is chosen because it captures the response of Nigerians and to a large extent the Africans in general as they grapple with the effects of pandemic. *Contagion* (2011) *and* Netflix's *Pandemic: How to Prevent an Outbreak* (2020) were both produced before the Covid-19 outbreak, but both predicted its emergence and spread and proffered solutions.

Synopses

Contagion (2011), an American thriller film directed by Steven Soderbergh. It focuses on the spread of a transmittable virus through respiratory droplets and fomites, the efforts put by medical researchers and public health officials to identify and contain the disease, the pandemonium that ensues as a result of the pandemic, and the successful discovery of a vaccine to halt its spread.

Pandemic: How to Prevent an Outbreak (2020) is a documentary miniseries of six episodes about pandemics, released on Netflix on 22nd January 2020. The series was co-directed by Isabel Castro, Danni Mynard, Arianna LaPenne, Doug Shultz, and Ryan McGarry. It addresses issues like the possibility of an influenza pandemic, research into achieving a universal vaccine, emerging viruses, anti-vaxxers, and the Ebola outbreak in Africa. Episode one introduces life on the front lines with doctors in the United States and Asia battling a flu and researchers racing to develop a universal vaccine. Episode two captures vaccine debates raging while healthcare workers inoculate against the Ebola virus in Congo and influenza in detainee camps at the US-Mexico border. Episode three shows scientists testing animals and their handlers across the globe for emerging viruses. It also captures doctors working long hours caring for flu patients in the United States and India. Episode four shows the escalation of anti-vaccine debates with medical staff being attacked in Congo. In the United States funding cuts hit hard while researchers in Guatemala make progress. In episode five, family, community,

and faith help physicians and medical advocates stay strong in the face of long hours and relentless disease. And finally, episode six shows viral outbreaks continue to claim lives across the globe as a larger pandemic looms.

In the Same Breath (2021)

       In the Same Breath is a feature documentary film directed and produced by Nanfu Wang. It narrates the experiences of people in the earliest days of the Covid-19 pandemic and how China and the United States of America handled the early spread of the virus in Wuhan to its rapid spread across the United States. The documentary shows the confusion and parallel campaigns by authorities to try to contain the virus and shape the public narrative through misinformation during the early stage of the pandemic, which culminated in an overwhelming impact on the innocent citizens of both China and the United States of America.

Corona Palliative (2020)

       Corona Palliative (2020) is a 2020 Nollywood Comedy about the Covid-19 Pandemic, directed by Emeka Jonathan, and starring Chiwetel Agu. It reflects how the Covid-19 lockdown here in Nigeria disrupted Nigerians' normal everyday life and forced them to adjust to the "new normal." The central conflict ensues as people attempt to defy the lockdown and the Covid-19 protocols set by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) to prevent the spread of the virus in various ways. The story revolves around a family of six, each family member taking up a character that reflects how Nigerians grappled with the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown.

Analyses

       The content of the case studies is analysed, giving particular attention to how the movie predicted, reflected or proffered solutions to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Projecting Power of Films

       The case studies that predicted the Covid-19 in this study are *Contagion* (2011), a feature film directed by Steven Soderbergh, and *Pandemic: How to Prevent an Outbreak* (2020**),** a documentary miniseries of six episodes co-directed by Isabel Castro, Danni Mynard, Arianna LaPenne, Doug Shultz, and Ryan McGarry.

       Contagion has demonstrated the power of films to predict future events with high level of accuracy. It got so many things right about the novel corona virus (Covid-19), from the origin, China, to the mode of transmission, from bats to humans. The film also predicted how the virus escaped from a live-

animal market to the global community and how the world grappled with the effects of a novel virus that spreads like wildfire.

Jason Bailey cited what Scott Burns, the screenwriter of *Contagion* (2011) wrote in an email to National Public Radio (NPR) based in Washington, United States of America from his article "The Ending of Steven Soderbergh's Contagion, Revisited". Burns posited that the filmmakers wanted to tell the story of a "plausible outbreak"- not a Hollywood exaggeration, "that is why the poster of the movie says nothing spreads like fear" (qtd. in Kritz 1). While Soderbergh, the director of *Contagion* in 2011 added that "The power of movies to predict events with some high degree of accuracy manifests itself in contagion" (qtd. in Asay 352)

We will be discussing how *Contagion* predicted Covid-19 in terms of the origin, means of contact and spread and Conspiracy Theories.

Origin: Although in *Contagion*, Soderbergh decided to keep the origin of the virus a mystery, obviously to keep his audience in suspense by revealing the origin of the virus at the last two minutes of the movie, it speaks volumes because of the striking semblance to the origin of the virus. In the last two minutes of *Contagion*, a bulldozer from Emhoff's company is seen razing down trees in China with bats flying off the trees. A bat is then seen perching in a pig pen and drops an infected piece of banana that a pig then consumes. The pig is slaughtered and prepared by a chef in a Macau casino, who, without washing his hands, transmits the virus to Beth through a handshake.

Even though there's currently a growing argument especially from the members of US Republican Party that the virus was a product of Gain of Function Research carried out at the Wuhang lab and sponsored in part by the United States CDC, and eventually leaked, as stated by Jessica McDonald in her article "Republicans Spin NIH Letter About Coronavirus Gain-of-Function Research", Aaron Kandola affirmed in his article "Coronavirus cause: Origin and how it spreads" that the official information on the origin of the virus remains from animals which was later transmitted to humans, through bats and pangolin and spreads through the animal market. This position makes *Contagion's* prediction apt. Experts have equally agreed with Soderbergh's portrayal of the virus's origin, which shows that his predictions are based on scientific findings. In a fact-checking attempt on *Contagion* by Fran Kritz of NPR news, Rebecca Katz, director of the Centre for Global Health Science and Security at Georgetown University, says that:

> I show the last few minutes of *Contagion* to my class, to show the interconnectedness between animals, the environment and humans…If you cut down trees, it changes the behaviour of bats. The bats interact with swine, being raised for consumption, and humans then interact

with infected swine as part of food preparations. This is just one example of how an emerging infectious disease can jump species into humans. (qtd. in Kritz 2)

Means of contraction and spread: *Contagion* (2011) has revealed that the mode of transmission of the MEV-1 to be almost the same as Covid-19. Through Dr. Erin Mears' lines when she and her team try to explain how an ailment could spread so fast to the government officials:

> At this point, I think we have to believe this is respiratory. May be fomites too… fomite refers to transmission from surfaces…an average person touches their face 2-or 3000 times a day…Three to five times every waking minute. In between, we're touching doorknobs, water fountains, elevator buttons and each other. Those things become fomites (Dr. Erin Mears in Wang's *Contagion* (2011)).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), possible modes of transmission of SARS-CoV-2, include: contact, droplet, airborne, fomite, faecal-oral, bloodborne, mother-to-child, and animal-to-human transmission. Respiratory secretions or droplets expelled by infected individuals can contaminate surfaces and objects, creating fomites (contaminated surfaces). Viable SARS-CoV-2 virus and/or RNA detected by RT-PCR can be found on those surfaces for periods ranging from hours to days, depending on the ambient environment (including temperature and humidity) and the type of surface, in particular at high concentration in health care facilities where Covid-19 patients were being treated (who.int/news-room). This is another plus for the movie.

Conspiracy Theories: *Contagion* (2011) equally introduces the conspiracy-theory conundrum. Through the character of Alan Krumwiede (Jude Law) a conspiracy-theorist blogger, we've seen how certain individuals in the society take advantage of health crisis to either score some political point or for financial gains as in the case of Alan Krumwiede, whose first line in the movie "Print media is dying" portrays him as an unconventional journalist who is ready to use his megaphone and his blog to advertise and sell a snake-oil "cure" for his personal financial gain.

According to Douglas et al., disinformation and conspiracy theories "are attempts to explain the ultimate causes of significant social and political events and circumstances with claims of secret plots by two or more powerful actors" (4). While Benkler et al. described it as "manipulating and misleading people intentionally to achieve political ends" (24).

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic also brought up a lot of conspiracy theories, especially about the origin of the virus. David et al stated that:

> While the SARS-CoV-2 virus—responsible for causing the COVID-19 disease—spreads aggressively and rapidly across the globe, many societies have also witnessed the spread of other seemingly viral phenomena such as fake news, conspiracy theories, and general mass suspicions about what is really going on. (4)

Some of the widely spread narratives are the ones claiming that the virus is caused by 5G cellular technology (Vincent, 2); Bill Gates is using the virus to enslave humanity by enforcing a global vaccination and surveillance program (Shahsavari et al). Other views tagged as conspiracy theories as compiled by Alliance for Science include the following: the perception that the US military imported Covid-19 into China, Covid-19 doesn't exist, COVID is a plot by Big Pharma, COVID death rates are inflated, the virus escaped from a Chinese lab and was intentionally created by Chinese scientists as a biowarfare weapon. On this, Pew Research shows that "nearly three-in-10 Americans believe that Covid-19 was made in a lab," either intentionally or accidentally (the former is more popular: 23 percent believe it was developed intentionally, with only 6 percent believing it was an accident).

Pandemic: How to Prevent an Outbreak (2020): the documentary series predicted the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic and proffered solution on how a pandemic could be prevented. In terms of prediction, *Pandemic: How to Prevent an Outbreak* (2020) was filmed around the 2018-2019 flu season and was released on Netflix 22nd January, 2020. It features prominent medical experts in medicine and infectious diseases who projected the possibility of a pandemic in the nearest future. Through Dr. Dennis Carroll, the director of USAID's Emerging Threats Unit's warning in the documentary, we get to know that there's an impending flu pandemic looming. He said, "When we talk about another flu pandemic happening, it's not a matter of if, but when." Also, the person in charge of preparing New York City's municipal hospitals against infectious disease outbreaks, Dr Syra Mudad voices out his concern in the mini docu-series. He says, "What worries me is that it just takes one person to start an outbreak. We're basically human incubators. We can host a number of different diseases. It's just a matter of time before another pandemic starts, we don't know where or when but we know that it will." She further noted that the pandemic could then spread throughout the country within a month and then the world the following month. We see that happening with the speed with which the Covid-19 spread.

Another striking prediction that *Pandemic: How to Prevent an Outbreak* got right is the origin of the next pandemic, which Dr Dennis Caroll predicted will likely come from an animal. In his words: "A pandemic influenza will likely come from an animal, and it will be a new and novel never seen before the virus." After saying that, we then see the footage of bats, birds, chickens, and pigs. All available evidence for Covid-19 suggests that SARS-CoV-2 has a zoonotic source. Many researchers have been able to look at the genomic features of SARS-CoV-2 and have found that evidence does not support that SARS-CoV-2 is a laboratory construct (who.int). Many health experts believe that the new strain of coronavirus likely originated in bats or pangolins.

Pandemic: How to Prevent an Outbreak also predicted the possible death toll from the "likely" pandemic through one of the medical researchers, when speaking about a lack of funding for flu vaccines, noted that:

> It's scary because in 1919, it [Spanish flu virus] killed over 50 million people but we didn't even have planes and we didn't have people travelling from Asia to North America on a daily basis…we didn't have factory farms with thousands of pigs and thousands of chickens, but now we do, so it could be that hundreds of millions of people would die from the next pandemic if it were as contagious as the H1N1 in 1919. (*Pandemic: How to Prevent an Outbreak*)

Although data from Johns Hopkins University released late Wednesday, July 8, 2021, showed that the death toll from Covid-19 worldwide was over 4 million (Talmazan 1), compared to the figure projected by the researcher, it is clear that the rapid response by governments of the world and the fast pace of vaccines productions contributed a lot in cutting down the number of fatalities.

The series also projected the likelihood of hoarding of vaccines, Fear factors and self-medication. Dr Syra speaks of "hoarding", but on a medical level, with vaccinations previously not made available in NYC during a breakout of H1 N1. We have seen this manifesting during Covid-19 when developed countries hoarded the vaccine for their citizens. On the fear factor, Dr Mudad said, "People's fear factor kicks in before logic. If they think I've had any remote contact with a disease, it's like, 'Don't touch me. Don't come near me!'" this plays out in various countries where people refuse to associate with others especially if they know that such people work in the hospital or have been to places with high Covid-19 cases. On self-medication, the series shows Caylan Wagar, a mother of five who chooses to home-school her young children. Wagar said: "Our lifestyle and the way that I raise my kids is just to be continually evolving and awakening in consciousness and awareness…. I

believe a healthy child has the ability to build up immunity naturally." In episode two, titled "We Don't Need Any Man-Made Disasters", Wagar represents many non-vaccinating families who choose not to vaccinate their children, a development the World Health Organisation considers as the biggest "threat" to society. Till date, many people are still kicking against the Covid-19 vaccine mandate that different governments were imposing on citizens, with protests erupting in major cities across Europe and the Americas with parents and students insisting that there's no need for the vaccine because the children have an immune system.

Reflective Movies

The movies that reflected the Covid-19 pandemic in this paper include *Corona Palliative* (2020) directed by Emeka Jonathan and *In The Same Breath* (2021), a feature documentary film directed and produced by Nanfu Wang. Although in *Corona Palliative* (2020), the story revolves around a family portraying different aspects of the struggle to cope with the new normal, it equally adopted the multi-narrative "hyperlink cinema" style, just like Soderbergh's *Contagion* (2011), which follow several interacting plot lines; discussing various themes such as Religiosity, Fear and Home remedies for Covid-19 saga, prostitution, crime and criminality and new ways of exchanging pleasantries.

Religiosity: In Nigeria, religion is central in living patterns and attitudes. Many look up to religious leaders for guidance as the Covid-19 crisis lasted. Guidelines were provided by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) to prevent the spread of the virus across worship centres in the Nation. Religious bodies, however, have not fully adhered to these guidelines (Okwuosa 398). This was reflected in the attitude of both the clergies and their followers during the lockdown. *Corona Palliative* (2020) clearly reflected that. Pastor Lazarus is stopped at a checkpoint by security operatives on his way to church because he is not wearing a nose mask, and he says to the law enforcement officials: "we are soldiers of Christ; we don't need all these things". The security operatives arrested him. Many Nigerian clergies were arrested and detained for defying the Covid-19 protocol. For example, two Pastors and three Imams were convicted for holding services in their religious establishments despite the lockdown order in Abuja (channelstv.com). In *Corona Palliative (2020),* Chidubem equally said: "Our God is a great God, He will not allow anything to happen to His children", when confronted by her father, who stopped her from going to church as result of the lockdown. Many Christians and Muslims defied Nigeria's lockdown order because they were convinced that God will protect them.

Fear and Home remedies for Covid-19 Saga: Fear has been a major factor worldwide during the Covid-19 lockdown, pushing people to do all manner of things to stay alive. There were videos on the internet on home remedies that people believed could cure the virus, especially because there was no known cure for the virus; people were always running away from travellers, especially those who visited affected areas and many believers who put faith aside and scamper for safety when confronted by symptoms of Covid-19. These themes are visible in *Corona Palliative* (2020). We see Pastor Lazarus, Chidubem and their church members fleeing when a church member manifests the symptoms of Covid-19 during deliverance service. Chidubem stays at home, drinking hot water, lemon, and ginger tea. After receiving a text message that the person exhibiting Covid-19 symptoms tested negative, she says to her sister Chinwe in pidgin, "I swear fear na bastard. In fact, na fear dey kill person sef before the virus." We've also seen Mama Chinwe zealously following the Covid-19 protocol, including literally robbing hand sanitiser all over her body and forcing her grownup children to wear nose masks and drink home remedies for Covid-19. Her mantra has been "na for coronavirus; anything for coro I go do am." Papa Nduka yells out, "Korona palliative abanagwarantino" (the line he repeats throughout the movie when confronted by fear or wonder). He refuses to eat his food because his daughter Nancy sneezes when serving him. At the restaurant, a guy plans to avoid paying for his food, he starts coughing and everyone, including the owner of the restaurant, scampers for safety, leaving the guy and his friend, who eat to their fill and walk away freely. Also, in a bar, Mr Fank walks and buys a drink for everyone. Out of excitement, a guy asks him where he has been for some time and the moment he mentions Italy, everyone, including the bar attendant, runs out of the bar.

Prostitution and the struggle for survival: Sex workers in Nigeria and worldwide have faced great challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is because in-person sex is intimate by its very nature, and workers are at heightened risk of contracting the virus if they keep working (See Skye, hrw.org). And because the trade is illegal in most countries, including Nigeria, they are usually excluded from emergency assistance available to other workers. The lockdown posed a great threat for them because there was no official support from the government for them. Hence, they device ways of making ends meet during the lockdown which are reflected in the movie. In *Corona Palliative* (2020), prostitutes complained of low patronage and resorted to wearing nose masks and hand sanitisers to attract customers. The lockdown trapped cheating husbands at home with their wives. They lie to their wives to cover up when their broke "runs girls" call them…we see that when Nancy calls chief in front of his wife. Some of the girls complained that their clients

offered them fake cheques and refused to pick their calls. Crime rate also increases as a result of the lockdown. Duke resorts to robbery and in the process his friend gets killed but he survived. We also see group of boys snatching a lady's handbag.

Finally, life under coronavirus was known as the new normal; new ways of doing things emerged, even the modes of greeting changed. Because of fear of contacting Covid-19 through handshake, elites and ordinary citizens resorted to jamming their elbows or legs as a greeting. We see that played out in *Corona Palliative* (2020) when Duke and his friends meet on the street. *In the Same Breath* captures history as it's being written -- and governmental failures as they amplify worldwide tragedy". This quote is from the critics' consensus remarks from Rotten Tomatoes. The documentary received an approval rating of 96% based on reviews from 50 critics, with an average rating of 8.40/10.

The portrayal of facts or truth about a phenomenon is central to documentary as a film genre. Hence, when it comes to reflecting society, the documentary goes the extra mile to dig deep into more than what meets the eye through its investigative power and brings a cholestatic picture to the fore. *In the Same Breath* offers an in-depth account of a rapidly evolving situation. In his article "Reviews in the Same Breath" Daniels Robert, a film critic stated that the Chinese-American director/producer, Nanfu Wang has carved a niche for herself in this area of filmmaking. Her work, *One Child Nation,* which critiques China's one-child policy from a personal angle showcases her ability to successfully explore the power of the documentary medium to "work around a government censorship in order to deliver truthful, powerful stories". Daniels further noted that, "Wang has established herself as the preeminent documenter of the pain inflicted by oppressive regimes on their people" and added that "Since the nascent days of the pandemic, there have been several high-profile Covid-19 documentaries: *76 Days*, *Totally Under Control*, *The Last Cruise*, etc. None have been like Nanfu Wang's *In the Same Breath*.

The heart of Wang's non-fiction movie is hinged on Wang's conclusion that "Circumstances we consider normal created the crisis we're in now", as the story's narrator, she goes on to reveal the timeline of events and how the Chinese government downplayed the severity of the pandemic and weaved propagandist narrative to launder their image through the state-run media. She shows how the government-controlled media promote pro-regime messages of positivity. One of Wang's cameras captures a television crew coaching the medics in a hospital corridor to "Say 'Go Wuhan, Go China!'" In one of the sequences, we see an array of news anchors repeat the same report: "No evidence of human-to-human transmission." She also shows titles of documentaries with positive tones like "Life Matters," "Fighting Covid-19," and "Chinese Doctors - Angels in White" that throve in China's airwaves at

the early period of the pandemic. Nanfung Wang also claimed that the Chinese government played down the death toll in Wuhang with the official tally admitting 3,345 deaths while the real estimated fatality is put 30,000 (qtd. in Daniels 2).

Wang embarks on this journey to counter this misleading information being churned out by her government. She recounted how she gets inspired to start the project at the beginning of the film. Wang flew from her home in the US to China to spend Lunar New Year with her mother in January 2020. This was 19 days after the news of "eight people punished for spreading rumours about a new pneumonia" was aired across Chinese television networks. Wang kept her three-year-old son with her mother and flew back to the US for work. While still in US, the Chinese government locked down Wuhan after initially downplaying the seriousness of the situation on ground. Wang goes through social media posts and sees accounts of people dying in the streets and hospitals full to capacity. She quickly archived as many posts as possible knowing that the government will swiftly delete them as they were uploaded. To divulge this secret, Wang decided to use her craft of documentary film. Knowing the implication of shooting such a film in communist country ruled by a government that is bent on concealing the truth about the virus to the rest of the world, Wang deployed the "guerrilla system" of film making. She recruited a team of ten camera men on the ground in Wuhan while she directed them remotely. As expected, there were restrictions and the cameras were automatically turned off as soon the story took on a negative angle. Wang countered that by directing her team to position running cameras in high traffic areas and hospitals.

With her footage and evidence from CCTV at hand, Wang, the activist, takes us through the agony that people pass through in China. Wang shows how an older couple, Chen Runzhen and Liu Deyan, owners of a Wuhan clinic, first encountered locals complaining of colds in December 2020. The private clinic was two minutes away from the Huanan Seafood Market, the wet market where the virus was born. The patients lie in their beds, with no mobilization for emergency response from the government. With a nervous woman saying, "I'm afraid that I'll die." Liu himself contracted the virus and was turned away by multiple hospitals.

Proffering Solutions *Pandemic: How to Prevent an Outbreak* strongly recommended the protection of healthcare workers as a priority. In episode one, titled "It Hunts Us" we see the employees of the NYC Health & Holargeto in the Unitetes of America where theres is similarities in the deployment of propaganda by the Trump administration which referred to the virus as a mere cold. The action succinctly juxtaposes the censorship that the Chines government enforced on its citizens by preventing them from speaking out

and telling the truth to the rest of the world against the initial messaging from the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC message which stated that the wearing of masks was unnecessary, contributed to the idea that mandatory mask-wearing was an infringement on basic freedoms thereby slowing down the quick response to handle the virus with the seriousness it deserved. She proved that both governments used disinformation to water down the seriousness of the pandemic. She equally showed how healthcare workers both in China, and in the US report threats of sackings in response to their requests for better protective gears. The entire one-on-one interview with an American healthcare worker resulted in emotional breakdown, especially on the issues of shortage of personal, protective equipment (PPE) and the high death toll.

On a healthcare delivery system going through a simulation designed to assess their readiness for a major flu outbreak, Dr Mudad said: "I think one of the things that we tried to put into the simulation was healthcare workers' safety. That was one of the biggest takeaways with the previous outbreaks." While addressing some of the health workers on how "deadly respiratory disease" could be, with reference to how the 1919 influenza spread, he said, "Healthcare workers were affected and shows us where we need to improve on." During the drill, she warned, "If you're not protected if you can't protect yourself, then how are you going to protect others?" She then gives them a hypothetical scenario in which a single traveller arriving New York City by aeroplane could trigger an overwhelming outbreak that would, within weeks, incapacitate the city. Dr Mudad emphasised the need to put safety security in place for healthcare professionals through training and retraining to keep them prepared at all times.

Another solution that *Pandemic: How to Prevent an Outbreak* proffered is the proper funding for medical research by governments. At some point, Dr Mudad is seen pleading with politicians about resources for pandemic preparedness. Dr. Sheri Fink, one of the executive-producers of the documentary said, "The work of prevention and preparedness — it's challenging to make that real to people before the bad thing happens and makes people care about it," this underscores the negligence the health institution experiences in the hands of relevant authorities that ought to cater for its need for effective and proactive service delivery.

Conclusion

The study explores the power of film to predict, reflect, document and proffer solutions to emerging global health challenges. Findings reveal that in the prediction of the Covid-19 pandemic, movies forecasted its origin, mode of transmission and severity; in reflecting, movies went beyond showing the true

state of things to investigating the reactions of both the world leaders, their citizens and how they cope with the scorching effects of the pandemic and in proffering solutions, health workers' health and safety, adequate funding for scientific research and production of vaccines were emphasised.

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NEWSPAPER REPORTAGE AND EDITORIAL CONTENTS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN A PANDEMIC ERA

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Abstract
Apart from the health and socio-economic woes largely associated with Covid-19, the virus tended to have aggravated gender-based violence, especially against women and girls under lockdowns due to isolation. The media, represented by newspapers here, are expected to bring to the public knowledge the various violent acts against the female gender; however, it`s assumed that since the pandemic broke, newspapers` reportage and editorial contents of gender-based violence is either lacking or inadequate. Therefore, this content analysis study, which was hinged on the Muted Group Theory (MGT), aimed to identify how many violent cases were reported; how many were gender-based against female, and the most common story type/genre used in reporting the gender-based violence stories in selected Nigerian online newspapers during the pandemic era. *Vanguard*, *This Day*, and *Leadership* newspapers were chosen for analysis. General violence and gender-based violence news articles were gleaned from the selected newspapers from April 2020 to July 2020, the period of the different phases of the lockdown and their gradual easing off in Nigeria. The findings showed that 231 stories were reported about violence by the three newspapers; 208 of this violence was against women and girls while the selected newspapers used more straight news stories in covering gender-based violence compared to other story types/genres. The study concluded that the fight against gender-based violence should be the prerogative of everyone, including human rights advocacy groups and the media. It recommended, among others, that all forms of gender-based violence should be discouraged, and measures should be put in place to protect women/girls' right to live free from violence.

Keywords: Gender, Lockdown, Media, Newspaper, Pandemic, Violence.

Introduction

When the corona virus (SARS-CoV-2), later referred to as Covid-19, first broke out in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China in December 2019, nobody envisaged it would become a worldwide pandemic that eventually affected all aspects of human endeavours. The sprouting nature of the menace of the disease brought about the restrictions of movements by land, sea, and air. Different nations went further by imposing lockdowns whereby people were

not allowed to move out of their houses, except those on essential duties. All these steps were taken, supposedly, to curb the spread of the disease. However, while the lockdowns were meant to save lives they were said to have brought about gender marginalisation.

The lockdowns in Nigeria were between March and July 2020. The residents of Lagos and Ogun States as well as the Federal Capital Territory were the first set of people restricted to their homes for an initial period of fourteen days (30th March to 13th April 2020). President Muhammadu Buhari later prolonged the lockdown for another two weeks, starting on Monday, April 13th, 2020. He also promised a "phased and progressive" relaxation of the lockdown, which began on May 4th. The relaxation of restrictions was phased in over two weeks, and included a nightly curfew, public face masks, and a prohibition on non-essential interstate travel. The president announced a four-week extension of the second phase, which will begin on June 30 and end on July 27 at midnight. The lockdown was eventually extended to all parts of Nigeria. It is reported that lockdown led to an increase in Violence against women and girls (VAWG) all over the world (Vanguard; Torinmo Salau; Maria-Noel Vaeza). The UN-Women refer to VAWG as the "shadow pandemic".

As of late March 2020 when the lockdown started, the Lagos State government's Domestic and Gender Abuse Response Team received 13 cases of allegations of sexual and domestic violence each day, which rose to 390 reports in March alone. According to data from the United Nations Nigeria on reported incidences of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) cases in Nigeria, based on preliminary evidence from 24 states, the total number of GBV events recorded in March 2020 was 346, but incident reports skyrocketed to 794 in the first half of April, depicting a 56 per cent increase in just two weeks of lockdown (4). According to Blessing Ejiofor, Mirabel Centre claims that the lockdown resulted in a more than 50% rise in the number of recorded incidences of sexual violence at their facility, with Itoro Ezeanaba, Executive Director of Partnership for Justice, stating that up to 85% of those cases were involving minors. Pauline Tallen, Nigeria's Minister of Women Affairs, said that the number of complaints of domestic violence against women and children had increased as victims were stuck at home. Mohammed Adamu, the Inspector-General of Police, blamed it on Covid-19 restrictions. He verified the rise in rape and gender-based violence, stating that in the first five months of 2020, 717 rape occurrences were reported across the nation (Torinmo Salau). According to Isioma Kemakolam and Danielle Robertson, for every three months while lockdowns are in place, the UN Population Fund predicts an additional 15 million incidences of gender-based violence throughout the world.

The lockdowns were said to have exposed the female gender to a lot of violence by their male counterparts because it acted as a barrier to victims in seeking help and reporting their situations. Due to the lockdowns introduced, schools, offices, and marketplaces were shut, this made family members to be confined to their houses, and it forced family members and co-tenants to stay together unusually. This made them discover the flaws of one another that were hitherto overlooked, especially amongst couples. For those who were not matured enough to manage the situation, it led to irrational reactions and domestic violence against the weaker ones, women and girls being the major victims.

Domestic violence, as defined by Lawrence Ekweonu, refers to all forms of violence perpetrated in the domestic circle by one family member against another; it can take the form of stalking, physical, sexual, and emotional violence; and child abuse, which includes sexual, physical, emotional, and psychological abuse, as well as neglect. In Nigeria, damaging cultural practices, psychological violence, socioeconomic violence, and violence against non-combatant women in crisis settings are all frequent kinds of violence against women and girls. Spousal violence, landlord-tenant violence, neighbor-to-neighbour violence, and parent-child abuse were among the most prevalent gender-based violence allegations collected during the lockdowns, according to Akiode-Afolabi, the head of the Lagos-based Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre. Ejiro Umukoro states that Akiode-Afolabi also mentioned homeowner-house help violence, boyfriend-girlfriend violence, violence on widows, police-sex worker violence, police-citizen violence, visitor-caught-in-lock-down child rape. The global cost of violence against women is estimated at approximately $1.5 trillion. That figure will only rise as violence increases in the aftermath of the pandemic (Maria-Noel Vaeza).

In situations like these, the media, hereby represented by newspapers, are expected to expose the dastardly acts of the men who violated women/girls during the lockdown, and report about the general issues that occurred during the lockdowns which may tend to impact women/girls now and in future. It is in this light that this study explored the domestic violence against women/girls during the lockdowns, focusing on how newspapers reported the abuses of women/girls during the lockdowns. This study focused on newspapers because readers can have a reasonable control level over their news consumption since they can attend to news stories at any time (Jim Kuypers). *Vanguard, ThisDay*, and *Leadership* newspapers between April and July 2020 which dictates the different phases of the lockdowns and the easing in Nigeria were chosen based on their widespread readership, and their online popularity.

Gender-based violence against women/girls seems not to be abating. Even in the face of the difficulty women and/girls find themselves in the periods of natural disaster, war, pandemic, and displacements, they still experience sexual abuse, assault, and different types of domestic violence. The Director-General of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, said that about 18 million women in Nigeria have one thing or the other to say regarding the issues of sexual and gender-based violence (*Vanguard*). The media, especially newspapers, are expected to raise awareness against continued violence and discrimination experienced by women/girls; but the question is: Are the media that are seen as society`s wide institution of mobilisation and enlightenment living up to their expectations? Hence, this study endeavoured to look at the role the newspaper played during the lockdown periods in Nigeria due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Although there have been numerous studies on Covid-19 and the media, like that of Sanita Nwakpu, Okwudilichukwu Ezema, and Nwakpoke Ogbodo which examined newspaper framing of Covid-19; that of Anietie Effiong, Ime Nseobot, Efremfon Johnny, Umoh Mfreke, et al. which x-rayed broadcast media framing and reporting of Covid-19; and that of Corey Basch, Clarke Grace Hillyer, Meleo-Erwin Zoe, Jan Mohlman, Alison Cosgrove and Nasia Quinones; and Jude Ogbodo, Chike Onwe, Joseph Chukwu, Jude Nwasum et al. that analysed online media and coverage of Covid-19 pandemic and how patients can relate with health professionals. Nonetheless, there is a paucity of studies on gender-based violence during the lockdowns in Nigeria, and how newspapers reported them. Moreover, data on the number of reported cases of violence in newspapers in Nigeria during the lockdown is otherwise scarce, not least of gender-based violence which was mostly against women and girls. Therefore, this present paper endeavoured to identify how many stories of violence were reported during the lockdowns. It ascertained the number of gender-related violence cases reported during the lockdowns, and further determined the common story type/genre used in covering the gender-based violence stories in the selected Nigerian online newspapers during the pandemic era. There three ojectives which is set propel this research are, identifying how many stories of violence were reported during the lockdowns; ascertaining how many were gender-related violence cases; and determining the common story type/genre used in covering the gender-based violence stories in the selected Nigerian online newspapers during the lockdown.

Theoretically, the arguments of the study were grounded on the Muted Group Theory (MGT) which can be traced back to two British social thropologists named Edwin Ardener and Shirley Ardener, who initially

proposed it in the field of cultural anthropology in 1975. The theory's foundation, which is based on group relationships, suggests that the dominant group makes the majority of contributions to the formulation of the language system, while members of the subordinate group merely need to become accustomed to the developed language and use it to communicate. However, there may be some communication issues along the road if the subordinate group finds some aspects of the language difficult to comprehend (Cheris Kramarae). The dominant group may decide to ignore the subordinate group's agitations, resulting in the subordinate group's eventual "muteness."

Peter Olusade Adebimpe (201) quotes Shirley Ardener as saying that the actual language of society had an intrinsic male bias, that men defined the meanings for a community, and that the feminine voice was suppressed or "muted." Women are unable to express themselves clearly in masculine jargon as a result of this silence. Shirley is claimed to have remarked that women's silence manifests in a variety of ways, particularly in public conversation. Edwin Ardener, on the other hand, discovered that the male point of view in society is dominant, whereas the female point of view is non-dominant and non-standard, after experimenting using the information in his essay "Belief and the Problem of Women," in which he studied the "problem" of women.

Although this theory was designed to analyse many difficulties involving men and women, it can also be applied to the way women are ill-treated in the society where women/girls` voices are "muted"; even though the concept of muted groups applies to both women and all other non-dominant groups in society (Mark Orbe, *African American Communication Research* & *Continuing the Legacy of Theorizing …*63). The subject of gender-based violence is core in human rights discourse because it involves gender inequality and violence against women/girls. 'Mutedness' does not relate to the absence of voice per se, but to a form of distortion where "subordinate voices ... are allowed to speak but only within the constraints of the dominant communication system," writes Renee Cowan (4). It is observed that sometimes women find it difficult to have dissent voices from that of their male counterparts, or even complain, report or object to the views expressed by men, this may be attributed to the fact that the vast majority of them depend on the men for their living. Therefore, for the women/girls` voices not to be muted, they must strive to be independent as per generating financial income themselves. This theory is significant to this study because it can be applied to the issue of gender violence against women/girls (muted?) as perpetrated by men and the society (dominant?). When the pandemic started, there was quite much gender-based violence, but most of the victims kept mute due to the fear of Covid-19. Sometimes, it may be their disturbed state of mind after experiencing violence that made it problematic for them to speak out. The

woman/girl is not only muted when she is dictated to on how and when to speak but she is muted when the media and the society refuse to speak on her behalf or present and represent her well to the world. Therefore, if the media (newspapers) are not found to have largely reported the cases of domestic violence against women/girls, then they can be categorised as being muted too because the women/girls` voices they would have represented were silenced.

Lockdowns and Gender Violence

The Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) defines gender-based violence as a form of violence that excessively touches women. Some popular forms of gender-based violence are sexual violence, violence against women, domestic violence, and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation. For the United Nations Nigeria, gender-based violence (GBV) also includes physical violence, emotional and psychological violence, child marriage, femicide, trafficking, rape, and socio-economic violence. Therefore, gender-based violence can be categorised as the various forms of domestic violence against women/girls. There was gender-based violence against women/girls even before the outbreak of Covid-19, domestic violence is a human rights violation. In April 2021, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women notes that in the previous 12 months, 243 million women and girls (aged 15-49) across the world were subjected to sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner (Ejiro Umukoro).

According to a survey commissioned by Nigeria's Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development and the United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA) Nigeria, with funding from the Norwegian government, 28% of Nigerian women aged 25-29 had suffered physical abuse since they were 15 years old (*Vanguard* 2). While mentioning that violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a prevalent issue, Maria-Noel Vaeza pointed out that one in every three women has been physically or sexually abused by an intimate partner or non-partner at some point in their lives. In addition, Maria-Noel Vaeza presents new worldwide statistics showing a rise in calls to VAWG helplines in countries like Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

Some Identified Causes of Abuse of Women/Girls

Many reasons have been attributed as the causes of violence against women/girls, both in and outside of the pandemic era. To some people, the lockdown periods were the first time that most family members stayed together indoors for many days after many years. This made them discover the "faults and weaknesses" of one another for the first time, and it resulted in

violent reactions most times. Also, the effects of the lockdown went a long way to increase the number of violence women/girls experienced. Most Nigerians are self-employed, and they depend on what they rake in daily to run their families. Their socio-economic values dwindled during the lockdowns. These set of people are disposed to get stressed due to the lockdowns which prevented them from going out to fend for their families, especially when there was no palliative given to them in the periods they were at home; where few palliatives were provided, the distributions were poorly handled to the extent that only a few people got few things. A man in this situation may suffer depression and can get irritated by little things from the wife or children, especially when there is pressure to provide the basic needs at home. To have temporary relief, some may result in taking alcohol or drugs that are stimulants of aggression. This may lead to an aggressive response from the man, hence VAWG ensues. In their study, Aloysius Odii, Millicent Ngwu, Mmesoma Aniakor, Ifunanya Owelle, Maureen Aniagboso, Onyinye Uzuanwu attest that the lockdown of cities to control the spread of Covid-19 negatively affected the socio-economic and health wellbeing of the citizens, especially daily wage earners.

Equally, disrespect of the man by the woman/girl can make the former raise his hands against the latter. Naturally and culturally, the African man expects "respect" from his wife, no matter how poor or small in stature he may be, and where and when he does not get this "respect", he will want to enforce it by becoming violent against the wife. The case is worse if the man has low self-esteem and poor communication ability. Africa is a patriarchal society that adheres to tradition. In most cultures, particularly in Africa, the woman is expected to accord respect to the man, especially in marriage. A man may get aggressive and violently abuse the woman when he feels he is being robbed of his respect hence Samuel Laleye notes that the greatest thing you will ever take from a man that will cause the beast in him to come out is his respect. He asserts that inherent in every man is a king and a beast and that if the woman chooses to be a queen she will bring out the king in the man, but if she disrespects him, she will bring out the beast in him.

Also, some men are naturally wicked, heartless, and violent, and they get the women/girl abused and violated at any little provocation or opportunity they have. They might have witnessed their fathers beat their mothers. Such men can unleash mayhem on women/girls even when they were not provoked because they have temperament problems, and cannot control their anger. However, it must be mentioned that women/girls, especially married women, do activate domestic violence against them sometimes. For instance, some of them nag too much. They also verbally abuse their husbands thereby making them experience mental torture. The mental

pain may linger so long with the man because the effects are not tangible. There have been cases where the men are moving away from the women to avoid confrontation, yet the women still go after them. When such men feel they have had enough, they react by manhandling the women.

Maria-Noel Vaeza concludes that VAWG was a pandemic long before the outbreak of Covid-19. The basic reasons, it was underlined, are not the virus per se or the resulting economic issues, but rather a power and control imbalance. The gender divide, biased attitudes and views, gender pigeonholes, social norms that condone and encourage violence and abuse, and societal systems that replicate unfairness and discrimination all contribute to this imbalance.

Media and Gender Issues

The mass media are the various avenues through which information is collected, collated, and disseminated to individuals and groups of people in diverse locations. Some of the popular ones are newspapers, magazines, television, radio, film, book, billboards, social media platforms etcetera. The fact that they are made up of many variants, makes it possible for varied ideas about social issues to be discussed and analysed. They are very important to the society vis-a-vis the roles they play which include creating awareness, dissemination of news, agenda-setting, advertising, and education in a democratic dispensation. This is in line with the thought of Jammy Guanah (*The role of the print media in resolving …*) who observes that the Nigerian mass media, like in other parts of the world, is seen as the fourth estate of the realm, coming after the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary, with this, the mass media are saddled with enormous responsibilities in the society.

Though, the vital roles they play are sometimes not appreciated enough especially when such roles are considered to be short of their expectations, considering the potency of the media; for instance, not amplifying the cases of violence women face daily. The media can put a human face to the stories about abused women/girls and assure them that they will get help and justice from the appropriate quarters. Even though, while calling for a change of focus by the media, Hashim Suleiman observes that what permeates the current scholarship about media and gender is all about the negativities that media do to the female gender, yet the media cannot be exonerated when it comes to how it reports the female gender stories.

The mass media, especially the newspaper, which is supposed to accord all citizens equal rights and opportunities have been accused of encouraging gender imbalance (Jammy Guanah *Comparative study of Nigerian press…*128). It must be inadequacies like this that made Smith Wigglesworth declare that "If I read the newspaper, I come out dirtier than I went in. If I read my Bible, I

come out cleaner than I went in and I like being clean" (71). Chris Kwakpovwe reports Wigglesworth as saying that he never read newspapers, and if anyone went to his house with a newspaper in his hands, he would shout at such person before he passed through the door into the house to "Throw that filthy thing out of my house", because he did not want to be distracted by the wickedness and politics of his time and "be deformed by the information from the world" (71).

The media are expected to educate citizens about gender issues in society regularly as part of their civic obligation, and bring to the knowledge of the public any time there are cases of gender discrimination. Hence, Andrew Campbell submits that expanding community partnerships and spreading awareness about the importance of reporting incidents of abuse are crucial to reducing the number of such cases. Thus, it will not be out of place if the media engage in investigative journalism by engaging VAGW victims during the lockdowns to unearth the causes of the abuse they experienced. Media can successfully be used to mobilise the male gender to achieve a healthier and equal relationship to prevent an increase in VAWG cases. It is expected that newspapers should report more about the danger women/girls are exposed to when violated, and such reports should be perpetual until the abuse against them is stopped, or drastically reduced. This research used content analysis to study newspapers` coverage of gender-based violence during the Covidd-19 pandemic lockdowns. A content analysis emphasises an integrated view of speech/texts and their specific contexts (Yan Zhang & Barbara Wildemuth). Purposive sampling technique was used to select the online versions of *Vanguard, ThisDay,* and *Leadership* newspapers based on their widespread readership, the high circulation rate of their hardcopies versions, and their online popularity. The researcher reviewed the papers for 4 months (April-July 2020) being the period of the lockdowns in Nigeria.

The population of the study is the 231 straight news, features, opinions/columns, photographs, editorials, Advertorial, and Personality profiles that have to do with the violence that was published during the four months by these newspapers. The population was also used as the sample size because the number making up the population is small. It holds that, when an entire population is not very large, it doubles as both the population and the sample of the study. This decision is justified by many scholars, including Amaechi Ifeakor who endorses the use of the entire population as a sample if the population is small.

The instrument for data collection is coding sheet that contains the content categories identified below. The sheet was validated, piloted, improved, and used to ensure that it measured the issues: general violence, violence against women/girls, and story type/genre during the lockdowns.

The test of validity conducted indicated Rho = 0.75 (strong positive correlations with) to 1 (perfect positive correlation). Such validity test results indicate the quality data herein (Patrick Biddix). Inter-coder reliability of 0.85 or 85% was achieved using Krippendorff's α Coincidence Matrix (Deen Freelon). This was arrived at using three categories from the six coded ones with the number of agreements at 9; disagreement at one; the number of cases was 10 and the number of decisions 20. Applying Krippendorff's

$$\alpha = \frac{(n-1)\Sigma o_{cc} - \Sigma n_c(n_c-1)}{n(n-1) - \Sigma n_c(n_c-1)}, \; \alpha = \frac{(20-1)(8+6+4) - [9(9-1) + 7(7-1) + 4(4-1)]}{20(20-1) - [9(9-1) + 7(7-1) + 4(4-1)]}, \; \alpha = 0.85 \text{ or } 85\%.$$

Analysis was done using the *Nvivo* research tool. The units of analysis for the study are the newspaper articles in the form of straight news, features, opinions/columns, photographs, editorials, Advertorial, and Personality profiles that have to do with violence during the lockdowns. The coverage of violence-related news was categorised into: i) general violence: which refers to the coverage of general violence stories by the newspapers; ii) gender-based violence: these are coverage of cases of violence meted out on women/girls, and iii) story type/genre: the class of the story that the violence stories were reported, that is, maybe they are in form of straight news, features, opinions/columns, photographs, editorials, Advertorial, or Personality profile.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Fig.1: Frequency of coverage of stories on violence by the three newspapers.
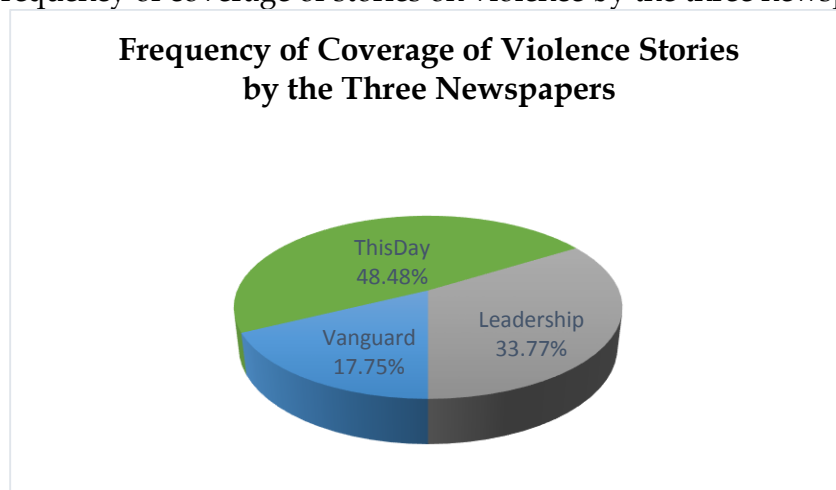
KEY: ▉ Vanguard ▉ ThisDay ▉ Leadership
Source: Content Analysis, 2021.

Fig. 1 shows that Thisday newspaper had the highest number of reported violence incidences; it is followed by *Leadership* newspaper, then *Vanguard* newspaper.

Fig. 2: Number of gender-based violence against women/girls by the three newspapers

Number of gender-based violence against women/girls by the three newspapers

ThisDay 52.88%

Vanguard 16.35%
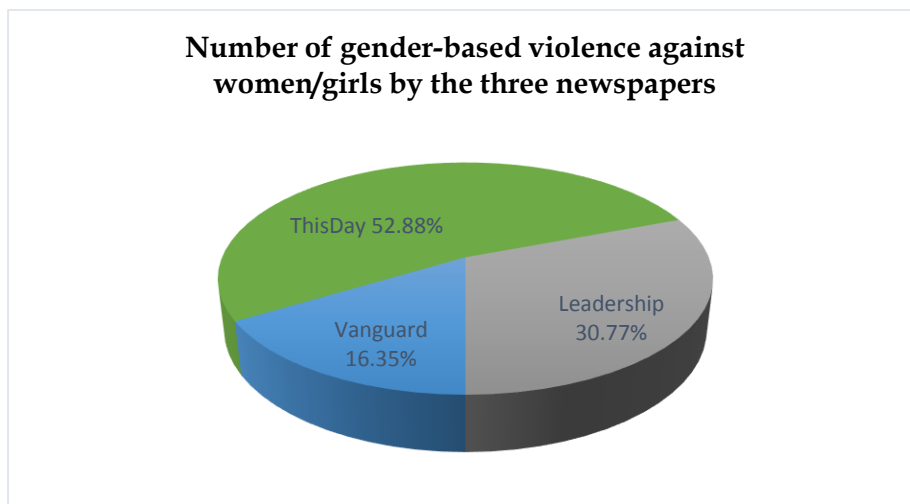
Leadership 30.77%

KEY: ■ Vanguard ■ ThisDay ■ Leadership
Source: Content Analysis, 2021

Data gleaned from Fig. 2 show that 208 from the 231 reported cases of violence were gender-based (*Vanguard* - 16.35%; *ThisDay* - 52.88%; *Leadership* -30.77%). This signpost that the women/girls were the major victims of violence during the lockdowns.

Fig. 3: Story type/genre used by the three newspapers to report violence during the lockdowns

Story type/genre used by the three newspapers to report violence during the lockdowns

Straight News, 74.03%

Feature Stories 10.38%

Editorial Opinion 0.43%

Articles 6.93%

Personality Profile, 1.73%

Advertorial 0.87%
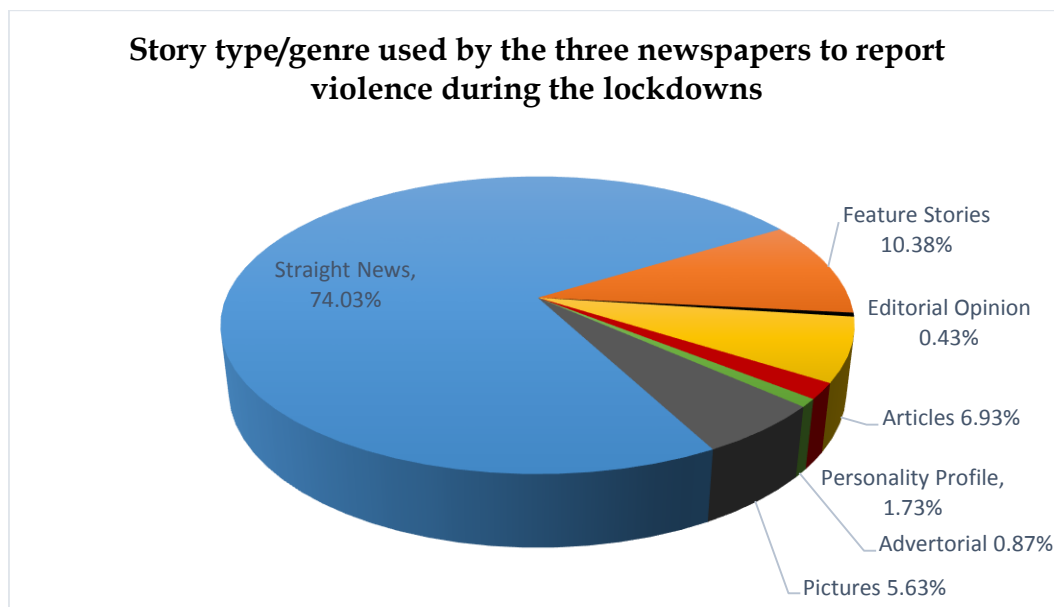
Pictures 5.63%

KEY: ■ Straight News ■ Feature Stories ■ Editorial Opinion ■ Articles

■ Personality Profile ■ Pictures ■ Advertorial

Source: Content Analysis, 2021

Fig. 3 infers that the majority of the stories on gender-based violence were reported in form of straight news more than any other story type/genre.

Discussion of Findings

The first objective of this study was to identify how many stories of violence were reported during the lockdowns. It was found that there were 231 stories. This high rate shows that the restriction of people's movement which made them be confined to their homes exposed them to various degrees of violence. The further breakdown indicates that the rate of violence increased at the peak of the lockdowns in June, and reduced when the lockdowns were relaxed in July. It implies that violence would have continued to increase if the lockdowns had been sustained. This pinpoints the fact that the newspaper is still an inevitable partner in achieving a sane society in exposing and reporting

the various forms of violence taking place, even amid other media platforms like social media which tend to threaten the existence of the newspaper.

Though, both male and female sexes do face gender-based violence, this study however revealed that women and girls were the greater victims during the lockdowns. This shows that women/girls who were already suffering domestic violence before the Covidd-19 pandemic, experienced more of this violence because there was no way they could escape from their abusers whom they were trapped with during the periods of the lockdowns. Oludayo Tade who reiterated that rape is not a strange criminal act globally, however, confirmed that rape took a threatening dimension as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic where both victims and sexual predators were trapped under lockdowns. Also, while addressing the alarming increase of gender-based violence (GBV) during the Covid-19 lockdown, Nthabiseng Moleko says reports globally show a link between pandemics, disasters, and gender-based violence.

The third finding revealed that the three newspapers used more straight news than other story genres. This finding conforms to that of Sanita Nwakpu, Okwudilichukwu Ezema and Nwakpoke Ogbodo thatcontent analysed newspaper framing of coronavirus and audience response and found that the coverage was dominated by straight news reports. Previously, Guanah (*Comparative study of Nigerian press…*) defines news (straight news) as new information about an event, incident, or happening. It is about something the hearer (listener or viewer) is hearing or seeing for the first time. That other person might have seen or heard such information before does not make it "non-news" (136).

However, Chinenye Nwabueze adds that straight news does not draw conclusions, offer any opinions, attempt to probe deeper than the surface happenings, provide elaborate background information, or examine claims made. When straight news fails to do the fore goings, readers may find it difficult to have a full grasp of what gender-based violence is all about. With other news genres like opinion and feature article options, experts that have to do with VAWG can write expository articles that can serve as an information base to readers as well as supporting statements to victims of this violence. It is inadequate for the newspapers that have reported most of their stories in form of straight news alone.

Conclusion

This study examined the number of violence cases that the selected newspapers reported during the lockdown periods in Nigeria; it went further to ascertain the number of gender-based violence cases, and against women and girls. It also identified straight news as the main news type/genre through

which the newspapers carried out their reports. Hence, this paper concludes that fight against gender-based violence should be the prerogative of everyone, including human rights advocacy groups and the media. The media, being effective tools of reporting cases like these must follow up the stories of abuse they have reported by ensuring that perpetrators are brought to book and persecuted.

Recommendations

i.   There should be implementations of laws that prohibit violence against all humans, especially against women/girls in public and private lives. Newspapers should continually clamour for this.

ii. All forms of gender-based violence should be discouraged, and measures should be put in place to protect women/girls' rights to live free from violence.

iii. Apart from the straight news/genre, newspapers should use other available story types and genres to report violence against women/girls, even beyond the pandemic era. They should also do a follow-up on cases of violence reported.

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INTERROGATING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EMERGING 'DRIVE-IN THEATRE' PRACTICE IN PANDEMIC ERA: AN NCAC EXPERIENCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
The overwhelming trajectory of Covid-19 upsurge has wreaked havoc on the existence of man. Several public and private institutions were practically shut down, as normal day to day activities were extremely threatened by the spread of the disease. This panic attracted both scientific and unscientific attention; on how to change this narrative. While so many individuals and institutions were struggling with the realities of adopting and adapting to the new normal way of survival, some theatre practitioners succeeded in carving a niche for the continuation and sustenance of theatrical performance by the introduction of Drive-in Theatre. This paper interrogates the responses and significance of this emerging theatre culture to Nigerians and seeks possible means of retaining this practice in the event of possible re-occurrence of the pandemic or its adoption as a new dimension in theatre practice. Findings have shown that before the advent of the disease, Drive-in Theatre's were relatively rare, with limited performance spaces globally, thereby depriving many theatre patrons the opportunity of being part of this innovative art; which is both educative and therapeutic. It is based on this fact and many more that this study advocates for the government's intervention in creating more open stage performance spaces. And also ensure that strategies are available for its continuation in Nigeria.

Keywords: Drive-in Theatre, Covid-19, Performance, Innovative art, Entertainment.

Introduction
The wild spread of the Covid-19 pandemic has taken a toll across nations, races, religions, and various institutions. The sectors of economy and entertainment could be said to have suffered the greatest strike of the pandemic. The reality of this disease tested knowledge, predictions and medicines to their boundaries and equally rip apart economic, socio-cultural and political propensities. In other words, one can explicitly state that the pandemic altered the world and rendered humankind hopeless and helpless with its associated global lockdown situation. The severity of the spread of this disease and its subsequent threat to humans attracted thoughtful

investigations (scientific and unscientific); that could help to understand the existence of the virus, and perhaps seek avenues to eliminate it and return the world to its formal glory.

Live theatre performance is one of the entertainment sectors that suffered the greatest knockout of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is because performance is a collective effort of people drawn together to achieve theatrical experience. Their quest for entertainment, communication, education, and the need to provide worthwhile information, demands that these people must come together to interact physically. Moreover, production processes require consistent rehearsals and consultations to meet up with the expectations of the audience. As a collaborative art, it calls for teamwork with adequate maximization of time and energy for a positive turnout. This interaction and interface contradict the strict adherence of Covid-19 protocols on social distancing, among other health stipulated rules. The rules of Covid-19 perceives this social intermingling of artists as jeopardy Considering the number of persons involved in both pre and post-production processes. This impression surreptitiously halted live theatre performance, thereby rendering most artists lethargic in the circumstance of the spread of the disease.

It is worthy of note that in the face of all threats to the lives and existence of humans, the pandemic opened up new vistas; as some theatre practitioners maximized this opportunity to carve a niche for the continuation and sustenance of theatrical performances, through the initiation of drive-in Theatre. This is perceived as a creative and innovative technique to weather the storm of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, creativity could be seen as the effective tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that are useful in problem solving. This persistent need to socialise, communicate and entertain the audience has directly or indirectly led to various creative dimensions.

In other words, for one to be said to be creative, it requires the capacity to view things in new ways or from a different standpoint. This among other concerns will help in the generation of new possibilities or alternatives. Hence, the real assessment of creative parameters may not only depict the number of alternatives that people could generate, but the uniqueness of those alternatives. Therefore, the ability to generate alternatives or see things uniquely does not occur by chance; but rather linked to the situation on the ground. Suffice it to say that the most fundamental qualities of thinking results to novel situations and the gratification of the circumstances presented. Ogande & Osori opine that "Creativity is the capacity of a person or persons to produce compositions, products or ideas of any sort, which are essentially new and novel, and previously unknown to the producer. It is also the ability

to think about something in a novel way and to come up with unique solutions to a problem" (38).

The valuable idea of drive-in theatrein Nigeria was nurtured and propelled by National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) in Abuja. The notion behind this initiative was to use the medium to revive and relieve theatrical experience which was stalled by the ravaging disease. It is sad to note that this novel idea instigated contempt by many Nigerians. This is because; many people had the impression that the drive-in theatre is highly sophisticated and selective as many theatre patrons were not carried along in the whole process, or allowed to witness and enjoy the drive-in experience. This paper therefore, interrogates the authenticity of this information and seeks possible means of improving and perhaps, retaining this novel theatre culture in the event of possible re-occurrence of the pandemic or any other life threatening disease that requires social distancing.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis of this paper found its bearing on Jean Duvignaud's theory, which states that "society is in theatre and theatre in the society." This means that as the theatre is impacting the society, society in turn strives to make a considerable imprint on the theatre. Duvignaud is of the view that, as the theatre seeks to reflect societal problems, the society also forces the theatre to change in terms of content and operational styles. This theory portrays theatre as a people-oriented and people-centred kind of creativity, which its superfluities find expressions through the spirit of cooperation and mutual understanding of critical issues. Live theatre helps to promote social discourse, dialogue and potential social change. Hence, theatre as a concept is a cultural phenomenon that stresses that society should examine itself through its mirror. Societal problems can be discovered and equally attempt to find solutions to them with theatrical interpretations. In effect, the role of theatre is no doubt expansive and can be likened to any other visual media of entertainment that tries to proffer solutions to societal difficulties. Duvignaud's theory presents the theatre as an excellent and a much more direct form of questioning what is off beam within the society. Its ability in influencing the thought pattern of the general public automatically leads to a new way of behaviour. Hence, theatrical medium of expression and communication could be said to be highly effective and impactful. One can unequivocally state that the theatre is an ally of society. This is because the latter naturally finds its focus in consonance with the former, rather than in opposition to its existence. Invariably, these two concepts influence one another.

A Critical View of Drive-in Theatre

Before the spate of the Covid-19 pandemic, drive-in system of entertainment has been relatively rare across the world. The quest to socialize, interact and communicate with each other during this critical period gave rise to lots of artistic innovations such as Drive-in-Cinema, Drive-in-Concert, Drive-in-Theatre among other creative and innovative scopes. It is noted that so many countries queued into the relevance of creativity to resuscitate both human beings and the entertainment sector. Countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Spain and France have witnessed the boom in attendance of these theatrical entertainment trends before the existence of the ravaging disease. The originators of these concepts used the effects of lockdown to close up distance and fill the void created by the closure of entertainment proceedings with these performances and displays. There is no doubt the fact that the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on the lives of many individuals was terrific and alarming. As such, it demands urgent measures to alleviate its effect on the masses. This is the reason why Evwierhoma argues that:

> Seasons come and go and are therefore like life transient. How can these times be full of prospects when news headlines daily scream tragedy, mayhem, commotion and diseases threatening our communal living and our collective ethos as theatre artists? Today, the theatre exists in a season of plaque, insecurity, political, as well as cultural upheaval. (7)

All these reflect the ugly situation Covid-19 pandemic has exposed people to, which theatre praxis is seen as an escape route for continuous interaction, communication and existence of man. There are evidence that this novel art of the theatre could lead to other theatrical ideas that can change communities, countries and continents. Needless to say that the exquisiteness of the drive-ins are that people can have a whimsical experience within the space or venue of the performance, by ensuring an appreciable percentage of safety in their personal vehicles. This is in response to the new normal way of social distancing that people are forced to accept. Drive-in culture could rightly said to be an excellent stop-gap and an addition in showcasing and guaranteeing good business in the midst of fear and trepidation.

Another endearing factor of drive ins is the colouration and aesthetic blend of live theatre performance and media arts; as media teams instantly streams the event on television and other media outlets to ensure visibility. In effect, people that could not attend physically were able to watch the event in the comfort of their homes. In essence, positive responses, accolades and assessments were received from audience members who were shielding and

feeling safe enough at either the events or their various homes. It was indeed, a worthy moment for people to have fun for the first time in months since the inception of the upsurge of the virus.

The researcher believes that the reasons for the organization of drive-in theatreat the peak of the spread of Covid-19 cannot be far-fetched; it aims at reaching out to as many people as possible, giving them a veritable opportunity to unwind and reset their psychological state of mind. This idea is immeasurably a suiting balm to all sours inflicted by this terrible disease. While outdoor cinemas are weather-sensitive, drive-in theatres are less so, and could be a new business model that is here to stay in the world of entertainment and exhibition; with the realities of the existence of Covid-19 and other related diseases still springing up. This may be possible if adequate attention could be given, and infrastructures put in place for its continuous existence and sustainability. There are numerous advantages of drive-in theatrethat the weather is not as much of a consideration for its survival.

The drive-in theatres, Cinemas and films as large screen situated outdoor type of entertainment is quite simple in its set up. The basic requirements are the spaces, manpower, stage, screen, projector (for showing films) or lighting for stage plays and speakers as the case may be. Most drive-in theatres aside the actors using microphones and speakers to boost communication, go as far as distributing headphones to their audience as they make their entrance to the performance venue. However, the most important requirement is a huge area or space for the parking of cars at least two meters apart from each other. A drive-in theatre allows the audience to watch plays or films from the comfort and privacy of their cars. You drive into a parking space, switch on your headphone and watch the film or theatrical display. Some drive-in theatres even provide other forms of entertainment such as tables; chairs, for those who want to use the facility instead of sitting in their cars. There are also stores for different brands of drinks and snacks to help set the mood of the audience members while the performance is going on. Drive-in organisers have their linkages via various social media platforms where tickets are advertised to be purchased either online or sometimes at the entrance of the venue. The online purchase gives them a better opportunity to know the number of persons to make provisions for.

The following are the pictorial examples of drive-in theatres in different countries;

Plate 1

Drive-in Theatre in Florida, USA

The first-ever drive-in movie theatre was located at Crescent Boulevard in Camden in New Jersey in 1933. It was previously known as Park-in Theatre. Drive-in was a later term that originated by Richard Hollingshead, a movie fan and a sales manager at his father's company, (Whiz Auto Products) in Camden. He was inspired by his mother's struggle to sit comfortably in traditional movie theatre seats. As such, Hollingshead came up with the idea of an open-air theatre, where patrons could watch movies in the comfort of their vehicles. He experimented with various ways to guard against rain and other inclement weather, and devised the ideal spacing arrangement for cars so that people could have a wonderful experience with a full view of the screen on display.

Plate 2

Drive-in Theatre Twyford Avenue Sports ground, United Kingdom.

Drive-in cinemas in England never took off in the same way they did in the United States of America. This is because drive-ins and drive-throughs are considered unnecessary and therefore rare in England. Hence, the number of drive-in cinemas across the country exploded as a result of the Covid-19 upsurge. Before the spread of the virus, the country had just three drive-in cinemas. The months of July to September 2020 witnessed at least 40 additional sites offering socially distanced cinema and theatrical experiences to audiences in their vehicles, with several venues even featuring roller-blading, masked service staff delivering, ordered and pre-ordered snacks and assorted drinks.

Plate 3
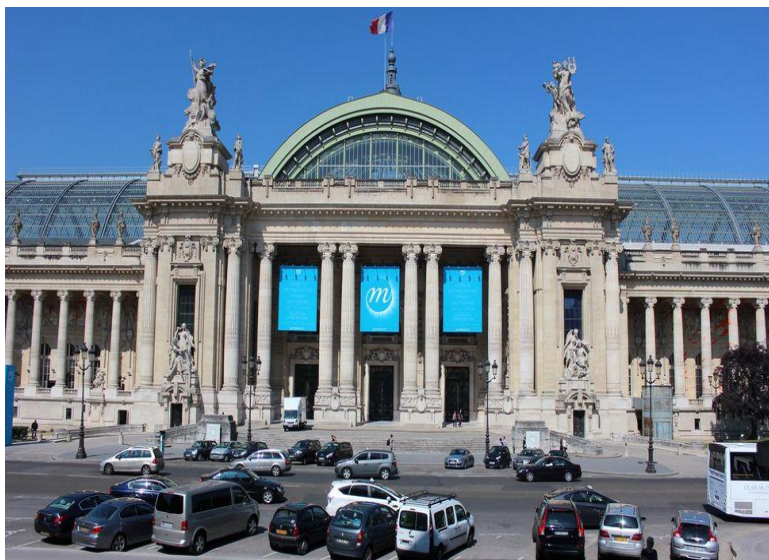
Paradiso Drive-in Theatre in France

Drive-in theatre came into existence in the 1960s in France but was abandoned by the managers due to the downturn in the business. Drive-in cinemas made a comeback in France as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. When the pandemic hit the country, group gatherings were the first thing to be banned, then came the closure of schools and finally extended to complete shutdowns. Presently, the drive-in theatre has regained popularity as an alternative means of entertainment in France at the moment. Hence, Paradiso drive-in theatre is the biggest drive-in theatre in the country.

Plate 4

Drive-in Theatre in Italy

Drive in theatre was first known in Italy as a metro drive-in theatre. This theatre has been in existence since 1950. It functioned till 1980 and was carelessly abandoned as a result of its aged technical equipment and materials which could no longer stand the taste of time. This theatre was revitalized as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is common knowledge that Italy is one of the countries that the disease ruthlessly dealt with. Hence, an alternative way of escape from the trauma becomes necessary among the citizens. The theatre as a matter of urgency commenced its operations by offering various types of entertainment during the lockdown, in other to keep life going.

The Birth of Drive-in Theatre in the Nigerian Space

As the scourge of coronavirus pandemic continues to rummage and hit harder on human beings and businesses, a Nigerian filmmaker named Charles Okpaleke, came up with the idea of drive-in cinemas, which was staged in Abuja and Lagos in early 2020. It also encapsulated a live performance from popular musicians such as; Style plus and the best DJs in Nigeria. The performance also had streaming of *Living in Bondage*' One of the first Nollywood movies in Nigeria. Mr Okpaleke who bought the rights to *Nneka the Pretty Serpent*, *Glamour Girls* and *Rattle Snake* later on, acquired the rights to *Living in Bondage* Mr Okpaleke believes that the medium of drive-in cinemas should be used as an effective approach to sustain the appetite of habitual cinema and theatre patrons; by entertaining them and as well, observing the guidelines of Covid-19 on social distancing. This was an imitation of what is in existence and obtainable in other countries as discussed earlier in this paper.

On the other hand, the Director-General of the National Council for Arts and Culture in Abuja, Mr Olusegun Runsewe, viewed that the Covid-19 strain has not only caused an entertainment deficit, but also a cultural void for many cultural arts enthusiasts. Consequently, he used the medium of drive-in theatre to reveal the programme of events prepared for the Annual National Festival of Arts (NAFEST), which was slated to be hosted by Plateau State in October 2020. He justified his efforts and intentions by engaging stakeholders and the creative sector in the experience in the light of the public health emergency. This idea was not personal, but rather with proper negotiations and deliberation with stakeholders, ranging from experts in various fields, members of the diplomatic community and journalists. This fruitful meeting and agreement were done on a virtual platform. Runsewe asserts that drive-in theatreand cultural tour were created as part of efforts to transpose the sector, and to alleviate the effects of Covid-19, rather than keeping the sector redundant. It could then be consciously said that the pandemic is coated with both misfortunes and opportunities in its entirety. It is the opinion of Uzondu that:

> The relevance of theatrical performance could be seen in the ability to create and recreate without vagueness, the events and issues that led to certain agitations and remarkable challenges of the people within the environment. Creative works are naturally inclined to those physical and emotional problems that touch the social fabrics of the masses. Therefore, the values of creativity are traceable to the contexts within their immediate environment…. (84)

However, the upsurge of the virus presented occasions for creative artists to think outside the box and come up with innovations such as the virtual cultural tour and the drive-in theatre which serve as therapy and rain jacket to cushion the effects of the pandemic. Mgbemere argues that, "The shape, outlook and presentation of theatre, reflect the yearnings of the people. It is these attributes that bestow on the theatre the role of a vanguard, a watchdog, the barometer of the society and a major factor in nation-building" (425). With these well thought plans, one can conveniently allude that the spread of Covid-19, overtly or covertly opened windows for novelties, irrespective of all the maligning effects on humans and businesses.

Plate 5

Drive-in Theatre in Abuja

Drive in Theatre Performance by National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) Abuja

Drive-in theatre was organized by National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) Abuja. The event featured live performances of cultural songs across the three most populated tribes in Nigeria; Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo, using the Nigerian Cultural Troupes that entertained the audience with various cultural tips. The audience was amazed at the expertise of Sheraton Hotel chefs who curated a top-notch menu of snacks and desserts, served through a contactless delivery method, to assuage hunger from the audience members. Afterwards, a staged performance of "Grip Am," a Pidgin-language play written by one of Nigeria's foremost playwrights, Ola Rotimi held the audience spell bound with an alluring performance. Grip Am is a hilarious comedy that fits into both past and present times. The choice of this play is obviously to entertain the audience and make them laugh off the sorrows brought by the disease. The play choice is both timely and effective as the audience kept laughing from the beginning to the end. It was a life-changing occasion that healed lots of people from the damage caused by the disease in their lives. The performance of Grip Am featured popular Nollywood actor, Francis Duru, who played the character, Iṣẹ.

Issues and Challenges of Drive-in Theatre in Nigeria

A drive-in theatre can be described as a construction of a large raised platform (stage) in a very wide parking lot, where the audience can conveniently enjoy the communal leisure experience from their vehicles. This

initiative came as a result of strict compliance with Covid-19 protocols on social distancing; an attempt to ensure a risk-free environment while enjoying the live theatre performance. This initiative was greeted with so much endorsement and appreciable rating, because of the ease and relaxation it presented to its audience at a devastating moment of Covid-19 spread in Nigeria. Ugala claims that, "in all ages, the theatre has mediated every life-giving and life-threatening situation. Nigerian theatre has not shirked its burden duty of watchdogging the society…Its immediate contact and response depict a sense of oneness with the action" (34).

This novel theatre practice in Nigeria was witnessed by a selected few audiences, with not more than 20 vehicles spaced two metres apart. This left many theatre patrons with the notion that the idea of this theatrical enterprise was specifically muted and designed for the benefit of the elite and affluents in Nigeria. The audience members were major stakeholders of the creative sector, some members of the diplomatic community, the National Association of Nigeria Theatre Arts Practitioners (NANTAP), the head of tourism association, arts reporters and some representatives of some embassies, among other few members of the audience. Perceptibly, this is not an all-inclusive practice that theatrical performances are known for right from their inceptions, especially in critical circumstances such as Covid-19 threat, where people have limited interaction with one another. Hence, the beauty of theatrical performance could be said to be determined by the number of audience in attendance. Suffice it to say that the information and the whole processes of theatrical experience should be for audience consumption and logical assessment. As such, the significance of audience members in performances cannot be over flogged. Indeed, they are the only reason why theatrical performances happen and flourish. The potency of this creative dimension could be seen as not impactful, with regards to audience participation. This is therefore a fundamental flaw from the organisers of the performance. The event should have been open to as many people that meet up the requirement for attendance.

Upon a critical investigation on this seemingly selective theatre practice, it was discovered that the space for the performance was limited and could contain only the aforementioned stakeholders and few audience members. This is so because drive-in theatre practice has not been a common practice in Nigeria, neither has the consciousness of unforeseen circumstances such as the spread of the virus come to many creative artists. Going by the brief analysis and origin of drive-ins in various countries, the consciousness has been established in many countries such as the United States of America, France, Italy, among other countries. These countries timely perceived the need for open space performances even before the outbreak of the disease;

thus, they provided this alternative means for continuity and sustenance of entertainment. This made it possible for them to easily revive the culture of drive-ins within a limited time and space.

It is, therefore, the standpoint of this paper that considering the number of unused or empty spaces in various states in the country, some should be reserved or converted to a drive-in theatre for either in the event of any disease outbreak or as a new dimension of theatre practice in Nigeria. This is considered necessary as a result of its instant response to psychological and physiological human needs. Consequently, the researcher observed that some of the empty spaces transformed to be used as parks or wedding reception arenas and other functions were non-functional with the spread of the disease. Other issues such as adequate publicity and budget, funding and provision of infrastructures from government and other relevant agencies are also some of the issues that demand urgent attention. Giving further critical thought to the social impact of audience going to drive-in performance, we could advance that social or business discussions may also take place freely in the cars as opposed to conventional theatre spaces, if the do-not-disturb culture is not adhered to. Also, it should be comtemplated that some attendees may not have interest in the performance, but just to relax.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted a critical discourse on the establishment of drive-in theatres in various countries. It notes that so many countries have already started the drive-in culture before the outbreak of Covid-19 in the world. This made it possible for them to easily take off the drive-in culture without much struggle. With the realities of the spread of the disease, some countries that abandoned or neglected their drive-ins due to outdated equipment and materials, as well as poor management of the theatre swiftly rectified them in other to salvage the ugly situation presented by the pandemic. The story was not the same in Nigeria; as drive-in theatre never existed in the country. In effect, following the eruption of the disease and lockdown that prohibited the movement of persons from one place to another, theatre practitioners came up with the idea of drive-in theatre. This is because, it is considered convenient and safe; as people could sit in the comfort of their cars to watch the theatrical performance while maintaining social distancing. The paper observes that while this novel practice is all-inclusive practice in most countries, Nigeria's situation was witnessed by few individuals. Therefore, it interrogates this seemingly selective theatre practice and insists that this lofty idea should be to the benefit of all and sundry. This is pertinent because; the art and its giant stride is an effective agent of socialization and reformation. The threats of Covid-19 should not erase the functions of theatre practice as an

inclusive venture. Hence, there is a need for continuity and sustenance of theatre practice in Nigeria against all odds presented to the people and environment; as novel ideas will continue to flourish.

Recommendations

Based on the enormous relevance of drive-in theatre this paper recommends that there is a need for the sustenance of drive-in theatre practice in Nigeria. This can be made possible if government and stakeholders could be proactive and committed to the provision of spaces and facilities that will help in the realisation and effectiveness of drive-in theatre in Nigeria. Hence, some empty spaces in the country and states should be set aside for a drive-in experience in the event of reoccurrence of the disease or as a new normal theatre practice. Again, drive-in theatre is a worthwhile experience and therefore should be adopted not only as a novel theatre practice but a new dimension of theatre experience.

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COVID-19 AND MULTIMEDIA VIDEO PEDAGOGY: AN APPRAISAL OF CHILDREN EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE PRACTICE OF CREATIVE HANDS ACADEMY, OYE-EKITI

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Abstract
The spread of Covid-19 in recent time has sent shockwaves and limitations in human interactions and contacts across the globe. These constraints in human contacts and interactions have made scholars and professionals experiment alternative means of practising their trades. It is in this context that this study assessed the impact of the "multimedia CDs" adopted as new trends in children theatre practice occasioned by the outbreak of Covid-19. Rather than engage the children in the formal and usual participatory children theatre activities, this study evaluates the experiments with Multimedia Video CD by The Creative Hands Academy at Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria. Tulsi Kumar's *Jonny Jonny Yes Papa* was used to facilitate learning in Mathematics, in the early childhood programme. To investigate this impact, the study hinged on Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences that posits that people do not have just intellectual capacity, but many kinds of intelligence; thereby making people learn through various means. The study adopted participant observation approach as its research method; by using the video CDs under study to teach the curriculum content of Primary 3A arm of the Creative Hands Academy Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State during the pandemic era. Thereafter, the entire Primary 3 classes of the school, consisting of four (4) arms, were examined on the curriculum content taught. The results revealed that the pupils of Primary 3A arm that were taught using the Multimedia CD, *Jonny Jonny Yes Papa Video CD* performed exceptionally well. Based on the results, the study recommended Multimedia as a viable medium of teaching and learning in the lower secondary schools.

Keywords: Post Covid-19, Pandemic era, New trends, Children-theatre practice.

Introduction

The world has grappled with Covid-19 that wreaked havoc on every aspect of human endeavour. It held the economy hostage, not to mention the educational sector. The pandemic brought about changes and upheavals in the educational sector, which acts as a catalyst for any nation's progress. The pandemic has had a devastating impact on many people's livelihoods, countries' wealth, and the world economy. About 1.2 billion students were out

of school as a result of pandemic-related measures, with school closures affecting 73.8 percent of the world's school populations (UNESCO 20). This has had a significant impact on educational access, quality, and equity, as well as the changing of educational delivery throughout the globe.

The risks we confront grow increasingly intertwined as the world gets more interconnected. International boundaries have been breached as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to spread and mutate. There are people from all walks of life who have been impacted by this. There may be options for students from more affluent households to participate in alternative education programmes. Many low-income students were expelled from schools when they were forced to closure due to budget cuts. Our educational institutions' inadequacies and injustices have been exposed by this issue, which ranges from lack of access to bandwidth and computers required for online learning to a mismatch between resources and standards to a lack of learning settings suitable to students. Because of the lockdowns in reaction to Covid-19, "most nations have had to close all of their schools for at least 10 weeks and at most six months" (Anthony et. al 70). Because of the horrific conditions, children and students have had to rely on their own means to complete their education via the Internet, television, or radio.

Hand-washing with soap and running water for 20 seconds, wearing face masks, and social distance are known in Nigeria as Covid-19 Safety Protocols, which were proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO 5) to limit the spread of the viral pandemic by May 2020. UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimates that more than half of the world's students have had their schools closed as a precautionary measure against the spread of the epidemic (6). Regardless of regulations requiring students to stay at home or be placed under lockdown, learning should continue. However, many schools lack the financial resources to acquire the necessary equipment for remote learning, and others lack staff with the necessary digital abilities for teaching and learning. Even with these Safety Protocols and Measures in places of learning in Nigeria, it has been difficult for schools that may be better resourced to successfully facilitate teaching and learning as a consequence of the fear of getting Covid-19. Fears about the feared Covid-19 spreading and contracting are causing the entire educational system to migrate towards e-learning in order to mitigate the effects of the pandemic (Prensky 3). As a result, instructors who ensured that education continued to be provided had to adapt to new pedagogical ideas and modalities of delivery, for which they may not have been educated. Learners from the most disadvantaged groups, such as rural inhabitants in distant communities who lack access to digital learning tools or the resilience and engagement to study on their own, are more vulnerable to falling behind. It is

against the background of educational interruptions caused by Covid-19 that prompted instructors and stakeholders to explore alternate teaching methods. As a result, the goal of this research was to see how effective *Jonny Jonny Yes Papa* video is useful as a substitute for classroom theatre, which is a valuable teaching and learning tool that encourages participation.

Theoretical Background

The research was based on Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory (MIT). Humans have multiple sorts of "intelligences," according to Gardner, people have several types of intelligence, including musical, interpersonal, and linguistic intelligence, interactive intelligence, and doing intelligence, among others. He notes that individual learns best from each of the aforementioned intelligences and as a result motivates educators to embrace the idea that there are many different ways to be intelligent and that each student's learning style is unique. To this end, it can be argued that incorporating multimedia into the classroom is appropriate in the twenty-first century, particularly with the introduction of Covid-19.

Many researches have been conducted on the functions and efficacy of interactive multimedia. This section aims to highlight the most important works in this field. A key component of well-designed multimedia courseware is user involvement. In reality, studies have demonstrated that an interactive learning environment may result in a successful teaching and learning system (Shinde 23). Mayer's study shows that multi-modal training is more successful than single-mode instruction in a variety of studies (Mayer 3; Norhayati and Siew 147). In other words, this research shows that media has an influence on learning because of the educational opportunities they provide. For example, based on Mayer's study, the video medium should be more successful than radio when utilized effectively, since radio cannot convey visual information. The ability to deliver information in a visual format has shown to be especially beneficial to educational programmes.

Video is a digital format for capturing, reproducing, and transmitting moving visual images. A succession of frames, static photos, and, in compressed forms, motions between those pictures will be included in video codes. The amount of frames per second, colour space, resolution, and other factors will affect the quality. Early childhood video usage might help youngsters grow healthy brains, prepare for school, and generate a better workforce and economy. For young viewers, animations are very interesting, and most pupils, even in their early years, demonstrate a high degree of media literacy and understanding regarding animation. "Animation" is a derivative of "animate," which meaning "to bring to life." Is it preferable to shoot the action of a spinning globe on video or is animation a better solution?

Traditional storytelling with animation conveys a wealth of information about the actual world. Early childhood is a period of rapid growth. The youngster gets more active as a result of rapid physical growth. At this age, the youngster begins to develop new behavioural patterns.

The Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19)

The Corona-virus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic in Nigeria is part of a worldwide pandemic caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome virus Corona-virus 2 (SAR COV-2) (Anthony et al. 79). Corona-viruses may be transmitted to humans from a range of animals, including cattle, camels, and bats. Several scientists assert that the new strain of Corona virus most likely originated in bats or pangolins (Anthony et. al. 81). Wuhan, China saw the first human transmission (Hui et al. 265). Since then, the illness has spread mostly via person-to-person contact. This virus is most often transmitted via close contact with an infected person. When individuals with Covid-19 cough or exhale, they eject minute droplets carrying the virus; these droplets may enter the mouth or nose of a person who does not have the virus, enabling infection to spread (Hui et al. 265). Although the illness is most contagious when the symptoms are at their worst, the virus may still be transmitted by an asymptomatic individual (Landry et. al 26). Virus-carrying droplets may also land on nearby surfaces or objects, and the illness spreads when others touch or pick up these surfaces or items and then touches their nose, eyes, or mouth (Landry et al. 26).

On February 27, 2020, Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Health reported the country's first case of Covid-19. Italian national working in Nigeria returned to Lagos from Milan, Italy on February 25, 2020. It's (Maclean and Dahir 10). The number of confirmed cases of illness in Nigeria and throughout the world has continued to rise since then. There are thirteen (13) nations that Nigeria has prohibited travel to on March 18th that have a high prevalence of Ebola. When the World Health Organization (WHO) declares Covid-19 a pandemic in 2020, the disease will be eradicated. There's nothing more frightening than a virus or illness spreading over continents or even the entire planet in a rapid and uncontrolled fashion (Cucinotta and Vanelli 158).

Multimedia CD as an Alternative to Children Theatre

Multimedia refers to the simultaneous display of computer-mediated information in many media formats. It contains text, still images, animations, hypermedia, photography, video, and audio, but not necessarily all of them (i.e. sounds, music and narration). Multimedia may accommodate several representations of the same piece of information in diverse formats. This has several implications for schooling (Ke 1619). In contrast to traditional teaching

techniques, which may lack such contact, interactive multimedia refers to the use of multimedia and information communication technology equipment to facilitate an effective dialogue between the instructor and the pupils. Traditional educators, on the other hand, maintain that face-to-face communication may be more participatory.

At all levels of education, technological advancements have had a major influence on the evolution of teaching techniques from conventional face-to-face teaching to computer-based learning (CBL) or e-learning systems. Alternative learning methods may be found in modern education and communication contexts. Multimedia has long been a staple of instructional technology. It is also envisaged that such technologies would be used more in teaching in the future. Some suggest that multimedia and e-learning technologies should be used as a complement to conventional classrooms (and not as a substitute) (and not as a replacement). The use of interactive multimedia in the classroom is becoming more common. It is crucial in supporting pupils with their learning processes. As a result, multimedia may be argued that it enriches and helps pupils to study more effectively. To provide content-rich learning software and courseware to a variety of students, further work is necessary to build new programmes utilizing multimedia components and multimedia authoring tools. When we refer to multimedia, we don't only mean animation or image- and video-related content; they may be coupled with programming and other techniques, for instance, to build a portal or application that combines data, video, and images.

Children's Theatre
Playing an active role in a child's development is one of the primary goals of children's theatre, which is both an educational tool and an entertainment medium. Instead than entertaining the audience, children's theatre focuses on boosting intellectual development and developing educational opportunities. Onyeisi correctly points out that although children's theatre is influenced by many of the principles and practices of the theatrical arts, it is primarily seen as an educational tool rather than an art form that is led and authorized by criteria other than aesthetics (Omoera 208). While the goals of children's theatre vary, they are always geared toward the well-being of the performers (the children) rather than the enjoyment of the audience. As an exciting part of Theatre-in-Education (TIE), which refers to all group activities designed, structured, and guided by a teacher or leader to engage children in the process of creating and experiencing drama as an art form and a tool for education, children's theatre is a fun and exciting way to spend time with friends. Consequently, "children's theatre" is used to describe

this participatory method to teaching and learning that incorporates theatrical techniques and creative concepts.

Use of Multimedia Tools to engage Children

Multimedia technologies provide a plethora of new opportunities to engage children, examine topics, collect feedback, and communicate with others. Students may learn "from" multimedia in the first of two ways to use multimedia in early childhood education. They may also learn "through" multimedia. Multimedia is a term used in education to describe the symbol systems that instructors and students utilize to communicate knowledge representations to others. "Educational communication" is the basis for using multimedia in early childhood education. The majority of instructors and students are at ease with utilizing multimedia. Teachers should borrow videodisc players to experiment with at home in order to encourage them to utilize the technology in their classrooms. Multimedia is essential for education in a variety of ways, including the development of cross-skills and competencies, effective communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and the use of technology, as well as the promotion of attitudes, intellectual curiosity, and personal accountability.

Students are more satisfied and motivated in classes that employ multimedia resources: thus students' value (and frequently demand) a range of media to pique their attention (Idogho 92). Rich media assets help students learn complicated concepts better, particularly dynamic processes that take place across time. Rich media resources contribute to improved encoding and retrieval, which improves memorability. Many people thought that multimedia's ability to give real-time simulations via the use of video lifted it above conventional based learning. Multimedia may be used to augment or replace classroom instruction or to prepare students for practical experiences. Where a laboratory was too expensive to purchase or maintain, where equipment storage prevented hands-on use for each student, and where reduced teaching budgets prevented the provision of the extra academic and technical staff required to supervise practice sessions, multimedia could provide a solution.

Presentation and Discussion of the Workshop Project

Research Design

The study used the qualitative research instrumentation to collect data. The primary data were collected from Children's fun time CDs and the primary school pupils of Creative Hands Academy, Oye-Ekiti. The data were collected analyzed using content analysis and descriptive techniques. The

purpose of the research was to determine how the use of multimedia films in mathematics instruction and learning influenced the factual, conceptual, and procedural understanding of primary school children. The following research question was formulated based on the intended objective: is there a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of factual, conceptual, and procedural knowledge when it comes to multimedia films and discovery learning?

The study used a quasi-experimental design with a pre- and post-test control group and an experimental group. The quasi-experimental design was used in this study for two primary reasons: (i) random selection of schools and classes is almost impossible, and (ii) the intended goals of this study are to assess the causal effect of the intervention on the target population without random selection (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 29). There were Fifty-two (52) Primary 3 A pupils, consisting of 27 male pupils and 25 female pupils, in the Creative Hands Academy, Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State who participated in the research. Both groups consisted of twenty-six students aged from 7 to 8 years. The learning process was conducted for eight hours a week to teach Mathematics lessons, as designed in their curriculum, which was appropriately captured in the Loo Loo Kids: *Jonny Jonny Yes Papa Video;* in Ten weeks throughout the third term of the 2020-2021 Academic sessions, which was from around May to July 2021.

The content and constructs validity of the Loo Loo Kids: Jonny Jonny Yes Papa Video are provided. Two experienced primary school teachers and one senior professor from the Department of Early Childhood Education, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, evaluated the content validity of the *Loo Loo Kids: Jonny Jonny Yes Papa* video. They examined the video based on its relevance, clarity, and simplicity. The suggestions and corrections of the experts were used to update the items and arrive at the final instrument form. Field-testing was carried out on 40 pupils in Primary 4 Class, who had previously acquired the same Mathematics concepts in under study. Before beginning the learning process; the video was chosen based on the planned educational aims as well as the qualities and interests of the pupils (Berk 9). Another factor to consider when selecting a Multimedia video clip is its duration, since shorter videos (around 10 minutes) are more interesting than longer Multimedia videos (Guo, Kim and Rubin 14). The researchers split students into diverse groups of 5 students (one group included four pupils) based on gender and academic performance at the start of therapy. In addition, both the experimental and control groups were given a pre-test. Before doing the instruction, the students solved 20 questions in class for 25 minutes.

In both groups, there is a learning process. The experimental group was given a Mathematics lessons with guided discovery as a teaching method and

the Loo Loo Kids: *Jonny Jonny Yes Papa Video* as ICT multimedia, while the control group was taught with guided discovery. The control group was taught through guided exploration, whereas the Yes Papa Video was used as ICT multimedia. The experimental group was taught by one of the researchers with five (5) years of teaching experience, whereas the control group was taught by an 8-year veteran classroom instructor. A post-test was done on the treatment and control groups following the teaching of the Mathematics, Addition, Multiplication, Subtraction, and Division concepts, and the findings revealed that the experimental group did better than the control group.

Benefits and Shortcomings of Multimedia Learning

Multimedia learning resources may be more comprehensive, provide more chances for elaboration, and give more cognitive links for the learner to relate new information to existing knowledge. Multimedia training should be more successful than a traditional lecture in the classroom. Multimedia could be useful because it enhances students' attitudes about the information they're studying. When compared to conventional classroom training, multimedia information presentation looks to provide a possible learning benefit. Multimedia may help students learn better by enabling the instructional designer to convey information in the most effective way possible. However, we must make multimedia instructional design choices if multimedia teaching is to have a meaningful, beneficial influence on education (Muller et al 3). Primary school is a crucial time in a child's educational career. If a teacher is successful in laying a solid foundation and making the full subject plain to a student, the student will be able to understand complex concepts with ease in the future (Prensky 2). It is contingent on a good teaching and learning process. Educational technology plays a critical role in improving the effectiveness and success of the teaching and learning process. Educational technologies are materials, methods, organizations, concepts, gadgets, instruments, or machines that improve the effectiveness, success, and memorableness of the teaching-learning process.

The basic purpose of multimedia is to allow students to learn by doing. Students initially see the things before learning about them. Because multimedia and the natural way children learn, which is via visual information and images, multimedia may offer unique potential to aid learning. Students may be more motivated to succeed and excel in vocabulary acquisition if visual text is provided with pictures. The usage of multimedia in presentations for vocabulary acquisition teaching and curriculum should be reconsidered (Moneta and Kekkonen- Moneta 64). The use of interactive multimedia in the classroom is becoming more common. Multimedia is crucial in supporting students in their learning processes. As a result, multimedia may be utilized to

improve and help pupils to study more effectively. Many opponents of improved teaching techniques say that employing interactive teaching methods may only temporarily increase children's knowledge or abilities, and that such skills may not be as mature or stable as those obtained via conventional teaching methods. Opponents also say that proponents of new approaches overlook severe disadvantages, citing games that encourage violence or are addictive and time demanding as examples. Furthermore, if the Internet is used in such approaches, the possibilities of young children being exposed to pornography or inappropriate websites by mistake are high and perhaps fatal.

For others, new methods are inherently unfair, particularly to youngsters, who may prefer the colourful colours and motion of modern boards to the monotonous black-and-white of conventional ones (even coloured markers may not be as impressive compared with flashy pictures and animation). Certain students may ignore or disregard anything on a graphical scale that is less than "mind-blowing." Therefore, rather than supplanting existing processes, these techniques may be valuable as supplements. Educators will be worried about the time and effort required to include games into their courses. However, we think that using interactive and upgraded approaches in the classroom, such as gaming technology, is viable and will have a favourable influence on students' capacity to learn.

Conclusion

Many recent education-related research articles and studies have focused on the use of multimedia and improved learning approaches. A Mathematics application for young pupils was created for this research to assess the influence of interactive learning on students' capacities to enhance their learning skills. In line with multiple other researches, the findings revealed that such strategies are particularly beneficial for children, who are inspired by visuals and animation, especially when well-known cartoon characters are employed in instructional games.

Despite the fact that the findings revealed gains in students' learning abilities, as described in the article, this is not a plan to replace conventional schooling. Rather, interactive enhanced learning may be a highly valuable alternative to Children Theatre and conventional education techniques, particularly in circumstances when traditional methods are ineffective, like as the recent introduction of Covid-19. A field research on students from schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria, will be done in the future to determine the efficiency of employing multimedia interactive systems with bigger study or experimental groups. Various gaming applications will be employed and used to different disciplines or sectors of knowledge in order to generalize the final outcomes.

To limit the possibility of bias in the outcomes, groups of students and instructors will be chosen at random. Future research should look at a variety of additional aspects, notably the potential downsides of employing instructional games on pupils.

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IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON NOLLYWOOD

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Abstract
Prior to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic and the attendant lockdown that grounded activities in all spheres of life globally, the Nigerian film industry christened 'Nollywood' was gradually overcoming the hydra-headed problem of piracy through revival of cinema culture. This is evidenced in reversal to exhibition in cinema halls like celluloid film days before the production into home videos. Closely aligned to this is the evolution of digital streaming platforms (DSP) to checkmate activities of fraudulent marketers and distributors. However, these new strategies of exhibition, distribution and marketing that is making filmmakers to smile to the bank was disrupted by the sudden shutdown of economic activities to stem the tidal wave of corona virus ravaging the world. Subsequently, to mitigate the spread of the pandemic which has had devastating effects on arts, culture and entertainment sector including the film industry lockdown (otherwise known as sit-at-home policy) was introduced. This was characterized in truncating of film sets, and postponement of ongoing and planned shoots with attendant financial losses. Despite these setbacks, Covid-19 also presented opportunities for the filmmakers to channel their creativity to alternative sources of production, distribution and exhibition. These are typified in film production targeted at online distribution and exhibition. This article examines the adversities and opportunities induced by the Covid-19, using documentary method of data collection and globalisation as theoretical framework. Among other findings, downturn of return on investment (ROI) for filmmakers during the lockdown forced them to intensify the usage of DSP that commenced before the pandemic for distribution and exhibition as the appetite of Nigerian DSP subscribers surges.

Keywords: Covid-19, Adversities, Opportunities, Nollywood, ROI, Nigerian DSP subscribers.

Introduction

Before the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, Nollywood was gradually checkmating the hydra-headed problem of piracy through the revival of the cinema culture. While the producers toil day and night to produce movies, the pirates sit and wait for a movie to be released, duplicate it and smile to the bank afterwards. The broadcast of films on satellite television has also drastically reduced the high patronage of video cassettes of 1990s to the early 2000. While battling piracy through agitation and enlightenment campaigns

for implementation of copyright laws, another strategy to checkmate activities of pirates and collaborators among marketers and distributors evolved, that is, Digital Streaming Platforms (DSPs). However, this new strategy of exhibition, distribution and marketing are still on before the sudden outbreak of covid-19. Subsequently, this compelled shutting down of economic activities to mitigate its spread globally.

For the film producers on location, shooting have to be suspended. Production money was subsequently diverted to meeting other costs since cast and crew members could not return to their abode due to lockdown and Covid-19 precautionary policies. The setback occasioned by the restrictions was also very devastating for the actors and other artists in the industry in terms of regular source of income. In few cases, where producers strive to defy the odds to shoot, Covid-19 restrictions come with its challenges on film set. Practicality of the guidelines on production are more difficult than imagined. This entailed, slashing the numbers of people on set to the barest minimum, compulsory testing of films crew for Covid-19 at a high cost and reduction of shooting of exterior and night scenes among others.

Impact of the pandemic has been significantly tough in the filmmaking industry in Nigeria and globally. The adversities of the period is typified in closure of cinema halls, closure of sets, postponement of ongoing and planned shoots implied huge lose to filmmakers. Redundancy of actors, directors and other artists in the industry represented big loss. Postponement of premieres was equally frustrating. The setbacks, however, avail creative filmmakers opportunities of channelling their creativity to alternative sources of production, distribution and exhibition to overcome Covid-19 induced meltdown in production and marketing of films.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on theoretical plane of globalisation. Globalisation is a system whereby the lives of individuals and local communities are affected by economic and cultural forces that operate world-wide. In effect, it is the process of the world becoming a single place. Globalisation is the perception of the world as a function or result of the processes of globalisation upon local communities. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 100). The term according to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin gained prominence over the world's 'international' and 'international relations' in the mid-1980s (100). The rise of the world international itself is traced to 18th century to describe growing importance of territorial states in organising social relations and its consequences on global perspective of European imperialism. Subsequently, with the domination of one nation by the other, "nation begun to have a decreasingly importance as individuals and communities gain access

to globally disseminated knowledge and culture, and are affected by economic realities that bypass boundaries of the state." Relevance of globalisation to this exploration on adversities and opportunities of Covid-19 on Nollywood lies in the global phenomenon of the pandemic. Like the global film industry has greatly influenced activities in the Nigerian Film Industry, the spread of the pandemic in its early stage and peak period was global. In the same vein, sources of alternative platforms to mitigate the devastating effects of covid-19 on the filmmakers was borrowed and imbibed from the global film blocs of Hollywood and Bollywood.

Corona virus: Conceptual Clarification

Etymologically, corona virus according to Almeida et al. is derived from the latin word corona which means crown. The nomenclature was based on microscopic attributes and appearance of the virus with a fringe of large, bulbous surface projection creating an image similar to solar corono or halo(63). Fergin and Cherry elucidate that, corona viruses are clusters of Ribonucleric Acid (RNA) viruses that causes diseases in mammals and birds. In human and birds,they cause respiratory tract infections that can vary from mild to fatal one.Mild illness in human include some cases of common cold, while more deadly types can cause Covid- 19.(10). Corona virus is therefore a new disease that affect the respiratory system of the victims especially the aged and sometimes leading to their death.

Nollywood

Nollywood is the coinage used to describe video films produced in Nigeria. It takes after the other two film blocs in the world, Hollywood for American films and Bollywood for Indian films. Foreign origin of the word attests to the global status of Nigerian film industry as "what the industry is now called was apparently first used in 2003 in *New York Times* by Malt Steinglass who for what of name for emerging video film industry simply used 'N' to connote Nigeria and called it Nollywood" (Oni 163). Other coinage for other segments of the industry include Yorubawood for Yoruba video films and Kannywood for Hausa films from Kano, Kaduna and Jos axis.

However, the coinage and its relevance to different cultures that made up the Nigeria Film Industry that has been very controversial. While Jonathan Haynes, like Oni, traced the coinage to Matt Steinglass in an article he wrote for the *New York Times* in 2002, another source linked the invention of the brand name to a Japanese American by the name Norimitsu Onishi, in article he wrote for the *New York Times* in 2002, entitled "Step Aside, Los Angeles, Bombay for Nollywood", culled and published in *The Guardian* Nigeria on

Thursday, October 3, 2002 (Shaka 53). The debate on who coined the brand name was further compounded by Olusola Oladele Adenugba who averred that, Nick Moran, a BBC reporter, who was in Nigeria to shoot a documentary on the "get-rich-quick-video came up with it" (Adenugba 2). Aside this controversy over the coinage, criticism of the coinage has to do with its neo-colonialist tendencies. One of such reactions as Adenugba attests is that:

> The term implies that Nollywood is an imitation of Hollywood and Bollywood rather than something in itself, something original and uniquely African. Many are opposed to the appellation because according to them, it is a form of neo-colonization, another western propaganda. They wonder why the only film culture that has built itself by itself must be labelled after Hollywood.(1)

Beyond the debates and criticism, we align with the submission of Adenugba that, the term covers the diversity of Nigeria Film Productions in terms of culture and language in the same way Bollywood covers the production of India Films in Tamil, Bengali, Telegu and others languages beside Hindi, in other parts of the huge country (Adenugba 1). This same conviction informed the coinage Kannywood and Yorubawood for linguistic and cultural identification.

Over the years, from its early days of mid 1980s to early 1990s, massive growth without development in structure and content of the Nigerian video film industry changed with time and more patronage. The Nigerian video repertoire expanded beyond the genres of mundane issues to contemporary social, political and economic issues. Recent phase of the development is the emergency of 'New Nollywood'. It is the banner under which independent producers/directors are charting a new direction in production, distribution and exhibition of films. The thrust of the crusade of the new generation of filmmakers to take Nollywood to the next level is characterised in training and professional background, passion for better films with bigger budgets, films that can meet the aesthetics and technical challenges of being projected on big screens in cinema rather than being released on VCDs and DVDs for home consumption.

Global Perspective of Covid-19 Pandemic

Our exposition on adversities of Covid-19 pandemic on Nigerian film industry is foregrounded with global overview of its devastating effects on different spheres of life. The effect of Covid-19 is not only limited to health of the people but also has a huge impact on the socio-political and economic sector of the world. An economy downfall has been noticed in the global economy after outbreak of Covid-19. Critical reviews of the impact of the lock

down on social, political and economic activities, affirm that, an economy downfall was notice in the global economy after outbreak of Covid 19. The preventive policies adopted by the government to mitigate its scourge such as lockdown, quarantine, social distancing grounded production and consumption activities. Side by side with this, the international as well as national trades and commerce, air service, railway service, road transport and other transport services were also suspended. Closely aligned to this, was the closing down of industries, shopping malls and educational institutions for uncertain period of time. (Patha 284)

Subsequently, tourism which is the backbone of global economy was also badly affected by Covid-19 pandemic. The world tourism organization recorded the decline of 58 to 78 percent in world tourism output because of Covid-19.: Drastic change was also observed in the GDP of around 170 developed and developing countries across the globe". Duffin (qtd. in Pathak 2840). National and international politics also had its fair share of Covid-19 pandemic induced backlash. Review of global political scene reveals that, "the government of ruling parties of some countries seems to be highly worried, while government of some other countries used the pandemic as an opportunity for their political gain. The democratically elected leaders of some countries become autocratic in period of emergency. (Quiraishi 3). In the same vein, the Covid-19 also impacted the elections of various countries across the world. The International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES) recorded that, 61 countries and eight territories postponed their elections and a total of 106 elections was postponed because of Covid-19 (IFES 5).

In international relations and diplomacy, outbreak of covid-19 created serious tension. The war like situation was enacted in the allegation and counter allegation between America and China. While the United States of America criticized the Chinese Government and blamed it for the outbreak of covid-19 pandemic, the Chinese vehemently denied the allegation by President Trump and in turn blamed America for the pandemic. Johny(qtd in Pathak 8). In spite of the denials by the Chinese government, President Trump derogatorily described corona virus as Chinese virus and threatened to seek compensation for the havoc wrecked by the pandemic.

In the entertainment world, global film industry had its own share of the adversities occasioned by the pandemic as "Covid-19 has had a game-changing effect on industries across the globe, but large scale events-especially those taken place indoors-have almost completely ground to a halt in 2020 that include cinemas, which spent most the year closed due to the corona virus". (Pearce 2). This was to sustain the preventive protocol of social distancing to mitigate the contamination of Covid-19. Equally, devastating was release schedule which was suspended or postponed due to the pandemic. Major

producers and marketers foreseeing challenges of releasing new films have to delay or in some cases, cancelled exhibition plans, leaving the cinema devoid of big money options.

Covid-19's Setback on Nollywood

Before the sudden lockdown of economic activities to mitigate the spread of corona virus, Nigerian filmmakers targeting international audience normally schedule their release, exhibition and distribution to conform to global film calendar. On account of Covid-19, most international film festivals and markets that would have afford them to the opportunity raise funds, awareness and critical acclaim from March, 2020 to the end of the year were cancelled. In the same vein, some local and foreign films already scheduled for release were rescheduled. The wave of cancellations and rescheduling had a knock-on-effect on Nigerian film industry, including widening the gap between Nigerian filmmakers and the much needed financing.

The general lull in film financing means several filmmakers will struggle with production and may have to device new ways of funding. Filmmakers who were able to secure funding before the pandemic may also have to suspend production or postpone theatrical release on account of new rules on social distancing and restrictions on human movement. At the home front, the setback experienced by Nigerian filmmakers during the peak period of the pandemic is captured in these flashbacks. On February 27, 2020 first confirmed case corona virus in Nigeria was recorded by the Federal Ministry of Health. About a month later, in Lagos state a lockdown which included ban on gatherings of over 25 people was imposed. This ban directly affected cinemas, cutting off income for filmmakers and marketers. (Ishola, Ityonzuahul, Gbamwuan 62).

Reports in *This is Africa* revealed how some Nigerian filmmakers bore the brunt of having to stop productions midway due to the pandemic (2). Nigerian India filmmaker, Imoh Umore was heavily indebted due to the lockdown of December, 2020. Umore who directed the hugely successful 2017 film, *Children of Mud*, the report indicates "was confined to his house working on his laptop putting final edits to a video, which was part of a project he directed. When the lockdown was announced". He was also in the middle of shooting his TV series with a crew of over 70 which he had to stop and wait for another eight months. In the same vein, Emmanuel Igbekele, a cinematographer, *this is Africa* (3) recalls that:

> He was just wrapping up a production and just like Umoren, he was also preparing for another production when the lockdown in Lagos state was announced. The production activities, which involved inter-state travel were indefinitely postponed. During the first two weeks of

lockdown, Igbekele started doing post-production work hoping he will get back to work after two weeks. When the lockdown was extended to more than three months, in which he was just home doing nothing,

Igbekele told *This is Africa*, "I was concerned because I had family to take care of my budget was running low and I began to panic. Money was not coming in and I started spending from my savings". In those months, Igbekele lost income. Effects of the pandemic on the marketing and film promotion are captured in the reflection of Joy Odiete, a film marketer and distributor with experience spanning 15 years. As a marketer, she recalls that, she lost over 60 million naira ($158,151) during the Covid-19 pandemic. To make up for the low patronage of films induced by the restriction of indoor activities and movements, filmmakers and marketers in Nigeria had to explore Video on Demand (VOD) (*This is Africa* 5).

In the same measure, actors and actresses variously complained about the lockdown and social distance policy adopted by the government as a control measure for the pandemic. Corroborating this scenario, a Yoruba actor, Funsho Adeolu as quoted in (Ishola, Ityonzughul and Gbamwuan 71) lamented that ...as celebrity, people are always flocking into our house to ask for money and food. Because I know these things affect us in varying degrees, I do my best for them. People will see you on the road and expect you to drop something, whereas, we are not even making any money at the moment. While the low patronage of the cinemas was a boom to viewership at different homes, it has the negative effect of exposing children and teenagers to obscenities of crime and sexuality which can influence the impressionable minds. This is evidenced in upsurge in cybercrime and teenage pregnancy recorded during the period.

Opportunities Presented by Covid-19

Social distancing and restriction of movement that led to low patronage of cinemas during the pandemic compelled the intensification of digital streaming platforms (DSP). The growing popularity of DSPs has thus queried the necessity for the exclusive cinema interval between theatrical release and film availability. The unprecedented large demand/rental of foreign films released solely on DSPs during the Covid-19 days' attest to its viability for distribution and exhibition. Platforms such as Netflix and Showmax have also notably gained more viewership.

Closely related to this, was the increase in audiences for African films. According to Okoth, "during the Covid-19 pandemic, the audiences were able to congregate and to watch more African films in their living rooms on phones, laptops and tablets" (2). The availability of time increased viewership on

online platforms. Prior to this period, time has been a rare commodity for the working class in Africa as the pressure to focus in creating wealth has been high. The multiplier effect of the high patronage of Digital Streaming Platforms for health and security reasons is the possibility of attracting more investment into local DSPs. Some Nigerian Telecommunication companies and financial institutions are beginning to consider establishment of more local DSPs, the latest being DSP designed by Telco and which does not require subscription. It is expected that, more local DSPs will be designed as more Nigerians adapt to digital streaming culture and data price further crashing down.

Another fallout of the lockdown induced by Covid-19 pandemic was the emergence of Northflix; a digital streaming platform (DSP) in Kano during the period. Northflix formerly used pay-per-view system, but quickly switched to flat rate subscription after the virus emerged in Asia and Europe. The fee is just N1, 500 ($4) a month in addition to subscriber's smart phone and internet cases. (Aljazeera 4). The platform is an alternative market for film producers with DVD shops shot. Subscribers have stuck to the platform despite the easing of lockdown because of the convenience it offers as well as the fact that DVD can no longer be found on the streets. Another morale booster for filmmaker during this period of stagnation and loss of revenue was the palliative in form of funding internationally and nationally. Governments in Europe provided covid-19 funding to cushion artist during the pandemic. While such palliatives in cash and kind are well publicised in Nigeria, beneficiaries cannot be ascertained, Kenya however exemplified this trend in Africa. In Kenya, the government's film commission provided artists with two funding opportunities. The first one was the artist's stimulus package, which saw 85,000 Euros distributed variably to the production of 20 short films on covid-19, which were regarded as work for pay. The second funding was the empowerment fund, in which government granted amounts ranging from 15,000 Euros to 40,000 Euros to 10 film production companies totalling 250,000 Euros to produce feature films and documentaries (Okoth 4).

Conclusion

In this exploration of adversities and opportunities of covid-19 on Nollywood, observation and documentation of the period of focus revealed a mixed blessing of loses and gains. Loses manifested in closure of cinema halls, suspension of shooting and premiers and stoppage of income for individual producers, directors and actors. On the other hand, the stagnation presented opportunities to sustain the industry beyond the pandemic period. This is typified in intensification of Digital Streaming Platforms (DSPs) for exhibition and distribution of films. Close related to this, is the upsurge in viewership off Nigerian and African films without the stress of going to the cinemas. Digital

Streaming has also relieved the filmmakers to certain extent the menace of pirates, who have been their nightmare before the lockdown. In the same vein, paucity of funds for survival and financing production in pre and post lockdown period engendered new sources of funding. In addition to expected returns from box office, efforts are geared towards crowd funding in collaboration with corporate organisations and international agencies.

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