

Nollywood Films and Substance Abuse Among Youths in Eket, Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract

This study investigated the connection between Nollywood films and substance abuse among youths in Eket, Akwa Ibom State, to examine how substance abuse is portrayed in Nollywood films consumed by youths, determine the influence of these films on youths' attitudes towards substance use, and assess the implications of such consumption on substance abuse behaviours. The study was anchored on Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which explains how youths model behaviours seen on screen, and Gerbner and Gross's Cultivation Theory, which posits that prolonged media exposure shapes perceptions of social reality. A survey research design was adopted, with a sample of 389 respondents drawn from four purposively selected streets in Eket, using structured questionnaires to collect data, which were analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that Nollywood films largely glamorise or trivialise substance abuse, making it appear fashionable; that a majority of respondents believed such portrayals encourage curiosity and experimentation while creating permissive attitudes; and that film consumption contributes to increased peer influence, higher risk of addiction, and academic decline among youths. The study concluded that Nollywood plays a significant role in shaping youths' perceptions and behaviours towards substance use, thereby influencing the prevalence of substance abuse in the community. It is recommended that Nollywood filmmakers incorporate stronger moral lessons to discourage substance abuse, media regulatory bodies enforce stricter guidelines on the portrayal of drug and alcohol use, and educational institutions and youth organisations implement media literacy programmes to equip youths with critical viewing skills.

Keywords

Nollywood, Substance Abuse, Youths, Social Learning Theory, Cultivation Theory

1. Introduction

Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry, has risen from a modest beginning in the early 1990s to become one of the largest centres of film production in the world. It now stands as a major cultural institution that reflects and projects Nigerian experiences, traditions and values while also influencing social life and popular imagination [1]. The industry produces thousands of films annually and has secured audiences across Africa, Europe and the Americas, thus making it a significant force in global media circulation [2]. Nollywood is not only an economic powerhouse but also a social tool through which ideas about family, morality, fashion, religion and even substance use are communicated. For millions of Nigerians, films are more than mere entertainment; they are sources of identity, social learning and value reinforcement. Bandura (2009) stresses that young people often model behaviours they see portrayed in media, and in the case of Nollywood, the industry has become an informal classroom where audiences, particularly youths, are taught what is acceptable or otherwise in society [3].

The consumption of films among Nigerian youths is intense, and with the rapid spread of digital technologies, the reach of Nollywood content has expanded. The availability of films through television, DVDs, YouTube and streaming platforms has placed these productions within the daily lives of young people in both rural and urban areas [4]. In communities such as Eket in Akwa Ibom State, youths increasingly turn to films as a source of entertainment and as a reflection of social realities. However, the representation of substance use in many films has become worrisome. Scenes that depict smoking, drinking or drug use without highlighting their harmful consequences risk normalising these practices among impressionable audiences. Scholars like Oyesomi and Oyero (2012) argue that films often play a more persuasive role in shaping behaviours than formal education, given that the messages are dramatised in relatable contexts [5]. When Nollywood glamorises characters who engage in substance abuse or presents it as a fashionable lifestyle, there is a danger that young audiences may begin to perceive such behaviour as desirable or socially acceptable.

The problem of substance abuse among Nigerian youths has assumed alarming dimensions, raising serious concerns for public health and social stability. National surveys and reports reveal that a significant proportion of Nigerian youths have experimented with alcohol, marijuana, codeine syrup and other substances [6,7]. Nnodim and Nwankwo (2017) note that peer influence, family breakdown and exposure to media representations are among the strongest drivers of

youth involvement in substance abuse [8]. Nigeria's drug use survey indicates that over 14 million people between the ages of 15 and 64 use psychoactive substances other than alcohol, with a growing number of these users being youths [7]. In states such as Akwa Ibom, the problem is particularly visible in semi-urban communities like Eket, where the combination of unemployment, poverty and peer networks exacerbates the vulnerability of youths. With Nollywood films providing a constant source of narratives about social life, the concern is whether these productions contribute to encouraging or discouraging drug and alcohol use among the youth population.

Substance abuse has profound implications on the physical, psychological and social well-being of young people. Health professionals link it to a range of conditions including liver disease, cardiovascular complications and mental health disorders such as depression and psychosis [9]. Socially, substance abuse has been associated with violence, crime and educational decline, further complicating the challenges faced by youths in achieving meaningful futures [10]. Against this backdrop, the potential role of Nollywood films in influencing substance abuse behaviours becomes a legitimate concern. While some films attempt to project moral lessons by showing the dangers of drug abuse, others present the practice casually, without any serious caution. This duality in representation leaves room for critical debate on the responsibility of filmmakers in a society grappling with a worsening drug crisis. Onwumechili (2018) notes that media content cannot be treated as neutral; it either reinforces positive social norms or undermines them [11].

In Eket, the situation is especially sensitive because the community occupies a strategic space as a semi-urban settlement experiencing both the penetration of global media cultures and the persistence of traditional norms. Young people in Eket are exposed to the cultural flows of Nollywood alongside Western media influences, creating a hybrid environment in which attitudes towards substance use are shaped. According to Ekeanyanwu (2012), the values communicated through films often find expression in the daily lives of Nigerian youths, influencing their fashion, speech patterns, and social practices [12]. Thus, Nollywood films, as a dominant cultural product, carry immense weight in shaping perceptions about drugs and alcohol. If the depictions trivialise or glorify substance abuse, they risk reinforcing practices that undermine community health and stability. Conversely, if they highlight the dangers of drug use and promote healthier lifestyles, they can serve as powerful instruments of social change.

The scholarly concern here lies in the absence of context-specific research that examines how Nollywood films may be implicated in the substance abuse patterns of youths in communities like Eket. While much has been written on Nollywood's cultural influence at the national level [1,2], few studies have interrogated the specific link between film portrayals and youth behaviour in semi-urban contexts. Such a study is necessary because it localises the conversation and provides empirical grounding for interventions. According to McQuail (2010), the effect of media is often contingent on audience context, meaning that the same film may influence viewers differently depending on their social environment [13]. Researching Eket therefore provides a lens into how local realities interact with media content in shaping youth attitudes toward substance abuse. Livingstone (2014) suggests that media literacy can mitigate harmful influences by equipping audiences with critical skills to evaluate and question media content [14]. If Nollywood continues to play a central role in youth socialisation, it becomes imperative to channel its influence towards positive outcomes. This research will provide evidence that can support campaigns for responsible film production and targeted media literacy initiatives in Eket and beyond. It will also add to the growing body of literature that calls for a more socially responsible Nollywood that prioritises the well-being of its audiences.

Against this background, this study investigated the connection between Nollywood films and substance abuse among youths in Eket, Akwa Ibom State. The study interrogated whether films contribute to shaping perceptions of substance use, the extent to which they normalise or discourage abuse, and the implications this holds for youth development. It situates the analysis within the broader discourse of media influence, cultural representation and social responsibility, recognising Nollywood as both an entertainment industry and a pedagogical space where social norms are transmitted.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian film industry, Nollywood, has become a dominant cultural force, shaping attitudes and behaviours among diverse audiences, particularly the youth. Ideally, films should serve as agents of positive socialisation, projecting values that discourage harmful practices such as substance abuse and guiding young people towards healthier lifestyles. However, the reality presents a dilemma: while some Nollywood films attempt to portray the dangers of drug and alcohol use, others depict such practices casually or even glamorise them, thereby creating conflicting messages for impressionable youths. This has raised concerns, especially in communities like Eket, Akwa Ibom State, where young people face socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, peer pressure and exposure to both local and global media influences. In such contexts, films that trivialise or normalise substance abuse may inadvertently encourage risky behaviours, worsening an already alarming public health issue. Existing scholarship has examined Nollywood's role in shaping culture and values at the national level [1,2], but there remains a gap in empirical research that focuses specifically on the relationship between Nollywood film consumption and youth substance abuse in semi-urban communities like Eket. This absence of localised evidence leaves unanswered questions about the extent to which Nollywood films contribute to or mitigate substance abuse among young people in this environment, hence the need for the present study.

2. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were:

1. To examine the portrayal of substance abuse in Nollywood films consumed by youths in Eket.
2. To determine the influence of Nollywood films on youths' attitudes towards substance abuse in Eket.
3. To assess the implications of Nollywood film consumption on substance abuse behaviours among youths in Eket.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised:

1. How is substance abuse portrayed in Nollywood films consumed by youths in Eket?
2. What influence do Nollywood films have on youths' attitudes towards substance abuse in Eket?
3. What are the implications of Nollywood film consumption on substance abuse behaviours among youths in Eket?

3. Literature Review

3.1 Nollywood as a Cultural and Socialising Agent

Nollywood has evolved into a dominant cultural institution that not only entertains but also reflects the everyday realities of Nigerians. Since its emergence in the early 1990s, the industry has been a medium through which traditions, values and social practices are expressed and transmitted to a wide audience. Haynes (2016) observes that Nollywood has become a powerful platform for articulating Nigerian experiences in ways that are both relatable and influential to viewers [1]. This cultural presence positions Nollywood as a vital agent of socialisation, where audiences, particularly youths, learn about acceptable and unacceptable patterns of behaviour. The significance of this function is heightened in a country where films are easily accessible through television, DVDs and online platforms, making them part of the routine consumption of many young people [4]. Nollywood has therefore moved beyond being a source of entertainment to serving as a symbolic teacher that conveys social norms and values to its audience.

As films mirror society, they also play a role in shaping attitudes and practices. Nollywood productions often dramatise themes such as family relations, morality, religion, fashion and peer influence, all of which speak directly to the socialisation process of young people. Okome (2010) affirms that the industry's productions have become a cultural text through which viewers interpret and negotiate their identities [2].

When youths are exposed to characters who engage in specific behaviours, whether positive or negative, they are likely to model such behaviours as part of their everyday practices. This is in line with Bandura's (2009) assertion that individuals, especially young audiences, learn through observation and imitation of media characters [3]. Hence, Nollywood functions as an informal classroom, imparting lessons about societal expectations, relationships and even lifestyle choices. The consistency of these portrayals reinforces Nollywood's role as a cultural force that significantly contributes to shaping values and attitudes in Nigerian society.

The influence of Nollywood on youths becomes more pronounced when considering the socio-economic realities of communities such as Eket in Akwa Ibom State. Young people in such semi-urban settings often rely on media for direction and identity construction, especially in contexts where unemployment and social pressure prevail. Ekeanyanwu (2012) contends that values transmitted through films are easily adopted by Nigerian youths because they find them relevant to their daily experiences [12]. This makes Nollywood a critical channel through which substance use and related behaviours can either be normalised or discouraged. When films glamorise drug or alcohol use without highlighting the consequences, youths may perceive such practices as fashionable. Conversely, when narratives emphasise the dangers of substance abuse, they have the potential to deter engagement in risky behaviours. Onwumechili (2018) stresses that media content is never neutral; it either reinforces or challenges societal norms [11]. In this sense, Nollywood stands as both a cultural mirror and a socialising agent, carrying immense responsibility in shaping the conduct of its audiences, particularly the youth population.

3.2 Representation of Substance Abuse in Media and Film

The representation of substance abuse in film has long been a subject of scholarly concern because of its potential to shape social behaviour. Media scholars argue that films do not simply reflect society but actively construct meanings that audiences negotiate and adopt in their everyday lives. Gerbner and Gross (1976), in their cultivation theory, emphasised that repeated exposure to specific portrayals in the media can influence audiences' perceptions of social reality [15]. In the case of substance use, this suggests that when films consistently depict smoking, alcohol consumption or drug use without emphasising the negative consequences, audiences may come to accept such practices as normal or even desirable. Hollywood studies provide early evidence of this trend, where films often presented alcohol as a symbol of glamour or sophistication and smoking as a marker of masculinity or rebellion [16]. These portrayals contributed to shaping public attitudes, and in many instances, legitimised behaviours that posed significant risks to public health. This global context is important in understanding the growing concern around Nollywood's representation of substance abuse and its implications for Nigerian youths.

Attention has increasingly shifted towards African cinema, particularly Nollywood, because of its massive influence on youth culture. Nollywood films frequently depict characters who engage in alcohol consumption, smoking and drug use as part of their daily social experiences. Scholars such as Oyesomi and Oyero (2012) argue that the danger arises when

such portrayals are casual, lacking the necessary moral framing to guide audiences towards healthy choices [5]. Films that present a glamorous image of wealthy characters consuming alcohol at parties or successful men smoking as part of their lifestyle risk creating aspirational models for impressionable youths. Obot (2013) observes that while Nigerian society is already grappling with rising levels of drug and alcohol abuse, media portrayals that trivialise the dangers compound the problem by providing validation for risky behaviours [17]. The challenge is that Nollywood operates in a context where films are not only popular but also affordable and easily accessed through television, streaming platforms and informal video markets. This ubiquity ensures that depictions of substance use, whether deliberate or incidental, are repeatedly reinforced in the consciousness of young viewers, who may begin to see them as an acceptable part of social life.

The duality of Nollywood's role in depicting substance abuse must also be acknowledged, as some films attempt to project cautionary tales about the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Ajala (2009) notes that Nigerian films occasionally highlight the destructive consequences of addiction, portraying characters who suffer health breakdowns, family disintegration or social downfall as a result of substance abuse [10]. Such narratives provide moral lessons that discourage youths from engaging in similar practices. However, the effectiveness of these cautionary stories is often undermined when other films simultaneously glamorise or trivialise the same behaviours. Nnodim and Nwankwo (2017) caution that inconsistent messaging in film can confuse young audiences, leaving them uncertain about the true social meaning of substance use [8]. In semi-urban communities such as Eket, where economic pressures, unemployment and peer influence already heighten vulnerability, these mixed signals can have profound effects. Nollywood, therefore, occupies a delicate position, as it has the capacity either to reinforce harmful behaviours or to function as a strong deterrent. Onwumechili (2018) insists that media portrayals should never be regarded as neutral because they either strengthen positive social norms or erode them [11]. This places Nollywood in a position of responsibility to ensure that its narratives contribute to building healthier societies rather than enabling the spread of substance abuse among the youth population.

3.3 Youth, Substance Abuse, and Media Consumption in Nigeria

The problem of substance abuse among Nigerian youths has emerged as a serious social and public health challenge, with increasing evidence pointing to its growing prevalence. National surveys reveal that a significant proportion of young people have experimented with psychoactive substances such as alcohol, cannabis, codeine syrup and tramadol, with many progressing from experimentation to habitual use [7]. Adelekan (2010) attributes this surge to a combination of peer influence, economic hardship and weak family structures that fail to provide adequate supervision [6]. The situation is compounded in semi-urban areas where unemployment and poverty push young people into experimenting with drugs as a form of escapism. In Akwa Ibom State, for example, reports indicate that youths in communities such as Eket and Uyo are increasingly involved in alcohol and drug use, raising concerns about the long-term implications for their health and productivity [9]. These statistics underscore that substance abuse is not an abstract national problem but one that has direct implications for the lived experiences of Nigerian youths.

The consumption of media, particularly films, intersects with this problem because youths are among the most active media audiences in Nigeria. Olayinka (2018) explains that Nollywood films are accessible to young people across different socio-economic classes through television, DVDs, YouTube and streaming services, making them a regular part of daily life [4]. For many Nigerian youths, especially in communities like Eket, films serve as both entertainment and a mirror of social reality. This exposure means that the behaviours portrayed in films, including substance use, are often consumed uncritically and translated into everyday practices. Oyesomi and Oyero (2012) argue that films are a more persuasive medium than formal education because they dramatise behaviours in contexts that young people find familiar and aspirational [5]. When young audiences see popular actors smoking, drinking or using drugs in Nollywood films, there is a risk that they may adopt these actions as fashionable, especially when such portrayals are not accompanied by cautionary consequences. This becomes more troubling in settings where peer groups reinforce the behaviours projected on screen, creating a cycle of imitation and validation among youths.

The implication of this trend is that substance abuse becomes not only a health issue but also a cultural practice reinforced through repeated exposure to media content. Obot (2013) stresses that substance abuse among Nigerian youths is often sustained by social approval within peer networks, a phenomenon strengthened when the media provides symbolic endorsement [17]. In Eket, for instance, young people who consume films showing characters drinking heavily at parties may view such practices as a marker of maturity or success, thereby normalising behaviours that undermine their well-being. Ajala (2009) observes that substance abuse also has ripple effects, contributing to crime, violence and declining academic performance, thereby aggravating the challenges of youth development in Nigeria [10]. These outcomes highlight the role of Nollywood as a potential site of intervention. If films consistently highlight the dangers of substance abuse, they can serve as a deterrent, but if they trivialise or glamorise the practice, they risk fuelling a crisis that is already threatening to destabilise communities. Onwumechili (2018) reminds us that media content is never passive; it either affirms positive social values or weakens them [11]. Thus, Nollywood's role in the socialisation of Nigerian youths cannot be divorced from the wider challenge of substance abuse, particularly in semi-urban areas such as Eket, where media influence interacts strongly with economic and social pressures.

4. Theoretical Frameworks

This study employed Social Learning Theory and Cultivation Theory. Social Learning Theory, propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977, holds that individuals acquire behaviours through observation, imitation and modelling of characters they encounter within their social environment, including media representations [3]. The theory stresses that young people, being highly impressionable, are likely to replicate the actions of role models when such behaviours are portrayed as rewarding or socially acceptable. In the context of this study, Social Learning Theory is relevant because Nollywood films often depict characters engaging in alcohol consumption, smoking or drug use, sometimes without showing the harmful consequences, which can lead youths in Eket to model such actions. A critique of the theory is that it does not sufficiently account for the agency of individuals who may choose not to imitate behaviours despite repeated exposure. For instance, a Nollywood film might present a wealthy character who frequently drinks at parties, and some youths may interpret this as a symbol of success and attempt to copy it, while others may resist. This illustrates how the theory aligns with the study, as it highlights the process through which media portrayals influence substance abuse behaviours among young audiences.

Cultivation Theory, propounded by George Gerbner and Gross in 1976, complements this perspective by arguing that prolonged and consistent exposure to media content gradually shapes people's perceptions of reality [15]. The central tenet is that heavy media consumers come to view the world through the lens of repeated portrayals. Within this study, the theory is significant because constant exposure to Nollywood films that depict drinking or drug use as commonplace can lead youths in Eket to accept these practices as part of everyday social life. The limitation of Cultivation Theory lies in its assumption that all audiences interpret media messages in the same way, neglecting the role of individual differences and social contexts. For example, a young person in Eket who watches several Nollywood films where alcohol is consumed during celebrations may begin to believe that drinking is a normal marker of festivity. This directly ties to the concern of this study, as it demonstrates how repeated portrayals can cultivate permissive attitudes toward substance abuse among Nigerian youths, thereby reinforcing the relevance of the theory to the research problem.

5. Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was the survey method, considered appropriate for a study of this nature that deals with people, their opinions, feelings and attitudes. The population of the study comprised 56,847 male and female youths residing in Eket Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, with a focus on those aged 20 to 39 years, as sourced from the National Population Commission. The sample size of 389 was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's 1970 sample size determination table. The sampling procedure combined purposive and systematic random sampling techniques. Four streets within Eket, namely: Ikot Udoma, Ikot Ibiok, Ofriyo and JamesTown, were purposively selected for ease of administration. Within these locations, the researcher employed convenience sampling, ensuring only youths were administered copies of the questionnaire. The research instrument used was a structured questionnaire which reflected the research objectives and questions. Data collection was achieved through the distribution of 389 questionnaire copies, out of which 360 were correctly completed and retrieved, representing a 93% return rate. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency tables, percentages, and charts). Ethical approval was obtained, and respondents participated voluntarily, with assurances of confidentiality and informed consent.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question 1: How is substance abuse portrayed in Nollywood films consumed by youths in Eket?

Table 1. The frequency distribution of responses on how substance abuse is portrayed in Nollywood films consumed by youths in Eket

| Portrayal of Substance Abuse | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Glamorised and fashionable | 120 | 33 |
| Casual with no consequences shown | 90 | 25 |
| Shown with caution and moral lessons | 75 | 21 |
| Rarely or never portrayed | 75 | 21 |

The data in Table 1 above indicate that most youths (33%) perceive Nollywood films as glamorising substance abuse, while a smaller proportion (21%) report that such behaviours are either shown with moral lessons or rarely portrayed at all.



Figure 1. Portrayal of Substance Abuse in Nollywood Films

Figure 1 shows that a significant proportion of youths perceive Nollywood films as presenting substance abuse in a manner that glamorises the practice, making it appear fashionable and aspirational.

Research Question 2: What influence do Nollywood films have on youths' attitudes towards substance abuse in Eket?

Table 2. On the influence of Nollywood films on youths' attitudes towards substance abuse

| Influence of Nollywood Films | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|-----------|----------------|
| Encourages curiosity and experimentation | 130 | 36 |
| Creates permissive attitudes | 100 | 28 |
| Discourages substance abuse through moral lessons | 80 | 22 |
| Has no significant influence | 50 | 14 |

The data reveal that the highest proportion of respondents (36%) believe Nollywood films encourage curiosity and experimentation with substances, whereas only 14% feel the films have no significant influence on youths' attitudes.

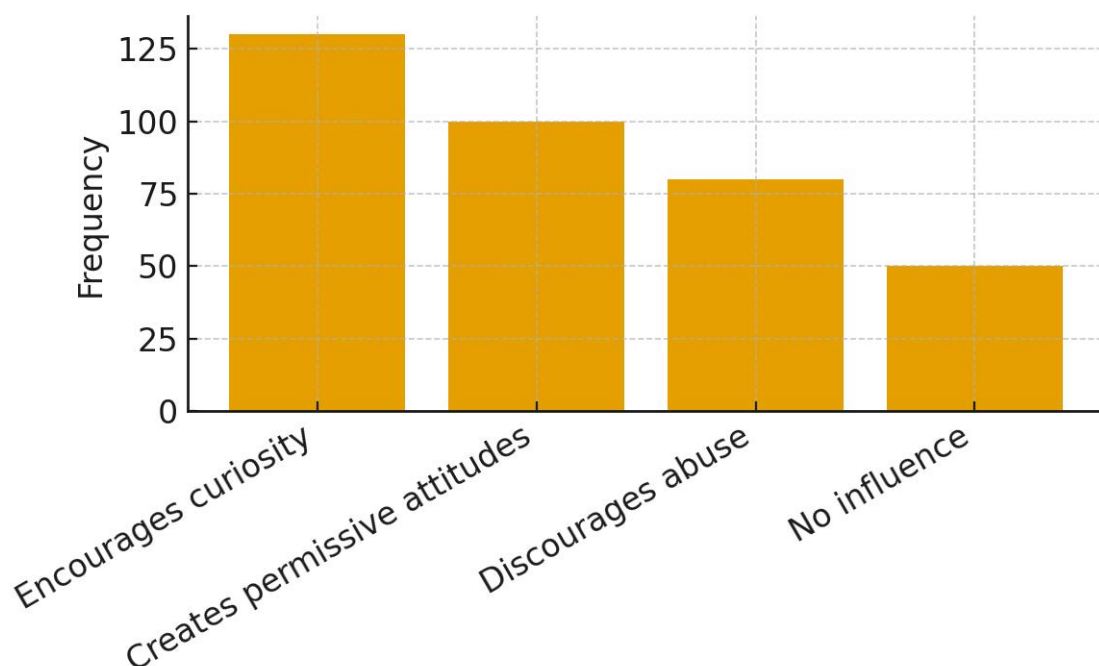


Figure 2. Influence of Nollywood Films on Youths' Attitude

Research Question 3: What are the implications of Nollywood film consumption on substance abuse behaviours among youths in Eket?

Table 3. To the implications of Nollywood film consumption on substance abuse behaviours

| Implications | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--|-----------|----------------|
| Increase in experimentation and peer influence | 140 | 39 |
| Higher risk of addiction and dependency | 95 | 26 |
| Decline in academic performance | 75 | 21 |
| Increase in social problems (crime, violence) | 50 | 14 |

The data suggest that the most reported implication of Nollywood film consumption is an increase in experimentation and peer influence (39%), while the least reported implication is the rise in social problems such as crime and violence (14%).

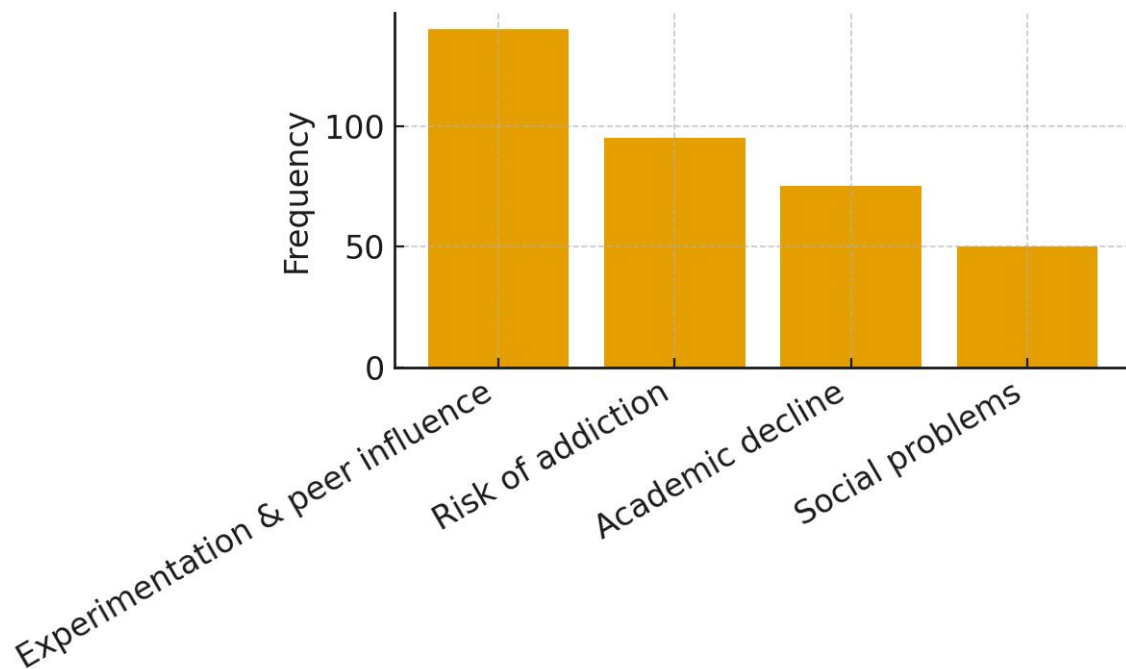


Figure 3. Implications of Nollywood Film Consumption on Substance Abuse Behaviours

6. Discussion of Findings

On Research Question One, the analysis demonstrates that Nollywood films largely depict substance use in ways that may influence youths towards permissive attitudes. This finding strongly aligns with the assertions of Oyesomi and Oyero (2012), who argue that when films present drug or alcohol use casually or as a status symbol, they risk creating aspirational models for impressionable viewers [5]. Applying Social Learning Theory [3], it becomes evident that such portrayals offer behavioural models that are likely to be imitated, especially when the consequences are not emphasised. Youths in Eket, being in a transitional semi-urban environment, often rely on films for behavioural scripts. When films present alcohol consumption or smoking as attributes of success or maturity, the likelihood of replication increases. Okome (2010) notes that Nollywood serves as a cultural text through which audiences negotiate their social identities, and when such texts glorify risky behaviour, they inadvertently validate such practices [2].

On Research Question Two, the findings show that a considerable percentage of respondents affirmed that Nollywood films encourage curiosity and experimentation with substances, while another proportion indicated that these films create permissive attitudes towards drug and alcohol use. These findings echo the position of Gerbner et al. (1986), whose cultivation theory posits that repeated exposure to certain portrayals can gradually shape an individual's perception of reality [15]. The implication is that youths who constantly watch films where substance use is a routine part of life may come to accept such practices as normative. Ajala (2009) stresses that repeated exposure to deviant behaviours in media can result in their social acceptance [10]. In the context of Eket, where peer pressure and unemployment are prevalent, such representations may have stronger behavioural outcomes. This further corroborates Bandura's (2009) social learning theory, as it illustrates the process through which youths internalise and replicate behaviours they observe from media role models, particularly when such portrayals are unaccompanied by cautionary consequences [3].

On Research Question Three, the results point towards serious social implications of Nollywood film consumption among youths in Eket. A significant proportion of respondents acknowledged that watching Nollywood films leads to

experimentation with substances and amplifies peer pressure. This aligns with the submission of Obot (2013), who argues that substance abuse is often sustained through social approval within peer networks, a phenomenon amplified when media provides symbolic endorsement [17]. Cultivation theory [15] provides an appropriate framework here, as it demonstrates that repeated portrayals of drug and alcohol use create a perceived social reality where such behaviours become acceptable. The link to declining academic performance and increased social vices resonates with Ajala (2009), who affirms that substance abuse exacerbates crime rates and undermines youth productivity [10]. This finding underscores the urgent need for responsible storytelling in Nollywood films, where cautionary messages should be prioritised to deter risky behaviours among impressionable audiences. It also highlights the importance of media literacy initiatives to empower youths to critically evaluate the content they consume.

7. Conclusion & Recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

This study concludes that Nollywood films play a significant role in shaping youths' perceptions, attitudes and behaviours towards substance abuse in Eket, as the portrayals often glamorise or trivialise drug and alcohol use, thereby encouraging curiosity, permissive attitudes, and risky behaviours that have adverse implications for youth development and community well-being.

7.2 Recommendations

1. Nollywood filmmakers should prioritise responsible storytelling by depicting the harmful consequences of substance abuse and integrating moral lessons into film narratives.
2. Media regulatory bodies such as the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) should enforce stricter guidelines on the portrayal of substance use in films to discourage glamorisation.
3. Educational institutions and youth organisations should implement media literacy programmes to equip young people with critical skills to evaluate and resist harmful media influences.

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