

Exploring the Stereotype of the African Parent in Selected Nigerian Comic Skits

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Abstract

The duty of parenting is not limited to the commissioning parents but the community at large as it takes a village to raise a successful child in the African context. Parenting style is a function of the society and the society holds a symbiotic relationship with the media as they reflect each other. Consequently, the media plays its role in shaping the role of parenting to the society through its content which is seen in various comic skits, drama and different genres present in the media. This paper examined the stereotype of the African parent and the parenting styles dominant in selected Nigerian comic skits. Media Dependency and Medium theories are the two theories the study was hinged upon and it adopted the qualitative design as thematic analysis was used for analyzing the data. The study discovered that parental aggressiveness, infidelity, gender bias, domestic power tussle and authoritarian style of parenting are the dominant stereotypes of the African parents present in the selected Nigerian comic skits.

Introduction

Comedy for diverse people is a medium of expressing their views on societal issues ranging from politics, socio-economic, cultural to parenting in a conducive environment. The primary aim of comedy is to induce laughter and entertainment to audience. The duty of parenting is not limited to the commissioning parents but the community at large as it takes a village to raise a successful child in the African context. Parenting style is a function of the society and the society holds a symbiotic relationship with the media and they reflect each other. Although there are various styles of parenting which include but not limited to authoritarian or disciplinarian parenting, permissive or indulgent parenting, authoritative parenting and uninvolved parenting (Bright, 2020). Consequently, the media plays its role in shaping the responsibility of parenting to the society through its content which is seen in various comic skits, drama and different genres present in the media. The media has its way of shaping the world view on diverse topics where parenting is not left out as a result of media dependency by the audience to meet their information need, socialization need and parenting styles. Recently, there are social media videos, vlogs and diverse contents that shows how parents engage their children through media content by creating social media platforms for their children by showcasing contents such as their lifestyle, activities and many more thereby exposing these children to cyberbullying in the comment section.

Family is regarded as the smallest unit of socialization which forms communities and ultimately the society. In Africa, parenting is a daunting responsibility that requires an entire community to raise a child in other not to go astray in their career path in the nearest future. With the aid of socialization groups that various parents belong to which teaches them different parenting styles to be adopted in training their children without considering the effect on their children or suit their family types, hence the study seeks to investigate the stereotypes of the African parents dominant in selected Nigerian comic skits.

The study seeks to examine the stereotype of the African parents' dominant in the selected Nigerian comic skits and investigate the parenting styles of the African parents' dominant through the comedy. This paper would aid producers of comic skits, viewers, cultural researchers, sociologists, psychologists and African parents by helping them to understand the concept of parenting through

comedy thereby shaping their world view on the different styles of parenting that can be adopted in training their children.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In 2015, a conceptual study conducted by Anne Jemutai Kiprotich and Joel Rotich Chang'orok titled "Gender Communication Stereotypes: A Depiction of the Mass Media" asserts that within the African context, gender stereotypes are also reinforced by cultural and socio economic features as depicted in the mass media. This article provides a review of the research record on the potential for media literacy education to intervene in the media's influence on racial and ethnic stereotypes, and explores the theoretical concepts that underlie these efforts. (Anne & Joel , 2015)

Similarly, in a their mixed method study conducted in 2015 titled "Intervening in media's influence on stereotypes of race and ethnicity: The role of media Literacy education" postulates that the topic is severely understudied, media literacy education holds great promise for its ability to shape media-related knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors and encourage an active and critical stance toward media. This article provides a review of the research record on the potential for media literacy education to intervene in the media's influence on racial and ethnic stereotypes, and explores the theoretical concepts that underlie these efforts. (Erica & Srividya , 2015)

However, Stacey P. Raj and Vaishali V. Raval (2013) in their conceptual review titled "Parenting and Family Socialization within a Cultural Context" argued that little is known about socialization behaviors of fathers, older siblings who participate in childcare, extended family members, teachers, peers, and other community members. Izuu Nwankwo's conceptual review titled "From court jesting to microphone comedy: Towards a History of Nigeria's Stand-up comedy" opined that carving a niche for oneself in an industry that is just coming out of its nascent stage is no mean feat. Given that stand-up comedy has to grapple with a socio-economic climate that is not supportive nor favorable to live performances, does one see a tremendous ingenuity on the part of the promoters and performers of the industry? (Izuu, 2015)

In the same vein, Akin Adetunji examined a study titled "The interactional context of humor in Nigerian stand-up comedy" (2013) therefore argued that

Nigerian stand-up comedy's interactional tenor could be uniquely hinged on linguistic coding, essentially the code-alternation of Nigerian Pidgin (especially) and English Language. This article, highlighted the major pragmatic strategies used by Nigerian stand-up comedians to involve their audiences in the creation of the interactional context of humor. (Akin , 2013)

Thomas G. O' Connor and Stephen Scott (2007) used the survey method in examining a study titled "Parenting and outcomes for children" which the results obtained showed argued that that the quality of parent- child relationships is significantly associated with learning skills and educational achievement as children's reading ability is associated with the reading environment around them and there is evidence that parental involvement with school is associated with achievement. The study further assert that social competence (most commonly studied within peer relationships), Parental warmth, lack of conflict, and control and monitoring appear to play an important role in developing children's social skills. (Thomas & Stephen , 2007)

A Focus Group Discussion conducted by Nicola Madge and Natasha Willmott in (2007) titled "Children's views and experiences of parenting" postulates that Children have views on most things and like to have a say in longer-term decisions as well as day-to-day matters. 'Being consulted' is generally more important to them than having things 'their own way' or taking the final decision. The study explored children's accounts of parenting where 'added value' is gained from including their views (Nicola & Natasha , 2007). In the same perspective, Ann Phoenix and Fatima Husain (2007) in their qualitative approach, investigated a study titled "Parenting and ethnicity" opined that religion remains an understudied component of family life. Religiosity has been associated with protective factors that strengthen families, but little information is currently available on the beneficial or harmful roles that religion plays in the home. The study explored the views of policy makers, philosophers, practitioners and academia on the subject of ethnicity and parenting (Ann & Fatima , 2007).

Ibukun Filani (2015) examined a study titled "Discourse types in stand-up comedy performances: an example of Nigerian stand- up comedy" which revealed that stand-up comedians perform discourse types, which are specific communicative acts in the context of the joke, such as greeting/salutation,

reporting and informing, which bifurcates into self-praising and self-denigrating (Ibukun , 2015).

Thomas E. Ford (1997) in an experimental study investigated “Effects of stereotypical television portrayals of African-Americans on Person Perception” as it opined that stereotypical-television portrayals of African-Americans in a humorous context increase the likelihood that whites will perceive an African-American target person in a stereotypical manner. The study addressed the effect of stereotypical television portrayals of African-Americans on Person Perception (Thomas E. F., 1997).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is hinged upon the tenets of media dependency propounded by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur (1976) and medium theories which was propounded by McLuhan (1964). Dependency theory integrates several perspectives: first, it combines perspectives from psychology with ingredients from social categories theory. Second, it integrates systems perspectives with elements from more causal approaches. Third, it combines elements of uses and gratifications research with those of media effects traditions, although its primary focus is less on effects per se than on rationales for why media effects typically are limited (University, 2019).

The core assumptions of media dependency theory proposes an integral relationship among audiences, media and the larger social system. This theory predicts that you depend on media information to meet certain needs and achieve certain goals, like uses-and-gratifications theory. But you do not depend on all media equally. Two factors influence the degree of media dependence. First, you will become more dependent on media that meet a number of your needs than on media that provide just a few. The second source of dependency is social stability. When social change and conflict are high, established institutions, beliefs, and practices are challenged, forcing you to reevaluate and make new choices. At such times your reliance on the media for information will increase. At other, more stable times your dependency on media may go way down (University, 2019).

In relation to the study, media dependency theory is found appropriate in exploring the stereotypes of African parents through selected comic skits as

result of the gratification they receive from the media they depend on which meets their information need, socialization need and various parenting styles they adopt in building a parent-children relationship with their children thereby sharing with their colleagues and ultimately transcending to the next parent in the community.

The second theory this study is hinged upon is the medium theory also known as channel theory, or media formalism which was propounded by McLuhan (1964). He challenged conventional definitions when he claimed that the medium is the message. With this claim, he stressed how channels differ, not only in terms of their content, but also in regard to how they awaken and alter thoughts and senses. He distinguished media by the cognitive processes each required. McLuhan popularized the idea that channels are a dominant force that must be understood to know how the media influence society and culture (University, 2019). Medium theory focuses on the medium characteristics itself (like in media richness theory) rather than on what it conveys or how information is received. In medium theory, a medium is not simply a newspaper, the Internet, a digital camera and so forth. Rather, it is the symbolic environment of any communicative act.

In relation to the study, medium theory is also found appropriate in exploring these stereotypes through the selected comic skits in the sense that the medium in which viewers access these messages has more impact in shaping their worldview on different parenting styles each parent will adopt in building a parent-children relationship with their children in the home. The theory is also considered relevant for the study in which the messages are disseminated via blog posts or write ups the possibility of reaching the target audience will be limited hence the use of short videos that portray these parental behaviors and disseminated via social media which has a large audience and the target audience are easily accessed as the world is now a global village.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological paradigm adopted in this study is the qualitative design and thematic analysis was specifically used to identify the stereotypes of the African parents in the selected comic skits produced by Nigerian content creators as disseminated via social media. The contents analyzed from the selected comic

skits is an evaluation of the stereotype of the African parent which centers on the parent-children relationship in an African home therefore, the characters and settings are representation of the reality of African parenting style has become a stereotype using the comic skits produced in Nigeria and disseminated via social media.

Synopsis of selected comic skits

Comic skit are short videos produced and disseminated via social media as a means of communication where different content creators shoot diverse skits as it centers on societal issues, parent-children relationship, and economic issues. For the purpose of this study, the focus is directed to the comic skits that are centered on parent-children relationship specifically skits centered around African families where children are not given the opportunity to express themselves because it is regarded as being disrespectful. The contents under study include Taaoma's Apaokagi Maryam's skits titled "A very short story" 'Mums will always deny you the credit you deserve', "African mums during this quarantine period", Gloria Oloruntobi popularly known as Maraji's skits titled 'How African Parents help with Homework' "Nigerian Mothers series" "When My mom sleeps versus when I sleep" and Debo Adebayo also known as Mr. Macaroni's skits titled "Can Daddy survive this lockdown" "Princess Come I have your balance" and "Oluwa!! Wetin dey occur".

SYNOPSIS OF TAAOOMA'S VIDEOS

A very short story

The storyline of this content shows that Ronke being the wife and Kunle being the husband played by Taaooma where seated in the living room where she was taking notes while Kunle's telephone rang with the name mechanic being the caller. She called the attention of her husband to his ringing phone but he was being adamant on responding to the call until Ronke persuaded him to respond to the call. The conversation between Kunle and the mechanic says that the supposed mechanic is Kunle's girlfriend having a romantic conversation in the presence of his wife. The moment Ronke overheard the conversation between her husband and the "mechanic", she demanded to hear the conversation by asking her husband to put on the loudspeaker of his phone to hear the

conversation. In the long run, Kunle could not yield to the demand of his wife hence a heated argument ensued between the couple which led to Kunle's death (Taaooma, 2020).

Mums will always deny you the credit you deserve

African mothers are known for not crediting their children for a good deed in the house which is the case of Iya Taaooma and Taaooma in this comic skit. The video showed that Taaooma was doing laundries while her mother came out to supervise what she was doing until her mother started a conversation with her neighbor, Iya Chidinma about selling her goods online. As the conversation dwindled, Iya Chidinma called the attention of Iya Taaooma to the laundries her daughter was doing immediately, she claimed the responsibility thereby painting her daughter as a lazy person. Immediately Taaooma exclaimed to debunk the claims of her mother, she received a resounding slap while her mother instructed her to finish up on the laundries and take up new ones (Apaokagi, 2020).

African mums during this quarantine period

The quarantine period is one which government of various countries declared states lockdown in curbing the pandemic of covid-19 also known as coronavirus and African homes are not left out of the order. The video of this skit shows Ronke a mother of two children Tayo and Taaooma calls her children to partake in the domestic chores despite Taaooma doing the same chores previously without Tayo her elder brother taking part in the chores. In the same vein, Kunle their father joined the scene to register his displeasure of being hungry but Ronke was busy instructing Taaooma on her duties in the domestic chores and argument ensued between the couple while Taaooma tried to settle the argument between her parents, she received a resounding slap and her father left the house to avoid domestic violence but his wife insist he does not leave the house as a result of the lockdown order by the government yet Kunle left the house (Maryam, 2020).

SYNOPSIS OF MARAJI'S VIDEOS

How African parents help with homework

Homework is an avenue of testing the ability of the students which their parents assist them in making progress and African children are not left out. The plot of

this skit shows how a mother is assisting her daughter with her Mathematics assignment upon the assistance, the daughter was not getting the answers right the mother called for her siblings to get her cane as a measure of discipline. Subsequently, the daughter got the answer to the first question correctly while she failed the second question, the mother gave her a resounding slap for failing the second question (Gloria, 2019).

Nigerian mothers series

This skit is a combination of all the various comic skits produced by Gloria Olorunfemi also known as Maraji which centers on the behavior of a Nigerian mother and how she relates with her family, starting with assisting her daughter with school assignments, dishing out instructions at the same time on how to be safe at home with constant slaps and beating to arguments. The skit also shows how a typical Nigerian mother will be yelling at the children within a second and the next minute, she is seen calling the same children asking for help on how to operate either her smartphone or the television set the moment the child (ren) refuses then an argument ensues in the home (Olorunfemi, 2019).

When my mom sleeps versus when I sleep

The content of this skits shows that when an African mother decides to take a nap, she should not be disturbed either by the family members or noise within the house yet reverse is the case when her daughter decides to take some nap that is the moment the parents especially the mother remembers to ask her daughter to do some domestic chores. In a nutshell, it is a sin for a child to be idle in an African home where there are tons of chores to do. A typical African child should not be seen sleeping rather do chores or be studying (Maraji, 2019).

SYNOPSIS OF MR. MACARONI'S VIDEOS

Can daddy survive this lockdown?

The lockdown is a government order on citizens of the country to combat the global pandemic of covid-19 also known as coronavirus for a period of time. This skit opens with the African man day dreaming of his affair with his mistress only for him to wake up and realize it was a dream which is wife woke him from. The moment he realized that he is stuck with his wife in the house as

result of the lockdown order of the covid-19 pandemic, he decided to get intimate with his wife but she refused and reminded him of this frolicking series with his mistress and not being faithful to their marital vows (Debo, 2020).

Princess come I have your balance

This skit opens with the scene of a young lady called Princess who stood beside a car discussing with a man suddenly, Mr. Macaroni stepped into the scene to convince the lady by negotiating both the price and venue for her services as a call girl which they agreed to the sum of fifty thousand naira only (#50,000). Upon the arrival of both Mr. Macaroni and Princess at the hotel room, Mr Macaroni gave her twenty thousand naira (#20,000) as opposed the agreed fees instead, she collected the money from him thinking she agreed to render the call girl service to his surprise, she went to the wall, hit it thrice and disappeared into thin air (Adebayo, 2020).

Oluwa!! Wetin dey occur

The content of this skit opens with an African mother shopping for dresses for children in a store where her husband whom accompanied her to the same store busy frolicking with the store attendant until the woman called the attention of the store attendant to assist her in picking a dress for her daughter thereby arguing with her husband about the funds he gave her for the shopping. However, the husband had made a cash transfer to the attendant's account hoping they would meet up for the continuation of their frolicking series. As the attendant alight from the chair she sat, only for the husband to realize that the attendant is a dwarf which he could not help but burst into tears (Mr Macaroni, 2020).

THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF SELECTED VIDEOS

Parental aggression

The comic skits produced by Taaoma Apaokagi Maryam popularly known as Taaoma and Gloria Oloruntobi popularly known as Maraji, which describes the reality of children and parents' relationship in a typical African home where children are not given the opportunity to express themselves as a result of the cultural and social exposure of the parents. These skits present theme of

aggressiveness in the parents in their styles of parenting thereby leading to transfer of anger and frustration to their wards which has negative influence on the confidence of their children.

In 2013, Stacey P. Raj and Vaishali V. Raval in their work titled Parenting and Family Socialization within a Cultural Context asserts that little is known about socialization behaviors of fathers, older siblings who participate in childcare, extended family members, teachers, peers, and other community members. However, in 2007 Nicola Madge and Natasha Wilmot in their study titled “Children’s views and experiences of parenting” postulates that children have views on most things and like to have a say in longer-term decisions as well as day-to-day matters. ‘Being consulted’ is generally more important to them than having things ‘their own way’ or taking the final decision.

Infidelity

There is a maxim in the African continent that by nature, man is promiscuous and infidelity to marital vows is their companion which leads to the societal problems of domestic violence such as rape between couples. From the selected skits analyzed, the theme of infidelity is predominant in the skits produced by Debo Adebayo popularly known as Mr Macaroni and Taaoma Apaokagi Maryam popularly known as Taaoma when compared to the counterpart of the white men in the western world is not rampant. However, the African man will tell you that in the stone age of our grandparents, they were polygamous in nature and they lived together as a happy family and the children bore into these homes where for economic reasons as well as domestic purposes. This theme is one of the stereotypes of the African father that bring about division among children when taking sides when their parents begin to quarrel over the practice of infidelity and promiscuity.

Gender Bias

The African parent especially mothers believe in the maxim that the girl-child is to be trained in terms of domestic chores and being prepared for marriage at the expense of the male child whom is seen as heir apparent of the home which keeps the family name and heritage and pass it unto generations to come. As seen in the videos of Taaoma, the way her mother dish out instructions on

domestic chores to her daughter, her mother is always strict and often slaps her daughter which she would not do same with her son Tayo as result of the manly ego he possess as the heir apparent of the family whom is seen pass on the family heritage to the next generation. This is one of the stereotypes of the African parents which affects the parent-children relationship which brings about division among children and ultimately leading to sibling rivalry as seen in the case of Cain and Abel as well as other cases within the society.

Domestic Power Tussle

The concept of power is relative as it is a transient mantle that comes with various responsibilities both at the political, social, cultural and domestic levels of the world. In terms of the stereotype of the African parent, there is a domestic power tussle among parents which usually come up as a result of various factors such as discipline of children, societal factors, economic factors but to mention a few. Present in the selected videos, is the theme of domestic power tussle that the African woman always wants to control her husband which the typical man will not consent to being controlled by his wife because the man is seen as strong, tough and provider of the family which bring about the increase in divorce rates within the society, hardened mindset of youths not delving into marriage rather opt for the option of lesbianism, same-sex marriage and transgender.

Styles of parenting

Although there are various styles of parenting which include but not limited to authoritarian or disciplinarian parenting, permissive or indulgent parenting, authoritative parenting and uninvolved parenting (Bright, 2020). The dominant style of parenting present in the selected comic skits is authoritarian parenting where the parents in this category are often thought of as disciplinarians as they use strict style with little negotiation in relating with their children. Another characteristics of this style of parenting is that communication is mostly one way from parents to child as the rules are not usually explained. Parents with this style are typically less nurturing and expectations are high with limited flexibility. This style of parenting is predominant in most African especially in Nigeria where the channel of communication in most homes is a top to bottom

approach where the parent is at the top of the communication model dishing out instructions to the children whom are at the receiving end.

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